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This dissertation considers how Restoration and early eighteenth-century writers imagined the female libertine in representative comedies and fiction written from the 1670s to the 1720s. These include John Dryden's *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1671), George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), Aphra Behn's late comedy, *The Luckey Chance, or an Alderman's Bargain* (1686), and novella, *The History of the Nun* (1689), Catharine Trotter's epistolary narrative, *Olinda's Adventures* (1693), and only comedy, *Love at a Loss, or the Most Votes Carries It* (1700), and Daniel Defoe's novel, *Roxana* (1724).

Because Charles II's court mistresses gained prominent positions at court, they inspired onstage adaptations of female libertines by writers also interested in Epicureanism. This dissertation gives attention both to perceptions of the mistresses at Charles II's court and to Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, which informs the witty, rebellious female libertine figures that influenced the development of sensibility in England during the seventeenth century. The increased emphasis on morality during the eighteenth century resulted in writers featuring heroines of sensibility that reject libertinism. Defoe's *Roxana* provides one of the last examples of a libertine heroine, and her absence of feeling marks a notable division between the heroine of sensibility and the female libertine.

THE FEMALE LIBERTINE FROM DRYDEN TO DEFOE

by

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CHAPTER I

WHAT IS THE FEMALE LIBERTINE?

What is the female libertine? Does she exist? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the libertine as an identity “rarely applied to a woman,”¹ though most critics assume that there were women, both real and fictional, who were libertines during the Restoration, when libertinism reached its height in England. J. Douglas Canfield, Warren Chernaik, Pat Gill, Jacqueline Pearson, Janet Todd, James Turner, Harold Weber, and others have increasingly studied how women participate in libertine values.² These critics examine women’s engagement of a culture traditionally described in terms of masculine

¹ “Libertine,” OED Online, 2nd ed., 5 Nov. 2007. <<http://www.oed.com>>.

² Scholars have traditionally studied the female libertine as a reflection of her more notorious male counterpart, the rake-hero. It is important, however, to recognize that women’s libertine identities are not only responsive to men, but that they are also often independent in their complex articulations of libertine desire. Earlier studies of gender, wit, and sexuality that offer definitions of the female libertine or suggest that women participate in a libertine culture include, among others, Warren Chernaik’s *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature*, which explores the darker psychological implications of the “libertine dream of human freedom”; Pat Gill’s *Interpreting Ladies: Women, Wit, and Morality in the Restoration Comedy of Manners*, which offers a feminist critique of Restoration dramatists’ often satiric depictions of women by using Freud’s two versions of the tendentious joke, or the hostile and the obscene; Jacqueline Pearson’s *The Prostituted Muse*, which includes quantitative data that impressively documents the overwhelming number of women writing for the stage during an oppressive social time in England; Janet Todd’s *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800*, which likewise examines how the commercial implications of women writers and their textual, economic, and literary “signs” affected their artistic representations of sexual desire; James Turner’s *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern England*, which offers a detailed description of the sexual culture of letters in England prior to and during the Restoration, pays particular attention to pornography and prostitution; and Harold Weber’s *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England*, which defines the female libertine primarily as a projection of her male counterpart’s deepest sexual fears and anxieties. Though each of these critics examine women’s sexual placement and treatment in libertine writings, Todd, Turner, Pearson, and Gill have particularly focused on the complex negotiation between women’s sexual transgression and the literary and social constraints such a transgression places on them, with Gill’s study articulating the issues of decorum and wit in a gendered context.

behavior and beliefs, and their studies ask us to interrogate the essentialist assumptions attached to the libertine figure.

This dissertation considers how writers imagined the female libertine in representative comedies and fiction written from the 1670s to the 1720s and includes John Dryden's *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1671), George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), Aphra Behn's late comedy, *The Luckey Chance, or an Alderman's Bargain* (1686), and novella, *The History of the Nun* (1689), Catharine Trotter's epistolary narrative, *Olinda's Adventures* (1693), and only comedy, *Love at a Loss, or the Most Votes Carries It* (1700), and Daniel Defoe's novel, *Roxana* (1724). These writers depict the female libertine as a witty, rebellious figure frequently targeted by satirists because of her transgressive sexuality. Though I also compare the representations of women in verse, I focus most attention on comedy and fiction because much of the criticism, with the exception of a few studies, has neglected to discuss the important way in which female libertine figures exercise agency and power in these forms. Even less attention has been given to how the figure was inspired by "real life" female libertines, notably members of Charles II's court, including his mistresses, Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, Nell Gwyn, Louise de K roualle, Duchess of Portsmouth, and Hortense Mancini, Duchess of Mazarin. These women gained titles and wealth but were often satirically treated in the verses included in *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714*, which I consider in relation to Dryden's and Etherege's comedies in chapters one and two.³

³ Sonya Wynne argues for the importance that these women played in the political world of the Restoration. She offers helpful information about the dates and significance of their "reigns" over Charles. Cleveland was the chief mistress during the early years, from 1660-70, while Portsmouth gained prominence in 1671, becoming the more important mistress until Charles's death in 1685 (Wynne 172). See also Nancy Klein

After Charles II's death in 1685, there was an overall decline in the theater, as neither James II nor William and Mary patronized the arts, and female libertines were featured less prominently in dramatic works than they had been during the 1670s.⁴ Aphra Behn, previously successful as a playwright, turned to more profitable forms, like fiction. Her incorporation of romance conventions influenced several of her complicated libertine heroines, whose demonstrations of erotic transgression and emotional anguish helped to establish a new aesthetics that privileged pathos. Novelists following Behn also experimented with French models of *sensibilité* and the Ovidian epistle, providing earlier examples of literature of sensibility in England than G. J. Barker-Benfield, Adela Pinch, John Mullan, and Janet Todd have suggested.⁵ Early novels feature a complex interaction between the heart, mind, and body that augments the discussion about libertinism's relationship to sensibility in imaginative works written from the late Stuart to the early Georgian periods.

Macguire's article, "The Duchess of Portsmouth: English Royal Consort and French Politician, 1670-85," and Susan Shifrin's "'At the end of the Walk by Madam Mazarines Lodgings': Si(gh)ting the Transgressive Woman in Accounts of the Restoration Court."

⁴ Richard Lewis Braverman's *Plots and Counterplots: Sexual Politics and the Body Politic in English Literature, 1660-1730* provides a thorough study of political, sexual, and literary "bodies" that interacted, changed, even revolutioned monarchical and developing parliamentary rule during the same approximate chronological period that my study covers.

⁵ In *Sensibility: An Introduction*, Todd provides an eighteenth-century context for understanding sensibility's relationship to the body, to later configurations of 'sentiment,' and to the mind, and she helpfully traces Locke's association of ideas and sensation to an early discourse of sensibility that the Earl of Shaftesbury extended, arguing for benevolence to counter Hobbes's materialism. Todd makes a compelling argument for sensibility's relationship to morality, but this study will look at sensibility's relationship to libertinism. Barker-Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* and Adela Pinch's *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* both argue for the integral relationship between the body and feelings in sensibility's earliest eighteenth-century examples, providing a physiological basis for what came to be a cultural, spiritual, and moral movement. Most studies have centered on eighteenth-century science, culture, consumerism, and models of gendered behavior without significantly taking into account earlier seventeenth-century roots for sensibility. They include John Mullan's *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*; R. F. Brissenden's *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to de Sade*; and G. S. Rousseau's "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility."

The connection between libertinism and sensibility is informed by writers' interest in the body's physiological and emotional responses, its link with the mind and soul, and its existence as matter, which resulted in part from the resurgence of attention given to Epicurean atomism during the seventeenth century. Atomism originated with Leucippius and Democritus in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., though it was mainly associated with Epicurus and his follower, Lucretius, whose long poem, *De rerum natura*, argues that matter is composed of tiny, unseen atoms moving unconsciously through a vacuum. Richard Kroll offers a comprehensive explanation of the neo-Epicurean revival in England during the seventeenth century,⁶ and Dale Underwood reminds us that the terms "Epicure" and "libertine" became synonymous during the late seventeenth century (15). The conflation of Epicureanism and libertinism is somewhat misleading since libertines disregarded the kind of moral limitations that Epicurus's system of ethics advocates. Though I do not propose, as Kroll does, to offer an extended examination of Epicureanism's influence, an overview of the translations and interpretations of Lucretius provides context for understanding the female libertines considered in this study.

Restoration questions about the universe, especially humanity's place in an empirically testable world, helped to generate and increase interest in *De rerum natura*, which argues that religion is superstitious, holding believers in thrall to its false rituals and beliefs. Though Lucretius invokes Venus as a muse, he nevertheless proposes that the

⁶Earlier studies include David J. Furley's *Two Studies in the Greek atomists: Study I, Indivisible Magnitudes; Study II, Aristotle and Epicurus on Voluntary Action*, G.B. Stones's "The Atomic View of Matter in the XVth, XVIth, and XVIIth Centuries," Charles Trawick Harrison's "The Ancient Atomists and English Literature of the Seventeenth Century," and Cyril Bailey's *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus*.

gods likely do not exist and, if they do, they do not care about humans. Epicurean ideas intrigued scientists and philosophers during the seventeenth century, though writers troubled by what they perceived as atomism's materialist implications often Christianized it (Kroll 146-56). Despite the early seventeenth-century interest in Lucretius shown in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial* (1658), for example, there was resistance to Lucretius and Epicurean thought by preachers like William Perkins, Lancelot Andrewes, and Joseph Hall (Harrison 8-9), all contemporaries of John Donne, whose *First Anniversarie. An Anatomy of the World* helped to draw attention to atomic theory in England.

David A. Hedrich Hirsch speculates that Donne's work might have responded to the works of Giordano Bruno, executed for heresy, who spent time in England from 1583-85. Atomic theory during the Renaissance not only intrigued Donne, but also Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland and lead figure of the "Northumberland Circle," a group nearly all composed of atomists that included Thomas Hariot, Walter Warner, who had connections with Thomas Hobbes through the "Cavendish Circle," Sir Walter Raleigh, Christopher Marlowe, and Nicholas Hill. Sir Francis Bacon's letters indicate that he originally embraced atomism, though Hirsch points out that Bacon later renounced it, perhaps, like Donne, both afraid of and intrigued by the possibilities of atomism's implications (72-3).

By the middle of the seventeenth century, there was a backlash against Epicureanism in England because Epicurus was often associated with libertinism and Hobbesian materialism and atheism, a connection that several translators of Lucretius's

De rerum natura make. In arguing for the soul's immortality, John Davies's *Microcosmos* (1603) refutes "The damned *Epicurean-Libertine*" (228), anticipating Edward Reynell's *Advice Against Libertinism* (1659) and the Cambridge Platonists, whose members, including John Smith, Henry More, and Ralph Cudworth, among others, rejected Democritus's and Epicurus's versions of atomism (not atomism itself) by asserting that reason emanates from God. Cudworth argues for and accepts the early Greek atomists, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Echphantus, Protagoras, Xenocrates, Heraclides, Diodorus, who he believes were religious, and claims, in *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), that Leucippus and Democritus first attached atheism to atomism (Harrison 44-5). Ironically, as Harrison points out, Cudworth's atomism nevertheless owes a debt not only to Hobbes, whom Cudworth confuses with Lucretius, but also to Democritus, despite his texts' misrepresentation of the atomists' ideas (46-9).⁷ It is important for my study to consider the misrepresentations of atomism since several of the writers covered in this study react either to these misinterpretations, like Dryden, or only approach it as heterodox materialism, like Defoe.

Kroll is correct, I think, to point out that we should not overestimate the subversiveness of Epicurus's ideas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (146); these ideas could provide a new, liberating understanding of the world to some, and terrifying possibilities to others. In England, Lucretius was appealing not only to seventeenth-century scientists, like Robert Boyle and the Royal Society, and philosophers, including Richard Overton, Thomas White, Thomas Stanley, and Walter

⁷ See Harrison's discussion of the Platonists, pp. 36-51.

Charleton, whose *Natural History of the Passions* (1674) is considered in chapter two of this study (Harrison 20-3), but also to linguists and literary critics. Lucretius makes direct parallels between physical atoms and the basic units of language, letters. The frontispiece to the second edition of Creech's popular full-text translation of *De rerum natura* in 1683 connects atoms with letters, drawing a visual analogy to the inferences about atoms and language propounded in books one and five. The poet, who holds Creech's translation of Lucretius, points to the atoms falling from the sky, connecting the physical world with the mental one through the atoms, which compose both (Kroll 192-3).

The text was translated a number of times in the middle and late seventeenth century, appearing first during the era of the civil wars, Cromwellian rule, and religious dogmatism. Though it was originally printed in Latin in 1473, Lucy Hutchinson provided the first full English translation of Lucretius's text in the 1650s. John Evelyn translated books one (the only one published), three, and four, also in the 1650s, and an anonymous prose translation appeared during this period. A more popular complete translation by Thomas Creech, *T. Lucretius Carus The Epicurean Philosopher, His Six Books De Natura Rerum Done into English Verse*, went through four editions between 1682 and 1699 (Goodrum 208-9). Rochester translated portions, as did Dryden, who published his translations of Lucretius and other classical writers in *Sylvae: or the Second Part of the Poetical Miscellanies* (1685). If Lucretius was "little better than a literary curiosity" in the first half of the seventeenth century, "the Restoration found him a popular and influential writer" (Harrison 60), whose relationship to libertines has yet to be fully examined.

In Creech's translations, Epicurus appears as a "*Man of Wit*" (99), and his versions anticipate John Locke's interest in the subjective experience of the mind, or the "thinking thing" (94), which Creech's translation often tries to explain objectively in terms of "atoms and seeds." Lucretius asserts that the mind lives within the heart, with passion and reason coexisting as feminine twin entities. Fancy, or the imagination, is an important component to *De rerum natura*, one that, in book four, plays a vital, if not an active, role in how the mind perceives and interprets the world. Robert A. Erickson describes the imagination "not so much an autonomous originator of the categories of perception as a receiver and shaper of impressions" (21). Thus the imagination appears like the stereotypically passive feminine receptor that, as I will later explain, Joseph Addison depicts in the *Spectator* as a faculty that perceives rather than generates ideas.

In Creech's version, the soul appears as a feminized and mortal part of the body, coinciding and possibly influencing that "feminization of the psyche" (105) that Jean Hagstrum describes in reference to the French salon culture pervading England during the Restoration. The soul's mortality counters Plato's argument for the transmigration of souls in book three, which so bothered anti-Lucretian detractors. Creech's translation repeatedly connects the soul, the body, and the mind, which the speaker joins together:

...I must affirm the *Soul* and *Mind*,
 Make up one single Nature closely joyn'd,
 But yet the *Mind's* the *head* and *ruling* part,
 Call'd *Reason*, and 'tis seated in the *Heart*,
 For there our *Passions* live, our joy, and fear,
 And Hope, which the *Mind* must needs be there
 But the *inferior part* the *Soul*, confin'd
 To all the Limbs, obeys the *ruling mind*,

And moves as *that* directs, for only *that*
 Can *of it self* rejoice, or fear, or hate,
 Passion and Thought belong to *that* alone,
 For *Soul* and *Limbs* are capable of none...
 But when the *Mind* a violent Passion shakes,
 Of that disturbance too the *Soul* partakes... (73)

The physical effects of passion, lust, and distress work through the body and the soul together and are driven by the mind, which Creech locates within the heart, collapsing both and privileging emotion in a way that Lucretius does not in the Latin text. The mind becomes a feeling entity and also, in Creech's translation, a feminized one. The mind and soul have important implications for the female libertine's relationship to sensibility, due in part to an understanding of the heart that, as Erickson explains, "is the source of mind, will, and motion" in the Stoic and Lucretian tradition. In book two, Lucretius depicts the heart as a sexual organ that makes use mostly of touch (Erickson 20-1). It appears "at once the source and the goal of erotic passion" (Erickson 22). By contrast, the biblical heart, the "center of understanding and feeling," had links with the often wayward imagination, which could become a dangerous, evil force prone to move away from God. Whereas the imagination in Lucretius's text emerges as a "physical material force," one with erotic and creative potentials for men and women, in the Bible, it appears as "the kind of power that fashioned Eve" (Erickson 28), a dangerous, ultimately sinful being. Women could have a deep relationship with God through their heart (Erickson 32), though, as receptors, they could not actively create. Men rather than women wrote the biblical heart, a masculine activity analogous to God's act of making the world (Erickson

29), and women remained bound to the material world with a primary function of childbearing (Erickson 30).

The Lucretian model attracted women writers, both readers of the bible, like Hutchinson, and the less religious, like Behn, who praises Lucretius in poems dedicated to Creech. In “Happiness” (1667), Katherine Philips, the “matchless Orinda,” combines both traditions, advocating that the “Good man can find this treasure out” in an “inward calm,” meaning Christ’s peace and Epicurean tranquility, as an “Innocent Epicure! whose single breast / Can furnish him with a continual feast” (118). Likewise, Mary, Lady Chudleigh’s “The Happy Man” in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1703) argues that a “constant Mind” (l. 1) with a “Soul...always easie, firm, and brave” (l. 5) finds lasting peace. The “happy man” relies on “*Halycon* Calmness, ever blest, / With inward Joy, untroubl’d Peace, and Rest” (ll.13-4), and he appears most contented in his Epicurean garden, renouncing the world with “unbecoming Fear” of death. The “happy man” is thus the Stoic and Epicure, “Unmov’d at all the Menaces of Fate: Who all his Passions absolutely sways, / And to his Reason cheerful Homage pays” (ll. 10-3). Similarly, in “The Resolution,” she praises Lucretius for his “Philosophick Strains” (l. 348):

My Mind at once delights, and entertains:
Thro’ Paths untrod, I see him fearless go;
His Steps I tread, with eager hast to know:
With him explore the boundless Realms of Chance,
And see the little busie Atoms dance:
See, how without Direction they combine,
And form a Universe without Design,
While careless Deities supremely blest,
Enjoy the Pleasures of eternal Rest,
Resolv’d that nothing here their Quiet shall molest.
Strange that a Man of such a Strength of Thought,

Could think a World was to Perfection brought
 Without Assistance from the Powr's above,
 From the blest Source of Wisdom, and of Love!
 All frightful Thoughts he from my Soul does chase,
 And in their room glad, bright Ideas place:
 Tells me that Happiness in Virtue lies,
 And bids me Death, that dreaded Ill, despise:
 That Phantom, which if we but judg'd aright,
 Would never once disturb, nor once affright;
 The shocking Prospect of a future State,
 Does in our Souls an anxious Fear create;
 That unknown Somewhere which we must explore,
 That strange, that distant, undiscover'd Shore,
 Where we must luand, makes us the Passage dread:
 But were we by inlightened Reason led,
 Were false Opinions banish'd from the Mind,
 And we to the strict Search of Truth inclin'd,
 We sure shou'd meet it with as much Delight
 As the cool Pleasures of a silent Night,
 And to our Graves with Cheerfulness should run,
 Pleas'd that our tedious Task of Life were done. (ll. 349-80)

Chudleigh shares a similar view that Dryden advances of the Epicurean man of virtue and happiness, and while both of these writers admire Lucretius, one of his earliest translators, Hutchinson, could not reconcile her religious faith with Epicurean ideas. She expresses disgust at Lucretius by disavowing his text and writing in her letter to Lord Anglesey that she

abhorre[s] all the Atheismes and impieties in it, and translated it only out of youthfull curiositie, to understand things...without the least inclination to propagate any of the wicked pernitions doctrines in it. (23)

Nevertheless, horrified as she might have been with Lucretius, she kept reading and translating, though she waters down or omits the most erotic sections.

Lucretius nevertheless appealed to a number of women writers during the seventeenth century, including Margaret Cavendish, who, though she never read Lucretius's text, shows interest in his ideas in her *Poems, and Fancies* (1653). Cavendish's interest and Lucretius's wider readership after Creech's full-text translation helped to result in the transmission of Gassendi's ideas about Epicurean atomism into England (Rees 4; Battigelli 49). Behn praises Lucretius's ideas in a celebratory poem, "To Mr. Creech (Under the Name of Daphnis) On His Excellent Translation of Lucretius" (1683), included with the second edition of Creech's translation. In the poem, Behn examines the possibilities that Epicurean atomism proposes for women: "Whilst that which admiration does inspire, / In other souls, kindles in mine a fire" (ll. 15-6). This "fire" in her soul offers equality, since it provides women with an opportunity not only to read the classics, typically unavailable to them because they were often untrained to read Greek or Latin texts, but also to read a philosophical system that proposes the equality of all matter. This "matter" includes men and women, who, according to Lucretius, are composed of the same "atoms and seeds."

In the poem, Behn's speaker commends Creech's translation because it allows her to read an otherwise unavailable full-text translation with liberating possibilities for women:

So thou by this translation dost advance
 Our knowledge from the state of ignorance,
 And equals us to man, ah, how can we
 Enough adore, or sacrifice enough to thee! (ll. 41-4)

Behn redefines the typical religious divine God with another one, “Worthy divine Lucretius, and diviner thou [Creech]” (l. 6). Creech’s translations provide for different artistic and social outlets for Behn, who describes her mental processes in terms of “seeds designed” (l. 7) and “moving atoms,” which Creech’s translation emphasizes. As Carol Barash reminds readers, these “seeds” were preferable to the Aristotelian conception of women’s dark and cold “seeds” in *De Generatione Animalium* (104-5). The speaker of Behn’s poem imagines that the Lucretian model literally re-forms her mind “with careless heed” (l. 9), just as the atoms collide within empty space. Like the atoms, her mind appears to float at random in the cosmos, and whereas before she “cursed [her] birth...education, / And more the scanted customs of the nation” (ll. 25-6), now she can enjoy the “heights of fancy, heights of eloquence” (l. 50). Behn redefines wit in her poem in a Lucretian context to accommodate a newfound freedom for women, since “reason over all unfettered plays, / Wanton and undisturbed as Summer’s breeze” (ll. 50-2). Reason, a stereotypically masculine property of mind becomes, in Behn’s poem, an effeminized faculty, both free and erotic, and more like wit’s other component, fancy.

Lucretius lent authenticity to women writers, and his invocation of Venus at the opening of book one held particular fascination for women because it inspired and authorized them as poets (Erickson 148).⁸ Though some writers, like Anne Finch, continued to paraphrase and reference the bible as a means of establishing authority, others, like Behn, turned to the Lucretian model of the heart and attention to the earth-mother, Venus, to give legitimacy to their art. Creech’s full text translation, though

⁸ I am indebted to Erickson’s *The Language of the Heart*, which explains how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers understood the heart in a classical and biblical tradition. His study foregrounds my thesis that sensibility began in the seventeenth century because it argues for the importance of the heart.

replete with inaccuracies, was nevertheless the beginning, for some late seventeenth-century writers, of a new understanding for the creative potentials of the heart and the imagination. Creech's Preface to the 1682 translation anticipates that readers might oppose the heresy of Lucretius's ideas, but it dismisses them, since "there is nothing in our Poet, but what is frequently heard and refuted from the Pulpit and the Desk."

Nevertheless, he also argues that "irreligion" can work as a powerful aphrodisiac, one that figuratively seduces men. He likens "irreligion" to a seductive woman who compels men to rash, unreasonable behavior, not unlike Lucretius's Venus:

For now she walks in the dark, we cannot see what's behind; but she seems gay and amiable, presenting us with Pleasure and Delight, pretending an antidote against cares and jealousies, and a power to induce perfect Serenity: But when we shall view her round, and see her train nothing but Folly and Absurdity, her walk on a Precipice, and necessary infinite dangers for her Companions; He must be a rash Man, and not worth Saving, who will venture an Embrace.

Creech compares "irreligion" to a *femme fatale* figure and likens Lucretius's arguments to a tempting woman whose seductive arms must be avoided, much like the female libertine figures depicted in Dryden's *Marriage A-la-Mode* and Defoe's *Roxana*.

Nevertheless, Creech defends Lucretius because of his scientific possibilities:

the Particulars of Natural Philosophy are so happily exprest in these Numbers; that as we have nothing in the Writings of the Greeks or Latins comparable thereunto, at least concerning the Physics of Epicurus, or rather of the more learned Democritus; so the renown'd Gassendus esteem'd it a good rise of his fame, to convert and draw out this Poem unto three large Volumes in Prose; not to say that on these leaves you find the Pearls of Cartesiansm.

Lucretius's text helped to fuel a resurgence of interest in atomism by Pierre Gassendi, the "chief single vehicle by which Epicurus was rehabilitated in the mid-seventeenth century" (Kroll 114). Equally as influential, as Creech's Preface indicates, was Rene Descartes, whose influential *Meditations on the First Philosophy* (1641) sparked debate about the mind and body's potentials throughout the seventeenth century.

Descartes begins in the *First Meditation* by doubting received collective wisdom and his own senses until he can arrive at any infallible truth, which he reaches in the *Second Meditation*—his ability to exist, think, and believe in God. Descartes could still, after all doubts, find certainty in two entities by which all extensions could be made in a mind-body dualistic structure divided into Thought and Matter. The soul and mind (Thought) were distinct from the body (Matter), and he asserts that our minds cannot know our bodies through the senses. Instead, he proposes that we intuit the body through our idea of it as matter. Descartes resolves potential spiritual problems his dualism creates by finding God through Thought, or the infallible, if abstract, entities: our soul and intellect. Nevertheless, the Cartesian method requires faith in abstractions, and neither faith nor abstractions could be empirically tested. Furthermore, one's reliance on soul and on God could be, after all, idols of the mind, the *ignis fatuus* deceiving mankind in Rochester's *Satyr on Reason and Mankind* (Willey 87-8).⁹

Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Bacon, Gassendi, and Descartes refocused attention on the relationship between humans and an earth newly expurgated of its ghosts, humours, spirits, and Ptolemaic plenitude. At the very least, their discoveries and

⁹ See also Stuart Brown's introduction, pp. 1-19, *British Philosophy and the Age of Enlightenment*.

assertions provoked questions not only about received scientific understandings of the world, but also about contemporary and historical understandings of human nature, which needed as much reassessment as the material world did. If atomism, now supported by a Cartesian spirit increasingly qualified by religious skeptics of “truth,” presupposed that bodies were matter, what were humans but atoms, free-floating at random? If, by extension, no hierarchies—religious, social, or even material—govern the world, what happens to the institutions that derive their authority from these hierarchies?

Hobbes engages these questions in his philosophical and socio-political treatise on human nature and behavior in *Leviathan* (1651), which responds to Lucretius’s ideas, as Creech indicates in his Preface to the 1682 translation:

the admirers of Mr. Hobbes may easily discern that his Politicks are but Lucretius enlarg’d; His state of Nature is sung by our Poet; the rise of Laws; the beginning of Societies; the Criteria of Just and Unjust exactly the same, and natural Consequences of the Epicurean Origine of Man; no new Adventures.

Hobbes begins by deconstructing the entities of the Cartesian ego, of Thought, or mind and soul distinct from matter, and God, postulating instead that Thought and Matter are inseparable because Thought *is* Matter, the mind and soul as atoms moving in motion. This motion plays itself out, for Hobbes, on a geopolitical landscape, which he saw in the English civil wars by the mid seventeenth century, and his text reacts to the religious certainty dominating the Cromwellian era with skepticism. Humans, those bodies, minds, and souls in perpetual motion, remain in a state of war and therefore need authority and religion to structure, classify, and contain the masses, which potentially threaten the state. Hobbes establishes an elitist position that libertines assume by arguing for the

concentration of power in the hands of the elite, who keep order by controlling the lower classes.

Restoration libertines responded to atomism with something like terror *and* euphoria at its calling into doubt every stable category of human existence. Rochester famously rejects the emphasis on rational inquiry in his *Satyr*, and his poem registers libertinism's emphasis both on skepticism and on what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as the carnivalesque. Bakhtin explains that rationalism disallows the subversion of distinct bodies and institutions because of the atomistic concern with the separation of atoms and bodies (321-2). Because atomism breaks down binaries, however, the possibilities open not merely for the subversion of patriarchy, but for its potential eradication. To the male libertine, the social possibilities of this subversion were incomprehensible, for they implicitly gave the lower classes and women, those legal and social nobodies, equal claims to power.¹⁰ On the other hand, women began to occupy new professional roles, as this age gave birth to the English actress and to a new kind of performative woman as actress and writer who literally and figuratively performed transgressive roles. Women questioned how they could exercise agency in a society that continued to see them as legal nobodies, or primarily as bodies that only produced more important male bodies.

The debate about the validity of patriarchal authority continued throughout the seventeenth century, which saw radical changes from models of absolutist, "divine right" rule to a theocratic republic and two-party political structure that, in theory, pointed to a

¹⁰ See Chernaik's introduction, where he tackles the ambivalent attitude towards women's sexuality in the works by Rochester and other libertine writers anxious about women's participation in a movement that espouses freedom. This ambivalence, of course, becomes part of the paradox of libertinism as a movement (7).

more equitable distribution of power, which did not, of course, extend to women. John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) critiques Sir Robert Filmer's argument for divine right rule in *Patriarcha* (1680), and his ideas are important to a discussion of Enlightenment feminism, when Lady Damaris Cudworth Masham, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, and Mary Astell, among others, argue for women's most basic human rights.¹¹ Trotter, Mary Pix, and Delariviere Manley, each ridiculed in the anonymously written play, *The Female Wits* (1696), tackle the legal and ethical problems women encountered in a culture that continued to see women's free exercise of the mind and body as amoral, dangerous, and anti-social.¹² Women enjoyed few, if any, legal rights in marriage, the only socially appropriate role available to them, and Astell, responding to the restraints placed on women, proposes in *Some Reflections Upon Marriage* (1700) that women are born into positions analogous to slavery, despite the new emphasis on liberty. By the end of the seventeenth century, Whig writers might advance Locke's social contract theory, his emphasis on individual natural rights, and ideology of "liberty and property," but most remained unwilling to extend social and legal rights to women in marriage.

Women writers frequently came under attack from detractors who called their bodies, identities, and mental states into question. When, in her Preface to *The Luckey Chance*, Behn establishes her authority, she genders that "masculine part" that writes, or

¹¹ For further information on Locke's influence on Enlightenment feminism, see Sheryl O'Donnell's "Mr. Locke and the Ladies: The Indelible Words on the Tabula Rasa" and "'My Idea in Your Mind': John Locke and Damaris Cudworth Mascham"; Felicity A Nussbaum's *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England*; Patricia Springborg's "Astell, Masham, and Locke: Religion and Politics"; Kathryn J. Ready's "Damaris Cudworth Masham, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, and the Feminist Legacy of Locke's Theory of Personal Identity"; Lois Frankel's "Damaris Cudworth Mascham: A Seventeenth-Century Feminist Philosopher"; and Alice Browne's *The Eighteenth-Century Feminist Mind*.

¹² See Robert Adams Day's "Muses in the Mud: the Female Wits anthropologically Considered."

“the poet,” arguing against the critics who condemn her for her sex. She opposes charges of impropriety in gendered terms that participate in an ongoing discussion about wit’s two faculties, judgment and fancy:

...such Masculine Strokes in me, must not be allow’d. I must conclude those Women (if there be any such) greater Criticks in that sort of Conversation than my self, who find any of that sort of mine, or any thing that can justly be reproach’d. But ’tis in vain by dint of Reason or Comparison to consider the Obstinate Criticks, whose Business is to find fault, if not be loose and gross Imagination to create them...since ’tis to the witty Few I speak, I hope the better Judges will take no Offence, to whom I am oblig’d for better Judgments....Is this likely, is this reasonable to be believ’d by any body, but the willfully blind? All I ask is the Priviledge for the Masculine Part the Poet in me, (if any such you will allow me) to tread in those successful Paths my Predecessors have so long thriv’d in... (23-4)

Laura Runge describes the important way that gender defines literary criticism during the Restoration and eighteenth century, and she suggests that Behn’s appropriation of a specifically masculine category as “poet” is tempered by her appeal to the critics judging her (30-1). Runge extends Thomas H. Fujimura’s explanation of wit during this period by describing how writers inscribe gender in their discussions about its two faculties. Her study provides a comprehensive look at the implications that a gendered model of the mind meant for the reception and (more often) rejection of female libertines like Behn.

Following Hobbes and Dryden, two of the leading, if not the only, contributors to prevailing definitions of wit prior to Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Behn divides wit into two distinct faculties, “Reason or Comparison,” with “reason” denoting judgment and “comparison” meaning fancy. As Fujimura reminds us, seventeenth-century writers often disagreed about the importance of wit’s component

parts.¹³ Yet they continued, in varying degrees, to employ judgment as a discriminating function that curbed imaginative flights of fancy. The debate continued into the eighteenth century, as writers discussed the extent to which wit was composed either of judgment or fancy. Both Hobbes, in *Leviathan*, and Locke, in his *Essay*, distinguish between judgment and fancy in their definitions of wit.¹⁴ Hobbes privileges judgment over fancy, and later writers, including Dryden and Pope, engaged in literary and philosophical debates about the mind that evaluated Hobbes's early distinction between both categories and his preference for judgment, typically understood as the "masculine" part of the mind, over stereotypically "feminine" fancy. Locke also elevates judgment as a discriminating function of the mind, which was increasingly understood to operate in an empirical epistemological context that relied on the senses and on reason. Unlike Hobbes, however, who retains judgment and fancy in his conception of wit, Locke separates judgment from wit, which Pope and others wanted to reintegrate. In *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), Pope's speaker argues that "wit and judgment often are at strife" but that they are "meant each other's aid, like man and wife" (ll. 82-3), articulating a gendered context for understanding the balanced mind.

In her Preface, Behn wants to authorize her art, and she separates reason and judgment as specifically masculine parts of her, literally those parts overtaking feminine fancy, conceived as "loose and gross Imagination," by which she means irrationality, or the mind out of control. She links judgment to observation, faulting unreasonable critics who are "willfully blind" to her wit because of her gender. Both observation and reason

¹³ See especially his chapter on "The Nature of Wit," pp. 16-38.

¹⁴ In *Arguments of Augustan Wit*, John Sitter also provides an important context for understanding how Restoration and eighteenth-century writers defined and divided wit in a Lockean context.

are properties belonging to judgment and therefore to men. To become a writer for a woman means occupying an androgynous position that needs an appropriate balance of masculine and feminine qualities. Judgment, Behn implicitly argues, can temper, redirect, and shape the “loose and gross Imagination,” controlling it to achieve an appropriate poetic decorum.

When Behn argues for the legitimacy of her art, she draws on an established poetic tradition in which poets have taken “those Measures that both Ancient and Modern Writers have set” (24). “Those Measures” indicate how wit should function, with judgment measuring out the limit to fancy. Though Behn authorizes her work by drawing on a long heritage of ancient and modern writers, she nevertheless struggles with the contemporary social implications that Dryden’s early association of decorum with wit mean for a woman writer. She turns the terms of the antifeminist debate against her male critics, however, accusing them of lacking the necessary “masculine” parts of the mind capable of judging her work fairly.

Writers throughout the Restoration struggled with the relationship between judgment and fancy in their gendered conceptions of wit. Dryden, in his Preface to *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), implies that, without judgment, the metaphorical spaniel ranging through memory to find the proper quarry, or phrase, could figuratively run through the mind chaotically, leading to excessive flights of fancy that were decidedly feminine in most representations. When Dryden’s Neander defends English drama, specifically Shakespeare and Fletcher, in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), for example, he qualifies their imaginative flights as ones of “more masculine fancy and greater spirit in

the writing than there is in any of the French” (66), indicating that the French versions of fancy create an overly feminized culture of letters that need a “masculine” curbing agent, like reason. His Epilogue to Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* describes Sir Fopling as an overly French, effeminate character whose “decorum” is achieved through his exaggerated manners and dress. Though depicted as a fool both in the play and the Epilogue, he nevertheless represents the influence of false wit among the “herd” of pretenders like him.

While Dryden argues against the dangers of allowing the mind to dwell too long in its feminine parts, Congreve humorously examines the gendered associations of fancy, judgment, and madness in *Love for Love* (1695). The heroine, Angellica, illustrates Dryden’s metaphor of the ranging spaniel in exercising her superior judgment. She dupes Sir Sampson and almost literally “reigns in” Valentine’s staged madness, which poses legal problems for the inheritance and transference of property. His “feminine” fancy, potentially out of control, needs her “masculine” judgment, and this becomes important because it is one of the last onstage representations of a female libertine’s use of wit to gain actual legal power by securing Valentine’s inheritance.

By Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (1700), only men compete for power through verbal displays of wit that articulate their political and social ideologies. Though Millamant and Mirabell achieve social and legal rewards for their appropriate balance of judgment and fancy, Mirabell clearly has the verbal and the legal power in the play, even over Millamant. The play shows how literary decorum not only becomes a standard for upholding artistic values, but also for judging women, discouraged from any participation

in libertine language, behaviors, or beliefs. Part of Millamant's appropriate balance of judgment and fancy means that she can control her body and her mind, and by withholding her feelings along with her body from Mirabell, she demonstrates how her wit conforms to expectations of socially acceptable feminine behavior.

An inappropriate display of fancy indicated a lack of reason stereotypically and historically attributed to women as irrational creatures of passion and madness. Antifeminist writers like Etherege often drew a misogynistic parallel between unbounded fancy and "irrational" women, whose sexual bodies followed their stereotypically uncontrollable minds, as Mrs. Loveit in *The Man of Mode* demonstrates. Libertine heroines like Etherege's Harriet often embed their unsuitable desires in a discussion about the correct use of judgment, fancy, and decorum to avoid condemnation or rejection because Kathryn J. Ready reminds us:

The female body remained the focus of arguments regarding women's "natural" inferiority. Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715) went as far as to deduce women's intellectual inferiority from the supposedly more sensitive nerve fibres in the female brain. The definition of women in terms of their bodies also encouraged men to treat them as objects whose sexuality it was necessary to regulate. Eighteenth-century conduct manuals continued to define women primarily in relation to their bodies, focusing on how women might transform themselves into objects of male desire. (565)

Women were often stereotyped as irrational beings, and their overt expressions in language or action of indecorous sexual desire expressed a lack of judgment and an excess of fancy. Essentialist distinctions made about the mind created a gendered binary, and the divisions between judgment and fancy helped to establish an emergent culture of

sensibility, which grew in part out of late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century debates about the mind's "masculine" and "feminine" parts.¹⁵

The *Spectator* papers (1711-12) reinforce this idea, and Addison and Steele offer advice about the effects of women's inappropriate use of wit, further defining the gendered terms of the debate. They suggest that fancy could, when free, delight and overwhelm the mind in an erotic context that Addison, one of the first writers to record the term "sensibility," likens to the pleasures of the imagination. *Spectator* 411, the first of his essays on the *Pleasures of the Imagination*, describes fancy as having "a kindly Influence on the Body, as well as the Mind." They "not only serve to clear and brighten the Imagination, but are able to disperse Grief and Melancholly, and to set the Animal Spirits in pleasing and agreeable Motions" (389). The Animal Spirits, thought to connect the heart with the body and the mind through nerve sensations and to be more acute in women than in men, contributed to misogynistic representations of women, their minds, and bodies.

In *Spectator* 412, Addison presents fancy as a feminine landscape of the mind awaiting a figurative sexual penetration provided by objects seen with the eye, or the discerning sense organ linked with judgment. Observation provides the phallic object that overwhelms the eroticized imagination:

Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to graspe at any thing that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment in the Soul at the Apprehension of them. The Mind of Man naturally hates every thing that looks like Restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy it self under a sort of Confinement, when the

¹⁵ Pearson notes that wit was a specifically male quality associated and belonging to men rather than women (7).

