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Challenging established categories in Restoration Libertine discourse:
Aphra Behn and nuanced engagements with libertinism and feminist
discourse.

A MPhil thesis

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Reworked and submitted

31 October 2019

Abbreviations

WJW: The Works of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

James Grantham Turner is the author of several books that this thesis refers and frequently references. Because several authors of books and articles relevant to this thesis have produced multiple works of scholarship on libertinism or authors relevant to this thesis, such as Paul Hammond, Laura Linker, and Harold Love, when referencing their work citations will name the title of the article or book referenced rather than their name.

SG: James Grantham Turner, Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, texts, images ed. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

WAB: Unless otherwise noted, all citations on Behn's work are from Janet Todd, ed., The Works of Aphra Behn, v. 1-7 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992)

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Introduction

In the twentieth and twenty-first-centuries, women's literary history and women's literary studies have resurrected the written works of marginalized and censored women from their literary graves. Women authors are recognized for their literary legacy and some, such as Aphra Behn, became historical proto-feminist figures alongside their written creations. Virginia Woolf, herself an esteemed figure in literary studies, writes in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) that all 'women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn which is, most scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds'.¹ Yet, Woolf's praise of Behn also emphasizes the spectacle of Behn's life by mentioning her 'scandalous' burial at the steps of Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner. In death as in life, Behn is kept adjacent, but separate, from her male peers. This thesis project explores Behn's place in literary history by concentrating the discussion on her legacy as both a proto feminist historical figure and as a libertine author. This thesis project examines the nuances of Behn's career as she engages with libertine discourse and proto feminist arguments for women's autonomy. This thesis highlights many of the feminist aspects of Behn's legacy while also acknowledging her conservative restraint that limits libertine discourse in her writing, especially when compared to that of her male peers. The libertine discussions in this project are limited to a comparative reading of Behn's oeuvre against that of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, as well as supplementary historical libertine texts that provide context to the development of Restoration libertine discourse.

¹ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Annotated and with an introduction by Susan Gubar (London: Harcourt Inc, 1929), loc. 1599.

Both Behn and Rochester engage with libertine discourse and proto feminist elements in their writing, but the clear differences in their respective genders and social standing show how different libertinism and proto feminist arguments can be expressed while ostensibly arguing for similar values. Like Behn, Rochester suffers from a problematic authorial legacy and historical designation for his contributions to the seventeenth century literary canon. Unlike Behn, Rochester's legacy is unambiguously libertine, and while his biography is legendarily scandalous, this thesis project argues that the presumed misogyny his libertinism suggests is undeserved. Rochester writes in the poem, 'To Love',

Such sweet, Dear, tempting Mischifs women are
When e're these flames grow faint, I quickly find
A fierce black storm, pow'r down upon my mind,
Headlong I'm Hurl'd like Horsemen who in vain
Their fury-foaming Coursers wou'd Restrain'²

The speaker describes women as complex, moody, but powerful characters on par with the speaker's own fickle and inconstant nature. Though 'To Love' describes a volatile relationship between Rochester's speaker and women, women are not depicted as passive objects but powerful beings. The 'fierce black storm' admittedly paints women with the misogynistic stereotype of being temperamental. However, when these lines are followed

² 'To Love' (lines 30- 35), John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *The Works of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp 12-13.

up by the speaker being ‘Hurl’d like Horsemen who in vain ... Coursers wou’d Restrain’ there is a power in this equation of women and war horses. Both are valuable and it is ‘in vain’ to believe you can ‘restrain’ them. Both Behn and Rochester write libertine styled verses and libertine aligned characters throughout their respective careers. One author is remembered by scholarship as a broadly proto feminist forebear in the historical discourse of women’s writing. The other is the consummate libertine, misogynistic, pornographic, and base.

This thesis reviews the role of libertine discourse in representations of women in Restoration society and challenges established presumptions of Behn’s feminism and Rochester’s misogyny. This project bases its discussion around Behn’s and Rochester’s approach to sexually suggestive and sexually explicit writing. It suggests that each authors’ oeuvre depicts a more nuanced relationship with libertine discourse and proto feminist developments in the depiction of women. There have been shifts in readings of each authors’ work in academia, and I suggest that current scholarship in libertine studies goes too far in reconciling Behn as a feminist force in libertine discourse. Behn’s current designation amongst many scholars is that she is a proto-feminist author. Her career reflects a rise in the visibility of early modern women’s writing in academic circles and continues to be a welcome starting point in early modern women’s writing from the traditionally patriarchal domination of literature.

The focus of this thesis project is Behn’s career and her engagement with libertine discourse. However, as has been mentioned, Behn’s contemporary, Rochester, is the most recognised libertine author in the Restoration canon. In counterpoint to Behn’s presumed proto feminism, Rochester’s assumed misogyny is likewise a nuanced and debatable

aspect of his writing. Rochester's misogyny has been a focal point in discussions of his work, both as a poet and historical libertine. Rochester is 'the libertine', and one cannot discuss Rochester without discussing his contributions to performative and literary libertine discourse. A fictional Rochester is the lead protagonist in Stephen Jeffrey's play *The Libertine* (1994) and the subsequent film adaptation in 2004.³⁴ As both fictional representations of Rochester illustrate, he is remembered as a poet, but his talent is eclipsed by his infamous sexual debauchery.

In the introduction to the collection of *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, texts, images*, James Grantham Turner asks if art historians and literary theorists have,

engaged in a single project of historicization, an "histoire de la sexualité" along Foucaultian lines, or do disciplinary and cultural divisions intervene, divisions as concrete and specific as the historical forces we wish to uncover? [...] Does literary history likewise fetishize the individual text, abandoning the sort of large-scale verification that would count as real history?⁵

Turner's introduction to the collection refers to his preferred subject, the history of sexuality, and questions the impact modern historicism on the interpretation of sexuality in its early modern cultural context.⁶ Turner's overarching question, 'do disciplinary and cultural divisions intervene' in the analysis of texts, is a question this thesis explores in relation to Behn and Rochester and how these factors change the nuanced depiction of

³ Stephen Jeffreys, *The Libertine*, (London: Nick Hern Books, 1994).

⁴ *The Libertine*, dir. Laurence Dunmore, The Weinstein Company (2004).

⁵ James Grantham Turner, 'Introduction: a history of sexuality?', in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, texts, images* ed. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 2-3.

libertinism and proto feminism in their writing. This thesis project proposes the argument that Behn's writing is not unequivocally feminist and that her contributions to libertine discourse show her writing to be conservative and that she limits her depiction of women's sexual agency to a minor privileged section of society. I look at the popular reputations of these two authors and dissect the content of their writing with an aim to glean feminist and anti-feminist messaging that supports or refutes their popular scholarly designations. This project suggests that Behn's written work marks her out as a problematic proto feminist while Rochester's literary treatment of the female subject is more feminist than misogynistic. Previous arguments that the libertine poet is a misogynist overlook the content of his writing and defer to his historical reputation.

Rochester like Behn has a reputation in Restoration literary studies as the consummate libertine due to his sordid biography and his pornographic libertine poetry. Poems such as the above 'To Love' describes women as, 'Such sweet, Dear, tempting Mischiefs' (line 30) which suggests animosity as much as the attraction between the speaker and the female subject. As will be discussed, however, Rochester's relationship with people is complicated, and women are not immune to his vitriolic invectives. Printed alongside poems such as 'Love to a Woman' and 'On Mrs Willis' the case for Rochester's misogyny appears to be an open and shut case.^{7 8} This thesis will argue otherwise and present evidence that the body of Rochester's poetic work shows women's desire as natural and ridicules the imbedded hypocrisy in libertine discourse that continues to marginalise and punish women's sexual agency. Showing the consequences

⁷ 'Love to a Woman', *WJW* p 38.

⁸ 'On Mrs Willis', *WJW* p 37.

of women's sexual agency is an aspect of libertine discourse Behn, ironically, preserves in her more traditional engagement with Restoration libertinism.

Rochester's role as one of the most visible and crude members of the coterie of Court Wits has led his libertine escapades, both confirmed and rumored, to become merged with the author's prolific oeuvre. This thesis challenges that such trends in Restoration scholarship and libertine studies have gone too far in reconciling author's works to academic trends and calls for a return to the literary analysis of the writing and historical context of each piece. Literary history credits Behn with trailblazing a space in literature for women to express their dissent and to earn an income from writing. However, the content of her writing reveals an author who concerns herself with the plight of wealthy and aristocratic women to the detriment of working class, poor, and women of colour.

Throughout the journey in researching and writing this thesis, I have encountered multiple interpretations and arguments discussing Behn as a proto feminist figure, the first female commercial dramatist and novelist, and a female libertine author.⁹ Rochester's scholarship likewise attempts to explain the poet as the definitive libertine, an alcoholic, and a political rebel.¹⁰ Indeed, like the term 'libertine' itself, Behn and

⁹ For scholarship on Behn and early modern women's writing see the works of Jane Spencer, *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, Fiction 1600-1800* (London: Virago Press, 1989); Laura Linker, *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, and the Rise of Sensibility, 1670-1730* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011).

¹⁰ For scholarship on Rochester and his biography see the works of Graham Greene, *Lord Rochester's Monkey: being the life of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester* (London: Penguin, 1976); Jeremy Lamb, *So Idle a Rogue* (Stroud: The History Press, 2005); Alexander Larman, *Blazing Star: The Life and Times of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (London: Head of Zeus Limited, 2014).

Rochester defy concrete definitions with both authors exemplifying libertinism, socio-political criticism, and questioning women's agency within Restoration society. Behn's contributions to libertine discourse illustrate a fascination with libertinism that is complicated by women's objectification within libertine discourse and the real consequences of sexually transgressive women in seventeenth century society. In contrast, Rochester's poetry is brutally satirical but poems like 'Song - Absent from thee I languish still' reveal vulnerability and desire for companionship that, for a poet whose speakers decry monogamy, nevertheless emphasises women as companions and not sexual objects.¹¹ Other poems, such as 'The Platonick Lady' (1680) empathise with women's social restrictions.¹² 'The Platonick Lady' (1680) is one of several poems written by Rochester featuring women speakers discussing women's issues. Rochester's contemporary celebrity led to his association with Behn's depiction of a libertine-rake in her stage-play, *The Rover; or the Banish'd Cavaliers* (1677) that has endured mention in every publication on Behn's play.¹³ While it is impossible to determine whether these two pillars of Restoration literature ever met in person, each author's career engages with English libertine discourse in ways that still invite scholarly debate.

I argue that there is a need for current scholarship to reassess the textual analysis of each authors' oeuvre and reevaluate Behn and Rochester as more nuanced authors based on the textual evidence and developments in libertine scholarship that includes queer and feminist readings of libertine literature and authorship. This thesis argues that

¹¹ 'Song – Absent from thee I languish still' *WJW* p 29.

¹² 'The Platonick Lady', *WJW* p 35.

¹³ Aphra Behn, *The Rover; or the Banish'd Cavaliers* (1676). Unless otherwise noted, all citations on Behn's work are from Janet Todd, ed., *The Works of Aphra Behn*, v. 1-7 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992)

the bulk of the textual evidence supports a feminist-reading of Rochester, while Behn reveals herself to be more nuanced in her libertine and feminist arguments. Also, this thesis argues that the assessment by feminist academics that Rochester is a misogynist overlooks the ridicule placed upon male hypocrisy, frank depictions of women's sexual desire, as well as his contribution to the discourse on aristocratic abuses of power over women and young men. Scholars, such as Hobby, Spencer, and Todd, argue that Behn's writing is an example of proto feminist writing in Restoration drama and prose fiction.¹⁴ Their arguments cite Behn's female protagonists and her focus on women's lives and struggles. But Behn focuses on the problems of attractive upper class women and offers scant empathy to lower class women, women of colour, or the elderly. She relegates her depictions of lower class women to the roles of loyal servants, whores, and noble savages. Examples of this dynamic between mistress and servant are present in *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684-7) between Sylvia and her maid, and in *The Rover; or the Banish'd Cavaliers* (1677), between Angellica and her maid. These inequal depictions of women are exacerbated in instances where Behn introduces women of color into her narratives, such as in the novella *Oroonoko; or The Royal Slave* (1688).¹⁵ As with her eponymous protagonist, Oroonoko, his wife Imoinda is a black African noblewoman and therefore vested with extreme beauty and innate nobility. Behn's white ladies are witty, vivacious, and while technically virtuous in many cases, they still voice their desire to be seen and heard by their male counterparts. Imoinda is troublingly quiet and docile, exposing Behn's racism and limited 'feminism'.

¹⁴ Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649-88* (London: Virago Press, 1988); Spencer, *Aphra Behn's Afterlife*; Todd, *The Sign of Angellica*.

¹⁵ Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko; or the Royal Slave*, ed. Janet Todd (London: Penguin Classics, 2004).

Behn marginalises black women's experiences by making them either silent and naturally servile, as depicted by the many female plantation slaves in *Oroonoko* (1688). Imoinda is given a voice, but in a break from Behn's caucasian heroines, acquiesces to her husband's desire for a murder-suicide pact. Unlike notable Behn-heroines such as Hellena, Sylvia, the *Unfortunate Happy Lady. A True History* (1698) or even the twin sisters of *The Dumb-Virgin: or, the Force of Imagination. A Novel* (1700) Imoinda is shockingly bland and submissive for a Behn-character.¹⁶ Scholars have argued about the problematic depiction of people of color in Behn's writing, and it is indicative of a brand of racism that cannot be excused by modern-readers.¹⁷ It is a racist depiction of English imperialism, and it does problematize feminist readings of Behn's texts because it is almost exclusively in favour of the agency of upper class English women, and implores the reader to sympathise with the social standing of one class while another is fetishised and marginalised. Though Hobby writes extensively and persuasively about early modern women's need for a 'virtue of necessity', the academic community has since built upon this thesis to what I argue is the neglect of textual evidence that supports Behn's place amongst early modern women author's as valid, but not entirely proto-feminist. Hobby's *A Virtue of Necessity* (1988) goes to lengths to contextualise the complicated amalgamation of Behn's self-described necessity to write prolifically 'for bread' as well as for political propaganda.¹⁸ Hobby writes,

¹⁶ WAB, v. 3 *The Fair Jilt and Other Short Stories* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992) *The History of the Nun; or the Fair Vow-Breaker* (1688) pp. 205-258; *The Dumb Virgin; or, the Force of Imagination. A Novel-* (1700) pp. 335-360.

¹⁷ Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) p 58

¹⁸ Hobby, *A Virtue of Necessity*

It was after her release from debtors' prison that Aphra Behn, presumably recently widowed, turned to writing to make a living. Contrary to popular belief, she was not the first woman playwright, nor was she the first woman to earn her living by her pen [...] To object to claims of origination being made for Behn is not, however, to deny how unusual and difficult her chosen path was. (*A Virtue of Necessity*, p. 114)

This thesis argues that libertinism is a polyvalent discourse that encourages dissent and thus encapsulates a wide range of views from misogynist to feminist, radical to conservative. The assumption is that Behn is the proto feminist and progressive figure while Rochester is the misogynist aristocratic rogue. Admittedly, Rochester's poetic legacy at first blush does little to desuade readings of his pornographic verse as misogynistic. Behn's engagement with libertine discourse likewise implies a desire to advance women's sexual freedoms in some capacity. Each new generation of academics brings with them contemporary morals that influence their interpretation of these authors. In this thesis, I engage with the conception of Behn as a problematic Royalist whose writing capitulates to more traditional and problematic roles for many of her heroines in her play's denouements. Her poetry and prose fiction take greater risks, however even in texts, such as *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684-7), I argue that the libertine discourse promotes a conservative and catholic sympathising agenda over an emancipatory feminist narrative. Against Behn's conservatism I explore Rochester's feminist depictions of women's sexuality, interactions with men, government, and politics. Hammond writes that if 'a single word could encapsulate the characteristic tenor

of Restoration literature, 'wit' would be a good choice'.¹⁹ Both Behn and Rochester are true to this spirit, as each author's writing is exemplary of the wit held in high regard by English culture broadly, and libertine discourse specifically. Hammond explains that,

The word [wit] had a wider range of meanings in the 1660s than it commonly has today: intelligence, mental agility, penetrating insight, pointed verbal expression, sharp repartee. It connotes a self-conscious, stylish, civilized panache. It applies equally to thoughtful philosophical insight and to comic devilment. It is the hallmark of an intelligent, confident culture. (*Restoration Literature*, p. xv)

Hammond's explanation of the seventeenth century conception of 'wit' as a descriptor of mental intelligence and stylish verbal expression encapsulates Rochester's and Behn's style. Both authors are the example of Restoration wit which is why they have endured in the popular imagination and continue to appear in anthologies of Restoration literature. Rochester's verses are deliberately inflammatory; he depicts women as the equals of the men in vice and virtue. The court ladies that feature heavily in Rochester's verses are depicted as loathsome and as complex as their male counterparts. Indeed, no member of the court is spared the poet's satirical attacks, including 'the easiest king and best-bred man alive', Charles II.²⁰ Hammond writes that 'Many poems in the 1670s satirised Charles II for his many affairs; this one refers to two of his mistresses, Louise de Keroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth (Carwell) and Nell Gwyn, the actress'.²¹ Each author contributes to a growing discourse based on sexual politics, personal freedom, and the

¹⁹ Paul Hammond, 'Introduction', *Restoration Literature: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. xv.

²⁰ *WJW*, 'A Satire', (line 4), p. 86.

²¹ Paul Hammond, *Restoration Literature: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 38.

changing political landscape of seventeenth century England, but in application Behn is more likely to conform to conservatism and to uphold traditional gender roles and their consequences, while Rochester pushes back against ingrained societal norms. Current Behn and Rochester scholarship has problematically projected onto each author's oeuvre an ahistorical reading that is not fully supported by the content of the texts. For Behn, this means that scholars attempt to explain away the problematic tropes of her writing with Hobby's theory of 'the virtue of necessity'. Though accurate to the plight of women's reputation during the seventeenth century, this does not excuse the multiple depictions of rape and violence against women Behn uses to progress her narratives.

Literature Review

In this section, I list the primary texts and a review of the scholarship and publications relevant to each author's extensive oeuvre. I have included a lengthy discussion of each section's existent scholarship and current arguments for and against each author's political and feminist interpretations. I have selected the primary texts for each author based on their place in the Restoration literary canon and for their contributions to proto and anti-feminist discussion. There is a wealth of scholarship on Behn's and Rochester's lives, writing, and the historical context of seventeenth-century politics. This literature review's intent is to provide an overview of existing scholarship and the texts used in researching and writing this thesis. I provide an overview of important scholars, supplemental authors, as well as the primary and secondary texts referenced in this thesis. I also discuss the existing gaps in scholarship and why each text that I have selected is important to this project's themes. I discuss existing scholarship on Behn and Rochester and the specific editions of their collected works I have selected to reference and why.

There are several annotated collections of my primary authors' complete oeuvres that have been published and provide different scholarly interpretations of Behn's and Rochester's literary work. Richard Bevis's *English Drama: Restoration and Eighteenth Century, 1660-1789* (1988) provides historical context and contains a helpful index of Restoration authors.²² Robert D. Hume's extensive scholarship on Restoration drama is

²² Richard Bevis, *English Drama 1660-1789* (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1988).

invaluable to any research on Restoration drama and authorship.²³ This thesis also relies on the subject specific specialists James Grantham Turner, Paul Hammond, and Mary Ann O'Donnell. What has made the selection process easier is the academic communities for both Behn and Rochester have a preferred edition that is most often cited. For Rochester's collected works I also benefit from the shared scholarship that references new editions in the book's appendixes. Finally, this literature review provides explanations for the supplementary texts and manuscript editions I have had the good fortune to access on this academic journey.

This thesis pulls from research and methodologies in the areas of libertine studies, Restoration drama, and the origins of the novel and women's writing. These areas benefit from many prolific scholars whose works provide a strong methodological background and historical basis for the research portion of this project. Gallagher's work on women's place in commercial writing, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Act of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670 – 1820* (1995) is a valuable specialised study that focuses on the literary legacy of women's commercial authorship. The focus of Gallagher's research gives their pedagogical publications more weight when it is applied to Behn's writing as a methodological tool. In addition to *Nobody's Story* (1995), Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt's *Practicing New Historicism* (2000) provides valuable theoretical groundwork on the application of new historicist methodologies in the interpretation of

²³ Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1976)

the libertine texts discussed in this thesis.^{24 25}This project notes the value of new historicism as a method of interpretation for Behn's and Rochester's writing and *Practicing New Historicism* (2000) is a good starting point for developing this thesis project's methodology.

Gallagher goes into detail in the first two chapters covering Behn's career. *Nobody's Story* (1995) also provides an essential overview of women's writing in the long eighteenth century and includes other subversive authors whose writing is not libertine but still shares in Behn's legacy of challenging the limits of acceptable modes of women's discourse. Viragos, such as Delarivier Manley and Frances Burney, share in Behn's fame and infamy and Gallagher covers each in depth and thus shows a linear progression of women's commercial authorship springing from Behn's pioneering efforts. As I discuss, many of these studies on Behn justify her status as a frontrunner in the history of commercial authorship and women's writing. In doing so, scholars have excused the problematic aspects of Behn's works that challenge her designation as a proto feminist icon. Behn's biography is feminist and inspirational for the legacy of women authors that followed in her footsteps. This thesis project acknowledges Behn's contributions to the advancement of women's literature, but it does not overlook the problematic elements of her proto feminist discourse. Instead, this project challenges Behn's textual legacy and discusses the limits of her feminism and how this relates to her libertine literary explorations. Behn's biographical legacy is inspirational to feminists and

²⁴ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Act of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670 -1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1995)

²⁵ Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2000)

further a feminist cause but this project highlights that her literary oeuvre skews conservative and in favour of a privileged minority.

Rochester scholarship has grown from edited collections and discussions of censorship to largely annotated anthologies tracking the publication of texts and the level of accuracy in their attribution to Rochester.²⁶ Hammond's *Figuring Sex between Men from Shakespeare to Rochester* (2002) discusses the homosocial bonding and Rochester's bisexuality in poems such as the Anacreontic ode, 'Nestor'.²⁷ ²⁸Hammond also discusses Rochester's loneliness in the 'Second-bottle' letter and discusses the homosexuality of Rochester's writing that frames Jeremy Webster's *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court: Drama, Politics, Sexuality* (2005).²⁹³⁰ Hammond and Webster, in turn, relate much of the foundational research into Restoration libertine literature and theory back to the extensive work in the subject done by Turner. Turner's scholarship provides the history and context of libertine protest and seventeenth century misogyny in *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics and Literary Culture, 1630-1685* (2002). Turner's text,

²⁶ Rochester, *The Gyldenstolpe Manuscript: Miscellany of poems by John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester and other Restoration authors*, ed. Bror Danielsson and David M. Vieth (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967); *The Works of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁷ Paul Hammond, *Figuring Sex between Men from Shakespeare to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

²⁸ WJW, 'Nestor' pp. 41-42

²⁹ Jeremy Webster, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court: Drama, Politics, Sexuality* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005)

³⁰ Paul Hammond, 'Rochester's Homoeroticism', *That Second Bottle: Essays on John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, Nicholas Fisher ed. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000) pp. 47-63.

provides a detailed analysis of English sexual culture from the Civil Wars to the death of Charles II (c. 1640-85), interpreting a broad range of representations from lampoons and pamphlets to Utopian political theories, from street defamations to Whitehall comedies, from aristocratic ‘riots’ to popular expressive rituals like the charivari or ‘rough music’. I focus on the seething subcultures of the capital city - on what a recent collection of essays calls ‘material London’ - but I treat the metropolis and its liberties or ‘zones of misrule’ as permeable space, open to shaming-rituals imported from the villages and illicit texts translated from the wickedness of Europe. (*Libertines and Radicals*, p. xii)

Turner’s historical analysis of libertine discourse during a period of great political upheaval in English history is a valuable resource for the history of libertine performances and the history of London ‘sexual culture’. *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) is the most comprehensive study on the ‘broad range of representations’ of libertine discourse in early modern English culture. Turner’s discussion attempts to categorise English libertinism into ‘high’ and ‘low’ variations. These categories depend on the audience, mode of discourse, and the groups forming the ‘seething subcultures’ of London society that are most likely to engage in different forms of libertine performance. Nigel Smith writes that ‘The writing is racy and polished, leaping from anecdote to text to archive, and back again. This is especially so in the last chapter, which must surely become required reading for any student of Restoration literature’.³¹ Smith’s review of Turner’s writing is echoed by the numerous scholarly texts that have since referenced *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) among their primary resources for Restoration libertinism and the history of sexual culture. However, *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) has flaws, which Smith explains, ‘the English were short of words to explain whoredom positively or quivocally ... This shortfall in native writing presents Turner with a significant problem: he can only articulate English libertinism by importing terms from the ancient and

³¹ Nigel Smith, ‘Review’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 4, 2003, pp. 1336–1337. p. 1336

continental literary traditions.’ (Smith, 1336) Smith’s criticism of Turner’s work is fair. English literature is populated with many works in translation. This is particularly true for pornographic and libertine texts, such as the libertine dramas of Jean-Baptiste Poquelin’s, who is popularly known as Moliere, text *L’École des femmes* (1661) and Pietro Aretino’s pornographic *Ragionamenti* (1534, 1536) or ‘whore’s dialogues that describe the grooming and exploitation of a young girl by an experienced prostitute.^{32 33} However, Smith’s criticism of Turner highlights the problem that libertine scholarship is in part a study of work’s in translation when it diverges from European libertinism to English libertinism. This point is a fair observation of a perceived flaw in *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) and one that I discuss at length in the following chapter *What is a Libertine*, where I will cover the historical context of English libertine discourse, deferring to Turner’s extensive scholarship on the subject. Other critics are less forgiving of Turner’s attempts at expanding the academic vocabulary used to discuss sexually charged texts. Paul Griffiths review asks ‘So what in the end, does this book give us? We have some new-sounding words, though the odds are stacked against “pornosphere” (175), “pornotropic” (78), “pornotropism” (44), or “punitive-festive-prurient arousal” (181) ever making it into the canon.’³⁴ Griffiths accurately predicts the likelihood of Turner’s neologisms populating any text other than his own, however, the review is overly harsh to Turner on the academic contribution of his work. There are broad and bold assertions made in the

³² Molière, *The School for Wives and The Learned Ladies*, by Molière: Two comedies in an acclaimed translation, trans. Richard Wilbur (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1991).

³³ Pietro Aretino, *The Works of Aretino, Translated into English from the original Italian, with a critical and biographical essay by Samuel Putnam* (New York: Covici-Friede (1926).

³⁴ Paul Griffiths, ‘Review of *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630-1685* by James Grantham Turner’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Fall, 2004), pp.856-858, pp. 857.

introduction to *Libertines and Radicals* (2002), but these are reflective of the text's engagement with libertine discourse and appropriate for the first of a two book study on a complicated subject.

Turner's follow up to *Libertines and Radicals* (2002), *Schooling Sex: Libertine Literature and Erotic Education in Italy, France, and England 1534-1685* (2003), is the second volume of his study on libertinism and sexual culture.³⁵ While *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) focuses on English libertinism, *Schooling Sex* (2003) 'broadens the scope of his research to include European erotic traditions. *Schooling Sex* (2003) is an important first step in the study of the development of libertine traditions, and the various influences exerted on this literature as they carry across nations'.³⁶ The scope of this thesis is more limited and covers only Restoration English libertinism, and more specifically, the careers of two of Restoration literature's most enigmatic authors.

Schooling Sex (2003) provides a good overview of the spread of libertine discourse from its French and Italian origins to English culture. *Schooling Sex* (2003) discusses the merging of erotic entertainment with erotic education. This genre of libertine writing gains popularity with *L'École des femmes* (1661). Lavery writes,

The first part of the book also addresses one of the key concepts behind the construction of early modern sexuality, as "natural" or culturally imposed. Montaigne's idea that, for women, sexuality is "une discipline qui naist dans leurs veines" is used by Turner to interrogate the ways in which female and male sexual identities are constructed in these texts. (Lavery, p. 66)

³⁵ *Sexuality & Gender in early modern Europe: Institutions, texts, images*. ed. James Grantham Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

³⁶ Hannah Lavery. 'Review', *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2006, pp. 64–68. P. 65

Turner's edited collection of essays, *Sexuality & Gender in early modern Europe: Institutions, texts, images* (1993) discusses these nuances of sexuality represented in early modern texts. This collection includes the contribution of Domna C. Stanton's 'Recuperating women and the man behind the screen' which discusses male appropriations of women's narratives, ostensibly written 'for women' but which are in actual practice voyeuristic literature in line with later variations of the 'School for Wives' genre of libertine literature of which Moliere is the most recognizable contributing author.³⁷ Josephine A. Roberts and James F. Gaines 'The geography of love in seventeenth-century women's fiction' grounds this thesis's argument of the historical context of erotic writing with their discussion of the cartography of erotic writing, both literal and metaphorical.³⁸

Textual Resources

This thesis engages with principal texts from Behn's and Rochester's respective bodies of work. In addition to samplings from their extensive writings, supplemental manuscripts are added to give context to the period in which these authors were writing and circulating their works. While the sheer size of each authors' oeuvre makes it

³⁷ Domna C. Stanton, 'Recuperating women and the man behind the screen', *Sexuality & Gender in early modern Europe: Institutions, texts, images*. ed. James Grantham Turner (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³⁸ James F. Gaines and Josephine A. Roberts 'The geography of love in seventeenth-century women's fiction'. *Sexuality & Gender in early modern Europe: Institutions, texts, images*. ed. James Grantham Turner (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

impossible to include an in-depth engagement with the entirety of their work within the limited scope of this thesis project, I have tried to include important texts from Behn and Rochester in each chapter and have grouped them by thematic focus and genre where possible.

For consistency in the quotations, this thesis cites from Todd's *The Complete Works of Aphra Behn* (1997) for all direct citations and quotes of Behn's writing, noted in abbreviations as *WAB* and followed by the volume. The Pickering Master's seven-volume printing of Behn's works is the complete collection of Behn's entire oeuvre with detailed annotations and the histories of each text.³⁹ Montague Summer's 1967 edition of Behn's writing has a place in the history of Behn scholarship but has been replaced by Todd's continued scholarship and contemporary study.⁴⁰ To supplement the research put into Todd's edition, I also reference Mary Ann O'Donnell's *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (2004). The edition of Rochester's poems that I reference in this thesis is Love's collected edition of *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester* (1999), abbreviated as *WJW*. There is a more recent edition of Rochester's poems edited by David M. Vieth, *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester* (2002).⁴¹ However, Love's *WJW* (1999) is the most extensively researched and indexed collection of Rochester's complete works to date. Love's dating of each poem, and the manuscript variants make it possible to incorporate probable circulation

³⁹ *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Montague Summers (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 1967).

⁴⁰ For other notable contributions by Todd to the field of Aphra Behn Studies see *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn* (Rochester: Camden House, 1998), and *Aphra Behn Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴¹ David M. Vieth *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

and publication dates into my comparative analysis of Behn's and Rochester's developing libertine discourse. *WJW* (1999) also provides a supplementary analysis of each text's attribution to Rochester, which makes this collection an invaluable academic resource. For Rochester's complete works there are more options available with strong contemporary scholarship, such as the recent collection edited by Keith Walker and Fisher, *John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester The Poems and Lucina's Rape* (2010), which revisits and updates Walker's earlier collection, *The Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (1984).^{42 43} This reprint of Walker's collection, edited and with notes by Fisher acknowledges the posthumous nature of the republication and notes that 'until Harold Love's comprehensive edition for Oxford University Press in 1999, Walker's had been the only full, critical, old-spelling edition of Rochester's verse and the preferred edition for many Rochester scholars'.⁴⁴ Fisher, Love, Veith, and Walker's extensive scholarship track the parent manuscripts and variants that collectively make up the multiple editions of Rochester's work since the first posthumous printing of *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (1680). *WJW* acknowledges these academics' contributions to Rochester scholarship in the annotations and bibliography of the anthology. While all of the quotations of Rochester's poems and dramas are cited from *WJW*, where applicable, I also consult existing manuscripts and variant manuscript sources, such as the copy of the 'Alexander Bendo Brochure' held in Nottingham University's manuscripts and special

⁴² John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester: The Poems and Lucina's Rape*, ed. Keith Walker and Nicholas Fisher (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁴³ John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *The Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Keith Walker (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1984,2010).

⁴⁴ Keith Walker & Nicholas Fisher, 'Notes on This Edition' *John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester: The Poems and Lucina's Rape*, ed. Keith Walker and Nicholas Fisher (Wiley-Blackwell (2010).

collections archive. Fisher's work argues that the 1680 Tonson printing of Rochester's *Poems Upon Several Occasions* (1680) is a mix of many alternate editions of the poems.⁴⁵ *WJW* considers this scholarship in the annotations of his collection and notes that the mixed editions of Rochester's poems, which include other libertine poems and pornographic verses, has contributed to the ongoing discussion of questionable attributions to Rochester's oeuvre that has been made over the centuries since the poet's death.

Theatre

The Rover; or the Banish'd Cavaliers (1676):

Behn is best known for her career as a commercial dramatist, and any case-study of Behn's writing requires attention be paid to her dramas. It is also relevant to this thesis's discussion since her theatrical productions include libertine sex-comedies and political intrigue plays that are often associated with the Court Wits. These plays also contain political propaganda based around Charles II and Restoration politics. Behn's most recognisable work of drama, *The Rover; or the Banish'd Cavaliers* (1677) engages directly with libertine discourse *via* the sympathetic depiction of English courtiers in exile. Engaging with key elements of high libertinism, *The Rover* (1677) places the witty and sexually provocative libertine-rake prominently as a supporting comedic character and principal love interest for the co-heroine, Hellena. Current scholarship on *The Rover* (1677) engages with themes of libertinism, political commentary, and feminist theory, all

⁴⁵ Nicholas Fisher and Ken Robinson, 'The Postulated Mixed '1680' Edition of Rochester's Poetry.' *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 75, no. 3, 1981, pp. 313–315. www.jstor.org/stable/24302503

of which are integral to the central arguments of this thesis. Ann Marie Stewart's *The Ravishing Restoration: Aphra Behn, Violence, and Comedy* (2010) highlights Behn's multiple usages of rape and sexual assault in her dramatic works, including *The Rover*.⁴⁶ Stewart emphasises that while 'Behn used theatre as a forum to highlight complex social issues' and that these could be 'sugar coated within the genre of comedy' the violence serves a purpose. (Stewart, 9) Stewart's book attempts to salvage Behn's feminism by highlighting the subversive depictions of the prostitutes, Angellica Bianca and Lucetta, as case studies of women from different socio-economic ends of the same profession whose femininity is a commodity purchased by the men in the play. Angellica Bianca is central to discussions of women's agency and sexuality in Restoration drama. Hobby's *A Virtue of Necessity* (1988) builds upon Behn's defence of her personal morality in the reaction of public backlash against her depictions of sexually provocative characters and subjects. Hobby's work on Behn and early modern women authors provides a strong foundation for discussions of early modern women, Restoration drama, and depictions of sexual agency. *A Virtue of Necessity* (1988) and *The Sign of Angellica* (1989) are integrated into the vocabulary and theory of Behn and early modern women's writing studies. Both author's discussions provide the vocabulary and theoretical framework for discussing Behn's depictions of female sexual agency. Hobby's phrase, 'A virtue of necessity' is linked to the performance of hegemonic femininity and sexual chastity while Todd's 'hanging out the sign of Angellica' has become the phrase's antonym in this area of academic discourse. If 'making a virtue of necessity' protects women's status in the seventeenth-century social hierarchy, 'hanging out the sign of Angellica' is equal to

⁴⁶ Ann Marie Stewart, *The Ravishing Restoration: Aphra Behn, Violence, and Comedy* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010)

social suicide. As stated by Behn, ‘hanging out the sign of Angellica’ places a woman into public life and opens them up to attack and public ridicule. To further link Hobby and Todd to this thesis’s larger discussion of Restoration libertine discourse, Behn’s stated concern for both her ‘virtue of necessity’ to preserve her social standing and her need to ‘hang out the sign of Angellica’ in order to make her living from writing, demonstrates Turner’s division of libertinism into these high and low categories. Behn’s theatrical productions clearly align with high libertine discourse by showcasing her literary skill, wit, and knowledge of political and historical events. Meanwhile, Behn’s anxiety on being at the receiving end of a Skimmington ride, being socially and even physically punished for real and imagined unchaste behaviour, represents the reality of women’s libertinism in its seventeenth-century historical context.

Behn’s dramas have been discussed at length for the political commentary and gender representation featured prominently in many of them. Anita Pacheco argues in ‘Reading Toryism in Aphra Behn’s *Cit-Cuckolding Comedies*’ (2004) that Behn’s social politics and personal politics do not coexist peacefully.⁴⁷ Pacheco focuses the discussion on the uncomfortable relationship between Behn’s brand of Toryism during the Exclusion Crisis and the early years of James II’s reign (1681-1686). Pacheco contributes to the scholarly debate of Behn’s sexual politics, which they agree are ‘proto-feminist’. Pacheco also notes Behn’s political criticism, specifically in favour of James II’s succession to the throne. (Pacheco, p. 691)

⁴⁷ Anita Pacheco, ‘Reading Toryism in Aphra Behn’s *Cit-Cuckolding Comedies*.’ *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 55, no. 222, 2004, pp. 690–708.

Other texts, such as Todd's biographical fiction *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (1996), offer some historical context to Behn's life and writing. Todd combines fiction-writing techniques and historical records in order to recreate probable timeline and biographic recreation of Behn's life. The research into the historical context of Behn's life adds historical context to plays such as *The Rover* (1677) and Behn's prose-fiction *Love Letters* (1684-7) and *Oroonoko* (1688) that prominently feature women as their main protagonists. Since libertinism is primarily an aristocratic discourse that privileges male agency over female consent, Behn's shift of focus from masculine homosocial bonding experiences common to other libertine narratives to feminine negotiation of libertine spaces complicates an easy anti-feminist reading of her work. Problematically, Behn's depiction of non-aristocratic women casts them in the role of acceptable victims for masculine sexual aggression. As will be discussed in later chapters, Behn represents marginalised women as either lacking quality and virtue, such as the street whore Lucinda, or they are cast as faithful servants to their lady and as such their sexual services are exploited by another woman as a tool in their sexual intrigue games. Such is the case of Sylvia's maid, and multiple other secondary female characters in libertine dramas and novels.

Thomasso; or the Wanderer (1663):

Behn's *The Rover* looked at in two parts, is fully plagiarised from the courtier and dramatist, Thomas Killigrew's unperformed chamber-play, *Thomasso; or the Wanderer*

(1654,1663).⁴⁸ Killigrew's *Thomasso* has a long history of association with *The Rover* (1677) due to Behn's appropriation of the characters, plot, and lines of dialogue which support the argument that Behn plagiarised *The Rover* (1677) from *Thomasso* (1654,1663). Behn's defence of *The Rover* (1677) against the accusations of plagiarism and the criticism she faced contextualise the virulent misogyny Behn faced from her male peers and which she attempts to soften in her work. The addition of *Thomasso* (1677) into this thesis's discussion of Behn's drama add historicity to discussions of Behn's conservatism and Rochester's feminism.

Prose

Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister (1684-1687):

The three-part prose-narrative, *Love-Letters Between a Noble-Man and his Sister* (1684), *Love-Letters from a Noble Man to his Sister: Mixt with the History of Their Adventures. The Second Part by the Same Hand* (1685), and *The Amours of Philander and Silvia* (1687) is Behn's most overtly political work of prose-fiction, and contemporary to her politically charged Cit-Cuckolding comedies of the 1680s.⁴⁹ James II's open Catholicism threatened English culture in the wake of the Civil War and

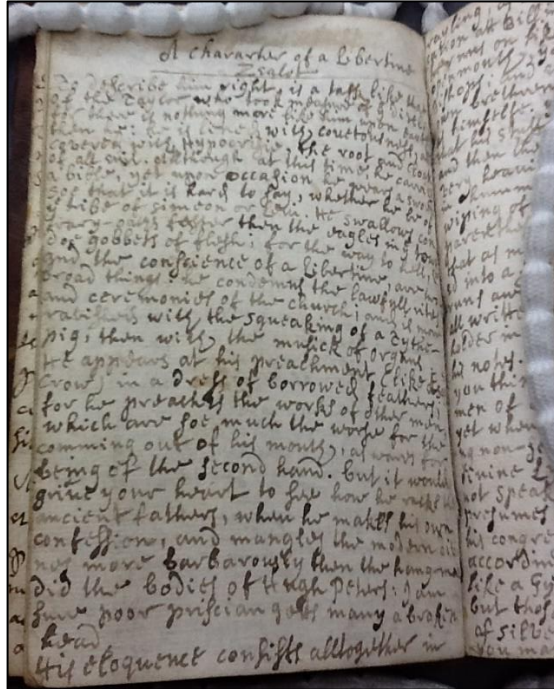
⁴⁸ Thomas Killigrew, *Thomasso; or The Wanderer, Comedies and Tragedies* (London: Herringman, 1663) *Thomasso; or The Wanderer* held in the Special Collections of Aberystwyth University's Hugh Owen Library.

⁴⁹ J.D. Canfield, 'Topping Your Rival's Women: Cit-Cuckolding as Class Warfare in Restoration Comedy', K. Quinsey (editor), *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama* (Lexington, Ky., 1996), 113-28.

protestant Royalists had to choose between supporting the right of succession or supporting the bastard pretender to the throne, the Duke of Monmouth. Written as an epistolary *roman à clef*, the salacious narrative is a pretence for the political and libertine philosophical exchanges which dominate the narrative. Behn's heroine, Sylvia, and her brother-in-law turned lover, Philander, represent opposing politics, variations in libertine performance and the resulting social repercussions of male and female libertinism. *Love Letter's* (1684-7) is valuable not only because it is a starting point for discussions of libertinism in prose-narrative fiction, but because it clearly delineates between men's libertinism and women's libertinism as two different experiences and interpretations of libertine discourse.

Behn's politics and feminism are central to this text. Unlike Hellena in *The Rover* (1677), Sylvia is more than a mouthpiece for libertine rhetoric and a desirable subversive female character; Sylvia drops her 'virtue of necessity' and becomes a female-rake. However, *Love Letters* (1684-7) is Behn's most comprehensive exploration of what it means to be a seventeenth century woman and engage in political discourse. Restoration libertinism is inherently political, and Sylvia's fate and the novel's conclusion are demonstrative of Behn's negotiation of her libertinism and politics within her own written practice.

'The Character of a Libertine Zealot', *The English Rogue, Described in The Life of Meriton Latroon*:



Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot' 3, Commonplace Book, 1668

The copy of 'A Character of a libertine Zealot' (1668) is a minor portion taken from a larger series of misadventures in the allegedly biographical account of *The English Rogue, Described in The Life of Meriton Latroon*. (1665)⁵⁰ 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot' (1668) is a portion of text that has been copied and included in a commonplace book held in the archive collections of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.⁵¹ There are no other mentions of libertinism or excerpts from *The English Rogue* (1665) in the collection apart from this single three-page copy about 'The Character of a Libertine

⁵⁰ Richard Head and Thomas Kirkman, *The English Rogue: Described in the life of Meriton Latroon, A Witty Extravagant, Being a Complete History of the most Eminent Cheats of Both Sexes* (1665)(London: George Routledge and Sons,1928).

⁵¹ 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot', Commonplace Book, The National Library of Wales

Zealot'. The rest of the commonplace book containing the excerpt is not political and contains household accounts, herbal remedies, and recipes for tinctures and tonics. The commonplace book transcription is an incomplete copy of the original text from *The English Rogue* (1665). 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot' (1668) consists of writing in a mixed secretary and italic hand. The document incorporates the use of the sigma 'e' that places the date of the document contemporary to the publication of *The English Rogue* (1665), but geographically removed from London. The mixed hand supports the interpretation that the transcription did not originate nor was the transcriptionist educated near London, as then it would not be in a mixed hand but instead be written in a modern italic hand.

The original text from which the commonplace book transcribes 'The character of a libertine zealot' (1665) chronicles the life of the character, Meriton Latroon, from the English Civil War through the Commonwealth period. The biographical account is critical of the Commonwealth. Meriton Latroon, and the rogues he encounters during the narrative are morally repugnant rogues but eschew the appellation of 'libertine'. This detail is important because it makes a distinction between immorality and a 'libertine zealots'' irreligious piety and sowing of social discord. This distinction provides context to the evolution of rakes in Restoration libertine discourse and predicts the stage-rakes and historical rakes that populate London's literary and social landscapes during the 1670s. This distinction between immorality and social discord associated with the upper- and aristocratic-classes during the Interregnum and Restoration periods further demonstrates the privileged position held by those contributing to libertine discourse, as

shown from the perspective of a hypothetical commoner and person of non-English heritage.

‘An Advice Against Libertinism’:

Edward Reynell’s , ‘An advice against libertinism: shewing the great danger thereof and exhorting all to zeal of the truth’ (1659) is a text that addresses the social and religious dangers of a libertine lifestyle.⁵² Like ‘The Character of a Libertine Zealot’ (1668), ‘An Advice Against Libertinism’ (1659) utilises libertine discourse to entice the reader into their argument against sexual immorality and atheism. These two texts emphasise social hierarchy as a defining factor of the libertine. Social division is present in all the libertine texts addressed in the thesis and these smaller tracts criticising the discourse further highlight the disparity between aristocratic interpretations of libertinism and commoner observations of libertine performances.

Poetry

‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’(1673)&‘A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind’(1674)^{53 54}

⁵² Edward Reynell, ‘An advice against libertinism: shewing the great danger thereof and exhorting all to zeal of the truth.’ (1659) Early English Books Online

⁵³ *WJW* ‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’ (pp 76-80).

⁵⁴ *WJW* ‘A Satyre against Reason and Mankind’ (pp 57-63).