Sight is pent up in a narrow Compass, and shortened on every side by the Neighborhood of Walls or Mountains. On the contrary, a spacious Horison [sic] is an Image of Liberty, where the Eye has Room to range abroad, to expatiate at large on the Immensity of its Views, and to lose it self amidst the Variety of Objects that offer themselves to its Observation. Such wide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding. (390)

Addison describes the experience of the imagination in a pseudo-sexual context that proposes ultimate freedom through an infinitely expansive canvas, imagined here as an aesthetic experience that is also an erotic one. To enjoy the pleasures of the imagination is to enter a feminine part of the mind figuratively filled with large natural objects.

Writers conceptualized the mind, dividing it into male and female parts that interacted in much the same way that men and women “worked” together sexually. The fruits of the mind were thus analogous to the fruits of the body, and the “procreating” mind needed male and female “parts” to create fully formed, well-balanced ideas. Women writers, perceived as lacking those “male” parts, like reason, were an aberration, a seeming impossibility, and, conceptually, at least, dangerous to the stability of such a gendered model of the creative mind.

Addison’s essays help us to understand how fancy, or imagination, connects the heart with the mind and body, often erotically, and his essays on the imagination in part inform our understanding of sensibility’s early connection to libertinism, two movements that privilege sense experience. These cultures grew out of already established French models, which Hagstrum notes were, throughout the seventeenth century, a possible result of the legacy of Petrarchan traditions or *précieux* love literature;

...there was everywhere a growing feminizing of the psyche. Although apparently the Parisian salon was not transplanted bodily to England during the Restoration, coterie sprang up around Mrs. Katherine Philips, the 'matchless Orinda,' and even Aphra Behn... (105)

He suggests that French salon culture and figures exerted some influence on "English letters," as Dryden's *Marriage A-la-Mode*, Behn's *The History of the Nun*, and Trotter's *Olinda's Adventures*, demonstrate to varying degrees. Many of the French sources that Restoration and early eighteenth-century writers used for their texts presented erotic depictions of the sensationalized medieval nun Héloïse, or nuns like her, who pine for absent lovers. The story recalls those of the women depicted in Ovid's *Heroides*, which Dryden invited Behn to help translate in the 1680s. Pathos figures like Héloïse were sometimes referenced for satiric purposes to target potentially dangerous influences at court, like Charles II's French mistresses, including Portsmouth and Mazarin, who held a French salon in London during the 1670s.

Not all English writers, however, targeted French women or their salon culture of *sensibilité*. Many women writers, including Behn, who dedicates her novella *The History of the Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker* (1689) to Mazarin, and Trotter, another writer of an early version of the epistolary novel, began looking at French forms to develop new literary modes for expressing libertine desires, notably the epistolary novel, though Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) demonstrates how the heroic epistle could become a poetic site of erotic transgression as well. They began to incorporate French values of *sensibilité* in their representations of female libertines, whose imaginative capacities communicate their pathos.

Antifeminist writers often condemned women, however, for showing too much passion. In the *Spectator*, Addison and Steele critique libertines for their libidinous drives and rakish behavior, but they often concentrate on libertine women who demonstrate their sexual and verbal power. Witty women appear in several *Spectator* papers, and Addison and Steele's program for moral reform includes condemning wit in women, who become the especial scapegoat of society's licentious behavior. They interpret women's wit in a specifically Hobbesian context that threatens the social and political stability of England, and the female jilt, a gendered byword Addison and Steele employ for the female libertine, comes under particular scrutiny.

Spectator 73 argues that women are more ambitious than men, even in the home, a traditional space for them. Addison suggests that women's seductive desires for power are drawn from an Ovidian tradition of predatory women, and he warns his readers about the destructive potential of their vanity. Steele extends the comparison in *Spectator* 187 by likening the female jilt to a dangerous animal that delights in tormenting others because she is a woman of wit; as such, she becomes "a spider in the midst of a cobweb...sure to destroy every fly" (527). Although men rather than women continue to be most often associated with libertine behavior, it is men who are helpless here, subject to the annihilating power of the seductive *femme fatale*, who causes Steele to "Disdain against all Libertine Women" (527). Kitty's story, a lesson on the dangers of women's sexuality, provides an important moral for readers. Her adulterous union with the footman potentially produces illegitimate offspring that could threaten the inheritance of property by lawful heirs.

Addison and Steele do not advocate any freedoms for women, whose moral education, they argue, should put virtue into action in the home. They assert that women, as keepers of morality, must maintain their chastity to encourage honor, nobility, Christian virtue, charity, and happiness in their children. Addison explains in *Spectator* 10 that his papers “will be more useful...to the female world” since

there has not been sufficient Pains taken in finding out proper Employments and Diversions for the Fair ones. Their Amusements seem contrived for them rather as they are Women, than as they are reasonable Creatures... (90)

Though Addison argues that “The Toilet is their great Scene of Business, and the right adjusting of their Hair the principal Employment of their Lives,” he proposes that his papers will provide “an innocent if not an improving Entertainment, and by that Means at least divert the Minds of [his] female Readers from greater Trifles” and that they will “point out all those Imperfections that are the Blemishes, as well as those Virtues which are the Embellishments of the Sex” (91).

The absence of “those Virtues” in women means nothing less than the moral destruction of an emerging imperial Britain. Addison’s *Spectator* 128 focuses on “female levity...and this irregular Vivacity of Temper [that] leads astray the Hearts of ordinary Women” (517). This irregularity produces a “pernicious Influence towards their children” because the mother “contributes all she can to perpetuate herself in worthless Progeny” (517). Addison cites a Roman Empress and Marcus Aurelius’s wife, Faustina, as a “lively instance of this Sort of Women” (517). While Marcus Aurelius was one of “the greatest, wisest, and best of the *Roman Emperors*” (517), Faustina appears, single-handedly, to

have been responsible for the decline of Rome after his death. She becomes the scapegoat for the immoral actions of her son, Commodus, who acts more like a gladiator than an emperor. His inaptitude for leadership, along with his vanity, volatility, and irrationality, directly results, in their version, from his mother's poor parenting.

Steele and Addison tie much of Commodus's complete moral and subsequent political failure to his mother's lacking an important characteristic that education and nurturing should foster in women: a heart, specifically a feeling, moral one that shows a strong social consciousness. If men are the actors of imperialist Britain, women are its soul, and their corruption disrupts the entire foundation, as Kitty's and Faustina's stories demonstrate. The complete dissociation between women's virtue and their wit becomes a central tension in the cultural and literary debate about women's libertinism. When Pope writes that "ev'ry Woman is at heart a Rake" in his *Epistle to a Lady* (1735), he argues that women, only interested in "the love of power and the love of sway," lack characters; their desire for power, a seductive one that threatens men, leaves them without a much-needed heart. Their vanity and lack of empathetic feeling for others, an appropriate "feminine" virtue, speaks to the growing significance for women to demonstrate their sensibility by showing that they respond to others with compassion, affection, and moral warmth—all features that came to define sensibility by Richardson's *Pamela* (1740).

In the *Epistle to a Lady*, Martha Blount becomes an ideal standard of virtue Pope draws from the Earl of Shaftesbury's philosophical views of virtue as action unmotivated by Hobbesian self-interest. As an androgynous figure, Martha Blount's virtue and reason distinguish her from Atossa, Pamela, and the gallery of women, whose wit, desire for

power and sway, and vain self-love result in their eventual isolation and degradation. Martha Blount becomes the perfect “softer man,” or woman-man, because she has a distinct soul reflective of an Aristotelian model of the heart Pope read in *De Anima*. Understood ontologically, her soul is a rational faculty of the intellect, an imprint of bodily sensation, and a structuring element that guides and organizes the body. Philosophically, women’s absent or corrupted heart misguides them, leaving them without a character, or a first material cause that guides the formal, efficient, and final causes. Martha Blount’s virtuous heart, formed from a proper balance of reason and the passions in a mind-body dualistic structure, becomes a necessary (because stable) final cause yoked to masculine reason. This reason establishes virtue as a necessary social function of decorum absent in the poem’s caricatured ladies, many of whom Pope draws from the *Spectator* papers. Pope, Addison, and Steele imply that women’s bodies become disordered because they lack a connection between the passions and reason, which, in an Aristotelian context, draws on a faculty of the soul, capable too of sense perception. The properties of the heart thus become a perceptual and active principle of the mind ordering the body that can only be explained in women by likening them to men. Nevertheless, Pope’s calling Martha Blount a “woman-man” signifies that she is feminine in her ability to feel, indicated by his naming her first as a woman and second as a man, or masculine in her soul’s rational capacity. She counters Defoe’s earlier heroine, Roxana, depicted as a “*Man-Woman*,” who lacks a heart and is named first as a man because she is more stereotypically masculine in her lack of feminine feeling.

Sensibility depends on the heart's physiological responses of mental, physical, and emotional distress or empathetic and/or vicarious feeling for others. At its center rests a desire for freedom from distress, a definition not entirely separate from libertine desires for freedom from constraint. An early example of this occurs in Donne's "The Ecstasy," which features a speaker who negotiates Aristotle's idea of the soul tied with the body. His conceits rest on a difficult relationship between love and sexuality that Pope explores later in *Eloisa to Abelard*, albeit in stylized heroic couplets that reflect Eloisa's divided heart. In Donne's poem, the soul needs the body as a book, and the poem's main conceit, which relies on the poet's wit, nevertheless imagines an audience of sympathetic admirers who "read" the lovers' souls through their bodies, much as Pope imagines himself and a future audience "reading" Eloisa's pain through his poetic portrait. Though Donne's speaker struggles to defy a Platonic notion of the body as dross, an imperfect vehicle for the soul's expression of love, the conceit nevertheless redefines the soul in libertine terms that allow the body to function as "allay" for an Aristotelian soul with physical and rational capacities. Sense perception and the imagined macrocosm framing the lovers' microcosm reconfigure an emerging libertine culture in early terms of sensibility. The link between sensibility and libertinism converges on both movements' desire for freedom, which becomes important for later pathos figures like Pope's Eloisa, whose demonstrations of sensibility are also expressions of her libertine desires.

The heart's capacity to think and feel through the body was equally a product of the possibilities that Lucretius's *De rerum natura* and, much later, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, propose. Both follow Aristotle's idea that the soul could be capable of reason and

passion, but they argued that the soul, an extension rather than an imprint of the body, must necessarily exist like the body as matter in motion. Aristotle argues against such assertions, which, in their logical conclusion, point toward chaos as a final cause, not the order that Aristotle and, much later, Pope, advocate. Pope nevertheless tests the possibilities of chaos in a world that needs the soul as an ordering principle to guide passion, reason, and human behavior, but he relocates epistemological questions in the knowable world that man can test empirically, not in a world of metaphysical speculation where final causes descend to material ones.

Such questions emerge also in Rochester's verse, an inspiration for most all of the writers considered in this dissertation. His "The Imperfect Enjoyment" (pub. 1680) offers a vision first of impotence, a first or material cause that produces the subsequent visions of sexual frenzy that lead not to a final cause but to chaos. Near the beginning of the poem, the speaker imagines both a bodily movement between himself and his mistress and a movement of his soul above his mistress:

My fluttering soul, spring with the pointed kiss,
Hangs hovering o'er her balmy brinks of bliss.
But whilst her busy hand would guide that part
Which should convey my soul up to her heart. (ll. 11-14)

The speaker imagines the Donnean moment of suspended souls, but the sexual failure becomes a failure of the soul as much as the body. The speaker can only concentrate on the material world, the problem of the body, and the inability for souls to unite, perhaps even to exist. Lucretius, of course, argues for the mortality of the soul, and Rochester, unlike Dryden, who denies Lucretius's assertion in his Preface to *Sylvae*, dwells on the

possibility of a material soul. The “great Love” (l. 60) Rochester’s speaker imagines and desires responds to a Donnean demand for the body to become “allay” for the soul, but the imagined sex act becomes a total denial of the soul’s ability to order the mind or the body. Rochester, like Descartes, refutes Aristotle’s assumptions, but on different grounds than Descartes does, since he continues to argue for the integrity of the soul separate from the mechanical operation of the body. Souls, which, for Donne, could speak even without the body, do not exist in Rochester’s poem, and their absence or failure produces disillusionment for the speaker, who concentrates on a Cartesian mechanical process of the body that has implications for the soul that Descartes does not locate in his mind-body dualistic model.

The subsequently chaotic visions of bestial sexuality, to Rochester, signify loss through an absence of soul, which separates humans from other animals. Natural passion might be sexual feeling, but for Rochester, it almost always implies a spiritual desire hidden beneath humanity’s fundamental sexual drive. The feminized grunting hogs in the poem represent bodies out of sexual control and epitomize the all-important distinction between “great Love” (l. 60) and gross physical functions. The image, in fact, follows Lucretius’s rendering of human sexuality in book four of *De rerum natura*, where he likens women to copulating cows and mares that desire their mates. This comparison allows him to argue that women, both as animals and humans, must feel sexual pleasure to procreate and thereby advance the species. Lucretius describes this sexual desire as a confining one for them, a chain that binds them in a dark world of illusory pleasure that only masks pain (4. 1097-1208). Rochester, perhaps recalling the animalistic drive from

Lucretius's book on sensation and sex, concentrates on the darkness and limitation of human existence in the sexual act. For him, as for Donne, libertinism means the realization of a paradox: freedom *from* the body means an expression of metaphysical desire *through* the body.

Such a paradox brings together the philosophical and physiological dimensions of libertinism and connects it with early demonstrations of sensibility. Writers featuring dramatic libertine personae in various states of physical, emotional, and imaginative distress contribute to the early development of both movements. Distress is an important, if often neglected, component of the libertine identity and is explored extensively in the last three chapters of this study, which begins by considering the influence that Charles II's courtiers, including Rochester, exert on writers' imagining of the female libertine:

Chapter two explores Dryden's two subversive female libertine characters, Doralice and Melantha, in *Marriage A-la-Mode*. While Melantha resembles the new and politically dangerous French mistress at court, K roualle, Doralice employs libertine language that reflects the Epicurean ideas derived from Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. In her opening song, Doralice defines pleasure in an Epicurean context that Dryden explores through a hybrid literary form that blends comedy with tragedy. He examines the social and political implications of both women's arguments for pleasure, paralleling them to resolve the potential political and sexual chaos that threatens to overtake the play.

Chapter three concentrates on Harriet's challenging Dorimant's libertine attitudes towards women and love in *The Man of Mode*. In this play, love becomes associated with excessive emotions and feminine "disease" embodied by Mrs. Loveit, who demonstrates

her distress in ungoverned displays of passion that Dorimant and Harriet reject. Much of the irreligious language Harriet employs attacks both Dorimant and Mrs. Loveit, modeled after Charles II's mistresses, the Duchess of Cleveland and the Duchess of Portsmouth. Mrs. Loveit's tantrums provide a spectacle that Harriet, following Rochester's treatment of these women, targets.

Chapter four evaluates the female libertine's growing disillusionment with the male libertine and considers two of Behn's heroines, Julia in *The Luckey Chance*, and Isabella in *The History of the Nun*. Whereas in *The Luckey Chance* Behn presents a dark but sympathetic portrait of the female libertine in distress in Julia's character, in *The History of the Nun*, Behn shows an increased interest in integrating values of sensibility with libertine aggression, as Isabella murders both of her husbands. Her version of the nun story nevertheless reflects the moral and religious tensions that ultimately divided sensibility from libertinism.

Chapter five examines a less often studied writer, Trotter, whose earliest literary work, *Olinda's Adventures*, presents a witty heroine who refuses to marry anyone since she struggles against her love for a married man. Trotter leaves this passion unresolved in Olinda's final anguished letters of sexual frustration, confinement, and loneliness, and she poses the same kinds of questions about autonomy, identity, marriage, and disillusionment in *Love at a Loss, or the Most Votes Carries It*, her only comedy. Though Lesbia, Miranda, and Lucilla scheme, manipulate, and direct the men, even Beaumine, the play ends in a loss of power for the female libertines.

Chapter six considers Defoe's darkest novel, *Roxana*, which features a heroine who enacts libertine desires for power that consciously and completely reject sensibility. Defoe models Roxana's character on Restoration figures, including Rochester and the court mistresses, and his consideration of Epicurean atomism emerges in the self-reflective questions Roxana proposes to the reader. The novel considers the ethical implications of a world without divine order, and it rejects closure because it features a libertine heroine who cannot believe in repentance or virtue. As a result, the novel cannot provide the moral promised in the Preface.

Roxana is one of the last novels to feature a female libertine as a heroine, and in chapter seven, I look briefly at contemporary and later versions of the female libertine, which continues to undergo transformations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though denounced for their vice, these characters demonstrate that, even at the height of the moral "age of sensibility," such transgressive figures continued to fascinate writers who were nevertheless compelled to condemn them.

CHAPTER II

‘DECENCIES OF BEHAVIOR’: DRYDEN’S LIBERTINES IN *MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE*

Dryden’s *Marriage A-la-Mode*, first performed in 1671, begins a new phase of libertine drama that, as Maximillian Novak has argued, “embodied the concepts of civilized and sophisticated life associated with the Libertines” (2). The female libertines in the play, Doralice and Melantha, participate in the increasingly satiric culture associated with libertinism in the 1670s, which might espouse the “civilized and sophisticated life” often associated with Epicurean ideals, but more often practiced indecent, less than civilized acts of debauchery. Such acts were often staged in comedies written during the decade, including ones by Dryden, who Novak suggests, before the late 1670s, “was the master of smutty comedy” (3). Dryden wrote several plays like *The Kind Keeper* (1678), a sex comedy tailored to an approving audience, which included the king, who commissioned the play to be written in the style of Thomas Durfey’s *A Fond Husband* (1677). Dryden, always aware of his own career, could write material he knew would please the court, though it is important to remember that he does not always treat sexuality in his plays in the 1670s merely as amusing “smut.”

The king and the court often used Epicureanism as an excuse for excessive sexual gratification, and like many, Dryden had a longstanding interest in the neo-Epicurean

revival during the seventeenth century.¹⁶ According to Charles Trawick Harrison, Dryden did “the greatest service, both in elucidation and in praise...to Lucretius by any poet of the Restoration” (76). He had planned to translate Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* much earlier than 1685, when his partial translation of the text appeared in *Sylvae*, and though Dryden had intellectual interests in the philosophical and scientific possibilities of Lucretius’s *De rerum natura*, he nevertheless translated more of book four, which focuses on physical passion, than the other six books, acknowledging his interest in the topic in the Preface.¹⁷ In his translation, Dryden concentrates on the dangers of sexually aggressive town women, blamed for the tribulations of the deceived lover, who is duped and left heartbroken by them. Dryden’s focus on the women’s sexual treachery in the translation is anticipated in his heroic tragedy and favorite play, *All for Love* (1677), which represents Cleopatra’s detrimental influence over Antony, a figure resembling Charles II that loses power because he becomes a slave to his desires. Dryden likely modeled Cleopatra after the court mistress most often visually depicted as her, or Hortense Mancini, Duchess of Mazarin, who, like Louise de K roualle, was French and eyed with suspicion by Dryden and others. In his works, Dryden treats promiscuous women, particularly those in real or perceived positions of power, with disapproval, even

¹⁶ See Mary Gallagher’s “Dryden’s Translation of Lucretius” for a helpful source on Dryden’s analysis of Lucretius’s text and Joseph McG. Bottkol’s “Dryden’s Latin Scholarship” for Dryden’s interest in translating the classics. Bottkol notes that we cannot know which of the Latin editions of Lucretius that Dryden might have read, though both Creech’s and Evelyn’s English editions were important sources for him when he did his own translation in *Sylvae* (243).

¹⁷ Richard Kroll’s chapter on the neo-Epicurean revival in England during the Restoration describes the scientific and philosophical interest that seventeenth-century writers like Dryden had in Epicurus’s theories, which influenced the entire reading culture of the Restoration. See *The Material Word*, pp. 1-111. Charles Kay Smith’s article, “French Philosophy and English politics in Interregnum Poetry,” also looks at the way in which Lucretian Epicureanism influenced Restoration writers in exile in France just prior to the Restoration, providing a helpful context for understanding the intellectual culture in which Dryden wrote.

disdain, and while he can appear to condone sexual extravagance in a play like *The Kind Keeper*, he can also, writing nearly at the same time, elevate it to tragic and heroic dimensions with distinct political overtones in plays like *All for Love*.

To what extent, then, might we say that his tragicomedy *Marriage A-la-Mode*, written several years before these plays, reconciles the kind of sexual excessiveness associated with the libertinism depicted in many of Dryden's comedies, with the heroic plays, in which women's sexuality is often rendered so very destructively? The libertines in *Marriage A-la-Mode* advocate what Novak describes as "total sexual license as a possible way of life" (2), and Dryden dedicates the play to the Earl of Rochester. Dryden knew he must please the king and the court, but he wrote plays like *Marriage A-la-Mode* that are more ambivalent towards the court's licentiousness. He shows disapproval towards the female libertine figures, also modeled partly after the most prominent court mistresses during the 1660s and 70s, Cleveland and K  roualle, for their subversive desires, which are linked thematically with the larger political problems of illegitimate rule introduced in the heroic plot. Dryden does not moralize in *Marriage A-la-Mode*; nor does he sacrifice meaning for aesthetic considerations.¹⁸ Instead, he parallels the concurrent heroic and comedic plots to emphasize the potential political dangers of the court's hedonistic impulses. Dryden's play does not condone adultery as a privileged, libertine mode of civilized, sophisticated existence. Instead, it both satirizes the destructive potentials linked with libertine licentiousness while drawing comedic power from the figures of vice held up for reform.

¹⁸ See Laura Brown's argument about Restoration tragicomedy (70).

Marriage A-la-Mode features characters with constantly shifting identities, a theme that continued to interest Dryden in an age when political identities were often equally unstable.¹⁹ I agree with J. Douglas Canfield's discussion of Restoration tragicomedy, which focuses on "ethical, particularly sexual relations and the problem of constancy," ultimately preventing sexual outcomes that threaten the succession of lawful heirs ("The Ideology of Restoration Tragicomedy" 448). There is a strong push towards reformation of all the libertine figures at the end of the play, though they do not indulge in the kind of extravagant sexual escapades that characters do in other plays by Dryden, Wycherley, and Etherege. Instead, *Marriage A-la-Mode* presents a more complicated reaction to libertinism that could, on the one hand, remain open to pleasure as an Epicurean ideal, and, on the other, debate the limitations of self-interested gratification in scenes designed to connect court wit with larger political and cultural debates about the dangers of sexual excess, particularly in women.

Dryden's Melantha and Doralice, two of the rebellious libertine characters in the play, almost physically fight over competing definitions of wit in a mock-battle,

¹⁹ David Hopkins, who provides an otherwise excellent analysis of Dryden's later literary output in *John Dryden*, oversimplifies the purposes behind *Marriage A-la-Mode*, which, he argues, "might lead one to suppose that Dryden's intention might have been to expose the folly of Palamede's and Rhodophil's constant pursuit of 'novelty' in their amatory affairs...[but] the handling of events leaves us, and the characters, with no greater understanding than we or they had at the outset either of the worth of marriage or of the power of the forces which might exist to disrupt or undermine the institution" (44). The plays of the 1660s and 70s, he argues, "suffer, to a greater or lesser degree, from the kinds of imaginative limitation" seen in plays like *Marriage A-la-Mode*. My reading of the play directly challenges these kinds of assumptions. Other relevant readings about Dryden's concern with politics, sexuality, or the tragicomic form in the play include Bruce King's *Dryden's Major Plays*, Frank Harper Moore's *The Nobler Pleasure: Dryden's Comedy in Theory and Practice*, Michael McKeon's "Marxist Criticism and *Marriage à la Mode*," Derek Hughes's *English Drama, 1660-1700*, Laura Brown's "The Divided Plot: Tragicomic Form in the Restoration," Robert Markley's *Two-Edg'd Weapons: Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve*, Laura Rosenthal's "'A Kind Mistress is the Good Old Cause': The Gender of the Heir in *Marriage à la Mode*," Stuart Sherman's "Dryden and the Theatrical Imagination," and Harold Love's "Dryden, Rochester, and the Invention of the 'Town.'"

articulating a relationship between wit and culture that Dryden and others would continue to evaluate throughout the 1670s. The play primarily attacks Melantha, who serves as the most obvious butt because of her association with Town values. In the Preface, Dryden laments the widespread influence of these values on an increasingly Francophile court invested in the kind of disruptive wildness represented in the libertine characters' arguments for "open" marriage. His play works within a tradition of satire, directly alluding to Horace's second satire on the title page, and its exotic setting, Sicily, is meant to represent England, providing Dryden with a way to address the court without overtly appearing to do so. His targets are the king and the court, which Dryden appeals to by furthering an ongoing discussion about the mind and the body's relationship to Epicurean pleasure in terms that displace the body's central importance to it.

Dryden considers the implications of libertine excessiveness by re-conceptualizing Lucretius's ideas about chaos in *De rerum natura*. He specifically strikes out at Doralice and Melantha because they embody the misunderstood principles of Epicurean pleasure and represent the dangerous manifestations of social and sexual volatility that he wanted to contain. The female libertines' linguistic sparring, which is interrupted by an actual battle to restore Leonidas to the throne, demonstrates how the potential political instability underscoring their witty language responds to the philosophical arguments of chaos that Dryden read in Lucretius's text.

Dryden's interest in Lucretian Epicureanism resonates on several levels. Charles and his court followed what Lucretius describes as kinetic pleasure, which gratifies the body, but often disturbs the spirit, disrupting the necessary equipoise that indicates the

achievement of a state of *ataraxia*. *Ataraxia* is an ideal form of Epicurean pleasure that provides peace and tranquility, or the classical ideals that libertines, often associated with Epicureanism, rarely, if ever, followed in the 1670s. Even so, Epicureanism provided a philosophical basis for the pleasure-seeking court, and seventeenth-century writers, readers, and translators showed increased interest in Lucretius's ideas, despite his association with atheism.²⁰ The interest would grow in the eighteenth century, when his ideas became highly influential on the *philosophes* of the French Enlightenment.²¹

Paul Hammond reminds us that Dryden was reading Lucretius years before Creech translated the full six books of *De rerum natura* in 1682 or before his translation in *Sylvae* in 1685; plays such as *Tyrannick Love* (1670) and *Aureng-Zebe* (1676) directly allude to Lucretius ("The Integrity of Dryden's Lucretius" 2). The Preface to *Aureng-Zebe* invokes and privileges the Epicurean ideal, *ataraxia*, and Dryden praises Lucretius, likening himself to the Roman poet and follower of Epicurus:

I am sure his Master Epicurus, and my better Master Cowley, prefer'd the solitude of a Garden, and the conversation of a friend to any consideration, so much as a regard, of those unhappy People, whom in own wrong, we call the great. True greatness, if it be any where on Earth, is in a private Virtue; remov'd from the notion of Pomp and Vanity, confin'd to a contemplation of it self, and centring on it self. (153)

Hammond notes, citing part of this passage, that Dryden valued the contemplative life and that he "was also rescuing Lucretius from the biased readings of his contemporaries," who had distorted Epicureanism, modifying the philosophy of tranquility to

²⁰ John Redwood looks at this influence in relation to the Enlightenment in England. See especially his discussion on "Theories of Matter and the Origin of the World," pp. 93-114.

²¹ Natania Meeker's recent work, *Voluptuous Philosophy: Literary Materialism in the French Enlightenment*, provides an excellent background to Lucretius's importance to French enlightenment ideals.

accommodate the debaucheries of libertinism, particularly by the middle of the 1670s (4). To Dryden, Lucretius had been mishandled and misinterpreted by debauchees who used Epicureanism as an excuse for sexual, drunken, and sometimes violent effusiveness. Dryden wrote his play in a libertine spirit of Charles II's court in part to advance his career, but he ultimately wished to evaluate the meaning of pleasure since his audience was heavily invested in experiencing it. His rather obsequious dedication to Rochester makes clear Dryden's need for court approval, particularly from an aristocrat who embodied court wit. The overall tone of the dedication, however, clarifies the difference between Rochester and writers like Dryden, who had no title and no real claim to the aristocratic culture that surrounded the king.

Rochester lent Dryden the "Protection and Patronage" (222) he needed, but his "Delicacy of Expression" and "Decencies of Behavior" (221) were laughable considering the indelicacy of Rochester's verse and his indecent behavior. Even so, Rochester was an up-and-coming poet who might act with all the destructive rebelliousness of his contemporary, the Duke of Monmouth, but who wrote early lyrics that proved himself quite capable as a poet of distinguished intellectual ability. In the dedication to *Marriage A-la-Mode*, Dryden invokes the classical ideal of the virtuous man, and James Anderson Winn notes the irony of his linking Rochester with this ideal. Dryden's dedication to Sir Charles Sedley in *The Assignment* (1672) has a similar aim because it associates the court wits with the Roman poets writing for Augustus. Their writing, unlike that of the court wits, followed a Horatian artistic standard of instructive delight (Winn 246-7). Even so, the court wits are conceptualized by Dryden as the epitome of Epicurean *voluptas*, or

self-controlled pleasure, though he was of course aware that the opposite was really true, both of Sedley and Rochester, known instead for their lewd debauchery, which defeats the necessary equanimity of spirit conceptualized as an Epicurean ideal. As Richard Kroll suggests, the play's dedication underscores its "own skepticism about noble values" ("Instituting Empiricism" 56).²²

Whatever court patronage Dryden needed, he seems always to advocate the classical, contemplative ideals that run counter to the viciousness of the court. In his Preface to *Aureng-Zebe*, for example, Dryden argues that,

As a Poet, I cannot but long to have made some observations on Mankind: The lowness of my Fortune has not yet brought me to flatter Vice; and 'tis my duty to give testimony to Virtue. (150)

Though Dryden spends much of his time in the Preface flattering his patron and dedicatee, John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, he privileges the kinds of classical values that he advocates in *Marriage A-la-Mode*, such as constancy and moderation:

A Prince, who is constant to himself, and steady in all his undertakings; one with whom that Character of *Horace* will agree, *Si fractus illabatur orbis Impavidum ferient ruinæ* [Were the vault of heaven to break and fall upon him, its ruins would smite him undismayed], Such an one cannot but place an esteem, and repose a confidence on him, whom no Adversity, no change of Courts, no Bribery of Interests, or Cabals of Factions, or Advantages of Fortune, can remove the solid foundation of Honour and Fidelity. (152)²³

²² Kroll compares Hobbes's *Leviathan* and empiricism to Dryden's play and argues that Dryden privileges skepticism over romance ("Instituting Empiricism" 55).

²³ The reference is taken from Horace's *Odes* III, iii, and the translation, printed in the notes of *Works* (403), is taken from the Loeb edition of Horace.

Dryden continued throughout his career to praise “Honour and Fidelity” in a politically unsure world, and if he wanted to instruct court wits or the king, “he could,” as Winn suggests, “only advise them to moderate their behavior under the guise of compliment” (247). Dryden always remained an outsider to the libertine circles he wrote about, and he recognized that his own chances depended on gaining their attention and approval. To “teach” the king or the court wits was a dangerous undertaking that required flattery, even ironic praise that exaggerated their “virtues.” His treatment of them presupposed that they already lived in a state of Epicurean *voluptas*, even if he knew this to be untrue.

Hammond suggests that Dryden’s humanist understanding of ideal Epicurean pleasure came from Gassendi’s treatment of *voluptas* as a mental state of detached equanimity in *Petri Gassendi Animadversiones in Decimum Librum Diogenis Laertii, qui est De Vita, Moribus, Placitisque Epicuri* (1649), which Dryden read before writing his own translation of Lucretius in 1685 (6-8).²⁴ For Dryden, the Epicurean ideal could counterbalance the sexual and political chaos resulting from the court’s immoderate pursuit of kinetic pleasure because he interpreted Lucretian Epicureanism as a powerful philosophy that engages the mind as a site of transformative experience. *De rerum natura* persuades the reader to accept its materialist delineations of the world and the self through its argument for the emancipatory capacity of the mind. Pleasure, as Natania Meeker explains, relies upon the mind’s cognition of itself and the world as free matter (7). Though Meeker specifically addresses the influence of Lucretian Epicureanism in French materialist and Enlightenment philosophy during the eighteenth century, she

²⁴ See also Hammond’s *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, pp. 156-170.

describes a relationship between the poetic understanding of nature as matter and the mind that explains Dryden's early intellectual interest in the literary possibilities of Lucretius's arguments for transformative experience through cognition.

To Dryden, Charles II and his court lived according to misinterpreted pleasure ideals associated with Epicureanism, which Creech's later, full translation of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* heightened. Dryden's multi-directional satire in *Marriage A-la-Mode* aims at revising these misinterpretations to communicate a philosophical lesson that the court could understand—that *voluptas*, as a lifestyle, requires a reciprocal relationship between the perceiving mind and the receptive body, which unreflective pleasure, signified, as I will explain later, by the female libertines, cannot enjoy. One could experience pleasure, then, without becoming its slave, since such a path could lead to personal and, in this play, political problems. This assumption underscores the Lucretian materialist understanding of an unstable world that Dryden considers in his treatment of libertine extravagance.

The libertines, both in the play and in the court, resemble the kinds of atoms that Lucretius describes, or those random, colliding particles that move freely without a conscious design, and this instability presents the greatest difficulty to the satirist trying to instruct them. Like Hobbes, whose *Leviathan* asserts the need for strong authoritative structures in a world literally composed of random atoms and politically composed of a precariously restored monarch, Dryden responds to instability by trying to contain it in the play through the elevation of heroic ideals meant to provide a stable response to the uncertainties of fortune. For Dryden, as for Lucretius, hedonistic pleasure prevents the

attainment of *ataraxia*, which, in *Marriage A-la-Mode*, becomes an attainable goal symbolized by the restoration of Leonidas, by the marriage of this ruler to Palmyra, a character that critics have sometimes regarded as dispassionate, even cold, and by the retirement of her potential rival, Amalthea, who helps to restore Leonidas and then finally leaves the court when she realizes that Leonidas will marry Palmyra.²⁵ Both Amalthea's and Palmyra's characters represent a feminine ideal of constancy to what they believe is their duty, even if this conflicts with their personal desires. The women's self-restraint and willingness to sacrifice their desires are intended to represent the personal commitments to stability that Dryden, in his Preface to *Aureng-Zebe*, calls "the solid foundation of Honour and Fidelity" (152) in an erstwhile changing world.

Dryden contrasts Doralice and Melantha against Palmyra and Amalthea to suggest that following materialistic, individual desires prevents the attainment of ideal pleasure, and he concentrates on their transgressive desires as manifestations of inappropriate sexual subversiveness, which needs controlling. Nevertheless, neither Melantha nor Doralice seem exactly "tamed" at the end, despite their return to their rightful partners. Though the play provides a comedic ending, it acknowledges that it could, almost at any moment, destabilize if the characters decide to pursue their own desires rather than their duty. Though the play works on the level of satire, it rejects any overt didacticism, providing instead a classical philosophical response to bodily pleasure in which overindulgence actually detracts from the overall experience. Dryden, who later praises what he calls Lucretius's "remedy" for the "disease" (12) of love in his Preface to *Sylvae*,

²⁵ Derek Hughes argues that Leonidas should have married Amalthea, a more worthy, loyal character than Palmyra, who seems to turn cold to Leonidas (*English Drama* 168-176).

takes seriously Lucretius's warning in book four that sexual relationships typically deceive lovers, engendering heartbreak and pain more often than physical pleasure. Even so, kinetic pleasure, for Lucretius, is both a necessary and unavoidable physical release of energy that more often than not leads to emotional pain, even violent actions.

In the original Latin text, Lucretius's treatment of Venus, the inspiration for kinetic and katastematic (tranquil) pleasure in his great poem, appears ambiguous, as does the relationship between both kinds of pleasure, which seem mutually exclusive and yet are conceptualized complexly as capable of working together as long as humans suppress their baser emotions, if not their baser instincts. Lucretius implicitly suggests that humans could do this if they were like gods, those perfect, remote, uncaring and probably non-existent beings in a state of seemingly perfect *ataraxia*. The tension between both kinds of pleasures creates a paradox in Lucretius's six books that Dryden introduces in the dual plots of the play, written in a hybrid form that expresses the tension between the instability of personal and political identity in a material world predicated on seemingly floating, random atoms, actions, and consequences.

Dryden appears to have had a complex reaction to the costs of kinetic pleasure in *Marriage A-la-Mode*. Though he does not explicitly connect the political with the sexual in the play, he parallels both thematically, ultimately bringing together the concurrent plots to reinforce the relationship between these themes. Rhodophil is, as I will explain later, a figure potentially resembling Charles II, and he feels betrayed, jealous, and angry, losing his insouciant, free attitude towards kinetic pleasure when he believes that Doralice humiliates him with Palamede. Rhodophil and Palamede, both about to lose

sexual power and possibly the assurance of legitimate future heirs, must restore Leonidas to the throne in the heroic plot in an overt gesture of political dominance, which allows them to reassert their sexual power, since the restoration of the king signals that they can provide a “rightful” ending to the political crisis and, by extension, to the sexual one. Once the play turns towards resolving the political and sexual tensions that drive both plots together, the male libertines must lose their desire for gratification of the body to achieve *voluptas*, though all the libertines’ commitments to monogamy, particularly Doralice’s, are contractual and based on mutual satisfaction, which, in Dryden’s later translation of Lucretius’s fourth book, appears unlikely, if not impossible.²⁶

Given that Dryden had a mistress, he likely did not find the king’s behavior morally repugnant in the way that John Evelyn did, but, like Samuel Pepys, he could not have failed to see the larger consequences of Charles II’s almost blind pursuit of sexual pleasure, which compromised the political stability of the nation since he seemed, to many, to become consumed with self-gratification at the expense of national peace. The latter becomes an important association for Dryden with Lucretius’s problematic muse figure, Venus, in his later translation in *Sylvae*. In the Latin text, Lucretius’s invocation to Venus in book one culminates in a desire to avoid Mars, the god of war, who disrupts the peace that Lucretius seeks. As Tom Mason has pointed out, Dryden’s translation in *Sylvae* of the invocation to Venus is a hymn or prayer for peace, or “a universal, absolute freedom from barbarous discord,” rather than an erotic invitation (98). Sexual power that overtakes the mind becomes, to Dryden, following Lucretius, destructive and disruptive.

²⁶ Bruce King argues that the characters opt for a contractual society, rather than a Hobbesian one, though Doralice’s proviso to her contract with Rhodophil indicates otherwise. See his discussion, pp. 82-94.

Lucretius cannot find happiness, peace, or contentment purely through bodily pleasure—only more pain, heartache, and conflict. Humans, Lucretius explains in book four, deceive others and themselves as they pursue sexual gratifications, and Dryden reinforces the message in several plays that stage these themes.

Dryden circumvents this possibility before actual consummation occurs in the play, but the question of legitimacy becomes its dominant theme. It alludes to the court culture of the 1660s and 1670s, when Charles II began to elevate his mistresses and his illegitimate children, giving them stipends and titles that Louis XIV thought, according to Pepys, ridiculous. Court wits, particularly Rochester, and Charles II's mistresses and illegitimate children served as possible models for the characters Dryden targets in the play. Because several of Charles's mistresses were Catholic, gained titles and wealth, and often sought political influence, they were often attacked, both in literary works and in real life. The Duchess of Cleveland gained her title in 1670 and had already established herself as Charles's most important and influential mistress during the 1660s.²⁷ Several other mistresses would arrive at court and eventually replace Cleveland, including K  roualle, who came to court from France in the early 1670s. Both of these mistresses contended with the English actress Nell Gwyn, who, unlike Cleveland and K  roualle, was Protestant, calling herself the "Protestant whore" to distinguish herself from Charles's Catholic mistresses, called those "politic bitches" (l. 6) in a short poem, "Nell Gwynne" (1669), which lauds Gwyn because she "never lay hands on his [Charles II's] sceptre" (l. 4). Dryden sometimes wrote parts for Gwyn, including Florimel in *Secret*

²⁷ Turner links her prominence as the chief royal mistress to the bawdy-house riots of 1668 and to what were perceived as national disasters, since she appeared, to many, to control Charles during this decade. See Turner's chapter in *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London*, pp. 164-196.

Love (1667) and Jacintha in *An Evening's Love, or The Mock Astrologer* (1668). *An Evening's Love* features two primary female libertine characters, Jacintha and Aurelia, with Jacintha assuming a more satirical, wittier role that Dryden extends in Doralice's character. Aurelia, like Melantha, affects French airs, speech, and manners, which are meant to poke fun at the heroic romances and love ideals that Jacintha derides. Both of these characters provide early models for Doralice and Melantha, who assume more sexually charged roles than Jacintha and Aurelia.

Gwyn did not play Doralice in *Marriage A-la-Mode*. Her association with it likely would have directed the audience to understand that Doralice was a figure meant to resemble Gwyn, who had become Charles's mistress by 1668. She had long-lasting friendships with Dryden and Rochester perhaps because she did not, like Cleveland, try to influence Charles politically. Her affiliation with Protestantism and lack of political ambition made her a less threatening figure, one who did not drain the king or the nation of the kinds of funds or political advantage that Charles's other court mistresses did.²⁸

Arguably the most influential women at court during the early 1670s, Cleveland, by then on the decline, and K eroualle, on the rise, were targeted by writers who satirized their actual and perceived power over the king. Because of her French nationality, K eroualle, also a spy for Louis XIV, became a favorite figure for derision for two reasons. Her "reign" over Charles II not only lasted longer than Cleveland's, but her French ties were eyed with derision by the English. Evelyn records that, in October 1671, K eroualle and Charles II went through a mock-marriage ceremony, after which Charles

²⁸ Derek Parker's biography, *Nell Gwyn*, explains her relationship to writers and figures at court, arguing that her lack of desire for political influence ultimately made her a favorite with writers, court wits, the people, and perhaps even the king, to whom she remained faithful.

and K roualle were put to bed by the revelers, as though K roualle was a virgin bride about to celebrate her first night with her husband (589-590). While K roualle never thought of herself as Charles’s actual wife, she seems to have entertained thoughts that this could happen, particularly given false reports of Queen Catherine’s reportedly fatal illness in the early 1670s. It is important to note that Dryden’s play was performed in November of 1671, just a month after the October mock marriage between K roualle and the king had taken place; if Dryden wanted to “teach” the court, or at least the king, to reform his ways, he could not have chosen a better time.

Long before this night, however, Samuel Pepys had already begun recording the wild nights of the court, bemoaning in his *Diary* that

the King and Court were never in the world so bad as they are now for gaming, swearing, whoring, and drinking, and the most abominable vices that ever were in the world—so that all must come to naught...the Court is in a way to ruin all for their pleasures. (July 27, 1667; 355)

Pepys writes that members of court (presumably those not swearing, whoring, and drinking) felt compelled to tell the king “the necessity of having at least a show of religion in the government, and sobriety” (July 27, 1667; 355), but Evelyn’s account of Charles II’s licentiousness just a few days before his death indicates that he never took this advice.

Pepys notes that plays were produced in the 1660s rebuking the king and his mistresses, and whether or not dramatists actually had these figures in mind as early as the 1660s, their audiences were ready to interpret characters as theatrical versions of real-

life court figures. Pepys certainly interpreted the theater as a satiric venue for chastising them. On February 20, 1668, he records going to

a new play, *The Duke of Lerma*, of Sir Rob. Howard's: where the King and Court was there; and Knepp and Nell spoke the prologue most excellently, especially Knepp, who spoke beyond any creature I ever heard. The play designed to reproach our King with his mistresses; that I was troubled for it, and expected it should be interrupted; but it ended all well, which salved all. (81)²⁹

Sir Robert Howard was Dryden's brother-in-law, and the Nell here, of course, was Nell Gwyn, though Cleveland was the dominant mistress of the 1660s who was most often perceived as a threat because of her seeming power over the king. Many, English and French alike, interpreted Charles as a weak monarch because of her influence. Pepys recounts that, on January 17, 1668, Cleveland, then Lady Castlemaine, "doth rule all at this time as much as ever she did" (27).

Such an influence, Pepys laments, produced far-reaching consequences for Charles II that damaged his credibility at home and abroad. In 1667, for example, when the Dutch fleet had blockaded the Thames, Pepys records his conversation with Thomas Povey, the Treasurer of the Duke of York's household from 1660-66.³⁰ They express considerable concern about the political consequences of the king's image and behavior:

In the evening comes Mr. Povey about business, and he and I to walk in the garden an hour or two and to talk of State matters; he tells me his opinion that it is out of possibility for us to escape being undone, there being nothing in our power to do that is necessary for the saving us—a lazy prince—no council—no money; no reputation at

²⁹ Robert Latham and William Matthews find Pepys's claims that the play reproaches the King and his mistresses groundless (81), though I think his interpretation of the play an important one for understanding the climate of the theater and playwrights' attitudes toward Charles II and his court culture, even if the references in the play are not explicitly meant to rebuke the king and his mistress, Nell Gwyn.

³⁰ A peace between England and the Dutch was not signed until July 1667. See Latham's and Matthews's notes for this entry, pp. 285-6.

home or abroad. He says that to this day the King doth fallow the women as much as ever he did. (June 24, 1667; 286)

Such concerns produce what Pepys records as a “horrid effeminacy of the King” because “the King hath taken ten times more care and pains in making friends between my Lady Castlemayne and Mrs. Steward, when they have fallen out, then ever he did to save his kingdom” (June 23 1667; 288). Feuds between the King’s mistresses were numerous and well-known, and both Evelyn’s and Pepys’s descriptions of their visible presence near the Queen, forced to endure their constant close presence, was seen as significantly compromising to the stability of the kingdom. “The King,” Pepys records, “adheres to no man, but this day delivers himself up to this and the next to that, to the ruin of himself and business. That he is at the command of any woman like a slave...[and] cannot command himself in the presence of a woman he likes” (July 27, 1667; 356). The emasculation of the king became a frequent topic in verse by satirists. Though Cleveland was out of favor by 1670, she continued to be a favorite target, particularly during the Popish plot, when Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset’s *Colin* (1679) was written. It attacks several women, including the court mistresses, and Cleveland is depicted as degenerate, promiscuous (several of her lovers are named), and avaricious:

Cleveland offered down a million,
 But she was soon told of Chastillon;
 At that name straight she fell a-weeping
 And swore she was undone with keeping;
 That Jermyn, Churchill had so drain’d her
 She could not live on the remainder.
 The Court said there was no record
 Of any to that place restor’d,
 Nor ought the King at these years venture,

When his prime could not content her. (ll. 120-9)

K roualle, by then titled the Duchess of Portsmouth, is also lampooned in the poem, but she emerges as a more dangerous force affecting Charles’s political decisions:

Each night with her dear was a sessions
O’th’House, and fuller of petitions,
Which drain’d him till he was not able
To keep his Council of a table;
So that whitestaves, grooms, and pages
Live alike upon board wages.
She must retire and sell her place;
Buyers, you see, flock in apace. (ll. 14-21)

The satirist of “Satyr Unmuzzled” (1680) characterizes her as the “great Jilt Royal... / She that commands the Court, the Dev’l and all” (ll. 73-4) and

She that i’th’eye o’th’state is such a film,
Who sits in state to guide and steer the helm,
And will in time the tall ship overwhelm.
Her fool of honor, like a nimble eel,
Has wriggled through the mud to fortune’s wheel.
Slipp’d into place improperly by fate,
Whose parts were ne’er cut out to serve the state (ll. 78-82)

Dryden’s depictions of Charles II in later satires, notably *Absalom and Achitophel*, also suggest a direct connection between perceptions of the king’s masculinity and political weakness, though not as directly or vehemently as the Whig satirist of “A Bill on the House of Commons’ Door On the Prorogation to the 17th of May 1680”:

Here’s a House to be let,
For Charles Stuart swore,
On Portsmouth’s bare arse,
He would shut up the door. (ll. 1-4)

The Whig satirist of “On the Prorogation to the 17th of May 1680” indicates that Portsmouth plays a significant part in controlling Charles II, “To Portsmouth, York, and the Triumvirate , / Who rule the King and ruin Church and state” (ll. 3-4), while John Ayloffe’s *Oceana and Britannia* adds Mazarin to the list of co-conspirators behind the “private screen” (l. 156) and in “close cabal” (l. 158). As Turner reminds readers, “seduction and emasculation become national rather than personal moments, emblems of political servitude or disintegration” (*Libertines and Early Modern Radicals* 169-70), and it is registered in the double plot of *Marriage A-la-Mode*, which implicitly links sexual continence with political legitimacy.

This is not to say, however, that Dryden did not try at times to flatter the mistresses. The author of *The Session of the Poets* (1668) satirizes Dryden for his praise of Cleveland:

Dryden, whom one would have thought had more wit,
The censure of every man did disdain,
Pleading some pitiful rhymes he had writ,
In praise of the Countess of Castlemaine. (69-72)

He welcomed K roualle when she arrived in 1670 with a short, four-stanza poem in her honor, “The Fair Stranger,” but she was not, of course, an established court mistress then. Dryden perhaps understood and predicted that she could become one and that she might even surpass Cleveland, famous for her tantrums and infidelities to Charles, who had begun to grow weary of her by 1670. John Lacy, even as late as 1677, ironically depicts

her as a figure of admiration since her “monstrous lechery exceeds all fame” (l. 46) in his “Satire,” a poem sometimes ascribed to Rochester:

Cleveland, I say, was much to be admir'd,
 For she was never satisfi'd or tir'd.
 Full forty men a day have swiv'd the whore,
 Yet like a bitch she wags her tail for more. (49-52)

She appears “as bold as Al'ce Pierce” (l. 38), the mistress of Edward III, and “as fair as Jane Shore” (l. 38), the mistress of Edward IV, while K roualle is the “bawd” that “ambassadors send far and near” in “The King's Vows” (1670), an early poem linking K roualle with espionage and treachery and that perhaps antedates her affair with the king.

By 1679, Dryden, like many writers, participated in the literary campaign against K roualle. Dryden and Mulgrave treat both her and Cleveland as betrayers of the king in their *An Essay Upon Satire* (1679):

Yet saunt'ring Charles, between his beastly brace,
 Meets with dissembling still in either place,
 Affected humor or a painted face.
 In loyal libels we have often told him
 How one has jilted him, the other sold him;
 How that affects to laugh and this to weep; (ll. 65-70)

Cleveland laughs, while K roualle (by then titled the Duchess of Portsmouth) weeps. The laughing, jilting references possibly allude to Gwyn, but it is more likely Cleveland and K roualle, Charles's more political mistresses. In his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Dryden depicts K roualle as a whore, but the attack was well under way before 1679, when K roualle experienced a decline with the arrival of Mazarin in 1675.

Dryden had already sided against K roualle, as early as 1671, when *Marriage A-la-Mode* was produced, perhaps realizing that her interests lay less with Charles II, England, and the court, which hated her, than with Louis XIV, France, and Versailles, which depended on her.³¹ K roualle’s influence over Charles II only grew during the 1670s, contributing in part to the female libertine’s frequent literary appearances in this decade, particularly in works of satire.

Melantha would have easily been recognized as a character resembling K roualle, who stayed in England to comfort Charles after his sister, Henriette, married to Louis XIV’s brother, died. Henri Forneron notes that Louis needed a replacement for Henriette, who was sent to convert Charles II to Catholicism and to persuade him to accept a secret treaty that gave France license to invade the Dutch (55-6). Her death put the links between the countries in doubt, but Charles’s relationship with K roualle, who accompanied Henriette to England, continued to sustain a relationship between these countries that was to prove long lasting (Forneron 47-63). In “The History of Insipids” (1674), likely written either by Rochester or Marvell, K roualle, whose name satirists often anglicized “Carwell,” appears as one of the figures responsible for Charles’s breaking the Triple League, formed in 1667 to ally England with protestant Holland and Sweden, for an alliance with Louis XIV: “Was’t Carwell, brother James, or Teague / That made thee break the Triple League?” (ll. 101-2)

Sharon Kettering distinguishes between brokers and go-betweens in the court of Louis XIV and notes that K roualle was a go-between who carried messages and

³¹ Bryan Bevan’s biography describes K roualle’s life and influence and note her important connections in France and England. See especially the descriptions of her arrival to England with Charles’s sister Henriette in 1670 and her growing prominence in the early 1670s, pp. 2-59.

documents between Charles II and Louis XIV. She helped in concluding the secret treaty, perhaps the one begun by Henriette earlier in the 1670s, between the kings in 1673, the year Charles gave her the title Duchess of Portsmouth and Louis gave her the Aubigny estate and title in Berry (Kettering 79-80). Charles II still received funds from Louis XIV, had spent years at the French court during his exile, and later exalted his French mistresses, even defending and parading them in front of Queen Catherine, for which Louis XIV ridiculed him. Pepys recorded a conversation with Evelyn in which the latter laments that “the King of France hath his Maistresses [sic], but laughs at the foolery of our King, that makes his bastards princes, and loses his revenue upon them—and makes his mistresses his masters” (April 26, 1667; 183). Louis XIV never failed, however, to capitalize on Charles’s perceived sexual weaknesses, and K  roualle’s position, titles, and wealth would heighten the anti-French sentiment growing around Charles’s increasingly foreign and Catholic court, which lasted until his death.³²

Though Melantha is not French, she introduces the dangerous French influences and values that Dryden targets as part of her seductive power in the play, and the audience would not have failed, I think, to establish a connection between Melantha and the affected or real French airs of women at court, which included the King’s new French mistress. Rose Zimbardo has argued that Melantha is an “embodiment” of the play’s “central meaning...an exaggeration of the condition to which we are all heir” (94), but Dryden stresses what I believe the audience would have seen as her foreignness by her importation and idealization of specifically French values, which become part of her

³² John Evelyn famously notes, of course, the presence of the Duchess of Portsmouth, Cleveland, and Mazarin at Charles II’s court even a few days before his death in 1685. See *The Diary of John Evelyn* (413-4).

erotic allure for Rhodophil. She mimics another language, dress, and manners in a way that is both false and seductive, and Dryden treats her character with a satiric eye that warns us less about human absurdity, as Zimbardo argues, and more about our attraction to “otherness” (93-5). Dryden still means for us to see Melantha as a humorous character, but nonetheless a compelling one that distracts Rhodophil from his “rightful” duty to Doralice. This is important for Dryden’s satiric purposes to target potential threats to the stability of Charles II’s court, which included the mistresses, particularly K  roualle.

Whether or not Dryden specifically had one of Charles II’s mistresses in mind for Melantha’s character is uncertain. What is more important is why he would stage characters with similar characteristics, desires, and mannerisms onstage, since making enemies of Charles’s mistresses was dangerous for any writer hoping to succeed at court. V. de Sola Pinto argues that it was likely K  roualle who had Dryden physically beaten in the famous Rose-Street Affair of December 18, 1679 because she assumed that Dryden had depicted her unfavorably in *An Essay Upon Satire*, written sometime during the late 1670s (likely 1677) by Dryden and John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, Dryden’s patron.³³ The depiction of the mistress in the satire indicates that they are frequently targeted, so much so that the satirist needs not even mention them:

Nor shall the royal mistresses be nam’d,
Too ugly and too easy to be blam’d;
With whom each rhyming fool keeps such a pother,
They are as common that way as the other. (61-4)

³³ The rift between Rochester and Dryden has caused some critics to assume that Rochester rather than Dryden played some part in the planning and execution of the attack, but de Sola Pinto argues against Rochester’s participation since he, unlike K  roualle, would have recognized that the poem was stylistically unlike Dryden’s work (178). Other possible contenders include the Antony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury and Philip Herbert, Earl of Pembroke.

K roualle appears as the “whore of Babylon” in Dryden’s version of *Troilus and Cressida*, and she must have recognized herself in other works written during the height of her influence over Charles in the early 1670s. Writers often depicted Charles II as a Venus figure in the arms of Mars, a Sampson fooled by Delilah, the name given to K roualle by members of Parliament, or an Antony, unmanned by the wily Cleopatra, as Dryden’s *All for Love* demonstrates. John Spurr examines the significance of the 1670s pornographic court satires circulated in manuscript, which, in conjunction with the staging of popular sex comedies suggestive of the king’s debauched behavior with his mistresses, contributed to the devastating effect on Charles’s image at home and abroad.³⁴

Dryden continued to create satiric characters meant to represent qualities associated with the mistresses and Charles II, such as sexual excess, often wrongly associated with Epicurean pleasure, but also a too-tolerant attitude towards potentially dangerous figures and influences.³⁵ If Rhodophil is meant to resemble Charles II, then his proposal for sexual freedom after marriage for husbands *and* wives resonates politically as much as it does personally. Rhodophil argues to Palamede, who has just met his intended wife, Melantha, that wives are

their own worst enemies; if they would suffer us but now and then to make excursions, the benefit of our variety would be theirs. Instead of one continued, lazy, tired love, they would, in their turns, have twenty vigorous, fresh, and active loves. (2.1. 122-26)

³⁴ See especially Spurr’s analysis of the effect of court satires on pages 195-213.

³⁵ See Richard Lewis Braverman for an analysis of the kinds of satires written about Charles II, several of them by Rochester, during the 1670s, and for an explanation of Charles’s increasing difficulties to receive funding from parliament for wars with the Dutch. Lampoons directed towards Charles’s sexual impotency were also targeted towards his political impotency (115-6).

Palamede becomes a candidate for one of Doralice's potentially "fresh" lovers, and Rhodophil must eschew his libertine belief that wives and husbands enjoy sexual freedom outside of marriage by the end of the play to avoid the realization of his early philosophical approach to "open" marriage. The predominance of this sexual openness could result in problems with the lawful transference of property, all of which, of course, was beginning to register politically at court, since most all of Charles II's illegitimate children, including the Duke of Monmouth, began to accrue titles, wealth, and property that gave them social and political prominence, which Monmouth, already rumored to be the king's legitimate son, later exploited to lay claim to the throne.

Critics like Judith Kalitzki have argued that Dryden's main emphasis in the play lies in "the need to follow one's instincts rather than the rule of fashion or convention, to be sensitive to context and occasion" (69), but following one's sexual instincts rather than one's duty is precisely the problem. The stability of Rhodophil and Doralice's marriage, a microcosm of the state, hinges on their mutual commitment, and their early arguments for "open" marriage reflect a Lucretian pessimism in the inconstancy of humans, incapable of feeling more than physical sensation, which Doralice's opening libertine lyric espouses:

*1.
 Why should a foolish Marriage Vow
 Which long ago was made,
 Oblige us to each other now
 When Passion is decay'd?
 We lov'd, and we lov'd, as long as we cou'd,
 Till our love was lov'd out in us both:*

*But our Marriage is dead, when the Pleasure is fled:
'Twas Pleasure first made it an Oath.*

2.

*If I have Pleasures for a Friend,
And farther love in store,
What wrong has he whose joys did end,
And who cou'd give no more?
'Tis a madness that he should be jealous of me,
Or that I should bar him another:
For all we can gain, is to give our selves pain,
When neither can hinder the other. (1.1. 3-16)*

Doralice's concentration on sexual pleasure advances a *carpe diem* argument that, had Dryden ended with the first stanza, might stand alone as a humorous, if standard, case typically made by a male wooer to a mistress, not a bored wife to her absent husband. However, the second stanza revises the kinetic pleasure principle that underlies the entire song and reflects the Lucretian vision of sensation and sexuality in book four of *De rerum natura*, the book that Dryden chose to concentrate most of his translating efforts in *Sylvae*.

In the Latin text of book four, Lucretius describes women's sexual pleasure, arguing that physical pleasure is shared between the conjoined couple. Dryden's allowing Doralice to sing this lyric rather than Rhodophil, her husband, significantly responds to the sexual equality that Epicurean atomism gives to male and female bodies—mere vehicles of motion that can nevertheless become disillusioned. Lucretius explains that the female may master her male partner during the sex act when children are conceived (4. 1210-12), and though Doralice and Rhodophil have no children, certainly Dryden implicitly plays with the idea of “seeds” in the potential children she could have—children possibly fathered by Palamede, her desired lover, or some other lover. Though

Lucretius specifically refers to the conjoining of “seeds” from the mother and father during conception, Dryden makes use of the idea of lawful and unlawful “seeds” to construct a framework for understanding the entire play, since the potential for illegitimate heirs or rulers resonates in both plots.³⁶ The challenge to the rightful king, like those that the female libertines pose to Rhodophil and Palamede, requires restoration and resolution through a conservative ideology, and part of this ideology contains and suppresses the excessive pleasures of the female body, which should only carry lawful “seeds.”

Doralice tells the audience that “the Princess *Amalthea* bade [her] learn” (1.1. 2) her song, and it becomes *Amalthea*’s song as much as Doralice’s. *Amalthea*’s motives remain pure throughout the play, however, as she retires from the court when Leonidas chooses Palmyra. Leonidas responds to *Amalthea*, who leaves out of a concern that her presence might create “trouble” (5.1.579) for him and his realm, by acknowledging her secret desire: “Too well I understand her secret grief, / But dare not seem to know it” (5.1.529-30). *Amalthea*’s sacrifice contrasts with Doralice’s threat of infidelity in her proviso because it indicates that she wishes to avoid political chaos, not invite it by tempting Leonidas or acting on her urges.

Amalthea serves as a double for Doralice, just as Leonidas parallels Rhodophil, and her wish to maintain marital and political stability replaces the more dangerous form

³⁶ Braverman concentrates on the relationships between legitimacy, politics, and literary form, arguing that the play “acquires a political dimension by virtue of its role as the counterplot to the romance of restoration” (99). Whereas, for Michael McKeon, the double plot allows for overall unity in theme and form, despite the tensions implicit within aristocratic ideology, for Braverman, legitimacy provides resolution through comedy’s emphasis on negotiation and contract over romance’s privileging of genealogical inheritance.

of pleasure emphasized in Doralice's opening song with a more important Epicurean pleasure: *ataraxia*. Amalthea implicitly bids Doralice learn a new "song," or one that denies the sensual impulses of the body to achieve a greater, more ideal pleasure nevertheless tempered by secret grief and longing. Dryden may dwell in the Lucretian possibilities of kinetic pleasure, but he always returns to a stable universe where legitimate heirs, structures, and leaders are restored. His more overtly didactic position in *Absalom and Achitophel*, where K roualle is the dangerous and adulterous Bathsheba, strongly asserts a position that only the rightful "seeds" are the ones that should count.

Though Dryden's play appears to invoke misinterpreted versions of Epicurean pleasure, primarily in the form of excessive sexual gratification, it actually responds to Epicureanism in more profound way that suggests that life and love are filled with suffering. Doralice's melancholic tone in her first song responds to the pain that Lucretius attaches to love, to pleasure, and ultimately to life, not only in book four, but in all of the six books of the Latin text. Lucretius's invocation in the first book to Venus, though ironic, considering his disavowal of a superstitious belief in the gods, demonstrates a strong interest in understanding the mechanical principles behind love, emotion, lust, and sexuality, which Rochester satirizes in his poetic versions of soulless, mechanistic sexual experience. Lucretius describes Venus in the opening lines as a life-giver, a maternal force, a sex drive, and most importantly for Lucretius, as for Dryden, a figure of peace. Yet, in book four, peace remains elusive when passion controls lovers' emotions and abilities to reason. The vision of love Lucretius provides in book four offers a dark,

jealous, bitter vision of fleeting pleasures of the body, not the mind or spirit, disturbed by resentments and fantasies that produce more pain than pleasure.

Doralice desires to avoid pain in her opening song, but she mistakenly believes that she can achieve it through sexual excess. For her, different lovers should emerge as different atoms meeting and colliding, without regard to emotion, which brings pain because it brings jealousy, even, as Lucretius suggests in book four, a kind of madness. Certainly her desire for Palamede indicates her physical attraction to him. Pleasure, as her initial song argues, lies in sensation, not in affection, attachment, or intellectual engagement of one's partner. Doralice articulates the lower form of pleasure that Lucretius describes as a form of madness because of its resentments, bitterness, heartaches, and jealousies, and to experience *voluptas*, the body and mind need harmony and equanimity. That is not to say, however, that Dryden believed that love, sexual desire, or sexual fulfillment must be avoided or that Lucretius's ideas about them were entirely disillusioning. These theories were both dark and seductive, like Lucretius's Venus, but also well-suited for Dryden's comedic and satiric purposes. For Lucretius, pain, war, and superstition are realities of life to be understood, often endured, and hopefully overcome. Lust rather than love, which causes heartbreak, offers some amelioration of pain through the senses, though it could become a dangerous undertaking if it begins to control the mind. These experiences are suppressed in the play because, to allow Doralice or Melantha to act on their unchaste desires would strip power from Rhodophil and Palamede, each of whom appears overcome with their lust for a new mistress until they recognize that each is about to be made fools or cuckolds.

Rhodophil and Palamede eventually take control of the female libertines, whose language, cross dressing, and wit threaten to overtake the play and the men, whose “rightful” places, like the legitimate king’s throne, are about to be usurped. Doralice becomes Palamede’s “good Genius” (4.3.72), a phrase that I believe Dryden means as a discerning power, or judgment, a key component both he and Hobbes attach to wit. Palamede seems to lack this power, allowing Doralice first to manage their verbal exchanges, then Melantha. Doralice ironically suggests to Palamede that his mistress may be untruthful, even playing a trick on him to test his wit. Palamede, relying on his “good genius,” mistakenly believes that he can discern any disguise that Doralice might wear, all while believing he speaks to a young man, who is really Doralice disguised. Doralice dupes Palamede, who must rely on her “good Genius” or wit, since he appears to lack it from the beginning of the play, when Doralice initially rebuffs him:

This will not give you the reputation of a Wit with me: you traveling Monsieurs live upon the stock you have got abroad, for the first day or two: to repeat with a good memory, and apply with a good grace, is all your wit. And, commonly, your Gullets are sew’d up, like Cormorants: When you have regorg’d what you have taken in, you are the leanest things in Nature. (1.1. 33-9)

Doralice wears man’s clothing when she targets his false wit, suggesting that she must appear like a man to enter into a discussion of it. She attacks him first for his unoriginality, then for his borrowing of foreign expressions. Palamede can only regurgitate what others say and thus lacks wit, becoming Doralice’s first satiric target and an appropriate partner for Melantha, who also comes to represent false wit in the play.

Doralice's wit, however, involves "wounds" that Melantha attaches to English "Countrey Wit" (4.3.153). This comparison recalls other wounds inflicted in the Civil War, which Palamede's allusion to the Puritan "*Good old Cause*" (4.3.187) reinforces. Doralice's character, while witty and attractive, reminds the audience of what could happen—disillusionment and disorder. This turmoil thematically corresponds to the other, actual conflict that England had recently experienced during a long and bloody civil war. If Doralice's wit stings, it stings with a figurative sword that Dryden and the audience would have remembered, and the "*Good old Cause*" refers both to a defeated religious sect and political faction now out of power, or the Puritans, a group often ridiculed in plays, and to a mistress, or Doralice.³⁷ Palamede's joke recalls a dark time in England's recent past, and the allusion collapses it with the dangerous sexual mistress. The rebellious faction has become the rebellious wife, both of which need to be contained and subdued.

These are not the only forces that need suppression, either. Equally important to Dryden are the literary influences on a court increasingly susceptible to French forms and aesthetic values. In a mock-battle, Doralice and Melantha examine the merits of English and French wit by trading insults. Their argument almost results in physical blows, and they must appear as males onstage to engage in a debate about the mind, literally dressing

³⁷ Laura Rosenthal reminds us that Cromwell's daughter had been suggested to Charles II as a potential wife, and though she acknowledges that the production of Dryden's play comes too late to advance this idea to the already married Charles II, her argument nevertheless recalls Dryden's own Puritan background and laudatory verses to Cromwell when he was in power. Dryden was best known for these verses when he began his career at Charles II's court, but he quickly wrote in praise of the restored monarch. Even if the play is too late for Charles to marry a Puritan, Rosenthal's suggestion that "the marriage of Leonidas and Palmyra theatricalizes a politics of the domination, but not destruction, of a rebellious faction" (46) is an important one, as the "politics of the domination" is a running theme in many of Dryden's works. It also, of course, works as an ideal against which Doralice and Rhodophil's marriage is contrasted.

as men to have the authority to enter into a semi-serious literary discussion. Though neither side “wins” the debate, since it is interrupted by the conflict in the heroic plot, Dryden still pokes fun at Melantha, the town lady, who affects foreign fashions, manners, and language and represents French wit in her battle with Doralice.

The larger debate framing their exchange is one that Dryden had engaged in the 1660s. It involved questions about the merit of French literary values and texts that he had to read to become a successful court writer for Charles II. David Bruce Kramer explains that Dryden’s greatest literary problems in the 1660s and 70s emerged not only from the burden of precedent set by English writers, like Shakespeare and Jonson, but also from French writers, notably Corneille, Molière, and Racine. Charles II had acquired French tastes in drama, particularly the rhymed heroic play, during his exile, and after his restoration in 1660, he took an active role in the production, creation, and editing of plays (Kramer 22). For Dryden to succeed as a court poet and playwright, he had to study French literary theory, plays, modes, and language (Kramer 23). Even so, he resisted Corneille’s “stiff and artificial” style and characters, which, in his *Essay of Dramatick Poesy* (1668), he could call beautiful but also cold, like a statue (Kramer 31-2).³⁸

While Melantha obviously does not represent a specific French writer, Dryden employs her character to respond to what he saw as a French “invasion” of English language and literature along with the English king’s *boudoir*. Though Dryden would praise many of the French influences in the *Essay* and in other works, he was also eager to distinguish English forms, especially tragicomedy, and to establish a new aesthetic

³⁸ See Kramer’s *The Imperial Dryden*, which features an excellent chapter on Dryden’s complex relationship to French writers, pp. 16-62.

rooted in a rich literary past that could participate with French forms, ideas, and influences, without being overtaken by them.³⁹ Dryden's comedic depiction of Melantha indicates that he could deal with serious literary debates with a degree of levity, rebuking Melantha's over-fondness for French manners and words even as he used French sources, such as Madame de Scudéry's story of "Sesotris and Timareta" in her romance, *Artamène: ou le Grand Cyrus* (1649-53), for the play.⁴⁰

While humorous, Melantha's mock-battle with Doralice foreshadows the more serious one that Rhodophil and Palamede fight to restore the proper heir. Indeed, the mock-battle, waged as one of French and English wit, is left undecided—like Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*—but in this exchange, Dryden lends this scene greater political significance. Melantha accuses Doralice's wit of reflecting the "Countrey Plays, where drums, and trumpets, and bloud, and wounds, are wit" (4.3.142-3), yet it is Melantha who advances on Doralice, who appears ready to "die upon the spot for...Countrey Wit" (4.3.153). Doralice becomes a version of the English soldier, defending the country from French invasion, and Rhodophil reinforces the challenge that Melantha presents by calling her a "young *Mars*" (4.3.154), a figure that, as David Hopkins argues, Dryden never lightly dismissed, since Mars, as the god of war, could become an all-consuming desire (78). Hopkins notes that "Mars, in Dryden's imaginings, is not just the classical war god but the deity responsible for most of the destructive or calamitous activities to be found in nature" (189). In his *Fables*, Dryden can both revel in and denounce Mars and

³⁹ Both the editors of the *Works*, vol. 9 (482) and E. A. Horsman note, however, that Dryden employed affected French language then current at Charles II's Francophile court.

⁴⁰ Kramer argues that the play reflects how "French language and culture ought to be absorbed into English" (111); he acknowledges that, even though Melantha is "champion of the ridiculous," she is ultimately "integrated by marriage into the society she craves" (112).

his power, with Mars's temple in the *Fables* showing scenes of chaos and disorder that Hopkins links with the English Civil War, the London mob, and other events Dryden experienced (190).

Dryden reinforces this point in his play by allowing the actual war for the throne to intrude on the mock-battle waged between the female libertines. This mock-battle provides striking images to remind the audience of what might be at stake, or the survival of a stable, English nation, along with its letters and its values. Kroll argues that Dryden's later poem *Absalom and Achitophel* is not only "directed against a moral and political threat" but also "against an erosion of knowledge and language, which David's final speech in itself is powerless to correct" (306). Language, as Kroll reminds readers, is power, and Dryden's works emphasize this relationship. He associates a lack of culture, wit, and literary sophistication as early as the 1670s with a bankrupt civilization invested in pretension, pride, and affectation, which he attaches to the town lady Melantha, whom Doralice targets:

You are an admirer of the dull *French* poetry, which is so thin, that it is the very Leaf-gold of Wit, the very Wafers and whip'd Cream of sense, for which a man opens his mouth and gapes, to swallow nothing: and to be an admirer of such profound dulness, one must be endow'd with a great perfection of impudence and ignorance. (4.3. 145-50)

This passage illustrates the Latin tradition of satire, or *satura*, meaning to be satiated with food, and *satura lanx*, which Ronald Paulson explains "was a festival platter filled to overflowing with meats chopped fine and, recovering a more savory version of the *satyra* tone, heavily seasoned." Dryden's later "Discourse concerning the original and progress

of Satire” (1693) defines several traditions of satire, as Paulson reminds readers, but Dryden prefers Menippean satire, the *satira lanx*, rather than the Greek *satyra*, which draws on a tradition of ritual curses and on the image of the satyr, a half-man, half-beast (Paulson 37).

The passage also corresponds with Dryden’s description in the Preface to *Marriage A-la-Mode* of town “fools” who

live on the Offalls of their Wit, whom they decry; and either quote it, (which they do unwillingly) or to pass it upon others for their own. These are the men who make it their business to chase Wit from the Knowledge of Princes, lest it should disgrace their ignorance. (222)

The reference to “the Knowledge of Princes” is an intriguing one that potentially recalls another prominent court figure, the Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II and Lucy Walter, who was nevertheless treated as a prince at court during the 1660s and early 1670s. Charles gave him titles, positions, and money, which he gambled away, living a licentious life that Robin Clifton has described as setting a mode of fashion for young witty men, including the young Rochester. Monmouth was known to have a marked preference for France, despite his maintaining his Protestant faith (if not practice), but he was equally known, according to Clifton, for his gambling, which Pepys notes in his *Diary*, from a very young age. Furthermore, his tutor, Thomas Ross, did not discipline him or make him learn his lessons, perhaps recognizing that Monmouth, later imagined by Dryden as a version of Milton’s Eve in *Absalom and Achitophel*, might have been courageous and handsome, but he was not known for his intelligence. Rumors circulated about a possible secret marriage between Walter and the king and about the

potential for Monmouth to be made legitimate and thus assume the throne during the 1660s and early 70s, particularly as Charles II seemed to have a marked preference for this son (Clifton 88). When Dryden describes those “who make it their business to chase Wit from the Knowledge of Princes,” he might have had the rakish Monmouth—vicious, even murderous, and foolhardy—in mind.

Doralice’s initial target is Palamede, who appears to be around the same age as Monmouth in 1671, a dashing rake who recognizes that he has less wit than Doralice and interrupts her first song to liken her to an executioner—the same satirist/executioner that Dryden later imagines in his “Discourse concerning the original and progress of Satire.” Palamede sees himself as a target, acknowledging her role as satirist in the play: “Well, I’ll say that for thee, thou are a very dextrous Executioner; thou hast done my business at one stroke” (1.1.98-100). Much of the play’s humor results from Doralice’s “execution” of her victims through biting wit, which attracts Palamede. Like Monmouth, he seems to lack the learning and aptitude of the court wits associated with Rochester, whose wit appealed to the intellectual Dryden, looking to reform kings, princes, and the court, which did not live according to the standard of ideal virtue that Dryden ironically attaches to Rochester and his “Decencies of Behavior” (221) in the Preface. Nevertheless, Dryden contrasts Rochester’s wit with the “middling sort of Courtier, who become happy by their want of wit; but they supply that want, by an excess of malice to those who have it” (222), a description that might apply to Monmouth, who had, by the early 1670s, begun a career of debauchery that included seducing an actress at age eighteen whom the king later nearly also seduced (Knowles 76-7). One wonders if Dryden had such occasions in

mind for Rhodophil and Palamede, the former an older libertine, the latter a younger rake, both about to share mistresses.

Clifton argues that Monmouth was the leader of a violent gang of young town men and that his prolificacy reached its height on December 21, 1670, when he was responsible for ordering his life guards to mutilate John Coventry, an MP, leading Parliament to pass the “Coventry Act,” which made this kind of behavior illegal.⁴¹ The poet of “A Ballad called the Haymarket Hectors” (1671) links the incident to the king’s sexual incontinence and reinforcing the connection between Coventry’s jibe at the king’s liaisons with Gwyn and Moll Davis and violence, both to Coventry, whose nose was cut, and to the country. In the last stanza, the poet associates these relationships to images of civil war, arguing that “If the sister of Rose” (l. 49), meaning Gwyn,

Be a whore so anointed
That the Parliament’s nose
Must for her be disjointed,
Should you but name the prerogative whore [Cleveland],
How the bullets would whistle, the cannon would roar! (ll. 50-4)

Just a short time after this, Monmouth, among his drunken friends, was implicated in the killing of a beadle, Peter Visnall, for which he received a pardon from the king (Clifton 90). Monmouth had come to epitomize the court’s vices, a literal offspring of the king’s worst qualities, but he was a much more dangerous political figure than other libertines because there were persistent rumors of Monmouth’s legitimization—rumors that Monmouth believed and eventually acted upon in the 1680s. He would later become an

⁴¹ Turner attributes the basis for the attack to Nell Gwynn and the king’s orders that twenty-five of Monmouth’s guards carry out the mutilation (*Libertines and Early Modern Radicals* 217).

actual threat to Charles, whose Francophile court and interests left the stability of his restoration to the throne questionable, particularly to a wary Parliament uneager to grant him funds, and to his subjects, anxious that Charles not return England to Catholicism. This anxiety made Monmouth, a protestant, look more attractive as a successor than the Catholic Duke of York. It is important for Dryden's satiric purposes that Palamede, if he is a kind of figure meant to resemble Monmouth, helps Rhodophil to establish the rightful heir to the throne. His "reform" is achieved by his understanding of his rightful place at the court as a loyal subject.