Discussing libertine satire requires the inclusion of two of the most quoted and popular verse satires in the Restoration canon. Rochester's 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673) is a wealth of satire against the court and king. The poem delves into the political and social machinations behind the sexual debauchery of the upper classes. Rochester's scathing criticism takes no prisoners, and the vulgarity in both poems has been a source of attraction and criticism to readers for centuries. The pornographic imagery of 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673) and the sexually objectifying attacks on the speaker's lover, Corrina, understandably lay the groundwork for the common criticism of Rochester as a misogynist. What is most relevant about this poem to this thesis project is Rochester's lurid portrayal of sexual acts and the male speaker's reaction to his female lover performing libertine sexuality. This exists in stark contrast to Behn's female characters who only verbally confirm their libertinage.

Scholarship on 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673) focuses on the gender dynamics at work in the poem between the speaker and his lover. For this reason, it is important to include this poem and its extensive scholarship into my larger discussion of Rochester's overall feminism. The point of view this thesis takes is that Rochester's speaker is himself the subject of satiric ridicule within the narrative of the poem. The speaker is shown to be a failed libertine who espouses the rhetoric of sexual freedom but does not apply it to his lover. Instead of successfully joining the libertine display of sexual debauchery before him, the speaker, like in so many of Rochester's poems, is rendered impotent when faced with female sexual liberation. By chastising his lover for engaging in libertinism, the speaker fails to achieve physical satisfaction *via* orgasm in

contrast to Corinna's sexual fulfilment. The failure of the speaker's libertinism is placed in direct opposition to Corinna's successful practice, relegating the masculine speaker to the role of a cuckold, similar to Wycherley's ageing libertine antagonist in *The Country Wife* (1675).⁵⁵

'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind' (1674) has been through many interpretations since it was circulated in manuscript form. In contrast to 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673), 'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind' (1674) breaks from the overt sexual explicitness of 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673) and rails against humanity. This poem is one of the most quoted and discussed of Rochester's verse satires. I have chosen to include this poem in the texts discussed in this *Literature Review* because it would be an academic oversight to not discuss this poem's place within Rochester's complete body of work. Though I include this poem in passing and acknowledge its virtue as a great libertine poem, there is not much this thesis project can add to the current scholarly discussion and it is only discussed in passing and in relation to other works.

'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680) and 'The Disappointment' (1684)^{56 57}:

⁵⁵ William Wycherley, *The Plays of William Wycherley*, Peter Holland ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), *The Country Wife* (1675) pp. 229-341.

⁵⁶ WAB 'The Disappointment' pp 65-69.

⁵⁷ WJW 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' pp 13-15.

The imperfect enjoyment style impotence poem is a unique style of poetry specific to libertine verse. These poems are interpreted in three major ways: political, gendered, and erotic. The political interpretation of the imperfect enjoyment style poem is that it is a criticism of Charles II's impotent leadership during the later years of the Restoration. This reading applies to Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680) and Behn's reactionary 'The Disappointment' (1684). Randy Robertson and Garth Libhart discuss in 'Castrating Rochester: The Politics of the Poems in the 1680s' (2012) the history of censorship, what is dubbed 'castration', of posthumous editions of Rochester's writing, including his family's attempts of suppressing the 1680 publication of *Poems*.⁵⁸ Robertson and Libhart expand their study beyond the 1680 publication of *Poems* and the government suppression of Rochester due to the political undertones of the verses in the wake of the Exclusion Crisis. (Robertson and Libhart, p. 504) They discuss how Love, Vieth, and Fisher have all made sound academic work of the political motivations for censoring Rochester's *Poems* (1680) and discuss how the censorship of Rochester has resulted in the multiple variants noted by Love in *WJW* (1999). However, Robertson and Libhart focus on Andrew Thorncome's edition of Rochester's poems from 1685. (Robertson and Libhart, 504)

'The Platonic Lady' (1680) & 'To Fair Clorinda, who made Love to me, imagin'd more than Woman' (1688)⁵⁹:

⁵⁸ Randy Robertson and Garth Libhart, 'Castrating Rochester: The Politics of the Poems in the 1680s', *Huntington Library Quarterly* Vol. 75, No. 4 (Winter 2012), pp. 503-525, 504.

⁵⁹ *WAB* 'To Fair Clorinda, who made Love to me, imagin'd more than Woman' p 288.

'The Platonick Lady' (1680), one of many Rochester poems about women, it is unique because it claims to be about the relationship between a female speaker and a youth with whom she shares an emotional, but not sexual, intimacy. The speaker says, 'Our freedoms should be full compleat / And nothing wanting but the feat' (lines 21-22). Similar in style to Behn's poem 'To Fair Clorinda who made love to me, imagined more than a Woman' (1688), the female speaker's relationship is to the ambiguously gendered 'youth'. Behn's variation on platonic love apes Rochester's and emphasises the absence of penetrative sex, stating 'In pity to our Sex sure thou wer't sent, / That we might Love, and yet be Innocent' (lines 12-13). In both poems, the relationship between the speaker and their companion lacks heteronormative penetrative intercourse, and thus allows the emotional love to take the lead as the driving force of the narrative between the speaker and the beloved. It is worth noting that because the form prevents it, or because it is a depiction of fraternal love, each poem stands as a rare example of love untainted by jealousy and sexual politics.

Rochester's relationship with women is inarguably complicated. Rochester's poetry, however, is consistent in representing the institution of marriage as negative, women as complex characters with individual motivations and desires, and is conspicuously absent of any commentary or opinion on the person and writings of Behn. Rochester's poetry contains several veiled and direct commentaries on women associated with the court, including the Queen Mother, 'To Her Sacred Majesty. The Queen Mother' (1680), the court mistresses Nell Gwyn, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and the Marchessa

de Mazarine in 'Dialogue. L: R' (1680), and many others.⁶⁰ Rochester's poetry delivers a candid glimpse of court society and its members, but it notably avoids the mention of Behn.⁶¹

'The Disabled Debauchee' (1675), 'Song - A Young Lady to her Antient Lover'(1673), 'Song - Leave this Gawdy Gilded Stage'(1680).^{62 63 64}

I discuss in several sections how Behn and Rochester show the social, Behn, and physical, Rochester, consequences of prolonged libertinism. In Rochester's poems, the speaker's reflective tone works as a suitable counterpoint to Behn's writing in the 1680s that adopts a similarly pensive view of libertinism and the long-term effects it has on devotees. Each author offers a unique vantage point that illuminates the shortcomings and strengths of libertinism. The longevity of libertinism is clearly gendered. As a female author, Behn is already accused of plagiarism and prostitution by her professional associations in a male dominated field. Adding libertine discourse into the mix of Behn's career and changing style further emphasises the limitations of her appropriation of masculine rhetoric. Behn's later prose-narratives and dramas are more conservative and anti-feminist than her earlier work. Conversely, Rochester's poems that focus on aging

⁶⁰ *WJW* 'Dialogue L:R' p 91.

⁶¹ *WJW*, 'To Her Sacred Majesty the Queen Mother' pp 110-111.

⁶² *WJW* 'The Disabled Debauchee' pp. 44-45.

⁶³ *WJW* 'Song - A Young Lady to her Antient Lover' p 30.

⁶⁴ *WJW* 'Song - Leave this gawdy gilded Stage' p 32.

acknowledge libertinism requires a young man's stamina, but age refines wit and broadens perspective.

Methodology

This thesis challenges that scholarship has gone too far in reconciling Behn's historical contributions as a proto feminist forebear and has overlooked the problematic and sometimes disturbing abuses of working class women and women of colour. Behn's feminist legacy extends as far as libertinism allows for aristocratic women, which is itself limited to libertine rhetoric but not libertine performance. Libertinism promotes and endorses the freedom of sexual exploration for men but withholds that same freedom from women. Behn shows multiple times that sexually transgressive women are stripped of the protections afforded them by their station. Behn's engagement with libertine discourse shows her willingness to embrace sexual and social freedoms, but it is notable that Behn does not extend agency to middle and lower class women or women of colour. Rochester's legacy likewise benefits from new historicist approaches and queer theorists that contextualise his representations of women, relationships, homoeroticism, and sexuality within the scope of seventeenth-century homosocial court society.⁶⁵ As I discuss in the literature review, Hammond's work on Rochester broadens the scope of this project's research analysis.⁶⁶ ⁶⁷The research into Rochester's work, feminism, and the role of queer theory within Rochester studies has resulted in more reliance on

⁶⁵ See Hammond, *Love Between Men in English Literature* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1996).

⁶⁶ Hammond, 'Rochester's Homoeroticism', *That Second Bottle: Essays on the Earl of Rochester* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 47-63.

⁶⁷ See also Hammond's *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Hammond's research into homoeroticism, Restoration and early modern conceptions of homoeroticism, than was originally planned for within the scope of this project.

New historicism's approach to Behn scholarship is to contextualise her dramas within the scope of the politicised Restoration stage, as well as through Behn's pioneering social context as a woman making a career from writing. Hammond takes a similar view when discussing the visibility of homosexuality and early modern conceptions of masculinity in context. Hammond writes,

Meanwhile anxiety about what was happening to masculinity was played out on the public stage, particularly in the comedy of the Restoration and early eighteenth century: here characters who are thought to prefer sex with men increasingly came to be seen as part of a specialized, identifiable group which had its own social spaces and leisure activities, but also threatened the language and mores of polite society. (*Love between Men*, p. 89)

In the above passage, Hammond discusses Restoration society's anxiety about unstable categories of gender and representations of masculinity on the stage. This anxiety is a shared theme in Behn's and Rochester's writing, manifesting in Behn's stage rakes, and imperfect enjoyment poetry.

To reiterate, I am arguing that while each author's historical contributions are valuable tools in unlocking the context of their writing, scholars should not overlook the textual evidence. Behn's proto feminist appellation is consistent with a new historicist approach to her work, and her known biography supports this reading. Behn makes strides for women's writing as a profession, and this deserves recognition. Textually Behn's writing is evidential of the class divide in Restoration society that fanned the

flames of the English Civil War and the religious zeal of the Interregnum period. Her 'feminism' is limited to the privileged few who occupy the upper classes of society and not for the working class. To this effect, Behn's attraction to libertinism emphasises that she is aware of her limitations as a woman, defending herself in her prologue with the claim that she is forced to 'write for bread' and does not desire fame.

New historicism provides the tools to interpret these elements of her writing, but it does not negate the problematic readings of Behn's oeuvre that reveal her tacit understanding that women cannot exercise libertinism's sexual freedoms on par with that of their male peers. In so much as Behn advocates for women's autonomy and their freedom to choose their husband, Behn's forays into feminism are limited by her seventeenth century context and we cannot expect her to approach women's issues and racial injustices with a twenty-first century sensibility. As Hobby advocates on Behn's behalf, the inequality between male and female sexual activity is palpable to the Restoration public, 'Charles's many mistresses were subjected to an endless barrage of anonymous ballads and pamphlets, portraying them as libidinous, diseased and immoral, and while the king's illegitimate sons regularly received noble titles, his daughters by the same women were left in unsupported obscurity'. (*A Virtue of Necessity*, p. 86) Behn's reaction to this public backlash against public women, the court mistresses, is to give her heroines a libertine voice, but hamper their activity. It could be argued, and Hobby does, that Behn's pretense to virtue in her writing is the natural response to such a volatile historical environment. Hobby ties the social stigma on women's sexuality and their exploitation by aristocratic men to the libertine behaviour of the royal court. Hobby argues,

This cynical exploitation of women as sexual objects was an essential part of a gentleman's calling. It would be a mistake to imagine that the increased promotion of an ideal that men should use women as sexual objects, and that women were longing to be abused, was caused by the royal household itself in any simple way. The king's behaviour is however the most visible evidence of a far-reaching male backlash against female liberty. (*A Virtue of Necessity*, p. 86)

Likewise, Rochester's work is pornographic and has led this project's research to libertine scholars, such as Warren Chernaik, Turner, and Webster, who have articulated the difficulties in discussing libertinism with the same language and methodologies as researchers of contemporary pornography studies.⁶⁸ In the *Literature Review*, I discuss the criticisms Turner has encountered by attempting to create vocabulary specific to early modern pornography studies and libertine studies. I agree with Turner's critics that his attempts at neologisms are not an effective methodology for engaging with a clear and unobstructed study of early modern sexuality. While many of Turner's attempts to blend his described faux-renaissance terms such as 'pornosphere' and 'pornotropic' are more likely to obfuscate than enlighten readers, certain terms are useful in assisting in the discussion of libertine specific poetical forms.

It has been difficult to select which texts to use in this thesis. Favorite poems such as Rochester's 'Upon Nothinge' (1680) had to be omitted from the discussion because they do not fit the scope of this project.⁶⁹ I have chosen to analyse a selection of texts from each author that includes poetry, drama, and prose.

⁶⁸ Warren Chernaik, *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁶⁹ WJW 'Upon Nothinge' pp 46-48.

The project employs close textual readings of each authors' work to support arguments for and against proto feminist literary interpretation. For this purpose, I have selected specific poems and supporting materials on each author that lend themselves to comparative analysis but still provide a wide sample selection of each authors' broad oeuvre. I also reference research materials such as O'Donnell's *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography* (2004) and Love's *WJW* (1999). These annotated collections have been vital in identifying the history and variant editions for this project's selected poems. Love's annotated *WJW* has also been key in locating scans available through internet database archives, printed monographs, and archival resources.

I have visited and reviewed archival resources for additional information on original texts that provide historical background on libertinism's reception outside of London court society and dramas, such as the handwritten excerpt 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot' 3, *Commonplace Book, 1668, [17-18 cent.]* (1668) held in the National Library of Wales archives, Aberystwyth. By reviewing archival resources, I have been able to expand the research and apply it to the historical context of libertine discourse during the Interregnum and Restoration periods and determine the extent of libertine and anti-libertine excerpts in *Commonplace Book 3* (1668).⁷⁰

The research methodology of this thesis employs close readings of the primary authors' writing. The close readings of complimentary texts from each authors' oeuvre compare their approach to representing sex and gender in their seventeenth-century social and political contexts. This thesis-project does not ignore the importance of historical

⁷⁰ Head and Kirkman, *The English Rogue: Described in the life of Meriton Latroon, A Witty Extravagant, Being a Complete History of the most Eminent Cheats of Both Sexes* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1928) pp. 424 – 425.

context and the influence it has on an author's writing. New historicist approaches to early-modern literature provide valuable tools for reading and interpreting the author's work. *Practicing New Historicism* (2000) provides a good foundation on how to apply new historicism. Gallagher and Greenblatt acknowledge in their introduction that there are criticisms commonly attributed to this approach to literary analysis, 'One of the recurrent criticisms of new historicism is that it is insufficiently theorised' they write. They likewise acknowledge that this, 'criticism is certainly just, and yet it seems curiously out of touch with the simultaneous fascination with theory and resistance to it that has shaped from the start our whole attempt to rethink the practice of literary and cultural studies'. (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 2) What is appealing about *Practicing New Historicism* (2000) is that Gallagher and Greenblatt openly acknowledge the history of the academic practice that shapes the development of new historicist approaches to literary analysis. Besides the recognition that history shapes the practice of literary studies and in turn literary studies benefit from the acknowledgement of historical context, it is refreshing that there is an approach to literary theory that is aware of the criticism and why that criticism exists.

Practicing New Historicism (2000) is helpful because Gallagher's contributions to Behn Studies, the history of the novel, and early modern women's studies all contribute to the themes of this thesis project. Gallagher and Greenblatt's additional scholarship in new historicism further contextualises the subject specific areas of study focused upon in this project. As it relates to feminist analysis and women's studies, *Practicing New Historicism* (2000) highlights that,

Women's studies, and the feminism that motivated its formation, has served as an important, if little acknowledged, model for new historicism in that it has inspired its adherents to identify new objects for study, bring those objects into the light of critical attention, and insist upon their legitimate place in the curriculum. It has also served to politicize explicitly an academic discourse that had often attempted to avoid or conceal partisan or polemical commitments, and it unsettles familiar aesthetic hierarchies that had been manipulated consciously or unconsciously, to limit the cultural significance of women. (Gallagher & Greenblatt, p.11)

In the above quoted passage, Gallagher & Greenblatt link the development of new historicism to renewed interest in women's studies, and new attention given to groups of people traditionally overlooked by literary studies, such as black literature and Chicano literature. This point made in the introduction to *Practicing New Historicism* (2000) holds as in the nearly twenty years since it has been written, literary studies is seeing a renewed and growing interest in the literary works of other marginalised groups, such as queer literature and transgendered literature.

Where this thesis engages heavily with libertinism and libertine studies, it relies on the scholarship of experts in libertine literature and Restoration theatre such as Chernaik, Turner, and Love.⁷¹ As this project's *Literature Review* discusses, Turner's expansive studies on libertinism, the history of sexuality and gender in European culture, and English libertinism are especially valuable tools. This project engages heavily with libertinism. Chernaik's *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (1995), Turner's collection of *Sexuality & Gender* (1993) and subject specific *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) are excellent resources that assist in understanding the historical and political

⁷¹ Warren Chernaik, *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

contexts of libertine performativity, as practiced by the court wits, and for the vast variation in libertine discourse between classes, genders, and political alliance.

This project's research methodology utilises a combination of close readings and comparative analysis of Behn's and Rochester's respective oeuvres. There have been practical limitations to the methodology of providing a close textual reading of Behn and Rochester. There are variations between different circulated versions of Rochester's poems that make it difficult to determine the original form of the poem. Resources of variant poems are provided by Love in the appendixes of *WJW* as well as in Daneilsson and Vieth's *The Gyldenstolpe Manuscript* (1967). The historical context provided by the scholars above and others such as Hammond, Hobby, Spencer, and Todd is invaluable resources that assist in engaging with these texts in detail. Hobby's *A Virtue of Necessity* (1988), Spencer's *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* (2000), and Todd's extensive historical detective work *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (1996), and *The Sign of Angellica* (1989) contribute to a well-rounded discussion of the historical Behn's contribution to women's rights and her visibility as a female commercial author. However, as discussed in the introduction and main question of this thesis, does Behn's historical legacy negate the problematic depictions of women and sexual abuse in her writing, or does it excuse the conservatism that her political views hold toward working class women and women of colour?

As I have mentioned, archival research and resources, when possible, have been useful for providing historical context to the primary texts used in this project. Having the opportunity to engage in archival research throughout this project has also been an exciting opportunity to touch an original document that is contemporary to these authors.

While this element of the research has no direct bearing on the substantive parts of this thesis's methodology, it has nonetheless reinvigorated excitement for the project. I have been able to access manuscripts including an eighteenth century edition of Thomas Killigrew's *Thomasso; or The Wanderer* (1663). This printing is held in Aberystwyth University's Special Collections, while *Commonplace Book 3* (1668), which contains a mixed-hand transcription of 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot' (1668) alongside a humourously large collection of herbal remedies for 'bowels', is held at the National Library of Wales Archives. Problematically and with no shortage of disappointment, upon visiting the archive for review *Commonplace Book 3* (1668) other manuscripts in the collection has been misplaced. While I have relative confidence that there are no other hand transcriptions from *The English Rogue* (1665) from my previous visit to the National Library of Wales archive, I likewise cannot say with any certainty there are not any other political or libertine adjacent transcriptions elsewhere in the collection. Earlier in the project's planning I had resourced and visited *MS 98*, held in the Nottingham University Manuscript Archives and Special Collections is a hand-transcribed copy of the *Alexander Bendo Brochure, or, The Famous Pathologist or The Noble Mountebank*, a pencil drawing, and a letter from Rochester's manservant, Thomas Alcock, to Rochester's daughter, Lady Anne Baynum (1687).⁷² ⁷³This archival resource provides a view of Rochester's libertine performance as seen through the eyes of a male observer and accomplice. This resource has provided this project with a wealth of perspective on Rochester's character and motivations, as understood by those closest to him, but

⁷² Nottingham, Nottingham University Manuscripts and Special Collections, *MS 98* (1687)

⁷³ *WJW*, 'Alexander Bendo Brochure, or, The Famous Pathologist or The Noble Mountebank' (1675, 1677) pp 112-117.

deserves further research and discussion than this project, which focuses heavily on Behn's legacy, has had time to provide.

In addition to archival and textual resources, this project utilises online archival resources when visits to archives are limited or not within the scope of time allocated to this project. Such resources have been accessed *via* Google book's online archive of scanned books from library archives all over the world. The resources I have accessed to further my archival research of Restoration dramatists and criticism of Behn include seventeenth-century critical writing on poetry and literary criticism by Gerard Langbaine. Online archival versions of these manuscripts include scanned seventeenth-century copies of Langbaine's writings include *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets: Or, Some Observations and Remarks on the Lives and Writings, of All Those that Have Publish'd Either Comedies, Tragedies, Tragi-comedies, Pastorals, Masques, Interludes, Farces, Or Opera's in the English Tongue* (1691) that contains mention of Behn as a poet.⁷⁴ There is likewise mention of Behn as a plagiarist of Killigrew's play in the critical text *Momus Triumphans: Or, the Plagiaries of the English Stage: Expos'd in a Catalogue* (1668).⁷⁵ The final account of Behn's name mentioned amongst a catalogue of other poets and authors in *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets, Also an Exact Account of All the Plays that Were Ever Yet Printed in the English Tongue ... First Begun by Him, Improv'd and Continued Down to this Thime by a Careful Hand*

⁷⁴ Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets: Or, Some Observations and Remarks on the Lives and Writings, of All Those that Have Publish'd Either Comedies, Tragedies, Tragi-comedies, Pastorals, Masques, Interludes, Farces, Or Opera's in the English Tongue* (Oxford, 1691).

⁷⁵ Gerard Langbaine, *Momus Triumphans: Or, the Plagiaries of the English Stage: Expos'd in a Catalogue* (London, 1668).

(1698) shows that while Behn faced criticism as a woman author and plagiarist, she gained recognition from her male peers as an author during her lifetime.⁷⁶

Turner's libertine specific vocabulary applies to subject specific discussions of libertine discourse throughout this thesis project. The emphasis on high and low libertine styles is useful in determining the class emphasis of a specific libertine performance and the political motivations behind the criticisms contained therein. One example of Turner's category of the high libertine style, a style almost entirely engaged with aristocratic masculine privilege, is the imperfect enjoyment poetry genre. This genre of poem includes verses such as Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680) and Behn's 'The Disappointment' (1684). The virtue of being part of a micro genre specific to libertine discourse is that the discussion of these poems benefits from Turner's criticised neologisms, such as 'spermatophilic', as a descriptor for their context and thematic emphasis on ejaculation, or the failure to achieve ejaculation through intercourse. This style attracts the attention of scholars because of the overt sexuality of the poems and the emphasis on emasculation and ejaculation. The emphasis on heteronormative sexuality in imperfect enjoyment poems draws further attention to the poet's emphasis on the woman as the reason behind their sexual humiliation. Naturally, this subject matter invites feminist discourse. The Restoration political setting and the prurient discussions of sexual disfunction and social stigma, make new historicist and political readings of these poems' popular vehicles for literary analysis. Behn's

⁷⁶ Gerard Langbaine, *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets, Also an Exact Account of All the Plays that Were Ever Yet Printed in the English Tongue ... First Begun by Him, Improv'd and Continued Down to this Thime by a Careful Hand* (London: Leigh and Turner, 1698).

contribution to this discourse subverts the emasculation narrative and focuses on the ‘virtue of necessity’ pretense. Behn’s portrayal of the maiden as a sexually curious virgin socially required to reject the man’s sexual advances shows the sexual assault undertones common to Behn’s narration, but it likewise illuminates the reality for early-modern women that their approach to sexuality is an impossible task. Women are held responsible for men’s failure to perform, as they are held responsible for their seduction whether they are virgins, or whores.

Turner’s libertine scholarship is leading in this area of study and cited by other scholars such as Laura Linker, who likewise blends libertine studies, early-modern women’s writing, and new historicist approaches in *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, and the Rise of Sensibility 1670-1730* (2011).⁷⁷ As with Turner, Gallagher, and Greenblatt, Linker’s scholarship attempts to reconcile early modern women’s studies with feminism. What this thesis takes away from Linker’s methodologies is her breakdown of Turner’s libertine discourse categories even further, creating libertine sub-genres for female practitioners, which are applicable to different historical contexts, class-division, and religious involvement. *Dangerous Women* (2011) engages with women’s libertine discourse and divides the discussion amongst five different libertine sub-categories. Linker emphasises the difficulty of static definitions in a dynamic discourse, and as a solution to this problem offers a timeline of women’s participation in

⁷⁷ Laura Linker, *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, and the Rise of Sensibility 1670-1730* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011) and ‘Catharine Trotter and the Humane Libertine,’ *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 50.3 (2010): 583-599. Linker continues this discussion in *Lucretian Thought in Late Stuart England: Debates about the Nature of the Soul* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

libertine discourse that recognises Behn as a forebear to future women authors. Linker concludes *Dangerous Women* (2011) by discussing Eliza Haywood and the advent of the sentimental novel. This new interpretation of female libertines, of which authors such as Catherine Trotter are dubbed 'Humane Libertine' adds more specialised language to discussions on libertine discourse. Linker offers five women's interpretations of libertine performances beginning with Behn as 'Lady Lucretius', 'Lady Sensibility' represents Behn and Delariviere Manley, 'The 'Humane libertine' appellation is given to Trotter, and the 'Amazonian libertine' is applied to Daniel Defoe's character, Roxanna. Defoe is notably the only male author to appear in *Dangerous Women* (2011), though this thesis suggests that because Linker overlooks Rochester's female voices, there is room in this project, and within existing scholarship, for a continuation of *Dangerous Women's* (2011) discussion of women's voices within libertine discourse. Linker's focus is primarily on prose-fiction representation and the history of the novel's development, so Rochester's omission in favour of Defoe's fits with the study's methodology and selection process.

Turner notes that the stratification of libertine modes into a binary model is insufficient in providing a definitive approach to an unstable, dynamic discourse. Turner's commentary on the problematic roles of women within libertinism, however, is immensely useful as it categorises high-libertinism's equally unstable relationship with prostitution,

All these fine distinctions were in any case fragile and unstable, since at any moment the graduated model could be replaced by the binary, according to which every sexually active woman is a mere whore and the great courtesan all the more culpable because she pretends

to rise above that criminal, abject status. Verbal, legal, and physical attacks could be sprung without warning, and the *cortegiana honesta* was particularly vulnerable; she represented the anomalous middle term that binary thinking cannot tolerate, the unchaste-but-still-honourable woman whose avowed 'free' sexuality has not (yet) plunged her into the gutter. (*Libertines and Radicals*, p. 7)

The inequality in the exercises of sexual agency within libertinism is a major point of criticism within studies of libertine discourse. Behn attacks this hypocrisy though even she often concludes her plays and prose fiction with marital resolution or a token depiction of the consequences of women's sexual transgression.

In researching background scholarship on Rochester and feminism, this project faces some ethical challenges in what scholarship to include and whether such scholarship remains feminist considering recent publications. Germaine Greer recognises Rochester's poetry as feminist, and her biographical study *John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (2000), is a good biographical study of the poet and the historical context of his work.⁷⁸ The slim volume by Greer provides background on Rochester and analysis of his poetry without the armchair psychology of popular biographies like Lamb's *So Idle a Rogue* (2005) and Larman's *Blazing Star* (2014). As with Behn, Rochester's famous biography overshadows his literary legacy and Greer's work fills an academic need for an updated Rochester biography to replace dated works such as Vivian de Sola Pinto's *Enthusiast of Wit* (1962) and Greene's *Lord Rochester's Monkey* (1976).⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Germaine, Greer., *John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (Devon: Northcote House Publishers, 2000)

⁷⁹ Vivian, de Sola Pinto, *Enthusiast of Wit* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962)

Greer's feminist designation is problematic despite the enduring popularity of *The Female Eunuch* (1970) as a seminal feminist text.⁸⁰ Her contributions to early-modern women's writing *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of 17th Century Women's verse* and *Slip-Shod Sibyls: Recognition, Rejection and the Woman Poet*. (1995)⁸¹ ⁸²However, Greer's disturbing commentary regarding gender and rape in recent years, as well as her public dismissal of the '# MeToo' movement call her continued designation as a feminist academic into question. In her follow up to *The Female Eunuch* (1970), *The Whole Woman* (1999) Greer obstinately rejects inclusivity in the feminist community by rejecting transgendered individuals with provocative language.⁸³ Greer writes in the chapter 'Pantomime Dames',

Governments that consist of very few women have hurried to recognize as women men who believe that they are women and have had themselves castrated to prove it because they see women not as another sex but as a non-sex. No so-called sex-change has ever begged for a uterus-and-ovaries transplant; if uterus-and-ovaries transplants were made mandatory for wannabe women, they would disappear overnight. (*The Whole Woman*, p. 70)

It is interesting that one of the most vocal feminist scholars of the twentieth century, who has written on both Behn and Rochester, has become, like the authors of this thesis project, a problematic feminist herself. Considering her feminist and early-modern

⁸⁰ Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: HarperCollins, 1970).

⁸¹ Germaine Greer, *Slip-Shod Sibyls: Recognition, Rejection and The Woman Poet* (Suffolk: Viking, 1995).

⁸² ed. Germaine Greer, Susan Hastings, Jeslyn Medoff, Melinda Sansone, *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of 17th Century Women's verse* (London: Virago Press, 1988).

⁸³ Germaine Greer, *The Whole Woman* (New York: Random House, 1999).

women's writing as well as her work on Rochester, this project recognises Greer's contributions but likewise must note that Greer's feminism, like Behn's, is not inclusive and incongruent with intersectional feminist dialogues in the twenty first century.

Luckily, Greer is not the only feminist scholar discussing Rochester's representation of women in libertine writing. Mona Narain's 'Libertine Spaces and the Female Body in the Poetry of Rochester and Ned Ward' (2005) engages with 'the basic premise that anxieties about newly emergent class and gender identities in this period are particularly visible in the spatial economies within the poems'.⁸⁴ Narain's discussion conflates representation of the female body in Rochester's poetry as 'a site of conflictual ideologies. Whether saliently or covertly, space is an active location where the performative dance of constructing, regulating, and rejecting whole or partial subjectivities is enacted in these poems'. (Narain, 553-554)

⁸⁴ Mona Narain, 'Libertine Spaces and the Female Body in the Poetry of Rochester and Ned Ward' *ELH*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2005, (553–576) p. 553.

Chapter I: What is a libertine?

This chapter asks the question, ‘what is a libertine’? In answer, libertinism is most frequently associated with pornographic satire and verse. As the *Literature Review* and *Methodology* sections discuss, libertine studies are different from modern discussions of pornography and prostitution, though the themes and language of both areas of study overlap. Turner’s attempts to reconcile this problem by creating subject specific language in *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) and *Schooling Sex* (2003) has been met with mixed and negative responses from the academic community, but his hierarchical categories for libertine discourse and specified language for themes common to libertinism are useful and assist in discussing the difference between pornography and libertinism. For example, Rochester’s short poem, ‘Satyr - ‘I’th’Isle of Brittain’ (1673) is frank in depicting coarse sexuality, but arousal is not the poem’s goal.⁸⁵ Rochester writes,

Nor are his high desires above his strength,
His Scepter, and’s Pricke are boeth of one Length,
And she may sway the one, who plays with th’other,
And make him little wiser, then his Brother.
I hate all Monarchs, and the Thrones, they sitt on,
From the Hector of France to the Cully of Brittaine.

(lines 10-15)

⁸⁵ *WJW*, ‘Satyr - ‘I’th’Isle of Brittain’ pp. 85-86.

The blunt sexual imagery depicting the king's 'Scepter, and's Pricke are boeth of one Length' (line 11) crudely implies the interchangeability of one symbol of power for another. Charles is a king, but as the poem illustrates, first he is a man and subject to animal desires. The failure of rationality as depicted by Rochester reduces the king to the equal of those around him. He is not divinely appointed and as the sexual imagery shows, he is motivated by base desires and easily manipulated by those who will satisfy his physical needs. The symbolism in this poem is not subtle and besides inspiring scholarly discussion on the nature of monarchical power, Jeffrey's incorporates the composition of the verse into the opening act of his play, *The Libertine* (1994). The scene depicts Rochester describing the poem more crudely than the original text,

It gets worse. This piece of paper is not covered merely with the thump of slop of congress, no, no, this poem is an attack on the Monarchy itself, culminating in a depiction of the Royal Mistress striving to flog the flaccid Royal Member into a state of excitement. (*The Libertine*, i.1. (8-9))

Jeffrey's 'Rochester' is shown to be proud of the overt political satire in the poem, with the secondary sexual elements serving to further heighten the ridicule of the king as completely impotent of masculine power. Of Rochester's verse poetry, *A Satyr, 'T' th' Isle of great Britaine'* (1673) is arguably the most recognised and highly quoted. It is also unequivocally a libertine poem. As this chapter discusses, the answer to the question of what makes a libertine is not the presence of sexuality, but a combination of points that form an argument against social institutions and rules of conduct previously treated as

untouchable. ‘This piece of paper is not covered merely with the thump of slop ... this poem is an attack on the Monarchy itself’, Jeffrey’s fictional Rochester declares triumphantly. It is clear from *The Libertine* (1994), a play meant to entertain as much as to explore Rochester’s character, that libertinism is more than pornography. While libertinism often contains pornographic elements, not all pornography is libertine, and that is one of the biggest points of differentiation between modern studies of pornography and libertine discourse.

Other scholars of early modern sexuality and prostitution have weighed in on the politics of discussing Restoration pornography and libertinism. Melissa M. Mowry’s work on the subject *The Bawdy Politic in Stuart England, 1660 – 1714: Political Pornography and Prostitution* (2004), contextualises the history of pornography and prostitution in English culture pointing out the political angle of Restoration libertine performances. Mowry’s emphasis on the performance of political violence during the late seventeenth-century agrees with what Turner terms as a ‘low libertine’ political performance.⁸⁶ Mowry ties pornography, prostitution and political protest together, arguing,

Events like the 1668 Bawdy House Riots, during which mobs tore down much of east London, and the protracted Exclusion Crisis (1680-1684), during which Charles II revoked London’s charter as punishment for the City’s attempt to abrogate crown authority, rocked England’s fragile post-civil war sense of political stability. In important ways, these conflicts were defined by the long-standing antagonism between court and commons, but they were also defined by the use of pornographic satires to vilify the vestigial remnants of civil war radicalism (Mowry, loc. 122)

⁸⁶ Melissa M. Mowry, *The Bawdy Politic in Stuart England, 1660-1714*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

Turner and Mowry isolate two key events during the Restoration period and tie them to the performance and politics of Restoration libertine discourse. This is not an accident, as the Bawdy House Riots (1668) saw the London populace rise and tear down houses of prostitution and chase the prostitutes into the streets. Turner cites this event as an example of low-libertine violence against women. Indeed, for Turner and the broad spectrum of libertine discourse, the City of London is a base of operation as well as a symbol of the libertine's libidinous desires. Turner notes that in London,

Certain zones of the city denote perpetual, semi-tolerated misrule: Turnbull Street or Whetstones Park signified full-time prostitution, Smithfield meant coarse entertainment and Grub Street poetry, St James's Park sustained aristocratic promiscuity, Billingsgate and the Thames permitted fluent obscenity from the fishwives and watermen ... These fishy, runny areas constituted a kind of alternative sexual city. (*Libertines and Radicals*, p. 31)

Defining libertinism requires a broader discussion about the historical period, political upheaval, and popular forms of libertine discourse during that period. Libertinism during the late seventeenth century is a politically charged discourse that targets and satirises social institutions through public performances. As will be discussed, libertine performance may take the form of poetry, as in the case of Rochester and the court wits, stage drama, as with Behn, Etherege, Killigrew, and Wycherley, or for the broadest and most violent turn, Turner's *carnavalesque* violence is a performative act of sexual violence. Mowry and Tuner emphasis the sexual violence and misogyny that targets women, particularly prostitutes. Like any other sexually charged discourse, Restoration

libertine discourse is often violent. However, this violence, as noted in the two above passages, has political motivations and engages with two sides of cultural debate in English history during the period. This does not excuse the violence associated with libertine discourse, but it does serve to contextualise it.

This chapter traverses the history of the definition of libertine literature and its many sub genres: high and low libertinism, French and Italian libertines, English Interregnum and Restoration libertinism, Sadean, Philosophical, and Hobbesian libertinism, extravagant and vicious rakes, from women libertines to Linker's Lady Lucretius. An understanding of the history of how scholars have viewed what constitutes libertine literature is a critical preface to this thesis project. Popular misconceptions of what libertinism is have led to Rochester's discourse being categorised as anti-feminist while Behn's libertine discourse is often viewed as proto feminist.

How scholars define libertinism is in the introduction to every text on the subject and the definitions that follow show that while there are common traits that feature in every libertine genre, there is also nuance and details that provide additional context to each form of libertine discourse. Chernaik's *Sexual Freedom* (1995) states that 'nearly all accounts of libertinism as an ideology stress restlessness, dissatisfaction or a sense of incompleteness as its defining characteristic'. (Chernaik, p. 2) Like Turner, Chernaik's work on early modern sexuality and libertinism is a good starting point for scholars in search of definitions and critical context. Chernaik identifies libertinism as the antithesis of its professed goal; dissatisfaction not satisfaction. It is important that Chernaik stresses libertinism's impotence rather than insatiability because the commonality between all libertine texts discussed in this thesis is the failed pursuit of pleasure. Casual readers

incorrectly view the libertine's embrace of sexual freedom as an insatiable drive for pleasure. Reading these texts, there is an emphasis on the pursuit of pleasure, but scholarship focuses on the recurrent theme of impotence that appears alongside priapic depictions of the rake's sexual prowess. Chernaik's argument for the libertine's 'dissatisfaction' and 'sense of incompleteness' is entirely appropriate considering poems such as Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680) and Behn's 'The Disappointment' (1684) are some of the most iconic libertine verses in Restoration literature. Each author's variation on the theme of emasculation presents a gendered view of the pursuit of sexual freedom and the barriers that hinder such a carnal pursuit. These verses leave Rochester's speaker fuming with impotent rage and Behn's shepardess disappointed that the pastoral Eden of sexual union between men and women is a fiction.

Behn's libertine discourse fits into several libertine sub-genres, but her proto-feminist designation is problematic in all but a few. Restoration libertinism and politics are inherently misogynistic in tone and purpose, and while these facts are uncomfortable, they do not affect Behn's ability to engage with and make the discourse her own. Behn's libertine engagement is remarkable considering her commercial career, and her pen is indeed her 'most masculine part'. Unfortunately, this 'part' of Behn is also guilty of replicating the problematic rhetoric and abuses of male power with little clear resolution. In contrast, Rochester writes in the same high libertine mode as Behn but ironically due to his aristocratic male privilege can make stronger feminist arguments against libertine abuses of power. Behn's 'virtue of necessity' forces her to conform to the rules of High libertine discourse. Rochester breaks those rules.

There is a perceived gap in the study of historical libertines and libertine literature that speaks to the subjectivity of the term ‘libertine’ and how its definition changes based upon the social climate in which it is written and in which it is studied. Jean-Marie Goulemot’s 1998 article ‘Toward a Definition of Libertine Fiction and Pornographic Novels’ questions how to classify libertine and pornographic texts.⁸⁷ Goulemot’s article lists several traits common to the development of the libertine novel in the eighteenth century and provides a concise summary of what a libertine is expected to be. Goulemot writes,

the libertine name of reason, with his biblical references and his knowledge of the Greeks and Romans, [...] gave way to a fictional character, often some great, malicious lord whose moral liberation involved the right he granted himself to seduce women and do as he choose with their bodies. (Goulemot, p. 136)

As with Chernaik, Goulemot identifies the aristocratic masculine privilege that justifies the ‘moral liberation’ of the libertine to ‘seduce women and do as he chooses with their bodies’. She identifies another aspect of the libertine that is arguably as important to the libertine as his pursuit of ‘naturall freedomes’, and that is his ability to synthesise a classical education into ribald wit. The tropes of the aristocratic rake in Restoration drama and later prose-narratives is indeed sexually provocative, however, the hallmark of a libertine is wit.

⁸⁷ Jean-Marie Goulemot, trans. Arthur Greenspan, ‘Toward a Definition of Libertine Fiction and Pornographic Novels’, *Yale French Studies* 94 *Libertinage and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale, 1998) pp. 133-145.

Goulemot's reference to the aristocratic prerogative to a classical education is indicative of the socioeconomic division between what Turner has termed 'high libertinism' and the public, performative acts of the lower classes which he calls 'low libertinism'. The existence of 'low libertinism' suggests a place within this discourse for non-aristocratic participants, especially the lowest rungs of society. Low libertine performance and their treatment of sexually provocative women leads Turner to ask 'what kinds of literature, then, did the courtesan culture sustain?' to which he answers 'from the lower stratum came hybrid narratives combining criminal and sexual 'tricks', from rudimentary Elizabethan whore-dialogues to the 1660s *Wandering Whore* pamphlets and the largely plagiarized *London-Bawd* ... Disorderly 'ridings' and calendrical festivals generated such an abundance and variety of lewd lampoons'. (*Libertines and Radicals*, pp. 41-42) To unpack this slightly convoluted definition of Turner's low libertine stratum, Turner's own words serve to sum up the evolution of social punishment of publicly transgressive women and emasculated cuckolds by stating that 'these low libertine performances already constituted a kind of charivari on paper, and so could be incorporated all the more easily into the ceremony of abjection'. (*Libertines and Radicals*, p. 42) Turner's argument traces the genealogy of the Restoration high-libertine mode associated with the writings of Behn and Rochester from these low-libertine performative acts. Over time, these acts of physical assault: the *charivari*, the Scold's Bridle, the dunking of whores, these acts and 'marks of prostitution' are transformed into the printed lampoon and written libel.

No less vicious, high libertine texts, such as Rochester's poetry, are separated from the pornographic lampoon due to the skill and social status of the author. These high

libertine works invoke classical philosophers and libertine antecedents such as Aretino as a method of displaying the wit and knowledge expected of high libertine authors and texts. Behn also conforms to the high libertine mode, as Spencer writes, 'Behn's foothold in the tradition of classical translation was more enduring, though this aspect of her writing received little comment. Her paraphrase on Oenone's epistle to Paris continued to be published, along with Dryden's praise, in editions of *Ovid's Epistles*'. (Spencer, p. 44) Turner writes that libertinism's 'doctrine of sexual freedom is always complicated by the politics of class and gender' which adds context to scholars' resistance to classify women as active participants. (*Libertines and Radicals*, x) Turner defines the libertine rake figure and philosophical libertines about Rochester's poetry in *Schooling Sex* (2003). Turner writes,

Rochester's thinker and the rake-heroes of Restoration drama proclaim their allegiance to Wit and Sense, but they are unable to reconcile these two components of the libertine character, intellectual brilliance and passionate sensuality. They show their Wit, and their freedom from conventional beliefs, by adopting sensualist, materialist, and determinist philosophy that denies intellect and freedom altogether. Simultaneously, they submit all appearances and all behaviour to a cynical, penetrating, 'Machiavellian' rationalism that subordinates pleasure to calculation, and that reveals the hollowness of the 'life of sense' they ostensibly espouse. (*Schooling Sex*, p. 266)

Turner's assessment of the duality of libertine characters agrees with other scholar's definitions of libertinism and libertine figures. Goulemot and Chernaik touch on the properties that make up Turner's broad catch-all for aristocratic libertines. What can be distilled from the multiple descriptions of the libertine's character is that libertines require wit and an embrace of freedom. In an antithesis to the libertine's stated embrace of freedom is the problematic 'Machiavellian' impulse 'that subordinates pleasure to

calculation' and means that the libertine is never truly satiated. At the most basic level, the libertine pursues pleasure and freedoms, but these pleasures are at the expense of women. The libertine's wit is his calling card, but not all libertines are successful and authors, such as Behn and Rochester, exploit and subvert the trope of a witty rake for comedic effect and critical impact. There are gaps and exceptions in Turner's classifications of libertine strata, as well as and he fair criticisms of his neologisms, *pornographia* and *pornosphere* that warrant further investigation into variances in individual libertine discourse.⁸⁸ It is also questionable, considering the range in scholars' redefinition of libertine sub genre if libertinism should be expected to conform uniformly to any rigid definition. Current trends in scholarship suggest that the blanket terminology 'libertine' is an umbrella term for various politicly charged, sexually provocative, performances of wit. Within these parameters exists a range of educational levels, gendered interpretations, and pornographic texts.

Goulemot's statement that classical education, or at least 'knowledge of the Greeks and Romans' is an expected characteristic of libertine authorship, substantiates Turner's division of Restoration libertine discourse into his distinct categories. Wit is a libertine requirement, and access to education only delineates which variation of libertine discourse is at play. Hammond also defines Restoration wit as a display of 'intelligence, mental agility, penetrating insight, pointed verbal expression, sharp repartee. It connotes a self-conscious, stylish, civilised panache'. (*Restoration Literature*, p. xv) It is worth

⁸⁸ Turner coins the faux-Renaissance term, *pornographia* in *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) as a method of differentiating early modern pornography discussions from modern discussions of the porn industry.

noting that wit is not exclusive to libertine discourse and is a common feature of the period specific trends of a lot of Restoration literary genres.

Restoration libertinism and misogyny:

Restoration libertinism is also dubbed 'Philosophical' or 'Hobbesian' libertinism. Hobbesian libertines justify the exercise of their aristocratic privilege and sexual desire for women *via* the philosophical writings of Thomas Hobbes. As I have noted above, the presence of misogyny is not a libertine requirement. But early modern texts that favour aggressive masculinity predispose themselves to misogyny and Restoration libertinism is not exempt from this. Chernaik contextualises libertinism's misogyny as a continuation of its running themes of dissatisfaction. He writes,

Libertinism thus has its territorial side, and resistance to female encroachment is a recurrent motif in libertine writings of the Restoration period. As the *OED* notes dispassionately, the term 'libertine' is 'rarely applied to a woman', making the transgressive, indecorous assertion by a woman of her 'naturall freedoms', rivalling the men, all the more a cause for anxiety. (Chernaik, p. 7)

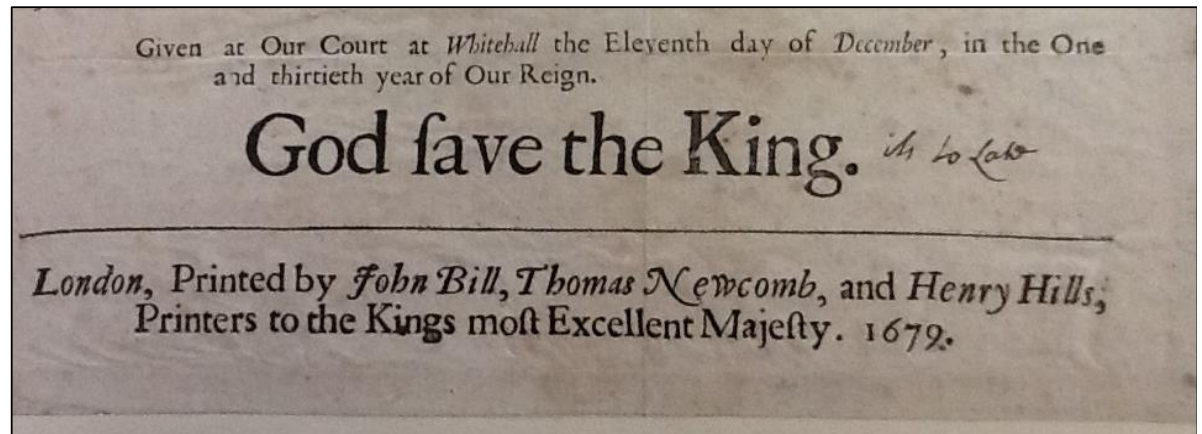
Two points in Chernaik's argument stand out. First is that Restoration libertinism is competitive. Restoration drama's competitive market and the plagiarism between the competing theatre companies is a discussion point that appears in multiple studies and is supported by printed lampoons from the period. Langbaine's *Momus Triumphans* (1668)

is evidential of the fierce competition between the competing companies to write and produce dramas quickly, and Behn's plagiarising of Killigrew's work shows libertine sex-comedies were not immune from the competitive market.

Certainly, the emergence of commercial writing as a viable source of income increased accusations of plagiarism and incentivised attacks on rival authors. Behn is a prime example not only of this first point but of Chernaik's second argument, that 'the transgressive, indecorous assertion by a woman of her 'naturall freedoms', rivalling the men, [is] all the more a cause for anxiety'. This anxiety is reflected in Behn's prologues that defend her reputation and address the attacks against it in printed lampoons and accusations of plagiarism by her male peers. Behn's commercial success targets her for attack by rivals in a limited market. However, the reality of her gender equates her public profession with prostitution.

Misogyny is expected in libertine discourse, but there is textual evidence of libertines being reflexively self-critical of their discourse. Rochester's speakers are not exempt from the libertine's satiric vitriol. These verses conform to the rules of high libertinism, but it is difficult to dismiss the depiction of men and women as misogynistic considering the critical language Rochester uses to create the exchanges between the Speaker and the Reader. As this chapter begins to discuss and continues in the next chapter, the subgenera and definitions applied to how the academic community talks about libertinism assist in further breaking down a complex discourse into manageable definitions suited to the historical period, style, and geographic location of the libertine discourse.

The high-libertine aesthetic and low-libertine performances:



Graffiti on a Proclamation by Charles II, 1679 'it's to late'. Bodleian Library Special Collections, Firth b.16 (1)

High libertine and low libertine denote the aesthetic choices and mode of dissemination of libertine performances by and for aristocratic audiences and those participated in and created by the greater English public. The image at the beginning of this section is taken from a proclamation in the Bodleian Library Special Collections from 1679. The proclamation itself is on the Duke of Monmouth, but of interest is the surviving graffiti at the bottom of the document that finishes the printed statement, 'God Save the King' with the prudent observation that 'its to late'. By the late 1670s Charles II's popularity with the court and London populace has faded and visible signs that the reputation of the libertine king and his libidinous court wits is poorly received by the greater public. Turner's high libertine discourse differentiates libertine performative acts by the aristocratic classes as separate in politics and style from the low libertine performative acts of the rest of the London populace.

Rochester is the cynosure of London libertinism during the 1670s, making the Stuart Court at Whitehall Palace the epicenter of high-libertine discourse. Restoration high libertinism encompasses all aristocratic libertine performances by Rochester and his fellow court wits, the relatively small number of libertine sex comedies that populated the London theatre houses, and manuscript poetry in circulation and print.

As the name suggests, low libertinism is a term that carries with it the same linguistic shame the term low art does. Turner creates a term that leaves little doubt that it is meant to emphasise the social stigma applied to toilet humor and physical comedy. The linguistic joke carries with it an appropriate equation of derision because Turner stresses that low-libertine performances target and punish women's indiscretions. With an emphasis on public shaming rituals, low libertine performative acts such as Skimmington rides and the application and exhibiting of women in Scold's Bridles are an extreme manifestation of seventeenth century misogyny. Turner divides these two public forms of protest into high and low libertine performative acts, but at a glance, these appear to be different discourses all together. High libertine performances include verse poetry and stage drama. Low libertine performances are public shaming rituals. The connection between these two discourses is their roots in policing and politicising sexual activity. While high libertine performances are associated with more culture indicative of upper class aristocratic tastes, low libertinism includes all forms of bawdy public protest. Turner discusses low libertine performances in the context of misogynistic shaming of women, predominantly lower class women and prostitutes. Low libertine performative acts are crude and accessible to a wider swath of English society instead of being tailored toward the court. High libertine performances and poetry is bawdry and misogynistic,

often pornographic. The content is not the defining factor between high and low libertinism. Context is what determines the classification.

Rakes:

Among examples of libertine authorship explored by Turner, Chernaik, Hume and other Restoration scholars, of libertine and other ‘rakish’ texts, the ‘notorious earl’ is the benchmark by which all other Restoration libertine authorship is measured. Turner dubs Rochester ‘the most notorious (and now most canonical) English poet of sexual transgression’. (*Schooling Sex*, p. 261) Notable is Rochester’s known interest in what Turner has dubbed the libertine ‘hardcore’ canon, which I have mentioned is inclusive of French and Italian authors ranging from the Restoration authors discussed above and including such sixteenth-century libertine predecessors as the aforementioned Aretino (1492-1556), Tullia d’Aragona (1510-1556), Rocco (1586-1653), and Pallvincino (1615-1644). Among these authors, the shared trait that Turner uses to define them as part of this ‘hardcore’ canon is their emphasis on pornographic depictions of sexuality.

‘Dialogues of the Hetaira’ or ‘whore’s dialogues’:

In his discussion of this focus on prostitution and misogyny, Turner outlines the various strata of prostitution featured in seventeenth century libertinism’s sixteenth

century antecedents, from Nicholas Chorier's seventeenth century text, *Aloisiae Sigeeae Satyra Sotadica*'s (1660) 'erudite libertines' and 'aristocratic married women' to the sixteenth-century 'Wandering Whore' narratives and Aretino's 'raunchy puttane'. (*Libertines and Radicals*, p. 6) These texts, amongst others, ground Turner's definition of High libertinism as being centred on the production and distribution of pornographic texts 'more accurately characterized as 'Dialogues of the Hetaira' or 'whore's dialogues'. (*Libertines and Radicals*, p. 6) 'Whore's Dialogues', which originated in France and Italy, influenced the production of the salacious literature known as the 'School for Wives' genre. This genre of libertine literature camouflages itself as an instruction manual for young women; however, as Pepys records in his diary, these are pornographic stories with similar 'instructive' scenes between a matron and a young girl as seen in Aretino's 'Dialogues' between an ageing prostitute and her daughter.

Hobbesian libertine or Philosophical libertine:

Turner's high libertinism category is a simplification of the Hobbesian or Philosophical libertine. This branch of libertine discourse is defined by their espousal of the political philosophy of Hobbes. Hobbesian libertines are the most common depiction of a libertine in Restoration drama and literature. Harold Weber's *The Restoration Rake-Hero* (1686) explores the representation and role of libertine rakes in Restoration drama.

⁸⁹ Weber contextualises the stage representation of the classic incarnation of the libertine

⁸⁹ Harold Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

rake with his historical counterpart, Rochester. Whether Behn and Etherege drew their inspiration from Rochester in penning their stage rakes is difficult to establish, though nonetheless Rochester's dubious biography and poetical oeuvre provide a good example of the philosophical libertine rake, also known as the Hobbesian libertine, as Weber argues:

Rochester's poems and letters document the contradictory desires that define and impel the Hobbesian libertine-rake. The tension between Rochester's love of women and contempt for, even fear of, them, between his obsession with sensual pleasure and loathing of the perversity of corrupt sexuality, between [...] his "fixed heart" and "straying" nature, all point to the volatile character of the Hobbesian rake and the complexity of the "pleasure" he would enjoy. (Weber, p. 91)

Because the Hobbesian libertine espouses the philosophical ideas of Hobbes's *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (1651) they are subject to accusations of atheism.⁹⁰ As the following chapter discusses in greater depth, the libertine's embrace of absolute freedom and the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure has led the discourse to be branded as atheistic. However, as Chernaik notes no clear statement in Hobbes' writing links the philosopher to atheism. Chernaik writes,

Hobbes's attitude toward religion was less straightforward: he was a sworn enemy of priestcraft, consistently urged the subordination of religion to the commands of the civil power and, in explaining the psychology of religious belief, placed great emphasis on 'perpetual fear' of things unknown, 'anxiety of the time to come' as 'the natural cause of religion'. (Chernaik, p. 23)

⁹⁰ Thomas, Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1984).

The relationship between libertines and religion is admittedly uneasy. As Chernaik states, Hobbes, and the Hobbesian libertine are antagonistic of authority figures, and this includes the clergy. For the Restoration rake, this scepticism of religious piety takes on political dimension after the Civil War and during the Exclusion Crisis in the 1680s. The libertine has always been at odds with religion in England and abroad. Louis XIV censors Moliere's *Tartuffe, or The Impostor, or The Hypocrite* (1664) for the depiction of the titular character as a faux religious zealot who affects piety for social gain.⁹¹

French and Italian Libertines and their influence on English libertinism:

I have attempted to differentiate English libertine discourse from French and Italian libertinism. Restoration libertine discourse is derived from French and Italian sources, and the evidence of this appropriation is visible in the dramas and textual adaptations by authors, including Behn and Rochester, that either invoke the authors directly, such as Rochester's 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673), or claim to be a work of translation, Behn's 'The Disappointment' (1684).

There are the Italian libertines, the sixteenth century pornographer Aretino and the eighteenth century rake Giacomo Casanova. French libertinism offers the prolific oeuvre of Moliere and Chorier, both seventeenth century authors who are remembered for their respective contributions to the erotic education style of libertine discourse. Moliere's

⁹¹ Moliere, *Tartuffe: A New Verse Translation*, Constance Congdon, trans. Virginia Scott ed., (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008).

comedy, *L'École des femmes* or *The School for Wives* debuted 26 December 1662, making the dramatist a French contemporary of Behn and Rochester. The play is not pornographic but satirises the same social morals and interactions common to libertine discourse.

Aretino's dialogues, in line with the graphic sexuality of his libertine sonnets, presents a dialogue between a veteran prostitute and a newcomer, while later variations lend an air of propriety to the same pornographic structure by elevating the women's social status from prostitutes discussing their trade to aristocratic women discussing marriage. The pornographic instruction manual subgenre is revived with popularity in the seventeenth century by an anonymous French author as *L'École des Filles* (1655) and subsequently by Molière with *L'École des maris* (1661) and *L'École des femmes* (1663), among many other French libertine texts contemporary to the Restoration. This change is important as it documents a shift from sixteenth century libertinism's non aristocratic characters to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' overwhelmingly aristocratic focus. Though libertinism in all its permutations is a mode reserved for the privileged sections of society, the shift from prostitute to wife in these erotic 'School for Wives' genre denotes the growing emphasis on social commentary in the discourse. Though the women are aristocratic, the equation is made between the marriage markets and prostitution, since both exchange sexual access for currency.

In contrast, Chorier's *Academie des dames, ou les Sept entretiens galants d'Aloisia* or *The School of Women, or The Seven Flirtatious Encounters of Aloisia* is a pornographic 'dialogue' in line with the style of 'whore's narrative' written by Aretino. Rochester's familiarity with the works of Aretino is evident in his poetry *via* direct

reference, as seen in poems such as ‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’ (1673) which describes the royal park as a forest:

Whose lewd Tops Fuck’d the very Skies.
Each imitative Branch does twine,
In some lov’d fold of *Aretine*.

(‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’, 20-22)

Turner has also read Rochester's now-famous portrait that depicts the poet crowning a monkey with a poet's laurels as a reference to Aretino. (*Schooling Sex*, p. 261) These lines are taken from ‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’ (1673) recall the Venetian libertine by name, ‘Aretine’, while the imagery of the poem itself subverts the expected pastoral imagery and imagines instead a landscape of phallic trees that ‘Fuck’d the very Skies’. (line 20) I argue that these lines specifically recall Aretino’s well-deserved reputation as a priapic pornographer since the ‘imitative branches’, or limbs, sexually ‘twine’ together around, or inside, the non-specific ‘lov’d fold of Aretine’ which can be either male or female, Aretino’s ‘folds’ or that of a sexual partner. By referencing Aretino, who is a poet that Rochester imitates both in his poetry and in his libertinism, Rochester has inserted what I suggest is a clever reference this libertine debt to the Aretino. Ironically, ‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’ (1673) is a poem critical of libertine ‘imitators’, especially at those, such as the featured, inconstant, Corinna’s lovers, who

wanting common sense

[...]

[converts] abortive imitation

To universal affectation'

(‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’, 55-8)

There is irony in this criticism as the speaker, and Rochester, likewise engage in sexual debauchery such the kind engaged in by Corinna and her fops, however, whereas the speaker, and, by extension, the poet, understand the history of the park and libertinism, these ‘fashionable’ libertines do not. Rochester depicts his speaker, and by extension himself, as an ideal or real libertine, through this display of wit and specialised knowledge in ‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’(1673). However, this is not the only reference to Aretino made by Rochester.

Scholars have likewise interpreted the portrait of Rochester crowning a monkey with laurels, attributed to Jacob Huysmans (1665-1670) to be a visual satire of Dryden. However, Turner has remarked on the painting’s visual mirroring of Aretino’s dedication to his pet monkey in *Il Ragionamenti* (1534) which further supports Rochester engagement with libertinism’s roots. Aretino’s dedication says:

Hail, dear monkey! Hail, I say, for Fortune still guides beast by the hand and so has brought you from where you were born to me, who, after realizing that you are a great lord in the form of a beast [...] dedicate to you these labors or, rather, these

pastimes of eighteen consecutive mornings – not to an ape, monkey, or baboon but as to a great lord.⁹²

The monkey in Rochester's portrait could and is even likely to be a polyvalent satire. On one level the image satirises Dryden as an animal, crowned with poet's laurels while destroying its manuscript. This interpretation invokes the pretension Rochester explicitly targets in 'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind' (1674) of humanity believing itself to be elevated above animals through rationality. Turner's observation emphasises Aretino's clear influences on Rochester and as such, strongly supports the portrait as a visual reference to libertinism's pedigree. Aretino's dedication concludes with the request directed at his pet:

Now, [...] take these pages of mine and tear them up, for great lords not only tear up the pages dedicated to them but even wipe themselves with them, as I almost didn't tell you. And they do it for the praise and glory of the idiotic Muses who, running with lifted skirts after the great lords, are appreciated by them as you appreciate them. (Aretino, pp. 12-3)

This is reflected in Huysmans' portrait and is supported by above references to Aretino by name in Rochester's poetry. (*Schooling Sex*, p. 261) Though the portrait lacks the scatological visual reference of Aretino's original description that Rochester no doubt

⁹² Pietro Aretino, *Aretino's Dialogues* translated by Raymond Rosenthal (Hassocks: Compton Printing Limited, 1971), p. 11.

found amusing, the text and portrait's depiction of a monkey tearing out the leaves of a book is too close in similarity to be coincidence, as Turner has argued. Aretino's sixteen *Sonneti Lussoriosi* (trans. 'Lewd Sonnets', 1524) are thematically linked around sexual exploration. This includes candid references to sodomy and homosexuality, which Rochester replicates throughout his oeuvre. Where the divide between decidedly Rochesterian libertine verse and the *Sonnetti Lussoriosi* (1524) becomes apparent, however, is that Aretino emphasises sensuality while Rochester more heavily relies upon the grotesque, as seen in 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673) and numerous other poems.

Behn's 'The Disappointment' (1684) is notable for its feminist, gendered and politically scholarly interpretations. Unlike the imperfect enjoyment poetry of the Court Wits, Behn's bills itself as a French translation, which Lisa M. Zeitz's and Peter Thoms's 'Power, Gender, and Identity in Aphra Behn's "The Disappointment"' accepts as fact, purporting it to be a translation and adaptation of Contenac's poem, 'L'Occasion perdue recouverte'⁹³ Zeitz and Thoms contextualize Behn's conspicuous participation within the nearly all male category of the 'imperfect enjoyment' poem. Instead of focusing on the politics that are the presumed focus of Rochester's 'Imperfect Enjoyment', Zeitz and Thoms highlight Behn's contrasting representation of sexual politics and female agency. (Zeitz and Thoms, p. 501) Behn offers a direct challenge to the misogynistic depiction of male and female sexuality as represented by Rochester's, potentially earlier, poem.

⁹³ Lisa M. Zeitz and Peter Thoms, 'Power, Gender, and Identity in Aphra Behn's "The Disappointment"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (Summer 1997), pp. 501- 516.

As I have discussed in this introductory chapter, several sixteenth and seventeenth century continental libertine texts supplement this thesis's primary Restoration texts, such as Aretino's *Il Ragionamenti* (1534) and various incarnations of 'Whore's Dialogues' and 'School for Wives' texts, as discussed by Turner. I argue they provide evidence of an engagement with a larger libertine discourse outside England during the period. All three of my primary authors show evidence that they were aware of this larger discourse and, while they focused on the London libertine moment, this was not without a nod to the texts and libertine legacy that came before. Prominent among these texts is *Les Ecole des Filles* (1662) and other sexual instruction manuals like it. *Les Ecole des Filles* (1662) is not unique even among early and contemporary libertine texts as an erotic text that serves to educate as well as arousing.⁹⁴ *Les Ecole des Filles* (1662) gives an exploitive and voyeuristic view of two female characters engaging in a salacious sexual conversation. The image of two women, one virginal and one experienced, is seen in other contemporary continental libertine texts including Chorier's *Aloisiea Sigaeae* (1660) simplified in translation to *The School for Women*. Chorier's work, notably the *Satyra sotadica* (1660) was an influential text and a favorite of Rochester, who himself is recognized as having influenced Behn. Sexual manuals including *Les Ecole des Filles* (1662) gained widespread popularity as pornographic texts during the Restoration period and despite being banned from English publication for obscenity are known to have circulated widely among middle and upper class social circles. Pepys famously records his encounter with this lewd work

⁹⁴ See also: Bradford K. Mudge, *When Flesh Becomes Word: An Anthology of Early Eighteenth-Century Libertine Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

of libertine literature, noting in several entries over the course of three weeks starting on Monday, 13 January 1667/68:

Thence homeward by coach and stopped at Martin's, my bookseller, where I saw the French book which I did think to have had for my wife to translate, called "L'escolle des filles," but when I come to look in it, it is the most bawdy, lewd book that ever I saw, rather worse than "Putana errante," so that I was ashamed of reading in it, and so away home.⁹⁵

Only on 8 February 1667/68 to be tempted into purchasing 'the more bawdy, lewd book that ever I saw':

Thence away to the Strand, to my bookseller's and there staid an hour, and bought the idle, rogueish book, "L'escolle des filles;" which I have bought in plain binding, avoiding the buying of it better bound, because I resolve, as soon as I have read it, to burn it, that it may more stand in the list of books, nor among them, to disgrace them if it should be found. (Pepys, loc. 39146)

And finally, on Sunday, 9 February 1667/68:

Up, and at my chamber all morning and the office doing business, and also reading a little of "L'escolle des filles," which is a mighty lewd book, but yet not amiss for a sober man once to read over to inform himself in the villainy of the world. [...] We sang until almost night, and drank mighty good store of wine, and then they parted, and I to my chamber, where I did read through "L'escolle des filles," a lewd book, but what do no wrong once to read for information sake... And after I had done it I burned it, that it might not be among my books to my shame (Pepys, loc. 39166-39175)

⁹⁵ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: M.A. F.R.S. Clerk of the Acts and Secretary to the Admiralt*, Henry B. Wheatley F.S.A. ed. (London, York St., Covent Garden: George Bell & Sons Cambridge Deighton Bell & Co., 1893) Kindle edition, loc. 38732.

Pepys's interest in the libertine tome is not unique, and neither is his repeated protestations that he has purchased the 'rogueish book' with a plain cover not out of prurient interest but rather 'to inform himself in the villainy of the world'. Besides the comical picture these diary entries create, it is difficult not to draw a parallel to twentieth-century depictions of middle-class men purchasing *Playboy* in a brown paper bags to 'read for the articles', it clearly illustrates the complex love-hate relationship between seventeenth-century society and libertine texts. While Behn and Etherege rarely depict sexual debauchery in such an unapologetically pornographic manner as *Les Ecole des Filles* (1662), their works often refer back to this popular text and certainly embroider on the libertine questions raised by the frank discussions of sexuality which made *Les Ecole des Filles* (1662) and texts like it so incredibly popular, despite the ban on the text in translation.

Continental libertine texts like the *Les Ecole des Filles* (1662) that appear to represent female sexuality as natural, nevertheless also fetishise the loss of virginity through frequent and detailed descriptions of deflowerment. Female agency holds a contested place in libertinism because on one side sexuality free of the constrictions of conventional marriage is a key attraction of libertinism, but the exercise of this freedom by women either with men or one another is often expressed for voyeuristic reasons or hypocritically criticised by the male 'rakish' speaker. What problematizes readings in sixteenth and early seventeenth century libertine texts are the same aspects that problematize the simplistic readings of Restoration libertine texts: the sexual double standard that places male and female sexuality at odds goes against libertine arguments in favor of sexuality free of restrictions. In my later analysis of 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680) and Anacreontic

poetry, which focuses on Rochester's contribution to the genre, this problematic relationship with the female subject opens up a discourse on human nature that embraces nihilism centuries before the nineteenth-century philosophy gave the words to discuss it.

As libertine texts developed from the courtesan narratives or the *putanna errante* of Aretino's fame to the libertine prose-narrative begun by Behn and continued into the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries, the libertine hero likewise develops from an aristocratic predator and into the Byronic hero of the nineteenth-century novel. The constancy seen in libertine discourse is the adherence to wit, reason, and a push against religious zealotry, as Goulemot notes that in 'libertine prose fiction, [...] it was as if the hero [...] were putting into practice the teachings of erudite libertines as expressed in their attacks on fundamental religious doctrine.' (Goulemot, p. 136) These libertine texts from the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century use the same tropes as Restoration libertinism, emphasising 'Reason' and 'Nature' as justifications for extra marital sexuality. Indeed, though Aretino's *Il Ragionamenti* (1534) translates roughly to 'The Reasoning', as I have touched upon previously, it is popularly known as 'The School for Whoredom'. This is technically an incorrect assessment of Aretino's texts since the 'Whore's Dialogue' is only one third of a text that discusses women's agency within Venetian society from the tripartite division of similar careers: wife, nun, and prostitute, all three of which Aretino categorizes as the same occupation dressed in different clothes and respectability. This association of women with sex work in different guises and used against women is part of what Turner uses to denote differences between high and low libertinism.

Chapter II: Libertine Zealotry

As the previous chapter discussed, what constitutes libertinism and libertine discourse is dependent on several factors. There is not always a clear answer as to whether a text is consciously libertine or engaging in low libertine performances. As this chapter discusses, the participants in these low libertine activities would likely reject the appellation of ‘libertine’ being ascribed to their actions. As discussed in the previous chapter, the word ‘libertine’ is used to describe a mode of discourse or performative behaviour that can be, but is not always, pornographic. Much like the term ‘epicurean’, the word ‘libertine’ conjures up popular associations that describe an aspect of the definition but overlook the meaning. For example, Epicurus defines epicureanism and pleasure thus,

So when we say that pleasure is the goal we do not mean the pleasures of the profligate or the pleasures of consumption, as some believe, either from ignorance or disagreement or from deliberate misinterpretation, but rather the lack of pain in the body and disturbance in the soul. [...] For it is not drinking bout and continuous partying and enjoying boys and women, or consuming fish and the other dainties of an extravagant table, which produce the pleasant life, but sober calculation which searches out the reasons for every choice and avoidance and drives out the opinions which are the source of the greatest turmoil for men’s souls.⁹⁶

The above passage from a translation of Epicurus argues for a form of temperance that is antithetical to the popular understanding of epicurean pursuits of pleasure. Similarly, Epicurus’s argument that ‘we do not mean the pleasures of the profligate or the pleasures

⁹⁶ Epicurus, *The Epicurus Reader*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Classics, 1994) p. 30-1.

of consumption, as some believe, either from ignorance or disagreement or from deliberate misinterpretation' touches at the heart of self-reflexive criticism in libertine discourse. In addition, there is an ongoing discussion in Restoration libertine texts of the longevity of libertinism and the effect it has on the adherent's health and wellbeing.

Rochester's poems, such as 'The Disabled Debauchee'(1675) and 'Nestor' (1680) meditate on the physical toll libertinism takes on the body. Behn's oeuvre shows the impossibility of sustained libertine discourse: male rakes publicly disavow libertinism and marry while the female libertines enter convents or die. A later chapter discusses the abbreviated ending of Sylvia's narrative in *Love Letters* (1684-7), and while we do not see our lady libertine reform, her ending is heavily implied to be an unhappy one. What these examples support is what scholars, such as Chernaik, discuss, that 'Libertinism is a young man's philosophy, a rebellion of the sons against the fathers.' (Chernaik, p. 25) As it pertains to this thesis-project's discussion of Behn's problematic feminism, it is worth noting that Chernaik, Epicurus, and the following excerpts from anti libertine texts specifically gender libertine discourse as a male pursuit, which Behn does challenge in her writing. Of the two authors central to this projects case-study of libertinism and proto feminist discourse, Rochester indeed conforms to the description of a 'libertine zealot' as imagined by Marsh. However, Behn's gender and career aspirations is itself 'a [rebellion] ... against the fathers' and further complicates a clear-cut reading of Behn's life and oeuvre as proto feminist or conservative. As with defining libertine and anti-libertine texts as two halves of a nuanced discourse, Behn's proto feminism is itself a nuanced subject.

This chapter discusses libertinism within the context of a young men's philosophical discourse, and how while sexuality is pervasive within libertinism, it is primarily a rebellion against accepted norms of socio-political discourse. In the 'anti-libertine' excerpt, 'The Character of a libertine zealot' (1665), Turner's *pornographia* is absent and the rejection of social norms and aristocratic rebellion is central to the text's definition of the 'libertine'. Defining the libertine, the text reads that 'He is lined with covetousness and covered with hypocrisy ... Although at this time he carries a Bible, yet upon occasion, he wears a sword; so that it is hard to say, whether he be of the tribe of Simeon or Levi.' ('The Character of a Libertine Zealot', 1665)

The texts in this chapter predate Behn and Rochester but help to inform the history of libertine discourse in England prior to and during the Restoration period. Hammond helpfully defines the 'Restoration' period as a 'forty-year time-span' between 1660 and 1700. Hammond argues that defining the period in this manner 'is convenient but treacherous, obscuring more than it illuminates. Contemporaries might more aptly have called this period 'the age of revolutions''. (*Restoration Literature*, p. xviii) The Restoration describes the return of the Stuarts to England and ruling power. Hammond's renaming better supports the historical reality of English culture during the seventeenth century. Contemporary accounts from the Restoration support Hammond's point that the [English] regarded the period as one defined by social discord and not reunification.

Paula R. Backscheider's *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (1993) discusses the public-performative spectacle of Charles II's

return in May 1660.⁹⁷ Backscheider points out the theatrics of the King's triumphant return to London engenders public support for the reestablishment of monarchical rule. One such account recorded in Pepys' diary recalls the excitement of Charles II's return in the days leading up to and immediately following his entry into London. Pepys writes,

31st May 1660,

This day the month ends, I in very good health, and all the world in a merry mood because of the King's coming.

This entry is immediately followed by another the next day that recalls Charles II's return to the capital city,

1st June 1660,

At night Mr Cooke comes from London with letters, leaving all things there very gallant and joyful. And brought us word that the Parliament had ordered the 29th of May, the King's birthday, to be for ever kept as a day of thanksgiving for our redemption from tyranny, and the King's return to his Government, he entering London that day.

These entries from Pepys' diary depict the early period of Charles II's reign as hopeful, but the record also shows that this hope degrades throughout the Stuart reign and culminates in the instalment of William and Mary of Orange in 1689. Echoed in

⁹⁷ Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)

Rochester's verses, the impotence of the Stuart government is reflected in Behn's increasingly cynical voice. The triumphant image of the King's return described in Pepys account increases the eventual disappointment that the return of the monarchy to England did not signal the return of a new English golden age. The tensions between the catholic and protestant sects of the English population persisted throughout the Restoration. The government remained ineffectual, and at odds with the majority of the population. The literature from the late 1670s through the 1680s show that even the Court Wits eventually fracture and challenge Charles II's leadership. The contemporary popular writing and London playhouses capitalise on these conflicts by recreating the rumours and scandals in plays, such as Behn's *The Rover* (1677) and prose narratives such as *Love Letters* (1684-7). Both *The Rover* (1677) and *Love Letters* (1684-7) blend libertine discourse with history. These, drama, prose, and poetry, are the most recognisable forms of libertine discourse popularly associated with Restoration England. However, early Interregnum libertine texts and anti-libertine critical texts establish a long history of libertine discourse unique to English culture than later French and Italian libertine influences originally suggest.

This chapter delves into the forms of libertine discourse in circulation during the Interregnum period. Without the highly visible libertine performance tacitly supported by the Restoration monarchy, non-libertine and anti-libertine discourse argue that Interregnum and early Restoration libertinism are antagonistic to a pious society and hegemonic social order. Anti-libertine sentiment in England and the production of cautionary texts provide an interesting counterpoint to the pandering libertinism seen in sex comedies and other Restoration forms of libertine discourse. These supplemental

libertine adjacent texts address libertinism as a moral failing common to aristocrats. The texts draw a correlation between monarchy and social disruption. Furthermore, these texts composition dates which link them to the Commonwealth period in English history illustrates the political nature of libertine discourse. Libertinism in this context is depicted as an affliction of monarchists that corrupts its practitioners towards atheism and blasphemy.

The correlation between libertinism and corruption is seen in texts such as ‘The Character of a Libertine Zealot’ (1665). This vignette from *The English Rogue* (1665) written by Marsh and published by Head and Kirkman, describe libertines as predatory aristocrats who disrupt pious English society with blasphemy and false testament. The text was later reprinted by Head and Kirkman after they acquired the rights to the manuscript. The biographical note supplied in the Routledge & Sons, 1928 edition which this project references states that the manuscript copy was acquired from the author following ‘the Censors of the Press they refused license to publish on account of its gross indecency’ and after the first 1665 printing ‘The following year the rights were acquired by Francis Kirkman, a bookseller at the John Fletcher’s Head, St. Clement Danes, Strand, who reissued it and endeavored to persuade the author to write a second part’. (Head & Kirkman, vii)

The religious overtones of the text equate the rise in libertine visibility during the mid-seventeenth century with the Interregnum’s contrasting religious piety. *The English Rogue* (1665) is an interesting text because of its purported autobiographical nature with sections recalling the events of the English Civil War and Commonwealth Period. While the text’s protagonist, Meriton Latroon, is shown to be a morally bankrupt individual, he

very clearly separates himself from the 'Libertine Zealot'. Separating the author from libertinism is a distinction that is not unique to *The English Rogue* (1665). Other biographies and histories make a distinction between con-artistry and libertinism. Often the rejection of the term 'libertine' is made due to the political and religious underpinnings of libertine philosophy.

As the previous chapter discusses, libertinism has several variant sub-genres, each with its own specific rules and audience. Behn and Rochester engage with opposing interpretations and representations of libertine discourse but overall both authors conform to the established conventions of high libertinism. Behn's libertinism utilises a cautionary tale styled engagement for her female characters to protect women against ruin. Rochester's libertinism directly attacks the structures that prevent women's free exercise of the pursuit of pleasure. Both authors are openly critical of libertinism's philosophical shortcomings but still appeal to the patronage and society most likely to embrace their message, aristocratic audiences. As this chapter discusses, criticism of libertinism is not an alien concept to libertine discourse and is a powerful tool for authors such as Behn and Rochester. The Interregnum texts that this chapter examines state that their purpose is to define the libertine and to caution society against their lifestyle. In doing so, anti-libertine texts appeal to the same voyeuristic imagery to entice their reader and while declaiming the libertine as a social pariah, nonetheless shows the figure to be powerful enough to demand influence over the people that gather around them.

These forms of libertine engagement align with texts critical against libertinism that circulated adjacent to libertine discourse during the Interregnum and early Restoration periods. Rochester's libertine engagement upholds the cautionary description of a

libertine as laid out in ‘The Character of a libertine zealot’(1665), making Rochester’s libertinism, as viewed through the historical lens of these contemporaneous texts, an example of libertine zealotry. Other supplementary anti-libertine texts, such as Reynell’s *An Advice against Libertinism* (1654) show that while twenty-first century scholarship breaks down libertinism into varied strata and defined sub genres, contemporary understandings of libertinism in the seventeenth century show a defined libertine performance measured by degrees of adherence to expected tenants of libertine behaviour.

The Interregnum and Restoration period and the literary culture it created are, as Hammond and Capp argue are defined by the ‘revolution’ and ‘zealotry’. Religious zeal and the social upheaval immediately after the English Civil War and Commonwealth create an environment of religious piety in the peasant underclasses pitted against the privileged and aristocratic classes. An equal or greater libertine response then countered the religious zeal that informed the laws and defined Puritan culture during the Interregnum under Cromwell and the Rump Parliament during the Restoration that followed. While libertinism is predominantly a discourse from the privileged sections of society, as Turner’s *Libertines and Radicals* (2002) discusses, there is a line between aristocratic libertine performances and low libertine public shaming rituals during this period. Both are variant forms of libertine discourse, but they are divided by class and mode of performance. Neither ‘zealot’ speaks for the whole of their discourse and are by the term ‘zealot’, extremists. In this way, though the title ‘The Character of a Libertine Zealot’(1665) is a tongue-in-cheek jab at the libertine rake’s devotion to dishonesty, this text reveals a lot about the burgeoning libertine response to Puritanism and English national identity

following the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Cromwell's interregnum government and its redefinition of English national identity as Puritan, or more specifically non-Catholic and non-, is at odds with libertinism's European, predominantly French and Italian, origins.

Texts such as *The English Rogue* (1665) contextualise a historical engagement with a libertine discourse that is not explicitly in favour of libertinism. Indeed, 'The Character of a Libertine zealot' (1665) which appears in the middle of the allegedly biographical account, deliberately separates the titular 'English Rogue' from 'the characters of a libertine zealot'. 'The Character of a libertine Zealot' (1665) and other criticisms against libertines are ironically a variation on libertine discourse. These texts engage with the tropes and style of libertine performance such as wit and the invocation of classical and religious imagery. They showcase the witty libertine rake as an example of blasphemy and social discord while preserving the attractive glamour of the figure that entices the audience's attention to the subject of the long term damage caused by libertinism on individuals and society. The stated intention of these texts is to criticise libertinism, but these texts' libertine engagement nevertheless contributes to the discourse and offers the reader the same voyeuristic enjoyment of the libertine rake's exploits.

In style typical of early-modern writing, *The English Rogue* (1665) opens with an 'Epistle to the Reader' that sets the tone for the chapters to come. Directly addressing a presumed male audience, the text greets its readers,

Gentlemen,

It hath been too much the humour of late for men rather to adventure on the foreign crazy stilts of other men's inventions than securely walk on the groundwork of their own homespun fancies. What I here present ye with is an original in your own mother-tongue'

and yet I may not improperly call it a translation, drawn from the black copy of men's wicked actions; such who spared the Devil the pains of courting them, but listing themselves volunteers to serve under his Hellish banners' (Head & Kirkman, 1)

Two aspects of this textual excerpt worth noting are the authors' statement of the British identity of the writing and the escapism the text offers in recalling the adventures of 'volunteers' that serve under the Devils 'Hellish banners'. The text's identity is British, and this is important to note as it is not exclusively English because of the Irish origins of the alleged original author, Henry Marsh. *The English Rogue's* (1665) publication history is unclear. Marsh is named as both the author and protagonist. He records his adventures and claims the entire volume as a biography. Marsh, who in 'Chapter One' introduces his profligate father, illegitimate conception, and his flight from Ireland to England during the English Civil War, establishes authority over the determination of immorality and redemption.

The epistle to the reader establishes the author's desire to provide a British account of libertines written in an English hand for English speakers. The narrator emphasises that *The English Rogue* (1665) is a text in translation despite what that title suggests. The introduction to Marsh's adventures states that "What I here present ye with is an original in your own mother-tongue' and yet I may not improperly call it a translation, drawn from the black copy of men's wicked actions". This illustrates a cultural desire for English libertine discourse but also a need to separate the immorality from the greater god-fearing civilian population. As the previous chapter establishes, libertine discourse is commonly accepted by scholars as originating from a French and Italian source and coming into English aristocratic circles as French and Italian

manuscripts or as texts in translation available for circulation amongst small coterie groups. Marsh shows this to be incorrect and composes a ‘libertine biography’ on par with the eighteenth century Casanova’s memoirs.⁹⁸ Recalling his childhood flight from Ireland, the protagonist immediately casts the social climate as divided between humane protestants and catholic zealots. Marsh writes that,

the rebels, wandering to and fro, intending either to meet with their friends who clocked from all parts to get into a body, or else any English, which they designed as sacrifices to the implacable malice, or inbred antipathy to that nation, met with my mother, attended by two scullogues, her menial servants, the one carrying me, and the other my brother. The fates had decreed my brother’s untimely death, and therefore unavoidable, the faithful infidel being butchered with him. The surviving servant, who carried me, declared that he was a Roman Catholic, and imploring their mercy with his howling *Chram a Cress*, or *St Patrick a gra*, procured my mother’s, his own, and my safety. (Head & Kirkman, 7)

The character’s identity is not English, and it is his Irish heritage and the pragmatism of the servant that saves him from death in the opening flight from Ireland to England. *The English Rogue* (1665) reveals that ‘The Character of a Libertine Zealot’ (1665) summarises the violence, religious zealotry, and polarised political climate of an era in English history correctly defined by Hammond as an ‘age of revolution’. The collection’s title, *The English Rogue* (1665), distances the pedigree of the narrator as ‘Other’ and not of the Protestant English citizenry the text champions. The imagery invokes chaos with a midnight flight by ‘the light of our flaming houses’ into the mountains. The unnamed

⁹⁸ Giacomo Casanova, *The History of My Life: First translated into English in Accordance with the Original French Manuscript*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

rebels are Catholic zealots who are hunting ‘any English, which they designed as sacrifices’. Here historical record clashes against the author’s florid prose and facts are abandoned in favour of sensationalism. Latroon and his nameless brother are each carried by their mother’s servants, one devoutly Protestant and the other at least culturally catholic because they know what Latin prayers to say to be spared by the rebel forces.

The narrative defines the morality of the protagonist on his rejection of Catholicism and eventual embrace of Puritanism. This detail is important to the discussion of the explicitly anti-libertine ‘The Character of a Libertine Zealot’ (1665) because *The English Rogue* (1665) is a biographical account of a person displaced by a war that is a conflict between two religious extremes. ‘The Character of a Libertine Zealot’ (1665) heavily relies on religious imagery in the description of the zealot. It is interesting because by the Restoration, translations of Lucretius’s *De rerum Natura* brings allegations of atheism to the academic community and included amongst the many translations of Lucretius’s writings are translations by both Behn and Rochester. Though neither author is explicitly atheist and there is evidence that supports Behn’s crypto-Catholicism and Rochester’s death bed reaffirmation of his Protestant faith, this equation of zealotry and libertinism shows that post-Civil War English culture remains keenly aware of the potential for radical division amongst the faithful.

The English Rogue’s (1665) thematic focus on zealotry and piety is striking because ‘A Character of a libertine Zealot’ (1665) is a direct engagement with the previous discussion on the historicity of piety in the public consciousness of the period. *The English Rogue* (1665) gives context to this division of religion into two extreme iterations, through the depiction of Catholic zealots who seemingly murder women and

children for political revenge against England, and *via* the depiction of political zealotry that invades places of worship and disrupts social harmony. There is a political agenda to *The English Rogue*, (1665) and its contribution to the discourse around libertinism links libertine practice to a French affiliated aristocracy. There are overtones that with continental European political affectation comes the return of Catholicism. What ‘A Character of a libertine Zealot’ (1665) does is make an equation between libertine zealotry and the return of a conspicuous aristocratic class of libertine performers. This is an allusion to court society during the early years of the Restoration period.

Reynell’s ‘An advice against libertinism (1659) and the ‘The Character of a Libertine Zealot’ (1665) caution against libertinism’s adherence to the Epicurean, Hobbesian, and Lucretian principles of ‘Naturalness’ and ‘Reason’ in place of religion. Through this substitution of classical discourse for religious dogma, these critics align libertinism with atheism and blasphemy. Blasphemy is defined as religious and social dissent. While the record overwhelmingly supports Rochester’s blasphemy, his writing clearly illustrates an inner struggle between potential nihilistic despair and his puritanical upbringing. I remain skeptical of the veracity of these texts’ accusations of atheism, as applied to Restoration libertinism. However, they do an excellent job emphasizing libertinism’s dissent against societal norms as we see here in Reynell’s ‘An Advice against Libertinism’ (1659):

Our Faith is not grounded upon wit, discourse, or natural judgement, but on the submission and duty we owe to the Truths and Ordinances of God; from which, whosoever wandereth shall finde nothing but an Ocean of disturbances, and the shipwrack of his Faith, which he ought not to abandon to a Caitive spirit, which hath nothing specious in it but illusion. (Reynell, p. 34)

Reynell's reaffirmation of the superiority of faith over libertinism illustrates that a main point of contention between these oppositional ideologies was not based solely in the promotion of pleasure seeking behaviours ('Natural Freedomes') but in the elements that encourage that freedom and skepticism. Moreover, while 'An advice Against Libertinism' sets out in 113 pages to renounce the libertine discourse as inherently harmful to society, the assertion that 'Our Faith is not grounded upon wit, discourse, or natural judgement,' invites satire.

Libertinism at its most basic interpretation is based on the principle of freedom. While I will discuss in the following sections the history and specifics of Restoration libertinism, Reynell's criticisms are accurate. The Court Wits and aristocracy that are the targets of these tracts exalt displays of wit, invite discourse amongst practitioners, and viciously mock the unthinking, which is supported in Restoration drama by the dramatic foil of the fop against the stage-rake. Furthermore, Reynell emphasises the importance of 'submission and duty [...] to God', a point that challenges the absolute power of the monarchy and which sparked the English Civil War twenty years earlier. Considering the early composition date of Reynell's text (1659), the emphatic refrain of humanity's duty and obedience to God rather than monarchy reads as a politically motivated rather than purely moralistic sermon written just before the return of Charles II the following year. As the following passage from 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot' (1665) supports, this dogmatic demand for unthinking faith and allegiance to God is in direct competition with the practices of the restored court and its courtiers, who explicitly name themselves and practice displays of 'Wit'. Both 'An advice Against Libertinism' (1659) and 'A Character

of a Libertine Zealot' (1665) place great emphasis on the hedonistic trappings of libertinism and the aristocratic 'Libertine Zealot'. 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot'(1665) paints the following picture,

To describe him right is a task like that of the tailor who took measure of the Devil; for there is nothing more like him upon earth than he. He is lined with covetousness and covered with hypocrisy, the root and cloak of all evil. Although at this time he carries a Bible, yet upon occasion he wears a sword; so that it is hard to say, whether he be of the tribe of Simeon or Levi. He swallows contrary oaths faster than the eagles in the Tower do gobbets of flesh; for the way to hell and the conscience of a libertine are two broad things. He condemns the lawful rites and ceremonies of the Church; and is more ravished with the squeaking of a tithes pig, than with the music of organs (Head & Kirkman, pp. 424-5)

As with Reynell's version, the declamatory tone of 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot' (1665) emphasises the perceived rejection of the Church in favor of libertine ideologies. The above passages castigate the inherent skepticism used in libertine discourse against social institutions, which is seen here as supporting the reestablished monarchy while challenging church doctrine. This promotion of free-thinking cuts both ways within libertinism, as Rochester's 'A Satyr against Reason and Mankind' (1674) among other poems is critical of 'Mankind's' false belief that he is a 'Rational' animal, pointing out that skepticism and criticism does not end with competing discourses.

In these texts, we can also see two different authors' variations on a shared theme. 'The Character of a Libertine Zealot'(1665) text exhibits the same religious tone but more directly ties libertinism to the court. Instead of promoting the absolute power of God, the target is contextualized as a disruptive courtier. The libertine is immediately

gendered as male, complimenting Reynell's text's assertion that libertines are corruptors of women. (Reynell, pp. 6-7). This detail effectively excludes female participation and denies their agency within the discourse, which this thesis project addresses and rejects through the discussion of Behn's libertine engagement. At this point, however, the masculinity of the libertine 'zealot' is important, as the text goes on to state that he is 'lined with covetousness and covered with hypocrisy' and 'though at this time he carries a Bible [...] upon occasion he wears a sword'. (Head & Kirkman, p. 424) These details, especially the phallic presence of the sword, signify the priapic courtier, rather than any one institution, as the target of the text's moral outrage. Additionally, the sword also is an obvious allusion to the libertine's reputation as a seducer of women. Already saddled with avarice and inconstancy, this libertine is also a remorseless and voracious liar who 'swallows contrary oaths faster than the eagles in the Tower do gobbets of flesh.' (Head & Kirkman, p. 424) Though unflattering, this description of a 'Libertine Zealot' and Reynell's declamatory 'Advice against Libertinism' (1659) do indeed describe the most popular and Rochester-inspired of the Restoration's stock libertine characters. These texts describe the rake figure. The mention of the 'libertine zealot's' phallic sword further ties the image of the libertine in the 1668 *Commonplace Book* entry to the libidinous reputation of Charles II and his court wits, likewise, represented in the re-opened theatres *via* the sword carrying, husband cuckolding, witticism spouting, stage rake. Through these texts and other writing that supports and exploits the stage-popularity of this rake figure, a deliberate equation is made between the Court Wits and their increasingly visible libertine performances that define London Restoration libertine discourse.