The messenger interrupting the libertines' witty repartee reminds the audience and the libertines of these weightier issues of kingship, which underscore the mock-battle waged between Doralice and Melantha. Like the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, which features four critics who debate dramatic and poetic forms during the war between England and the Netherlands, Doralice and Melantha's battle of wit occurs on the precipice of an actual war as well, where the stakes are raised to life and death. Dryden links the battles of wit with the battles of war for a specific purpose—to demonstrate that wit interacts with the cultural, political, and social events that shape language, meaning, and the theater. He argues in his Preface to *An Evening's Love* that comedy imitates the "humours, adventures, and designs as are to be found and met with in the world" (146). Though instruction is only comedy's secondary purpose, as pleasing the audience is the poet's chief aim, Dryden states that "if he works a cure in folly" the writer does so

to amend what is ridiculous in our manners...But, lest any man should think I...make libertinism amiable, or that I cared not to debase the end and institution of comedy so I might thereby maintain my own errors, and those of better poets, I must further

declare, both for them and for myself, that we make not vicious persons happy, but only as Heaven makes sinners so; that is, by reclaiming them first from vice. For so 'tis to be supposed they are, when they resolve to marry; for then enjoying what they desire in one, they cease to pursue the love of many. (152)

Nevertheless, the poet, which Dryden likens to a “gunsmith or watchman” must provide laughter in comedy and “concernment in a serious play” (155), which implies both tragedy and heroic drama. Dryden, of course, is challenged to do both in *Marriage A-la-Mode*, since he blends heroic, tragic, and comic modes and their goals together in this tragicomedy, performed the same year he writes this Preface.⁴²

Doralice and Melantha’s battle of wit allows him to achieve both ends since their definitions of wit not only reflect the political conflict that will interrupt their mock-battle, but also the hybrid purposes that Dryden wants to achieve through the intermixing of comic with tragic modes—a feature of tragicomedy that Milton dismisses as a poetical error in his Preface to *Samson Agonistes*, also published in 1671. Robert Markley argues that Dryden felt ambivalent about writing a “low” form like comedy and that tragicomedy helped him to “define comedy as one half of a dialectic, a realm of wit that remains stylistically distinct from the self-consciously serious world of love and honour” (88-9). More importantly, Dryden can offer “two sets of assumptions...to account for his and his audience’s conflicting responses to social and political experience” (Markley 89). Michael McKeon suggests that the comic and tragic are distinct and not easily resolved, though a “dialectical unity” holds them together through the thematic contradictions (162), and Derek Hughes examines the relationship between a different but related

⁴² Laura Brown argues against the resolution of comedy with romance based on the conventions of tragicomic form.

binary, private and public, suggesting that it is public knowledge that makes possible the world of the private in the play (“The Unity of Dryden’s *Marriage à la Mode*”). Canfield explains that Restoration tragicomedy’s primary concern remains “ethical, particularly sexual relations and the problem of constancy.” The form typically prevents sexual outcomes that threaten the succession of lawful heirs (Canfield “The Ideology of Restoration Tragicomedy” 448).

While the endings fulfill both aesthetic purposes for comedy and tragedy that Dryden defines in his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* and his Preface to *An Evening’s Love*, the potential for political and marital disillusionment compromises any concrete resolution, which is achieved formally but not thematically, since the play only loosely contains these problems. It does not entirely suppress them, as both Leonidas’s restoration and each couple’s marriage appear tenuous. Rhodophil describes his marriage to Doralice as “a kind of Heathenish life” that “does not answer the ends of marriage” (3.1 67-8), but Doralice explains that

Our Husbands think it reasonable to complain, that we are the same, and the same to them, when we have more reason to complain, that they are not the same to us. Because they cannot feed on one dish, therefore we must be starv’d. ’Tis enough that they have a sufficient Ordinary provided, and a Table ready spread for ’em: if they cannot fall to and eat heartily, the fault is theirs; and ’tis pity, me-thinks, that the good creature should be lost, when many a poor sinner would be glad on’t. (4.3.86-95)

In this passage, Doralice explains the consequences of an absent husband, or adultery. She condemns Rhodophil for his lack of sexual attention to her in a way that makes use of religious and sexual language metaphorically rendered as a kind of profane

communion whereby the ingestion of the bread and wine, open to all believers in a protestant tradition, becomes the open ordinary, with food functioning as a metaphor for sexual appetite. Doralice's body becomes a sign for irreligious sexual freedom that is at once libertine and anti-libertine, since she ultimately argues that Rhodophil should stay home with his wife to fulfill his appetite, particularly as others would gladly take his place at the ordinary.⁴³ It is a strange argument for marital fidelity that contradicts her early argument for "open" marriage, one that Dryden endorses because her sexual need also represents the kind of necessary life-producing impulse that Lucretius attaches to Venus, a contradictory figure like Doralice. Doralice's needs must be fulfilled physically if for no other reason than to produce children, which she and Rhodophil lack.

Though Epicurus does not classify sexual fulfillment as a basic need like air or water, Lucretius argues in book four that humans need a physical outlet for bodily satisfaction primarily because humans are composed of moving atoms and seeds that require an outlet for this energy. In this way, Dryden authorizes Doralice's longing as a natural one that, without fulfillment from Rhodophil, could lead to adultery with Palamede's attentions. Rhodophil's description of their "Heathenish life" that "does not answer the ends of marriage" points out that they have not yet produced heirs, but Dryden gives Doralice the last words in this debate, which blame Rhodophil for his neglect. If he would "feed on one dish," she argues, he will answer those "ends of marriage," or

⁴³ The contradiction focuses attention on the thematic oppositions, which Dryden leaves unresolved. According to Eric Rothstein and Frances M. Kavenik, they fall into the categories of play/sincerity, choice/authority, and reason/passion. These binaries reflect the dual plot (Rothstein and Kavenik 155) and allow the audience to react and assess the characters for themselves (Rothstein and Kavenik 161).

children, and perhaps achieve the friendship, peace, and stability that Dryden suggests is necessary to the home and to the state.

Dryden contrasts Rhodophil, who ostensibly reforms by the end, with Leonidas, who recalls Charles II because he moves from peasant to heir several times in the play. When Rhodophil restores Leonidas to throne, he must lose his libertine qualities and become more like Leonidas by vowing faithfulness to a disbelieving Doralice, who threatens infidelity if Rhodophil strays: “I will adde but one *Proviso*, That who ever breaks the League, either by war abroad, or by neglect at home, both the Women shall revenge themselves, by the help of the other party” (5.1.364-66). Her language, now contractual, reflects her desire to become more seriously engaged in pursuing a libertine lifestyle if Rhodophil does not live up to his end of the bargain. Instead of raptures of love or pastoral songs, Doralice speaks of a proviso and of war—much like a treaty between two warring countries. Her warning is clear: if Rhodophil cannot maintain his part of the treaty, then their union will dissolve. Their marital agreement, now predicated on mutual desire, rests on Rhodophil’s performing his duties to Doralice, and in this way, Rhodophil must restore and keep order domestically in the same way that he restores it politically.

Doralice’s “proviso” to Rhodophil’s promise gestures towards possible future unhappiness, which the comedic ending should prevent, but neither couple’s marital stability seems assured. Palamede might equally vow constancy to Melantha, but he continues to desire Doralice, as he promises to “watch [her] hourly, as [he] would the ripeness of a Melon...to see if [she is] not ready to be cut yet” (5.1.285-7). Palamede’s

invitation to Doralice is laden both with sexual and satiric suggestions that compromise his faithfulness to Melantha. And Melantha, once she attains a place in the new court, “can be no longer ridiculous; for she is young enough, and pretty enough, and fool enough, and *French* enough, to bring up a fashion there to be affected” (5.1. 503-5). In short, she will make foolishness the fashion, as Melantha will not change—the fashion will. Perhaps this is Dryden’s darkest and most humorous moment in the play. Even as the play works within a tradition of satire, it acknowledges its own failure to engender change because the targets are themselves so unstable. The potential tragedy lies in the possible consequences of such failure, which cannot correct or prevent the influence of Melantha’s foolishness and false wit. Nor can it prohibit Doralice from making or keeping her proviso to Rhodophil’s contract. These influences, Dryden suggests, are too widespread, too dangerous, and too fashionable among women like Melantha, who, as Palamede warns, will “bring up a fashion there.”

Throughout his career, Dryden shows suspicion in his writings, even aggression, towards sexually alluring women, particularly ones at court. In his translation of book four of Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* in *Sylvae*, “Concerning the Nature of Love,” Dryden includes misogynistic representations of women, elaborating on their vanity, affectation, and materialism. In Dryden’s version, town women become pernicious, seductive creatures who cast “Nets of Love” over men, who “to a Woman will enslave their life” (85). And in a letter written to George Etherege on February 16, 1687, Dryden not only shows a weariness with court life, but also a scornful attitude towards women: “for every man hates every man perfectly, & women are still the same Bitches” (27).

Several years later, in 1693, Dryden translated Juvenal's bitter sixth satire on women, for which he nevertheless presents an argument defending English women and providing a reason for translating the satire:

Whatever his Roman ladies were, the English are free from all his imputations. They will read with wonder and abhorrence the vices of an age which was the most infamous of any on record. They will bless themselves when they behold those examples related of Domitian's time; they will give back to antiquity those monsters it produced, and believe, with reason, that the species of those women is extinguished, or, at least, that they were never here propagated... That they are imperious, domineering, scolding wives; set up for learning, and criticism in poetry; but are false judges: love to speak Greek (which was then the fashionable tongue, as French is now with us).

The same might apply to the town ladies at court. The distinction in this passage is important because it shows that Dryden views the sexually promiscuous Roman wives as pernicious and vicious embodiments of false values. The Roman ladies, speaking Greek, are suggestive of the English ladies who speak French and affect French manners, despite Dryden's freeing English women from all "imputation." Susanna Morton Braund argues that "Safe sex is his preferred mode" in "dealing with Juvenal" (139), whose sixth satire Dryden waters down in a less racy translation of the Roman wives' nymphomania. His purpose there, I think, is to focus less on the actual sex itself, which could be attractive to the reader, and more on the consequences of the women's adultery. Dryden critiques Juvenal in the *Argument of the Sixth Satyr* for his maliciousness towards women, who he argues would likely become offended. His translation reveals that there is no real "safe sex" for wives.

When Dryden depicts Melantha's influence at court, he describes her in terms not unlike his satiric portrayals of Roman women in Juvenal's satire or of women in his translation of the fourth book of Lucretius in *Sylvae*, in which he concentrates on town ladies:

their frugal Fathers gains they mis-employ,
 And turn to Point, and Pearl, and ev'ry female toy.
 French fashions, costly treats are their delight;
 The Park by day, and Plays and Balls by night.
 In vain (86)

Palamede's prediction of Melantha's future behavior at court reinforces this kind of satiric portrait of women like her, both French and English, at the court in the 1670s. Dryden extends these kinds of depictions in his later translations from Lucretius and Juvenal, where he offers a bleaker view of the married town lady.

Dryden elaborates on the destructive outcome of marriage in his translations of Lucretius, arguing that lovers "break th'involving Net" (88) because they cannot remain faithful. Such an understanding of marriage and inconstant partners complicates Rhodophil's last speech in the Epilogue to *Marriage A-la-Mode*, where he asserts: "*Thus have my Spouse and I inform'd the Nation, / And led you all the way to Reformation*" (ll. 1-2). None of the couples seem to love their partners with a constant, ideal love. They speak to one another in French rather than English by the end of the play, requiring that the audience understand French to understand their repartee and indicating that Dryden targets French audience members like K roualle and town ladies and fops speaking French to impress the court.

Melantha shares the same attributes with Rochester's town lady in "A Letter From Artimisia in the Town to Chloe in the Country," composed and circulated in 1675. Though Harold Love has argued that Dryden is "pro-Town and Rochester is anti-Town" (37), Dryden ridicules the town values represented by Melantha, and his perspective is not as different from Rochester's as Love has argued; indeed, Dryden's treatment of Melantha in the play suggests, in the end, that she will refashion the court. Rochester's perspective on the town, voiced through Artimisia, laments its destructive potentialities, which Rochester, in other poems, can both uphold as true pleasure (typically for debauched and debauching men) and deride, particularly in women like the destructive Corinna. Melantha bemoans that she is "turn'd into *ridicule* by all that see [her]" (3.1.149-150), yet she nevertheless can "begin to value [her] self again, and to despise...Country-acquaintance" (3.1.150-151) when she has "been once or twice at Court" (3.1.150). She begins to see herself as a court lady, but Doralice reminds her that the "Town-lady...is laugh'd at in the Circle" (3.1. 157). Melantha might impress the "Merchants Wife, whom she laughs at for her kindness" (3.1. 159-160), but she does not impress the court "Circle," which initially rebuffs her. Though Melantha joins in the general derision of the "meer Town-Lady" (3.1.107), Artemis reminds her that she is not part of the "Circle" yet and advises her "to quit the Court, and live either wholly in the Town; or, if [she] like not that, in the Country" (3.1. 118-119).

By Act Four, however, Doralice must renew her attack on Melantha's pretentious frivolity, which, while merry and diverting, represents false wit, or the "Leaf-gold of wit" (4.3. 146) signified humorously by her practicing the new French expressions she will

use later at court. Doralice's defense of English wit voices Dryden's concern that it could become entirely overtaken by French tastes, yet her ridicule of Melantha demonstrates that she cannot consider her just as a "meer Town Lady" to be dismissed anymore, particularly since Rhodophil appears more interested in her than in his wife. After she discovers that her husband secretly courts Melantha, Doralice begins to see that the influence of town values represented by Melantha are becoming more attractive to the "Circle," an influence Dryden also describes in the dedication to Rochester, whom he distinguishes from the fools at court.

Canfield argues that words become as interchangeable and meaningless as the obscured ideals of constancy, duty, and loyalty (*Word as Bond in English Literature from the Middle Ages to the Restoration* 67-8), and Robert D. Hume reminds readers that Dryden's audience misunderstood the play's subplot by reacting only to its sexual focus (*The Rakish Stage* 209).⁴⁴ The comedic plot ultimately confirms that Melantha, who embodies false language, influences the court, which, as Palamede describes it, is "very aiery, with abundance of noise, and no sense" (5.1.219-221), and Dryden creates the sense of irrationality, even meaningless existence more darkly in the heroic plot, where Leonidas reminds the audience that "Fortune, once more, has set the ballance right: / First, equall'd us, in lowness; then, in height" (4.4.31-2), or that power rests on Fortune, which was, for Dryden, "the power which upsets human serenity" (Hammond "Dryden's Philosophy of Fortune" 669). All the characters, not just Leonidas and Palmyra, "have so long, like Gamesters, thrown, / Till Fate comes round, and gives to each his own"

⁴⁴ See also Canfield's discussion of the play's language in "The Ideology of Restoration Tragicomedy," pp. 457-60.

(4.4.33-34). Leonidas's uncertain status between two very different fortunes indicates the illusoriness of any stability, even in kingship, and points directly to Charles's own ambiguous status during the interregnum.⁴⁵

The images of gambling equally represent the vagaries of fortune and the court's dependence on it, and William Empson notes the irony of Dryden's linguistic use of "die" in the play (47-8). The king, court wits, mistresses, and the "middling sort of Courtiers" (222) were all noted gamblers, literally and politically casting their lots, often to the detriment of the country, as Monmouth's unwise gamble for the throne later demonstrated. Argaleon, in disgrace, curses his fortune in Act Five, and Polydamus, perhaps the bleakest character, offers the darkest answer in the entire play: "So blind we are, our wishes are so vain, / That what we most desire, proves most our pain" (4.2. 82-3). Such a statement directly reflects Dryden's later translation of Lucretius's second book in *Sylvae*, in which he argues that we are

Bewilder'd in the Maze of Life, and blind;
 To see vain fools ambitiously contend
 For Wit and Pow'r; their lost endeavors bend
 T'outshine each other, waste their time and health,
 In search of honour, and pursuit of wealth.
 O wretched man! in what a mist of Life,
 Inclos'd with dangers and with noisie strife,
 He spends his little Span; And overfeeds
 His cramm'd desires, with more than nature needs. (56-7)

⁴⁵ As Braverman reminds readers, "the political control which Leonidas ultimately reasserts at the end of the play is illusory, the result of feminine self-exclusion rather than patriarchal mastery" (100).

What Dryden wanted to achieve, as Hammond argues, is “the attitude of mind which frees a man from what he came to see as servile dependence on Fortune” (770). None of the characters in the play, however, seem capable of avoiding it, even the ones who follow classical ideals. The wheel of fortune affects everyone, even characters like Amalthea, who suffers despite her virtue, and this the satire because it presupposes that all concrete answers remain subject to the whims of fortune that Dryden wanted to escape but could not. After all, as Palamede asserts, “Methinks we move and talk just like so many over-grown Puppets” (4.1. 132-3). The same might be said for the Stuarts, “overgrown” with self-deluding myths that eventually would destabilize—again—in 1685, the year Charles dies and Dryden publishes his translated selections of Lucretius. It would finally collapse in 1688, the year James II was deposed. Though the play ends happily, the potential for tragedy helps Dryden to convey a message to Charles II and his court—that fortune might once again turn against the Stuarts, as it would for Charles’s brother, James II. What Dryden suggests, as a remedy, follows a classical prescription for pleasure: remain constant to ideals of duty, humility, and self control. One cannot control fortune, but one can control the self.

Dryden provides ambiguous models of reform in the play that counter the debauched lifestyle actually embodied by libertines like Charles II, Monmouth, or Rochester, the undoubted libertine inspiration for the witty repartee in the play. Dryden’s relationship with Rochester eventually became strained and broke off entirely by early 1676. Rochester circulated a satire primarily written about Dryden, “An Allusion to Horace, the Tenth Satyr of the First Book,” when John Sheffield, Earl of Musgrave,

Rochester's enemy, became Dryden's patron in 1675. Writers aligned themselves either on the Dryden-Musgrave side or on the Rochester-Shadwell side, and this kind of antagonism defined the literary "war" permeating the decade of the 1670s, when satire, wit, and libertinism was at its height, and when physically violent acts by libertines became an outward manifestation of satire's tradition of abusing the body. Libertinism, as a rebellious game played by aristocrats, articulated the greatest class difference between Dryden and Rochester and between Dryden and other dramatists like Etherege, whose play, *The Man of Mode*, features another female libertine who both embodies the growing maliciousness of the literary "war" among writers and calls into question the foundations of masculine libertine privilege and misogyny.⁴⁶ The female libertines both in Dryden's play and in Etherege's show that this figure is a socially unstable force that challenges prevailing power structures, and in the next chapter I will examine how she employs language to disrupt the male libertine's assumption of privilege.

⁴⁶See Turner's chapter on "inversionary wit" in *Libertines and Early Modern Radicals* for a discussion about the kinds of libertine "wars," pp. 197-251.

CHAPTER III
ETHEREGE'S HARRIET AND THE 'PLEASURE OF PLAY'

In the last chapter, I discussed Dryden's interest and support for Epicurean ideas about tranquility, self control, and moderation in relation to his fears about the stability of Charles II's restoration. I argued that his attack on the female libertines in *Marriage A-la-Mode* resulted from the danger that Dryden attached to this subversive figure, which he modeled, in part, on Charles II's court mistresses, who were often seen as threats because they sought political influence. Dryden's audience included Rochester, known for his excesses and wit, and both characteristics inspired Dryden's play, which nevertheless advocates moderation as a classical ideal. Though Dryden flatters Rochester, an ironic ideal of Epicurean equipoise, in the dedication, he was not always Rochester's supporter, and their differences helped to spark the literary "war" between court wits, which became more vicious as the 1670s progressed, culminating in Dryden's unfavorable depictions of Shadwell in *Mac Flecknoe* (written between 1676-1677) and of Rochester in the Preface to *All for Love* and *An Essay Upon Satire*. Rochester and several other wits likely wrote the attack on Dryden in *Advice to Apollo* (written 1677). These exchanges led up to Dryden's physical beating in 1679, which was possibly instigated by Rochester and Portsmouth, though the editors of *Poems on Affairs of State* include a longer list of candidates drawn from the targets in the satire: Charles II, Portsmouth, Rochester, Shaftesbury, and Pembroke (396).

The libertine “war” was waged in multiple forms, through literal acts of violence that Rochester figuratively depicts in his verse, through blatant satires abusive of the king and his mistresses, and through plays that featured aggressive libertine characters. As James Turner has shown, the Restoration saw upper class debauchees enacting outrageous performances, which included public exhibitions of nudity and perversions, violent mutilations, mock religious ceremonies, and property destruction, not to mention strange instances of public defecation.⁴⁷ Images of Hobbesian warfare permeate the libertine literature and acts of this decade, with poems like Rochester’s “The Disabled Debauchee” celebrating the kind of extravagant irreligious behavior that inspired onstage adaptations of debauched libertines by Wycherley, Etherege, and Behn, among others, who present versions of characters like Rochester in their plays. *The Man of Mode* best represents the staging of the libertine “war” of the mid-1670s. It examines the kind of disruptive libertine values that Dryden ultimately condemns in *Marriage A-la-Mode*, and it became the standard by which later writers, including Addison and Steele, based their attack on the immorality of the Restoration theater.

Etherege’s play concentrates on malice as an expression of power that emerges through battles of wit between characters, providing a notable example of what Steele describes in *Spectator* 65 (1711) as “the Ruin of Virtue and Innocence” and “Nature in its utmost Corruption and Degeneracy” (368). The play primarily ridicules fools like Sir Fopling Flutter, a literary descendant of Dryden’s Melantha, and cast-off mistresses like

⁴⁷ Though Turner spends more time discussing the 1660s, much of this behavior continued in the 1670s’ “porno-political” culture (*Libertines and Early Modern Radicals* 171), which I would argue culminated in violent political rebellions waged by libertines like Monmouth at the end of the decade. See especially pages 170-181 on the court participation in bawdy carnivaleque behavior.

Mrs. Loveit. It features a female libertine, Harriet, whose interrogation of authoritative figures, institutions, and symbols, including libertine ones, demonstrates the complex way in which these figures not only engaged in the literary “war” occurring during the mid 1670s but also modified the parameters of the conflict, which was predicated on contradictory libertine values of freethinking and free living as long as these practices did not extend to women or the lower classes. She challenges a decidedly masculine libertine culture that could revel in antiauthoritarianism and also continue to objectify women, most often seeing mistresses as tiresome whores and wives as estates.

Critics have often seen Harriet either as a witty, sophisticated, and relatively harmless character or as an impetus for Dorimant’s moral reform, but this chapter will look at her as a subversive character whose libertinism disrupts gender-specific social codes for women.⁴⁸ Pat Gill summarizes critics’ views on the heroine in Restoration comedy, which range from looking at her as an addition to the rake hero in skepticism, “naturalistic” desires, wit, and even libertinism to ones that insist on her “many orthodox qualities,” which the hero “appreciat[es],” and she includes Harriet among these heroines. Laura Brown’s view of Harriet sees her as a “reward” (45) for Dorimant, the “damned libertine” (46) condemned morally and socially through satire but reformed because of his love for Harriet, which Brown suggests is “fundamentally different from his relationships with Loveit and Bellinda,” despite his affair with the latter while wooing Harriet (28-65). And Lisa Bergland takes a similar view as Brown does, acknowledging

⁴⁸ See, for example, Norman Holland’s view of the “reformed rake” in his chapter on *The Man of Mode*, in which he reduces the play as “nothing more nor less than the old sentimental story of the rake reformed, indeed redeemed, by the love of a good woman” (94). Holland’s analysis of Dorimant and Harriet relies on the “reformed rake” process, though he argues that Harriet occupies a position not unlike Mrs. Loveit’s.

Harriet's libertine language only as a means for her to provide "honesty in indirection, and virtue beneath a vizard" (369-386). While I agree that Harriet never strays from her "purity" at least in sexual conduct, Etherege consistently presents her as a duplicitous character. Harriet calls into question the foundation of the male libertine's assumptions of power, which is ironically invested in the very aristocratic privilege that libertines often rebelled against, by evaluating and rejecting its misogyny. Despite her country upbringing, at which she scoffs, Harriet understands the patriarchal nature of libertinism and seeks to upset it, producing a nervous reaction in Dorimant, who becomes both attracted to and fearful of Harriet's challenge to his identity.

Harold Weber persuasively argues that women participated in a libertine culture and sexual identity that threatened masculine power, but Harriet's expression of libertinism is concerned less with sexual promiscuity—those women are most often made powerless, even ridiculous in the play—and more with disrupting social and religious practices.⁴⁹ Her character articulates another movement cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the primary one attached to libertinism, or religious freedom, conceived broadly from "free-thinking" to a "disregard of moral restraint, especially in relations between the sexes" and "a knowledge of the world, a knowledge of human nature." Harriet appears to have this knowledge. She anticipates the "freethinking" associations with libertinism, employing irreligious language in her repartee with Dorimant that often borders on blasphemy. In this way, Harriet brings to mind Rochester's often satiric treatments of religious language and doctrine, yet she employs irreligious language to

⁴⁹ According to Weber, this sexuality is rooted in superstitious beliefs that tie women's erotic powers to witchcraft; see pages 130-178.

scorn Dorimant's assumption of religious-like power over others, particularly Mrs. Loveit. She demonstrates a libertine contempt for authoritative figures that would restrict her behavior, beginning with her mother and ending with her would-be husband, who does not truly love her, as he claims, but sees her as an attractive fortune to repair his estate.

Etherege's Harriet resembles Rochester's Artimisia in "A Letter From Artimisia in the Town to Chloe in the Country," but Harriet tests the class and gender based assumptions of libertine power that real-life and stage representations of Rochester, like Dorimant, had come to embody by the mid 1670s. Her attack on Dorimant is equally one on the libertine identity that he symbolizes, and it is through Harriet's irreverent and subversive wit that Etherege can playfully satirize the perceptions of libertine power signified by Rochester's actual and poetic personae. Her evaluation of the male libertine identity anticipates Behn's continuing assessment and ultimate rejection, by the middle of the 1680s, of libertine exclusivity and antifeminism, which, in many of Behn's plays and novellas, leave women powerless. Harriet struggles against this, articulating the female libertine's desire for a truly free existence, yet her performances allow her to mask this desire.

Harriet's first introduction in the play is as a masked woman in the theater, and the mask is a symbol for the self-fashioning language that nearly all libertines in this era employed to create their identities. The Orange-Woman, who gossips about Harriet with Dorimant in Act One, reminds him that he has seen "a mask" (1.1.69) at the New Exchange. This "mask" is Harriet, already concealed and perhaps calculating, since, as

the Orange-Woman says, she “acted with head and with her body so like” Dorimant (1.1.72-3). By adopting a mask, Harriet treads dangerous lines, since “masks” were often prostitutes selling themselves to buyers. Though Medley includes virtue in his list of Harriet’s attributes, which also consist of wealth, beauty, wit, malice, delicacy, and finally, a “wild” nature masked beneath “demureness” (1.1.162-3), Harriet’s wildness is a characteristic often applied to libertines, and she always reminds the audience that her virtuous role is a performance—one of many that she employs to manipulate the parameters of a system that expects her to marry. She frequently lies to control her world, consenting to marry Young Bellair in a duplicitous act crafted to deceive her mother and to move her into fashionable town circles. Her performances become like so many masks that she adopts and sheds when she needs them.⁵⁰

John Spurr explains that masks and masquerades were popular in the 1670s, as were counterfeit characters, with figures like Rochester adopting actual masks for real life performances and figurative ones for the libertine characters populating his poetry (110-11). Women’s wearing of masks created some confusion about their class status, since women adopting masks, like Harriet, could be prostitutes or virtuous women hiding their blushes (Spurr 112). The culture of instability that Spurr characterizes as the “masquerading age” of the 1670s is most pronounced in Harriet’s character. She looks wild and natural, coming to London with seeming experience and exercising agency in a

⁵⁰ Terry Castle’s book on masquerade in the eighteenth century, which gives particular attention to fiction, ultimately sees the masquerade as a brief but liberating experience in which women could, while the masquerade lasts, free themselves from sexual, cultural, and social restraints. Harriet’s participation in the masquerade is not, however, the kind of ideal picture of total liberty that Castle imagines in later literary depictions of the masquerade because it does not imagine the erased boundary between the self and other through love (109). Instead, it sees love as a disease that distances characters, confining rather than liberating them.

way that undermines the audience's expectations of her character. Etherege presents Harriet as a character who blurs the line between virtue and vice. Given her desire to play tricks and deceive, Harriet seems entirely unlike the virtuous young lady, yet she must create and sustain an illusion of propriety, which becomes perhaps her most elaborate mask.⁵¹ The "real" Harriet constantly changes her masks, which become signs of her subversion in the play. Her performances appear ambiguously treated by Etherege, who might critique and even reject the pretentious Sir Fopling, the overly passionate Mrs. Loveit, or even the god-like perceptions of Dorimant, but he cannot, finally, find a place for Harriet. Etherege leaves the meaning of Harriet's character and its purposes unresolved, and her libertinism represents a socially unstable force that threatens masculine authority in a way that Etherege appears unable either to denounce or endorse.

Libertines, by testing the dominant culture in which they belong, invoke what Bakhtin has described in *Rabelais and His World* (1965), has described as the as carnival, which upsets normative cultural expectations by making use of visual spectacles and comedic and abusive language, but with one important revision. Whereas Bakhtin's theory presupposes that the lower classes ridicule the church and the reigning aristocracy, liberating them from social inequality, in the Restoration, it is the aristocratic libertines who overturn hierarchies, paradoxically subverting and relying on a stable class system to give them a license to rebel. Bakhtin, though he concentrates more on fiction, also links

⁵¹ Rose A. Zimbardo takes a different view of Harriet, seeing her as a natural character and one that, in Jonsonian style, holds a mirror to nature, reflecting what she encounters (384). And yet, Harriet's masks disprove the "corrective" (385) component to her character that Zimbardo argues is her true intention for Dorimant.

comedy with the world of carnival, which relies on satire and parody because of its antiauthoritarian impulses.

Etherege's comedy, indeed much of the literature of the 1670s, loosely corresponds to the basic idea of Bakhtin's theory because the comic libertine mode of the 1670s mocks religious, social, and political hierarchies, frequently mixing the sacred with the profane. Following Turner's idea that "libertinism was not so much a philosophy as a set of performances" (*Libertines and Early Modern Radicals* x), this chapter will look at Harriet's irreligious language and rejection of social norms as performances, which do not reflect the "popular libertinism" that Evelyn describes or the pornographic literature that Turner examines, namely, *The Whores Rhetorick*, *L'Escole des filles*, *The Poor Whores' Petition*, *Venus in the Cloister*, or *The Parliament of Women* (xvi). Instead, Etherege emphasizes her distance from the whore, represented, in this play, by Mrs. Loveit, a powerless character that reinforces rather than challenges Dorimant's authority. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of *The Man of Mode* verges on the chaos of the carnival that both Turner and Bakhtin describe because it insistently mixes high with low culture.

The Orange-Woman provides a description of the heroine to the hero, the shoemaker acts like his aristocratic master, and the fool, Sir Fopling, believes he sets trends, providing a visual spectacle by his exaggerated dress, language, manners, and dancing, symbolically represented by his wearing a mask, which women wear also, in Act Four. He asks Harriet if "women [are] as fond of a vizard as we men are" (4.1. 225-6), and she replies that she is "very fond of a vizard that covers a face [she] does not like" (4.1.227-8). Presumably, the face is Sir Fopling's, which everyone recognizes despite his

mask, but Harriet seems not to like the face she ought to wear, or that of the virtuous young lady from the country. She relies on gambling metaphors, double entendres, and irreligious language to communicate with her potential husband. She tests her mother and Dorimant along with the cultural expectations that look to her, rather than to Dorimant, to reform from her rebellious tendencies after she marries. The carnivalesque seeks to destroy the dominant powers controlling culture, and those on the margins articulate this resistance because carnival overturns hierarchies and gives an otherwise marginalized group a voice. Harriet becomes one such voice, which speaks in a performative, transgressive world that destabilizes the social order. It is because her role is unstable and unclear, however, that it cannot be integrated into the dominant society at the close of the play, when she must return to the country after the “carnival,” which only temporarily upsets the dominant status quo, has ended. She is neither whore nor virtuous young woman, and what she appears to represent is the shifting nature of carnival itself, articulating the difficulty that writers had in resolving the questions raised by female libertine figures.

Etherege contrasts her character with Mrs. Loveit, a more clearly defined character meant to resemble real-life female libertines, like the more visible and prominent court mistresses, Cleveland and Portsmouth, who were, by the mid 1670s, favorite satiric butts of court wits. They offered the kind of visual spectacle that Bakhtin describes in the atmosphere of the carnivalesque, and they presented a challenge to the

dominant Protestant society threatened by their sexuality and their Catholic religion.⁵² Rochester often rebuked them, sometimes playfully and sometimes more pointedly. In a poem written in late 1675 or January 1676, “Dialogue,” he features four speakers, Nell Gwyn, Portsmouth, Charles II, and the People, who respond with frustration at the king and at the infighting between the mistresses. Both Gwyn and Portsmouth damn the newly arrived Duchess of Mazarin: “Now heavens preserve our faith’s defender / From Paris plots and Roman cunt; / From Mazarin, that new pretender” (ll. 13-15). Rochester links Portsmouth and Mazarin, but not Nell Gwyn, with the disruptive potentials that underlie the environment of the “carnival.” The comparison directly parallels the Catholic mistresses’ sexual agency with England’s compromised political position and its possible subjugation to France and to Catholicism, which the king, or the “faith’s defender,” must guard against.

In a similar poem, *Britannia and Raleigh* (1674-5), John Ayloffe, perhaps with the help of fellow poet Andrew Marvell, presents the court as a place completely overtaken by foreign influence:

A colony of French possess the court;
Pimps, priests, buffoons i’ th’ privy-chamber sport.
Such slimy monsters ne’er approach a throne
Since Pharoah’s reign, nor so def’d a crown. (25-8)

The atmosphere of “carnival” is rendered destructive to Britannia, where sycophants, fools, and mistresses, “owe / To flatt’ry, pimping, and a gaudy show” (ll. 168-9) put on

⁵² See Turner’s descriptions of and reactions to the royal mistress’s carnivalesque behavior in *Libertines and Early Modern Radicals* 166-174.

by “Carwells [K roualle], Pembrokes, Nells [Gwyn], / Clevelands, Osbornes, Berties, Lauderdale: Popea Messaline, and Acte” (ll. 170-2), all mistresses of Charles II or avaricious mistresses or wives of Roman rulers. Women receive particular attention in the poem since they have corrupted both Charles II and the nation:

But his fair soul, transform'd by that French dame,
 Had lost all sense of honor, justice, fame.
 Like a tame spinster in's seragl' he sits,
 Besieg'd by whores, buffoons, and bastard chits;
 Lull'd in security, rolling in lust,
 Resigns his crown to angel Carwell's trust.
 Her creature Osborne the revenue steals...(117-26)

Marvell writes several poems that link Charles II's weakness to his mistress as well. In his “Upon the King's Freedom of the City” (1674), he satirizes the king's receiving a gold box symbolically holding the freedom of the city, since Charles

Though oft bound to the peace,
 He never would cease,
 But molested the neighbors with quarrels;
 And when he was beat,
 He still made a retreat
 To his Cleveland, his Nells, and his Carwells. (49-54)

Likewise, the satirist of “The Royal Buss” (1675) condemns Charles's proroguing of Parliament, citing French influences, namely Portsmouth, or “Carwell”:

...that incestuous punk,
 Made our most gracious Sovereign drunk,
 And drunk she let him give that buss
 Which all the kingdom's bound to curse;
 And so, red hot with wine and whore,
 He kick'd the Parliament out of door. (65-70)

Satirists frequently linked violent images with the mistresses, and they continued throughout the 1670s and 80s. The Whig satirist of “Queries” (1679) directs the reader to “Banish Italian [Mazarin] and French [Portsmouth] whores, / The worser sort of common shores” (ll. 10-11) because they are “locusts” to be “drive[n]...from our land” (l. 15). He ends by urging “Papists” to renounce the Queen (l. 76) and to “Cloister up fulsome Mazarin” (l. 77), who had escaped a convent after her husband had sent her there to live.

Rochester extends the satire to include debauched town ladies, presented as artificial and cunning women, who sometimes posed violent threats to men easily duped by them. The king, in many poems, appears to be this kind of man, governed, as Rochester indecorously writes in his “A Satyr on Charles II” (written before January 20, 1673/4), by “his prick” (l. 14) and by “buffoons at Court” (l. 15). Rochester also ridiculed Portsmouth in several poems throughout the 1670s. Sometime in the late summer of 1675, Rochester offended Portsmouth and was subsequently banished from court for a time (Vieth xviii). Given the satires he wrote about Portsmouth, including “A Satyr on Charles II,” for which he was banished, or “Dialogue,” it is unsurprising that Charles II would have been angry enough to dismiss him. Rochester seems to have responded to his dismissal by wearing various masks and assuming different identities, performing multiple roles, such as the quack Alexander Bendo, perhaps to parody the gross caricature of the carnivalesque he saw represented at court, which had rejected him for a time. He certainly mimicked what he saw as visual spectacles—fools, knaves, and whores—in his poetry, ridiculing the town in many poems circulated among the court

wits, and Etherege captures the masking culture embodied by Rochester's multiple disguises in the play, along with Rochester's often antifeminist attitudes.

Harriet is a malicious and witty character like Rochester's Artimisia in "Artimisia to Chloe," a poem that includes one of the more misogynistic denunciations of the town ladies, who are likened to whores. Like Artimisia, who disparages these women, Harriet also disdains Mrs. Loveit, a figure similar to Cleveland, whose temper and rages were loud, frequent, and infamous. Mrs. Loveit appears also like Rochester's description of the town lady, who is "ridiculously grown" (l. 97) and might be "bold in the dusk before a fool's dull sight" (l. 121) but should "Should fly when reason brings the glaring light" (l. 122). By the end of the play, Mrs. Loveit does "fly" when Harriet denounces her publicly for the same reason that Artimisia rejects the town lady's affectation and lack of "discretion only" (l. 168). Mrs. Loveit's jealousies and rages have grown wearisome to Dorimant perhaps as much as Cleveland's had to Charles II, who had replaced her with Portsmouth by 1671. Both were somewhat out of favor by 1676. Just a year before, Mazarin had arrived, and it was not at all clear in 1676 who would ultimately become Charles II's favorite mistress, since even the place of Portsmouth appeared less assured. For a brief time, until Charles II tired of Mazarin, it seemed that Portsmouth's quick rise to power was over, or at least greatly diminished, and that Cleveland had no place at all.

Like Mrs. Loveit, Portsmouth's outbursts, tears, and jealousies appear congruent with the "fifty antic postures" (l. 94) of Rochester's town lady. They were targeted by Charles's other mistresses, particularly Gwyn, but also by writers who either humorously depict her struggle with the other mistresses in poems like Edmund Waller's "The Triple

Combat” (1676), a more positive treatment of the royal mistresses, or blame her for the nation’s political problems, like Rochester’s “The Royal Buss” (1673). Rochester’s “Quoth the Duchess of Cleveland to counselor Knight” articulated the now cast-off mistress’s position in the early 1670s at court:

Quoth the Duchess of Cleveland to counselor Knight,
 ‘I’d fain have a prick, knew I how to come by’t.
 I desire you’ll be secret and give your advice:
 Though cunt be not coy, reputation is nice.’
 ‘To some cellar in Sodom Your Grace must retire
 Where porters with black-pots sit round a coal-fire;
 There open your case, and Your Grace cannot fail
 Of a dozen of pricks for a dozen of ale.’
 ‘Is’t so?’ quoth the Duchess. ‘Aye, by God!’ quoth the whore.
 ‘Then give me the key that unlocks the back door,
 For I’d rather be fucked by porters and Carmen
 Than thus be abused by Churchill and Jermyn.’