Chapter III: Behn's proto feminism in the context of her commercial career

In *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (1669) Todd describes the emergence in the late seventeenth century of professional authors dependent upon writing as a primary source of income. This places Behn and her contemporaries within this new category of commercial dramatist. This chapter of the thesis project is divided into three complimentary sections that aim to situate Behn and her libertine discourse within the network of male dramatists who engage in coterminous exchanges of ideas and in the production of plays that by turns glorify and criticise court culture. This section will contextualise Behn's commercially incentivized libertine discourse. The following section will discuss Behn's appropriations and adaptation of Killigrew's work and characters. Behn adapts Killigrew's original work and makes it more proto feminist. She also garners accusations of plagiarism due to her financial success, which she defends by pleading her sex. Finally, the final chapter in this section wraps up this project's discussion of Behn's *The Rover* (1677) and Killigrew's *Thomaso* (1663) with a discussion of the libertine rake. The popularity of the stage-rake with theatre audiences contributes to the complexity of libertine depictions on the Restoration stage.^{99 100} Behn's depiction of comedic rakes and witty heroines is a staple of her early career as a dramatist and it makes financial sense that she plays to her audiences' interests by depicting the court in her writing.

⁹⁹ Robert D. Hume, *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama 1660-1800* (Carbondale; Southern Illinois University Press, 1983).

¹⁰⁰ Harold Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

The rake is depicted by Behn as both a corrupting force for young women, and a heroic representation of libertine masculinity for men. Behn's representation of rakes evolves from portraying them as dubiously moral but comedic characters and into a critical attack on the predatory nature of libertinism. Behn's portrayal of libertinism changes throughout the length of Charles II's reign. In her earlier work, however, this criticism is diluted with a comedic ending and the preservation of her heroines' virtue. This chapter discusses Behn's *The Rover; or the Banish'd Cavaliers* (1677) and Killigrew's *Thomaso; or the Wanderer* (1654) and the development between these two texts of the stage rake as a representation of royalist politics and libertine ideologies. Killigrew's *Thomaso; or The Wanderer* (1654) was composed during the author's voluntary exile from England during the Interregnum period. I have had the opportunity in the course of this project to use and refer to this 1663 edition of *Comedies and Tragedies* and its copy of *Thomaso; or The Wanderer* (originally penned 1654) as it is part of Aberystwyth University's rare books collection at Hugh Owen Library.

This thesis project asks whether Behn's designation in scholarship as a proto feminist is warranted and whether her engagement with libertine discourse sways her legacy towards proto feminist or misogynistic depictions of women. This chapter examines one of Behn's earliest commercial successes and how she has tempered the libertinism in her plagiarism of a competitor's virulently misogynistic chamber play. Behn's negotiation of the early commercial markets and her use of gender for advertising illustrates the hazy line between proto feminist advances in libertine discourse and savvy marketing.

The *cortegiana honesta* figure appears prominently in both plays, though her portrayal, prominence, and allegiance to the rake are wildly different between the textual interpretations. This character, Angellica Bianca, dominates discussions on *The Rover* (1677) and the play's relationship to Killigrew's *Thomaso* (1663), from which it was adapted. I argue that Behn developed Killigrew's Angellica Bianca from a static depiction of a typical *honesta cortegiana* into a dynamic stage-representation of the tragic consequences of women's libertinism and its irreconcilability with social order. Paulina Kewes in *Authorship and Appropriation* (1998) and recent scholarship by Marcus Nevitt, 'Thomas Killigrew's *Thomaso* as a Two-Part Comedy' in *Thomas Killigrew and the Seventeenth-century Stage*, have remarked upon Behn's critics' accusations; that she had plagiarised *The Rover*, and especially Angellica Bianca, from Killigrew's work.¹⁰¹ ¹⁰² Kewes explains that appropriating the work of another author was not an uncommon practice and helpfully cites other criticisms directed at Dryden, Killigrew, and the court wit, Charles Sedley, all of whom were labelled plagiarists. Hume also remarks that '[the] casual adaptations, translations, and pure plagiarism common to the late seventeenth-century are a world away from our notions of original composition. A playwright who worked today the way Dryden did would be sued from all sides and hooted out of the theatre.'¹⁰³ As Hume and Kewes have said, Behn's contemporaries were equally guilty, and the practice of casual plagiarism was so systemic that the term loses power and cannot provide any substantial criticism of any Restoration dramatist's originality in their

¹⁰¹ Marcus Nevitt, 'Thomas Killigrew's *Thomaso* as a Two-Part Comedy' in *Thomas Killigrew and the Seventeenth-century Stage* ed. Philip Major (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), pp. 113-132.

¹⁰² Paulina Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁰³ Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the late Seventeenth Century*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp 29-30.

compositions. Nevitt even removes Behn from his discussion of *Thomaso* (1663), marking recent scholarship's attempts to discuss Killigrew's oeuvre apart from other discussions of Behn's adaptation and how it overshadows Killigrew's work. Nevitt's argument grounds itself in the play's Interregnum composition and Killigrew's documentation of the relationship between the exiled court and their host countries, Spain in *Thomaso* (1663). Nevitt focuses his analysis of *Thomaso* (1663) around the play's notorious length, its common classification as a 'closet-drama' or 'double-play', and its political importance as a document of his [Killigrew's] political ambition. The play's Spanish setting recalls Charles II's preference for translations of Spanish plays (Kewes, p. 36), as well as Killigrew's attempt to appeal to prevailing theatre trends such as the popularity of Spanish dramas in the 1660s; in addition, *Thomaso* (1664) drew from Killigrew's personal experiences and support of the Stuart monarchy. (*Development of English Drama*, pp. 240-1)

The Rover (1677) shifts the setting from Madrid, Spain, to Naples, Italy. The change in setting contributed to the less overtly libertine, less overtly royalist tone of the 1670s play. (Spencer, pp. 187-9) The carnival setting complete with masqueraders further contributes to the intrigue aspects of Behn's comedy that *Thomaso* (1663) lacks. However, as most of the scholarship, and this chapter, maintains, whether Behn's *The Rover* (1677) is viewed as a work of plagiarism, these two plays, *The Rover* (1677) and *Thomaso* (1663), are irrevocably linked together by their content and history. Indeed, I suggest that the specific changes and plagiarisms made by Behn in the 1670s emphasise the differences between Killigrew's 1650s penned, aristocratic male libertinism, and Behn's evolving 1670s, economically incentivised female libertine variant.

The accusations of plagiarism warrant discussion as there is a clear shared libertine discourse between the commercial dramatists and the courtiers who frequented the theatres. Both groups, predominantly male except for Behn, develop different interpretations of libertinism with shared ideological themes around male sexuality, female virtue, and religious and political zealotry. These English libertine plays lack the overt satire of religious zealotry, as seen in Moliere's contemporary French dramas, such as 1664's *Tartuffe, ou l'Imposteur* (trans. *Tartuffe, or The Impostor, or The Hypocrite*). However, the threads of political satire and social commentary are present in both *Thomaso* (1663) and *The Rover* (1677), especially when attacking the political zeal of the foppish characters, Eduardo and Ned Blunt, respectively.

Though scholars such as Barbara A. Kachur in *Etherege & Wycherley* (2004) have difficulty supporting that there were coterminous exchanges amongst these commercially incentivised dramatists, plagiarism is a form of the transmission of ideas between authors, albeit competitive and commercially driven.¹⁰⁴ These authors did develop and respond to each other and the court through their ongoing exchange of ideas and competition to write more entertaining, salacious, and politically aware dramas. Additionally, the pervasiveness and unstable definition of plagiarism in the seventeenth century meant that any author working in a commercial capacity was guilty in one form or another. The amateur dramatists certainly felt no guilt in admitting their literary debts to the other authors within their networks, and when accused of plagiarism it was not as harsh as it was for commercial authors due to their social privilege. Langbaine's (*The Younger*) *Momus Triumphans: or The Plagiaries of the English Stage* (1687) and its

¹⁰⁴ Barbara A. Kachur, *Etherege & Wycherley* (London & New York: Red Globe Press, 2004).

follow up, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691), Kewes has noted, were more lenient to aristocratic plagiarists than commercial ones like Behn and, especially, Dryden. (Kewes, 118)

Appropriation & Plagiarism amongst the Theatre Coterie and Amateur Wits

While the canonical circle of wits at Whitehall included several professional dramatists amongst their ranks, other court wits wrote dramas as well. George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, Rochester, and Sedley also wrote plays. However, these productions are the work of amateur dramatists. Aristocratic authors write to showcase their wit and not, like Behn, 'for bread'. Instead, these dramas are designed to appeal to the tastes of the court and further exemplify the traits associated with libertinism: wit, a classical education, political satire, and ribald humour. As seen in Rochester's own drama, *Lucina's Rape; or, the Tragedy of Vallentinian* (1684), these plays are works of translation from earlier productions that have been reworked for a Restoration audience.¹⁰⁵ As in the case of *Lucina's Rape* (1684), Rochester has adapted and expanded upon the original Jacobean play by John Fletcher, *Valentinian* (1647). Much like Behn's plagiarism of Killigrew, Rochester updates the political commentary from Fletcher's Jacobean play to reflect the political climate contemporary to the Carolean court. Since these amateur plays were often works of translation and were not composed for commercial gain, they were also less likely to bring with them the accusations of

¹⁰⁵ WJW, *Lucina's Rape; or, the Tragedy of Vallentinian* (pp. 133-231)

plagiarism which followed Behn throughout her career. Kewes says about these early amateur translations,

Other amateur playwrights sought royal favour by rendering French masterpieces directly into English. Competing versions of Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* were supplied by Katherine Philips and by a group of Court Wits – Edmund Waller, Sir Charles Sedley, Lord Buckhurst, Sir Edward Filmer, and Sidney Godolphin – in the early 1660s. (Kewes, p. 37)

These two translations of Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* (1642), one translation by an amateur woman dramatist, Philips, competed against another version written and translated coterminously by several members of the Court Wits. This shows a level of coterie cooperation amongst the Wits in the early years of the Restoration as well as the differences in competitiveness between amateur and commercial dramatists. Kewes goes on to say that 'Like Charles's Spanish commissions, these translations from the French were explicitly acknowledged as such in both the theatre and in print' which shows that this was a safeguard against accusations of plagiarism if the source was not in direct competition with the adaptation. (Kewes, p. 38) Kewes explains that critics of the period, such as Langbaine, sought 'to differentiate between the use of plots and of language to distinguish legitimate literary borrowing from plagiarism, the borrowers from the thieves. But in practice, he finds this an impossible task.' (Kewes, p. 117) However, as Kewes and Hume have stated, the application of these rules sorting literary debt from plagiarism was determined by the author's social rank and their distance from the original text, via language, the passage of time, or geography. This does show consistency to be a failing of Langbaine's and his fellow critics' work. Kewes explains that,

The moral impropriety of covert borrowing, then, is allayed by the culprit's social eminence, and, in this instance, is further assuaged by the foreign provenance of appropriated matter. Above all, trespasses against literary property committed by genteel amateurs are less blameworthy than those by professional writers, since the former do not expect to profit from what they take from others. (Kewes, p. 119)

This fiscal incentive, that 'the former do not expect to profit from what they take' is the key factor that separates Behn's plagiarism from Rochester's adaptation. For Behn and Rochester, the gendered division of their writing is only one factor in many that impacts the representation of proto feminist expression in each authors' dramas. Behn needed to negotiate her 'virtue of necessity' against her 'hanging out the sign of Angellica'. Behn never had the freedom to fully embrace libertinism just as her proto feminism is symptomatic of the need to earn a living from composing plays quickly that will gain her a third night's profit.

In contrast, Rochester's privilege on many levels enabled the exercise of libertinism and socio-political dissent on levels Behn could never dream of. As Kewes argues, amateur dramatists, like Rochester, had the luxury to write for pleasure and therefore were 'less blameworthy than those by professional writers'. However, the commercial dramatists, writing for competing companies, were under pressure to produce new plays for each season. As a result, they turned to similar works of translation and adaptation. Due to the competition between the Duke's and King's Companies, plagiarism accusations levelled at Behn, as Behn herself highlights in her defence of *The Rover* (1677), were likely due to the play's popular and financial successes than any legitimate concerns of literary theft as that was already shown to be systemic within both

companies. Adaptations of older plays were common during the Restoration, and professional playwrights were expected to produce several plays throughout a given season. Hobby explains the '[speed] of composition was probably one reason why many of Behn's plays, like those of her contemporaries, are adaptations of other works. Of the twenty plays generally regarded as hers, only five can be shown to be predominantly original in their material'. (*Virtue of Necessity*, p. 116) While the accusations of plagiarism followed Behn, the reality was that adaptations and translations were not unique to Behn, and authors often altered the source material and updated the politics for their contemporary audiences. Dolores Altaba-Artal in *Aphra Behn's English Feminism* (1999) points out the derivative origins of Killigrew's *Thomaso* (1663) arguing that the 'plot is in turn conceived from a Spanish source', a popular *picaresque* novel in two parts, Aleman's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599/1604).¹⁰⁶ Altaba-Artal emphasises that the loose plot of the play serves as a set piece for Killigrew's personal boastful stories from his exile in Madrid during the 1650s, strengthening his position within the restored court society. Altaba-Artal argues that the two plays, *The Rover* (1677) and *Thomaso* (1663), while similar are separated by their respective authors' skill, since '*Thomaso* (1663) consists of many loosely organised scenes and incidents, it is episodic in structure and lacks Behn's firm structure, added merriment, and true suspense.' (Altaba-Artal, p. 75) Pulling elements from the *picaresque* novel, both stories [*Guzman de Alfarache* (1599) and *Thomaso* (1663)] are told from a 'retrospective of a life by the one who lived it' and are told from the perspective of the title character.¹⁰⁷ *Thomaso* (1663) is a play and not a

¹⁰⁶ Mateo Aleman *Guzman de Alfarache* (1599,1604).

¹⁰⁷ Carol B. Johnson, *Inside Guzman de Alfarache* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978) p.2.

prose-narrative, like *Guzman de Alfarache* (1599), and it has no omniscient narrator. However, like *Guzman de Alfarache* (1599), the primary rake has been interpreted to be an authorial analogue.

Furthermore, Killigrew's literary debt, not plagiarism by Langbaine's definition, is seen in the title. *Thomaso; or the Wanderer* (1663) is a multivalent title alluding to the exiled cavaliers as well as recalling one of three types of: 'picaresque or rogue – an individual related to three other literary types: the wanderer, the have-not, and the jester.' (McGrady, p 44) Behn's *The Rover* (1677), by comparison, drops naming the rake in the title and instead notes his identity and the play's historical context, a 'Rover' and 'banish'd cavaliers'. Ultimately, though I see several similarities between *Thomaso* (1663) and *Guzman de Alfarache* (1599), many of these can be explained as tropes of their respective genres: autobiographic elements, roguish characters, and 'several types of digressions' within the narrative by the title character.¹⁰⁸ It is possible Killigrew had taken inspiration from Aleman as Behn did from Killigrew, though more likely the similarities suggest Killigrew's literary debt to the *picaresque*. Behn's response and updating of Killigrew's interregnum libertine drama similarly shows a literary debt between the two authors, though undoubtedly there are elements of Behn's interpretation that cross-over into outright plagiarism. Between Behn and Killigrew financial competition is the defining factor between viewing their plays as texts in translation and literary theft.

Restoration dramatists like Behn, Etherege, and Wycherley, to varied degrees of necessity, were commercial dramatists who had vested financial interests in the success

¹⁰⁸ Donald McGrady's *Mateo Aleman* (New York: Twayne Publisher's Inc, 1968) p. 57.

of their productions outside of political posturing. While with the Court Wits, there was always a political element embedded in their work. Amateur productions, such as Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* (1671,1672) and Rochester's adaptation of Fletcher, *Lucina's Rape* (1684), were comparatively more direct and vicious in their political and social criticisms. Unlike Philip's and the Wit's early 1660s translations of *La Mort de Pompée* (1642), these later amateur plays are not translations and derive their plots and characters from other dramatist's work, though once again avoid accusations of plagiarism. *Lucinda's Rape* (1684) bills itself as an adaptation from the title and Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* (1671), among other points satirizes heroic drama, particularly Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1670) in retaliation for being satirized in Dryden's *Essay on Dramatick Poesy* (1668) that criticises among other points, francophiles and other dramatic trends. Rochester's adaptation of Fletcher's Jacobean play *Valentinian: A Tragedy* (1647) is difficult to date. *WJW* notes that,

Rochester's adaptation of Fletcher's *Valentinian* exists in two recensions. The earlier, *Lucina's rape* (henceforth LR), is preserved in three manuscript sources [...]. None of these can be securely dated; however, British Library manuscript BLa92 could well be from close to the time of adaptation. Each contains a King's Company cast-list of the mid-1670s that does not, however, appear to represent an actual performance. [...] The second recension, acted by the United Company in February 1684 as *Valentinian*, was published later in that year as a quarto post-dated to 1685." (*WJW*, p. 618)

Notably, *The Rehearsal's* (1671) structure of a play within a play, with the actors likewise playing double roles within that play, was in turn adapted again into a satire

targeting women playwrights, *The Female Wits* (1696).¹⁰⁹ This provides further evidence of the prevalence of ‘borrowing’ ideas within these communities and the ill-defined parameters of plagiarism during the seventeenth century. These plays plagiarise their structure and crucial plot elements, but because they forgo obvious appropriation of characters and dialogue, they skirt the edges of plagiarism. These adaptations that owe their literary debt to Dryden’s original play tie tangentially to this theme of coterie development of ideas between these two communities. The back and forth criticisms of the courtier wits and the dramatists show, as Hume explains, that while not a traditional ‘coterie’, there was some small coterie involvement at play between these two communities with a lot of it manifesting in libertine plays. (*Development of English Drama*, p. 27-8)

In the case of *The Female Wits* (1696), the transmission did also, unfortunately, lead to the stifling of women’s involvement in the production of libertine drama after Behn’s death. Linker explains in *Dangerous Women* (2011) that later satirical attacks against women playwrights, particularly female ‘wits’, likely contributed to Behn’s successor’s, Mary Pix’s, Trotter’s and Manley’s, retirement from writing female libertine characters. (*Dangerous Women*, p. 8) All of these plays, by amateur and anonymous authors, *The Rehearsal* (1671) and *Lucina’s Rape* (1684), *The Female Wits* (1696), adapt, borrow from, and criticise another author’s pre-existing work. Despite this, they did not carry the stain the accusation of plagiarism could leave, as it did on Behn’s *The Rover* (1677).

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous, *The Female Wits: The Augustan Reprint Society* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).

Dramatic expressions of libertinism and gender

The division between amateur and commercial authorship, besides effecting the potential for accusations of plagiarism changes the expression of the libertinism within a play. Courtier dramatists did not want to be seen to labour over their writing and did not have an economic need for their writing to succeed financially in the same way commercial authors did. Instead, amateur dramatists, such as Buckingham and Rochester, used the platform of the Restoration theatre to attack other authors and make political criticisms, such as when Buckingham satirises Dryden in *The Rehearsal* (1671). Rochester does in *Lucinda's Rape* (1684) to depict political impotence and the abuse of monarchical power. (Stewart, pp. 53-5) This was not the first nor last attack on Dryden by the Court Wits and as the following chapter discusses, Rochester and the Court Wits in the 1680s are increasingly preoccupied with the various interpretations of impotence. Rochester's *Lucinda's Rape* (1684), being his only reasonably attributed drama, attacks court society in a similar way that his libertine poems do, though *Lucinda's Rape* (1684) was, if possible, more explicit in its criticism of the monarchy's power over its subjects and the impotence of the subjects as a result. It is worth noting that Behn wrote the prologue to the play that both playfully chastises the occupants of the pit (the Court Wits) and celebrates the late Rochester's adaptation, 'None but Great *Strephon's* soft and pow'rful Wit / Durst undertake to mend what Fletcher writ'.¹¹⁰ Behn's lines reference Rochester's adaptation of Fletcher's existing work, praises the dead poet's skill, and,

¹¹⁰ WAB, 'Prologue to *Valentinian as Altered by the late Earl of Rochester*. Spoken by Mrs. Cook the first Day', p. 159-160, lines 35-6

potentially inserts a soft double entendre into the tribute, as ‘Wit’ in libertine verses, often functions as a stand in for masculine authority and sexual prowess.¹¹¹

Politics are still represented in commercially authored works. Behn’s dramas are a strong example of this. However, the comparison between these two groups of authors suggests that the libertinism and social politics are softened or altered to appeal to a greater audience than in the French and Spanish ‘translations’ produced by aristocratic dramatists. (Kewes, pp. 34-46) Many of these amateur and commercial productions performed on the London stages by professional companies recreate the Court Wit’s libertine performances and by doing so they helped to propagate depictions of libertinism to other non-aristocratic audiences.

The division between the libertine engagements of court and theatre coterie was primarily determined by the financial considerations made in the production of such plays. This division between these two coterie groups delineated by economic incentives contextualises the accusations of plagiarism levied against Behn because of her practice of adapting older plays. As Kewes has shown, this practice was not unique to Behn but was instead a common feature of the output of all the London commercial playwrights. Todd explains concerning the new emergent class of commercial authors working for the King’s and Duke’s Companies:

Behn and Dryden were of the new breed of men and women of letters. Before them authors had been aristocrats, actors or court officials, or they had had some other source of income or function. In this generation, however, a few began to make a living solely from writing.

¹¹¹ Raymond Stephanson, *The Yard of Wit: Male Creativity and Sexuality, 1650-1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 16.

Such authors had to be flexible and write in whatever genre was required or fashionable. Most began in the theatre, the most lucrative place, and thus they gained a sense of audience at the outset. They also relied on patronage, but, so far, Behn had showed that this was not essential. (*The Sign of Angellica*, pp. 158-9)

Todd's description of the advent of commercial authorship after 1660 informs a significant portion of this chapter's discussion of the court and theatre coterie groups that both Behn and Rochester engaged with and wrote about. Two points in the above passage stand out as key to the development of commercially dependent authors such as Behn and Killigrew. Todd's main point that 'such authors had to be flexible and write in whatever genre was required or fashionable' and that they often 'began in the theatre, the most lucrative place,' describes the greater part of Behn's career. Though they display their political motivations in their plays, such as Behn's royalist support, their economic need and desire to succeed in this new commercial avenue of opportunity shaped the development and representation of what became the recognisable style of Restoration theatre. Like Dryden, Behn's theatrical writing served as a source of income and, as many scholars have pointed out, in the production of plays only Dryden surpassed Behn in the sheer number produced. (Spencer, p. 21-3) Unlike Dryden, Behn lacked the benefit of a royal appointment and court patronage to supplement her third day earnings, thus giving her further incentive to appeal to fashion in her writing.

'The third-day earnings' refers to the practice in the seventeenth-century of dramatists only receiving a take of the ticket-sales for every third day that the play ran. As Kachur discusses in *Etherege & Wycherley* (2004), Etherege's *The Comical Revenge*'s (1664) 9 day run, which brought in £1000 in profit, was an unprecedented

success.¹¹² Of that nine day run Etherege was paid every third day the play was performed, thus illustrated the concept of the ‘third day’ in Restoration theatre studies.

Killigrew, who was an acquaintance of Behn’s from her previous career as a spy in addition to being a dramatist, was appointed the head of the Duke’s Theatre Company’s only other competing production house, the King’s Theatre Company, in 1660. Another dramatist, William Congreve, was granted the patent as head of the Duke’s Company, and Dryden was awarded the title of poet laureate in 1668.¹¹³ The benefit of patronage, while not essential, was desirable for playwrights working in this new commercial sphere, with success for male dramatists yielding considerable socio-political advantages. For example, Etherege’s modest production of three comedies helped to solidify his court connections and establish him as a member of the court, as it did for Wycherley.¹¹⁴ Kachur describes Etherege’s entrance onto the London theatre scene:

If Etherege made slight inroads into the fashionable world of London prior to 1664, his first play, *The Comical Revenge*, gained him immediate prominence with London’s *beau monde*. The unprecedented success of this comedy, opening at the Duke’s Theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields in April 1664, running for an entire month (a nine-day run was deemed a smash hit), and earning a staggering profit of £1000, established Etherege as a man of wit and artistry and earned him a place in London’s elite social circle that included Charles II, the courtiers, and the Court Wits. In fact, the king ... ordered performances of the play at Whitehall and four years later sat in his royal box at the Duke’s Theatre for the opening of Etherege’s next comedy, *She Would If She Could*. Etherege [...] probably spent the next four years enjoying his celebrity and the companionship of his fellow wits and court satellites. (Kachur, pp. 48-9)

¹¹² George Etherege, *The Comical Revenge: or Love in a Tub* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1664, 1735).

¹¹³ Killigrew was granted permission by Charles II, along with William Davenant, to form theatre companies (the King’s Company and the Duke’s Company, respectively) on August 21, 1660, Killigrew received his letters patent on April 25, 1662.

¹¹⁴ See Webster’s, ‘Staging Libertine Tricksters: *The Man of Mode* and *The Plain Dealer*’, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II’s Court* pp. 65-100.

The ‘unprecedented success’ of Etherege’s *The Comical Revenge* (1664) solidified his new friendship with Court Wits such as Buckingham and brought him to the attention of the Carolean government. Though Etherege is known as a dramatist, unlike Behn, his minimal output led to governmental appointments and social elevation that better supported him after his literary career ended. With the success of his first play, Etherege gained the financial means to subsidise his association with such high profile members of Charles II’s court and ensured his political appointments and retirement long after his writing output had slowed. However, as Kachur also points out his second production, *She Wou’d if She Cou’d* (1668) was a critical failure despite court attendance and current popular revivals.

As this relates to Behn’s writing, it is worth noting that *She Wou’d if She Cou’d* (1668) delves into similar themes of women’s sexual agency and though ‘played for laughs’, Etherege’s second play is more socially critical than *The Comical Revenge* (1664). Kachur explains that, while *The Man of Mode* (1676) is likewise socially critical, it was a character study of a stage rake and the dénouement imply Dorimant’s possible reformation and marriage to the witty heiress, Harriet. As such, *The Man of Mode* (1676) is more in line with the conventional and expected tropes of plays that prominently feature libertine characters. As other scholars, such as Kachur, have addressed, an important detail is that like Behn’s Willmore in *The Rover* (1677), *The Man of Mode* (1676) also implies the rake’s continued libertinism and inconstancy after marriage. This makes *The Man of Mode*’s (1676) dénouement conventional to the comedic form, but only just. Etherege linked the failure of *She Wou’d if She Cou’d* (1668) to ‘lack of

rehearsals' and not the play's content. (Kachur, pp. 48-9) Even though *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* (1668) was the least successful of Etherege's three plays, it is not a reflection on the play's writing, which is complex and suggests that Etherege's protestations that it was poor acting that ruined the play were not entirely based on his ego. Kachur explains:

[*She Wou'd if She Cou'd*] forgoes the conventional happy ending and includes on a note of irresolution because [Etherege] was after other game. His [Etherege's] interest lies not in positing some Hegelian synthesis (*via* marriage) between libertine and orthodox views but rather in dramatizing the libertine as so wedded to the posturing and rhetorical evasions inherent in the cultural ideal of social codes that he fails to distinguish where performance ends and reality begins. (Kachur, p. 77)

Kachur's analysis of *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* (1668) informs the later reading of Dorimant's character as entirely based upon performance for the sake of performance, not pleasure. The statement that the 'interest lies not in positing some Hegelian synthesis [...] between libertine and orthodox views' is applicable to other major 1670s libertine plays by the commercial dramatists. The commentary on the rakes' libertinism prefigures the dubious promises of constancy by the rakes in the dénouements of *The Man of Mode* (1676) and *The Rover* (1677). Furthermore, this shows Behn's and Etherege's different interpretations of the rake's reformation. The 1680s see Behn develop this further in more interesting and subversive ways with the introduction of female rakes to libertine discourse. Though Behn's Willmore and Etherege's Dorimant are not as constant in their rejections of marriage as other fictional libertines, such as Wycherley's rake, Horner, in *The Country Wife* (1675), these plays conclude with the promise of infidelity and the implausibility of sustained happiness within the proposed marriages.

Kachur's assessment of Etherege's construction of his rakes so that they are 'dramatizing the libertine as so wedded to the posturing and rhetorical evasions inherent in the cultural ideal' that he loses the ability to 'distinguish where performance ends and reality begins', is a sharp satire of the group Etherege is most often associated with. Like his *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* (1668) and Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), both depict their rake's rejection of marriage in favour of continued libertinism. All three of these atypical dénouements are written by a commercial dramatist, such as Behn, or a coterie fluid dramatist, such as Etherege and Wycherley.

As mentioned, Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) followed this trend in subverting the rake's reformation. However, *The Country Wife* (1675) is a blatantly sexual libertine spectacle beyond the comedy of manners Etherege is known for, and far beyond the implied sexuality of the intrigue comedies Behn produced. Behn's sex comedies and 'she-tragedies' rarely reach the sexual crescendo of Wycherley's writing. While the blatant subversion of the expected resolution of a comedy of manners was significantly less likely to be accepted by mixed middle-class audiences, it appears that these three authors did not unquestioningly embrace the libertinism of the court either.

Behn's success as a dramatist yielded some high-ranking patrons within the court coterie, notably Rochester. (*Sign of Angellica*, p. 70) Unlike Etherege and Wycherley, however, Behn was excluded from the same level of influence. While Todd points out that these connections to the court and its patronage were advantageous, and as I have discussed, these benefits were varied and fortuitous for Etherege, Todd also says that 'Behn had showed that this was not essential'. For commercial authors the lack of financial security that patronage and political appointment offered, nevertheless placed

them in potentially stressful economic positions – one that in Behn’s case was acute, and which, furthermore, influenced the production, themes, and direction of her writing.

Behn was not the only dramatist to be accused of plagiarism however her public defence against this label suggests that for women writers working in a male dominated arena, such accusations could not be ignored. *Thomaso* (1663) but it failed to achieve the popularity of *The Rover* (1677). The following section discusses Behn’s defence of her ‘borrowed’ character, Angellica Bianca, and the differences in her expression of libertine ideology in Behn’s *The Rover* (1677) and Killigrew’s *Thomaso* (1663). Behn and Killigrew’s plays read as coterie texts which contribute to the development of female libertine engagement. Angellica Bianca is not the only ‘stolen object’ from Killigrew’s work as both plays link the author’s libertine performance, the act of writing, with the equivalent character in each text. (WAB, p. 248)

Behn's borrowed object and the defense of her pen

This section discusses the appropriation of Killigrew's characters, plot, and dialogue from *Thomaso* (1663) by Behn for *The Rover* (1677). This section contributes to scholarship by continuing the discussion of Angellica Bianca's character development and Behn's self-association with the character. This chapter also examines other literary devices that have been appropriated from Killigrew. However, as with her 'borrowed' character, Behn 'makes her borrowings her own, cutting and altering to increase pace and humour [...] and her stagecraft and sense of spectacle are almost always original'. (*Virtue of Necessity*, 116) Though that quote taken from Hobby is referencing Behn's plays, her 'borrowed' performance from Killigrew is likewise made 'her own'. O'Donnell explains that with '*The Rover*, Behn drew charges of plagiarism, since she drew heavily from *Thomaso*, a closet drama by her old spy-mentor and employer Killigrew, and she defended herself in a feisty postscript.'¹¹⁵ Behn's postscript pointedly attacks these accusations of plagiarism though she admits to 'stealing' Angellica Bianca's character from Killigrew. Behn also engages with libertine discourse around sexual availability, prostitution, and virtue. Behn elevates these themes in *The Rover* (1677) to replace Killigrew's dated political stumping and the libertine fantasy of priapic masculine posturing. The self-alignment of the female author with the courtesan mirrors Killigrew's presumed association with his stage-rake insertion through references to his experiences as a Cavalier-in-exile during the Interregnum. Killigrew's self-insertion into his writing is further supported by the political overtones in the play which, considering that *Thomaso*

¹¹⁵ Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'Aphra Behn: The Documentary Record', *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-11, p. 6.

was never performed during the period it was written, suggests a possible purpose of the composition was to support Killigrew's position within the Restoration court. There is reasonable evidence to argue that Behn's and Killigrew's developments of their respective author-analogues within their plays allows these very similar, indeed, plagiarised, plots to reflect their authors different libertine engagements. Killigrew's *Thomaso* functions as a simplistic, yet indulgent, libertine sex-comedy; Behn's *The Rover* (1677) modifies the characters to appeal to Restoration fashion and in doing so shifts the focus from masculine aristocratic fantasy onto a socio-political discussion of female curiosity and sexual agency. A major distinction between *Thomaso* (1663) and *The Rover's* (1677) libertinism is the shift in focus from the exercise of aristocratic, male power over female subjects to the female subject negotiating an impossible minefield of expectations around sexuality.

Spencer cites several reasons for *The Rover's* (1677) continued popularity into the eighteenth century, writing that there 'are negative reasons for the play's longevity: it was not too narrowly political, not too extremely libertine. Positive reasons include the treatment of the two main female roles, Angellica and Hellena.' (Spencer, p. 189) This is shown best in *The Rover's* change in focus from *Thomaso*. Much like *Thomaso*, *The Rover* reflects the period in which it was written. *Thomaso* engages with the politics and history of the exiled cavaliers while *The Rover* challenges the social order of communities where libertinism is a fashionable mode of aristocratic behaviour.

The Rover (1677) was licensed for the theatre at Drury Lane on 2 July 1677 by Roger L'Estrange and subsequently printed by John Amery in Fleet Street the same year.

(O'Donnell, p. 30) In that printing Behn included a postscript in addition to the play's original epilogue, defending the originality of her work:

This play had been sooner in print, but for a report about the town (made by some either very malicious or very ignorant) that 'twas *Thomaso* altered; which made the booksellers fear some trouble from the proprietor of that admirable play, which indeed has wit enough to stock a poet, and is not to be pieced or mended by any but the excellent author himself. That I have stolen some hints from it, may be a proof that I valued it more than to pretend to alter it, had I the dexterity of some poets, who are not more expert in stealing than in the art of concealing, and who even that way outdo the Spartan boys. I might have appropriated all to myself; but I, vainly proud of my judgment, hang out the sign of Angellica (the only stolen object) to give notice where a great part of the wit dwelt; though if the *Play of the Novella* were a well worth remembering as *Thomaso*, they might (bating the name) have as well said I took it from thence. I will only say that the plot and business (not to boast on't) is my own; as for the words and characters, I leave the reader to judge and compare 'em with *Thomaso*, to who I recommend the great entertainment of reading it. Though had this succeeded ill, I should have had no need of imploring that justice from the critics, who are naturally so kind to any that pretend to usurp their dominion, especially of our sex: they would doubtless have given me the whole honor on't. Therefore I will only say in English what the famous Virgil does in Latin: I make verses, and others have the fame. (*WAB*, p. 521)

Behn opens with a complaint on the delay in the play's publication due to 'some either very malicious or very ignorant' person's accusation of plagiarism that caused the booksellers to worry that 'the proprietor of that admirable play' would seek legal action, a new and growing problem at the time.¹¹⁶ Behn defends her work by arguing that Killigrew has 'wit enough to stock a poet' and that *Thomaso* (1663) 'is not to be pieced or mended by any but the excellent author himself'. Behn's defense here is interesting since she embeds in her praise of Killigrew's wit the implication that *Thomaso* (1663) needs 'mending'. Besides defending her right to have borrowed 'some hints' as 'a proof

¹¹⁶ Paulina Kewes, 'Gerard Langbaine's "View of *Plagiaries*": The Rhetoric of Dramatic Appropriation in the Restoration', *The Review of English Studies*, n. s. 48 (1997), 2-18, p 10.

that I valued it' the postscript argues for more than the legitimacy of a single adaptation and delivers an equally strong riposte to her critics regarding the wide-spread practice of plagiarism amongst her contemporaries. Behn compares herself to her peers, poets and dramatists writing at the time, pointing out that 'had I the dexterity of some poets, who are not more expert in stealing than in the art of concealing, and who even that way outdo the Spartan boys. I might have appropriated all to myself'. Revealed in Behn's own words is the culture of borrowed and stolen ideas common to the Restoration theatre that in several ways mirror the court coterie. Behn and Killigrew used their respective plays as a platform to disseminate their agendas and in Behn's case to function as a filter for her libertine performance. Behn's threat 'had I the dexterity ... I might have appropriated all to myself' suggests that this is actually a tacit admission that this is exactly what she had done by writing *The Rover* (1677). However, Behn places her emphasis on the female characters and restores Angellica Bianca's humanity by elevating her character to a secondary leading woman and expanding her character beyond her original role as a sexual plot device for the rake in Killigrew's text. Indeed, Behn largely gets away with appropriating major plot events and even Killigrew's performance by having 'the dexterity' to alter and improve *Thomaso* (1663) enough to make it successful. Margaret Ferguson, writing on Behn's use of authorial ciphers in her writing says,

Behn's authorial personae both build on and seek to revise contemporary images (mostly negative) of the female playwright, especially the image of the "public" woman writer as a prostitute [...] Making some of her authorial personae complement characters represented in her plays [...] she sought to transform the liability of her gender into an asset.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Margaret Ferguson, 'The Authorial Ciphers of Aphra Behn', *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1650-1740*, ed. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 225-249, p. 226.

By aligning herself with the character her critics believed her to share a profession with, this chapter suggests that Behn has taken the character and revised Killigrew's negative 'images' of women in *Thomaso* (1663) and created a fallen woman the audience empathises with. The prostitutes become complex people with multivalent motivations on par with the Cavaliers instead of stage dressings for the rake's witticisms. Ferguson's statement that '[Behn] sought to transform the liability of her gender into an asset' is supported by Behn's defense of *The Rover* (1677) and again in the preface to *The Luckey Chance* (1686) where she defends her adaptation and her use of bawdry by pointing out the same behaviour in her male peers. (Ferguson, p. 226) In support of this argument, Hobby agrees that,

[Behn's] argument is a complex one. She agrees that there are immodest elements in her plays, but argues firstly that they are not as lewd or as blatant as popular men's writing, and secondly that if she were a man, these elements in her work would not be thought noteworthy. (*Virtue of Necessity*, pp. 117-118)

This is true. When comparing *The Rover* (1677) to *Thomaso* (1663), *Thomaso* (1663) exhibits the most overt engagement with libertinism and showcases both the libertine rake's priapic sexuality and witty discourse. Killigrew's version of the narrative features the figure of the *cortegiana honesta* via Angellica Bianca's romance with the cavalier, *Thomaso*, and later engages with low-libertine shaming rituals via the violent facial maiming of the whore, *Lucetta*.

Lucetta's facial scarring recalls Turner's low libertine performative acts of misogyny that would likely be engaged in by non-aristocratic sections of society upon lower-class, sexually transgressive women, and not exclusively prostitutes. Though Behn's *The Rover* (1677) borrows heavily from *Thomaso* (1663), she forgoes the expected *cortegiana honesta* plot and instead subverts the trope to expose the cruelty enacted upon women by aristocratic men. However, this does not make Behn's engagement innocent of continuing libertinism's tendency toward misogyny. In *The Rover* (1677) violence against women is ultimately forgiven as both Willmore and Frederick, two of the leading cavaliers and friends of the male lead, Belvile, admit they mistook the aristocratic women for whores. Ultimately, for Behn, it appears that class trumps agency as again and again aristocratic women are sympathetically portrayed as victims of libertine violence and lower-class women are vessels to be acted upon with impunity.

Thomaso's (1663) ironically egalitarian application of libertinism, therefore, spreads Killigrew's engagement across a larger section of society than Behn's exclusively aristocratic appeal to high libertinism in *The Rover* (1677). Behn's appropriation of Angellica Bianca and her character's narrative arc is the most discussed aspect in studies of these two plays. The character appears in both plays espousing the same libertine ideology against marriage and criticizing that men care about the dowry a woman brings to a marriage more than her beauty or love.

Behn builds upon the libertine's criticism against marriage by expanding this discussion in *The Rover* (1677). Behn has Willmore prove Angellica Bianca's argument against monetary incentives for marriage to be true by marrying the heiress Hellena for

her money and to spare her the tragedy of becoming a fallen woman. Hellena's reputation as a virtuous maiden is risked by her verbal flirtation with libertine performance and as such, Willmore is placed in the advantageous position to acquire her dowry despite his libertine reputation. The tragedy of Willmore's betrayal of the courtesan is further heightened because it is in part due to Angellica Bianca's revelation to Willmore that his 'little gypsie' is a virgin and heiress:

I will not answer for your mistress's virtue,
though she be young enough to know no guilt;
And I could wish you would persuade my heart
'twas the two hundred thousand crowns you courted.

(The Rover, IV.ii)

It is Angellica Bianca who pushes Willmore into marriage as this information about Hellena's virginity and dowry are two elements that influence his ultimate acquiescence into agreeing to marry her, though he pledges inconstancy. Behn divides many of Killigrew's cast of characters and their plotlines. For example, the male lead, Thomaso, is divided into the nobleman, Belvile and the rake, Willmore Behn likewise rewrites Hellena from Killigrew's old prostitute supporting character, and rejuvenates her into a young virgin noblewoman.

Angellica Bianca is conspicuously intact as the *cortegiana honesta*, though her plotline is subverted. Therefore, Behn is prompted to defend her as the only ‘stolen object’, though in fact she appears to be one amongst many.¹¹⁸

Though *Thomaso* (1663) was probably never publicly performed, it was first published in 1663/1664 for Herringman and drew upon Killigrew’s experiences as an exiled cavalier during the interregnum.¹¹⁹ The political nature of Killigrew’s exile, which is emphasised in *Thomaso* (1663) as proof of the character’s, and by extension the author’s, royalism, is referential to Killigrew’s biography. As I have touched upon, the biographical and roguish elements that make up the character, *Thomaso*, are read as referential to Spanish *picaresque* novels while the heavy royalism evident in the propagandistic asides in the play suggest that *Thomaso* (1663) was written to secure the author’s status at court. Dramas in the 1670s such as *The Man of Mode* (1676) and *The Rover* (1677) are supportive of the monarchy and prominently feature rakes as their heroes but still incorporate criticisms against abuses of people in their social strata. *Thomaso* (1663) is the most overtly royalist in its politics and while the rake perpetrates some truly horrific acts of violence against lower-class women, it lacks the critical

¹¹⁸ For clarity, I have elected to use two variant spellings of Hellena/Helena in this chapter to differentiate between *The Rover*’s Hellena and *Thomaso*’s Helena. The difference in spellings are determined by those used in the copy of *The Rover* from *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy*, ed. Scott McMillin (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1997) and the original printing of Thomas Killigrew’s *Thomaso* from *Comedies and Tragedies* (London, for Henry Herringman, 1663).

¹¹⁹ In *Thomas Killigrew and the Seventeenth Century Stage*, both Major’s ‘Introduction’ and Nevitt in ‘Thomas Killigrew’s *Thomaso* as a Two-Part Comedy’ argue that the ‘fact’ of *Thomaso*’s history and the oft repeated statements that it was never meant for performance are contradicted by notes on the publisher’s proofs of the manuscript that show Killigrew’s attempts to restructure the play for performance.

element seen in these later dramas. This becomes one of the most noticeable additions made by Behn in *The Rover* (1677).

Major's introduction to *Thomas Killigrew and the Seventeenth Century Stage* discusses the political emphasis in Killigrew's writing, saying that unlike other exiles,

Killigrew was not, in fact, among those few royalists formally banished from the realm by parliament; hence his precise status is pertinent to current debates about the accuracy of the term 'exile' in describing royalists on the continent during the 1640s and 1650s.¹²⁰

Killigrew's years of 'voluntary' exile from 1644 to 1660, in addition to what Major argues is a more complicated debate around the use of the term 'exile' in relation to cavaliers, who left England voluntarily, all support a reading of the dramatist [Killigrew] and the multiple mentions of the cavalier exile in *Thomaso* as inherently political in its motivations. (Major, p. 11)

What marks out *Thomaso* (1663) as an overtly libertine play and work of political propaganda is that Killigrew's play stalls the plot for the characters to engage in political speeches. Besides drawing the audience out of the narrative and slowing the pacing to a halt, these political asides immediately tie *Thomaso* (1663) and the cavalier cause to libertinism within the space of a few lines. An example of one of these political asides occurs in the first act, second scene of the play. Thomaso directs his companions to the

¹²⁰ Philip Major, 'Introduction', *Thomas Killigrew and the Seventeenth Century Stage* (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), p 11.

house of his friend Harrigo during midday and is immediately greeted, and the party identified thus:

Harrigo: Gentleman, so speak with me, and why do you keep them at the door? My Friend, the *Wanton Wanderer* still; what new ill luck drives thee hither again?

Thomaso: Salute my Friends and then I'll answer you; They are true blades, Hall. --- Remnants of the broken Regiments; Royal and Loyal Fugitives, highly guilty all of the Royal Crime, Poor and honest, Hall; you see his Majesties marks upon us, English, and that gave us a safe Conduct, and here we are to snuff our wits.

(*Thomaso*, I. ii)

Thomaso is identified as a 'Wanton Wanderer', emphasising the double meaning behind the appellation 'Wanderer' with the addition of 'Wanton' making it explicit that the character is a literal exile without a home as well as a philanderer without a wife. This address by Harrigo is immediately followed with Thomaso's description of himself and his companions' exile. As I have quoted from Major above, Killigrew's exile from England was not a forced exile, as that of Charles I and Charles II, but one of choice made to show loyalty to the crown and cavalier cause. (Major, p. 11) Thomaso states that these cavaliers are 'Royal and Loyal Fugitives, highly guilty all of the Royal Crime'. This display of the biographical elements that inform a good portion of *Thomaso* serves to depict the characters within the play as having given up more for the monarchy since 'Fugitives' implies they were compelled to leave England but they in point of fact chose exile out of loyalty to the monarchy and are therefore more valuable to the restored court than those compelled into exile.

In contrast, the exchange between Willmore and the cavaliers in *The Rover* (1677) integrated the exposition of the history of their exile into a series of short exchanges between the characters. These short pieces of Royalist political dialogue are spaced at intervals throughout the scene instead of being delivered by the rake in a single speech. The exchanges are also placed in the first act and second scene of *The Rover* (1677). Behn notably chooses to begin her play with an introduction of her female leads, thus again highlighting her proto feminism is focused on the plight of aristocratic women. Angellica Bianca's introduction scene is lifted almost entirely from *Thomaso* (1663) and stands as further evidence of Behn's plagiarism. Regarding the recollection of history by the male leads, Behn introduces her history lesson to the audience is a series of short exchanges between Willmore and his companions. Behn writes,

Frederick: Faith, sir, the old complement, infinitely the better to see my dear mad Willmore again. Prithee, why camest thou ashore? And where's the Prince? [Charles II]

Willmore: He's well, and reigns still lord of the wat'ry element. I must aboard again within a day or two, and my business ashore was only to enjoy myself a little this Carnival.

(*The Rover*, I. ii.59-64)

Instead of delivering a history lesson to her audience these exchanges are quick and display the characters' wit and relationships with each other. Everything the audience needs to know is delivered in four lines as opposed to Killigrew's six. These exchanges further introduce the character's allegiances instead of functioning as political propaganda. Behn's lines give the basics of the plot, setting, and political undertones at

work in the narrative: Willmore has gone into exile with Charles II, they are in Naples, and Willmore remains loyal and in the service of the exiled prince as the dialogue reveals that the character is on shore-leave. Similar lines of dialogue appear throughout the play, revisiting the politics in short doses throughout. The fop, Ned Blunt, responds to his companion's complaints that they have neither money nor women by chiding their loyalty to Charles II, 'But gentlemen, you may be free; you have been kept so poor with parliaments and protectors that the little stock you have is not worth preserving. But I thank my stars I had more grace than to forfeit my estate by cavaliering' only for Belvile, who is one of two variations of the character, Thomaso, that appears in *The Rover* (1677), to respond, 'Methinks only following the court should be sufficient to entitle 'em to that.' (*The Rover*, I.ii.48-50) These exchanges better integrate politics into *The Rover's* (1677) plot and equate the cavalier's exile and poverty with heroism and loyalty to the monarchy.

In Killigrew's play, following Thomaso's political declaration in the first act, the dialogue shifts from royalism to libertinism quickly with what could be an attempt at wit. Thomaso transitions from reaffirming his group's loyalty to a single cause, the patriarchal monarchy, and immediately launches into libertine raillery against loyalty to a single woman,

Thomaso: Who me? I will not be tied to one Woman, Hall, for all the sword has won or lost; All that Love has given, or Lust has cost; all that Treason has bought or sold, could it be told down; I would not sell my freedom of that of span of days that's left me, for it all; I am no Mutton to folded, Nor Bird to sing, though in a golden cage: Home, Hal, is all this to me, till in a Grave, I'll not be found at home; I am resolved those tame Spirits that can be conjured in to a wedding Ring, and dance in that dull Matrimonial circle all their days,

I pity their Bodies that must suffer this slavery, and despite their lean starved Souls that threw them into those Chains.

(*Thomaso*, I.ii)

This juxtaposition between the libertine rhetoric of absolute sexual freedom and political loyalty to the point of exile is yet another example of libertinism's paradoxical relationship to the oppositional concepts of freedom and power. This transition from preaching political loyalty into railing against marital fidelity may be an attempt at wit on the part of Killigrew. However, both pieces of dialogue fail to display the rake's linguistic skill and the speeches garner no praise from the observers within the play. The transition reads as clumsy, and in *Thomaso* (1663) this contradiction appears to go largely unnoticed, suggesting that this is not an attempt to display the rake's wit, but further recitation of libertine rhetoric without the associated linguistic skill required to display it. If this scene was an attempt by Killigrew to display his wit as an author, it has likewise failed. This exchange does foreshadow the resolution of the plot at the end of Part II, however.

Thomaso's single dénouement shows the 'Wanton Wanderer' reintegrated into social order by being placed in the 'golden cage' of a wealthy marriage to Serulina. However, as always, the rake's loyalty to his spouse is unlikely to be met with the same loyalty as he, and the author, shows to his monarch. The irony in *Thomaso*'s declaration that he 'would not sell my freedom of that of span of days that's left me, for it all', especially as this scene precedes a similar attack on Angellica Bianca's profession as a prostitute, it provides amusing foreshadowing of his eventual marriage to Serulina. As

with Behn's Willmore, declarations of love and libertine railing at any institution, marriage or prostitution, which inhibits the rake's free exercise of his sexual expression, is conveniently regarded as being against nature. In part, the differences between Behn and Killigrew's expressions of political allegiance in their plays are likely due to the nearly twenty year difference in the composition dates. This is also likely reflective of the difference in the political climate of their respective decades. The 1660s by most scholar's accounts was largely optimistic of Charles II's restoration while by 1677 the court was already in decline after the multiple naval failures of the regime and the libidinous reputation of the courtiers amongst the greater London public. The differences in Behn's and Killigrew's use of libertine discourse is more complicated.

The Rover (1677) recreates *Thomaso*'s (1663) expository exchanges as conversations between Willmore and Belvile and then Willmore and Hellena. This is notable for two reasons. First, Behn has divided Killigrew's rake Thomaso into Belvile, the heroic lead, and Willmore, the rake. Secondly, this division of the rake character necessitated Behn rewriting Killigrew's Helena from 'an old decayed blind, out of Fashion whore, gay, and fine, as Girls of Fifteen, but out-of-fashion in her cloaths,' into the witty heiress, Hellena, who is young and witty; a suitable match for Willmore. (*Thomaso*, IV.ii) Belvile's relationship with Florinda goes largely unchanged from that seen between Thomaso and Serulina in Killigrew's play. Behn's Belvile is shown to be significantly less libertine than his previous incarnation and his rakish traits are given over to Willmore. Behn's revisioning of Hellena as a love interest for the overtly libertine Willmore is interesting as in *The Rover* (1677) Willmore chooses to marry Hellena over continuing his affair with Angellica Bianca, in part because Hellena is virginal. As

previously mentioned, Hellena needs Willmore to marry her to prevent her becoming a fallen woman, yet her origins in *Thomaso* (1663) show that the character was originally a courtesan. An *old* courtesan.

In rewriting Hellena's character from aged whore to young virgin, Behn rewrites the Mountebank subplot from *Thomaso* without incorporating the rejuvenation scene into the play itself. Unlike the Mountebank's body-swap farce from *Thomaso* (1663) in act IV scene ii, Behn's de-aging of the character was successful. This emphasises the ideological shift Behn makes from Killigrew's political emphasis on loyalty and exile and onto a social criticism of the 1670s treatment of women. In particular, and fitting with the alignment she makes with Angellica Bianca, *The Rover* (1677) uses *Thomaso*'s (1663) libertinism and cavalier characters to criticise the social systems that celebrate free sexuality in men and malign it in women.

Major reads a political agenda into the play's historical setting which stifles the romance plot. Major says,

When a cavalier like Killigrew pens a play in exile, a play which may never have been designed to be performed, does he form an intended continuum with former patterns of playwriting? Do these texts speak to the imperatives of patronage, in an exilic landscape where finding favour at court is even more important to one's future – and problematic – than it is at home? Relatedly, does it reflect the immediacy of the present political situation, national and local, passing comment both on the – as perceived – parvenu, usurping forces back home in England and thorny tensions which could obtain within host communities? (Major, pp. 12-3)

If this is the case, Killigrew's documentation of the experiences of the court in exile depicts the 'thorny tensions [...] within host communities' as *Thomaso* and the cavalier's misreading of the local culture is systemic. Friends are mistaken for enemies, thieves for friends, noblewomen for prostitutes, and prostitutes for noblewomen. Indeed, such comical misunderstandings are typical of foppish characters, as seen in Edwardo's extensive romantic subplot with the whore Lucetta and these should contribute to *Thomaso*'s (1663) overall attempts at a comedic tone. This is not the case.

The failure of the play to read as a comedic libertine romp is greatly inhibited due to the frequent political speeches dropped into the play's dialogue. These political asides reveal the cavaliers to be, and are perceived as, royalist exiles. However, this does nothing to progress what is at its core a basic libertine sex comedy. Major questions if Killigrew's writing 'reflect the immediacy of the present political situation, national and local, passing comment both on the – as perceived – parvenu, usurping forces back home in England' and I believe it does. *Thomaso*'s political posturing serves two purposes in the text. Firstly, it establishes the politics at work within the play as political propaganda promoting the restoration of Charles II as a legitimate cause and the cavalier's exile as unjust. Secondly, the play itself, printed after the restoration further advances the political narrative that this restoration was successful.

The problem Behn faced with her adaptation of *Thomaso* (1663), as she states in her postscript, had very little to do with the act of adapting another author's work, but rather that she met with financial success while the original author was still alive and competing against her in the same market. *The Rover* (1677) borrows heavily from *Thomaso* (1663), but Behn alters the character dynamics and motivations and changed

the material to better suit a commercial production. By doing so Behn can take *Thomaso*'s libertine history beyond the confines of closet-drama. Hobby rightly says 'Behn's relationship to her sources, though, is far from passive or imitative. She makes her borrowings her own, cutting and altering to increase pace and humour and to make the dialogue more lively.' (*Virtue of Necessity*, p. 116) Indeed, the sheer size and self-indulgence of Killigrew's 'double-play' fails to read as a single cohesive narrative and suffers from a thin plot stretched over ten acts that never build to the same emotional climax and tragic-comedic dénouement of Behn's *The Rover* (1677).

Both plays share major plot points: encountering Angellica Bianca, Edwardo's/Blunt's jilting-whore sub-plot, and Serulina's/Florinda's sexual assaults. As I have suggested, *Thomaso* (1663) treats these events as episodic while *The Rover* (1677) weaves them into the larger overarching plot. Thus, Behn's careful application of dialogue and pacing allowed these set-pieces to come together as a single cohesive narrative. Part of this restructuring of Killigrew's play comes from Behn's solution to the problems caused by dividing the character Thomaso into Belvile and Willmore. Behn mirrored the cavalier's adventures with those of her three virgin heiresses and uses the major events in *Thomaso* (1663) to bring both parties together until they converge in *The Rover*'s (1677) climax. Behn balances scenes between the 'banish'd cavaliers' and her trio of sisters, and provides a female perspective on the social-politics between the male and female cast. However, if Killigrew's/Thomaso's perspective was comfortably the focus of *Thomaso* (1663), Angellica Bianca, as a courtesan, is conspicuously removed from the comedic action of *The Rover* (1677). Angellica does not align with either the cavaliers or noble women because she is entrepreneurial.

Like Behn, Angellica Bianca's product is her femininity, sexuality, and sharp wit. Behn's affinity for her tragic heroine hints at Behn's cynicism regarding the relationship between libertinism and public women, such as herself. Though the ideology and celebration of freedom is attractive, as Spencer argues, public women cannot be accepted back into regular society. (Spencer, pp. 189-190) Killigrew's namesake rake fares much better, though arguably the play suffers from the authors' unfettered indulgence in his libertine performance. Nevitt argues that *Thomaso* (1663) is unconventional in its construction and single dénouement for the two sections, instead of one for each part, deserves attention. Nevitt explains that,

Killigrew was helpfully insistent that *Thomaso* consisted of two related plays and was not a single ten-act play with one dénouement at the close of Part II. In a note to the copyist, Miss Hancock, in the Worcester College folio he distinguished between single plays and plays in parts: 'Alle that you finde cut out and markt with this marke in red ... you must write out every play or part – Write over the Parssouns Wedding, the Pillgrim and both partes of Tomasso'. The revealing ambiguity of 'every play or part', whereby 'part is at once synonymous with and distinct from 'play', that is, both artfully self-contained yet constituent of a broader narrative, intimates at a complexly dialogic relationship between the two parts of *Thomaso*, which has been ignored in previous assessments of the play but which is absolutely central to its comedy. (Nevitt, p. 124)

These notes to the editor are interesting and considering that Killigrew's collected folio contains several plays, it is likely that the reference to 'plays in parts' is indeed a reference to *Thomaso* (1663). However, the point Nevitt pulls from this that 'artfully self-contained yet constituent of a broader narrative' is a problematic argument. The 'complexly dialogic relationship between the two parts of *Thomaso*' were not consistent

enough to avoid being fully divided by Behn into her two complete narratives with separate dénouements. *The Rover* part II (1681) sustains an overarching narrative in that it revisits some of the same characters, notably Willmore and Blunt. As with *Thomaso* (1663), both parts of *The Rover* (1677, 1681) also follow the same cabal of cavalier exiles in their continued adventures, but the division feels more natural and acknowledges a passage of time between Part I (1677) and Part II (1681), which is lacking in *Thomaso* (1663). It is difficult in *Thomaso* (1663) to discern any passage of time between major events in the play, which makes sudden additions to the plot at the end of Part I, such as the Mountebank subplot and introduction of the Jewish Giant and Dwarf sisters, jarring and unnatural. However, each part also functions as a self-contained play with a climax and resolution. Killigrew's *Thomaso* (1663) fails to achieve this.

Nevitt argues that the details contained within the dialogue of the play, 'Ferdinando and Edwardo's insouciance' function as a representation of the affected idleness of the Court Wits. However, when the addition of these details to the play were made, either 1654 or 1663, are unclear in Nevitt's argument. This potential acknowledgement of the Court Wit's writing would be unique to *Thomaso* (1663) as Behn appears to be uninterested in, or unaware of, the affected idleness of privileged aristocratic authorship. Killigrew disguises 'the relationship between the play's two parts [...] [resembling] the *sprezzatura* flourish of a cavalier dramatist trying to pass careful plotting off as the amateurish work of an idle moment.' (Nevitt, p. 127) Nevitt's argument is supported by the text, through verbal exchanges between the cavaliers and the women they attempt to seduce.

Serulina is mistaken for Angellica Bianca in the aftermath of Edwardo's robbery by Lucetta at the conclusion to Part I. This encounter in Part II, Nevitt argues, references Part I and subverts the previous robbery. He then suggests that by visually depicting Serulina's jewelry as proof of her social status where before Lucetta (a prostitute) also used jewelry to lure Edwardo, comically reveals to the audience that the foppish Edwardo is incapable of distinguishing between prostitutes and virtuous women. (Nevitt, pp. 113-132) Unlike Behn's rape scenes in *The Rover* (1677), which Behn uses to emphasise the brutality of rape in her female-centric addition to the storyline, Nevitt argues that self-referential moments such as this one, in *Thomaso* (1663), are spread between the two parts to create 'a wryly metadramatic intervention which enables Killigrew to relieve the tension of the scene by setting an actor's momentary confusion on stage against an audience's knowledge of a repeated plot'. (Nevitt, p.126) Nevitt further argues that repeated scenes like these which subvert previous encounters are used by Killigrew to relieve some of the tension *via* comedy and that the audience remembers the previous scene find Edwardo's continued ignorance comedic. (Nevitt, 125-7) However, though these casual, purposefully amateurish, additions to Part I and II of *Thomaso* (1663) help to portray the author as a member of the aristocratic wits. If the play is indeed intended to go to performance, as Nevitt argues and Tonson's editorial notes support, affected idleness and poor plotting are not valid excuses for *Thomaso's* (1663) unwieldy double play.

Theatregoers with familiarity of the plot of the first part of *The Rover* (1677) would be able to see the comedic subversions in similar scenes in the sequel (1681). However, Behn's construction of her versions of Killigrew's double play do not require past

knowledge to understand the comedy. For Behn's re-imagining there is clear evidence of the author's craftsmanship whereas Killigrew's version's amateurish affectation, if we believe this to be an affectation as Nevitt argues, diminishes the effectiveness of *Thomaso* (1663) as a drama.

A production of *Thomaso* (1663) was in the works for a November 1664 premier featuring a newcomer to the Restoration stage, Nell Gwyn, in the role of the prostitute Paulina; however, though the casting and rehearsals for the performance had begun, *Thomaso* (1663) was never staged and instead was published in a collection the same year.¹²¹ This abandonment of the project is important as it adds to the mounting evidence of the play's substantial narrative and structural problems that Behn appropriated and altered. While Behn's version was heavily criticised for plagiarism, critical reception of Killigrew's 'original' was hardly resoundingly positive, further supporting the highly competitive landscape of seventeenth century London theatre. Richard Flecknoe's scathing condemnation that Killigrew was 'born to discredit all the Professions he was of' would suggest that originality was *Thomaso*'s (1663) only virtue, a virtue that itself had shaky foundations.¹²² Indeed, the biographical additions from Killigrew's previous exile and the author's self-insertion into the text is part of the criticism of *Thomaso* (1663) in the late seventeenth century. Nevitt says,

¹²¹ Robert D. Hume and Harold Love, ed., *Plays, Poems, and Miscellaneous Writings Associated With George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham*, Vol. 1, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 17–8.

¹²² Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642–1660*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), p. 281.

Flecknoe, first suggested that it was the pattern of its author's life, rather than the language, motifs and structure of the play itself, which was the prime determinant of its meaning. This was partly driven by Killigrew's urge to insert a cameo description of himself into the play. In the final act of Part II, Killigrew is mentioned as a member of a royalist faction hostile to William Davenant, who had actually met Thomaso and his friends in London before the play began. (Nevitt, p. 116)

Both Behn and Killigrew align themselves and their professions with their characters: Behn with the courtesan, and Killigrew with the cavalier. However, Killigrew is more blatant than Behn with political posturing by mentioning himself by name as the characters reminisce about London,

Edwardo: I remember 'twas at the Saint *John's* head, and it prov'd the purest Babe of grace; it would have tempted a Jew as it lay in the dis; old Satan of the *Differ*¹²³, and a Scot his Host, in spite of Moses fell to the Rost.

Ferdinando: 'Twas where we met Ambassador *Will*, and Resident *Tom*, with M. Sheriffs Secretary, John the Poet with the Nose; all *Gondiberts* dire Foes; from *Poland* laden with the spoils of what do you lack, Sir; and all the Scotch Pedlars Packs on their backs, Sir.

(*Thomaso*, II, V.vii)

The actual character, Thomaso, is a more direct author-analogue in the text on par with Behn's alignment with Angellica Bianca. Still, the coded attack at his competitor, Davenant and the naming of Killigrew and his fellow royalists further supports the

¹²³ Note in the text: 'Differ, which is Will Murrey, L. Differ. Will Crofts, T. Killig. Jack Denham.' Thomas Killigrew, *Comedies and Tragedies* (London, 1663), p 456.

outdated political agenda *Thomaso* (1663) pushes as contrasted against *The Rover*'s (1677) more accessible social agenda. The 1664 folio addition shows that this addition is not an attack against *The Rover* (1677), as the dates show that cannot have been the case. Nevitt's detail supporting Killigrew's use of *Thomaso* (1663) as a libertine performance as well as a political tool does highlight the impossible competition Behn faced as a professional dramatist and active participant in libertine discourse amongst both the theatre and court coterie groups. Considering the historical significance of the courtiers and their relative freedom to engage in several levels of libertine performance imbued to them due to their social status and masculinity, it is amazing that Behn was only labelled a plagiarist and public woman by her critics.

Behn declares that she 'hangs the sign of Angellica' in *The Rover*'s (1677) postscript defense. It is this direct equation of the author and the courtesan that differs from Killigrew's political posturing. Killigrew conspicuously names and 'flew his Royalist flag' via *Thomaso*. However, the only direct address by the author is through his Act V cameo appearance, and his name only appears in the marginalia. In this manner, though Killigrew projects a strong presence over the entire play, he is less bold than Behn. Behn's statement did not serve the purpose of bolstering her ego and political standing, as it did for Killigrew. It could not have, as Behn aligns herself with a prostitute and despite Angellica Bianca holding the admirable role of *cortegiana honesta*, it is not an advantageous role for any woman to choose. Nor did it serve to enhance her status as a courtier since that door was forever shut to her. Instead, Behn's equation of women's authorship with prostitution exposes the hypocrisy of punishing women for selling out of what Behn claims to be a necessity in the preface to *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), 'forced to

write for Bread and not ashamed to own it' and what society rewards men for exercising freely.¹²⁴ Behn's claim would later be contradicted by her preface to *The Lucky Chance* (1686) where she angrily declares the opposite, stating that,

I am not content to write for a Third day only. I value Fame as much as if I had been born a Hero; and if you rob me of that, I can retire from the ungrateful World, and scorn its fickle Favours.¹²⁵

For male commercial dramatists, such as Dryden, writing professionally did not make them 'public' men as it did Behn. Instead, they were attacked for *what* they did, not *who* they were, and this is what Behn's 'sign of Angellica' draws attention to. By shifting the focus of *The Rover* (1677) from the male cavaliers and onto this party of three young women, Behn changes the social politics of the play from outdated royalist propaganda and clumsily executed libertinism into a criticism of the commodification of women's sexuality.

Behn opens *The Rover* (1677) with a statement of Hellena's desire for sexual knowledge and a rejection of her brother deciding her fate for her. The character's verbal rejection of the traditional roles assigned to women of noble birth suggests Behn's own dissatisfaction with the limited roles relegated to seventeenth century women.

Remarkably, and in juxtaposition to Behn's presumed middle class origins, Behn's affinity and empathy is for the aristocratic classes of society and does not focus on the

¹²⁴ WAB Volume 6, 'Preface', *Sir Patient Fancy* (London, 1678) pp. 5-81, p 5.

¹²⁵ WAB Volume 7, 'Preface', *The Lucky Chance* (London, 1686) pp 211-284, p 215.

greater social ramifications for lower-class women who transgress from their assigned roles. Hellena says in *The Rover*'s (1677) opening act,

And dost thou think that ever I'll be a nun? Or at least till I'm so old I'm fit for nothing else? Faith no, sister; and that which makes me long to know whether you love Belvile, is because I hope he has some mad companion or other that will spoil my devotion. (*The Rover*, I.i.30-33)

Concerning marriage, Angelica Bianca also argues against the role of economically incentivized marriage, 'When a lady is proposed to you for a wife, you never ask how fair, discreet, or virtuous she is, but what's her fortune'. (*The Rover*, II.ii.359) While I still view *The Rover* (1677) as retaining much of the libertine wit and even alluding to some ideological appropriation of libertinism by the female cast. Angellica Bianca's, Hellena's, and Willmore's libertine rhetoric function as actual displays of wit and show Behn's literary skill to be superior to Killigrew's clumsy confluence of libertine ideology with royalist politics.

The Rake's function as a political tool

Two character-types that feature prominently in libertine texts are rakes and prostitutes, both of which Behn and Killigrew use heavily in their respective plays. High class courtesans, reminiscent of Aretino's Nana from *I Ragionamenti* (1534), such as Angellica Bianca, and lower class prostitutes common to Turner's low libertine aesthetic, such as Lucetta, feature in both *Thomaso* (1663) and *The Rover* (1677). Courtesans, recalling the *cortegiana honesta* trope, function as a love interest for the rake because they can participate in the rake's free exercise of sexuality but have no expectations of constancy. Behn subverts the trop by giving Angellica Bianca the desire for constancy from Willmore after he vows to love her. The character's desire for love is then transmuted into a desire for revenge after Willmore is revealed as a consummate libertine. Though Killigrew's Angellica shares some semblance of jealousy for Thomaso's similar betrayal, she accepts the reality of her situation and retires to Venice without a confrontation, thus preserving the fantasy of unrepentant libertinism that *Thomaso* (1663) creates. *The Rover* (1677) also allows Willmore his unjust rewards in the dénouement. However, the consequences that his actions have on others, particularly the women he seduces, complicates the original libertine fantasy. The climatic confrontation between Willmore and Angellica Bianca emasculates the rake and, while it is a far more successfully comical application of threats of violence than what Nevitt suggests Killigrew does with Serulina's rapes in *Thomaso* (1663), the confrontation between the characters reveals Angellica's humanity despite her vocation. Willmore is rendered ridiculous when he attempts to bargain for his life with flattery, raillery, and finally belated payment. For possibly the first time in his life, he is completely at the mercy of a

woman. *The Rover* (1677) is prevented from becoming a tragedy because a prostitute's vows of love are shown to be real, while the courtier is proven to be a liar. Angellica Bianca cannot murder Willmore because she really does love him, despite her abject status. Willmore is without honour, despite being an aristocrat. After Angellica Bianca exits the play, Behn once again revisits the rake making vows, vows that the audience recognises as more false promises from a profligate rake. Though Hellena and Willmore marry, their negotiation and vows mirror Angellica Bianca's and Willmore's from Act II, scene ii, further reinforcing that the couple's happiness will be short-lived.

The differences in the interactions between the female cast and the rake in *The Rover* from *Thomaso* emphasises the inequality of women's participation in libertine performance by further elaborating on Aretino's sixteenth-century contributions to libertine discourse, cited by the Court Wits and Killigrew. Behn's alterations subverts Killigrew's masculine power fantasy and secondary libertine performance. As Spencer explains, 'Behn undercuts Killigrew's self-indulgent vision of an ever successful, yet fundamentally honourable, rake [...] Willmore [is] [...] both violent and foolish, he is robbed of most of Thomaso's abundant heroic dignity.' (Spencer, 196)

The previous chapter discussed Behn's and Killigrew's links to their authorial ciphers, this section shows that that association is further used to engage with this older libertine discourse centered around the depiction of libertine rakes and women, through the three depressingly similar roles they are allotted in libertine texts. Killigrew illustrates his knowledge of libertinism. Behn appropriates this knowledge, as she did *Thomaso* (1663), and rewrites it with a shift in focus from a masculine view of libertine sexual

conquests to a feminocentric view of the consequences of women's exercise of libertinism, whether it is the free exercise of sexuality or limited to verbal discourse.

In both versions of the play, Angellica Bianca's role as a *cortegiana honesta* emphasises the rake's libertinism: he is witty enough to seduce a woman with promises of love while other competing men must pay her money to have sex with her. What Behn and Killigrew focus upon in each version of the character is what makes her character a *cortegiana honesta*. For Killigrew, it is her good nature and understanding that she cannot make demands of the courtiers because she is a courtesan. For Behn, she humanises Angellica Bianca in *The Rover* (1677) and raises her to a tragic heroine. Because Angellica Bianca was already considered sexually transgressive due to her vocation it was more acceptable for her to be abandoned to make room for Willmore's marriage to the socially appropriate, and now virginal, Hellena in *The Rover's* (1677) dénouement. Todd explains,

Angellica Bianca is denied the hero: the message of her portrait is too frank, too crude. Had she worn it close to her face as a mask, matters might have been different, but instead she chose to distance it and to draw attention to its construction. The action was conscious, blatant, unfeminine and professional. (*Sign of Angellica*, 1)

This argument suggests that in addition to 'wearing' her profession as a mask, Angellica Bianca wore her libertinism too visibly. One needs to only read poems such as 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673), to see libertinism, as a practice rather than abstract

philosophy, is shown to be an unacceptable appropriation of masculine power when enacted by women. Turner further supports what Todd argues in regard to Angellica Bianca's professionalism, explaining that, 'Transgressively "public" women provide an unstable mixture of erotic worship and indignation in the respectable imagination, and consequently serve as figures for dubious authority in other spheres – living embodiments of passion ruling reason, tail ruling head, women ruling men'. (*Libertines and Radicals*, p. 14) In *the Rover* (1677), Hellena espouses libertine ideas, Angellica Bianca follows through with them.

While Behn's 1680s prose fiction explores female libertinism in greater detail, Angellica Bianca's embrace of sexual freedom with Willmore outside the protections of either a financial or a marital contract stops short of depicting her appropriation of her lover's cavalier attitudes toward sexual fidelity. For these transgressions, to society, since she is unchaste or 'unfeminine', and to her profession, because she devalues her services, Angellica Bianca is 'punished'. While this thesis project agrees with Todd's assessment that Angellica Bianca is revealed to be 'conscious, blatant, unfeminine and professional' by hanging her portrait, these masculine traits are destroyed in *The Rover's* (1677) final act; Angellica Bianca's previous autonomy and professionalism are stripped from her because of Willmore's actions. Here the suggestion is that because *The Rover* (1677) contrasts Angellica Bianca's libertine practices against Hellena's theoretical libertinism, Behn is able to restore the *cortegiana honesta's* humanity and the tragedy of her role in libertine discourse in a way Killigrew does not and cannot. Spencer elaborates, describing Angellica Bianca's character in *Thomaso* as being 'depicted with sympathy [...] her cutting speeches against the sexual double standard give voice to a feminist complaint,

but in the dramatic action she is ‘the good-natured whore written large’. (Spencer, 197)

Behn expands Angellica Bianca’s criticisms of virtue and the social valuation of sexual exclusivity significantly in *The Rover* (1677) and whereas I do not feel Killigrew depicts her holding her own against Thomaso in any of their verbal exchanges; Behn does between Angellica Bianca and Willmore. The quote Spencer uses, from Jones DeRitter’s ‘The Gypsy, “The Rover”, and the Wanderer: Aphra Behn’s Revision of Thomas Killigrew’ (1986) labels Angellica Bianca as ‘the good natured whore written large’, I suggest further underlines the masculine fantasy of libertinism’s *cortegiana honesta* that Behn subverts throughout her career.¹²⁶

Behn uses the *cortegiana honesta* and pairs her against the would-be nun Hellena, as romantic rivals. Angellica Bianca and Hellena represent two of the three ‘postures’ for women from Aretino’s *Il Ragionamenti* (1534): nun, wife, and whore. This is not coincidental. Behn fully develops several of Killigrew’s female characters based on small details, such as Hellena’s promotion to young virgin from old prostitute, and Angellica Bianca’s elevation into a tragic heroine from that of a libertine plot device. Aretino is referenced by name in *Thomaso* Part II (1663) as a direct commentary on the prostitute, Paulina’s, resolve to enter a convent which Thomaso remarks is a futile gesture of ‘living honestly’ since nunneries are ‘where Aretine should be made an ass, and blush the publishing of his dull postures, compar’d to the ingenious lust that’s practis’d in their cells.’ (*Thomaso*, II, V.vii) Since Aretino’s *The Secret lives of Nuns* (1534) is a pornographic depiction of convents as brothels, the embedded misogynistic commentary

¹²⁶ Jones DeRitter, ‘The Gypsy, “The Rover”, and the Wanderer: Aphra Behn’s Revision of Thomas Killigrew’, *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700* 10.2 (1986): pp. 82–92, p. 88.

is that there is scant difference between a nun and a whore. Behn completes Killigrew's allusion to Aretino and attacks its conclusion by adding Hellena and Willmore's marriage vows of infidelity. Thus, Behn depicts, as Aretino does, the reality of early-modern women's lives. Her criticism is that men create these categories for women whereas Aretino, and many libertines, depict them as natural conclusions. Whether nun, wife, or prostitute women's sexuality is determined by the men in their lives. However, as a courtesan, or, I suggest, female rake, there is some small semblance of autonomy because their money is their own.

The Rover (1677) challenges the rake's heroic role and changes its conclusion from the comedic ending of *Thomaso* (1663) to the bitter-sweet tragicomedy of *The Rover* (177). This is created by Behn with what Spencer notes as the addition of pathos to Angellica Bianca's fate,

Productions of the play are likely to have emphasized the pathos of Angellica's position during this period, when she was played by famous tragic actresses including Mary Porter and Elizabeth Barry; and when Barry played the role, her fame made Angellica the star attraction of the play. (Spencer, p. 190)

Yet even in *The Rover* (1677), Angellica Bianca's profession is still railed against by Willmore,

Angellica: I sent for you to ask my pardon, sir, not to aggravate your crime. I thought I should have seen you at my feet imploring it.

Willmore: You are deceived. I came to rail at you, and rail such truths too, as shall let you see the vanity of that pride which taught you how to set such price on sin. For such it is whilst that which is love's due is meanly bartered for. (*The Rover*, II.ii.283-285)

Even after negotiating constancy and sexual intimacy in the previous scene, Angellica Bianca is never free from Willmore's verbal chastisement. She is railed at once again in Act V, scene I for her success in her profession. Willmore describes Angellica Bianca's previous patron in their final confrontation as a relationship akin to marriage, and his actions on par with that of making her client a cuckold, arguing:

This old general has quite spoiled thee: nothing makes a woman so vain as being flattered. Your old lover ever supplies the defects of age with intolerable dotage, vast charge, and that which you call constancy; and attributing all this to your own merits you domineer, and throw your favors in's teeth, upbraiding him still with the defects of age, and cuckold him as often as he deceives your expectations. But the gay, young, brisk lover, that brings his equal fires, and can give you dart for dart, he'll be as nice as you sometimes. (*The Rover*, V.i.255-262)

This is important because in both *Thomaso* (1663) and *The Rover* (1677) the rake's libertinism and rejection of marriage is used against the character. However, in *The Rover* (1677) Behn makes the libertine rejection of constancy more explicitly far-reaching and ruinous. In the same scene, her naivety is mocked by Willmore, whom Angellica Bianca has instructed to follow 'the pistol to his breast' whilst rebutting his arguments,

Broke my vow? Why, where has thou lived? Amongst the gods? For I never heard of mortal man that has not broke a thousand vows' only following with 'that beauty has been too long tempting, not to have made a thousand lovers languish; who, in the amorous fever, no doubt have sworn like me. Did they all die in that faith still adoring? I do not think they did. (*The Rover*, V.i.244-246; 248-252)

Willmore accuses a prostitute of acting like a wife, which renders his eventual marriage to Hellena even more cynical and problematic. If Angellica Bianca, a literal prostitute, by Willmore's own words, can 'cuckold' a man by sleeping with libertines who 'can give you dart for dart', Behn has made a careful, but scathing criticism of the impossibility of women to maintain virtue and freedom in their interactions with men. More troubling still, the interactions depicted by Behn are between aristocratic women and the highest level of the 'whore's hierarchy' a courtesan. If women at such high levels of the social strata, with the freedoms afforded to them by their station cannot demand autonomy free from judgement, what chance do lower class and women of colour have in Behn's society. Though Behn's depiction here is of a proto-feminist argument for women's relative freedom to choose the course of their lives, it is a limited interpretation of feminism that purposely ignores all other women's experiences as valid and in keeping with high libertine discourse, almost exclusively engages with aristocratic interests.

Angellica Bianca argues against the hypocrisy of Willmore's frustrated arguments when, due to his lack of money, cannot purchase her for the whole month as she has advertised. Willmore reasons thus,

Yes I am poor. But I am a gentleman,
And one that scorns this baseness which you practice.
Poor as I am I would not sell myself,

(The Rover, II.ii.320-322)

Willmore conveniently ignores that he is a cavalier in exile, loyal to a poor monarch, and whose aristocratic station has little monetary value. Angellica Bianca counters his abuse by equating her business with the marriage market. Unlike Willmore's accusations in Act V, Act II makes the equation between prostitution and marriage *via* Angellica Bianca's lines of dialogue. However, unlike Willmore's later allegation that Angellica Bianca is as incompatible with his libertinism as a wife would be, she counters with an argument against his hypocrisy. She says,

Angellica: Pray tell me, sir, are you not guilty of the same mercenary crime? When a lady is proposed to you for a wife, you never ask how fair, discreet, or virtuous she is, but what's her fortune; which, if but small, you cry 'she will not do my business,' and basely leave her, though she languish for you. Say, 'is not this as poor?' (*The Rover, II.ii.357-361*)

Willmore responds to this that it 'is a barbarous custom, which I will scorn to defend in our sex, and do despise in yours,' and this line speaks as strongly of libertine views on marriage as it does the undercurrent of misogyny within seventeenth-century society. Though Behn has appropriated the character from a male playwright and courtier, the

frustration and rage the character is imbued with serves to emphasise that privilege which the character Willmore takes for granted and that the Court Wits who occupied the pit and patronized Behn's plays likewise did.

Behn used the implausible naivety of Angellica Bianca to force Willmore's betrayal to the foreground of the narrative in Act V. The confrontation is one of Behn's original contributions to *The Rover* (1677), along with Hellena, and is the only moment in the play where a woman is presented as a legitimate threat able to exercise power over Willmore. Killigrew preserved Thomaso's dignity by truncating Angellica Bianca's revenge and having her declare her enduring love of the rake. Admittedly, even Behn allows Willmore to survive his encounter because the character's tragic love forces her to forgive Willmore's inconstancy. This ironically depicts the Italian prostitute to be nobler than the English Cavalier and recalls Willmore's earlier assessment of the local population's libertinism,

Belvile: What think you of these grave people? Is a wake in Essex half so mad or extravagant?

Willmore: I like their sober grave way; 'tis a kind of legal authorized fornication, where the men are not chid for't, nor the women despised, as amongst our dull English. Even the monsieurs want that part of good manners. (*The Rover*, I.ii.109-114)

Behn foreshadows her criticisms and Willmore's hypocrisy early in the play. '[Nor] the women despised, as amongst our dull English' further complicates readings of *The Rover* (1677) as being neither 'too political' nor 'too libertine' in comparison to *Thomaso* (1663). Compared to Killigrew's Angellica reaffirming the rake's masculinity, *The Rover*

(1677) shows ‘Behn’s Angellica, by contrast, [leaving] the hero looking foolish, even though she does not carry out her threat to shoot him.’ (Spencer, p. 197) Admittedly, the depiction of a courtesan murdering the popular Restoration rake-hero would not likely have been applauded by the Court Wits. However, the scene is a more satisfying exit for the character compared to Killigrew’s version.

In stark contrast to *The Rover*’s (1677) vengeful ‘virago’, Killigrew’s courtesan is unrealistically accepting of the rake’s inconstancy and allows his marriage to Serulina to go unchallenged. (*The Rover*, V.i.210) Saretta and the foppish Edwardo are confused by her forgiveness,

Edwardo: Yes faith, the Gentlewoman is gone; and that damn’d Souldier [Thomaso] has all to be married her by this time; What a fool ‘tis, to neglect the *Angellica* for *Serulina* There’s not above two hundred thousand Crowns to book; Nay, nay, be no angry sweet heart, nor do not frown, wee’ll find thee another man.

Angellica: Fools cannot Anger me, especially Stript, beaten, couzen’d fools; I despise their Anger and their praise; and ‘twas all my Quarrel with Thomaso, for keeping such mouthes company, such Monster-Mongers; and he was in the right in his answer; Alas, what can one expect from Hobynoles, that are cut out of Fools Tynber? [...]

Saretta: No matter, would thy heart were burst with Envy, or with Grief; and may thy Love turn to as great a mischief to thy self, as it has been a Curse to us. (*Thomaso*, I, V.iii)

To Killigrew’s credit, his version of Angellica Bianca reveals herself to be intelligent and not easily swayed by the false flattery of a fop, and she immediately counters with ‘Fools cannot anger me [...] ‘twas all my Quarrel with Thomaso, for keeping such mouthes

company' which though a lie, showcases her wit as comparable to the rake's.¹²⁷ Saretta's assessment is shown to be closer to the reality of the situation, though this prophesy, 'may thy Love turn to as great a mischief to thy self, as it has been a Curse too us', is only brought to fruition in *The Rover* (1677). Though unsatisfyingly passive, Killigrew's Angellica Bianca is consistently depicted as noble in moments such as the exchange with Edwardo and Saretta. Despite her nobility, or perhaps because of it, Weber argues that Angellica Bianca is Thomaso's 'feminine mirror' and that this comparison in their roles leads to his necessary reformation at the end of the play. Weber says:

Thomaso certainly distances himself from Angellica, who finally does not share his "gallant temper," but he does perceive her as a distorted image of himself; her extravagant sexuality matches his own, while her refusal to restrict her freedom by marrying shows him his own future should he not "seek a nest ere Age and Diseases find us." Thomaso's speech implicitly recognizes that Angellica's life and sexuality represent, not the Other, but a version of the male Self. (Weber, p. 157)

The emphasis on the rake distancing himself *from himself* as a motivating factor for reformation through marriage is a valid description of Thomaso's decision to marry Serulina. Paulina remarks upon Angellica Bianca's mercy that 'I was amaz'd at nothing more than to hear them brag that you would joyn in the Murther of one you lov'd', which appears to work against Weber's argument that she 'does not share his "gallant temper"'.

¹²⁷ A major change Behn makes in *The Rover* (1677) is the revision of Killigrew's rake into a more obvious foil of the fop as is seen in several examples of 1670s drama and is missing from *Thomaso* (1663). Kachur has suggested that Dorimant and Sir Fopling Flutterer in *The Man of Mode* (1676) are two sides of the same coin. (Kachur, pp. 122-6)

(*Thomaso*, II, III.vii) However, the argument that ‘*Thomaso* [...] implicitly recognizes that Angellica’s life and sexuality represent [...] a version of the male Self’ is interesting. As scholars, such as Todd, have remarked upon, Behn appropriates Angellica Bianca as an authorial cipher. Behn also claims her pen to be ‘her most masculine part’. As this thesis-project and the last few chapters have argued, the rake *Thomaso*, in addition to Killigrew’s named-cameo in Act V, is also an authorial cipher of Killigrew. If we read Angellica Bianca as representative of Behn’s career and engagement with libertine discourse, and the character *Thomaso* as an extension of Killigrew’s libertine performance, Behn had essentially written herself as a female mirror of Killigrew. As this relates to libertine performance and this thesis, Behn’s appropriations from Killigrew’s work are extensive, up to and including his libertine performance.

After his seduction of Angellica, and as a result of her accusations of his inconstancy, both her profession and her constancy are turned against her by Willmore. (*The Rover*, V.i.255-262) While it is not out of character for the rake to be scornful of marriage in libertine texts, Behn’s expansion of these exchanges between Angellica Bianca and Willmore simultaneously criticise marriage markets and the rake’s abuses of power over women. By including Willmore’s railing against the hypocrisy of marriage customs and prostitution, because he cannot afford either, Behn recreates the effect of Killigrew’s *Thomaso* while preserving Angellica Bianca’s humanity. Behn depicts Angellica Bianca’s inner conflict by showing her desire for revenge and her impotence in exercising it by failing to follow through with shooting Willmore. Instead, she saves his life at the cost of her dignity and freedom to choose her suitor,

Angellica: [*Pointing to Willmore*]

And this, 'twas thus he talked, and I believed. Antonio, yesterday I'd not have sold my interest in his heart For all the sword has won and lost in battle. - But now, to show my utmost of contempt, I give thee life; which, if thou wouldst preserve, Live where my eyes may never see thee more. Live to undo someone whose soul may prove So bravely constant to revenge my love. (*The Rover*, V.i.329-337)

In contrast, Killigrew's courtesan condemns herself with her dialogue, 'once a whore and ever' while Behn's heroine is condemned by her actions, she fails to either shoot herself or allow Don Antonio to shoot Willmore. Instead, she nobly trades her happiness for Willmore's and exits with a new patron and remains a whore. Neither play's outcome is a 'good' ending. However, Behn's emphasis on Angellica Bianca's betrayal and noble sacrifice grant the character more agency over her fate than depicted in the original *Thomaso* (1663).

In *The Rover* (1677), Angellica Bianca tries and fails to 'win' Willmore while in *Thomaso* (1663) her words seal her fate before the sexual betrayal happens,

You have reason, Sir; and I am pleas'd to find such Honour in your heart; But your truths are a knowledge I have learn'd too late: And to afflict my self with the consideration of that which cannot be remedied is second folly; Onely (once a whore and ever) is the world adage; yet there may be degrees of ill; and I am vain enough to believe, though I am not a good woman, I am not an ill Mistress. (*Thomaso*, I, III.iv)

Indeed, both versions reveal themselves as adept at matching the rake's priapic witticisms, but Killigrew terminates Angellica Bianca's progression at this verbal appropriation and more than anything this oversight is the missed opportunity that elevates Behn's. Weber argues that since the character functions as a mirror to Thomaso's libertinism, the character transformation emphasised in Killigrew's play is that of the rake. Thus, by humanising the courtesan and granting her pathos, as Behn does, she undoes in *The Rover* what Killigrew attempts in *Thomaso*. Weber says,

Thomaso's rejection of his youthful follies is, of course, characteristic of the extravagant rake. Yet Killigrew's ability to make this transformation psychologically compelling is something few Restoration dramatists could imitate. [...] too often the rake's repentance is nothing more than a necessary dramatic convention, occasioned not by the psychological needs of the character but by the proximity of the fifth-act curtain. Behn's adaptation of Killigrew's play provides a perfect example, for Behn's hero, Willmore, changes from committed rake to a devoted husband in mid-speech. But in presenting Angellica as a libertine mirror of Thomaso, Killigrew makes plausible the latter's reformation because it stems from Thomaso's recognition of what he might become if he refuses to give up his youthful humor. (Weber, p. 157)

Killigrew's Angellica Bianca is used to provide an example to the male characters of the unsustainability of the libertine lifestyle. While Behn comments on women's truncated ability to engage in the social and sexual freedoms of their male peers, and against the abuses enacted upon them by predatory libertines, Killigrew argues that while libertinism is enjoyable, it is ultimately short lived and must be abandoned in favour of reintegration into what society views as acceptable levels of sexual engagement within the confines of

a marriage. Weber's interpretation, which does give a narrative reason for Killigrew's neglect in developing Angellica Bianca beyond the trope of the 'good natured whore', foreshadows many of the texts produced in the late 1670s and 1680s that grow cynical of libertinism and argue for the same reintegration Weber discusses.