Rochester lashes out at figures like Cleveland, whose body becomes a grotesque example of sexual excess in the poem. The “abuse” Rochester describes by her lovers represents also the satirist’s rebuke of her that ironically describes her fears for her reputation, which her higher class lovers might taint. Rochester’s circulation of the poem thematically corresponds to her common circulation among men, and he plays on the idea of her taking “porters and Carmen” to bed rather than higher class lovers, who could spoil her “nice” reputation, which was, of course, already sullied, not only by her lovers and her tantrums, but also by poems like Rochester’s that were circulated among court wits.

Mrs. Loveit is a figure not unlike either Portsmouth, who rages, or Cleveland, who is condemned for her easy virtue. Her mind and body are exposed and made ridiculous, providing the same kind of visual spectacle and object of scorn in the play as

Cleveland did at court. Only Sir Fopling, the fool, still wants her. Harriet suggests that she should, as Cleveland was preparing to do, leave the court, where she is made a laughingstock. Even Mrs. Loveit seems aware of this by the end, exclaiming that she “was never so near killing [her]self with laughing” (5.2.302-3). Dryden’s Artemis makes a similar suggestion that Melantha leave the court in *Marriage A-la-Mode*, but Palamede predicts that she will set a fashion at court that Etherege absurdly renders in Sir Fopling’s character, which parallels Melantha. He continues the satiric campaign against the court mistresses who had become the most powerful and the most expensive, or Cleveland and Portsmouth, albeit in less abusive or direct terms as Rochester uses.

Mrs. Loveit’s excessive outbursts, combined with Sir Fopling’s exaggerated reliance on French phrases, dress, and dancing, provide a visual spectacle reminiscent of the carnivalesque, and both characters’ inability to exercise wit is maliciously treated by the gay couple, Dorimant and Harriet. Mrs. Loveit’s lack of wit is directly correlated in the play with her open sexuality and expression of passion, both of which indicate her lack of wit. Though critics have sometimes associated Mrs. Loveit with libertinism, the open expression of the body, for women, is likened to the “open” and “freethinking” mind, which, if too free, could compromise the ability to exercise wit, or that balance between judgment (discretion) and fancy (imaginative freedom). Peter Cryle and Lisa O’Connell remind readers that,

hard as she may try, the libertine woman cannot pass herself off as...a cosmopolitan, a fashionable figure, a charlatan, or even a libertine. This is because the moment she becomes a public woman, her identity is collapsed into her conspicuous sexuality. (11)

Cleveland's and Portsmouth's bodies occasioned satires and derision from court wits circulating verse that made their bodies public, grotesque signs of abhorrent sexual frenzy, and Mrs. Loveit's overexposed body becomes a visible sign that her mind is also "open" and unbalanced. Harriet might act as a free agent beneath her masks, those provocative symbols of subversive desire, but she could not expose her "real" self, as Mrs. Loveit does. Harriet must withhold her body and her thoughts, and her language and appearance are carefully crafted for her performances.

Though depicted as "wild," Harriet's exercise of wit demonstrates that she controls her body and her mind, which provides a striking contrast to Mrs. Loveit's loss of control. Mrs. Loveit often becomes hysterical in the intensity of her harangues, which suggest a stereotype of the illogical, even mad woman. Both Dorimant, who "never know so violent a creature" (1.1.200-1), and Medley describe Mrs. Loveit as "the most passionate in her love and the most extravagant in her jealousy of any woman... ever heard of" (1.1.202-204). Early in the play, Etherege associates Mrs. Loveit with mental and emotional turmoil that emerges in physical manifestations of excessive desire. Her love has grown "diseased" (2.2. 254) as a "torture of a ling'ring and consumptive passion" (2.2.256-7). She is, to Dorimant, now "desperately ill" (2.2.167). Bellinda cautions Mrs. Loveit, who exclaims that she "will tear him [Dorimant]" from her heart "or die i'the attempt" (2.2. 121-2), that she should "Be more moderate" (2.2.123) since her "transports are too violent" (2.2.127), but Mrs. Loveit curses her rival for Dorimant by wishing that they could experience her suffering: "May all the passions that are raised by neglected love—jealousy, indignation, spite, and thirst of revenge—eternally rage in

her soul, as they do now in mine” (2.2.140-143). She screams “Hell and furies!” (2.2.184), tearing her fan, and “growing hot” (2.2.185-6) in her tantrums, all the while weeping and cursing Dorimant by wishing on him that “Horror and distraction seize [his body]” (2.2.187) and that “Sorrow and remorse gnaw [his] soul, and punish all [his] perjuries” (2.2.187-189). In other words, she wishes her mental and emotional “distraction” on Dorimant.

As Christine Battersby explains, the excessiveness of women’s passions and the openness of their minds or bodies were considered as a form of hysteria, one in which the hysterical woman was thought “able to experience only those phantasms created by her own self” (33), which Mrs. Loveit’s “phantasm” of Dorimant as a god reinforces. Interest in a new understanding about the relationship between the body, mind, and spirit during the late seventeenth century occasioned natural histories that concentrated on explaining mental, emotional, and physical manifestations of passionate expression. For example, in Walter Charleton’s *Natural History of the Passions* (1674), he follows Descartes’s descriptions of the passions, looking empirically at the body’s reactions to various sorts of emotions to understand their origins and effects. Charleton helped to generate interest in Epicureanism during the first half of the seventeenth century, as his *Epicurus’s Morals, collected partly out of his own Greek text in Diogenes Laertius, and partly out of the Rhapsodies of Marcus Antoninus, Plutarch, Seneca, and Cicero* (1656) shows. He tries to recuperate the tarnished image of Epicurus, and though his work does not explore atomic theory, it does participate in an ongoing debate about the ethical considerations that the new philosophy provoked and laid the groundwork for later studies that look for

causal relationships between the body, mind, and soul in an empirical context.

Charleton's consideration of the passions in the *Natural History* provides the scientific basis for what would come to be called sensibility, which also looks at the body's physical manifestations of spiritual and emotional distress, particularly as it relates to the nervous system.

Etherege's depiction of Mrs. Loveit considers scientific ideas about the nerves, which were thought more delicate and more acutely responsive to stimuli in women than in men, and Charleton describes, in detail, the effects of the strongest passions, or love and hate, that Etherege examines in Mrs. Loveit's character, held up for derision but also perhaps as a curious scientific specimen that Dorimant provokes, it seems, not only for his amusement but also to see how she will respond to the kinds of passions he raises in her. They range from the deepest feelings of love to those of hate, both of which appear to drive Mrs. Loveit to near madness. He explains to Medley that he has "not had the pleasure of making a woman so much as break her fan, to be sullen, or forswear herself, these three days" (1.1.225-8). He seems to miss seeing the spectacle such a pleasure can provide him. Medley, who "love[s] mischief well enough" (1.1.230) that he could "forward this business" (1.1.230-1) himself, wants also to "set her a-raving...heighten it a little with invention [and] leave her in a fit o'the mother" (1.1.232-4), or a fit meaning hysteria. Medley is nevertheless ill qualified for rousing these passions, since, as Dorimant describes, "The business is undertaken already by one who will manage it with a little more malice" (1.1.237-9), by which he means himself.

Charleton describes the passion of love has having the kind of effects on the “*Animal Spirits*,” which

are like lightning dispatched from the brain by the nerves instantly into the Heart; and by their influx render the pulse thereof more strong and vigorous than is usual, and consequently the circulation of the blood more nimble and expedient...this grateful passion is highly beneficial to all parts of the body, and conduceth much to the conservation of health; provided it continue within the bounds of moderation. But if it exceed them, and break forth into a wild and furious *desire*; then on the contrary, by degrees enervating the members, it at length induceth very great weakness and decay upon the whole body. For, Love accompanied with vehement desire, doth so intirely imploy the Soul in the consideration of the object desired, that she remains in the brain the greatest part of the Spirits, there to represent to her the image thereof: so that the whole stock of nerves, and all the Muscles are defrauded of the influx of Spirits from the brain, with which they ought to be continuously inspired or invigorated. (107-9)

Furthermore, he advises that none should

therefore admire, if many of those Men whom *Lust*, or *Concupiscence*, *Ambition*, *Avarice*, or any other more fervent *desire* hath long exercised and inslaved, be by continual *sollicitude* of mind, brought at length into an ill Habit of body, to leanness, a defect of Nutrition, Melancholy, the Scurvy, Consumption and other incurable diseases. (110)

Dorimant similarly describes Mrs. Loveit as an emotionally diseased woman whose “worse symptoms are...being always uneasy...picking quarrels...and... kindly list’ning to the impertinences of every fashionable fool that talks” (2.2.259-264). The latter, though a false accusation Dorimant uses to rid himself of Mrs. Loveit, nevertheless suggests that she has lost her mental powers of discriminating between fools and wits. Her own declarations that she “could tear [her]self in pieces” (2.2.316) indicates her mental disturbances have overtaken her. Even Sir Fopling finds her “Stark mad” (5.2.462).

Love that is turned to hatred is explained by Charleton as a “disagreeable Passion” that sometimes

is exalted to *Anger*, whereby the Soul, offended with the Evil or wrong she hath suffered, at first *Contracts* herself, and by and by with vehemency *Springs* back again to her natural posture of Coextension with the whole body, as if she strove to break out into revenge: and then it is that the spirits are in a tumultuous manner, and impetuously hurried hither and thither, now from the brain to the heart, then back again from the heart to the brain; and so there follow from these contrary motions alternately reciprocated, as well a violent agitation, palpitation, burning and anxiety of the heart; as a diffusion of the blood, distension of the veins, redness of the face, and sparkling of the eyes (such as may be observed in great indignation, and seems composed of laughter and weeping mixt together) grinding of the teeth, and other symptoms of *Anger* and fury. (112-3)

Such fury, he explains,

hath fired into perpetual *madness*, of others whom it hath fell'd with *Apoplexies*, others whom it hath thrown into *Epilepsies*, rack'd with *Convulsions*, unnerved with *Palseys*, disjointed with the *Gout*, shook with *tremblings*, and the like: but that the books of *Physicians* are full of them. (114)

An almost perfect example of such thinking, Mrs. Loveit screams “Death and eternal darkness” (5.2.347), vowing not to sleep, and hoping that “Raging fevers seize the world and make mankind as restless all as [her]” (5.2.347-349). Her maid Pert pleads for Bellinda not to leave Mrs. Loveit, recognizing that she needs someone to help her mistress through “this outrageous passion” (2.2.321-2) in which she has become the dark, disordered, and nearly mad character that Dorimant and Medley describe in Act One. Though Dorimant believes, in part, that she affects this passion, Mrs. Loveit fulfills his early depiction of her behavior, which he describes in detail to Medley:

She means insensibly to insinuate a discourse of me and artificially raise her jealousy to such a height that, transported with the first motions of her passion, she shall fly upon me with all the fury imaginable as soon as ever I enter. (1.1.262-266)

Dorimant depicts this like a scene in a play in which the hero makes his entrance, confronting the furious, scorned woman who becomes irrational and the embodiment of the hysterical woman that anticipates Bernard Mandeville's later *Treatise of Hypochondriak and Hysterick Passions* (1711), which directly links women with this "nervous" disorder and with George Cheyne's female cases of hysteria in *English Malady: or, A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds, as Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Spirits, Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Distempers, Etc.* (1733).⁵³ Dorimant describes Mrs. Loveit's passions as artificial ones, a "mask" (4.1.386) he would "pluck off" to "show the passion that lies panting under" (4.1.386-7), though he seems actually to raise passions in her. It appears almost as though he were a natural historian experimenting with Mrs. Loveit, who continues to rave even after Dorimant leaves. Even Pert feels exhausted by her mania, arguing against her pursuing Dorimant, if for no other reason, she says to Mrs. Loveit, than for "for my quiet and your own" (5.2.336-7).⁵⁴

Rochester's Artimisia makes a similar distinction between uncontrollable female minds and bodies at the beginning of her letter to Chloe, in which she advises that

Bedlam has many mansions; have a care.
Your muse diverts you, makes the reader sad:

⁵³ Cheyne, of course, was Samuel Richardson's doctor. The two corresponded, influencing Richardson's consideration of nerves in his depictions of sensibility in his novels (Barker-Benfield 7).

⁵⁴ Barker-Benfield's first chapter on "Sensibility and the Nervous System," though it considers more eighteenth-century than seventeenth-century texts, is nevertheless helpful because it examines the relationship between sensibility and the body according to Lockean psychology and Newtonian physics. See especially pp. 1-36.

You fancy you're inspired; he thinks you mad.
 Consider, too, 'twill be discreetly done
 To make yourself the fiddle of the town (ll. 17-21)

Fancy, madness, and discretion, all language suggestive of the mind, equally apply to a woman's body, and Artimisia knows that she "stand[s] on thorns" (l. 31), as does Harriet, understanding the "contradiction and the sin" (l. 30) of the libertine world in which women are judged if they express themselves too openly. Harriet tells Dorimant that "Beauty runs as great a risk exposed at Court as wit does on the stage, where the ugly and the foolish all are free to censure" (4.1. 169-171). She, like the fearful Bellinda, has only to look at Mrs. Loveit to see evidence of the risk of being censured or of falling in love. While Mrs. Loveit has no one to feel for her distress, as all the characters treat her with derision, Behn's heroines begin to look to the audience for sympathy, helping to establish an important link between scientific discourses about the mind, body, and spirit in distress and libertine longings for freedom. These connections become integral to understanding sensibility's early development out of multiple forms, genres, modes, and disciplines, which Behn's explorations of new literary forms help to bring together. In Etherege's play, such demonstrations of passion, because they are so extreme, are held up for scorn.

The connection between the body and the mind is an important one for the libertine, as sexual conquests only function as a sign of power as they are communicated by and to others in this period through wit. Wycherley's *The Country Wife* is one of the most notable theatrical examinations of wit's important role in the libertine's identity in this decade, and the play's central Hobbesian game relies on linguistic tricks paralleled in

sexual ones, both of which nearly unravel by the end. Horner, a master linguistic trickster, merely promulgates a rumor of impotence, and husbands escort him to their wives. His entire identity rests on his ability to exercise wit even more than on sexual performance, which the “women of honour” challenge and undermine.

In their verbal exchanges, Dorimant and Harriet demonstrate their ability to control language by controlling speech, and their power relies on their abilities to negotiate a delicate balance between discretion and openness, both in body and mind, which is another way of saying that judgment, or “masculine” reason must control fancy, or the “feminine” part of the mind. Sir Fopling Flutter’s dress, for example, becomes an outward manifestation of his too-free and too-feminine mind, one that Medly directly compares to a woman’s:

His head stands, for the most part, on one side, and his looks are more languishing than a lady’s when she lolls at stretch in her coach or leans her head carelessly against the side of a box i’ the playhouse. (1.1.425-29)

Etherege links fancy with a mind either out of control and therefore witless, like Mrs. Loveit’s, or with a mind verging on the brink of letting fancy overrun judgment, like Sir Fopling’s, with dress becoming the outward manifestation of wit. Handy tells Dorimant that his “clothes hang just” (1.1.391), and Dorimant responds that he “love[s] to be well dressed...and think it not scandal to...understanding” (1.1.393-4). Young Bellair completes the association between Dorimant’s “understanding” and his “fancy,” or his wit, by arguing that “No man in town has a better fancy in his clothes than you have” (1.1.407-8). In other words, no man has a more apt display of wit expressed outwardly in

his fashion. Unlike Sir Fopling, Dorimant knows when to show judgment, or discretion, which controls fancy, or that *je ne sais quoi*, which, if unchecked, could result in the overly feminine manifestations of dress, language, or emotion, such as hysteria. Even Sir Fopling's excitability suggests an unbalanced representation of his too-feminine mind.

When Dorimant begins his confession of love to Harriet later in the play, he leaves himself open and vulnerable in a way that could compromise his reputation as a wit. She withholds her confessions from Dorimant, who becomes too free with his declarations, earning scorn from Harriet throughout the play because love becomes a kind of feminine disease associated with the effeminate mind and with Mrs. Loveit. Dorimant begins to think that he has caught "the infection from her," and can "feel the disease now spreading" (4.1.184-5). Bellinda, who also falls for Dorimant, begins to look pale and faint when she begins to realize in Act Five that Dorimant does not love her. For Harriet to "catch it" might mean that she becomes a "diseased" and even outcast figure like Mrs. Loveit, since love seems to affect the mind as much as the heart or body. When Dorimant expresses his love to Harriet, he describes it as a "settled ague," one in which he has had "now and then...irregular fits" (4.2.180-1). Harriet warns him to "Take Heed! Sickness after long health is commonly more violent and dangerous" (4.2.182-3). Mrs. Loveit has, after all, provided an example of what it can do to a person.

Dorimant's love, however, is not real but appears like the description that Rochester's Artimisia provides: "that lost thing.../ Since so debauched by ill-bred customs here" (ll. 38-9) and that "arrant trade" (l. 51) that was only once a "generous passion of the mind" (l. 40). Now, it has become a series of "little cheats and tricks" (ll.

53) that Harriet both plays and recognizes in Dorimant, who does not seek a soft refuge in Harriet, but a marriage portion. Any sort of ideal representation of love through language, which might compel Bellinda or Mrs. Loveit, becomes laughable to Harriet, and Dorimant's aside, "I love her and dare not let her know it" (4.1.172-3), suggests his fears of humiliation. Harriet will not listen, even by Act Four, to Dorimant's raptures, and he asks her "Is the name of love so frightful that you dare not stand it?" (4.1.186-7). Harriet, knowing, as Dorimant reminds her, that it can be "fatal" (4.1.190), has seen "some easy women" (4.1.191) fall prey to Dorimant, whom she accuses of laughing at love rather than making it (4.1.191-2). When his "love's grown strong enough to make [him] bear being laughed at" (4.1.204-5), then, she argues, he can "trouble [her] with it" (4.1.206).

Dorimant offers a better description of the libertine's definition and practice of love to Mrs. Loveit: "We are not masters of our own affections; our inclinations daily alter. Now we love pleasure, and anon we shall dote on business. Human frailty will have it so, and who can help it?" (2.2. 169-172). Dryden's Doralice offers a similar argument in her opening song, but unlike Doralice, Dorimant's "declaration" of libertine sensibilities remains disingenuous, since his "natural" pleasure is compromised by his constant calculation. Though Young Bellair declares "never [to have] heard [Dorimant] accused of affectation before" (3.3. 35-6), Harriet accuses Dorimant of being false. Harriet, unlike any other character in the play, implicitly understands Dorimant's false libertine "naturalness," uncovering the natural mask that hides the calculating rake all while enjoying "the pleasure of play" (3.3.58) in their verbal repartee. As Harriet explains

to Young Bellair, for those who lack “temper” (3.3.56), meaning self-control and wit, they might be “undone by gaming” (3.3.56) or the “deep play” (3.3.84) that Dorimant describes to Harriet, whose fortune he hopes to win.

Despite her seeming innocence, Harriet’s wit and knowledge of the “masks and private meetings, where women engage for all they are worth” (3.3.81-3) tests Dorimant, challenging his perceived superiority over women ruined by such “deep play.” When Dorimant quotes from Edmund Waller’s “Of a War with Spain, and a Fight at Sea” and a few lines later, “The Self Banished,” he speaks poetry to woo and conquer, as implied by the aggressive nature of the first poem’s title.

The title of the second poem by Waller, “The Self Banished,” offers a more intriguing view of Dorimant’s progression in the play, as he appears to follow the lines he recites: “It is not that I love you less, / Than when before your feet I lay—” (1.1.30-31). By the end of the play, when Dorimant recites lines eleven and twelve from Waller’s “Of My Lady Isabella, Playing on the Lute,” Harriet answers his “Music so softens and disarms the mind—” (5.2.106) by finishing the couplet, with “That not one arrow does resistance find” (5.2.107). Dorimant believes he can win Harriet as he does Bellinda or Mrs. Loveit by performing the ardent lover, yet she “disarms” his “mind” more than he disarms her heart, suggesting to Young Bellair, who claims that “all [Dorimant] does and says is so easy and so natural” (3.3.30-31), that “Some men’s verses seem so the unskillful, but labor i’ the one and affectation in the other to the judicious plainly appear” (3.3.32-34). After all, as Harriet tells Dorimant, “Do not speak it if you would have me believe it; your tongue is so famed for falsehood, ’twill do the truth injury” (5.2.143-4).

Her recitation of lines she literally takes out of Dorimant's mouth represents one of her most obvious refutations of Dorimant's assumptions that she, like Bellinda or Mrs. Loveit, will fall for his poetic promises.

Instead, Harriet potentially humiliates Dorimant, whose confessions of love presumably leave his mind and heart open to her, and though Harriet knows them to be false, she works off of this assumption because it empowers her.⁵⁵ When Dorimant confesses to Harriet in Act Five, "I will open my heart and receive you where none yet did ever enter. You have filled it with a secret, might I but let you know it" (5.2.140-1), he appears to shed his mask in front of her, signifying that Harriet has "disarmed" his mind in a way that could shame him unless she too confesses her love, which would leave her open to the "disease" that afflicts Mrs. Loveit. She does not make any confessions to Dorimant, despite her seeming preference for him, saying to him, instead, that she "did not think to have heard of love from you" (4.2.177). The world of *The Man of Mode* is one in which love is the kind of delusional, disempowering phantasm that Battersby describes as afflicting hysterical women, not that "softest refuge innocence can find" (l. 41) described in "Artimisia to Chloe." Once Harriet tells Dorimant her feelings, he can control her, and the play ends without his sure knowledge of her love. Harriet knows such declarations can be construed as dangerous expressions of the diseased mind, body, and spirit parodied in Mrs. Loveit's character.

⁵⁵ Derek Hughes proposes a similar outcome in his discussion of Dorimant as a character that must confront the public and the private in the "game" played by masterful wits and serious suitors. In his assessment, this interaction forces Dorimant to confront a more dangerous outcome: humiliation. Harriet first proposes this alternative to Dorimant in Act Four and acts as the catalyst for the "random and unforeseen" (154) in Dorimant's otherwise stable world.

Dorimant's "confession" actually reveals to her his underlying insincerity. Though masked in delicate, intimate language, his expressions of undying devotion conceal what Brian Corman calls his "ruthless pursuit of power over women" (62), and this is what Harriet targets. She does not express her love because, as she explains, "In men who have been long hardened in sin, we have reason to mistrust the first signs of repentance" (5.2; 157-9). She does not believe him even as the play ends, and her religious metaphor suggests that she would as likely believe that Dorimant could repent of his sins as he could of his many mistresses. Dorimant argues that his "soul has quite given up her liberty" (5.2.491), but such language does not fool Harriet, who claims she will only take Dorimant seriously as a potential husband if he follows her to Hampshire. Even then, Harriet declares that his resolution to court her is "more dismal than the country" (5.2.492), ironically suggesting that his raptures of love are outdated, like the country, particularly since most marriages are not based on love but on property and wealth. Harriet's playful response to Dorimant's wooing indicates that she understands the realities of marriage, which could, for women, be "dismal." Though Dorimant's "soul has quite given up her liberty," Harriet gives up everything but her soul's liberty if she marries Dorimant, who would command her person and her property after marriage. Dorimant confesses his "fear" that "sh'as an ascendent o'er [him] and may revenge the wrongs [he has] done her sex" (4.1.173-4). This reveals Dorimant's anxiety that wives, once they trap their husbands, might commit adultery as their "revenge," a suggestion that Rochester's depictions of the town women in "Artimisia to Chloe" also indicates. Though Dorimant specifically casts doubts about Emilia's constancy after marriage, he

provides a dubious view of women's chastity after marriage and one that has serious consequences, since Harriet represents the estate he pursues.⁵⁶

Though Harriet presumably changes her mind after meeting Dorimant, she initially shows resistance to the idea of marriage, arguing to Busy, her maid, that "Women then ought to be no more fond of dressing than fools should be of talking; hoods and modesty, masks and silence, things that shadow and conceal—they should think of nothing else" (3.1.26-30). Harriet thinks of nothing else but "fetches," or tricks, including the one that will "get her up to London" (3.1. 44-5). The "things" in "shadow," or her desires, remain hers throughout the play. She vows to "lay [her]self all out in love" (3.1. 78-9), but given her reliance on "fetches," "laying [oneself] all out in love," a bold statement of private feeling, involves several selves, or several masks, with as many actual and linguistic disguises in tow. When Busy asks Harriet her opinion of a future marriage with Young Bellair, whom her mother has chosen as a suitable husband for her, Harriet provides the first example of her views of prearranged marriages as a type of confinement more endurable than the country, but an endurance nonetheless: "I think I might be brought to endure him, and that is all a reasonable woman should expect in a husband..." (3.1.55-7).

Harriet concludes her remarks to Busy by quoting the character Merab from Abraham Cowley's biblical epic about David, *Davideis*, Book III: "like the haughty

⁵⁶ J. Douglas Canfield takes a different view of marriage in the play, disputing critics like Robert Markley, who contest Raymond Williams's view in *Country and City* that Dorimant and Harriet enjoy a commitment to love by the end of the play that is restored despite their verbal battles (11-16). While Canfield argues that there is a resolution through marriage that reaffirms aristocratic values, as the sexual trickster Dorimant marries his estate, Markley views the play's ending as unresolved, without the libertine "reintegrated" into society (136).

Merab, I 'Find much aversion in my stubborn mind' which 'Is bred by being promised and designed' " (3.1.58-61). Cowley describes Merab's character as one that rebels against rules, and he contrasts Merab with her milder sister Michol, who appears in "comely *Majesty* and *state*" (l. 680). Unlike Michol, "*Merab* rejoyc'd in her wrackt *Lovers* pain, / And fortifi'd her *vertue* with *Disdain*" (ll. 684-685). Whereas Michol appears virtuous and meek, "*Business* and *Power Merabs* large thoughts did vex, / Her *wit* disdain'd the Fetters of her *Sex*" (ll. 690-691). This passage offers the strongest comparison between Merab and Harriet because both women exercise their wit to free themselves from restrictions imposed on them.

Merab has a prideful character akin to Harriet and one that hates "fetters" just as Harriet hates "promises." Merab also employs wit to fulfill her desires rather than those of her father, Saul, by eloping with Adriel, her social inferior, in reaction to the marriage to David, which Saul contrives for her. Like Harriet, she outmaneuvers her parent, though "Her *Pride* debaucht her *Judgment* and her *Eyes*" (ll. 701). As much could be said for Harriet, who contracts another match to avoid one forced on her. Harriet's likeness to a rebellious biblical figure contributes to her overall irreligious characterization as a libertine. By comparing Harriet to Merab, Saul's rebellious "debaught" daughter rather than Michol, her more virtuous sister, Etherege presents Harriet as a character that tests even the highest authorities, since Merab's father is also the king. Though Harriet has not yet met Dorimant, with whom she will fall in love, she never appears eager to marry anyone, even Dorimant, who she knows will likely break his marriage vows. Like many libertines of the 1670s, Harriet shows contempt for the institution even though she

recognizes that she must marry. She will do it, however, on her own terms, not ones set for her by a parent.

One of the greatest attacks on religion and its rites was waged through the libertines' abhorrence for marriage, an institution the king mocked, and one that expected constancy, which restricts sexual freedom. Even mistresses can become as unappealing as wives when they become too attached or expect their lovers to remain faithful. Dorimant promises constancy to Mrs. Loveit, who takes his promise seriously, almost like a marriage vow, but he renounces his commitment to any woman: "Constancy at my years? 'Tis not a virtue in season; you might as well expect the fruit the autumn ripens i' the spring" (2.2.214-6). Mrs. Loveit, however, expects Dorimant to remain faithful and treats his infidelities as a wife would, lamenting his false vows and his relationships with other women. She is ironically made to look like a harping spouse whom Dorimant has difficulty shedding, one not unlike Charles II's mistress Portsmouth, who frequently chastised her lover for his infidelities to her.

Harriet develops her own libertine definition of an ideal relationship that defies rather than embraces such restraint. Her version exists outside of a moral, religious, or social context, and she releases Dorimant from any promise of faithfulness in his love, which remains entirely false, considering that he fulfills his expected rendezvous with Bellinda while he contrives to win Harriet. When "the hour is almost come...appointed with Bellinda..." (4.1.401-2), he is "not so foppishly in love here [with Harriet] to forget" (4.1.402-3) that natural impulses call or, at least, libertine ones. After all, he is "flesh and blood yet" (4.1.403). Dorimant answers Young Bellair's admonishment that he "had best

not think of Mrs. Harriet too much” since “Without church security, there’s no taking up there” (4.3.214-5), with a reply that epitomizes seventeenth-century marital relations: “The wise will find a difference in our fate: / You wed a woman, I a good estate” (4.3.218)—an answer he likewise gives to the angry Mrs. Loveit about his “affection” for Harriet. Unlike Mrs. Loveit or Bellinda, Harriet recognizes Dorimant’s underlying falsity, distrusting his language, which she knows does not reflect his true meaning. She assures Dorimant in Act Five that she will never ask him for constancy, and she rejects Mrs. Loveit for her jealous, excessive behavior, instead endorsing a libertine lifestyle that nevertheless threatens male libertines who marry women like Harriet. Mrs. Loveit cannot tolerate another rival for Dorimant, but Harriet acknowledges that Dorimant cannot remain faithful, accepting this by promoting the kind of “open” love that Doralice and Rhodophil advocate at the beginning of *Marriage A-la- Mode*.

When Dorimant makes the kind of declaration that fools his other female conquests, promising to “renounce all the joys...in friendship and in wine, sacrifice...all the interest...in other women—” (5.2. 164-166), Harriet interrupts his empty promise: “Hold! Though I wish you devout, I would not make you turn fanatic” (5.2. 167-8). Harriet’s satiric and skeptical view both of religious enthusiasm and of the now “devout” Dorimant pokes fun at the adoration of his fanatical admirers, but it also, more importantly, pokes fun at the libertines like Dorimant (and his model, Rochester) who were seen by admirers as gods. Even Behn, who also critiques Rochester in her depiction of Willmore in *The Rover*, writes in “To Mrs. W. On Her Excellent Verses (Writ in Praise of Some I Had Made On the Earl of Rochester) Written in a Fit of Sickness,” that

the dead poet comes to her in a “blessed vision” (l. 14), appearing as “the great, the god-like Rochester” (l. 32). He inspires her as a muse figure would and one who, in her elegy, “On the Death of the Late Earl of Rochester,” also appears “like a god” (l. 10), with his “worshipped tomb” (l. 26) and “shrine” (l. 63) appearing as an ironic version of Christ’s. Behn reinforces Rochester’s god-like status in the elegy, but he appears like a god of satire that ironically resembles Christ’s suffering: “Bold as a god was every lash he took” (l. 31). The association of the lash not only invokes the tradition of satire’s abusing the body but also the religious images of Christ’s lashes and final anguish before death. Like Christ, Rochester offers the “kind and gentle...chastising stroke” (l. 32) as “the last reproacher of...vice” (l. 34) and one “Adorned with all the graces Heaven e’er lent” (l. 47), as though Rochester rebuked his targets to teach a Christian moral. Behn knew, of course, that the opposite was true, but she employs the association to reinforce the ironic comparison and irreligious values represented by Rochester, who had ostensibly confessed his sins to Gilbert Burnet on his deathbed.

Behn, like many literary critics, likely found the conversion preposterous. The final association that Behn makes with Rochester seems a truer one since it names Lucretius, who rejects religion. The connection between Rochester and Lucretius indicates his libertine rejection of Christian principles, but it also elevates Rochester to a divine position of the creative genius who replaces religion and gods, as Lucretius argues, in *De rerum natura*, that Epicurus and his teachings did. Though Behn’s poems of praise appear after Etherege writes his play, they nevertheless express a sentiment felt by many

during the 1670s about Rochester and the libertine-as-god myth that Behn can both celebrate and critique.

Etherege plays with these associations in Dorimant's character, and it is important that Harriet is not duped by his god-like persona, which compels Sir Fopling, Young Bellair, Bellinda, and Mrs. Loveit. She never falls into the fits that characterize Mrs. Loveit's body and almost violent speeches, replete with hellfire, damnation, and vengeance. They ironically recall the dissenting preachers who railed against libertines in her abuse of Dorimant, the "dissembler, damned dissembler" (2.2.222), and his libertine arguments for free love. Harriet never condemns Dorimant, but instead scorns him, treating him with the same ironic detachment that characterizes his actions toward Mrs. Loveit. Even when Dorimant claims his "passion to kno[w] no bounds" (5.2.176) Harriet continues to treat his declarations to her with skepticism, refusing to promise anything to Dorimant.⁵⁷ She continues "to be obstinate and protest against this marriage" (5.2.205-6). Even when Harriet confesses to her mother that she would marry Dorimant "and never will marry any other man" (5.2.386-7), she appears more interested in antagonizing her mother and staying in London than in pursuing a marriage, even with Dorimant, whom she appears to want. Her final lines in the play do not express undying love for Dorimant but disgust for Hampshire, "that sad place" (5.2.493). Dorimant's following her there becomes a "dismal" (5.2.492) prospect perhaps because she knows why he follows her—to win her fortune.

⁵⁷ Ronald Berman proposes that the Restoration comedy of manners stands between a self-aware world cynical to love and a declining metaphysical age that conflates love with heroic action and language. To Berman, Dorimant and Harriet "immerse themselves in the lost world of 'natural' love, yet [they are] modern enough to have their doubts" (168).

Harriet understands that Dorimant does not pursue marriage because he loves her or that he could remain faithful after marriage. She asks him, ironically, “Could you keep a Lent for a Mistress?” (3.3.101), already knowing that he cannot abstain from any of his self-gratifying impulses, as is typical in the season of Lent. The sexual metaphor is a direct challenge to church teachings since Lent is observed to remember Christ’s suffering prior to his death and resurrection, but here the mistress replaces Christ. To engage in illicit sexual conduct during such a period is an ultimate profanation of the religious calendar, and Harriet plays on the sacrilegious idea that Dorimant will suffer for a mistress, not for Christ. Dorimant reinforces the irreligious reference by linking his desired conquest of her as the “expectation of a happy Easter” (3.3.102), which implies a sexual resurrection rather than a divine one after “forty days well lost” (3.3. 103) in abstinence.

J. Douglas Canfield reads the play’s religious language both as a casual perversion of and as a morally reaffirming exercise whereby Harriet engenders a transformation in Dorimant. The verbal repartee between Dorimant and Harriet that involves either the religious calendar or religious figures serves, in his argument, as a way for Dorimant’s character to work out his libertinism, even questioning whether love might save him (386). Canfield proposes that the religious language, the frequent usage of “God,” “Soul,” and “Faith,” among other sacred terms in the play, has a moral purpose that becomes evident as the comedy drives to its idealistic conclusion, namely that a metaphysical transcendence occurs in Dorimant’s “love at first sight” of Harriet, who serves as a type of spiritual guide to Dorimant in Canfield’s argument (388). But nothing

in Harriet's language suggests this morality or the spiritual desire to transcend London life; indeed, the closest approximation to transcendence in this play is to the less than idyllic country, or Hampshire, which imposes another confinement on Harriet that she consistently revolts against, from her early deception to her last lines to Dorimant. If anyone in the play remains firm in the desire to participate in town life, it is Harriet. She never pretends religious or moral superiority because, as Robert D. Hume notes, "Harriet is too good a schemer to stand comfortably as a spotless redeemer" (*The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* 93).

By the end of the play, Dorimant has been set up as a kind of ironic replacement figure for God, and Harriet makes fun of his near-religious power over women, since the libertine, god-like male ego is as much under attack as Mrs. Loveit's religious idolization of him as "God Almighty" (5.2.447) is. Harriet's advice to Mrs. Loveit to enter a nunnery holds both religious and sexual meanings since a nunnery refers both to a religious house for women who took orders and to a brothel. Canfield interprets this scene as Harriet's suggestion that Loveit reform herself and go to a religious house, replacing the earthly idol, Dorimant, for the divine, or at least another Dorimant: "Mr. Dorimant has been your God Almighty long enough, 'tis time to think of another" (5.2.446-8). Mrs. Loveit's religious adoration for Dorimant, however, appears as the delusional phantasm that Battersby describes as belonging to the hysterical woman, and Harriet must distance herself from Mrs. Loveit by attaching her "diseased" love to dangerous religious practices.

Harriet suggests that Mrs. Loveit go to a nunnery for a secluded life since “a nunnery is the more fashionable place for such a retreat and has been the fatal consequence of many a *belle passion*” (5.2.451-3). The nunnery, as a “fashionable” and a “fatal consequence” to passionate affair, implies both a Catholic religious house and a brothel. Mazarin, though nominally Catholic, unlike Cleveland or Portsmouth, could not be associated with any real religion, since she had made a mockery of religion literally by escaping a nunnery, where her husband wanted to keep her, and by continuing to reject her unhappy marriage. Nevertheless, she was attacked by writers for her foreignness and for her libertine lifestyle. Like Harriet, she derided restriction, opting instead to live an independent life that allowed her to exercise power over herself and her world. Mazarin was a striking figure, often derided, yet one who had, before the Restoration, been suggested as Charles II’s potential wife. She captured many writers’ imaginations in their depiction of the female libertine, particularly Behn’s, and she shares certain characteristics, especially in her libertine challenge to religion and her society, with Harriet. Mazarin flouted the limitations placed on married women, strenuously resisting her husband’s attempts to exert legal authority over her in England, which Astell emphasizes in *Some Reflections Upon Marriage*. The connection between Mazarin and Harriet’s character is not one I wish to stress, as I do not think audiences would have made any connections between the women; however, it is important to note that literary representations of the female libertine share common characteristics with real female libertines, such as wit, beauty, rebelliousness, and antagonism towards religion and marriage, and these qualities appeared in a number of works featuring libertine heroines.

More understood by Harriet than he imagines, Dorimant perhaps predicts an outcome to their marriage that would fulfill Harriet's "wild" desires in the play, though he does not refer specifically to Harriet, of course, but to Emilia, when he suggests that "many women make a difficulty of losing a maidenhead, who have afterwards made none of making a cuckold" (1.1. 505-7).⁵⁸ Etherege seems to mock Dorimant and his claim "To fathom all the depths of womankind" (3.3.415), since he does not fathom Harriet so well as Bellinda or Mrs. Loveit, the two characters most manipulated by Dorimant for his amusement. By the end of the play, Harriet subdues both Mrs. Loveit and Dorimant, and her wit frequently challenges Dorimant's authority. It is not until she condemns Mrs. Loveit, however, that Harriet becomes a more powerful libertine character than Dorimant. She, not Dorimant, publicly denounces and thereby controls Mrs. Loveit's fate.