The focus on Thomaso's development and sincere reformation further support Killigrew's association with the rake and his subsequent reformation. Killigrew's libertinism does not appear to have continued at Charles II's restored court where Pepys observed his antagonistic relationship with Rochester and other Court Wits.¹²⁸ Weber's argument hinges on the rake's redemption as wholly genuine which even in *Thomaso* (1663) is difficult considering his avowed libertinism throughout the majority of the play. Ultimately, the difference in the development of these 'mirrored' figures, Angellica Bianca, the courtesan, and Thomaso, the rake, is determined by the authors' self-association with them. Killigrew aligns himself with his libertine rake, and, indeed, engages in libertinism himself, and thus develops the character as an ideal depiction of the Extravagant rake and as fully capable of reintegration before his lifestyle could catch up with him. Alternatively, Behn's association with an entrepreneurial female libertine supports her development of Angellica Bianca from a *cortegiana honesta* and into a

¹²⁸ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, entry from 17 February 1698/1669: 'The King dining yesterday at the Dutch Ambassador's, after dinner they drank, and were pretty merry; and, among the rest of the King's company, there was that worthy fellow my lord of Rochester, and Tom Killigrew, whose mirth and raillery offended the former so much, that he did give Tom Killigrew a box on the ear in the King's presence, which do much give offence to the people here at Court, to see how cheap the King makes himself, and the more, for that the King hath not only passed by the thing, and pardoned it to Rochester already, but this very morning the King did publicly walk up and down, and Rochester I saw with him as free as ever, to the King's everlasting shame, to have so idle a rogue his companion. How Tom Killigrew takes it I do not hear.' (*sic.*)

tragic example of an impossible double-standard faced by women broadly and ‘transgressively public women’, such as herself, specifically.

By concentrating Angellica Bianca and Hellena’s interactions with the rake around marriage and sex, Behn enables virtuous characters, such as Hellena, to discuss their sexual desires without compromising their perceived virtue *via* the use of double entendre. Pat Gill explains this common feature of Restoration comedy as,

the coincidence of female (mis)interpretation and female sexual duplicity cannot be disentangled or dismissed: in Restoration comedy, the moral indeterminacy and slippage in satiric language is both a metaphor for and a metonymy of male uneasiness about female honesty and the related discomfort with the discursive components of social identity.¹²⁹

Notably, both Angellica Bianca’s and Hellena’s interactions with Willmore engage with libertine rhetoric to different ends, with the one who best appropriates the rake’s language ultimately ‘winning’ Willmore, as dubious a prize as that may be. There is no witty Hellena for him to verbally ‘spar’ with in *Thomaso* (1663), and while *Thomaso*’s meeting with Angellica Bianca is the same as it is in *The Rover* (1677), the lack of resolution to their relationship or climactic exchange like we see in Behn’s version makes their initial meeting another set-piece to showcase the rake’s libertinage.

Spencer discusses Hellena’s ‘rescue’ from her original role as a whore in *Thomaso* (1663) to an heiress in *The Rover* (1677). Behn imbues the character with some

¹²⁹ Pat Gill, *Interpreting Ladies: Women, Wit, and Morality in the Restoration Comedy of Manners* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1950), p. 19.

masculine traits that embrace the verbal sparring as a substitute for the depiction of sex, which she cannot give Willmore without compromising her virtue. Gill's statement that 'the moral indeterminacy and slippage in satiric language is both a metaphor for and a metonymy of male uneasiness about female honesty' is seen in the character, whom the audience knows to be a virgin, and the rake assumes to be a prostitute. Furthermore, Hellena's espousal of libertine ideas intrigues Willmore even as her actions bar him from testing her libertinism by seducing her into sexual relations. Spencer says,

Restoring youth and beauty and turning her into the heroine, she makes Hellena assertive and dramatically dominant, giving her smutty lines from one of the male characters in *Thomaso* and from the servant Callis, allowing her to reduce her arrogant brother to inarticulate anger, letting her witness and comment on Willmore's activities. She offers, perhaps, the fantasy of a powerful heroine to counteract the fantasy of the all-powerful rake offered by Killigrew. (Spencer, p. 197)

Because Angellica Bianca's exchanges with Willmore are clearly sexual negotiations which are then consummated offstage (*The Rover*, II.ii), Hellena's are coded displays of her libertine wit play with Willmore's misunderstanding and the audiences' recognition that she is not, in fact, a prostitute. By giving the virgin lines taken from the libertine cavaliers in *Thomaso* (1663), like Behn herself, Hellena reveals herself to be attracted to libertine ideology but unable to fully engage with it. She does not want to be forced into marriage. However, unlike Angellica Bianca's publicly transgressive sexuality, Hellena's coded libertinism is the safer of the two female libertine interpretations. Hellena's ability to fulfil 'the fantasy of a powerful heroine to counteract the fantasy of the all-powerful

rake offered by Killigrew' is possible because her libertinism, expressed only through her dialogue, can conceal and reveal depending on the audience's understanding of the double-entendre she employs.

Behn and Killigrew use both rakes and courtesans in their plays to different socio-political ends. Behn's agenda in *The Rover* (1677) is clear. The marriage market is unfair and mercenary, which is antithetical to libertinism's free embrace of sexuality. The exercise of libertinism as a practice beyond a purely ideological framework, as seen in Hellena's characterisation, was impossible for women without bringing them to social and financial ruin, as is visible in Angellica Bianca's tragic narrative arc. *The Rover* (1677) unequivocally shows that female libertinism, while attractive, is limited in contrast to their male peers. Hellena, because she renders herself sexually transgressive by disguising herself and engaging Willmore in verbal exchanges of libertinism is compelled to marry Willmore or risk social ruin like her co-heroine, Angellica Bianca.

In Act I, Scene i, Behn gives Hellena's motivations for disguising herself as a desire to experience love before she is forced into a convent by her brother. This storyline is original to Behn and replaces Killigrew's long introduction to Thomaso and his companions, later rewriting the cavalier's explorations into a 'meet-cute' with the female cast at Carnival. In this scene Behn plays up the double entendre in her dialogue to play upon the dual meaning of 'love' as meaning both romantic love and as a euphemism for sexual intimacy. This is used frequently in Hellena's verbal exchanges with Willmore,

Hellena: I perceive, good Father Captain, you design only to make me fit for heaven. But if, on the contrary, you should quite divert me from it, and bring me back to the world

again, I should have a new man to seek, I find. And what a grief that will be; for when I begin, I fancy I shall love like anything; I never tried yet.

Willmore: Egad, and that's kind" Prithee, dear creature, give me credit for a heart, for faith, I'm a very honest fellow. Oh, I long to come first to the banquet of love! And such a swinging appetite I bring. Oh, I'm impatient. Thy lodging, sweetheart, thy lodging, or I'm a dead man!

(*The Rover*, I.ii.177-189)

This verbal exchange between the gay couple uses to full effect double entendre, making it clear that Willmore is vying for sex and the idea does not entirely repulse Hellena. Because in *The Rover* (1677), Hellena is a young virgin instead of an old courtesan, unlike Angellica Bianca she cannot engage in sex despite her apparent desire for it. Instead, Behn uses their dialogue to show their complimentary wits and play upon the sexual tension between the characters. This exchange also plays into the Restoration concept that the 'good' women in the audience would only understand the first meaning. Hellena is curious about romantic love but has 'never tried it'. This exchange likewise reveals Hellena to be the more proficient wit as her lines use double entendre while Willmore's are raunchy. Though comedic, 'such a swinging appetite I bring' is a none-to-subtle allusion to his priapism, the rake deliberately ignores Hellena's pretention to virtue and reads the libertinism coded into her double-speak on love as a proposition for sex if his wit can match hers.

Chapter VI: Unstable Gender categories in Behn's Prose

Weber writes in *The Restoration Rake Hero* that 'the penis might be linked to the devil, the vagina could become hell itself' (Weber, p. 26) The above quotation taken from references the pre-Restoration association between sexual activity and demonic influences. Weber's work discusses the shift in sexual politics and their representation on the Restoration stage, noting that during 'the Restoration the types of sexual freedom imaginatively as well as socially available to men and women differed greatly.' (Weber, p. 11) The difference between sexual freedom between men and women is a topic repeatedly addressed by Behn in her oeuvre. Weber's observation that pre-Restoration and Puritanical views of human sexuality link the 'penis [...] to the devil' and the 'vagina [to] hell itself' does not differ greatly from libertine representations of genitalia. One needs only to read any of Rochester's compositions to find a libertine description of the vagina as a paradoxical source of pleasure and torment. These gendered divisions between male and female sexual representations in literature provide a useful dichotomy for discussing the representations of the male and female rakes in early modern prose fiction and novels. Though Weber's work predominantly discusses the depiction and function of 1670s stage rakes, the differences between male and female rakes applies to their similar role in Behn's 1680s transition from stage dramas to prose fiction. Backscheider explains some of the rationale behind Behn's continually evolving career, stating that 'Behn had to work within the same kinds of forms and conventions that gave aspiring male authors access to publication and production.' (Backscheider, p. 83)

Behn's female protagonist in the series *Love Letters* (1684-7), Sylvia, eventually rises to becoming a rake. This chapter discusses Behn's shifting libertine discourse and the rise of the female libertine rake in prose fiction. Though the rake figure is a stock libertine character, they are almost always gendered male. Behn's *Love Letter's* (1684-7) is one of the first forays into clear female libertine engagement. Regarding specifically female rakes, Weber says,

The female rake must differ from her male counterpart, for the male takes his definition precisely from those social conceptions that assume male aggression and enforce female passivity. Yet Restoration comedy presents a select number of women determined to enjoy the sexual freedoms available to men. The career of the female rake [...] reveals just how men understood women as sexual beings, for the female rake exists as a projection of the ambivalent feelings aroused in men by female eroticism. (Weber, p. 11)

Since the 'female rake must differ from her male counterpart' due to the male rake's identification with masculine sexual aggression. This chapter agrees with Weber that most libertine texts present 'the female rake ... as a projection of the ambivalent feelings aroused in men by female eroticism'. Even within Behn's oeuvre, female eroticism titillates as much as it criticises the relegation of women to sexual passivity. However, I suggest that Behn's movement away from Restoration drama and into prose fiction develops the female rake into a clearly active participant who enacts her libertine performance. Sylvia becomes more than a 'projection' of masculine sexual fantasy and fear. Behn's interpretation of a female rake can still be viewed as 'passive' as she develops her libertinism as a direct result of her lover's seduction. However, this project suggests that by assuming the 'devilish' and 'aggressive' masculine aspects of the rakish

performance Sylvia develops a libertine identity independent from her lover, Philander, and evolves beyond her beginnings as a 'projection' of Philander's 'ambivalent feelings' towards female sexuality. This chapter focuses specifically on Behn's evolving libertinism and the development and depiction of lady rakes in the 1680s. The first two sections of this chapter discuss how women's interpretations of libertinism are complicated by what Linker identifies as libertinism's paradoxical desire for masculine power over women, while purporting to value personal freedoms. (*Dangerous Women*, p. 3)

Furthermore, I suggest that the historical context in which *Love Letters* was written its serial publication allows Behn a political backdrop to better explore the growing political division after the events of the Monmouth Rebellion (1685). I argue that Behn depicts Sylvia's libertinism as pragmatic and contrasts this against her lover, Philander's, more traditional libertine engagement. I suggest that Behn's depiction of female libertinism is complex and engages in a critique of libertinism and the gendered norms of seventeenth century English society by depicting a sympathetic, though unrepentant, lady rake whose libertine performance meets and exceeds that of her male counterpart. Vivien Jones's 'The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature' argues that later eighteenth century incarnations of the rake placed a greater emphasis on the class and economic divisions between the rake and his partner, thus changing the narrative from the Restoration's pro-monarchical stance to the cautionary tone of eighteenth century conduct literature.¹³⁰ Jones explains,

¹³⁰ Vivien Jones, 'The Seductions of Conduct: Pleasure and Conduct Literature', *Pleasure in the Eighteenth-Century*, ed. Roy Porter and Marie Pulvey Roberts, (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 1996), pp. 108-32.

The seduction plot, in which vulnerable femininity is betrayed into ruin by socially superior masculinity, is a founding bourgeois myth. In warning against that tragic story, against ‘the snares of a seducer’ as told in the novels of Eliza Haywood [Behn’s literary progeny] for example, conduct literature also evokes its comedic opposite: the upward trajectory of Richardson’s heroine in *Pamela*, who withstands Mr B’s threats, to achieve spectacular social success. This sexual narrative imagines the possibility of taming, and so controlling, the social and economic power represented by the morally reprehensible libertine. (Jones, p. 117-8.)

As the previous chapter discussed, on the Restoration stage, the virginal love interest was depicted as of the same social class as the aristocratic rake. Generally, the rake’s sexual conquests are from a lower social stratum or, as it is in *The Rover* (1677) and *Thomaso* (1663), prostitutes. Scholars, such as Stewart, have argued that the emphasis on class distinction served to excuse the depictions of sexual assault by the Restoration rake ‘hero’. (Stewart, pp. 89-90) As seen in eighteenth and nineteenth century novels, the social and economic divisions are reintroduced as elements used to further emphasise the power struggle between the rake and women. In *Love Letters* (1684-7), Behn retains the 1670s dramaturgical convention of the lovers as aristocrats. However, the libertine performances enacted by Sylvia and Philander diverge. This division between the lovers marks the point within the series where social status and economic concerns factor into each rake’s reconciliation of their libertinism with socially acceptable codes of conduct. Linker explains the prevalence of women libertines in the late seventeenth century is linked to the rise of the novel of sensibility and amatory fiction in the long eighteenth century. These fluid literary modes gave women authors the opportunity to freely engage with libertine discourse. Linker writes,

Satirists, most of them male, frequently targeted female libertines in poems or plays during the 1670s and early 1680s. By the end of the seventeenth century, more sympathetic female authors began to feature libertine heroines in a different, more fluid literary mode that they found better suited to exploring their heroines' emotional and erotic desires, fiction. Their interest in the female libertine directly resulted in the creation of the novel of sensibility in the late seventeenth century. (*Dangerous Women*, p. 2)

Besides Linker's contributions to discussions of female libertines, Ros Ballaster's

Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740 (1992) and Jacqueline

Pearson in *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women & Women Dramatists 1642-1737*

also discuss libertinism's links to amatory fiction in the seventeenth century.^{131 132}

However, *Seductive Forms* (1992) and *The Prostituted Muse* (1988) do not specifically

focus on female libertinism as *Dangerous Women* (2011), and *The Restoration Rake-*

Hero (1986) do. Sylvia appropriates Philander's libertine rhetoric to facilitate her

appropriation of the rake's performance throughout *Love Letters* (1684-7) and eventually

develops her libertinism into a pragmatic autonomous performance of her own creation.

Backscheider in *Spectacular Politics* (1993) points out that,

When Behn and other women writers began to modify representation, they were participating in a hegemonic process. Specifically, they were re-negotiating elements of the patriarchal ideology such as "woman" and woman's "place" as well as things of crucial importance for women's lives such as "satisfactory courtship," "good marriage," and options for single women. (Backscheider, p. 83)

¹³¹ Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)

¹³² Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women & Women Dramatists 1642-1737* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988)

Sylvia's female libertine modification is not a re-negotiation in favour of her continued participation within aristocratic society. In many ways, Sylvia's revisioning of Philander's libertine performance subverts the rake's expected character arch and, this chapter argues, exposes the gendered ideological flaws within libertine discourse that Behn rails against throughout her career. Ultimately, as this chapter will show, women's reintegration back into society is impossible once they give up their 'virtue of necessity' and their libertine performance progresses beyond a theoretical exercise and into actual appropriate of male sexual freedoms.

Linker views these element of Sylvia's character as a further commentary on libertinism's misogyny, which isolates women from regular society, and I suggest, serves to discourage their active participation in libertine discourse. Linker writes that,

Behn [...] anticipates Trotter's concern with finding a meaningful place for the female libertine in the 1680s by creating more complicated figures that look for a community but cannot find one. In Behn's long novel, *Love Letters*, Silvia, the main female libertine, acts on her sexual desires, but she cannot return to her society at the end. (*Dangerous Women*, p. 72)

Indeed, besides her servant, Sylvia has no social safety net beyond her sexual partners and accomplices. By comparison, Philander and other rakes are continuously in homosocial male communities recalling those of Court Wits. Behn's closest approximations of lady rakes, such as Angellica Bianca, are isolated. Linker's

observation of Behn's anticipation of the lack of a sense of community for female libertines highlights these risks associated with female libertinism.

This is further confirmed by the absence of the redemptive arch for female libertines that is in stark juxtaposition to the *de rigueur* of 1670s stage-rakes. This is reflective of the social pressure and shunning that transgressively public women, such as Behn, risked by libertine engagement. Considering the prevalence of the myth of the 'Reformable rake' in libertine writing, and because women libertines are often depicted as lonely figures unable to reform, the lack of female libertine communities underscores a significant difference between male and female libertine discourse. This is particularly relevant considering the coterie of Court Wits was well recognised during the Restoration as a social group as well as a collective of amateur poets and dramatists. In his discussion of female libertines, Weber notes that,

For the most part, speaking and thinking venery define the limits of a woman's sexual prerogatives: to indulge those thoughts, to turn speech into action, confronts female characters on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage with the vast gulf between the maid or wife and the whore. In sexual terms the pre-Restoration drama provides women with a very restricted stock of roles. (Weber, p. 133)

Weber's discussion of the pre-Restoration depiction of women's sexuality on the stage is part of the framework of a large discussion of female sexuality's connection in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries with witchcraft trials and the prevalence of the

greater emphasis on sexual transgression as evidence of the demonic in women. (Weber pp. 130-1) *Love Letters* (1684-7) does equate Sylvia's libertinism and witchcraft.

Unlike Philander, Sylvia's desires during her seduction of Octavio are rooted in revenge and vanity, not lust. The crucial libertine desire for power over another remains. However, the impetus for the seduction is skewed away from sexual desire and placed upon the desire for retribution for inconstancy. While this is neither a demonic nor evil image that Behn has created it does depict the female libertine as vengeful against her inconstant lover. This recalls Weber's suggestion that for seventeenth century men the 'vagina could become hell itself' when wielded by a female rake. The trope of the vengeful scorned lover was common in Restoration drama, Etherege's Mrs Loveit from *The Man of Mode* (1676) and Behn's Angellica Bianca, to different degrees embody this trope. However, Sylvia's calculated vengeance using letters and lovers more closely resembles Etherege's male rake, Dorimant's, actions against Mrs Loveit and lacks the disorganised passion of Angellica Bianca's assault on Willmore.

There is a juxtaposition between Sylvia's words and her actions that, along with the introduction of the omniscient narrator, emphasises the isolation and societal condemnation against women libertines that necessitates calculated revenge and pragmatic action to ensure Sylvia's survival. Behn changes the focus, as she often does, from the male rake's priapic libertinism to the female libertine's weaponized libertinism. Instead, Behn focuses on the female reaction to and appropriation of the rake's libertine ideology and language. As a female libertine operating within an overwhelmingly masculine discourse and patriarchal society, Sylvia's sexual curiosity already marks her out as a transgressive figure and although the libertine rhetoric she uses is appropriated

from a masculine source, as is Behn's, I argue that Sylvia's libertine performance becomes uniquely her own as she adapts it to fit her purpose.

Historical Context

Love Letters (1684-7) spans a unique period in English history. The Monmouth Rebellion (1685) is notable as it affected the expression of Behn's royalist support and apparent Tory allegiance differently in each successive volume as the political events inspiring the events in the narrative unfolded. Behn initially focuses the plot around the social scandal between Ford, Lord Grey of Werke and his elopement with his sister-in-law, Henrietta, Lady Berkeley. This provided an easily recognisable real life analogue for the social and gender politics represented in *Love Letters* (1684-7). Likewise, the *roman-au-clef* exploited aristocratic gossip with an aim to encourage greater readership. *Love Letters* (1684-7) prose fiction narrative, while 'based on true events', provides much needed distance between her politics and the political upheavals of the 1680s that, when represented on the stage, drew unwanted legal trouble onto Behn.¹³³ The Monmouth Rebellion (1685) and Exclusion Crisis saw the Court Wits and commercial dramatists similarly divided by the infant political parties though their libertinism remained a shared discourse. The Exclusion Crisis (1679-1681), Rye-House Plot (1683) and the concluding Monmouth Rebellion (1685) divided the two coterie groups and further emphasised the political and economic underpinnings of each group's libertinism.¹³⁴

¹³³ Angela Gorgeau, *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn* (New York: The Dial Press, 1980), p. 251.

¹³⁴ Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

As the story unfolds Sylvia targets and manipulates her suitors with beauty, sexuality, and wit. Philander's repetition of his seduction cycle with the married Calista recalls the unthinking, uncomprehending libertinism expressed by fops than an active performance. This juxtaposition satirises the priapic libertine courtier at a politically complicated period that saw the collapse of the Court Wit's coterie because of illness, death and growing political dissent. Buckingham, Buckhurst, and Sedley allied with the Whigs and the Country Party, while gentleman dramatists with a dependency on Royal patronage, such as Etherege and Wycherley, came out as strongly Tory. (Webster, p. 141) Though I see Behn's engagement with libertine ideologies throughout *Love Letters* (1684-7) and in her short fiction, the flush of optimism that Charles II's return brought in the early years of the Restoration had dissipated by the 1680s.

Though I argue her libertinism remained a prominent cornerstone of Behn's oeuvre, there is evidence of a progressive cynicism toward libertinism and its misogyny, in addition to its failures as an effective mode of political discourse. Behn's texts penned during the 1680s retain the critical quality of her 1670s writing and as such she develops a woman rake whose narrative arch is taken to its logical conclusion, providing dual criticisms against libertinism and the English socio-political climate. Unlike Angellica Bianca, Sylvia's tragedy chronicles her seduction, disillusionment, and revenge. Though Philander remains important to the plot of *Love Letters* (1684-7), unlike previous incarnations of the stage-rake, his reform is given in passing while Sylvia's character arch remains the core of the narrative. Philander's country retirement highlights the differences between his and Sylvia's respective fates. The shift in the focus moves the narrative further away from affirming Philander's libertine performance as heroic and his

reintegration emphasizes Sylvia's ruin. Behn applies the self-reflexive criticism of libertinism against itself in her prose work like that which Rochester adopts in his poetry. This criticism of libertinism in a libertine performative text shows the detrimental effects of both rakes' libertinism. Linker notes that by the 1680s 'Much of the glamour of libertinism had tarnished,' though Behn does not abandon the discourse entirely as 'in Behn's later works, she examines her heroines' expressions of frustration [...] in an entirely new way that features women rather than men as the aggressive figures nevertheless victimized by their societies.' (*Dangerous Women*, p. 43) There is a dark realism employed in the depiction of Sylvia's fall from grace. Her actions, though they stem from an ideological embrace of freedom, result in the destruction her own life and the lives of others.

Love Letters from a Nobleman to his sister (1685), diverges from the conventions typical of amatory fiction. Behn begins to flesh out the development of Sylvia's libertine engagement hinted at in her arguments with Philander in the first installment. Though the epistolary format is retained and serves an expository purpose for revealing to the reader through Philander's letters to his servant and friend, Brilljard and Octavio. These letters reveal important narrative events happening outside of Sylvia's sphere of understanding. This further emphasises her isolation and Philander's mobility and social network.

It is through Sylvia's letters and not Philander's that the text's royalism and libertine rhetoric, disdaining marriage specifically, is most strongly expressed. While in *The Rover* Angellica and Hellena provide the platform on which Willmore can express his libertine wit - though Angellica, as I have argued, does effectively hold her own verbally against the rake's railings - in *Love Letters* (1684-7) this platform is reversed

with Philander providing the stage on which Sylvia disseminates her radical politics and libertine performance. By having Sylvia appropriate the libertine language and behaviour of Philander, Behn can use her female rake to expose the different standards of sexual behaviour men and women are held to by London society broadly and libertinism more specifically. While the embrace of libertinism by her characters is conventional to the genre and presented more optimistically in *The Rover* (1677), Stewart emphasises the pragmatism of the virginal heroines in Behn's stage productions (Stewart, pp. 98-105).

Though libertinism claims the Epicurean pursuit of pleasure, the rake and his real-life counterpart, the Courtier Wit, are instead preoccupied with obtaining and maintaining power through conquest. Wehrs argues that the 'The Golden Age' (1684) which was written contemporary to *Love Letters* (1684-7) first instalment and depicts an Arcadian world is, in fact, a libertine seduction comparable to Philander's purposeful misuse of language. 'The poem's libertine-epicurean critique of honor is articulated as part of the rhetoric of seduction by a speaker who stands in precisely the same position as Philander in the novel' (Wehrs, pp. 464-5) Wehrs's article emphasises Behn's value of honour and how this is a target of libertine raillery and is consistently featured as the target of Behn's rakes.

Philander is shown in pursuit of and subsequently corrupting, a new love interest, Calista. Unlike Sylvia, his motivations remain static. Unlike female libertines, Hobbesian rakes operate within the parameters of libertinism's ideology of free love. Philander repeats his cycle of courtship, conquest, and inconstancy in each successive instalment of *Love Letters* (1684-7). One can read a subtle criticism of the rake as a Sisyphus-like figure: each conquest offers the opportunity to reform only to fail and restart the cycle

anew. Sylvia, unlike Philander, is motivated by more desperate circumstances because of her gender. I have to agree with the majority of the scholarship on rakes which points out that, particularly in Restoration drama, the reintegration of rakes is always treated as dubious, and Behn is especially fond of resolving her plays implying their continued libertinism as seen in *The Rover* (1677), *The Second Part of The Rover* (1681), *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678) and *The Feigned Courtesans* (1679). Weber elaborates: ‘Too often the rakes repentance is nothing more than a necessary dramatic convention, occasioned not by the psychological needs of the character but by the proximity of the fifth act curtain.’ (Weber, p. 157). Indeed, reformation, even for Philander, is not given the same emphasis as in previous examples of Behn’s work. Whereas later amatory fiction offers the fallen woman a retirement to a nunnery as part of her redemption, Sylvia refuses renounce her libertinism.

Appropriation, Power, and Performance

Ballaster explains the difficulty critics have faced in defining the questionable ‘heroine’, Sylvia, ‘cast either as a positive model, a figure of monarchy, authority and fictional power who comes to eclipse the compromised figures of the Stuart kings themselves, or she is viewed as a negative example of decline from innocence into politico-sexual chicanery.’¹³⁵ Behn deliberately associates Sylvia with the aristocracy despite her eventual decline into a courtesan. This mirrors the male rake’s association with the aristocracy and, specifically, with the royalist causes.¹³⁶ The importance of

¹³⁵ Ros Ballaster, “‘The story of the heart’”: *Love Letters between a Noble-Man and his Sister*, *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. Derek Hughes and Janet Todd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.135-150, p. 137-8.

¹³⁶ Prior to the Monmouth Rebellion and the rise of the Tory and Whig Political parties the libertine rake is aligned with the Royalist cause, as seen in Thomas Killigrew’s exilic pre-libertine dramas,

Sylvia's political alignment in understanding her libertinism reflects what Wehrs argues is Behn's manipulation of her contemporary political and social context. Wehrs highlights Behn's inclusion of recognisable libertine ideas which all the while foreshadows Sylvia's decline. Libertinism is understood to be an unsustainable performance for women. Wehrs says,

Sylvia's argument that one who occupies the position of "brother" cannot, without "crime," assume that of "lover" could not but be recognized by Behn's contemporary readership as a political argument, nor could that argument fail to be recognized as one against Hobbesian nominalism and libertine psychology. [...] Hobbes argues that words acquire value connotations through an association with emotions derived from our "natural pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. Philander's assault upon "honour" draws upon Hobbesian nominalism and Epicureanism in ways that were, by 1684, well established in the libertine tradition. (Wehrs, p. 464)

Wehrs notes the prevalence of Hobbesian nominalism and Epicureanism as established libertine traditions by 1684 but associates them only with Philander's raillery against 'honour' common to libertinism. Wehrs's argument is based on Philander's deconstruction of words so that they lose all meaning and therefore aid in his seduction of Sylvia. Since Behn then shows Sylvia's rejection of such terms as inhibitive of her pursuit of pleasure, with Philander, Wehrs argues that this is evidence of Behn's criticisms of libertine raillery.

such as *Thomaso; or The Wanderer* (1654), and specifically with the Cavaliers and courtiers, as evidenced by both anti-libertine tracts: Reynell's *An Advice Against Libertinism* (1659) and *A Character of a Libertine Zealot* (1668).

Though Sylvia does rebut Philander's advances by arguing their familial bond is too close to incest though they are not blood related, I disagree with Wehrs's assessment that Sylvia's 'argument [could not] fail to be recognized as one against Hobbesian nominalism and libertine psychology.' *Love Letters* (1684-7) criticises Sylvia's and Philander's libertinism and depicts both characters as socially destructive, yet as Linker agrees, 'Behn's female libertines [...] directly attack male libertines and their attitudes. Even in works that appear to condone male rakes' sometimes vicious treatment of women, strong female challengers emerge to defy their assumption of power.' (*Dangerous Women*, p. 3) Indeed, though Sylvia's female libertinism challenges the male rake's 'libertine psychology' which categorises women's chastity and honour as manipulative tools working against the Epicurean pursuit of pleasure, I suggest that instead of rejecting libertinism Sylvia's recognises the dangerous associated with it. Linker points out that 'Behn's novellas might not have been the runaway bestsellers [...] but her heroines set a precedent for the emotionally wrought and sexually charged female libertines we find there.' (*Dangerous Women*, p. 9) Indeed, though Part II concludes with Sylvia's attempt to reconcile her libertinism through marriage, a prerogative of the male rake, as with Dorimant and Willmore, the marriage is socially motivated and therefore reaffirms libertinism's argument that such institutions are against nature and love.

As noted in *What is a Libertine*, the most common libertine sub-type is the Extravagant or Hobbesian rake. This was the libertine performance most commonly associated with the coterie of Court Wits. Hume opens *The Rakish Stage* by explaining the rake's basic characteristics. Hume says,

Crudely defined, a rake (short for rakehell) is a *roué*, a licentious or dissolute man. The term carries strong connotations of profligacy, idleness, and waste. [...] Insofar as rakes in plays represent something like the Court Wits, much of the audience probably found them both glamorous and shocking. (*The Rakish Stage*, pp. 148-9)

Hume has specified a rake as ‘a licentious or dissolute man’, presumably due to the popular association between Restoration stage-rakes and the exclusively male Court Wits. However, the descriptors of ‘licentious’ and ‘dissolute’ are likewise fitting when applied to Sylvia.

Regardless of her initial innocence Sylvia quickly, and despite token protestations to the contrary, consentingly engages in multiple sexual affairs with men, with a nod to emotional affairs with women. While still taking her cues from Philander’s libertinism, Sylvia’s conquests are emotional rather than physical; her pleasure is derived from the seduction rather than the sexual act. Hume’s specification of the term ‘dissolute’ in addition to ‘licentious’ is important and the implication that the rake engages not just in sexual activity, but sexual *overindulgence* reaffirms the consensus that libertinism’s, hedonism derives from a deliberate misunderstanding of Epicureanism. (O’Keefe, p. 117) As such, ‘dissolute’ as well as ‘licentious’ are appropriate descriptors of Sylvia’s relationships with the men and women she encounters throughout *Love Letters* (1684-7). Indeed, it is not Sylvia’s licentiousness that the narrator criticises, but her appropriation of masculine power and her desire to dominate and seduce men.

Sylvia’s seduction is discovered when Myrtilia finds a letter. The response to Sylvia’s intercepted letters foreshadows her eventual fate. Myrtilia writes, ‘foreseeing the misery whereto you must arrive, by this fatal correspondence with my unhappy lord’ but

only reveals her sister's affair with Philander to their father after Sylvia has sex, 'But oh, alas, I had no sooner finished this enclosed, but my father entered my cabinet, but it was with such a look --- as soon informed me all was betrayed to him'. It becomes clear that Sylvia's reputation, and betrothal to a young lord, Foscario, is in danger of being ruined. Action must be taken to preserve her public perception of honour before the public discovers the affair. (*Love Letters*, pp. 40; 50) While Linker's statement which discusses Behn's anticipation of the lack of community for women libertines, Myrtilia's overtures of sisterly advice in her letters to Sylvia despite the affair, offers a rare example of female friendship in a libertine text though it is problematized by the character's relationships with Philander. Myrtilia's letters to Sylvia demonstrate her discretion and potential understanding of her sister's desires as she initially attempts to reason with her rather than threaten her with exposure.

Sylvia's and Philander's first successful sexual encounter is given a significant amount of epistolary foreplay. The exchanges are steeped in sexual innuendo, 'Oh, take either title from him [Philander], or from me a life, which can render me no [sexual] satisfaction, since your cruel laws permit it not for Philander, nor his to bless the now Unfortunate *Sylvia*' and sexual fantasy, 'methought my *Sylvia* yielded [her virginity], with a faint struggle and a soft resistance; I heard her broken sighs'. (*Love Letters*, pp. 2-3) The verbal foreplay and power struggle between the pair features heavily in all three volumes of *Love Letters*. Each burst of epistolary exchanges functions as a catalyst that draws them together despite their increasing disgust with each other's inconstancy and struggle for dominance over the other. Though Philander reaffirms his libertinism through his seduction of Calista, and his initial letter to Octavio after his departure states

that 'I find myself much more at ease than I thought it possible to be without Sylvia', (*Love Letters*, p. 75) Philander is unable to fully disengage from Sylvia and wants to maintain his power over her even while seducing another woman, 'from who I am nevertheless impatient to hear; I hope absence appears not so great a bugbear to her as it was imagined'. (*Love Letters*, p. 75) Philander is controlled by a cycle of obsession, seduction, and inconstancy. He is drawn back into Sylvia's sphere of influence by his desire to reassert his control over her. Behn's representation of Sylvia is more complex than her stage heroines, in part due to the freedom the nascent novelistic form allows. Since Sylvia is uniquely able of the women in *Love Letters* (1684-7) to meet and exceed Philander's libertine wit, this paradoxically repels, and attracts, him to her after he has conquered her. Despite Philander's successful seduction, he cannot fully disengage from Sylvia after achieving a sexual conquest. Behn's writing engages in more a substantive elaboration on popular themes such as extramarital sexuality, women's sexuality, and power-exchange. These are all themes that the later *Love Letters* series has the scope to develop because it is prose-fiction and not a play or poem. This development of Behn's libertine engagement is consistent with the increasingly cynical tone of her oeuvre. Behn adapts and rails against the constraints of libertinism's professed embrace of freedom; Sylvia likewise must appropriate and rail against similar ideological contractions in *Love Letters* (1684-7). While *The Rover* (1677) begins the discussion on women's place within libertinism and posits the potential for lady rakes, *Love Letters* (1684-7), helped by its prose style and length in which to develop these themes, teases out to the fullest the impossibility of female libertinism under the parameters set by male libertines. Behn does not offer a solution to the problems faced by female libertines, her development of Sylvia

throughout the series takes the character through all three variations of Aretino's 'Postures' (nun, wife, and whore) and contrasts the differences between male and female libertine experiences.

The choices given to Sylvia at different points in *Love Letters* are to enter into marriage; enter a convent; or enter into prostitution. These options, offered in turn with each instalment of *Love Letters* (1684-7), echo Aretino's *I Ragiamonetti* (1534) that likewise features a singular female character who is presented over three consecutive instalments, in Aretino's text this takes place over three successive days, with the same 'career' paths: wife, nun, and finally, courtesan. Aretino utilises the pornographic recitation of sexual acts in his text to titillate as well as criticise sexual mores and the faux aristocratic bearing of courtesans. Similarly, Sylvia's paroxysms of passion expressed within her letters are coded as allusions to the act of writing and emotional expressions of romantic love which effectively masks the depictions of female masturbatory fantasy that I suggest they stand in for. The epistolary structure of *Love Letters* (1684-7) plays on the double meaning embedded in Sylvia's choice of language and the emphasis placed upon writing, especially letter writing. Ballaster explains that:

The woman's letter/body is then more erotic because more concealed than that of a man. Like clothing, the letter's cloaking devices serve to enhance the appeal of the body by the very act of concealment. Even in the private realm of the letter the romance heroine cannot afford to express her desire directly." (*Seductive Forms*, p. 62)

Indeed, Sylvia's letters to Philander read like a literary striptease as much as they conceal any direct reference to the character's sexuality. Erotically charged language such as 'I rave, I die for some relief' and, 'I die with that thought, my guilty pen slackens in my trembling hand' camouflage Sylvia's sexual arousal, and orgasmic release in a way that can be interpreted as more innocent ejaculations of romantic love and youthful passion. (*Love Letters*, p. 9; p. 14) Unlike Rochester, Behn's libertinism is mitigated by the social mores of society and fiscal reality, both of which necessitated greater discretion in how her libertine performance is expressed in her writing. The coded sexual language in Sylvia's letters, much like the employment of double entendre on the Restoration stage, conceals sexuality from persons of quality even as it titillates those who understand the sexual innuendo. I suggest that the letters, therefore, function as the 'stage' on which Sylvia can enact her libertine performance that in several ways is shown by Behn to be stronger and more calculated than Philanders.

However, Sylvia's libertine performance is not without criticism toward libertinism as an inherently unequal and flawed discourse. In contrast to their male peers, Behn's female libertines stress the correlation between financial independence and personal security for women as this was a more tangible form of freedom for seventeenth-century women than libertinism alone could offer. This reinterpretation of libertinism's rejection of sexual economies, I argue, is compatible with the libertine pursuit of personal freedom, even though it displaces the emphasis from sexual pleasure onto personal autonomy. For women, this is the only way to in any way reconcile the libertine embrace of freedom with sexual expression outside the bond of matrimony. Stewart agrees that the conclusion of *The Rover* (1677) is Behn's most complicated

‘happy ending’. (Stewart, p. 98) This earlier version of female libertinism is reconciled through marriage, which can be read as a conventional happy ending for the time; however, the critical subtext of Behn’s play also notes the necessity of women to enter pragmatic marriages and surrender their autonomy or be expelled from ‘good’ society. Though marriage is ultimately reaffirmed as socially necessary in *The Rover* (1677), Behn retains the libertine belief that marriage is incompatible with lasting love. It is notable that both characters fail to follow through on their initial ideologies and even within *Love Letters* (1684-7) narrative neither rake is happy in their libertinism nor do they meet favourable ends. I suggest, given the evidence contained within Behn’s lengthy oeuvre, that over time, the unrestrained embrace of hedonism is unsustainable and that, especially for libertine women, survival necessitates the development of pragmatism.

As discussed at the beginning of the thesis project, the pen functions as a woman author’s metaphorical penis which Gilbert and Gubar has playfully termed ‘Pen (is)’.¹³⁷ This convention is impossible to ignore in *Love Letters* because the epistolary format emphasises the equation of the physical act of writing with its potential of facilitating seduction and actual sex later. Behn is aware of the masculine assumption of power writing grants women, as she states that her pen is her ‘masculine part’, so it is natural that her lady-rake is depicted appropriating more than masculine language so early in the text. Philander’s declamation of marriage is less emotionally impassioned,

¹³⁷ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic; the woman writing and the nineteenth-century literary imagination* (Newhaven, London: Yale University press, 1979) p. 3.

the beauty of divine shape [was] created for the cold matrimonial embrace? And shall the eternal joys that Sylvia can dispense, be returned by the clumsy husband's careless, forced, insipid duties? [...] While your Philander, with the very thought of the excess of pleasure the least possession would afford faints over the paper that brings here his eternal vows.' (*Love Letters*, p.4)

Linker's reading of Behn's rakes describes their relationship with women as adversarial, arguing that.

Male rakes frequently appear to hate women and marriage, and though most all female libertines do marry, they do not enter marriage willingly, shunning its confinements. Aphra Behn's female libertines, for example, directly attack male libertines and their attitudes. Even in works that appear to condone male rakes' sometimes vicious treatment of women, strong female challengers emerge to defy their assumption of power. (*Dangerous Women*, p. 3)

While Linker's point is a fair one supported by Behn's liberal use of rakes in her writing, this project disagrees that Behn's 1676 depiction of the rake 'hates women or marriage'. Willmore's exchange with Florinda during her near-rape casts him as a drunken buffoon unable (or unwilling) to recognise that not all women are prostitutes. Stewart comments that:

the intriguing element is Willmore's defence of the libertine ethos [...] He does not need the consent of God, or the notion of romantic "love," only desire and opportunity. In short, he is the epitome of Behn's libertine rake hero, echoing the sentiments and behaviours of King Charles II himself.' (Stewart, p. 90)

Throughout *Love Letters* (1684-7), Sylvia is aware of the cost Philander's pursuit of her has on her reputation. Interestingly, Sylvia initially defends Myrtila's honour against Philander's accusations of infidelity, foreshadowing the similar accusations of inconstancy she will weather from Philander later in the narrative. Sylvia argues,

No if by any action of hers the noble house of the Beralti be dishonour'd, by all the actions of my life it shall receive additions and lustre and glory! Nor will I think Myrtila's virtue lessen'd for your mistaken opinion of it, and she may be as much in vain pursu'd, perhaps, by the Prince Cesario, as Sylvia shall be by the young Philander: the envying world talks loud, 'tis true; but oh, if all were true that busy babbler says, what lady has her fame? What husband is not a cuckold? (*Love Letters*, p. 9)

Here the social commentary is a direct criticism on the impossibility of virtue, regardless of the woman's actual conduct. There is no evidence given in the text beyond Philander's assertions that Myrtila has made him a cuckold. Sylvia points out here 'she may be as much in vain pursu'd' by Cesario as Sylvia is by Philander. Problematically, Sylvia's actions do not support her protestations of virtue. As in Behn's imperfect enjoyment poem, 'The Disappointment' (1684) discusses, the first instalment of *Love Letters* depicts Sylvia rebuffing Philander's advances and seducing Philander with sexually suggestive imagery. Which he obeys, Philander says, 'oh let me quickly know whether you are at all, or are the most impatient and unfortunate Sylvia's. *I rave, I die for some relief.*' (*Love Letters*, p. 9) Though it can be argued that Sylvia is naïve to Philander's seduction, passages like the one above illustrates that Sylvia understands the complexities of her society. Rumours are as damaging as sexual indiscretion. It is even implied that the

inherent danger of the incestuous love affair is part of the attraction for the protagonist, an inference further underscored by her appropriation of increasingly sexualised language in passages of self-rationalisation,

Who but fond woman, giddy heedless woman, would thus expose her virtue to temptation? I see, I know my danger, yet I must permit it: love, soft bewitching love will have it so, that cannot deny what my feebler honour forbids; and though I tremble with fear, yet love suggest, it will be an age to night: I long for my undoing; for oh I cannot stand the batteries of your eyes and tongue. (*Love Letters*, p. 12)

The this explanation that ‘love will have it so,’ as it appears in the text, is used to excuse Sylvia’s sexual desire for Philander. In the above passage with each instance of sexually suggestive language, romantic love is given as a justification for carnal desires. Sylvia exposes ‘her virtue to temptation’ and has sex with Philander, but only because ‘love will have it so’. Though her ‘feeble honour forbids’ it, Sylvia nevertheless ‘trembles’ and ‘cannot stand the batteries’ of Philander’s ‘eyes and tongue’. Once again Behn’s use of double entendre, honed during her tenure writing for the stage, conceals the inherent sexuality of her heroine’s desires. To the virtuous reader or those that pretend to it, Sylvia’s passionate dialogue betrays only her love and desire to speak with Philander and not sexual desires.

As the narrative progresses, Sylvia becomes sexually awakened and progressively appropriates Philander’s libertine ideology. This denouncement of marriage is the first example of Sylvia’s libertinism gaining agency separate from that of Philander’s. What

wit he is shown to have is limited to his command of libertine rhetoric used in his seductions; practical skills such as planning, fighting, and legal matters are completely beyond his realm of understanding. Philander appears to lack even basic intelligence, leaving Sylvia to arrange her transportation to Paris, ‘*After her flight*. Ah, Philander, how have you undone a harmless poor unfortunate? Alas, where are you?’ and then, when ‘nothing but echoes answered me [...] at last, consulting Brilliard what to do, after a thousand revolutions, he concluded to trust me with a sister he had [...] he changed my name and made me pass for a fortune he had stolen’. (*Love Letters*, p. 57) Philander reveals in a later letter that despite having arranged to elope with Sylvia, he nevertheless attacks (and is wounded) by Sylvia’s fiancé Foscario and must seek medical attention.

Sylvia boasts of her spotless honour while revealing a high level of understanding of sexual politics. Sylvia shows signs of understanding the language of seduction and initially identifies Philander for the libertine that he is, pointing out the recycled nature of Philander’s protestations of love and devotion, ‘Remember once your passion was as violent for Myrtilla, and all the vows, oaths, protestations, tears and prayers you make and pay at my feet, are but the faith repetitions, the feeble echoes of what you sigh’d out at hers.’ (*Love Letters*, p. 10) Behn highlights the value of Sylvia’s virtuous reputation socially in securing her future, having first Sylvia in an early letter asks, ‘And can Philander’s love set no higher value on me than base poor prostitution? Is that the price of his heart?’ (*Love Letters*, p. 9) It is not the first or last mention of prostitution as being the final and extreme punishment for female sexual indiscretion. Another letter, this from Myrtilla herself reveals that not only is she fully aware of the affair, but again the equation of lost virtue with prostitution is made, further foreshadowing Sylvia’s future:

Consider, oh young noble maid, the infamy of being a prostitute! [...] Alas, consider, after an action so shameful, thou must obscure thyself in some remote corner of the world, where honesty and honour never are heard of: no, thou canst not shew they face, but it will be pointed at for something monstrous; for a hundred ages may not produce a story so lewdly infamous and loose as thine. (*Love Letters*, p. 40)

Myrtilla's letter reveals her awareness of her husband's seduction of Sylvia and yet she refrains from informing their father to instead appeal to her sister's reason. Though earlier Sylvia had protested that her virtue was important to her, Sylvia has gained Philander's libertine language and denounces marriage in favour of natural freedoms. Sylvia argues that,

Must laws, which man contrived for mere conveniency, have power to alter the divine decrees at our creation? –Perhaps they argue to-morrow at the bar, that Myrtilla was ordained by heaven for Philander; no, no, he mistook the sister, it was pretty near he came, but by a fatal error was mistaken; his hasty youth made his too negligently stop before his time at the wrong woman, he should have gazed a little farther on. (*Love Letters*, pp. 62-3)

Behn gives Sylvia words common to libertine rhetoric of the period as the character over the course of several letters presents the argument that marriage is antagonistic to 'natural love', Sylvia forgots that Philander's words of love do not originate from a unique passion. They are recycled from his seductions of other women.

Yet, Sylvia forgives and excuses Philander's infidelity by problematically claiming fate ordained them to be married, but her *sister* yielded her valued virginity too

easily and distracted *him*. One can see Sylvia's relationship with Myrtilla shifts in the text from fidelity to adversarial. This change in the relationship between the sisters is shown only from Sylvia's perspective, with no interactions between them confirming Myrtilla's point of view. Sylvia initially defends her sister. Importantly, Sylvia, despite her prior displays of intellect, rationalizes the fateful marriage to Myrtilla that prohibits the lovers from legally consummating their relationship as being caused not by Philander's rakish habit for seducing young girls – a trait that is alluded to even this early in the text by Sylvia's knowledge of how her seduction parallels that of her sister's – but by the legal system that requires marriage to socially sanction their sexual union, if Sylvia is to be protected.

Behn's previous works of drama and poetry flirt with female libertine performance. Behn depicts women as ideological libertines but not as rakes who operate separately from, or against, the desires of the male rake. Sylvia is significantly more mercenary in her seduction of Octavio to revenge herself upon Philander. The narrator outlines Sylvia's intentions toward her infatuated suitor:

Sylvia, who had other business than love in her heart and head, suffered all the marks of his eager passion and transport out of design, for she had a further use to make of Octavio [...] it was pity to impose upon him; and make his love for which she should esteem him, a property to draw him to his ruin" [...]

[Octavio] deserved her, kneeling implored she would accept of him, not as a lover for a term of passion, for dates of months or years, but for a long eternity; not as a rifler of her sacred honour, but to defend it from the censuring world ... and now implores that he may bring a priest to tie the solemn knot. (*Love Letters*, pp. 146-147)

Without the token legal binds of marriage, Sylvia is easily abandoned and left with no protections from falling to prostitution.

Even within Behn's oeuvre, the lady rakes are often ideological libertines rather than operating on a par with their priapic masculine counterparts. All these women demonstrate sexual desires, and to different degrees exercise agency in the pursuit of them. However, it is Sylvia who is most closely aligned within the text as being a rake. Virginal heroines such as Behn's Hellena and Etherege's Harriet in *The Man of Mode* (1676) act the part of female libertines but I am unconvinced that they are female rakes. Both Hellena and Harriet challenge their respective suitors with displays of verbal 'foreplay' – for the rake to be tempted into marriage his potential partner must be able to best him in verbal sparring; however, neither character uses their sexuality as a weapon. They tease with the idea of sexual liberation but know better than to risk it.

Removed from the direct influence of her lover and having successfully manipulated Octavio into marrying her, Sylvia can reject libertinism and conform to the passive role of wife and mother. What *Love Letters* (1684-7) unfortunately reveals is the Sylvia's continued rejection of social reintegration at the cost of her power over others. This links back into and confirms Linker's argument that libertines paradoxically sought power over others and that women authors found fiction better suited to exploring the female libertines' emotional struggles and erotic desires. (*Dangerous Women*, pp. 2-3) *Love Letters* (1684-7) exhibits both points. The prose fiction format and epistolary structure provide the space for Sylvia to transition from a passive imitator of Philander's libertinism into a pragmatic rake motivated by revenge.

The narrative shift from Sylvia rejecting a forced marriage to rejecting all marriage comes when Sylvia begins to understand that she cannot legally exist as an individual without male guardianship. First under her father and then under Brilljard. Sylvia writes in part one of being destined to be Philander's natural wife; however, very quickly part two exposes the impossibility of Philander's fidelity and the resultant betrayal requires Sylvia's complaisance with an even less desirable forced marriage to a poor servant instead of another wealthy nobleman. Before her final elopement, Sylvia, in an extreme libertine declamation of marriage writes,

Were I in height of youth, as now I am, forced by my parents, obliged by interest and honour, to marry the old, deformed, diseased, decrepit Count Anthonio, whose person, qualities and principles I loathe, and rather than suffer him to consummate his nuptials, suppose I should (as sure I could) kill myself, it were blasphemy to lay this fatal marriage to heaven's charge--curse on your nonsense, ye imposing gownmen, curse on your holy cant; you may as well call rapes and murders, treason and robbery, the acts of heaven; because heaven suffers them to be committed. (*Love Letters*, p. 63)

In a break with Behn's previous railings against forced marriage here the heroine equates marriage with 'blasphemy', 'rape' and, continuing Sylvia's political associations, 'treason'. There is a lot Behn has embedded in Sylvia's protest. Though the section can be read as a more typical, though no less libertine, denouncement of economically incentivised forced marriage or, as has been suggested previously and depicted in *The Rover*, marriage 'obliged by interest and honour'. I suggest that Behn has moved beyond that expected trope in her writing. Sylvia may indeed love Philander and therefore clearly intends to continue her illicit relationship with him, but it is legally impossible for her to marry for love.

Furthermore, while part one of *Love Letters* ends with the lover's elopement, Sylvia's refusal to marry for obligation and interest is proven impossible for her to maintain. This complicates the depiction of marriage in Behn's prose fiction. Certainly, Behn's criticism of marriage as an institution that commodifies women as property to be traded amongst men is clear. Sylvia's parents intend to marry her off quickly before the scandal of her incestuous affair renders her an unlikely match for her social peers. Philander marries her to his servant, Sylvia's social inferior. This secures Philander's continued sexual access to Sylvia. Sylvia may begin the narrative denouncing forced marriage as the death of natural love. However I argue that Behn is making, through Sylvia, Myrtila, and Calista, a stronger statement against the institution of marriage more broadly. It is shown to be unavoidable within the context of Behn's seventeenth century society for 'good' women to exist and function autonomously from patriarchal control. Behn's oeuvre attests to the necessary 'evil' of marriage for Restoration women as forced marriages, and unhappy marriages are shown in every piece of drama and prose fiction she wrote. Behn's very name, Mrs Aphra Behn, implies her conformity to the institution of marriage, though the conditions of her marriage or if one even took place are impossible to know. Not only does Behn recall specifically Hobbesian libertinism practiced by the Court Wits, but as Wehrs also alludes, this sets the stage for Sylvia's own 'evolution' from a starting point of physical and philosophical innocence into a libertine rake herself. (Wehrs, pp. 470-2)

For the rake, the promise of sex may be the motivation behind the pursuit, but this is not the sole or primary source of enjoyment. In the case of Sylvia, sex is jointly depicted as a source of pleasure and as a tool of manipulation in an increasingly bleak

narrative. Through her libertine actions, Sylvia gains most of her pleasure through the attraction she inspires in men and women alike, which she then manipulates for social and financial gain. In setting up this discourse of power between the rake and opposing forces, the author draws upon the history of the character archetype and manipulates this to satirise current figures and events. Specifically, Restoration London-centric libertinism layers meaning upon the rake through dialogue and visual cues to either align the character with expected royalist and libertine ideology or, in the examples that this chapter examines, to destabilise the power behind such political and social constructs. The Restoration actress in a breeches role functions to manipulate the audience through the titillation of the exposed female body. In a work of prose fiction, this aspect of the breeches role is diminished though not eliminated. I argue that instead, in the transition from stage to page, Behn's decision to clothe her female protagonist in *Love Letter's* in the cavalier costume associated with the rake now serves several functions in the text.

By dressing her heroine in the rake's costume, Behn transfers the ambiguous gendering of the speakers in her poetry into the format of a prose novel. Also, while the cross-dressing serves a similar function in the plot of Behn's novel as it does in her stage productions, namely, to conceal the character's identity. This is further embroidered upon with Sylvia's adoption of masculine behaviour. Sylvia not only dresses as a man but speaks, acts and courts like one:

It was debated what was best to be done [...] whether Sylvia should yet own her sex or not; but she, pleased with the cavalier in herself, begged she might live under that disguise, which indeed gave her a thousand charms to those which nature had already bestowed on her sex; and Philander was well enough pleased she should continue in that agreeable dress, which did not only add to her beauty, but gave her a thousand little privileges, which

otherwise would have been denied to women, though in a country of much freedom. (*Love Letters*, p. 68)

While physically female, what is most interesting about this unique take on the character type is the inclusion of the previously mentioned hermaphroditic voice flirted with in prior plays and best seen in Behn's verses. With the evolution of this new rake, Behn has introduced into libertine discourse a woman who appropriates the language of her all-male compatriots and turns that language against them. Admittedly, this adoption of masculine language and libertine philosophy is a double-edged sword for the character. As the narrative progresses, Sylvia acquires more masculine traits and language. As I have shown, Sylvia's libertinism is alluded to in her sexual attraction to Philander early in the story and further confirmed in her rejection of marriage with an emphasis placed upon her imminent forced marriage after the scandal of her affair is discovered. Libertinism's justifications for love outside the bonds of matrimony are appropriated from Philander by Sylvia, and this origin of her libertinism as a by-product of her desire for Philander renders her transition from noblewoman into a rake problematic. These aspects of Sylvia's libertinism are depicted as a learned behaviour and side effect of her corruption. Philander provides her with the libertine rhetoric she uses to express her frustration when she cannot legally have what she wants, and in this, the corrupting influence of the rake within the narrative serves as a cautionary tale to a majority female readership.

The importance of the lady rake's repentance for her sexual transgressions, or if not repentance then her punishment, is noticeably different from the fate of male rakes.

Ballaster's argument asserts that both the Speaker and the Beloved as seen in 'To Fair

Clorinda' are a narcissistic reflection of Behn herself and while Ballaster has focused on Behn's use of the poetical form, I suggest this argument applies to Behn's writing beyond her poetry. Sylvia's criticisms of both libertinism and marriage, like the 'narcissistic reflection' of Behn's poetry, mirrors those of Behn. Sylvia operates in a patriarchal society and, as with Behn, Sylvia's 'pen' teasingly doubles as her 'masculine' 'tool' used to participate in libertine discourse with Philander, 'And where will the raging fit end? I die with that thought, my guilty pen slackens in my trembling hand'. (*Love Letters*, p. 14) The imagery suggests that Sylvia's pen is analogous to a penis. Behn demonstrates her skill at multivalent depictions of her characters and their motivations here, as it is entirely possible to read Sylvia's letter as a sexual experience, an emotional experience, and a libertine performance. All three of these depictions are correct and contribute to Sylvia's development as a lady rake. Behn creates an entirely plausible scenario of a young girl overwrought with emotion attempting to communicate with her lover, however, the phallogentric association of writing implements also creates a sexually charged scene that harkens to the masturbatory depictions of women in other libertine verses.

The double entendre utilised by Behn in this passage likewise emphasises the dual roles of Sylvia's pen as a tool of communication for composing letters to Philander, and a 'tool' for pleasure, as her 'raging fit' causes her to 'die' and her 'guilty pen slackens' leaving her 'trembling'. The euphemistic phrase 'le petit mort' as a textual replacement for orgasm is not lost here. That Sylvia's metaphorical 'death' is further accompanied by the slackening of her pen that she had previously been using in a raging fit of communication with Philander, for me, strongly suggests that in this moment Sylvia has had a sexual encounter involving the idea of Philander, which, as Behn goes on to depict,

is more intense and satisfying than her actual attempt at sex. It is not a subtle image Behn constructs, and the narrative establishes with descriptions such as these that Sylvia is a sexual being. The character asserts her agency, through her pen, and seduces Philander with her libertine wit. Trull argues that the multivalent 'Images' Sylvia creates in *Love Letters*: naïve virgin, dutiful daughter, lover, and prostitute, stem from Behn's criticism of misogynist interpretations of Lucretius's *DRN* emphasised in Thomas Creech's translation:

Behn responds to Lucretius's thought with both imitation and implicit criticism. While Lucretius helped to shape the broad strokes of *Love Letters*' depiction of gender and desire, we also find Behn wielding specifically epicurean concept with the term "Idea." Though scholars have generally assumed that Behn's frequently used "Idea" is Platonic, in fact she uses the word to evoke not eternal forms, but images like Lucretian simulacra. This distinction is important because Behn's "Ideas" are performing entities that seduce their audiences through delightful erotic spectacles – a far cry from ideal Platonic "Ideas." (Trull, p. 177)

Behn's 'erotic spectacles' established her literary career and she is noted and criticised by scholars for her liberal use of both rape and cross-dressing across all genres. The erotic images, the epicurean 'Ideas' in *Love Letters* (1684-7), tap into the performative elements of libertinism and in place of a stage performer enacting her performance for her or directly engaging in libertine acts herself, the 'performing entities' in *Love Letters* (1684-7) act as surrogates for the author. They seduce the audience as well as the characters. Though consequences are levelled against Sylvia her performance is a simulacrum of Behn's libertine performance. Virtuous women cannot appropriate the rake's identity

without serious consequence. However, fictional women, and libertine 'Ideas', can engage in extreme libertine spectacle. Trull explains that:

Behn's response to Lucretius focuses on its use of performance as a metaphor for mental images. She undermines Lucretius's misogyny and rewrites his analysis of agency and desire, while also reflecting a deeply Epicurean view of the absolute freedom – even arbitrariness – of the will' (Trull, p. 177)

The libertine performances of the characters are largely conveyed through sexual fantasy. The 'metaphor of mental images' is employed to satirical effect particularly at the points in *Love Letters* where Sylvia rewrites Philander's impotence from their first, 'imperfect', sexual encounter in a letter in the style of an imperfect enjoyment poem. Behn's imperfect enjoyment contribution to popular libertine discourse, 'The Disappointment', likewise recalls the rake's failure to complete his sexual conquest due to either impotence or premature ejaculation before penetrative sex can take place. Imbedded in *Love Letters*, Behn creates once again a purely female vantage point of the rake's seduction and renders it comical. Behn does not display Sylvia in this exchange as the languishing virgin she will describe later in the letter in erotic detail. The 'Image' Sylvia creates, before recalling their failed sexual encounter, is of a woman overcome with arousal,

shouldst thou now behold me as I sit, my hair disheveled, ruffled and disordered, my eyes bedewing every word I write, when for each letter I let fall a tear; then (pressed with thought) starting, I dropped my pen, and fell to rave anew, and tear those garments whose loose negligence helped to betray me to my shameful ruin, wounding my breast, but want the resolution to wound it as I ought; which when I but propose, love stays the thought, raging

and wild as it is, the conqueror checks it, with whispering only *Philander* to my soul; the dear name calms me to an easiness, gives me the pen into my trembling hand, and I pursue my silent soft complaint; (*Love Letters*, pp. 32-3)

Sylvia's arousal can be interpreted as emotional distress brought on by Philander's absence, yet the reflection Sylvia recalls in the letter more closely resembles sexual frustration due to the unconsummated affair. In her fit she 'tear[s] those garments', that she blamed for helping 'to betray me to my shameful ruin' which is followed by the slightly ambiguous 'wounding my breast' that from the context could be taken to mean Sylvia has wounded her breast in her emotional outburst.

What though I lay extended on my bed, undressed, unapprehensive of my fate, my bosom loose and easy of access, my garments ready, thin and wantonly put on, as if they would with little force submit to the fond straying hand: what then, Philander, must you take the advantage? [...] I urged your vows as you pressed on, but oh, I fear it was in such a way, so faintly and so feebly I upbraided you, as did but more advance your perjuries. Your strength increas'd, but mine alas declin'd, 'till I quite fainted in your arms, left you triumphant lord of all: no more my faint denials do persuade, no more my trembling hands resist your force, unregarded lay the treasure which you toil'd for, betrayed and yielded to the lovely conqueror (*Love Letters*, p. 36)

The visuals Behn invokes through Sylvia's description of herself during a seduction where she is depicted as a passive participant, 'I lay extended on my bed, undressed, unapprehensive of my fate' and 'so faintly and so feebly I upbraided you', as well as actively desiring Philander, 'I urged your vows as you pressed on' and 'no more my faint denials do persuade' recall another of Behn's works:

She with a Charming Languishment,

Permits his Force, yet gently strove;
Her Hands his Bosom softly meet,
But not to put him back design'd,
Rather to draw 'em on inclin'd

(‘The Disappointment’, 13-16)

The image of a ravished woman is a common one in Restoration literature. Stewart highlights the function of rape-scenes in Behn’s dramas both serve a critical purpose,

Rape scenes were a popular vehicle for display and objectification of the actresses’ bodies, for the very presence of the female body on the stage was a novelty. Like breeches roles, which revealed the shape of the female leg, rape scenes emphasized the actresses’ physicality, displaying the victimized female with bare breasts torn clothing and messy hair.’ (Stewart, p. 48)

Whereas the couple’s successful sexual encounter is given the brief recollection, once again by Sylvia: ‘After the happy night. ‘Tis done, yes, Philander, it is done, and after that, what will not love and grief oblige me to own to you? Oh, by what insensible degrees a maid in love may arrive to say anything to her lover without blushing!’ (*Love Letters*, p. 48) Though Behn portrays Sylvia at different points in the narrative as the would-be victim of sexual violence, Philander threatens her early on that ‘I am resolv’d; put me not off with tricks, which foolish honour invents to jilt mankind with; for if you do, by heaven I will forget all considerations and respect, and force myself with all the violence of raging love into the presence of my cruel Sylvia; own her mine and ravish my

delight' and Brilliard molests her after she faints, 'trembling with his love and eager passion, he took a thousand joys, he kissed a thousand times her lukewarm lips, sucked her short sighs and ravished all the sweets, her bosom'. (*Love Letters*, p. 16; p. 81)

The division of the narrative into two parts emphasises Sylvia's rebirth from a noblewoman into a rake. Sylvia leaves her previous life devoid of 'honour', money, and noticeably naked in nothing but her shift. Necessitated by her and Philander's fugitive status Sylvia's adoption of men's clothing and a man's name compliments what the part one has already established to be her masculine reasoning, by way of her pen, and pursuit of her sexual desires. 'she was resolved to undeceive both sexes and let them see the errors of their love; for Sylvia fell into a fever [...] that she was obliged to own her sex.' (*Love Letters*, p. 68)

Though *Love Letters* presents itself as a potentially cautionary tale of the dangers of the male libertine rake as a corrupting force, Behn furthers her discussion of female agency, and the rake as a problematically sinister force within libertinism first touched upon in her earlier works in the 1670s. *Love Letters* parallels the growing disillusionment and cynicism of other authors engaging with libertine modes – illustrating the price of freedom and presenting the reformation of the rake as impossible for women and negotiable for men. Sylvia relishes the power her 'charms' have over others and 'put on all her gaiety and charms of wit, and made as absolute a conquest as it was possible for her supposed sex to do over a man' (*Love Letters*, p. 67) As with male rakes, Behn saturates her descriptions of Sylvia with terms linking the character back to the rake's roots, 'wit' 'cavalier', and as with the men around her, 'conquest'. Sylvia even engages in the pursuit of other women for the thrill of conquest by exploiting the freedom her male

disguise allows her. In such instances, Behn has returned to a common trope of casting her witty heroine in a breeches role for titillation. Behn writes:

[Whether] Sylvia should yet own her sex or not; but she, pleased with the cavalier in herself, begged she might live under that disguise, which indeed gave her a thousand charms to those which nature had already bestowed on her sex' (*Love Letters*, p. 68)

Behn goes further than merely showing Sylvia dressed as a cavalier but also has the character mimicking the words and actions of other high-profile rakes, 'Every day she appeared in the Tour, she failed not to boast her conquests to Octavio'. (*Love Letters*, p. 68) This is a very different depiction of Sylvia's relationship to a man in the story. Indeed, Sylvia's exchanges with Philander lack any indication she is aware of the power she holds over Philander. Admittedly, the power dynamic between Sylvia and Philander is the most complicated as well as the most equally matched of the relationships depicted. Here, the emphasis placed upon Sylvia 'boasting of her conquests to Octavio' while simultaneously revealing her unknowing conquest of him, illustrates Sylvia's progression from espousing libertine ideology to asserting her priapic power over others.

Sylvia's rejection and Philander's reintegration

Sylvia's desire for power over her partners becomes more limited as her reputation is ruined by Philander's and Brilliard's betrayals in their attempts to assert their dominance over her. Linker notes that 'The Hobbesian libertines modeled after Rochester [...] rely on the reputation of their honor to achieve power over others, the real source of

pleasure for them.’ (*Dangerous Women*, p. 57) Sylvia’s complete loss of her reputation by Part III strips her of that power and forces her to rely more heavily on her sexual charms. The transition from a rake into a courtesan in the dénouement allows Sylvia to retain a semblance of power and autonomy over men, albeit through economic means instead of a rake’s seduction. Recalling Turner’s emphasis on Rochester’s Hobbesian rakish persona, Sylvia in Parts II and III demonstrates a similarly antagonistic relationship with men that male rakes have with women. (*Schooling Sex*, p. 261) This is likewise complicated by Sylvia’s pursuit of sexual satisfaction and power over her suitors and the oppositional social need for security that can only be granted to her via an advantageous marriage.

The narrator in *Love Letters* (1684-7) provides a necessary disapproval of Sylvia’s libertinism for the reading public. Remarking often of the ‘weakness of our sex’, the language the narrator uses to admonish Sylvia’s actions does not ruminate on her sexuality but her assumption of masculine power (emphasis mine):

I have known more women rendered unhappy and miserable from this torment of curiosity, which they bring upon themselves, than have ever been undone by less villainous men. One of this humour was our haughty and charming Sylvia, whose *pride and beauty possessing her with a belief that all men were born to die her slaves, made her uneasy at every action of the lover (whether beloved or not) that did but seem to slight her empire:* but where indeed she loved and doted, as now in Philander, this humour put her on the rack every thought or fancy that he might break his chains, and having laid the last obligation upon him, she expected him to be her slave for ever, and treated him with all the haughty tyranny of her sex, in all those moments when softness was not predominant in her soul. (*Love Letters*, p. 109)

The narrator identifies her weaknesses both feminine: ‘pride and beauty’ and reasons that women like Sylvia are ‘rendered unhappy and miserable from this torment of curiosity’ and ‘bring upon themselves’ their ruin, further supporting the argument that Behn predicts the social isolation experienced by female libertines. The narrator also uses aggressive and masculine descriptors as well: ‘empire’, ‘tyranny’, and ‘she expected him to be her slave forever’ strongly recall the rake’s pleasure derived from the seduction and conquest more so than the sex act itself. (*Dangerous Women*, p. 3) This commentary made by the narrator is inserted into the narrative between the letters throughout Part II and III and breaks away from Part I’s epistolary structure and toward a more recognisably novelistic structure. For Wehrs, Behn’s contradictions in characterization and political allegiance in *Love Letters* extends to the composition itself that is both narrated and epistolary and therefore makes the very use of language part of the unfolding discourse between honour and libertinism, and their political underpinnings related to the Monmouth Rebellion and the emergent Tory and Whig political parties. Wehrs argues:

‘The contradictions in Sylvia’s self-presentation (proclaiming her resolve while dramatizing her pliancy) mirror the contradictions in Philander’s opening letter [...] The frequency of conceptual and figural contradiction or tension within individual letters or between letters suggest that the rhetoric of Behn’s fiction depends upon our attentiveness to how language exposes character as well as expresses feelings, discloses consequences as well as articulates ideas.’ (Wehrs, p. 463)

Sylvia's libertinism is clearly articulated in the epistolary sections whereas the narrator explicitly rejects the heroine's libertinism and instead insists that Sylvia's behaviour is consistent with stereotypically feminine weaknesses such as vanity and pride rather than being representative of a libertine rakehell. The alternating structure of the narrative depicts Sylvia by turns as overtly feminine, by the narrator, and overly masculine, as her actions and letters illustrate. Linker argues that Behn's female libertines are a socio-political commentary and that the shift from drama to prose reflects a greater focus on criticising societal norms and libertinism's gendered hypocrisy. Linker says that,

When Behn turns to fiction in the 1680s, she concentrates on the female libertine's disillusionment with social customs that restrict or punish women, particularly for their sexual desires. Her volumes of *Love-Letters* show her interest in developing narrative strategies that look at the social, psychological, and emotional difficulties of the female libertine. (*Dangerous Women*, p. 58)

I suggest that embedded within *Love Letters*' (1684-7) structure, Sylvia's letters reflect Behn's increased disillusionment with seventeenth-century society and libertinism. Indeed, Sylvia fellow rake Philander proves himself to be as strong an impediment to her continued libertine performance as society is:

Both, Sylvia and Pamela are 'rewarded' with their respective fates by virtue of their power as writers. Both, in their different ways, come to control the scene of representation of their own amatory histories. It is, after all, Pamela's papers, her secretly scribbled accounts of her trials at the hands of her tormentors, that finally win her the respect of her lover. It is Sylvia's education in the duplicities of the letter and her consequent ability to manipulate epistolary representation that enable her to engineer her way out of the position of a

discarded victim of seduction into that of female libertine [...] Sylvia triumphs because of her manipulative arrogance. (*Seductive Forms*, pp. 1-2)

Sylvia appropriates and recycles the same words and rhetoric used on her by Philander. In a departure from her dubiously naïve characterisation in Part one, Sylvia's final appearance before her exit from the narrative at the conclusion shows her demanding tangible proof of her newest suitor Alonzo's 'love' by demanding (monetary) proof of her conquest. Now undeniably a courtesan like Angellica before her, Sylvia mimics language reminiscent of Philander's initial demands of her that she affirms his conquest of her heart by offering him her virginity as payment. Ballaster and others have drawn attention to the fact that,

Sylvia has learnt the language of Philander here, the claim that 'free' love is an exchange between equals; it is 'free' of the 'formal ceremony' of marriage which conveys familial (especially paternal) consent. Silvia abandons one form of constraint and structure – the role of dutiful daughter in her father's house – only to fall victim to another: the role of acquiescent mistress. ('The Story of the Heart', p. 141)

While Ballaster here is discussing the very beginnings of Sylvia's transformation at the end of part one, this structure is repeated several times throughout parts one and three of the trilogy. Sylvia, in her dealings with Octavio, Brilljard, and later Alonzo, repeats the libertine philosophy touched upon by Philander that 'free' love is indeed an exchange – but in practice equality is not easily obtained by a woman. In negotiating with Alonzo Sylvia retains her superior position in the power dynamic; he desires Sylvia and she

manipulates this fact in order to negotiate a contract between courtesan and client, ““Well, sir,” replied our easy fair one; “if you believe me worth a conquest over you, convince me you can love; for I am no common beauty to be won with petty sudden services; and could you lay an empire at my feet, I should despise it where the heart were wanting.”” (*Love Letters*, p. 259)

In Behn’s plagiarism of Killigrew’s Angellica Bianca, she reinterprets a character who has been acted upon, a device of the plot enabling the rake to showcase his wit, and rewrites her as an active, albeit tragic, participant in Willmore’s libertine performance. Problematically though, Angellica makes many of her own choices regarding her interactions with the rake, and unlike Hellena and her sister Florinda, she takes some measure of action against Willmore. In the end, Behn conforms to the formula of other contemporary libertine sex-comedies and reconciles the rake with the social order through his marriage. In 1684, Behn’s three instalments of *Love Letters* (1684-7), revisit her discussion of female agency within libertine discourse through the introduction of a more fully realised progression of a libertine woman as an active participant, who enacts *her* libertine performance separately from that initiated by her lover. In *Love Letters* (1684-7) Sylvia pursues multiple lovers with multivalent motivations: romantic attachment, political activism, sexual interest, and financial gain. Rather than being a passive participant in Philander’s libertinism, or as Rochester criticises in his poem ‘A Ramble in St. James Park’ (1673), an unconscious, and therefore passive, slave of fashion, Sylvia’s libertine performance in Behn’s prose fiction stems from conscious choice and belief instead of solely from a desire to follow either her lover’s hedonistic lifestyle or court fashion. *Love Letters* (1684-7) reflects the frustration at libertinism as a

failed discourse and the seeming failure of the Restoration as a whole. Failure is pervasive: the institution of marriage fails, free love outside marriage fails, Cesario's rebellion fails, reflective of the failure of the Monmouth Rebellion, and one could read Sylvia's grasp at freedom likewise fails though the reader's final image of her is of a proud courtesan.

Chapter VII: Rochester and Behn on libertinism and the female subject

This chapter focuses on imperfect enjoyment poetry. This genre of libertine poetry describes the themes of political and sexual impotence that makes up these verses. Imperfect enjoyment poetry dwells on social and political themes of emasculation and political impotence. They depict physical impotence as evidence of mental failure, and the genre of poetry itself is subversive and explicit in two very different ways. First, it recreates libertine sexual debauchery as a secondary performance but is not, typically, a celebration of the rake's priapic sexuality as it was depicted upon the Restoration stage. Instead, the reader becomes witness to the debauchee's sexual failure which, in turn, is used to rail against the female beloved's incorrectly modulated modesty. The commodification of women's sexuality, Behn's niche specialty and one which she uses to expertly subvert the trend in 'The Disappointment' (1680/84), is presented as a no-win situation for the female participant in imperfect enjoyment poetry.¹³⁸ Significantly, Behn's imperfect enjoyment-styled poem is written in a pastoral mode whereas Etherege's and Rochester's versions, 'The Imperfect Enjoyment; After a pretty amorous discourse' (1672) and 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680), are poetic accounts of a failed sexual encounter from a masculine perspective.¹³⁹ Neither poem attempts to engage with a particular verse form. Thoms and Zeitz explain that '[t]he male tradition itself is, of course, concerned with the representation of masculine identity; unlike its male counterparts, however, Behn's 'The Disappointment'

¹³⁸ Behn's 'The Disappointment' was published twice in two separate collections of poetry. The first publication was in Rochester's posthumous *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, August/September 1680). (Danielsson and Vieth, p. 325) The 1680 publication of contained both Behn's poem and Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment'. 'The Disappointment' was reprinted against, under Behn's name, in *Poems Upon Several Occasions: With a Voyage to the Island of Love* (Fleet-street: Tonson, 1684). (O'Donnell, p. 77)

(1684) is not about impotence so much as it is about power at some levels'. (Thoms and Zeitz, p. 513) Indeed, 'The Disappointment's (1684) depiction of the sexual encounter shifts the perspective from the male speaker, as seen in Etherege and Rochester's respective versions, and instead dwells upon the reactions of the woman as the rake seduces, experiences detumescence, and finally succumbs to his literal impotent rage. Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' similarly depicts the rake's anger at his sudden, unexpected, loss of his erection. However, whereas there is a comedic element to the speaker's rage, it is diminished by his resultant misogyny toward his love, Cloris. 'The Disappointment', while maintaining its pastoral conceit, emphasises the rake's misplaced anger at his loss of power by rendering him ridiculous. Thoms and Zeitz emphasise Behn's take on the structure of power and gender in the seventeenth century English society, arguing that 'Behn incisively interrogates the notion of power as a definer of male identity and, in so doing, playfully and wittily questions conventional gender roles and the structures of oppression which they support. (Thoms and Zeitz, p. 513) Behn's pastoral variation of the imperfect enjoyment, viewed from the female perspective puts forth a dual criticism of the rake's priapic potency, an interrogation of masculine erotic power, and a criticism of what I suggest is the Courtier Poet's poetic potency. This double satire of whom I suggest are the Court Wits, challenges their masculine authority and their poetic prowess with her equally tumescent female pen. This is demonstrated with allusions to the libertine poet's twin deities, Priapus and Apollo, 'Upon that Fabulous Priapus / That Potent God, as Poets feign'. ('The Disappointment', 105-6)

The comedic and pastoral aspects of 'The Disappointment', as I will discuss in the third section of this chapter, is one of three instances where an imperfect enjoyment is used

in Behn's oeuvre to depict the rake as a figure of ridicule and criticise the priapic power of the character type within libertine discourse. As Etherege depicts the encounter, mutual pleasure is achieved separately, '[t]he action which we should have jointly done, / Each has unluckily performed alone'. ('Imperfect Enjoyment: After a pretty amorous discourse', 33- 4) I suggest that this could imply one of two scenarios: mutual masturbation or solitary masturbation after the lovers have parted. Etherege's poem is unique of the three poems discussed in this chapter because unlike Behn's and Rochester's which by turns depict and imply imperfectly discharged male orgasms, neither feature nor imply any orgasmic response in the female participant. I suggest that this is likely due to the emphasis in both 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' and 'The Disappointment' on the power dynamics that govern the sexual act between the participants. Behn and Rochester's imperfect enjoyment poems take their inspiration from the French source by de Cantencac, 'Sur une Impuissance' (1661) which was itself translated into English as 'The Lost Opportunity Recovered' (1682). (WAB, p. 392)

The prevalence of imperfect enjoyment poetry during the Restoration shows that this was a specific trend to a small community of poets taken from the French originals. In the case of Rochester, there is evidence of further imitations from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* or, 'The Art of Love', which Todd notes is 'more comforting to the un-performing man' than Behn retains in her French imitation. (WAB, p. 393) In 'Gender, literature, and gendering literature' Margaret A. Doody makes the following playful, but I also argue, accurate, observation of Rochester and his imitations:

Rochester certainly does want to shock – there is a punk rocker quality about him, as about the Ovid of the *Amores*. Or perhaps Ovid's *Amores* is to rock video what Rochester's work

is to punk rock – but in Rochester the punk rock quality is raised to the very highest style. His poetry is almost always aggressive, but it is aggressively questioning.¹⁴⁰

Doody's argument does contradict Todd's statement that Ovid's imperfect enjoyment themes are 'more comforting'. However, one can suggest that while *Amore's* may indeed be kinder to an under-performing or un-performing male, Rochester's imitation is not. This project agrees that Rochester's 'poetry is almost always aggressive, but it is aggressively questioning'.

The English translation, the 'Lost Opportunity Recovered' is likewise more amenable to the masculine ego and ends happily for the rake. In what Stephanson states is an anonymous poem printed in 1682, the once impotent and then avenged rake can engage in penetrative sex by the conclusion. The rake's 'happy ending' nonetheless remains predicated on an exchange of power between the rake and the woman he seduces as well as the rake and the woman's husband. Stephanson writes,

In one of the few successfully concluded imperfect enjoyment poems of the Restoration – an anonymous poem entitled "The Lost Opportunity Recovered," printed in *Wit and Drollery. Jovial Poems* (1682) – Lysander, the premature ejaculator, returns the morning after to his Cloris (a married woman) and, "With a proud Courage and with stiffness blest, / Foaming with Love he makes to Beauty's Lap" for a second encounter. Engaging more efficaciously this time, Lysander recovers his tumescence, ejaculates, and his paramour "wip'd away those drops of Liquid Fire. (Stephanson, p. 36)

¹⁴⁰ Margaret A. Doody, 'Gender, literature, and gendering literature', *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1650-1740*, ed. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp.58-81. p. 68.

In this singular example the rake's potency does not fail him a second time. Furthermore, he can exercise his power over another man by making the woman's husband a cuckold. Though 'The Lost Opportunity Recovered' 'allows the man to succeed spectacularly on subsequent occasions', there is no mention of the woman's sexual fulfilment as she wipes away the semen from her lover's ejaculation. (WAB, p. 393) There is no mention of female orgasm, which informs the reader that no mutual pleasure has been achieved though 'the man [succeeded] spectacularly'. The consistent, deliberate absence of women's pleasure in these imperfect enjoyment poems underscores Behn's title, 'The Disappointment'(1684). Successful penetrative sex results only in the achievement of male pleasure. When women do assert their sexually, as seen in Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680), disappointment, impotence, and rage follows.

Stephanson's assertion that this is the only example of an imperfect enjoyment style poem ending happily, if we agree that happily means that male penetration of the female has occurred, then the statement is correct. I have not found any other poems that feature the rake's orgasm achieved through full penetrative sex. *Sexual Freedom* (1995) addresses the loaded political and social implications of the imperfect enjoyments and the depiction of male and female pleasure by discussing how they are linked to the rake's failure to fulfill the expected role of a priapic libertine. Behn is the single female outlier within this specific trend of libertine poetry, masculine potency and its multitude of meanings takes preeminence over feminine interpretations of shared pleasure. Chernaik says:

The equation of sex and power central to the ideology of libertinism entails a fear of failure, damaging to the reputation of the would-be conqueror, who can in a moment be

overwhelmed by 'Rage and Shame'. Male dreams of omnipotence, centred in the mighty phallus, are deflated to comic effect in Behn's 'The Disappointment' and Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment', two poems in the same genre which treat similar materials but differ in their approach. Both poems are characterised by ironic distance, carefully judged shifts in tone, as they portray the embarrassment, comic to the reader but not to the participants, of a sudden, catastrophic failure by the male to perform adequately in a sexual encounter. (Chernaik, p. 14)

Chernaik's assessment that the 'equation of sex and power' are central to libertinism has been a running theme throughout this thesis. Linker's observation that the libertine, while supporting an ideology of freedom and the pursuit of pleasure likewise is predicated on the desire for power over others, I argue is best exemplified in imperfect enjoyment poetry. (*Dangerous Women*, p. 3) Behn's subversion of the masculine 'dreams of omnipotence, centered in the mighty phallus' are by turns childishly hilarious, as the subject matter is wanting to lend itself to, as well as scathingly critical of the rake figure who is at the centre of every libertine text discussed in this thesis. However, this project does not agree that the depictions of rakes by male authors are inherently flattering, Rochester's oeuvre degrades masculine power fantasy. Even the priapic stage-rake, a staple of libertine sex comedies is subject to criticism, and where he is portrayed as a hyper-masculine figure, the libertinism devolves into un-charming misogyny, such as in Killigrew's *Thomaso* (1663). Behn's rakes, while subject to increasingly overt levels of criticism, do fulfil a comedic function within the text. The would-be ravisher in 'The Disappointment' (1684) conjures a humorous visual even under critical scrutiny.

Indeed, the exact interpretation of what these imperfect enjoyment's failures of potency consist of, are sometimes obscured. 'The Disappointment'(1684) implies impotence, 'the o're-Ravish'd Shepherd lies / Unable to perform the Sacrifice', as well as

premature ejaculation, 'The Insensible fell weeping in his Hand'. ('The Disappointment, 68-69; 90) Meanwhile, Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' conclusively states the speaker has '[i]n liquid raptures I dissolve all o're'. ('The Imperfect Enjoyment', 15) Behn's 'The Disappointment', uniquely addresses the impossible paradox of female libertinism and what Ballaster summarises about Rochester's oeuvre, though I suggest such a description describes libertinism and not just Rochester, as 'a discernible preoccupation with an economics of the body politic and private'. (Ballaster, pp. 202-206)

Behn's 'The Disappointment' (1684) shifts the focus from masculine political impotence onto feminine social impotency, which I suggest best describes Behn's libertine engagement that I have attempted to make a case for throughout this thesis. Female pleasure within imperfect enjoyment poetry is tied to the description of sexual economies within Rochester's writing that Ballaster discusses. However, Behn's 'The Disappointment's (1684) satire of not only the sexual economies themselves but effectively subverts the masculine genre and establishes what I argue is a concretely female libertine response to her male aristocratic peers. Behn's 'The Disappointment' (1684) had previously seen publication under Rochester's name in the 1680 and 1684 printings of *Poems On Several Occasions* (1680) and the works, 'The Disappointment' (1684) and 'The Imperfect Enjoyment'(1680), are usually discussed in reference to each other. (O'Donnell, pp. 225-227)

In imperfect enjoyment poetry, the failure of male sexual function that is depicted in these poems as either premature ejaculation or the loss of the male speaker's erection and is analogous to poetical and political potency. Stephanson's *The Yard of Wit* takes the equation of sexual, political, and literary potency and focuses on the masculine

relationships that are represented. Furthermore, Stephanson's argument delineates the representation of masculine potency via how the penis is represented, be it erect, flaccid, disembodied, or figurative. Stephanson explains,

More specifically, cultural conceptualizations of the relationship between soft and turgid penis were not limited to a privileging of the symbolically detached phallus, but rather the potent erection as self-contained symbol was found along with a discourse about the temporal drama of the yard in the lives and on the bodies of individual men. That is, there was a recognition that the process of tumescence and detumescence has different figurative possibilities than does the phallus separated imaginatively from the penis, and the presence of both discursive modes is typical of the period reflecting an uncertainty about how the relationship of soft and erect tarse might be representative of masculine identity or mind. (Stephanson, p. 29)

The 'yard' of the Restoration wit appears in all libertine texts, and it is not exclusive to the rake's priapic member. As Chapter 2 discussed, Behn's figurative phallus appears in defence of her right to write, and Sylvia's phallic pen is repeatedly referenced as she discovers and then asserts her sexual agency and burgeoning rakishness. I suggest that these figurative female pen(is) are neither described nor represented as explicitly as their biologically male libertine counterparts' parts, however, by Behn's outspoken public defence of her 'most masculine part' they serve a tumescent function of masculine erotic-power, nonetheless. As Stephanson explains, imperfect enjoyment poetry uses the 'process of tumescence and detumescence' for different 'figurative possibilities'. Though the genre draws attention to the sudden 'detumescence' of the penis, the poems initially introduce the penis to the reader erect and assertive, even violently in Behn's 'The Disappointment', in a display of the owner's phallic power over the woman they are attempting to conquer.

What the imperfect enjoyment genre does well is to then highlight and satirise the various reasons for sudden, emasculating, loss of potency. Stephanson continues,

Finally, the yard was sometimes viewed as an irrational and ungovernable Other, at odds with male will, and commodified as a thing to be owned or exchanged by others without reference to the male self or character to which it was attached. (Stephanson, p. 30)

Rochester's oeuvre supports Stephanson's argument for 'irrational and ungovernable' penises as like discussions of female hysteria, the libertine speaker of Rochester's and other's poetry is as prone to sudden, sometimes catastrophic, losses of Reason when confronted with female libertinism. The 'yards' of his speaker's operate separately from their owner's desires, gravitating toward the wrong women, a male partner, or losing that critical tumescence at the first perceived threat to their owner's power. In Etherege's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment; After a pretty amorous discourse,' the speaker claims that it was his conquest's beauty that robbed him of his erection before mutual pleasure could be achieved. Stephanson's second point that the penis is also a 'commodified [...] thing to be owned or exchanged by others' (Stephanson, p. 30) can likewise be applied in the broader sense to intimate exchanges of trust and loyalty between king and courtier. This reading of the libertine Court Wit as Charles II's 'commodified' and 'exchanged' courtier I suggest provides an appropriate summation of the speaker's grievances toward the monarchy in Rochester's 'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind'. The satire of the substitution of humanmade Reason in place of Religion reasserts the equation of poetic potency with masculine erotic power. However, I suggest that 'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind'

recalls an imperfect enjoyment in the sense that the emphasis is placed upon ideological and political impotence in the face of a different powerful Other, the failing monarchy. The suggestion that the Court Wits, in addition to being politically impotent, are actually a detriment to policy, are 'commodified', 'owned' and 'exchanged by others' dovetails nicely with Rochester's assertion that Wits are treated like 'common whores [...] then kicked out of doors' ('A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind', 37-8).

Webster suggest that it was the '[p]ublic performance of transgressive activities was at the heart of what it meant to be a libertine.' (Webster, p. 3) The public displays of debauchery and hedonism by the court in public venues like the theatre's and the pubs serves as the primary libertine performance by the wits. By recreating these primary displays as poetry, the Court Wits relived their shared experiences a second time. Importantly, they reimagine themselves as more priapic, more potent, and more politically relevant. Webster identifies this as a motivating factor of these multileveled libertine performances. *Performing Libertinism's* interpretation of the Courtier Wit's public and literary displays of libertinism argues that from the mid-1670s through the 1680s, many of these performances stem from the increased political impotence of the Wits in influencing policy in Charles II's government. Indeed, as time passed, the Court Wits became a liability for the restored Monarchy as the debaucheries of the court further maligned Charles II's already damaged public image. (Webster, p. 141) Imperfect enjoyment poetry both valorises the wit of the author and satirises the impotencies, inconstancies, and insufficient wits of another Courtier's within the coterie. The hedonistic 'performances' of drinking, whoring, and gambling viewed by London's population, as Webster explains, are contrasted against the literature written by and circulated amongst the Wits.

As I have discussed about Stephanson's and Chernaik's scholarship, imperfect enjoyment poetry the emphasis is placed upon the rake's successful penetration of his sexual partner, gendered female in these three poems apart from Rochester's passing, violent, allusion to penetrating a male partner,

Stiffly Resolv'd t'would Carelesly invade
Woman, nor Man, nor ought its fury stayd –
Where ere it perc'd a Cunt it found or made'

(‘The Imperfect Enjoyment’, 41-3)

Rochester's inclusion of a line implying the dominance of one male over another has been discussed at by Hammond. This image of successful penetrative sex, albeit depicted as a violent intrusion into another's body, is given as a boast by the speaker which asserts his masculine prowess even as his penis is rendered a 'cinder' my impotence. Hammond argues that the reference to sodomy 'is perfunctory, and the casual phrasing suggests that the gender of the partner is immaterial, though at the same time the line [...] makes it clear that the male body is no more than a convenient substitute for the female.' ('Rochester's homoeroticism', p. 55) Though more pornographic in its depiction of sexual acts and impotency than other libertine lyrics, such as the speaker in 'A Ramble in St James's Park's' (1673) which asks the question, 'who fucks who and who does worse', 'The Imperfect Enjoyment (1680) share a theme of masculine impotence that is represented as both sexual and political. ('A Ramble in St James's Park', 2) In both poems, the emasculation and

impotence of the speaker is central to the theme. Though not imperfect enjoyment style poems, these verses by Rochester are different explorations on the same theme: impotence and emasculation. While 'Reason and Mankind' (1673) does not directly reference cuckolding, the speaker's wit is used and discarded by the monarchy, as the 'Witts are treated just like common Whores' with "The Pleasure past, a threatening doubt remains'. ('Against Reason and Mankind, 36; 38)

'A Satyr against Reason and Mankind' presents the observation that the role of the coterie at court has been reduced to that of a cheap spectacle, to be used and then disposed of as one would a mistress or prostitute. The speaker continues in the following verse to assert their superior wit and offers a satire against court society which appropriates fashionable libertinism while distancing itself from the Court Witts,

For I profess I can be very smart
On wit, which I abhor with all my heart.
I long to lash it in some sharp essay,
But your grand indiscretion bids me stay
And turns my tide of ink another way.