What Harriet will become after marriage remains ambiguous, given her aversion to promises. Neither Dorimant nor Harriet seems to experience true attachment to each other, since both attach a loss of power to love. As Jocelyn Powell notes, "the relationship of Dorimant and Harriet is left for the audience to resolve" (44) and that while the "marriage is ideal in Restoration terms...the two personalities, with their determined independence...make one question its future" (65). Even Dorimant recognizes, albeit to Mrs. Loveit, that "to say truth, in love there is no security to be given for the future" (2.2.243-4). The same, however, could be said of any of his relationships with women. Harriet responds to Dorimant's assessment of the insecurity of love by

⁵⁸ Richard W. Bevis suggests that Dorimant's "winning" of Harriet could either be a punishment or a reward. Given Harriet's "tart and nasty" side, especially with Young Bellair, Mrs. Loveit, and even Dorimant, Harriet and Dorimant may "deserve each other, and no one else" (87-88).

arguing that all women “are not born to one destiny” (4.1.191-2), and this prophecy may extend even into marriage. Harriet counters Dorimant’s flattery with, “Men grow dull when they begin to be particular” (3.3.106-7), revealing libertine sentiments expected from Dorimant, not his potential wife. Her desires to act on natural sexual urges after marriage pose the most significant challenge to Dorimant should they marry and one that does not, I think, conform to the libertine myth that “open” marriage represents a more civilized, sophisticated life since it means that the male libertine also becomes the cuckolded fool, whose heirs are not his own.

The play ends without the gay couple’s marriage, despite the likeliness that this will happen after the play ends. The audience of the 1670s likely would have drawn this conclusion, but they also would have expected that both Harriet and Dorimant would act like libertines after marriage by seeking extramarital affairs. Steele, for example, interpreting the play years later in *Spectator* 65, reads Harriet as an unworthy choice for Dorimant’s spouse because of her malice, wildness, and false demureness. He argues that she likely would not remain appropriately chaste after marriage, suggesting that her “Virtue” might not “last...longer than ’till she is a Wife” (366). And though Albert Wertheim argues that the gay couple’s unconventional relationship rises above conventional standards of morality, that “marital love need not exclude extra-marital love” (102), Dorimant expects fidelity from Harriet, whose objectified body represents his future property. He explains in the final scene of the play to Mrs. Loveit that Harriet is “a wife to repair the ruins of [his] estate, that needs it” (5.2. 338-9). Unlike Dryden’s *Marriage A-la-Mode*, where such desires are subverted and contained, Etherege’s play

both reinforces a mode of sexual conduct for libertines predicated on arguments for “open” marriage, which were an attack on arranged marriages, and finds such a possibility implicitly disturbing in women, whose practice of “open” marriage compromised the legitimate transference of property through potential illegitimate heirs. Harriet is contemptuous of Dorimant’s desire to marry her, recognizing that it is based on his need for property over his need for her, and her inability to believe Dorimant’s declarations of love or his commitment to her make any reading of Harriet’s belief that Dorimant will reform problematic.⁵⁹

Though John Harrington Smith argues that “subsequent writers proved incapable of equaling her,” while Dorimant was an “easy” copy for dramatists, Behn presents fascinating portraits that re-imagine Harriet’s character in multiple contexts, many of them violent in their libertine struggle against confining limits. While Smith asserts that “Harriet did almost nothing for the woman’s [role]” in later plays (92), Behn’s versions of aggressive narrative heroines show a direct legacy from Harriet that attacks patriarchal figures with murderous violence. Her early versions of the female libertine, perhaps best represented in the 1670s by Angellica Bianca in *The Rover*, recognize that their exposure leads to a loss of power. Angellica Bianca comes to terms with the fact that, as a

⁵⁹ Dale Underwood proposes a different view of Dorimant’s Hobbesian world in which he argues that Harriet finally achieves marriage because of “refusing to be drawn into either the libertine or Machiavellian elements of Dorimant’s world” (79-80). See also Francis M. Kavenik’s argument about their “Hobbesian survival tactics” played out on the mall, in the drawing room, and on the stage between “competitors” (27) and about the “Hobbesian liberty and libertinism” seen in Etherege’s, Wycherley’s, Behn’s, and Dryden’s plays (46).

prostitute, she is an unmasked woman whose identity has reached a stable social meaning as “whore.” She loses power because of the public commodification of her identity.

Harriet, a less volatile character than Angellica Bianca, nevertheless represents the kind of performative libertinism that later writers like Behn employed to interrogate the libertine identity through female characters in dramatic and non-dramatic works. Her veiled eroticism and free expressions to the audience, but not to Dorimant, tempt audiences and critics with an inconsistency that embodies the libertine spirit of the 1670s because it seems to reinforce contradictory messages. Etherege makes a deliberate choice, I think, when he does not end the play with her marriage to Dorimant. On the one hand, the choice is yet another way in which Etherege’s play participates in libertinism’s aggression towards marriage; on the other, the choice directly relates to the problems the gay couple likely would experience after marriage—namely, adultery—and its consequences, illegitimate heirs. These kinds of questions begin to arise in comedies by Dryden, Thomas Southerne and Behn, among others, during the 1680s and 1690s and continued into the eighteenth century.

Southerne, for example, looks at the problems of female sexuality and female distress, but not in the same character, in a complex set of social scenes and interactions in his comedy, *The Wives’ Excuse; or, Cuckholds Make Themselves* (1692). Though the title sets up an expectation that Mrs. Friendall, sorely tested by her philandering husband, will capitulate to Lovemore, the rake, she refuses, defying convention in her search for a way out of marriage that does not conform to patriarchal standards of appropriate female submissiveness, either to an unworthy husband or to an equally unworthy lover.

Etherege's Harriet, who might desire Dorimant, is also more invested in looking for a way out of her own restricted existence. She implicitly appears to understand that to marry is to enter into a lifetime of confinement, even humiliation, of the kind that Behn, Southerne, Congreve, George Farquhar and others depict as part of marriage in their plays. The next chapter considers one such play by Behn, *The Luckey Chance*, in which the female libertine, Julia, like Southerne's later depiction of Mrs. Friendall, is unhappily married. Whereas Mrs. Friendall rejects adultery as an answer to her unhappiness, Julia desires Gayman, a handsome lover, as an alternative to her loveless marriage to Sir Cautious. The play that returns to the Lucretian formulations of love and chance in *De rerum natura*, and it examines the female libertine's restricted freedom in this late play, when Behn was also experimenting with fiction. In her novella, *The History of the Nun*, which will also be considered, she begins to incorporate values of sensibility into the heroine's distress. She positions the philosophical discussion in socio-economic terms that redefine fortune in ways that more directly evaluate and reject marriage, which leaves Julia entirely powerless, and Isabella, a murderous realization of Angellica Bianca's tendencies, without a social role at all.

CHAPTER IV

WRITING TOWARDS AN AGE OF SENSIBILITY: BEHN'S *THE LUCKEY*
CHANCE AND THE HISTORY OF THE NUN

In the last two chapters, I have considered two representative plays by Dryden and Etherege that provide notable examples of the high point in sex comedies of the 1670s. Behn's comedies, notably *The Rover* and the *Feign'd Curtizans* (1679), also celebrate libertine rebelliousness and sexual freedom. Near the end of the 1670s, however, she became increasingly disillusioned with male libertines' misogynistic tendencies, strongly expressed in popular plays by Dryden, Wycherley, and Etherege, and her later works examine the implications of violence, rape, and betrayal for female libertines, who are often the recipients of the male libertines' ill treatment. Susan Staves reminds readers that the female libertines in Behn's works struggle because of the tension she felt about libertinism's contradictory impulses. Behn was caught between enjoying libertine freedom and realizing its privileges did not extend to women (Staves 20-1), and she creates characters like Angellica Bianca that lament this contradiction, challenging Willmore and, by extension, the real life libertine he resembles, Rochester.

By the early 1680s, Behn openly critiqued the male libertine's mistreatment of women in her plays. The Willmore depicted in *The Second Part of the Rover* (1681) is a much less compelling figure than the earlier Willmore. He appears not to mourn his dead

wife but is driven by mercenary motives, mourning her spent fortune and cursing the beautiful women he desires sexually. As Susan J. Owen points out, Behn explicitly critiques Willmore's attitude and behavior towards women, and, by extension, libertinism's unfair treatment of women in this play (74-5). And, though libertine privilege is particularly celebrated in *The City-Heiress* (1682), women are left helpless victims to male libertine figures that act violently. Lady Galliard and Charlot are passive, without power, and despite Behn's obvious support for libertinism in this play, her depiction of the sheer helplessness of the women, duped, seduced, or forced to marry, like Charlot, to save their reputations, offers an implicit critique of the aggressive male libertines overtaking them.

By the middle of the 1680s, when Behn had begun experimenting with fiction, she had, in addition to continuing her critique of the male libertine, also begun to feature more complicated female libertine figures like Julia in *The Luckey Chance*. Julia is a complex character with philosophical ideas about love that reflect Behn's interest in Epicureanism, which, as I explained in the introduction, she regarded as liberating because its arguments had the potential to destabilize fixed gender roles. Her idealistic conception of love conflicts with Gayman's Hobbesian version of libertinism, creating irresolvable problems between them that lead to misunderstanding, miscommunication, and rejection. Behn concentrates on the agony that both lovers experience, and the focus on interiority in this play appears more novelistic than comedic, marking a transition for the female libertine, who becomes a distressed figure that experiences the capacity to suffer greatly, both from her society and from her libertine lover.

The emergence of the novel helped to redefine the female libertine as an early figure of sensibility that Behn particularly featured in her works. Rose A. Zimbardo has argued that *The Luckey Chance* anticipates the novel in its treatment of characters, and Behn wrote the play after beginning her longest novel, *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684-7), a work that, according to Carol Barash, along with *Oroonoko; or, the Royal Slave* (1688), “rework[s]... political tensions from the Restoration stage” and reconsiders its “configurations of gender and narrative authority” (103). The audience is meant to feel empathy for the characters, as they would feel for those in a novel (Zimbardo 162-3), and Dolores Altaba-Artal suggests that the language of the play “becomes closer to real life or to everyday conversation” with an “insistence on interiority,” which paved the way for the emergence of the novel (126), and, I will argue, the heroine of sensibility. I will extend both Zimbardo’s and Altaba-Artal’s readings of *The Luckey Chance* by arguing that the play not only features characters with greater interior struggles, but it also concentrates on Julia’s emotional and physical distress, which results from her poor treatment by Gayman. Julia and Gayman’s relationship articulates the disconnect Behn felt between libertinism’s liberation from social customs, religious orthodoxy, and marital fidelity and its devaluation of women.⁶⁰ This tension creates the “darkening vision” that Jacqueline Pearson describes at the close of the play (166), which is meant to compel the audience to feel for Julia’s loss, pain, and solitude.⁶¹

⁶⁰ See Staves’s section on libertinism in “Behn, women, and society,” pp. 20-3.

⁶¹ I am not convinced that Julia belongs in the group of “women as passive victims” that Pearson describes, ones “needing clever lovers to help them to avoid victimization rather than escaping by their own wit and nerve, so passive that they cannot even choose what man they sleep with” (*The Prostituted Muse* 167). None of the women in *The Luckey Chance* have problems choosing the lovers they want, and both Diana

The focus on distress in the play mirrors Behn's growing interest in incorporating characteristics that would come to be associated with sensibility in her writing in post-Carolean texts, when the inspirational figures for much of the libertine literature of the previous two decades, Charles II and Rochester, had died. Much of the glamour of libertinism had been tarnished, and in Behn's later works, she examines her heroines' expressions of frustration, particularly in her fiction, in an entirely new way that features women rather than men as the aggressive figures. In *The History of the Nun*, the most complex shorter narrative that Behn writes, she continues to complicate the female libertine figure by concentrating on Isabella's psychological and emotional pain. The story integrates libertine aggression with emerging values of sensibility drawn from French narratives of *sensibilité* that Behn had already used in her longer novel, *Love-Letters*. Isabella's sorrow, need for a community to share her grief, and physical manifestations of distress conform to the values of sensibility that Behn derived from circulating "nun" stories based loosely on popularized versions of letters from the medieval nun, Héloïse, to her priest-lover, Abelard.

Behn imagines an unlikely candidate for an early narrative of sensibility in Isabella, who breaks her religious vows first by marrying and then by murdering her two husbands. She nevertheless becomes a pathos figure overcome with sensibility in her varied states of physical, emotional, and mental anguish meant to compel sympathy from

and Julia take active roles to achieve their desires, though they experience very different outcomes. Julia experiences pain, but her last words are to reject both her lover and her husband.

the story's dedicatee, the Duchess of Mazarin.⁶² Her memoirs, written either completely by or with the help of a French romancer, César Vichard de St.-Réal, as the *Memoires de Mme. La Duchesse de Mazarin* (1675; translated into English in 1676), makes a similar argument because the narrative, whether real, partially accurate, or entirely fictional, also looks for understanding from the audience.⁶³ Alison Conway notes that Behn had already used Mazarin's *Memoirs* along with Gabriel de Brémond's *Hattigé ou Les Amours de Roy de Tamaran* (1676; translated in 1680) about Cleveland's affair with Charles II for her courtesan narrative and political scandal, *Love-Letters*, and I will argue that Behn uses Mazarin's *Memoirs* again in *The History of the Nun* to create similarities between Isabella and Mazarin, at least as she is depicted in the *Memoirs*. Like the "character" of Mazarin, Isabella needs a sympathetic community to which she can express and thereby alleviate her grief, and she feels despair, demonstrated through a decidedly libertine act of aggression towards her husbands.

In *The Luckey Chance*, Leticia and Julia, both forced into marriage with much older men, have young lovers, Belmour and Gayman, yet they each experience two different "fortunes" in love despite the similarity in their circumstances. Belmour has been exiled for six months and is presumed dead by Leticia, who, out of desperation, agrees to marry the old Sir Feeble Fainwoud. He has fabricated the story of Belmour's death to win her but is then "haunted" by Belmour, who finally forces him to admit his

⁶² Because of their often aggressive reactions to victimization, Starr argues that the heroines of Behn's "nun" stories are not passive models for "virtue in distress" (368), or the typical heroine of sensibility. This chapter contradicts Starr's reading of these heroines.

⁶³ Scholars debate the authenticity of the *Memoirs*, with Allison Conway arguing that it is a novel and Elizabeth Goldsmith suggesting that it is a more accurate representation of Mazarin's life.

deceit. Belmour's commitment to Leticia results in the dissolution of her "false" marriage to Sir Feeble, and he is able to reclaim his place as her "true" husband.

Gayman has also lost his mistress, Julia, forced into marriage with an older husband, Sir Cautious, to whom Gayman has mortgaged his estate. He loses all of his money in trying to woo Julia, who unknowingly repays him in his own gold during an elaborately staged evening in which he does not recognize her. Gayman later gambles with Sir Cautious for a night with Julia, which turns sour when she realizes that her body has been the wager between them.⁶⁴ Though the play opens by examining the problems of "forced marriage," which Behn interrogates in earlier plays, it ends without endorsing adultery as an answer. Earlier female libertines, like Lady Fancy in *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), could happily find an answer to their marital difficulties by turning to young lovers like Wittmore, satisfied as much or more by the financial benefits of becoming Lady Fancy's lover as he is by gaining Lady Fancy. No such arrangement keeps Gayman happy, and he punishes Julia, turning their love into a disillusioning experience in which her Epicurean garden, a literal space in the play, becomes a place of deceit.

Julia loves Gayman without restraint or material considerations, and she, like Lady Fancy, is willing to offer her lover financial rewards. She is less cynical about love than Lady Fancy, however, and wants to alleviate Gayman's poverty, partly brought about by his pursuit of her. Julia believes that their love exists in a constant, ideal world outside of financial concerns, and she has an Epicurean conception of their relationship, reflecting Behn's reading and praise of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. As I argued in the

⁶⁴ Gayman's competitiveness problematizes the argument that critics sometimes make that there is a May-January binary dividing the young lovers from the old husbands. Gayman does not fit this binary and does not seem to believe in love, which is predicated, for him, on fortune.

introduction, Lucretius implicitly argues for equality between sexual partners, advocating monogamy so that lovers could avoid feelings of jealousy and pain, and Behn found his theories appealing. Julia, more idealistic than Behn or earlier female libertines like La Nuche in *The Second Part of the Rover*, expects that Gayman shares her desire for Epicurean “marriage,” but Gayman resembles Rochester in his libertine attitude towards women. Though Rochester had a strong interest in Lucretian atomism, he did not appear to endorse Epicurean ideas about women as equal partners. Instead, he often objectified them, both in real life and in his poetry, which in part accounts for Behn’s disillusionment with male libertine figures like Willmore, Wittmore, or Gayman, all modeled to varying degrees on Rochester.

Julia finds that Gayman does not share or understand her philosophical ideas, and though readers have argued that Julia and Gayman remain lovers at the close of the play, Gayman loses Julia, who becomes angry and frustrated when her lover treats her as a sexual object rather than an equal.⁶⁵ Behn contrasts Gayman’s competitive gambling with Julia’s desire for a private, authentic experience of love that relies on the imaginative “poet’s dream” (1.1.60). Julia privileges the imaginative and emotional life, but this “poet’s dream” is often tested in Behn’s works by real world problems, namely the one that Behn faced throughout her own career, or the need for money. Julia’s “dream” exists outside of the social or legal context that Gayman needs to validate his Hobbesian conception of honor, and his pursuit of rewards, both financial and sexual, compromise Julia, who becomes a prize for him rather than a partner.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Catharine Gallagher’s argument in “Who Was That Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn,” which I will debate in a later note.

At the beginning of the play, Belmour prepares to fight Gayman, whom he believes has married Leticia, and his initial question to Gayman, “Whither is Honour, Truth and Friendship fled?” (1.1.58) is one that Julia implicitly asks Gayman at the end of the play, when he has treated her neither with honor, truth, nor friendship. Gayman’s answer to Belmour, “Why there ne’re was such a virtue. ’Tis all a Poets Dream” (1.1.59-60), suggests that Behn sets up a contrast between two kinds of lovers and their different versions of libertinism. To Julia, the “poet’s dream” is an Epicurean one comprised of honor, truth, and friendship as well as love. Gayman believes such dreams are only an illusion, and when he later questions whether his mysterious benefactress (really Julia) has a “care of her Honour?” (3.1.256), he resolves that it “cannot be—this Age afford none so nice” (3.1.256-7). He believes neither in Belmour’s version of honor, which looks for truth and friendship, nor in Julia’s, which is private, generous, and Epicurean. The early dialogue with Belmour reflects the central tensions in the play, and Behn juxtaposes social and legal realities against friendship and love. Julia must finally recognize such qualities are, for Gayman, “a Poets Dream,” not a reality.⁶⁶

Following Lucretius’s descriptions of love, Julia associates physical passion with a version of Epicurean *ataraxia* because it can offer peace and happiness in a world more invested in greed, pretense, and self-interest than in harmony. When Julia contrives to

⁶⁶ As Markley has convincingly argued, “In her comedies, to paraphrase Pope, most men have no characters at all: character and good nature are incompatible because the psychology of male insecurity demands that female desire be restricted to endless validations of masculine self-worth. What Behn’s heroines can expect from their lovers, then, are only the parodic performances—rakes playing the roles of faithful lovers. In a comic universe dominated by cynical reason, however, playing along with such fantasies provides perhaps ‘the Ladys’ with their best and only revenge” (115). Julia refuses, however, to validate her lover’s rape fantasy of masculine conquest.

meet with Gayman as his unknowing benefactress, she creates a pastoral setting that includes a shepherd, who sings of love's tranquil powers:

*Cease your Wonder, cease your Guess,
Whence arrives your Happiness.
Cease your Wonder, cease your Pain.
Humane Fancy is in vain. (3.1.221-4)*

The song indicates that lovers spend too much time speculating about love, which can produce "pain," instead of enjoying the experience of it. A core belief of Epicureanism is the desire to escape pain, and in both the Latin edition and in Creech's translations, the speaker of *De rerum natura* concentrates on the way in which superstition, disease, and betrayal engender conflict, oppression, and grief. Physical gratification offers one way to escape an otherwise disillusioning existence as long as lovers find and stay true to one sexual partner. Otherwise, it can create as much, if not more, pain as it does pleasure.

Julia initially assumes that Gayman will know her, and the imaginative world that she creates in the masque is, she believes, a foreshadowing of their shared bodily expressions of love, which she expects will satisfy his curiosity about the unknown woman he believes has bought a night with him. The song suggests that, even if love is the disease that Lucretius warns against, it is one more joyful than health because it offers more freedom:

*Oh! Love, that stronger art than Wine,
Pleasing Delusion, Witchery divine,
Want to be priz'd above all Wealth,
Disease that has more Joys than Health.
Tho we blaspheme thee in our Pain,
And of thy Tyranny complain,*

*We all are better'd by thy Reign.
 What Reason never can bestow
 We to this useful Passion owe,
 Love wakes the Dull from slug[g]ish Ease,
 And learns a Clown the Art to please.
 Humbles the Vain, kindles the Cold,
 Makes Misers free, and Cowards bold.
 'Tis he reforms the Sot from Drink,
 And teaches airy Fops to think. (3.1.190-204)*

In other words, love will reveal to Gayman that Julia, not an old hag, has come to him. To Julia, love enlivens the mind and reforms sots, fops, misers, and dullards, implicitly giving them the kind of wit that they otherwise lack. One lover does not dominate the other, and love's reforming power defines Julia's version of libertinism, which does not rely on struggles for domination. Instead, love rules, permitting the lovers to enjoy greater shared pleasures that can ameliorate pain, bettering them and making their union stronger. This argument counters the typical libertine definition of love as a disease afflicting the mind or body and weakening the libertine's power. Instead, love augments pleasure, providing an alternative to the Hobbesian model of competitive individualism because it argues for a shared emotional and physical experience.

The shepherd's song is nevertheless a libertine one that rejects tradition, acknowledging that it is also a "pleasing delusion," which anticipates Julia's later realization that Gayman believes he has betrayed her with an old hag, a reality that causes her embarrassment and heartache. The song offers possibilities of love in an Epicurean context of placid, tranquil happiness, though the ideal love that the shepherd's song advocates, or "the Joy of Love without the Pain" (3.1.246), which the chorus repeats for

emphasis, turns into a disillusioning experience of love in which Gayman does not recognize Julia, even as he longs for her:

Ah *Julia, Julia!* If this soft Preparation
Were but to bring me to thy dear Embraces;
What different Motions wou'd surround my Soul,
From what perplex it now. (3.1.215-8)

His response to the shepherd's song, which argues that love can offer *ataraxia*, is also philosophical, but it is one that recalls Hobbes and the Cartesian body, not the Epicurean ideal that Julia longs to share with him. He imagines his soul as a mechanistic automaton with "motions" that cannot respond to the unknown woman who has bought him. The song is not pleasing to him because he does not know that Julia has prepared their evening together. He believes that different "motions" would compel him if Julia appeared, yet they do not, despite her actual presence there.

Because Gayman cannot imagine Julia, she cannot exist for him. His perception of the old hag overtakes the reality of the beautiful woman he desires and physically feels. Even when he touches her body, he cannot overcome his false perception, which conforms to Hobbes's descriptions of "Sense" in Chapter One of *Leviathan*:

Neither in us that are pressed are they anything else but diverse motions (for motion produceth nothing but motion). But their appearance to us is fancy, the same waking that dreaming. And as pressing, rubbing, or striking the eye, makes us fancy a light, and pressing the ear, produceth a din, so do the bodies also we see, or hear, produce the same by their strong, though unobserved action. For if those colours and sounds were in the bodies, or objects, that cause them, they could not be severed from them, as by glasses, and in echoes by reflections, we see they are, where we know the thing we see is in one place, the appearance in another. And thou at some certain distance the real and very object seem invested with the fancy it begets in us, yet still the object

is one thing, the image or fancy is another. So that sense in all cases, is nothing else but original fancy, caused (as I have said) by pressure, that is, by the motion, of external things upon our eyes, ears, and other organs thereunto ordained. (7)

Gayman understands his experience according to Hobbes's description of the imagination and the Cartesian body, which explains the world and the perceiving self in mechanistic terms. The body imagined and the real body are separated for Gayman, with the former overtaking the latter, and the motions "pressing" into his mind, though false in reality, are more true to him than physical experience.

His Hobbesian vision is equally predicated on the Lucretian model of the heart's motions in Book Two of *De rerum natura*. In Creech's edition, the heart is connected intimately with touch as a perceiving faculty that sometimes misinterprets what it thinks it physically and emotionally feels, since the heart is the seat of thought:

For touch that best, that cheifest sense is made
 When stroaks from *things without* the Nerves invade,
 Or something from *within* doth *outward* flow,
 And hurts, or tickles as it passes thro,
 As tis in *Venery*, or when the seed
 Remain *within* and strange confusions breed (2.47)

The physical sense of touch fails Gayman, who thinks he lies with a rough, brittle body, not Julia's. Gayman's sexual experiences with her suggest that he cannot feel beyond this mechanized process of body-on-body, and he unknowingly depicts Julia as an "Amourous Devil" (4.1.75), a "Proserpine" (4.1.75), a "silent Devil" (4.1.77), and "a Carcase...rivell'd, lean, and rough" (4.1.83-4). Such descriptions, Julia argues, make her a "Monster" (4.1.86), a product of Gayman's superstitious imagination. He imagines the

evening as an act of vengery, and the old hag who “buys” him becomes an imaginative extension of this act. His perception of her has deluded his physical senses, creating the “strange confusions” that lead to the unraveling of his relationship with Julia, the real body he feels.

On both nights that they spend together, the first directed by Julia, the second by Gayman and Sir Cautious, the lovers come together in darkness as Cartesian bodies in motion rather than as two souls sharing meaningful love expressed through the body.⁶⁷ Behn emphasizes this before their second night, when Gayman, hiding in the dark, comes to claim his “reward,” won by chance, from Sir Cautious, who leads him to an unknowing Julia. Sir Cautious repeats that “the Candle’s out” (5.2.193) because it “went out by Chance” (5.2.196), a philosophical statement as much as a literal one that reinforces the lovers’ inability to know each other without a light to guide them. Ideally, their souls should know one another, yet they are composed of the same material as the body, following a bleaker Epicurean realization about love that argues against the spiritual dimension of the soul.

Unlike Descartes, Hobbes had followed Lucretius by arguing that the mortal soul is composed of atoms that meet by accident, not by design, and it decays and moves like the cosmos, a description that appears to describe the lovers’ meetings. They come together by chance like Lucretius’s regenerative atoms, which Hobbes links also to the motions of the heart. As Erickson explains in *The Language of the Heart*, Hobbes, following Lucretius, held that the heart relies on motion, which “is simply the pressure of

⁶⁷ In 1688, Behn translated Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle’s *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, which had been published in 1686, as *A Discovery of New Worlds*. According to Alvin Snider, she likely read the philosophy of Descartes in Fontenelle’s work (“Cartesian Bodies” 302).

one body upon another” (23). The purely mechanical experience of sexuality epitomizes the Hobbesian libertine’s practice of love, which Behn could both idolize in the representation of the “god-like” libertine, Rochester, and often criticize.

Through *Gayman*, Behn not only critiques Rochester’s sexual use and abuse of women, but possibly also his reputed deathbed conversion to Christianity, which contradicts his libertinism and interest in Lucretius. Behn admired Lucretius for his attack on the hypocrisy of religion, with its superstitious and harmful practices and its teachings against free love. For Julia, love exists outside of seventeenth-century Christian orthodoxy, with its rules and devaluation of women. She organizes the masque as a pagan marriage ceremony symbolically sealed by the ring given to *Gayman* while he watches the shepherd and chorus, and her pagan allusions to Epicurean philosophy work outside of a Christian framework. She does not see her forced marriage to Sir Cautious as a valid one; instead, she relies on the classical world, describing the “sacred Vows to *Gayman*” (1.2.33) as a happy, pagan dream she wants to indulge. He interprets the “ceremony,” however, as a rite of the devil, though she calls *Gayman*’s description of her “Magick Art” (4.1.70) and “enchanted Palace in the Clouds” (4.1.71) “Imagination all” (4.1.74). Julia’s relationship with *Gayman* depends upon his acceptance and participation in a dream world free of devils, madness, disorder, and rules that bind couples through property, religion, and wealth. Her vision mirrors Lucretius’s overarching arguments about freeing the self from social and superstitious beliefs and rituals, and though Julia gives *Gayman* the money that he needs, she expects him to understand that their love does not depend on it.

Instead, Julia desires Epicurean *voluptas*, a harmonious, higher level of existence in which the imagination becomes the most important way of accessing *ataraxia*, both for Lucretius and for Julia. She and Gayman actually live in a world bound by rules, laws, and social custom, but she hopes to bring the imagined *voluptas* into a reality with Gayman, sending him a letter that directs him to “Receive what Love and Fortune present you with, be grateful and be silent, or ’twill vanish like a Dream, and leave you more wretched than it found you” (2.1.146-8). The imaginative dream, however, is horribly misunderstood by Gayman.

Though a libertine, Gayman appears to struggle with the antireligious devilry he believes the old hag has conjured for her unholy night with him. He associates darkness with the feminine devil he despises, believing in the powers of the devil, which he often likens to a woman, physically chastising Julia later for her devilish, pagan beliefs and acts. He cannot see past Bredwell’s disguise to the “Banks of Bliss” (2.1.162) he will enjoy with Julia:

—I am awake sure, and this is Gold I grasp.
 I could not see this Devil’s cloven Foot,
 Nor am I such a Coxcomb to believe,
 But he was as substantial as his Gold.
 Spirits, Ghost[s], Hobgoblins, Furys, Fiends, and Devils
 I’ve often heard old Wives fright Fools and Children with,
 Which once arriv’d to common Sense they laugh at.
 —No, I am for things possible and Natural,
 —Some Female Devil old, and damn’d to Ugliness,
 And past all Hopes of Courship and Address,
 Full of another Devil call’d Desire,
 Has seen this Face—this—Shape—this Youth
 And thinks it worth her Hire. It must be so.
 I must moyl on in the damn’d dirty Road,
 And sure such Pay will make that Journey ease;

And for the Prices of the dull drudging Night,
All Day I'll purchase new and fresh Delight. (2.1.170-186)

He hugs the gold, the “substantial Security” (2.1.164) that binds him, demonstrating more physical affection for this than for Julia, whom he unknowingly finds in darkness.

Gayman becomes concerned by the female devil who directs the “singing Fiends innumerable” (4.1.73) and the devilish rites he must perform to fulfill his contract with this woman. Gayman cannot free himself from his need for money or from religious superstition, and he interprets the she-devil who organizes the evening as a kind of base sexual monster he describes later to Julia as a being that physically feels worse than “a Canvas Bag of wooden Ladles” (4.1.84), a line she repeats back to him at the end when she rejects his love.

The misinterpretation of the masque represents Julia's and Gayman's different versions of libertinism. Staves 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 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. (22)

Gayman has lost his power and any pleasure because he is not in control of the sexual meeting with the perceived old hag, whom he associates with the devil. Her control violates his sense of honor because he connects his disempowerment with his poverty and prostitution. As Hobbes writes in *Leviathan*,

Dominion, and victory, is honourable, because acquired by power; and servitude, for need or fear, is dishonorable...

Good fortune (if lasting) honourable, as a sign of the favour of God. Ill fortune and losses, dishonorable. Riches are honourable, for they are power. Poverty, dishonorable. (53)

From the very beginning, Gayman sees himself as a loser in fortune and love because he has lost his wealth. He first appears in the play through a letter to Julia articulating his “ill fortune and losses”:

Did my Julia know how I Languish in this cruel Separation, she would afford me her Pity, and write oftner. If only the Expectation of two thousand a Year kept me from you, ah! Julia how easily would I abandon that Trifle for your more valued Sight, but that I know a Fortune will render me more agreeable to the charming Julia, I should quit all my Interest here, to throw my self at her Feet, to make her sensible how I am intirely her Adorer. (1.2.1-6)

The sexual management by the landlady and the old hag, who is Julia in disguise, strips him of his power and libertinism. Though he does not immediately discern that the old hag is Julia, he nevertheless describes his relationship with her in Hobbesian terms that directly challenge Julia’s version of libertinism. For a woman to direct, manage, and “buy” him means that Gayman becomes weakened like a woman, and he reasserts his power only by objectifying Julia, treating her as a reward when he gambles for her with her husband. Throughout the play, Gayman lacks a sword, or a phallic symbol of power, but he takes control of Julia by manipulating her old husband, who lets him use Julia sexually as payment for his gambling debt. Their second night, though it occurs in the same physical space as the first encounter, is transformed from an imagined pastoral

dream to a Hobbesian nightmare of betrayal and conquest, and both nights represent their respective versions of libertinism.

When Gayman enters Julia's bedroom, he begins to recognize that it is the "Inchanted Room" (5.2.159) of "last Nights Vision" (5.2.158), yet he continues to believe that "indeed some Witch...has by Inchantment brought [him] hither" (5.2.160) and that he is "betray'd" (5.2.161). Even after realizing that Julia is the "Witch" that "last Night gave [him] that lone Opportunity" (5.2.162), he continues with his plan, implicitly justifying his dishonesty by arguing that he "was deceiv'd, and it was *Julia*" (5.2.165). One trick, it seems, deserves another, and Gayman enters Julia's bed in darkness, interpreting her earlier deception as a power struggle, not a romantic evening.

For Gayman, literally winning Julia from her husband replaces the physical pleasure of loving her and causes her to feel bitter and angry. In Creech's edition of *De rerum natura*, the reader is advised that he "rather take the *sweet* without the *pain*" (133), since "joy's not perfect, tis not pure" (133), and Gayman's treatment of Julia reinforces this. Julia pursues the "sweetness" of love with Gayman because her life with Sir Cautious is painful and one that she wants to escape. When Gayman asks her if she is "going to the Bride-Chamber" (2.2.224), she asks him to enter into the private Epicurean "garden" (2.2.228) with her because it represents for her, as for Leticia, an ideal place in which she can escape from the social ritual of the binding marriage ceremony. To Julia and Leticia, the garden, recalling Epicurus's famed garden, represents a mental, emotional, and sexual escape where lovers can freely express themselves outside of such rituals. When Phillis asks Leticia, "Why Madam do you leave the Garden, For this

Retreat to Melancholly” (2.2.1-2), Leticia responds by defining it as an ideal, pleasing place of remembered love that she must leave to return to a melancholic world of unhappy social restriction. She defines the garden in Epicurean terms as a tranquil space in which she can pour out her emotions: “Blest be this kind Retreat, this ’lone Occasion That lends a short Cessation to my Torments. And gives me leave to vent my Sighs and Tears” (2.2.10-12). For both women, the garden represents a retreat in which they may ameliorate the pains of their hearts and their lives.

By Act Five, the garden is converted to another space that Gayman controls, one in which interest, superstition, fear, and pain intrude. It becomes a treacherous place in which Gayman “conjures” devils to fool Bearjest and Noysey, who are kicked, pinched, and beaten by these “spirits,” which are really Rag and two porters disguised as devilish fiends. Because Bearjest and Noysey “have a Mind to see the Devil” (5.2.3-4), Gayman orders Rag and the porters to “well-favour’dly bang” (5.2.2-3), or physically abuse them. The place of tranquility has become a preparative space for betrayal, one that foreshadows Gayman’s coming night with Julia, whom he also punishes.

In his “conjuring” of the fiends, Gayman associates the “Devil” with women, specifically with the woman he saw the night before, and his invocation to the false devils indicates that he associates the sexually powerful woman with darkness and devilry:

*Cease your Horror, cease your Hast.
And calmly as I saw you last,
Appear! Appear!
By thy Pearls and Diamond Rocks,
By thy heavy Money Box.
By thy shining Petticoat,
That hid thy cloven Feet from Note.*

*By the Veil that hid thy Face,
Which else had frighten'd humane Race.
Appear, that I thy Love may see,
Appear kind Fiends, appear to me! (5.2.60-70)*

Gayman's conjuring could equally apply to his conjuring of Julia, the "devil" whose "Pearls and Diamond Rocks" and "heavy Money Box" had bought him the night before. He is brought to Julia's chamber in another such heavy box, which she calls "a nasty Chest!" (5.2.150), expressing her disgust for Sir Cautious's bringing his commercial interests, or "rich Commodities" (5.2.153), to her bedroom. She expects, of course, that Gayman does not participate in the trade of such commodities, whether in business, in marriage, or in love, and she is unprepared to become an object traded from one man to another. The chest, however, like the "Money box," becomes a symbol of her commodification by both men, who literally play for her.

Money ruins Julia's relationship with Gayman, from her stealing money from her husband to Gayman's gambling for her body, and Gayman cannot see their relationship outside of material terms. This results in the trickery and pain that follow Lucretius's depiction of heartbreak in book four of Creech's translation of *De rerum natura*:

Debts they *contract apace*, their *mony* flies;
Their *Fame*, their *Honour* too *grows sick*, and dies:
Rich *Shoes*, and *Jewels* set in Gold, adorn
The Feet, the richest *Purple Vests* are worn
The Wealth their *Fathers* toild, and *fought* to gain?
Now buys a *Coat*, a *Miter*, or a *Chain*:
Great *Shows*, and *Sports* are made, and *Royal Feasts*,
Where *choicest* Meats and Wines *provoke* the Guests,
Where *gawdy* Tapestry, and *Odors* spread
O're all the *Room*, and Crowns grace every head:
In vain; for still some *bitter* thought destroys

His *fancy'd* mirth, and *poisons* all his joys: (234)

The description applies to Gayman's entire experience with Julia, which he believes has left him without honor. His poverty has taken away his joy, and he is appalled that Julia is angry with him for gambling for her, arguing that he "only seiz'd [his] Right of Love" (5.2.230). The "right" to Julia, however, is only valid to her if they consummate their love on equal terms. Hers is an imaginatively-inspired "right of love" that presupposes that her "marriage" to Gayman is a sacred, Epicurean commitment to shared happiness. She scorns Gayman's base treatment of her, since he has made her a "base Prostitute, a foul Adulteress" (5.2.233) to the world. She recognizes that his passion rests on his total conquest of her, which his gambling for her with Sir Cautious makes open and public. He commercializes her private, peaceful garden, becoming the "dear Robber of [her] Quiet" (5.2.233) by destroying the Epicurean equanimity of mind, body, and spirit that she desires. Hers is the world of private experience; his is a public one in which libertines gamble, rape, and make their sexual exploits and conquests known.

Gayman rejoices in his having slept with her without her knowledge and in "cold Imagination, and no more" (5.2.239). He seems only to enjoy a sexual experience with her by corrupting her innocence and subconsciously punishing her, like Bearjest and Noysey, for her perceived practice of devilry. To him, her erotic passion is the kind of witchcraft that Weber argues is attached to the female libertine figure—a dangerous, powerful force to be contained. Gayman would rather have her "faintly resign'd" (5.2.240) and "an innocent Adulteress" (5.2.237). Then, he argues, she can retain her virtue, which her association with the sexually aggressive "witch" of the previous night

compromises. Her punishment for participation in such devilry is akin to Bearjest's and Noysey's, who also want to see the devil. To put it crudely, they, like Julia, are "well-favour'dly bang[ed]."