('A Satyr against Reason and Mankind', 53-57)

The speaker here does two things. There is the statement that it is 'wit, which I abhor' however, this assertion is delivered in the form of a poem displaying the author's skills, his wit. The desire to be display wit while criticising the oversaturation of pretenders-to-wit, fops, is rendered ironic by the desire of the speakers to attack false 'wit' in a 'sharp essay'.

The speaker, as is the one in 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673), is familiar to the court and its culture. Unlike the fops who employ libertine wit as an accessory, the 'authentic' Court Wit is impotent in 'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind' (1674) and cuckolded in 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673). Both satires refer to the over-saturated libertinism of the court and present the speaker as unmanned and rendered impotent by men usurping his power. Imperfect enjoyment poems highlight the speaker's impotence and the appropriation of their masculinity and political influence by an outside force: man, woman, or governmental body.

The above passage from 'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind' (1674) avoids the hedonistic nightmare landscape described in 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673), the phallic and 'spermatophilic' imagery is retained. For example, 'But your grand indiscretion bids me stay / And turns my tide of ink another way' revisits the conceit of the image of the pen, and the act of writing are analogous to masculine phallic power. As depicted in 'A Ramble in St James's Park' (1673), impotence or misdirected ejaculations are a popular trend within a discourse that purports to celebrate pleasure as the greatest good. Ballaster even observes that in 'Rochester's poetry, emission and loss are consistently associated with male sexuality and, especially, the penis.' ('John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester', p. 208) Rochester's speaker is impotent of speech and his 'tide of ink' is required to be spilled elsewhere. Since court culture restrains his raillery, though the poem suggests impotence is avoided, his 'tide of ink' is spilled elsewhere. Stephanson supports that the 'yard of wit' is a clear expression of sexual and social power within seventeenth-century society, however he expands upon Gilbert and Gubar's question, made in reference to women's authorship, '[i]s a pen a metaphorical penis' to which I answer with an emphatic 'Yes!'

presenting a critique of feminist scholarship's emphasis on the disembodied penis which overlooks the whole 'package'. (Gilbert and Gubar, p. 3) I relate this imperfect enjoyment scenario to Rochester's imperfectly spilled 'ink'. Stephanson suggests,

One cannot deny the gender-implications of discourses in which male writing was so frequently imagined as a quintessentially sexual act inscribed onto feminized pages by masculinist representatives of patriarchy [...] The metaphorical logic of quill-yards also included ink-as-semen which in turn prompted the cause-and-effect implication that male writing like a man's seed, originated in the testicles. (Stephanson, pp. 138-139)

Stephanson does not challenge Gilbert and Gubar. By in extending the metaphor of poetical potency and masculine power into a complete sexual act that includes the 'whole package' changes the discussion from just the pen(is) to a discussion that appropriately represents the 'spermatophilic' ink-tides of Behn and Rochester's immense poetic oeuvres. 'A Satyr against Reason and Mankind' (1674) is not an imperfect enjoyment poem, it nevertheless emphasises Chernaik's 'catastrophic failure' of the speaker's reason and wit *via* the speaker's 'tide of ink'. It is worth noting that though the poem is about political impotence, Rochester's speaker nevertheless claims a 'tide' and not a 'trickle' of ink, further supporting Stephanson's observation that for these homosocial male communities of authors the act of writing is a 'quintessentially sexual' act. Stephanson asserts that male writing originates in the testicles and I suggest political poems such as these are therefore a form of literary masturbation, and imperfect enjoyment of a different kind, which functions as a display of wit.

In the third verse, the speaker breaks from his attack on the broad concept of 'Reason' and enters a direct criticism the coterie's place within the closed society at court. The poem highlights the Court Wit's failure to retain political potency and influence at court, reduced to the role of entertainers:

And wit was his vain, frivolous pretense
Of pleasing others at his own expense.
For wits are treated just like common whores:
First they're enjoyed, and then kicked out of door.

(*'A Satyr against Reason and Mankind'* 35-8)

Rochester's speaker names wit, a defining trait of the character type, as a 'vain, frivolous pretense'. While the public displays of wit by the courtiers and their fictional analogues emphasise their masculinity and sexual potency *'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind'* (1674) argues the opposite. The 'wits' become 'common whores' because they 'please others [Charles II] at [their] own expense'. The equation of the Court Wits with mercenary sexuality is even more emasculating because it equates the priapic libertine as on par with his most commonly referenced sexual conquest. There is a further feminising aspect embedded within the equation of the libertine with 'whores' as the terminology surrounding prostitution is gendered female just as the terminology which we use to discuss libertinism and the rake is gendered masculine. 'The sexual specificity of such terms [rake and whore], of course, is not accidental, but points to the social and economic contexts that determine our apprehension of gender' (*Weber*, p.11) By equating the Court Wits as equal

to, at least in treatment, prostitution, their most utilised and most vocally maligned sexual economy, Rochester's makes a statement conflating the self-importance of the Court Wits against the reality of their political influence.

Men's Pleasure

Imperfect enjoyment poems are 'spermatophilic'. Turner defines spermatophilic as erotic literature, primarily poetry that places 'excessive emphasis on ejaculation as the sole source of pleasure.' (*Schooling Sex*, p. xii) This ejaculatory focus, as discussed, ties in well with Stephanson's discussion of how male literary power and poetic potency is expressed through the male genitals or a literary substitute. Stephanson argues that homosocial male communities 'seed' each other's creativity through coterie transmission. This creative lineage creates figurative 'brain-wombs' with the dominant poet 'seeding' the passive poet's mind so that he can give 'birth' to his creation. (Stephanson, pp. 97-115) Libertinism elevates wit and reason above what are perceived to be the arbitrary morals of wider society. Thus, the failure of the rake's sexual potency in the 'imperfect enjoyment' is directly linked to the more humiliating failure of his mental capacities. Behn's rake 'The poor Lisander in Despair, / Renounc'd his Reason with his Life' after his loss of potency. ('The Disappointment', 104) Rochester's rakish voice progressively loses his reason as '[rage] at last confirms me impotent' he is then reduced 'Trembling, confused, despairing, limber, dry, / A wishing, weak, unmoving lump I lie.' ('The Imperfect Enjoyment', 30; 35-36)

For Rochester, the raillery employed by his speakers attracts equally vicious satire of the author in return. The cause of the speaker's premature ejaculation and resulting

impotence is Corinna's appropriation of masculine sexual agency, represented very deliberately as penetrative. This role reversal and feminisation of the rake is a paradoxically shown as a dual display of sexual ecstasy from this perceived abasement, orgasm and ejaculation, and 'catastrophic failure' which ends the sexual encounter prematurely. As Behn has repeatedly highlighted in her work and this thesis keeps returning to, there is a paradoxical problem regarding women's agency within the supposedly sexually 'free' libertine discourse. Etherege and Rochester's versions of the imperfect enjoyment emphasise the cause of male sexual failure is, problematically, the exercise of this female sexual agency. Problematically it is this exercise of female agency that triggers the speaker's orgasm in Rochester's poem while Etherege's speaker's ejaculation results from the beloved's demure acceptance of his sexual advances.

In 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' Rochester's 'Potent God', here described as having sexual prowess on a par with the powers of Zeus, is nevertheless unmanned, again, by a reaching hand, of a mortal woman;

With Armes, Leggs, Lipps close clinging to embrace,
She clips me to her Breast, and sucks me to her face.
Her nimble tongue, (love's lesser lightning), plaid
Within my Mouth, and to my thoughts conveyed
Swift Orders, that I should prepare to throw
The all dissolving Thunderbolt below.

(*'The Imperfect Enjoyment'*, 5-10)

Here the female lover, Corinna, exercising her mutual desire, has abandoned the pretence of virtue. Rochester's poem begins in medias res, 'Naked she lay clasp'd in my longing Armes'. (line 1) The rake's attempt at penetration soon ends abruptly as his lover's 'busy hand' causes him to 'Melt into sperm and spend at every pore.' (line 15) It is interesting that it is the penetration of the rake by Corinna's 'nimble tongue' that helps to trigger his orgasm. Elizabeth V. Young in 'Aphra Behn, Gender, and Pastoral' suggests that the assumption of agency by Corinna robs the speaker of his masculinity. Young argues that 'Rochester's speaker, in finding himself unable to serve the desirous woman, perceives himself in a position of weakness, owing something to-and therefore dominated by-a woman. He interprets his weakness as female aggressiveness'.¹⁴¹ One can agree with Young's assessment, and it is suggested that the act of penetration by the speaker's female lover continues the theme of emasculation and impotence that forms the foundation of imperfect enjoyment poetry. I am not the only reader to notice that it is specifically the penetrative act that triggers the 'imperfect' emission and not just the 'busy hand' guiding the speaker's penis toward her 'balmy brinks of bliss' (line 12). Love writes,

The kiss may be seen as 'pointed' in a literal sense because of the projecting tongue or, metaphorically, because it performs the function of a pointer dog, in indicating the position of the concealed bird prior to being 'sprung' (startled into flight) (*WJW*, p. 353)

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth V. Young, 'Aphra Behn, Gender, and Pastoral', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 33.3 (1993): pp. 523-543 < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/451012>> [Accessed on: 26 November 2015]. p. 534.

Though an odd comparison to make, I concede that the pointed tongue serves a similar role within the poem's narrative of indicating when orgasm will 'startle [the speaker] into flight'. However, I suggest that the language of 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' does, in fact, depict Corinna's tongue filling the role of a 'disembodied' penis. The tongue is 'loves lesser lightning' in opposition to the speaker's statement that 'I should prepare to throw / The all dissolving Thunderbolt below'. (lines 9-10) The speaker's God-like status is undermined by Corinna's usurpation of his 'lightning'. The penetrative role of Corinna's tongue is placed in direct contrast to her lover's attempt at penetrating her. As her 'lesser lightning' succeeds in penetrating the speaker's mouth, his 'fluttering soul [his penis], sprung with the pointed Kiss, / Hangs hovering o're her balmy brinks of bliss'. ('The Imperfect Enjoyment', 11-2) She has asserted her agency by entering his body, his mouth, and before his successful penetration of her body. Overstimulated and emasculated by his lover's appropriation of his masculine agency, the speaker's orgasm is triggered. Following the speaker's orgasm, as her entire being transforms as the speaker 'Melt[s] into sperm and spend at every pore. / A touch from any part of her had don't: / Her hand, her foot, her very look's a Cunt.' ('The Imperfect Enjoyment, 15-18) At the moment of premature ejaculation begins the Rochester's poem turns from playfully pornographic to violent and disturbing. Corinna is reduced to the sum of her sexual parts as the rake goes on to rail against her rampant sexuality. The penetration by the traditionally passive sexual partner calls into question the rake's erotic power and as 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' from the point of orgasm onward will show rather than state the rake's loss of reason we can also assume the rake's loss of poetic power and wit. This is particularly relevant if we agree with Wiseman's statement that poetic power is analogous to erotic power. (Wiseman, p. 17)

Rochester's rakes are not the expected representations of 'rakish characters' but are, I suggest, 'rakish voices'. In his longer satires Rochester's speakers are initially depicted as hyper-masculine, and to borrow Turner's terminology, 'spermatophilic', meaning to place 'excessive emphasis on ejaculation as the sole source of pleasure.' (*Schooling Sex*, p. xii)

Women's Pleasure

As this thesis has addresses women's libertinism, my necessity was different from its masculine counterpart. Libertine poetry, similarly, provides two complimentary but different variations between male and female performances. Behn's 'The Disappointment' (1684), as previously mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, is primarily engaged in representing the power-dynamic between the rake and his beloved. While Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment'(1680) depicts unconsummated sexual acts and the titles of the poems reference their entirely masculine perspective toward pleasure. Susan Staves in 'Behn, Women and Society' explains that,

As Behn represents them, male desire and female desire differ. Male libertine desire focuses narrowly on the pleasure of sexual intercourse in the present moment; it is a desire for conquest and the experience of power as well as for sexual orgasm [...] it is excited by resistance, heightened by women's fear, and diminished by successful enjoyment.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Susan Staves, 'Behn, Women, and Society', *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p 22.

As Staves explains, and is shown as true in imperfect enjoyment poetry, the libertine desire for conquest, figured masculine and essential to the depiction of the rake character, ‘focuses narrowly on the pleasure of sexual intercourse’ however, as it is ‘a desire for conquest’ the rake is unable to complete ‘the sacrifice’ when he is met with no ‘resistance’. As Stave’s concludes, masculine pleasure in these poems is ‘diminished by successful enjoyment’ on the part of the woman. Of this, Behn’s point is succinct: there is no imperfect enjoyment, only disappointment. The nature of that disappointment, however, is open to debate. I suggest that while the dearth of female pleasure in this genre of poem is allude to *via* the tongue-in-cheek nature of Behn’s title, the disappointment referenced in ‘The Disappointment’ is the same inescapable failure within libertine discourse to reconcile female libertinism with the masculine preoccupation with power that dominates every facet of the ideology. As mentioned, imperfect enjoyment poetry is tied to the depiction of sexual economies which Ballaster discusses are important to the depiction of women in Rochester’s writing. (‘John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester’, p 206) Behn’s ‘The Disappointment’ (1684) satirises the sexual economies themselves but also the other libertines, such as Etherege and Rochester, who rail against Rochester’s aforementioned ‘affected rules of honour’. I suggest that Behn effectively subverts the masculine imperfect enjoyment genre and establishes a concretely female libertine response to her male coterie peers.

Behn’s response to Rochester’s ‘The Imperfect Enjoyment’ (1680) is one of a handful of what others such as Love term ‘thematically linked’ imperfect enjoyment poems. (WJW, p. 353) However, unlike other poems appearing under the appellation of ‘imperfect enjoyment,’ Behn engages with the subject via a different poetical mode. Young

discusses at Behn's large selection of pastoral poetry and notes the advantages of the pastoral form. Young writes,

[p]astoral is [...] a "ladylike" form, one categorically disempowered by the critical generic hierarchy. But it is also a particularly subversive form that, in the hands of such an accomplished female poet as Aphra Behn, challenges conventions of both genre and gender. (Young, p. 523)

This subversion of the gendered power dynamic in 'The Disappointment' (1680) with the use of pastoral imagery is one of three instances in which Behn depicts the rake's failure to engage in and consummate a sexual act under the guise of a pastoral setting. As I discussed in the previous chapter, *Love Letters* (1684-7) is a series which emphasizes female libertines' struggle for agency within a discourse that seeks to assert power over them. I suggest that 'The Disappointment' (1684) recalls the same theme in miniature. O'Donnell's annotated bibliography of Behn's oeuvre lists 'The Disappointment' (1684) as part of the collection *Poems Upon Several Occasions: With a Voyage to the Island of Love* (1684) making it a contemporary publication of the first instalment of *Love Letters* (1684-7) that likewise depicts complimentary recollections of an imperfect enjoyment between Philander and Sylvia where Sylvia is overcome with longing for Philander which causes her 'guilty pen [to] slackens in [her] trembling hand' (*Love Letters*, p. 9) Todd notes the egalitarian reporting of the incident between the lovers in *Love Letters* (1684), writing that 'the situation is presented first from the man's point of view, in a letter from Philander to Sylvia then from the woman's, in one from Sylvia to Philander'. (WAB, p. 393) Todd's

notes on the poem agree with the scholarship that 'The Disappointment' was published along with Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment'(1680) in his *Poems on Several Occasions*(1680) dating the poem to at least 1680. This makes it the oldest imperfect enjoyment depiction in Behn's oeuvre. The dating of the original French poem and its English translation, as well as the first appearance in print of 'The Disappointment' (1684) suggest that Behn has either translated her poem from the source, which is likely and represents the prevailing scholarship on the poem's origins. However, I suggest that the poem serves as a coterie response to Rochester's raillery against women's libertinism as the composition dates and both poem's initial printing within the same collection of Rochester's verses suggest that these poems are imitations of the same French source as well as being, at least for Behn, a coterie response to the libertine trend.

Behn's 'The Disappointment' (1684) reflects in the title a potentially female perspective on the incomplete sex-act, though it can be argued the 'disappointment' in the failed sexual experience equally applies to Lisander. Though the swain will probably *be disappointed*, later, upon reflection, within the confines of the poem the rake is actively enraged rather than passively disappointed at his sudden loss of potency. Behn's shepardess Cloris is denied any sexual enjoyment since Lisander, upon prematurely ejaculating, loses possession of his capacity to reason and falls into the 'Rage that had debauch'd his Love.' (line 109) Behn's criticism of libertinism within what is itself a libertine-styled poem continues with Cloris reaching out to her lover, thus revealing her sexual desire behind her pretence of virtue, expecting 'That Potent God' but instead grabbing 'a Snake.' Young explains,

The snake is not only a sign of masculine detumescence, but a sign of the wily and dangerous nature of masculine power, which seduces women to reveal themselves and render their social and sexual authority for the false promise of pleasure and gratification. The disappointment to Behn is not only sexual, but ideological: a physical and a social loss for Cloris, who has believed in masculine power sufficiently to tender her own autonomy in exchange for, ultimately, nothing. (Young, p. 536)

Tellingly, Behn has included within this stanza of the poem criticisms against her fellow poets. ‘That Potent God (as Poets feign)’ fails to deliver and reduces Lisander from ‘fabulous Priapus’ into a figure of ridicule. Libertinism explicitly favours reason, and here Behn further divests reason and dignity from her rake and replaces it with ‘[d]espair’ and ‘[r]age’. While the chronology of the three poems is difficult to determine the imperfect enjoyment is a popular genre explored by the coterie of Court Wits and as such a prime target for Behn’s criticisms of the social double standards even within these libertine groups.

Behn’s omniscient speaker in ‘The Disappointment’(1684) immediately aligns her rake with poets through an allusion to the Greek god Apollo, who, descending to Earth,

The gilded Planet of the Day,
In his gay Chariot, drawn by Fire,
War now descending to the Sea,
And left no Light to guide the world,

(‘The Disappointment’, 6-9)

Later this conflation of the rake with the libertine poet is reiterated, until the final humiliation,

Her tim'rous Hand she gently laid,
Or guided by Design or Chance,
Upon that Fabulous Priapus,
That Potent God (as Poets feign.)
But never did young Shepherdess
(Gath'ring of Fern upon the Plain)
More nimbly draw her Fingers back,
Finding beneath the Verdant Leaves a Snake.

(‘The Disappointment’, 113-120)

Wiseman explains the equation of male potency with poetry since ‘Poetic power remains analogous to masculine erotic power, figured as penetrative; it finds out and points meaning for the reader as Cupid’s darts point out love.’ (Wiseman, p. 17) For Behn, this focus on male orgasm is written as a failing on the part of the man, and thus refutes the point of view put forth in Etherege’s and Rochester’s imperfect enjoyment poems that place the blame on woman’s feigned modesty. Alternatively, Rochester’s accuses the culprit is insufficient modesty, ‘A touch from any part of her had done’t: / Her hand, her foot, her very look’s a cunt’ or even more simplistically the speakers blame for his loss of masculine potency is delivered to the reader wrapped in a compliment: the woman is just too attractive. (‘The Imperfect Enjoyment’, 17-18)

The libertine rambler, to reference Rochester’s inebriated speaker in ‘A Ramble in St James’s Park’ (1673) differs from his stage and prose equivalents in several ways. While stage rakes often assume the role of flawed but comical romantic leads, often reforming at

the conclusion, the rakish voice in poetry utilises satire without the comfort of comedy. The rakish voice is acutely aware of libertine arguments favoring reason and free sexuality but is also critical of this libertine philosophy even while celebrating the absolute freedom it purportedly ensures. This absolute freedom in Etherege's 'Imperfect Enjoyment' leads to the rake's overstimulation and a light criticism that the pretense of modesty has only led to the fetishisation of modesty. This self-reflective satire of both London society and the libertine proclivities of the court is taken to its ultimate nihilistic conclusion by Rochester in textbook examples of libertine verses such as 'A Ramble in St James Park' (1673), 'A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind' (1674) and 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680). The libertinism of these three poems is undisputed, and they are scathingly satirical, graphically sexual, but also self-critical. Rochester's rambles heavily rely on both satire and pornography in the construction of their criticisms, yet these samples from what Turner classifies as the hard-core libertine canon are neither comedic nor erotic. Where economic needs and the pretense of virtue are required, as seen in Behn's treatment of the rake in 'The Disappointment' (1684), comedy is used in conjunction with satire to temper the criticisms and make them more palatable to a wider audience. As Ballaster succinctly puts it, 'Rochester takes Hobbes's grounding argument that man's life is "nasty, brutish and short" a step further, toward a representation of culture as unremitting chaos and nihilism.' ('John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester', p. 218-219)

Conclusion

An enduring difficulty with defining libertinism, especially Restoration libertinism, is the fluidity of the discourse itself. Libertinism is performative. The misogyny is undeniable. Libertinism is an ideology based around the practice of freedom and the pursuit of pleasure, and yet, paradoxically libertinism also strives to exert power over others, especially women. This can be seen in the plays, prose, and poetry of the period. As this thesis project has argued, the power-dynamics in libertine texts that delineate along the lines of gender, economics and social class are a testament to the unique socio-political climate of late seventeenth-century London. Prolific authors such as Behn and Rochester have the scope of material to illustrate the degrees to which their respective libertine engagements change and evolve. As this project has shown, within Behn's body of work, her libertinism and proto feminist depictions of aristocratic women's struggles changes and adapts to literary trends and the shifting political climate. This illustrates that Behn had to be as aware, if not more so, of the unstable political landscape than her male peers, such as Rochester. Though libertine literature does lend itself, due to its focus on masculine sexual freedom, to misogyny, this thesis project has shown that this does not prevent female libertinism from being depicted, discussed, and created with a female pen.

As scholarship by Linker, Turner, and Webster, have all noted, the notorious difficulty of libertine scholarship is in pinning down a 'definitive' libertinism. It has been suggested throughout this project that part of the difficulty in providing a 'definitive' answer to what it means to be a 'libertine' is determined by the historical period and the social climate being discussed. Restoration London was a unique time in English history

that saw the emergence of commercial authorship, political scandals and crises, and the highly visible Court Wits enacting their version of Epicurean hedonism on the streets and in the pubs of London town.

Doody's 'Gender, literature, and gendering literature in the Restoration' explains that the Restoration period was:

Paradoxically, in an era that dealt in paradoxes, the aggressiveness of male writers in discussing sex and gender gave some freedom to women writers to tackle gender matters from new points of view, and to deal with their own anger, desire, and questioning. The very idea of writing is gendered, but any gendering as soon as announced is right for question. "A Female Pen" may be a contradiction in terms, but the Restoration lived by and with contradictions. (Doody, p. 69)

These contradictions in the presentation of libertinism and proto feminist discourse have been addressed in each chapter of this thesis. Behn's 'Female Pen', and the concept of female writing as an appropriation of a masculine pursuit, has been given the witty shorthand 'Pen(is)'. (Gilbert and Gubar, p. 3) Behn's libertinism and classist politics problematize proto feminist readings of her oeuvre, since both her libertinism and Tory politics work against contemporary intersectional feminist discussions of sexual politics and gender. Ultimately Behn's proto feminist underpinnings are complicated by early modern conceptions of class and race which, in Behn's writing, privilege female libertine discourse for an aristocratic minority. However, this thesis project agrees with Doody that these contradictions are the product of the age in which Behn, and other Restoration libertines, were living and writing in. Gilbert and Gubar appropriately place Behn and her

professionalism as seemingly equal with her male libertine peers and go so far as to speculate that she led a lifestyle like that of other Restoration dramatists. Gilbert and Gubar say,

Behn was the first really “professional” literary woman in England – was and is always considered a somewhat “shady lady,” no doubt promiscuous, probably self-indulgent, and certainly “indecent.” “What has poor women done, that she must be / Debarred from sense and sacred poetry?” Behn frankly asked, and she seems just as frankly to have lived the life of a Restoration rake. (Gilbert and Gubar, p. 63)

While this project has corroborated Gilbert and Gubar’s suppositions that Behn was likely ‘a somewhat “shady lady”, “probably self-indulgent” and certainly “indecent”’, Behn’s consistent inclusion in her dramaturgical and prose writing of the consequences of women exercising the free sexuality enjoyed by libertine men refutes the argument that Behn was ‘no doubt promiscuous’. Though Behn’s critics had labelled her promiscuous despite her efforts, this project has argued that her career and engagement with libertine discourse is the reason for her ‘sign of Angellica’ rather than any libertine embrace of sexual freedom. If Behn ‘lived the life of a Restoration rake’ it was defined by her terms and was notably different from that of Etherege’s and Rochester’s rakish exploits. Weber’s *The Restoration Rake-Hero* states that ‘During the Restoration, the types of sexual freedom imaginatively as well as socially available to men and women differed greatly’ and suggests that ‘the female rake exists as a projection of the ambivalent feelings aroused in men by female eroticism’. (Weber, p. 11). This assessment of the libertine woman as a construct born from the complicated emotions of libertine men, such as Etherege and Rochester, undercuts Gilbert and Gubar’s attempts to lift Behn onto more equal footing with her male peers, but

nevertheless retains the historical context of Behn's rebellion against social concerns beyond the exercise of libertine sexuality.

Female libertinism and female versions of the traditionally masculine rake-figure have been the subject of a considerable portion of this thesis, predominantly because Behn's writing exemplifies the paradox above of female libertinism and the restriction of the free exercise of that libertinism without lasting consequences. By appropriating masculine power, Behn and other female libertines become, as Weber described 'a projection of ambivalent feelings aroused in men'. As Behn has shown, libertinism likewise lends itself well as a vehicle for discussions of sexual agency, marriage, and the burgeoning market for commercial literature. Doody's point that 'the aggressiveness of male writers in discussing sex and gender gave some freedom to women writers to tackle gender matters from new points of view, and to deal with their anger, desire, and questioning' (Doody, p. 69) is a strategy used to great effect by Behn in her response to imperfect enjoyment poetry, potentially even Rochester's 'The Imperfect Enjoyment' (1680) *via* her female perspective on the aforementioned paradox of too little and too much affected modesty in 'The Disappointment' (1684). Even more central to this thesis's discussion of the development of cynicism and nihilistic tendencies in Restoration libertinism, Behn's trilogy of prose fiction, *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684-7) showcases Behn's 'anger, desire, and questioning' by giving voice to her criticisms of libertinism and particularly the rake-figure, and the commodification of female sexual agency through Sylvia's increasingly frustrated letters to both her lover, Philander and her sister, Myrtilia.

The brand of Restoration libertinism associated with the Court Wits informs the reflection of their libertinism on the Restoration stage in the many sex comedies and comedies of manners made popular by the amateur and professional dramatists of the period. However, these depictions of libertinism are likewise unique unto themselves. Behn's prolific career charts the progression of male and female rakes from the canonically accepted variations of the Hobbesian or Extravagant stage-rake to what Linker has identified as Behn's 'Lady Lucretius' female libertine interpretation. As discussed by Weber in *The Restoration Rake-Hero* there is a uniqueness to the English libertine interpretation that differentiates itself from its sixteenth century and continental predecessors. Weber identifies this difference in his introduction as being,

shaped by the assumption that the Restoration rake-hero's most distinctive and therefore most important, characteristic is his sexuality. The singularity of his sexual nature reveals how fundamentally he differs even from most of the figures usually related to him for the rake is the first character type in the history of English literature to derive his definition primarily from his eroticism. (Weber p 3)

Weber's assumption that the Restoration rake's 'most distinctive' feature is his sexuality I agree with. When discussing libertinism, the first and most dominating aspect of the rake-character, and indeed, the discourse, is the prevalent and appropriately priapic sexuality that is essential to the classification of libertine drama, prose-fiction, and poetry. However, I disagree with Webster, as this thesis has shown, that the rake's sexuality is 'therefore most important'. I got so far as to say that I do not view the defining characteristic of Rochester's oeuvre, or indeed libertinism, at the conclusion of this project, to be its sexuality.

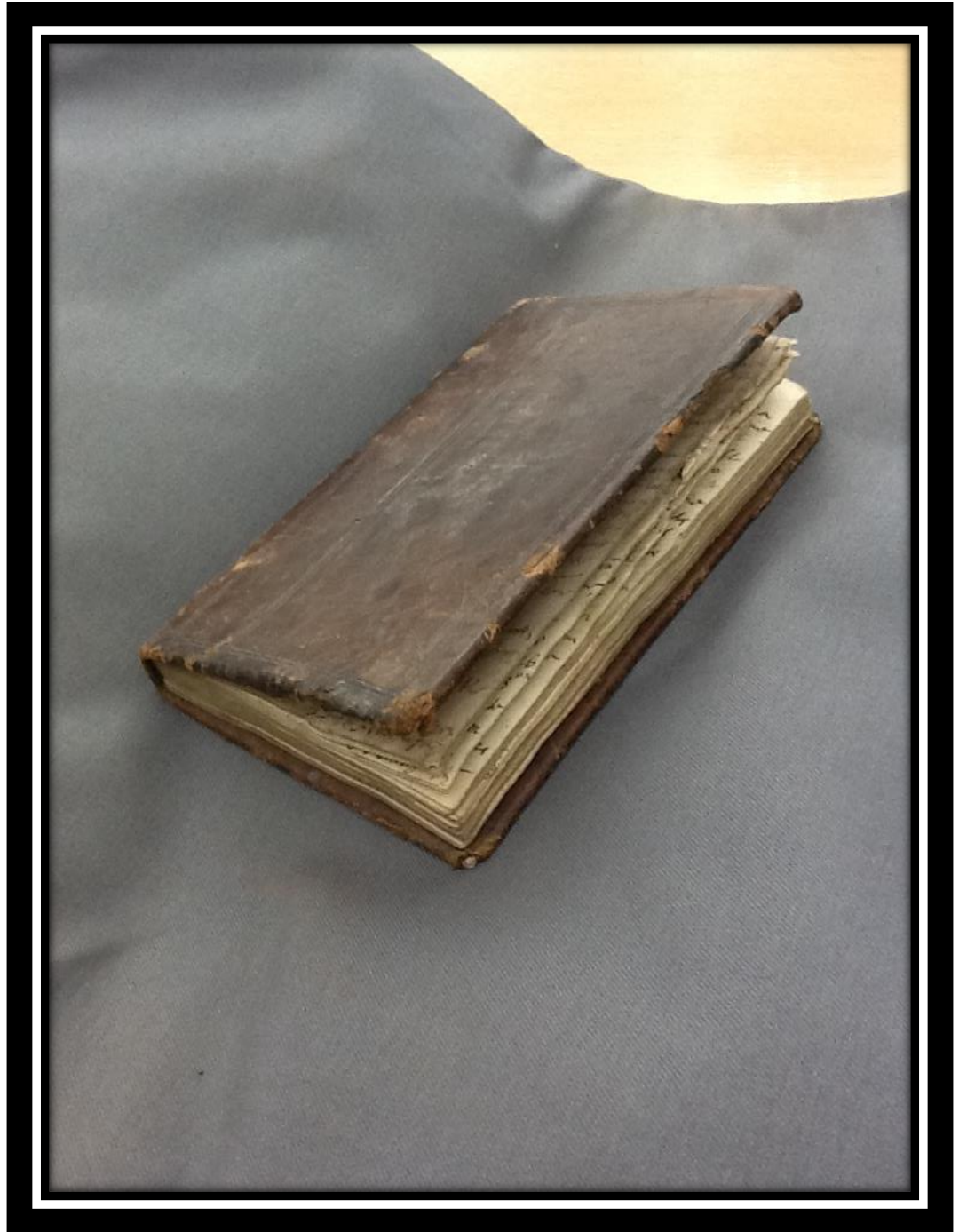
The emphasis on the performativity of libertinism is not unique to this thesis, and thus I owe a debt to the previous scholarship of Weber, Webster's *Performing Libertinism* (2005) and of course Backscheider's *Spectacular Politics*(1995) which began the discussion of the Restoration, and especially the monarchy's, use of performativity and spectacle in its politics. I appreciate Weber's emphasis in the above passage on this aspect of the rake. There is a strong element of this performativity in the depiction of the rake, as Weber notes the 'love of disguise' and 'fondness for play' with all the connotations the words 'disguise' and 'play' carry are central to the development of the rake-figure from his traditional home in the Restoration theatre to his eventual cross-over in the eighteenth century as a prominent novelistic embodiment of aristocratic excess.

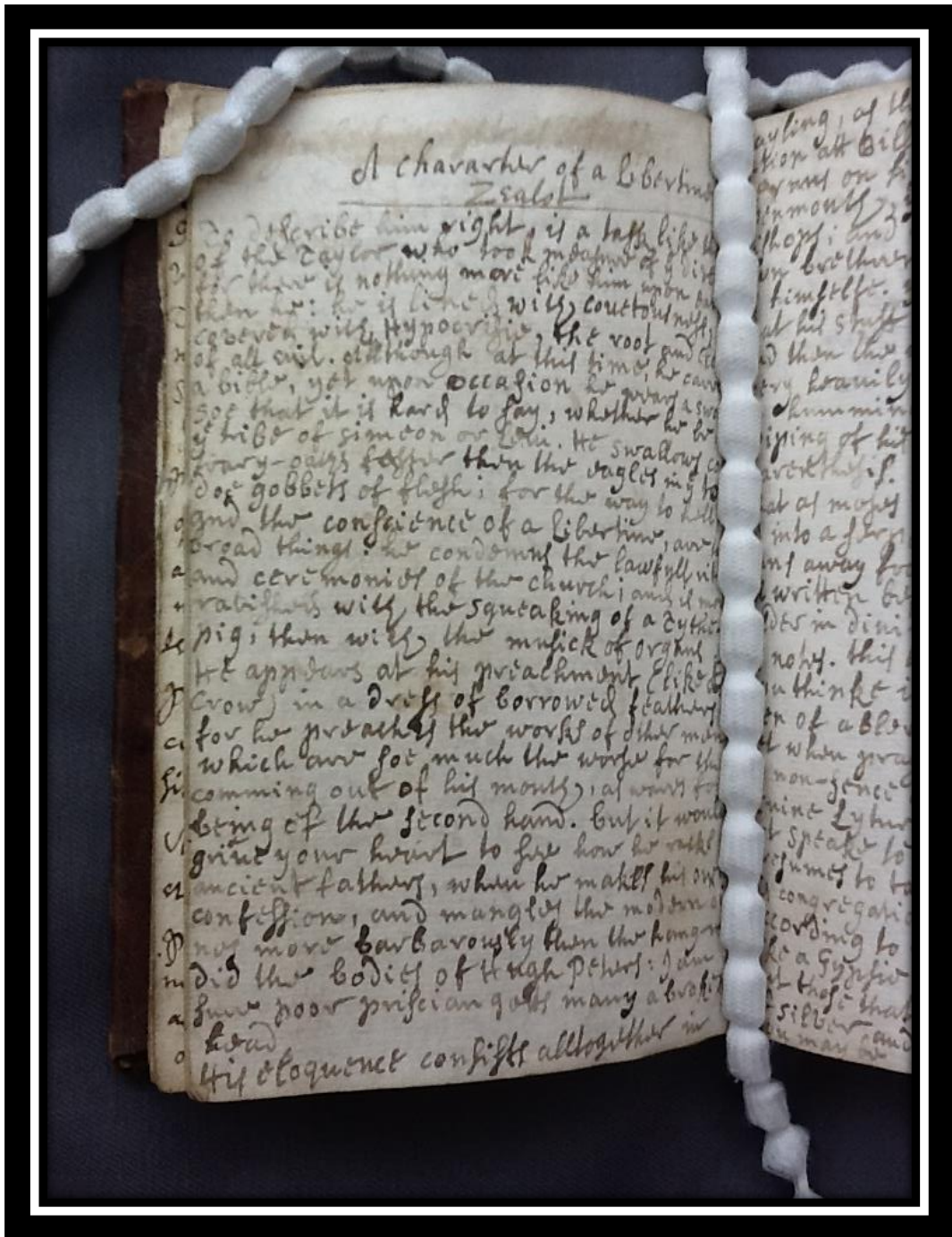
Indeed, as this thesis have discussed, it is these elements of 'disguise' and 'play' which enable, and even encourage, the developments in female libertinism throughout the Restoration period. Weber states in the above passage that 'like Rochester the rake most compellingly expresses these complexities through his overwhelming desire for sexual pleasure, transforming the world's greatest stage into a playground for his amours', and this conceit has been translated, I argue very well, in the stage and film productions of Jeffreys's *The Libertine* (1994). *The Libertine* works serve to further cement Rochester's biography with the performance of libertinism as a literary mode and lifestyle. However, as Webster likewise discusses in the conclusion to *Libertines and Radicals* (2002), Jeffreys's script functions as a continuation of the libertine performances of Rochester and the Court Wits, remarking that interest in libertinism in the twenty-first century is understandable, consider that ours is a likewise 'a society marked by continuing debates on feminism, homosexuality, and pornography, it is not surprising that the wits' discussions

of politics, gender roles, and sexuality have elicited a consistent scholarly interest.’ (Webster, p. 204) These debates, as they relate to current incarnations of libertine scholarship and the continued production of sexually explicit, socially critical literature and performances, have further contributed to what the current, and evolving, discussions amongst scholars of what, precisely, libertinism is. Behn’s oeuvre is more extensive than Rochester’s short life’s work, but as this thesis has argued, her feminist and libertine engagement is problematic, like libertine discourse itself.

Appendix A

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, 'The Character of a Libertine
Zealot' 3, Commonplace Book, 1668, [17-18 cent.]' pp 1-3





A character of a Libertine
Zealot

Describe him right, is a basse life
of the Taylor who took judgment of his
life: he is a man who is a
covetous will, Hypocrite, the root
of all evil. although at that time, he
is a biter, yet upon occasion he
goe that it is hard to say, whether he
is a bit of simon or a bit. He
swallowes more than the eagle in
the doo gobble of flesh; for the way to
gain the confidence of a Libertine, and
broad things. he condemns the lawfull
and ceremonie of the church; and it
is a ratling with the squeaking of a
pig; then with the musick of
it appears at his preachment, like
a Crow in a dress of borrowed
clothes for he preaches the works of other men
which are got much the worse for
squeaking out of his mouth, as
being of the second hand. but it would
give your heart to see how he
ancient fathers, when he makes his
confession, and mangles the modern
more barbarously than the
did the bodies of High Priests: I
am sure poor prisoner gets many a
how
His eloquence consists altogether in

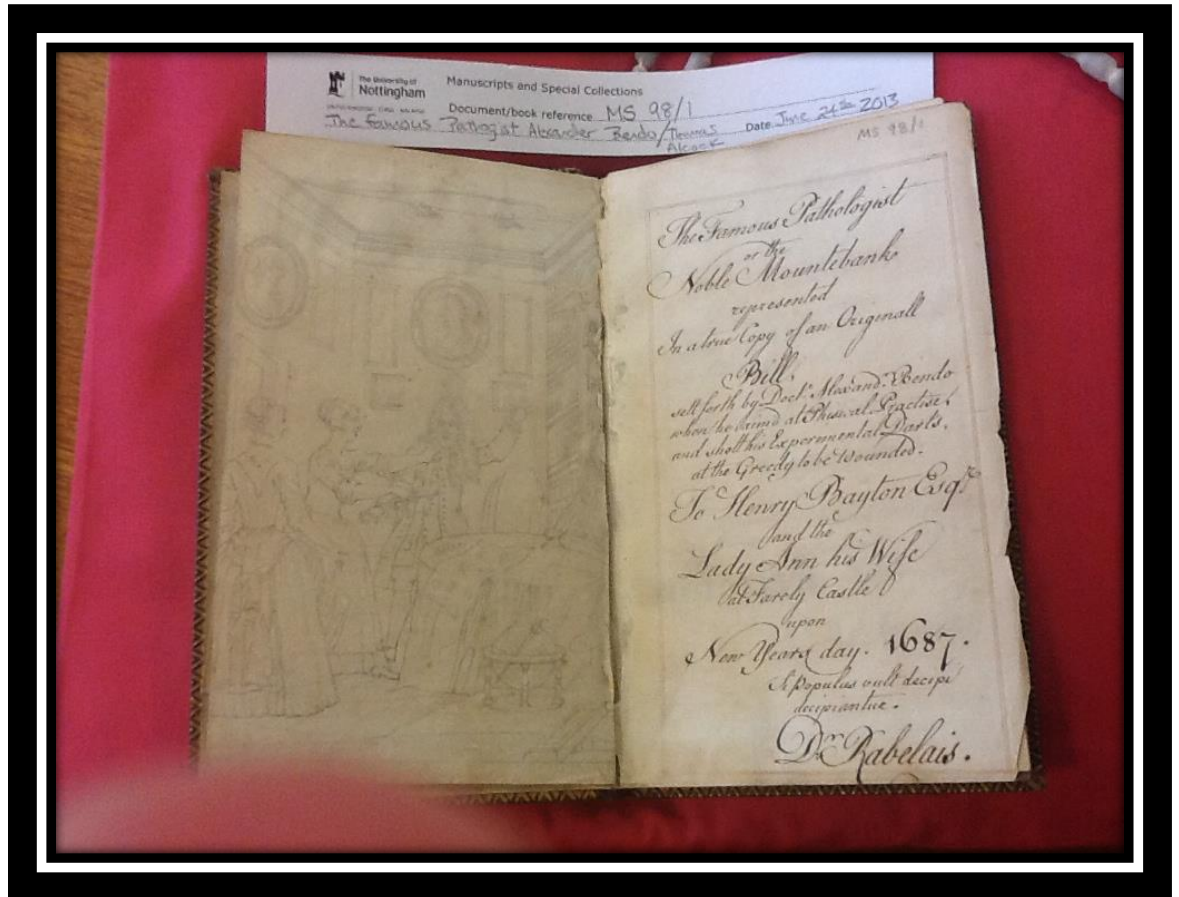
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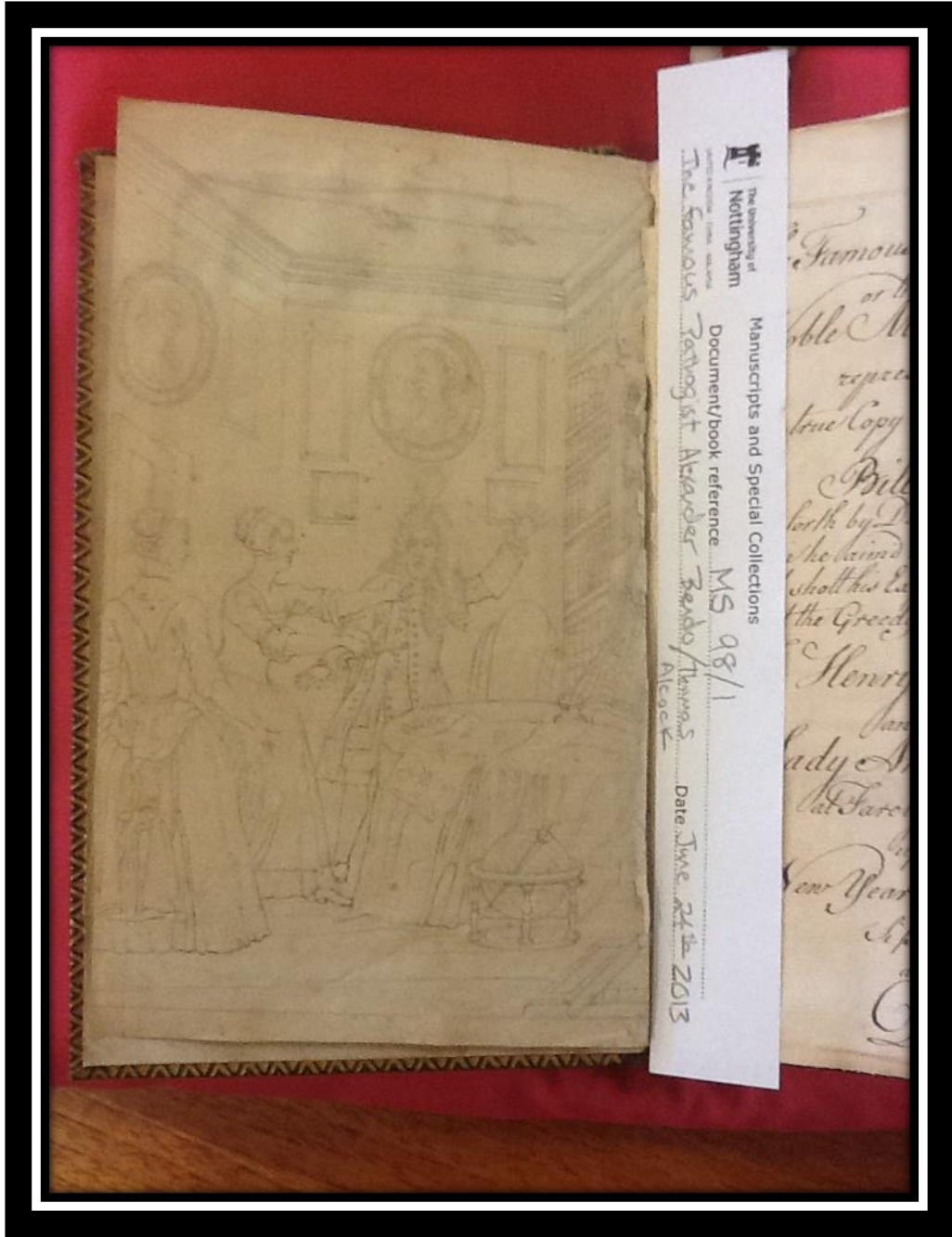
Canonized for money. Thus he is a modern
Balaam that blebly and curstly for
ward. he that opposeth him, acts the
part of an angel. But he that sub-
mits to him is worse than an dy. If
you consider his constancy, he is a kind
of a religious profane, that is now
ready to fawn upon that power again
which he hath long barred. &c.

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Appendix B

Nottingham, Nottingham University Manuscripts and Special Collections, MS 98





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