It is Gayman's physical vigor, or "Excess of Love" that "betray'd the Cheat" (5.2.242) to Julia, whose rejection of him only heightens his ardor:

Heavens! I before ador'd you,
 But now I rave! And with my impatient Love,
 A thousand mad, and wild Desires are Burning!
 I have discover'd now new Worlds of Charms.
 And can no longer tamely love and suffer (5.2.246-250)

Gayman's most ardent speech to her in the play is the one in which he appears most empowered and she most passive, yet his raving corresponds to Creech's translation of the distracted and mad lover in book four of *De rerum natura*: "the *Lover* burns with strong, but pleasing fires" but also with "*Distracting thoughts, and often deep despair*" (132). Gayman experiences both depression and near frenzy when he comes closer to enjoying his "reward" from Sir Cautious. He revels in Julia's ignorance that she has been gambled to him, and she represents the new world he would "Possess...without a Crime" (5.2.269). His lust is heightened by the ravaging of her innocence, and his conquest of her is suggestive of rape, which he believes has restored his honor, according to the definition of it that Hobbes gives:

...for honour consisteth only in the opinion of power. Therefore the ancient heathen did not think they dishonoured, but greatly honoured the Gods, when they introduced them in their poems committing rapes, thefts, and other great, but unjust or unclean acts: insomuch as nothing is so much celebrated in *Jupiter*, as his adulteries; nor in *Mercury*, as his frauds and thefts... (54)

Hobbes's description does not preclude rape, and Gayman's treatment of Julia, he believes, augments his honor and reputation. The Hobbesian libertines modeled after Rochester and made popular in Willmore's character in Behn's *The Rover* and in the plays of Wycherley and Etherege rely on the reputation of their honor to achieve power over others, which is the real source of pleasure for them.

Gayman must have Julia when she does not consent (because she does not know it is him) to experience the frenzy of pleasure, not the tranquility of it, and it must be a public act for him to achieve a libertine reputation of honor. His poverty, he thinks, has weakened him to Julia, and he must master her physically to reassert his dominance. Gayman argues to Julia earlier in the play that "the tempting Hope of means to conquer you, Wou'd put me upon any dangerous Enterprize: Were I the Lord of the Universe" (4.1.89-91). Behn can poke fun of the libertine-as-god myth in Gayman's dream of becoming "Lord of the Universe," perhaps also meant to recall her earlier treatment in her works of Rochester both as a god-like figure and a Hobbesian predator, but she also treats such egotistical beliefs and behavior seriously since it often results in rape, heartbreak, and the objectification of women in many of her works.

Julia does not remain a victim, however, either to her husband or her lover.⁶⁸ She responds angrily at first to their treatment of her, but she moves from anger to a Stoic response that denies any future pleasure to avoid any further pain, refusing all physical

⁶⁸ I disagree with Gallagher's argument that Julia hides her real pleasure in Gayman's deceit and use of her (83-4). It is not through "her nullity, her nothingness, that Julia achieves a new level of self-possession" (84), but through her Epicurean dream, which she believes she shares with Gayman, who cannot believe in its authenticity.

attentions from her husband and her lover. She tells Sir Cautious that she will “separate for ever from this Bed” (5.2.274) and commits to remaining true to her oath: “I’ve sworn, nor are the Stars more fixt than I” (5.2.288). Though Sir Cautious promises to bequeath her to Gayman with his estate, she tells Gayman that she is unwilling to consent to becoming Gayman’s property, particularly as she is undesirable to him: “No sir—you do not like me—a canvas Bag of wooden Ladles were a better Bed-fellow” (5.2.390-1). Though she absolves Gayman, attributing the blame to Sir Cautious’s greedy self-interest, Julia cannot enjoy her imaginative garden of erotic delight with him. She emerges resolved against experiencing any further pain from Gayman. She appears to feel neither anger nor grief anymore, but neither does she rush again into his arms. *The Luckey Chance* ends unhappily for Julia, gambled by her husband to her lover, and she remains alone and unloved, a pitiable figure meant to compel the audience to feel sympathy for her.⁶⁹

Behn struggles with the implications of her heroines’ anger and distress in Julia’s character, and she extends these feelings in the heroines of her fiction, many of them less idealistic than Julia. 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 transgressions. 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, which are impossible to separate from the political

⁶⁹ G.A. Starr has anticipated my thesis by arguing that Behn reacts against the nastiness of Hobbes by concentrating on the sympathy of the victim, though he concentrates primarily on the victimization and feminization of Oronooko and Octavio, both of whom he argues anticipate the sentimental heroes of the eighteenth-century novel of sensibility.

unrest surrounding the Duke of Monmouth or the sexual scandal of Lady Henrietta Berkeley, the model for Silvia. Behn used similar sources for *Love-Letters* as she does for a later and shorter narrative, *The History of the Nun*, a better candidate than Behn's longer work for this chapter because it concentrates almost exclusively on the female libertine's psychological struggles and anguish. The narrator, who is both fascinated by Isabella's beauty and piety and appalled by her outrageous actions, focuses the story on the heroine's distress. Isabella suffers from mental and emotional pain, which she acts out by committing murder. Though she kills, she finds a sympathetic audience in the narrator, who describes her as a compelling figure whose feelings are meant to lend her character authenticity.

Behn wrote several, less violent versions of the "nun" story, which she derived from French stories about Héloïse and Abelard. Héloïse's translated Latin letters helped to shape the culture of *sensibilité* in France during the seventeenth century and the early novel of sensibility in England. Roger Rabutin, a writer in this culture and the most famous French translator of the letters written by Héloïse, published a French edition of these letters in 1687, though the narrative was popular at least since 1616, when the medieval letters were published in Latin. Rabutin augments Héloïse and Abelard's love story in 1687 with features of sensibility, though French writers had already appropriated the epistolary form and love tradition from the original letters and employed the basic narrative for their works—a practice that grew into almost a "cult" around Héloïse, which had already formed in French salons during the 1670s (Kamuf xi-xvi).

The letters were first translated into French in the seventeenth century by Francois Grenaille and included in his *Nouveau recueil de lettres des dames* (1642), an important influence for the *Lettres portugaises traduites en françois* by Gabriel Joseph de Lavergne Guilleragues (1669). Both versions influenced Rabutin, whom Behn read. Another French translation of the story had appeared in 1675 and was widely circulated along with the 1642 and 1669 “editions” of Héloïse’s narrative in France and England shortly thereafter.⁷⁰ Peggy Kamuf offers compelling evidence for the incredible popularity of the story in seventeenth-century France and argues that the lovers’ letters and story compelled writers and readers from their first appearance in the twelfth century to the age of sensibility, both in France and in England—so much so that the bodies of Héloïse and Abelard were exhumed several times starting in 1497. Subsequent exhumations continued into the nineteenth century. The next exhumation and reburial, in 1621, five years after the publication of the Latin letters in 1616, was a direct result of curiosity about the lovers, and every exhumation of the bodies revealed missing teeth or other remains by visitors anxious for “relics” of the famous lovers (Kamuf xi-xvi).

Behn seems to have been fascinated also with the various translations of the story. Transgressive erotic desire, irreligious longings, and mental and emotional distress emerge as shared characteristics of libertinism and *sensibilité*, and the lovers were symbols in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for both movements. Behn rewrote the “nun” story but turns the reader’s expectations of the typical narrative of irreligious, illicit, erotic (and sometimes pornographic) desire, on its head in *The History of the Nun*.

⁷⁰ See also Cecilia Feilla’s “From ‘Sainted Maid’ to ‘Wife in All her Grandeur’: Translations of Heloise, 1687-1817 and Nancy Arenburg’s “Veiling the Erotic: (Re)Writing Heloise’s Epistles.

The tale deviates when Isabella murders her first husband, Henault. Behn has several narrative goals in this novella—to examine the associations of libertinism with violence, to experiment with popular “nun” stories of *sensibilité*, and to inspire an emotional response in her readers that could compel them to feel sorrow for the distressed heroine.

Isabella served also as one model that Defoe likely read before writing his later novel *Roxana*, which, as I will argue in chapter five, responds in part to the kind of fiction that Behn and Haywood wrote. It also was inspired by the court mistresses, namely Nell Gwyn, who is directly alluded to in his novel, and possibly also by the Duchess of Mazarin, Behn’s dedicatee for *The History of the Nun*. In her dedication, Behn writes that Mazarin’s “*irresistible Air of Sweetness, Generosity, and Wit*” (208) inspire her to write, and she dedicates this “true” story of Isabella’s sorrowful plight to Mazarin, whose translated *Memoirs* Behn recalls in the dedication and narrative of *The History of the Nun*. The author argues at the beginning of the *Memoirs* that

it is very Natural to defend one’s self from Calumny; and to make appear, to those, of whom we have received considerable Services, that we are not so unworthy of their Favours, as the traducing World would make us appear to be...I know the chief Glory of a Woman ought to consist, in not making her self to be publickly talked of. And those that know me, know like-wise that I never took much pleasure in things that make too much Noise. But it is not always in our choise to live our own way: And there is a kind of Fatality, even in those things that seem to depend upon the wisest Conduct. (2)

Certainly Mazarin was a woman “publickly talked of,” and she appears, like Cleveland, Gwyn, and Portsmouth, in satire. Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset’s *Colin* (1679), written during the Popish Plot, depicts Mazarin as aging and pretentious:

Then in came dowdy Mazarin,
 That foreign antiquated quean,
 Who soon was told the King no more
 Would deal with an intriguing whore:
 That she already had about her
 Too good an *equipage de foutre*;
 Nor was our monarch such a cully
 To bear a Moor, and swingeing bully.
 Her Grace at this rebuke look'd blank,
 And sneak'd away to villain Frank. (ll. 76-85)

And, in *Rochester's Farewell* (1680), which Rochester may or may not have written, she appears as the "renowned Mazarin" (l. 120) in the most extended satiric portrait of Mazarin that I have found, one whose promiscuity is renowned throughout Europe and surpasses Emperor Claudius's wife, Messaline:

For all the bawds the Court's rank soil does bear
 (And bawds and statesmen grow in plenty there)
 To thee submit and yield (we must be just)
 To thy experienc'd and well-travel'd lust.
 Thy well-known merit claims that thou shouldst be
 First in the glorious roll of infamy.
 To thee they all give place, and homage pay,
 Do all thy lecherous decrees obey:
 Thou queen of lust, thy bawdy subjects they;
 Whilst Sussex, Broghill, Betty Felton come,
 Thy whores of honor, to attend thy throne;
 For what proud strumpet e'er could merit more
 To be anointed the imperial whore?
 For tell me, in all Europe, where's the part
 That is not conscious of thy lewd desert?
 The great Pellean youth whose conquests run
 O'er all the world, and travel'd with the sun,
 Made not his valor to more nations known
 Than thou thy lust, thy matchless lust, has shown.
 Thou world of lewdness, to whose boundless womb
 All climes, all countries do with tribute come;
 Thou sea of lust, that never ebb dost know,
 Whither the rivers of all nations flow.

Lewd Messline was but a type of thee,
 Thou highest, last degree of lechery:
 For in all ages, except her and you,
 Who that e'er sinn'd so high e'er stoop'd so low?
 She to th'imperial bed each night did use
 To bring the stink of the exhausted stews;
 Tir'd (but not satisfi'd) with man did come
 Drunk with abundant lust and reeling home.
 But thou to our admiring age dost show
 More sin than inn'cent Rome did ever know;
 And having all her lewdness outran,
 Takst up with devil, having tir'd out man;
 For what is else that loathsome filthy black
 Which thou and Sussex in your arms did take?
 Nor does old age, which now rides on so fast,
 Make thee come short of all thy lewdness past;
 Though on thy head grey hairs like Etna's snow
 Are shed, thou fire and brimstone art below.
 Thou monstrous thing! in whom at once does rage
 The flames of youth, the impotence of age. (ll. 121-163)

But the author of the *Memoirs* suggests that Mazarin did not seek fame and that she was subject to fortune and “Fatality.” Behn’s Isabella is in a similar circumstance; like the description of Mazarin in the *Memoirs*, Isabella does not take “pleasure in things that make too much Noise,” and her actions are literally fatal. In the dedication to Mazarin, Behn does not ask for her “*Graces Protection*” but for her “*Pity*” (208), asserting that this “*will be a sufficient Glory*” (208) for her heroine. Though Isabella does not represent Mazarin, Behn draws several parallels between the heroine of the *Memoirs* modeled after Mazarin and Isabella.

Behn’s purpose was, undoubtedly, to gain Mazarin’s attention, if not her patronage. Mazarin was, by the late 1680s, no longer the king’s mistress, as Charles II was dead, and she was no longer a wealthy woman after the Revolution in 1688, when

she lost her pension. Behn could not have had monetary motivations for flattering Mazarin. Instead, Behn's narrative shows that she was inspired by Mazarin, whose life, "seem[s] to favour much of the *Romance*," which was not, the author claims, by design or "Inclination," but by "Destiny" (2). The exciting adventures contained in the *Memoirs* would likely have been read by Behn, an avid romance reader who was experimenting with new kinds of literary forms derived from the French *nouvelle*, French *sensibilité*, French romance, and, I would argue, stories (real and fictional) about famous French women. Whether we can believe that the *Memoirs* are true or not, we do know that Mazarin was, like Isabella, a "Fair Vow-Breaker," one who left her husband, Armand-Charles de la Meilleraye, after five years of marriage (1661-66) and traveled on the continent, where she escaped from nunneries before arriving in London in 1675 to become Charles II's mistress (Todd 206-7). She is, perhaps, the most likely muse for the female libertine figure in this period because she rebelled against marriage and motherhood, cross dressing and keeping a salon of intellectuals in Chelsea that included libertines like Saint- Evrémond.

Her *Memoirs* helped to make public her marital unhappiness and financial woes. Arguably the richest woman in France when she married de la Meilleraye in 1661, Mazarin died penniless in 1699, and her story attracted as many writers as it offended. Manley praises her in *The Adventures of Rivella* (1714), and Mary Astell, who condemns her immorality, found much to pity in her marital unhappiness and took it as the basis for her argument in *Some Reflection upon Marriage Occasion'd by the Duke and Duchess of Mazarine's Case which is also consider'd*, published just a year after Mazarin died.

Though not a sympathetic figure to many, Mazarin certainly could have been for Behn, who likened herself as a woman writer to a prostitute and might have believed that the *Memoirs* were written by Mazarin, even if the content was more likely romance than reality.

By dedicating her narrative to Mazarin, Behn wants to establish a connection between her heroine and Mazarin, despite their very different reactions to the possibilities of public humiliation and suffering. She creates it by linking Isabella's unhappy fate to her original broken marital vow, not her murderous tendencies, which may instead recall rumors regarding Mazarin's sister, Olympe, Comtesse de Soissons, who had been accused of murdering her husband (Pearson "The History of the History of the Nun" 244). Pearson argues that the dedication to Mazarin should be taken "as ironic, as clumsily inappropriate, or else as helping to provide a frame that subverts the simple moral tale that the novella appears to offer" ("The History of the History of the Nun" 244). Like Pearson, I believe that the last suggestion best explains the reason for Behn's dedicating the narrative to Mazarin, though, by 1689, Mazarin's financial situation might also have made her a more appealing figure to Behn, whose handwriting has nevertheless been identified in the manuscript "Astrea's Booke for Songs and Satyr's," a collection of satirical poetry recorded by several hands during the middle of the 1680s. The poetry includes unfavorable portraits of former court mistresses Cleveland, Gwyn, and Mazarin, but whether or not Behn shared the same feelings towards the mistresses as the satirist did is unclear (O'Donnell 287). Mazarin's depiction is, according to Mary Ann

O'Donnell, "among the more vicious pictures" (294).⁷¹ Nevertheless, both O'Donnell and Maureen Duffy cite Behn's "To the Fair Clarinda, who made Love to me, imagin'd more than Woman" (1688) and the dedication to Mazarin as evidence for her stronger homoerotic feelings in her later years (O'Donnell 295).⁷² These feelings were possibly directed towards figures like Mazarin.

Whether or not Behn was sexually attracted to Mazarin, she shifts the focus of the story to create a common bond between Isabella, the heroine, Mazarin, the dedicatee, and the sympathetic narrator, who likens herself to Isabella since she "was once design'd an humble Votary in the House of Devotion" (212). Unlike Isabella, raised in such a house and destined for it by the wishes of her father, the narrator claims that she had free choice, deciding against taking holy orders because she could not give up "the Effects and Vanities of the World" (212). Though Isabella has no problems giving up the temptations of the outside world, at least initially, Mazarin certainly would have, and the narrator's explanation ties her with Mazarin, depicted in the *Memoirs* as both a pitiable and exciting figure that undertakes daring escapes from nunneries. Biographers have speculated about the narrator's representing Behn, but whether or not Behn was destined for a convent, she uses the comparisons to create commonalities between the real and imagined women who can share in the grief of difficult choices, circumstances, and consequences.⁷³

⁷¹ O'Donnell notes that the manuscript bears three dates, 1685, 1686, and 1688, and the first one hundred pages are not in Behn's handwriting (287).

⁷² See also Duffy's biography, *The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn, 1640-1689*, p. 277.

⁷³ I am not entirely ready to associate the narrator in the story with Behn, as Todd does, but I would agree that the narrator is "all-important in this fiction, emerging as a definite character" (*The Sign of Angelica*

The broken vows bind this “community” together, and the narrator begins not by condemning those who break vows, but by explaining that the vengeance of the gods on vow breakers is greatest:

Of all the Sins, incident to Human Nature, there is none, of which Heaven has took so particular, visible, and frequent Notice, and Revenge, as on that of *Violated Vows*, which never go unpunished; and the *Cupids* may boast what they will for the encouragement of their Trade of Love, that Heaven never takes cognisance of Lovers broken Vows and Oaths, and that 'tis the only Perjury that escapes the Anger of the *Gods*. (211)

The religious vow breaker angers and offends gods, but not, ironically, the Christian God, to which Isabella makes her vow. The pagan entities controlling fortune punish them, resulting in “so many unhappy Marriages” (211), which bring “Misfortunes...to the Nuptiall'd Pair” (211). Neither of Isabella’s marriages, however, are unhappy, though she does receive punishment by way of public execution for killing her husbands. If the narrator is providing an explanation for Isabella’s death in the story, then the retribution from the gods is not for her bigamy or her murdering, but for her breaking a religious vow to become a nun by marrying Henault.

I am not convinced, however, that the opening pages relate as much to Isabella as they do to Mazarin. The narrator elaborates on marital unhappiness, which seems unrelated to Isabella’s motivation to murder. She kills because of her fear of exposure, not because she feels unhappy in her marriage. On the contrary, the only times Isabella appears miserable in the narrative are when she is either unmarried or widowed. The

77). As Altaba-Artal reminds readers, “it is safer to separate a work of fiction from any kind of autobiography because uniting them entails entering speculative conclusions” (155).

narrator's early explanations appear as a separate defense for women's sexual misconduct, which blames men for women's faults:

What Man that does not boast of the Numbers he had thus ruin'd, and, who does not glory in the shameful Triumph? Nay, what Woman, almost, has not a pleasure in Deceiving, taught, perhaps, at first, by some dear false one, who had fatally instructed her Youth in an Art she ever after practis'd, in Revenge on all those she could be too hard for, and conquer at their own Weapons? For, without all dispute, Women are by Nature more Constant and Just, than Men, and did not their first Lovers teach them the trick of Change, they would be Doves, that would never quit their Mate, and, like *Indian Wives*, would leap alive into the Graves of their deceased Lovers, and be buried quick with 'em. But Customs of Countries change even Nature her self, and long Habit takes her place: The Women are taught, by the Lives of the Men, to live up to all their Vices, and are become almost as inconstant; and 'tis but Modesty that makes the difference, and hardly inclination; so deprav'd the nicest Appetites grow in time, by bad Examples. (211-2)

Chernaik argues that “the opening pages...comprise a feminist protest against the patriarchal organisation of society, with its ritualised traffic in women” (152), but the passage also accomplishes several other goals for Behn. First, it establishes her audience, or women, who are absolved from their broken vows of marriage by the poor example that men set. It also reads like an apology for Mazarin's broken vows, not Isabella's, since her husbands have not been unfaithful, unkind, or unreasonable to her. Instead, both Henault and Villenoy's show great devotion to Isabella, and Villenoy's is willing to cover up her murder of Henault. The argument, then, is better suited to explain Mazarin's sexual transgressions rather than Isabella's. It absolves Mazarin for her sexual escapades, which have made her famous, and for her abandonment of her husband, a religious fanatic who mistreated and tried to imprison her.

After mounting this defense, the narrator begins to connect Isabella with Mazarin by collapsing the broken marital vows with the broken religious ones. She argues that

for the prevention of abundance of Mischiefs and Miseries, that Nunneries and Marriages were not to be enter'd into, 'till the Maid, so destin'd, were of a mature Age to make her own Choices; and that Parents would not make use of their justly assum'd Authority to compel their Children. (213)

Isabella loses her mother at a young age. Raised to believe that she will take holy orders, Isabella lacks parental guidance, losing also her father, who leaves her in a nunnery to start a new life among the Jesuits. Isabella appears, in the early parts of the story, to resemble Mazarin, who also seems not to have had parents guiding her actions or marital choices. In the *Memoirs*, the author assures the reader that Mazarin is “descended from one of the most Illustrious Families of *Rome*; and that [her] Ancestors these three hundred years have held a Rank so eminent and considerable” (2-3). Though she “had the advantage to be descended from a Father, that was one of the most accomplished and best qualified of our family” (3), her mother and father do not raise her.

In Behn's narrative, the narrator claims that the “true” story took place in Iper “in the Dominions of the King of Spain, and now in possession of the King of France” (265). Iper is a derivation of Ypres, Belgium, which was alternately controlled by the Spanish Hapsburgs and the French during the seventeenth century. Behn links the story's location both with the “nun” stories, which were then popular in France, and possibly with Mazarin, born in Rome, but raised mainly in France, where the author claims that she was

married unhappily in a match made by her powerful uncle, Cardinal Mazarin.⁷⁴ Like the author's description of Mazarin in the *Memoirs*, Isabella is beautiful and desired by all the men, who, in Behn's narrative, initially try to lure her away from her original sacred vow to God. Her physical appearance corresponds both to formulaic descriptions of beautiful heroines from romance stories and to the description of Mazarin in the letter attached to the *Memoirs*. At thirteen, Isabella appears

pretty tall of Stature, with the finest Shape that Fancy can create, with all the Adornment of a perfect brown-hair'd Beauty, Eyes black and lovely, Complexion fair; to a Miracle, all her Features of the rarest proportion, the Mouth red, the Teeth white, and a thousand Graces in her Meen and Air; she came no sooner abroad, but she had a thousand Persons sighing for love o'er her; the Reputation her Wit had acquir'd, got her Adorers without seeing her: but when they saw her, they found themselves conquer'd and undone...she rose like a new Star that Eclips'd all the rest, and which set the World a gazing. (215-6)

Mazarin is likewise described, in detail, with "*the Fire of the Black*" (116) in her eyes, with "*as becomming a height, as any Woman can well be*" (119), with "*Sweetness and Mildness*" (117) in her face "*that re-assures those Hearts, which her Charms had Alarmed, and inspires them with that kind of unquiet Gladness, which is next of kin to a tender Inclination*" (118), with a "*Hue or Colour of her Skin, [which] is Naturally most lively; and so delicately cleer, that...any man that views it with Curiosity, can justly deny*

⁷⁴Pearson speculates that one reason Behn claims historical truth for her fiction was because she needed to claim a kind of androgynous literary ability that could claim "both feminine imagination and masculine reason" ("The Short Fiction (excluding *Oroonoko*)"192).

it to be whiter than the Driven Snow,” and with hair that is “*shining Black*” (118). Her mouth and lips are “*very Graceful, and Charming*” (117), as is her body and her air.

Behn could have, like the author, drawn on romance conventions of ideal beauty, or she could have seen Mazarin either in person or in the portraits made of her, which confirm that she had clear, white skin, and dark hair and eyes. She is not, as the writer of the letter asserts,

Baby Visaged, and Puppet-like Faces of France; in whose Composition Nature alone triumphs over all those Artifices and Helps, which...painted Ladies make use of, to recommend themselves, and their borrowed Graces to the dotting World, and to the silly Adorations of their Conceited Adorers. (116)

Such faces, of course, could easily be those of Mazarin’s chief French rival, the Duchess of Portsmouth, whose birth was not as noble as Mazarin’s. Her “borrowed Graces” came from Charles II and Louis XIV, not from a noted aristocratic background, which the French and English made sure to hold against her. Mazarin, the writer suggests, has no real rivals either in aristocratic birth or in beauty. Neither does Isabella, whose beauty and charm surpass ordinary women also. Though both women’s appearance and qualities conform to romance formulations, Mazarin, like Isabella, appeared to have actually captivated many who fell in love with her beauty.

A more important link between the *Memoirs* and Behn’s narrative, however, emerges in both women’s need for a sympathetic community to understand their difficult marital situations, if we assume, as Behn could have, that Mazarin’s *Memoirs* are true and that the author’s sympathetic portrait of Mazarin is intended to compel understanding from the reader. Isabella, to a much greater extent than the author of the *Memoirs*, also

looks for an audience to share her pain. She finds a compassionate one initially in another nun, Katteriena, who follows a more traditional path than Isabella does by entering a nunnery after committing sin rather than leaving it to pursue illicit desire. She relates her story of illicit love, providing another version of the “nun” story embedded within the larger framework. This is important because it extends the “community” Behn wants to establish inside and outside of the narrative.

Katteriena is the sister to Isabella’s first love, Henault, for whom Isabella confesses her love “with abundance of Tears” (224), a sign of sensibility that compels Katteriena to lessen her friend’s pain of “Desparing Love” (225), conceptualized as “so violent a Disease” (224) in its affliction. Behn depicts thwarted love as a “Madness” for Isabella, caught between her Catholic religious vows and her forbidden love, and she attaches to this madness a social consequence, since the forbidding of desire will, the narrator argues, either “render her an hated Object of Scorn to the Censuring World, or force her Hand to commit a Murder upon her self” (225-6). The “disease” of love produces violent reactions, and religious devotion cannot help Isabella:

nor her fervent and continual Prayers, her nightly Watchings, her Mortifications on the cold Marble in long Winter Season, and all her Acts of Devotion abate one spark of this shameful Feaver of Love, that was destroying her within. (226)

She attempts to keep the secret because of the shame, but the narrator suggests in this passage that these unexpressed desires engender destruction, either of the mind or body.

Once she shares her longings with Henault, she finds an outlet for her passion and a

remedy for her “disease,” which is no longer shameful to her because she can share it with him. Her greatest difficulties arise when she has no one to feel for and with her.

Isabella becomes stricken by her emotions after her marriage. She leaves the convent to marry Henault, finding happiness in her married life with him until she believes that he dies. It is because she cannot express her grief, mourning alone for “the space of a whole Year, never suffering the Visit of any Man, but of a near Relation” (244), that she begins to suffer. The narrator concentrates on her inability to share her grief, which inspires admirers to write their devotion to her. She is made more beautiful by her sorrow and more compelling both to men and to the reader, meant to grieve at her loss alongside her. Isabella cannot find a community to grieve with her in the text, and the reader is meant to feel for the heroine, whose grief is ameliorated only when Villenoy, a former admirer, arrives. Isabella can again alleviate her grief by transferring her emotional attachment from Henault to Villenoy, whom she also marries both “for Interest” (245) and because she “fancy’d, the Hand of Heaven had pointed out her Destiny, which she could not avoid, without a Crime” (245). She “now transferr’d all that Tenderness she had for him [Henault], to *Villenoy*” (247), filling the void of her childlessness, another source of shame for Isabella, by working for the poor. Her marriage and charity work again “subdue her Heart to that Calmness” (245), which solitude prevents. Though modern readers likely find Isabella’s financial motivations for marrying Villenoy repulsive, Behn and Mazarin were both in need of money (it is a constant concern in Behn’s writings) and could sympathize with Isabella’s material considerations for marriage, the only way for her to acquire and secure wealth. The

narrator concentrates less on Isabella's self-interested choices for marriage and more on her fear of divine retribution if she does not marry Villenoy, making the financial gains seem like an added benefit to an inevitable decision rather than a primary motivator.

Isabella's need for a community and the potential for public shame and divine punishment drive her throughout the narrative. When Henault returns to her alive, though much altered, she once more experiences violent emotions and an impossible dilemma that she cannot share with others, separating her from her community and her husband. Behn concentrates on features of sensibility both in her character and in Henault, who emerges again in the narrative as a figure of distress, "trembling and speechless before her" and "(with the Tears of Joy standing in his Eyes, and not daring suddenly to approach her, for fear of encreasing that Disorder he saw in her pale Face) began to speak to her, and cry'd" (248). Isabella cannot initially respond because of the burden of guilt she feels; she is overcome with emotion that cannot be shared, and it leads to her intense mental distress. Her immediate reaction is to wish that "it was not he" (248), but then "Shame and Confusion fill'd her Soul" (249). She cannot feel for Henault, who has been replaced in her affections, and who also appears no longer as the handsome young lover, but as a weary, haggard, and almost unrecognizable traveler. She finds that she

is not only expos'd to all the Shame imaginable; to all the Upbraiding, on his part when he shall know she is marry'd to another; but all the Fury and Rage of Villenoy, and the Scorn of the Town, who will look on her as an Adulteress: She sees Henault poor, and knew, she must fall from all the Glory and Tranquillity she had for five happy years triumph'd in; in which time, she had known no Sorrow, or Care. (249)

She cannot love, accept, or acknowledge him to anyone because she might be rejected and would thereby lose the community that she desperately needs emotionally. Feeling as though she will become a social pariah for her bigamy, she murders Henault, eliminating the problem.

This moment marks a turning point in the narrative, one in which the reader should also repudiate the false Isabella, who cannot love her first husband because she will lose her reputation, her second husband, and her social status. I agree with Chernaik that the novel “in no way serve[s] a didactic end” (150), but then didacticism is almost never Behn’s goal as a writer. The narrator instead turns, as Chernaik points out, to providing a defense for libertinism and for Isabella, explaining that,

she could not recall her Love, for Love, like Reputation, once fled, never returns more. ’Tis impossible to love, and cease to love, (and love another) and yet return again to the first Passion, tho’ the Person have all the Charms, or a thousand times more than it had, when it first conquer’d. This Mystery in Love, it may be, is not generally known, but nothing is more certain. One may a while suffer the Flame to languish, but there may be a reviving Spark in the Ashes, rak’d up, that may burn anew; but when ’tis quite extinguished, it never returns or rekindles. (249)

Henault, of course, returns without having the increased charms the narrator describes, since he is “a Man in a very odd Habit, and a worse Countenance” (248), rendered totally unrecognizable to Maria, the maid, or to Isabella, who identifies him only by his voice. The narrator exculpates Isabella from her inability to love Henault primarily because of the “Mystery of Love” that makes it suffer, languish, and then die. Once it is “quite extinguished,” the narrator explains, it cannot be resumed. The narrator’s argument is inconsistent with Isabella’s character, however, which is, on the one hand, deeply

religious, and, on the other, often rebellious. But it is never flighty. Isabella does not fall in and out of love easily, more often rejecting lovers than accepting them. Why, then, does the narrator provide an explanation that does not appear congruent with Isabella's character?

The description and explanation again appear more appropriate to Mazarin's libertine practice of love, since she had numerous lovers, than to Isabella's, though the narrator suggests that falling out of love with someone, particularly someone no longer attractive, is a natural response. On these grounds, Isabella has "in [her] Opinion, far less Excuse" for the murder of Villenoy's than of Henault (253). After all, Villenoy's, unlike Henault, is "Young, Vigorous, and Strong" (253). This superficial excuse is one reason we should not align the narrator's values with Behn's, but it works as a narrative strategy that Behn perhaps thought could be compelling to Mazarin, a libertine who fell in and out of love easily. It attempts to explain Isabella's actions in terms that Mazarin could pity, even if she likely would not have condoned Isabella's murdering of her husbands.

A more likely explanation of Isabella's actions emerges from her sense of shame, which she cannot communicate to others because she believes that they will not sympathize with her guilt or pain. She cannot find anyone who can share her grief or alleviate her conscience because she believes she will become an outcast if Henault's identity is discovered. Her inability to find an alternative to her desperate situation leads her to commit a destructive act. The narrator explains that she cannot find an audience even in God, and she appears to go mad because she suffers alone:

Isabella essay'd to Pray, but, alas! it was in vain, she was distracted with a thousand Thoughts what to do, which the more she thought, the more it distracted her; she was a thousand times about to end her Life, and, at one stroke, rid her self of the Infamy, that, she saw, must inevitably fall upon her; but Nature was frail, & the Tempter strong: And after a thousand Convulsions, even worse than Death it self, she resolv'd upon the Murder of *Henault*, as the only means of removing all Obstacles to her future Happiness; she resolv'd on this, but after she had done so, she was seiz'd with so great Horror, that she Imagin'd, if she perform'd it, she should run Mad; and yet, if she did not, she should be also Frantick, with the Shames and Miseries that would befall her. (251)

Isabella faces an impossible choice. If she does not kill Henault, she will suffer mental distress as a result of her rejection from her society. If she does kill Henault, she will live with the private guilt of murder, which already begins to torment her body and mind. She decides that losing her community is a greater evil than dealing with the private knowledge of Henault's death, yet, once she smothers him, she "fell into a Swound with the Horror of the Deed" (251), feeling physical effects of madness in which she is

Awaken'd to more and new Horrors, she flyes all frightened from the Chamber, and fancies, the Phantom of her dead Lord pursues her; she runs from Room to Room, and starts and stares, as if she saw him continually before her. Now all that was ever Soft and Dear to her, with him, comes into her Heart, and, she finds, he conquers anew, being Dead, who could not gain her Pity, while Living... Ten thousand Tortures and Wrecks are fastening on her, to make her confess the horrid Murder. (252)

The narrator privileges the heart in her description of Isabella, suggesting its importance to our understanding of Isabella, whose heart also resembles the one described in Creech's translation of *De rerum natura* as a feeling and thinking faculty. In her madness, she turns again to Villenoy, whom she had wanted to keep ignorant of Henault, to share and thereby alleviate her pain, forgetting in her distress that she must keep her secret. Throughout the story, she acts out the violence of her emotions when she

cannot express them. Her weeping is “in the most violent manner” (252) and moves Villenoy’s “with Love and Compassion” (252) such that he “lost all Patience, and rav’d, and cry’d,” imploring her: “Tell me, and tell me immediately, what’s the matter?” (252). He physically demonstrates the visible effects of her suffering, manifested in his “Face pale, and his Eyes fierce” (252), showing her that he can feel for Isabella because, like her, he is a figure of sensibility.

Villenoy’s offer to share her grief overwhelms Isabella, who needs to confess as much as she needs to conceal her crime. He reminds her that she “*never fled from [him], when Ill, but came to [his] Arms and...Bosom, to find a Cure*” (252). She considers him as a confessor, a Christ figure who can forgive her of her unpardonable sin and thereby lift her burden, “curing” her of the emotional affliction that she suffers. He promises to forgive whatever sin she has committed, and she believes him long enough to work out her initial fit of madness and guilt. Instead of a Christ figure that saves her, however, Villenoy becomes a partner in her crime. He suffers the same fate as Henault does since Isabella cannot believe him.

Already, Behn acknowledges the association between characteristics of sensibility and women rather than men. Stereotypical depictions of male figures with these kinds of emotional capacities are often depicted as fops like Etherege’s Sir Fopling, scorned by the other characters in the play. Neither Henault nor Villenoy, who visibly demonstrate their compassion, suffering, and emotion, survive in the text. They are symbolically killed because they cannot exist in Isabella’s society. Though the idea of the man of sensibility is suggested in earlier eighteenth-century texts by Steele and Pope, who

imagines himself in poems like *Eloisa to Abelard* feeling for Eloisa's plight, the ideal of the man of sentiment or sensibility is a later eighteenth-century conception.

In Behn's text, Isabella does not believe it possible that either of her husbands can feel for her. As a result, she realizes her tenuous position as a bigamist and murderer, and she is

fill'd with Thoughts all Black and Hellish...She imagin'd, that she could live after a Deed so black, Villenoy's would be eternal reproaching her, if not with his Tongue, at least with his Heart, and embolden'd by one Wickedness, she was the readier for another, and another of such a Nature. (253)

According to the narrator, she has "far less Excuse, than the first," yet the narrator is also willing to attribute her motives to Fate, which begins to "afflict" (253) her, an argument that suggests that destiny orchestrates these murders. Isabella, conceptualized as a character moved to act by Fate rather than some innate evil, nevertheless recognizes that she has committed and confessed an unpardonable sin to Villenoy's, and she cannot cope rationally with the realization that he might reject her. The burden of potential solitude becomes too much for Isabella, whose need for a community to understand her outweighs her need for a husband.

Isabella weeps throughout the night and in the morning, an emotional response meant to show her grief and remorse. She is rendered almost speechless by the murders, which provoke "a thousand tender and endearing things" (256) in her mind. As a figure of sensibility, Isabella feels acute physical manifestations of her emotional pain, swooning when they bring in the body of Villenoy's, whose eyes open and look at her. To alleviate her distress, she must find an outlet to vent her terrible guilt and eventually

confesses to the crime. Instead of the town reviling her, they pity her, a reaction that compels them to feel for Isabella, who is made “Chearful and Easie” (257) under her death sentence because of their compassion. She becomes an ironic figure of inspiration that preaches about the dangers of vow breaking, not murder, to others. Behn emphasizes the connection between Isabella, the narrator, and the townspeople, who appear to become entranced by her. Isabella compels them to feel for her plight and argues that her story provides a warning to others, binding her audience to her, even on the scaffold. The narrator explains that,

When the Day of Execution came, she appear'd on the Scaffold all in Mourning, but with a Meen so very Majestick and Charming, and a Face so surprizing Fair, where no Languishment or Fear appear'd, but all Chearful as a Bride, that she set all Hearts a flaming, even in that mortifying Minute of Preparation for Death: She made a Speech of half an Hour long, so Eloquent, so admirable a Warning to the *Vow-Breakers*, that it was amazing to her hear her, as it was to behold her. (257)

The narrator's description shows Isabella's persuasive powers, and it shifts the reader's attention away from the crime of murder, focusing instead on her beauty, courage, easy spirit, and ability to sway hearts and minds in a way that suggests that the narrator feels homoerotic desire for her. The narrator lovingly dwells on Isabella's physical charms, describing her “Beautiful Head” and “Delicate Body” (258), which is nonetheless capable of committing two murders within the space of a night.

Despite her crimes, Isabella “was generally Lamented, and Honourably Bury'd” (258). Instead of the narrator or the town rejecting her, they embrace her as a virtuous woman whose piety and goodness outweigh her terrible sins. She meets her death passively, accepting it almost as a martyred saint might, and her devotional life is

remembered over her crimes by those watching her death. Her delicate body and mind demonstrate that she suffers, and Behn is able to refashion her, by the end, as a model of “virtue in distress,” anticipating later eighteenth-century heroines of sensibility, whose beautiful bodies are attuned to suffering like Isabella’s.

The Luckey Chance and *The History of the Nun* feature female libertine figures that are feeling beings with qualities of rebelliousness, eroticism, and irreligiousness and with intense emotional faculties, including the capacity to feel great anguish. Behn significantly changes the female libertine figure from an aggressive character featured prominently in sex comedies of the 1670s to one that visibly demonstrates signs of sensibility primarily through a need for others to understand and feel for her. The female libertines in both of the works I have considered in this chapter show a psychological intensity meant to inspire empathetic feelings from the audience, and though they continue to transgress social, religious, and moral boundaries, they also demonstrate that they need to express the pain of isolation to others as a way of expressing the self. The transition did not “undo” the category of the female libertine, but it concentrated more on the emotional expressions and experiences of this figure.

Behn’s experimentations both with the interiority of characters and with the female libertine during the 1680s had a lasting influence on contemporary and later women writers, some of whom imitated her or invoked her name for inspiration. Jane Barker rewrote Behn’s *The History of the Nun* in her *The Lining of the Patchwork Screen* (1726), Trotter rewrote Behn’s novel *Agnes de Castro, or, The Force of Generous Love* (1688) as a tragedy, *Agnes de Castro* (1696), and Manley featured Behn as the wise and

generous Astrea in *The New Atalantis* (1709). The 1680s, 1690s, and early 1700s saw a wave of new women writers, particularly for the stage, including Trotter, Sarah Fyge Egerton, Judith Drake, Mary Pix, and Susanna Centlivre, among others. Though many of the women writers who followed Behn shied away from erotic or transgressive themes that dominate Behn's works, all of them were indebted to the legacy that she had left in her depictions of female libertines.

The focus of the next chapter will be on one of the less studied women writers following Behn, Catharine Trotter, whose novella, *Olinda's Adventures*, and comedy, *Love at a Loss, or, the Most Votes Carry It*, continue to look at the female libertine figure's social difficulties, expressions of distress, and need for sympathy from others. Trotter, like her predecessor Behn, experimented with multiple genres, writing fiction, prose, and drama. In her very early writings, she appears fascinated by erotic narratives and versions of the tragic "nun" story, but she demonstrates more ambivalence towards their libertine qualities than Behn had, ultimately turning away from libertinism entirely, both in her personal life and her later writings. Trotter's early works question the only socially appropriate opportunity available to women, or marriage, and its confinement for women, and she focuses on the increased scrutiny of women's sexual conduct by looking at the implications of the female libertine's place in the transition between the Restoration era of wit and the emerging era of sentiment, without offering conclusive answers about how or if this figure should express her erotic desires. On the one hand, such figures acknowledge or act on their sexual impulses, rebelling against prevailing normative constraints that expect women to remain chaste. On the other, they experience

loss, pain, and frustration as they realize that society will condemn them for their transgressive tendencies. As a result, the libertine heroines in both works agonize over the difficult positions in which they find themselves.

CHAPTER V
LOVING AT A LOSS: CATHARINE TROTTER AND THE DISTRESSED
FEMALE LIBERTINE

Behn's turn to fiction signals several important changes during the late 1680s and 1690s, a time of transition, not only politically, but also in terms of literary tastes, which were beginning to reject the loose moral boundaries of libertinism. The theater experienced a decline during the 1680s when Charles II died. Royal patronage waned, as James II, William and Mary, and Anne took less interest in the theater than Charles had, and, in 1682, Dorset Garden and Drury Lane came together to form the United Company, the only theater in operation from 1682 to 1695. The company needed little new material from dramatists, resulting in the relative poverty of previously successful playwrights like Behn, Thomas Otway, and Nathaniel Lee (Munns 96).

A rival theater, Lincoln's Inn Fields, opened in 1695 with Congreve's *Love for Love*, and it allowed for more plays to be written by male and female dramatists. Though Congreve, Southerne, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar continued to stage libertine ideas and characters in their plays, professional women writers like Susannah Centlivre often avoided or rejected licentious topics. Several, including Trotter, questioned libertinism's place in this new, post-Revolutionary period, which was based on Lockean political principles of "liberty and property." Though Behn only lived a year after the Glorious Revolution, she 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 her long novel, *Love Letters*, Silvia, the main female libertine, acts on her sexual desires, but she cannot be reintegrated into her society.

Like Behn before her, Trotter continued to characters that find it difficult to find their place in a culture that espouses ideals of freedom yet expects women to remain chaste, socially decorous, and confined to the home. Trotter's novella, *Olinda's Adventures*, written in the early 1690s, and comedy, *Love at a Loss, or the Most Votes Carries It*, performed in 1700, concentrate on the female libertine's resistance to social and religious rules restricting her behavior, including marriage. In both texts, this figure tests gender-specific codes of conduct for women by expressing or acting on socially inappropriate sexual desires.

The stricter moral climate in which Trotter wrote did not mean that she joined those hostile towards libertinism, at least not in her youth. Her comedy was performed after Jeremy Collier's attack on the theater, *A Short View of the Immortality, and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), which begins by arguing that "The business of plays is to recommend virtue and discountenance vice" (493). He condemns sex comedies and libertine writers for "their smuttiness of expression; their swearing, profaneness, and lewd application of Scripture; their abuse of the clergy, their making their top characters libertines and giving them success in their debauchery" (493-4). Wycherley, Dryden, Congreve, Otway, and D'Urfey are among the chief offenders, and Behn continued to be a favorite target in the eighteenth century. Pope, who satirizes several women writers in his verse, including Eliza Haywood and Lady Mary Wortley

Montagu, unfavorably depicts Behn as a “loose” woman in “The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace: To Augustus”: “The stage how loosely does Astraea tread, / Who fairly puts all characters to bed!” (ll. 290-291).

Collier’s multiple condemnations of the theater in the early eighteenth century indicate the increasing importance of morality to art, and he sparked reactions from literary critics and dramatists. Congreve refutes Collier’s *Short View*, angrily denouncing Collier’s misinterpretation of his works, and while John Dennis also takes issue with Collier, he nevertheless suggests that the theater needs reform from its bawdy Restoration heritage. His later *A Defense of Sir Fopling Flutter* (1722) goes so far as to indicate that the characters in Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* fulfill Horatian standards of pleasing and instructing theater-goers through characters’ exaggerated folly.

The debate about the theater’s purpose and moral importance continued into the eighteenth century, but the attacks on the stage did not prevent dramatists like Congreve from writing a spate of new sex comedies during the 1690s and early 1700s, when both Trotter’s *Olinda’s Adventures* and *Love at a Loss* (1700) were written. Trotter’s female libertines examine what the new emphasis on morality means for women, and her characters suffer both emotional pain and potential social ostracism for their life choices. Both works present early versions of the heroine of sensibility that nevertheless show decidedly libertine characteristics, reflecting a direct heritage from Trotter’s predecessor, Behn. Like Astell, whose *Some Reflections Upon Marriage* (1700) was published the same year that Trotter’s comedy was produced, Trotter questions marriage as the only socially appropriate role for women. Her novella, *Olinda’s Adventures*, features a heroine

who decides to remain single rather than marrying unhappily, anticipating several of Astell's major ideas that women should reject a life of misery in marriage, which she likens to slavery.

The libertinism that critics like Constance Clark, Anne Kelley, and Heather King have overlooked in Trotter's early works, like *Love at a Loss*, is foreshadowed in *Olinda's Adventures*, and though Clark, Kelley, and King have argued that Trotter was a moral writer throughout her career, Trotter's heroines in her fiction and comedy, Olinda, Lesbia, Miranda, and Lucilia, feel tension between their libertine longings and their sense of morality. Trotter's texts are caught between two paradigms, or two social worlds, and the heroines in them are important for understanding how the female libertine is depicted during the 1690s as a figure as much in moral distress as she is in psychological and emotional turmoil. Trotter's concentration on this figure's anguish leaves a legacy to later eighteenth-century writers of fiction, including Defoe, who presents a female libertine figure in misery in *Roxana*.

Trotter's heroines allowed her to work out the difficulties that she likely would have felt in the 1690s. Relatively little is known about Trotter's early life, but the details are relevant because they influenced the direction of her literary interests, which changed significantly after her marriage to a clergyman in 1708. She was born in London in 1679, an Anglican of Scottish heritage whose father died in 1684, leaving his family in severely reduced financial circumstances. Despite these difficulties, she taught herself French and Latin grammar and logic. When Trotter began publishing in the 1690s, she was unmarried and fatherless. Prior to her marriage, she explored new literary territories as

well as new religious ones, briefly converting to Catholicism before eventually returning to the Anglican faith and more traditional duties as a wife and mother. Trotter married the Reverend Patrick Cockburn and began raising a family, which seems to have ended her career as a dramatist almost before it began. It also ended her interest in libertinism. Before her marriage, Trotter experimented with a variety of different genres, writing an epistolary novel, poetry, plays, and a system of logic based on her readings of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), which she defends in 1702 against one of his detractors, a theologian and philosopher, Thomas Burnet, in *The Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding*. After her marriage, she never wrote another play or novella, perhaps as a result not only of her marriage but also because of her unfavorable depiction in *The Female Wits* (1704), a satirical play in which she, along with Mary Pix and Delariviere Manley, was a target. *The Female Wits* likely provided enough incentive to dissuade Trotter from future derision or from unwanted public attention, which any further exploration of the licentious themes in her early fiction and only comedy might produce. Behn's writing about libertine themes made her an easy target, one that Trotter and other women writers interested in libertinism wanted to avoid becoming, often without success (Steeves ix-xlii).

In his Preface to Catharine Trotter Cockburn's works, Thomas Birch assures readers that "Her conversation was always innocent, useful and agreeable, without the least affectation of being thought a wit" (xlvi), and her writings and correspondence after marriage reflect her interests in rationalism, moral sense theory, and natural law, which

she read in the philosophies of Locke, Frances Hutcheson, and Samuel Clarke.⁷⁵ This edition included only one play, a tragedy, *Fatal Friendship*, but not her comedy, and it helped to construct an identity of Trotter in terms similar to Birch's description. But this is not how the young Trotter likely saw herself in the 1690s, if we can read the witty, fatherless fourteen-year-old author at all in the witty, fatherless eighteen-year-old heroine, Olinda, of *Olinda's Adventures*, which Robert Adams Day calls a "romanticized autobiography" (iv). Perhaps like Trotter, Olinda wants to write the story of her life, her loves, her suitors, and her private feelings of erotic desire but can only find an outlet for expression through the act of writing them. Like her heroine, however, Trotter faced a world that increasingly condemned the kind of witty, erotic libertine women that she depicts in her earliest works.

Though Trotter left her brief career as a novelist and dramatist in London, years later she appeared as "Calista," a libertine character in Manley's scandal fictions, *The New Atalantis* and *The Adventures of Rivella* (1714). Trotter had dropped Manley's acquaintance after Manley openly lived with John Tilly, or "Cleander." Trotter had asked Manley to help Tilly out of his legal difficulties, and this "Cleander" shares the same name and possibly the same role as Olinda's male confidant in *Olinda's Adventures* (Clark 40). In his biography, Birch suggests that Trotter disapproved of Manley's "licentiousness" (lviii) and wanted to avoid her because of her immoral life and writings, but Manley tells a different story in *Rivella*—that Trotter was mistress first to Tilly, a

⁷⁵ Birch's biography of her appeared as the Preface to *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn, Theological, Moral, Dramatic and Poetical, with an Account of the Life of the Author by Thomas Birch* in two volumes (1751).

married man.⁷⁶ Whether or not Birch, who knew Trotter closer to the end of her life, or Manley, who knew her in early years, is correct about Trotter's youth remains inconclusive. Notably, Birch omits *Olinda's Adventures* and *Love at a Loss* from his edition of her works.

Trotter may have spent her life after marriage to a clergyman, as Birch claims, "always innocent, useful and agreeable, without...being thought a wit," but in her novella *Olinda's Adventures*, her heroine styles herself as a wit, ridiculing those who lack it. She pines for her married lover, though she does not act on her urges as Lesbia does prior to Act One in *Love at a Loss*. Even if Trotter was not the promiscuous woman Manley depicts, she did question religious, social, and sexual restrictions in her youth, though, unlike Behn, she does not stage Lesbia's sexual liaison. Whatever inspired Trotter in the 1690s—a libertine spirit, the London intellectual and theatrical scene, or her acquaintances with Congreve, Farquhar, Wycherley, and Dryden—she features female libertine figures that challenge appropriate lines of feminine decorum.⁷⁷

One of Trotter's earliest characters is Olinda, a young woman writing letters about her lover, the married Cloridon, to another, Cleander.⁷⁸ Her unwillingness to marry or obey her mother and her writing to Cleander about her passion show her tendency to test prescriptive social codes that require her to maintain her chastity and to marry. The

⁷⁶ See the reference to Trotter as "Calista" in Manley's *Rivella*, p. 66, and Constance Clark's chapter on Manley, p. 114-5.

⁷⁷ Jacqueline Pearson makes a similar argument for Manley's heroines, whom she suggests are "struggling to control their own lives in a hostile world" (201). This same could be said, however, for Trotter's heroines, who do not always submit to established social codes, even if they know that they will be punished for them.

⁷⁸ Sonia Villegas-Lopèz and Josephine Donovan argue that Olinda's narrative is a case history, which Donovan calls "feminist casuistry" (78). Both suggest that Olinda's treatment of the subject of marriage offers a narrative truth that anticipates and influences later novelists (Villegas-Lopèz 270-1).

question Olinda repeatedly asks herself is one that Trotter would again tackle in her comedy: Should she marry without love because it is socially appropriate, or should she follow her heart and become Cloridon's mistress? She knows what her moral and social duties require of her, or marriage, but she continually resists eligible suitors, desiring instead a socially inappropriate choice. Writing about her lover and her private feelings compromises her chastity and indicates her rebelliousness. Her last letter shows her conflicted feelings for Cloridon, and the epistolary form Trotter chooses communicates the emotional intensity of her anguish to the reader.

Ballaster persuasively argues for the importance of French fictional forms for women writers, including the romance, *nouvelle*, *chronique scandaleuse*, and the epistle, all of which influence *Olinda's Adventures*, which Trotter writes in what Ballaster has described as a "feminocentric frame" (42).⁷⁹ The epistle communicates the private feelings of its author, though Sonia Villegas-Lopèz notes that Trotter also chose the popular framed-nouvelle format, which, unlike the romance, concentrates on realistic and comic details (269), allowing Olinda to satirize society while also expressing her erotic frustrations. In her earliest letters, she lacks compassion for the fools who fall for her, old and young alike, explaining to Cleander that she "took a malicious pleasure in Laughing at their Follies" (23). A notable shift occurs in the tone of her letters when she describes Cloridon, for whom she willingly confesses her illicit love in the last letter. In her letters, she is both a feeling being and a wit, and her often ironic tone, combined with Trotter's use of the French heroic romance tradition, blends Restoration wit with a tragic

⁷⁹ Ballaster provides a helpful analysis of the importation of these forms into England, pp.42-66.

perspective expressing ill-fated love and repressed sexuality. On the one hand, she ironically comments on the deficiencies of the young women and men that she meets, while, on the other, she rhapsodizes about her desires and frustrated love for Cloridon.

Janet Todd suggests that the French heroic romance tradition influences women writers like Trotter during the 1690s, especially in their scrutiny of love, which Todd asserts was distinct from lust in Trotter's works (49). Olinda does not, however, necessarily separate love from lust. She distinguishes her reason from her physical passions, understanding the moral choice she needs to make and the sexual choice that many women, to their ruin, have already made by acting on their passions:

But at length considering the occasion of my misfortune, it represented it self to me, not only as my Folly but my Crime; and then I concluded it must be a Crime to grieve for the loss of that, which 'twas a Crime to Love; and so fix'd a resolution of overcoming my Passion, which I endeavour'd to do by Reason, and by diversions. Had I had you my Friend to assist me with your Counsels, I had found it much less difficult; but now I had the strongest part of my self to Combat without any Aid: I often gave ground, and sometime suffer'd my self to be vanquish'd by the bewitching Reflections of what unequall'd satisfactions I had found in his Company, and how many happy hours I enjoy'd with him; but some good thought wou'd rouse my Soul to strive again, and then the Victory was mine. I find by experience 'tis but bravely, heartily, and thoroughly Resolving upon a thing, and 'tis half done: There's no passion, no Temptation so strong, but Resolution can overcome: All is to be able to Resolve; there's the point, for one must lose a little of the first Ardour, before one can do that; and many of our Sex have ruin'd themselves, for want of time to think. (101-3)

The erotic possibilities she explores in her letter to Cleander exert a strong influence of “bewitching Reflections of...unequall'd satisfactions” over her. She is “vanquish'd” by these reflections, which conflict her soul and her body, tempted despite her mind's “Resolution” to prevent herself from sexual ruin. Thinking and feeling are set against each other in the letters, yet it will be through the imaginative process that she resolves

the sexual tensions she feels, finding a space to express them in her letters. Writing to one man, Cleander, offers her a way of communicating her erotic desires for another, and it replaces the sexual experience she wants with Cloridon, who prevents her marriage to Orontes or anyone else by asking her to remain single and alone, calling her his “Lovely Nun for me confined” (127) in the verses that he sends to her.

Trotter, like Behn, was responding also to the sensationalized “nun” stories that circulated throughout France and England. Rabutin’s French version of Héloïse’s story in 1687 likely provided one model for Olinda’s character, whose sexual yearnings in her last letters most closely reflect this version of the “nun” story. In 1718, Samuel Briscoe published a collection of epistles, *Familiar Letters of Love, Gallantry and Several Occasions*, that includes selections from fictional letters taken from *Olinda’s Adventures*. This collection also included the first, most impassioned letter by Héloïse to Abelard, which Day notes was likely translated by Sir Roger L’Estrange. The collection features letters written by Etherege, Behn, Dryden, Manley, Farquhar, and others (Day ii). Though the 1718 edition of *Olinda’s Adventures* does not include the ninth letter, the original 1693 publication, *Letters of Love and Gallantry and Several Other Subjects. All Written by Ladies*, volume one, does.

Kelley disputes the authenticity of the last two letters, which she argues might have been added by the bookseller “to spice up the text” (56), though no direct evidence exists to suggest that this is true. The last two letters reflect the tone and emotional intensity of epistolary romances like L’Estrange’s *Five Love-Letters from a Nun to a Cavalier* (1678) and Behn’s *Love-Letters*, two likely sources read by Trotter, rather than

the earlier, more satiric tone of the letters to Cleander. Olinda addresses her lover, Cloridon, in the last letters rather than Cleander, and this change of audience accounts for the alterations in her narrative voice and style.

Olinda's letters to her lover demonstrate a more strongly articulated emotional intensity and sexual energy than those she writes to Cleander. In her letters to Cloridon, she chastises her absent lover, but also shows him her anguish and sexual longing:

'Tis not an hour ago, since I believ'd I hated you: I thought I cou'd have rail'd at you, have call'd you base, seducer of my Honour, Traytor, that under a pretence of Love, design'd my Ruin; but Ah! Those tender Excuses which you sent me, soon discover'd the mistake, and show'd me it was only Angry Love, that so Transported me: And now 'tis turn'd to as violent a Grief, which wou'd fain ease it self in Complaints: But I am so Wretched, that even that poor Comfort is deny'd me; for who can I complain to, when in Lamenting my misfortune I must expose our Crime: For yours my Lord, has involv'd me in the guilt; and all those thoughts, and Actions, which were innocent before, must be condemn'd as the Causes of such ill Effects: For if I had never lov'd you, or if I had never own'd it, nor consented to see you, you had not desir'd any thing of me that cou'd shock my Virtue: Now I can't think of 'em without shame and anger. That Love which shin'd before so Pure and Bright, appears now the blackest thing in Nature; and I hate my self, for not hating you: For I own (tho' I blush in owning) that I love you still; Nay, I believe that I forgive you too; but I must never, never see you more: No, tho' you Swear you Repent, and that you wou'd not Repeat your Crime, if you were certain of success. Would not you believe I shou'd as easily Pardon your breach of this Vow, as I did the last, which you made me as solemnly? (132-134)

The same could have been written by Héloïse to Abelard, at least in the imaginatively translated French version provided by Rabutin. Héloïse also laments the broken vows her lover makes to her, but Olinda, unlike Héloïse, has not consummated her passion with her lover. In their letters, both women chastise their lovers for a lack of true feeling and rebuke their own passionate desires, though Héloïse openly admits her sexual desire for Abelard. Though Olinda shows more reserve, struggling against her passion, her last

letters are remarkably different from the earlier ones to Cleander because they show her anguish. She wants to compel Cloridon to feel for her plight and to respond with like feelings of sympathy for her dilemma.

Villegas-Lopèz argues that “Trotter shapes the language and female prototypes found in later sensibility novels” but also that Olinda is an original ‘woman of sense’ (271), articulating the primary debate Olinda holds with herself between reason and passion. Though readers like Villegas-Lopèz view Olinda as a virtuous heroine, at least inwardly, Olinda yearns for Cloridon, expressing anxiety in letters meant to alleviate her suffering, much as Richardson’s Pamela and Clarissa write letters to communicate their private feelings. She reconciles herself to their new relationship as “a kind of Platonick Lovers” (139), but nevertheless continues to write to and about him:

My Dear Love, do not fear I should forget you. It was not in my Power, when I try'd all Arts to do it; and now that I indulge my thoughts of you and think 'em Authoriz'd, what danger is there? All my Life is Dedicated to you: I think of nothing else, and my chief pleasure in this lovely Solitude, is sometimes to Write down the Passages of our Loves. (139-40)

Trotter draws on a classical epistolary tradition that recalls the suffering women in Ovid’s *Heroides* in Olinda’s voice. Like them, Olinda has lost her lover, but it is because religious and social rules make their union impossible. Letters nevertheless give Olinda an imaginative and written space to work out her sexual frustrations because she knows that her lover will read her most intimate thoughts. It is a reciprocal process in which she needs both the experience of writing to him and the knowledge that he will read the letters, which creates an erotic experience that she cannot otherwise have:

I am a thousand times more happy than when I believ'd I had only an indifference for you, and for all the World. Life was then a dull senseless thing, without Relish; but now every tender expression you write Transports me; and I feel a Joy not to be excell'd on this side Heaven. (140)

Olinda's final letter to Cloridon does not reject his love but embraces it, despite their separation, which only heightens her "Transports." Her argument that she can "feel a Joy not be excell'd on this side Heaven" suggests that writing replaces other joys, full of sensual, not "senseless" pleasures, which are channeled into a shared imaginative mode. The written expressions of love delight her, and she experiences a kind of rapture through them that she can have with her lover: "my Heart was made for you alone: Be confident of it, and tell me you believe I love you, and that I shall never love any other" (140). Olinda may not resolve her moral dilemma, but she has found, in the imagination, an outlet for her desires.

The inconclusiveness of the epistolary form and the warmth of Olinda's passionate avowal of love in the last letter leave open the possibility of sexual gratification in the future, and Trotter's ending the narrative there does not, I think, mean that Olinda has decided to give up her lover forever, especially since she promises to love him exclusively. Whether or not Olinda ever marries Cloridon or whether or not they will, in the future, consummate their love remains ambiguous, but the last letter is meant to heighten the reader's response to her plight. It is intended both to compel our sympathy for her anguish and our approval at her withholding her body, though her final request for Cloridon to show kindness to his wife involves his not forgetting her: "give her all that you can give without being ungrateful to Olinda" (140). This is not a final farewell to

Cloridon or a plea that he forget her. Nor is it a moral lesson for young women. Instead, it is a passionate avowal of love that recognizes the social impossibility of their union.

Fulfilling her sexual love means that she would compromise her integrity in society's eyes, and perhaps also in her own, but this does not prevent her from desiring Cloridon's love and from writing her love to him.

The intensity of Olinda's feelings and distress might not have been resolved in the last letter, as the novella does not include Cloridon's response, but the letters found an actual community of avid readers, both in England and abroad. The novella was translated into French in 1695 as *Les Amours d'une belle Anglaise: ou la vie et les aventures de la jeune Olinde: Ecrites par Elle mesme en forme de letters a un Chevalier de ses amis*, and it appealed to readers already familiar with this kind of story in France, where there was a well-established culture of sensibility. Day indicates that Trotter's Olinda must have had a wider readership in both countries for her text to appear in subsequent editions and translations (ii), indicating that Trotter had a place in furthering a growing culture of letters in England based on feeling. Such borrowings between English and French writers continued well into the eighteenth century, when the so-called "age of sensibility" had gained more prominence in England. The next chapter will show that this "age" had grown enough by the 1720s to provoke a reaction against it by writers like Defoe.

Trotter tackles many of the same questions that Olinda's letters raise in her comedy *Love at a Loss, or the Most Votes Carries It*. Like *Olinda's Adventures*, *Love at a Loss* features female libertines whose rebelliousness recalls the Restoration but whose

concern with social consequences for their actions looks forward to an age of sentimental comedy that featured less malicious heroines than those depicted in libertine comedies of the 1670s. King proposes that Trotter creates a moral community of reformed female characters in the play;⁸⁰ Paula Backscheider believes that Trotter advances a feminist agenda based on Enlightenment principles of rational choice;⁸¹ and J. Karen Ray argues that the play “reveals a curious inability or unwillingness on the part of the female characters to act in their own behalf and to exercise power or authority” (74). The women are not unwilling to exercise power, as Ray argues (74), but they must recognize, by the end of the play, that their sexual agency severely compromises their ability to marry, the only socially appropriate choice for them. Trotter considers the social problems resulting from their desires for sexual liberty in her play, which more thoroughly examines women’s limited agency after marriage, a theme less explored in *Olinda’s Adventures*. Olinda concludes her letters by writing to her married lover, still conflicted about her feelings but unwilling either to act on them or to marry another man. Lesbia, though not in love with a married man, wrestles with similar questions insofar as she considers whether she should marry, since she might, after marriage, suffer, particularly as she desires one man, Grandfoy, but must marry another, Beaumine. She feels that she cannot choose Grandfoy as a husband because she has already lost her chastity to Beaumine. Like Behn’s Isabella, she cannot believe that Grandfoy would forgive her for allowing another man to seduce her, and she does not choose him as a husband, despite her love for him. Instead, she asks each of the characters present, including the heroines, their

⁸⁰ See pp. 151-180

⁸¹ Pearson also argues for the women’s power and autonomy (188).

suitors, and the fool, Bonsot, to vote for her husband, and the votes are tied between Grandfoy and Beaumine until Miranda casts a vote for Beaumine, a significant choice indicating that the female libertines lack power. The voting scene shows that they lack agency to choose their own husbands and that they must conform to social rules, which require that women marry according to standards of decorum.

Love at a Loss presents three female libertine figures in Miranda, Lesbia, and Lucilia, each of whom will marry by the end, though not all of them as happily as readers have sometimes suggested.⁸² How each of the women will act after marriage remains unclear at the end of the play, but there are veiled suggestions that two of the women might act on their attraction for other men after marriage. This is problematic to any reading that suggests that the women create a moral community.⁸³ All of the women practice deceit before marriage, and whether or not they submit to their future husbands after marriage remains the play's unanswered question, one that Trotter was perhaps unable to answer this early in her life, if we can at all believe Manley's depictions of the young Trotter. What Trotter does more clearly represent, however, are three heroines whose behavior resemble earlier practices of sexual and linguistic freedom by

⁸² See, for example, Pearson's argument that Lesbia, Trotter's only unchaste dramatic heroine, receives a happy ending despite her sleeping with Beaumine before marriage. I agree with Pearson that Trotter felt conflicted about the presentation of romantic subjects, at least in her dramatic works, since she is a woman writer, but I think this is owing less to Trotter's moral convictions, than her concern for women's social perception and acceptance or rejection by a society unwilling to forgive unchaste heroines, as Cleander's prefatory letter to the reader in *Olinda's Adventures* suggests. See *The Prostituted Muse*, p. 184.

⁸³ Marcie Frank argues, for example, that Trotter presents "women as virtuous agents of reform," though she suggests that there is a homoerotic dynamic between the women (107), which seems to contradict the argument that they are traditionally virtuous heroines, at least as normative sexual categories were understood in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Restoration heroines. Nevertheless, they must acknowledge that this freedom has severe social consequences that ultimately prove disempowering for Lesbia, punished for her sexual liberties by a future loveless marriage with her seducer, Beaumine.

The play is neither a Restoration comedy, nor a sentimental one, though it has features of both. Shirley Strum Kenny has described the comedies written between 1696 and 1707 as “humane comedy,” which she defines as “not so intellectual and not so cruel” as earlier Restoration comedies (30). The heroes and heroines in them are less vicious, witty, or stylish (Kenny 30), and the category provides a good framework for understanding Trotter’s play, which features one heroine, Lesbia, who fits Kenny’s description of the more complicated heroines appearing in plays by Congreve as “strong, thinking, feeling human beings” (32). Like Farquhar, who treats Mrs. Sullen in *The Beaux’ Stratagem* (1707) with sympathy, Trotter asks us to consider Lesbia’s plight with compassion. Lesbia does not, as Kenny argues about Mrs. Sullen, react illogically to her problems (32-3), and if she is not as complex as Mrs. Sullen is, neither is she the passive heroine imagined in more sentimental plays.

Trotter’s comedy does, however, feature several characters, notably Grandfroy and Constant, whose generous and convivial spirits anticipate sentimental heroes like Steele’s Bevil Junior in *The Conscious Lovers*. The main characters in Trotter’s play, who engage in a game of Hobbesian competition with one another, have less malice or wit than characters in earlier comedies. Kelley disavows Hobbes’s influence on Trotter given her arguments against his model of self-interest in her later philosophical writings (120), though the women and men compete with each other in the play for love and attention. I

am unsure, however, whether or not there is, as Kelley argues, “a satisfactory closure for two of the couples” (120-1), given the women’s deceptions of their husbands before marriage or Lesbia and Miranda’s competing for Beaumine, which leaves open the possibility of future adultery.

Trotter’s play examines the female libertine’s likely unhappiness after marriage, particularly if she marries a fool. Trotter features less witty men in Constant and Beaumine, who are outmaneuvered by the women until the end, when Miranda and Lesbia must come to understand that they will lose their freedom after marriage. The marital stakes are high for each of the women, whose libertine tendencies almost prevent their marriages. Miranda’s flirtation with Beaumine almost loses Constant; Lucilia’s letters to one man, Cleon, threaten her marriage to another, Phillabell; and Lesbia’s seduction by Beaumine before the play opens results in his unwillingness to marry her until the end, when a majority of the characters vote for him to marry her. He tries to escape her throughout the play, and though she does not love him, she needs him to marry her to redeem her social status. None of the women enter into marriage without knowledge of what it will mean for them, or legal, social, and sexual restriction, yet they know that the consequence of remaining unmarried, particularly for Lesbia, is rejection from their society.

At the beginning of the play, Lucilia rails against her governess and advisor, Lysetta, who has taught her how to deceive but has not told her that men practice deceit also. She encourages Lucilia to write compromising letters to Cleon and has represented men as passionately devoted characters drawn from romance narratives:

Shou'd you not have warn'd me of the Deceit and Treachery of Men? Instead of that, what did you entertain me with, but Tales of happy or unhappy Lovers? All to insinuate the violence of *Cleon's* Passion; How did you represent him to my vanity, adoring, dying for me? I thought it a fine thing to be courted in Rhimes and Extasies, tho' ev'n in that distinguishing Age he never pleas'd me, which you knew; and therefore to move my pity, made my credulous Ignorance believe, that if I wou'd not give him some hopes, he must infallibly die for me; the poor Innocent though she was oblig'd in Conscience to save a Man's Life! (1.1.1)

The entire play, as Lucilia's speech reminds the audience, centers around the women's beginning to "know" themselves and their places in society. Though romance stories might be interpreted as empowering to women, since knights often show a willingness to die for their beloved, they do not extend to the real world. According to Lysetta, a reader of romance, Cleon could physically perish without Lucilia's encouragement, which she provides through a letter that Cleon later uses against her. Lucilia assumes that she exercises the kind of emotional power of life and death depicted in romances, and the entire play involves re-schooling all of the young women about their naïve assumptions about their own power, both over themselves and others. They must recognize that this kind of control remains illusory.

Earlier women writers, like Margaret Cavendish, represent women as strong heroines who create their own worlds, and Cavendish's *Blazing World* features a female ruler who exercises control over herself and others. By the mid-eighteenth century, such representations of women were depicted as laughable and nearly tragic. Charlotte Lennox humorously examines the implications of women's self-deluding beliefs about their own powers in Arabella's re-schooling in *The Female Quixote*, but Trotter is one of the first fiction writers to look at the harmful consequences for women who believe that the power

that a female character wields in the fictional world extends to real women or exists outside such texts. Lucilia's beliefs about men are initially based, like Arabella's, on romance ideals, and she derides Lysetta for misrepresenting reality: "ever since I have begun to know my self, your Maxims are not Oracles, you shall no more debauch my Reason" (1.1.1). She comes to realize that she does not possess the kind of power that a heroine of romance does, and Cleon's threat of blackmail forces her to realize that this imagined control is a potentially destructive illusion. Her letters compromise her reputation and her marital possibilities, and Cleon, far from the passive lover mastered by his love for Lucilia, effectively controls her and her fate.

Lucilia begins to learn that her letters have social consequences grounded in the real world. If exposed, she is "utterly undone," her "Reputation ruin'd; and what is worse, *Phillabell* lost for ever" (1.1.2). That does not prevent her, however, from continuing to write, endangering her reputation and potential marriage prospects with another man. Though reluctant, Lucilia continues acting in this intrigue, which is directed by Lysetta, whom she asks, "Can you invent a way to Countermine him? You have been cunning to undo me, employ your Art for once to save me" (1.1.2). Despite her rebuke, Lucilia places total trust in Lysetta, who teaches her how to trick one man to win another.

Trotter thoroughly questions the moral implications of her heroines' choices, and Lucilia pauses at the deception she is about to practice: "Methinks 'tis so dishonourable a Deceit I can't relish it" (1.1.2). She continues to listen, however, to her governess, and Lysetta's argument that she must "scruple the Cheat" (1.1.2) proves too expedient, especially given that, as Lysetta argues, she can promise to make Cleon "Happy

afterwards” (1.1.2) with sexual favors, even if she never intends to keep the promise. Lysetta rationalizes, “What are you the worse for his Imaginations? Besides, you can easily dispose him of ’em, when once you have secur’d your Husband” (1.1.2). She reminds Lucilia that

at the same time you give him [Cleon] the Power, you show him that ’tis against his own Interest to use it; and when you are once believ’d (which his Vanity will help you in) and have gain’d a little time, twenty wiles may be thought of to get the Letters out of his Hands. (1.1.2)

Lucilia is, however, worse for *her* former “Imaginations,” which partly inspired her to write the first letters to the pitiful Cleon. Lucilia leaves off her dreams of self-empowerment as a romance heroine, recognizing that Cleon is not an unfortunate and dying lover but a fop who can nevertheless destroy her chances with Phillabell. She acts towards Cleon as a libertine heroine from Restoration comedy would by tricking him to get what she wants.

While Lucilia only writes about her seductive power, which is enough to ruin her, Lesbia has already acted on hers. Her reputation suffers by “some malicious Reflections that are whispered” (1.1.3) about her and Beaumine, whom she pursued to make Grandfoy jealous. Though she might not have loved Beaumine like Grandfoy, she does seem to have been overcome by a sexual passion for him. She explains to Lucilia that she does not “know how he [Beaumine] found the yielding Minute...Is not there one of which we are not Master?” (1.1.4). Lucilia’s response is important here: “I will believe so for your sake, tho’ I think it would be always in my Power to refuse a Man any thing that is not fit for him to ask” (1.1.4). Lesbia’s sexual indiscretion before marriage spreads

scandal, and the town whispers malicious rumors that Lucilia wants Lesbia either to discredit or affirm, suggesting, even as she deceives Cleon in her own clandestine intrigue, that Lesbia has crossed an inappropriate line. Lesbia implies that “the yielding Minute” was one in which her passion overcame her morals or reason, and in this, Lucilia chastises Lesbia.

Lesbia confesses to Lucilia that she loves Grandfoy, not Beaumine, and “could love him more than ever” (1.1.4), but their relationship is compromised first by her belief of his unfaithfulness, then by her revenge on Grandfoy with a richer lover, Beaumine. She argues, “I believ’d it would be some Revenge upon *Grandfoy*, which was the Chief motive of my resolving to Marry *Beaumine*” (1.1.3). Though she enters into a contract with Beaumine to solidify “the tye of Hearts that made a Marriage” (1.1.3), signing it with her blood and letting him take her “to the Holy Altar” (1.1.4), she still, “with all the artful Tenderness” that she “could affect” (1.1.4), enters into a false marriage only to “Engage him in [her] Interests” (1.1.4), which lie with Grandfoy. She confesses that, “agreeable as he is, [she] never lov’d him much” (1.1.4). Even so, Beaumine seduces Lesbia, now forced to pursue and compete for him with her rival, Miranda, rather than to follow her heart.

Though Lesbia knows her duty lies in marrying Beaumine, at the last moment she hesitates, allowing chance to dictate her choice between him and Grandfoy. It is another libertine, Miranda, who reminds Lesbia that she has only one socially acceptable choice now—Beaumine—and casts the deciding vote for him when Lesbia allows the characters to decide on her husband. Lesbia’s hesitation when given a choice between Beaumine

and Grandfoyl is not so much her unwillingness to act in her own behalf, as Ray argues, but her realization that her sexual indiscretion with Beaumine has now bound her to marry him, almost before she can rationalize the implications of marriage. She wonders why, “out of a foolish scruple,” should she be forced to “tie [her]self to *Beau*. when [they] are weary of one another” (5.3.55)? The “foolish scruple” she committed with him before necessitates that she marry him now, and she begins to debate her own personal happiness in a loveless marriage merely to fulfill a social obligation.

Lesbia leaves her fate to chance because she acknowledges that, as a wife, she will become an object regardless of whom she marries. She suggests, “I think they had best throw Dice for me” (5.3.55). Miranda modifies Lesbia’s suggestion: “E’en put it to the Vote” (5.3.55), alluding to Behn’s Hellena, who wants to avoid entering a nunnery and losing Willmore, in *The Rover*. Hellena asks the characters present, Belvile, Florinda, Frederick, and Valeria, to cheer for Willmore and override Pedro’s decision that she return to the convent. Hellena wins Willmore, but, in Trotter’s play, all of the characters do not vote for Lesbia’s choice, Grandfoyl. Lesbia, perhaps as “inconstant” as Hellena claims to be, must instead marry Beaumine, her seducer. Lockean principles of enlightened liberty did not extend to women, who lacked legal or social rights after marriage. Lesbia, like Miranda and Lucilia, is about to become someone else’s property, an implicit critique, in the tradition of Astell’s *Some Reflections Upon Marriage*, of marital restrictions placed on wives. Lesbia admits that “the odds are on *Beaumine*’s side, whether I declare I love him least, or best, there’s a Vote for him; his right is indisputable” (5.3.55). The vote Lesbia means, of course, is the one that Miranda casts

for him, but such language necessarily implicates the more important social and legal issue that Trotter's play raises for women, or the husband's right over his wife.

The question remains, then, why does Lesbia *not* choose Grandfoyl, who admits to loving her best? If this were a more sentimental comedy, Lesbia likely would choose Grandfoyl, following her heart by relying on Grandfoyl's love and forgiveness to bring her happiness, especially given that, legally, she would belong to him. Beaumaine admittedly tells Lesbia that he loves her after Miranda's deciding vote means that he is obligated to marry her, but his declaration, half-hearted at best, comes late in the play, after Miranda's vote delivers a blow to his libertine ego. Miranda's choosing to marry Constant and her vote for Beaumaine to marry Lesbia signify that she does not want him, and Beaumaine regards it as "pure Malice" (5.3.55).

Miranda's response to marriage with Constant also appears less than enthusiastic, as Lesbia observes her "gravity," which she assumes is "affected" (5.3.54). Lucilia too expresses surprise: "*Miranda* Marry'd at last!" (5.3.54). Lesbia turns to Constant, rather than Miranda, to wish him joy on his upcoming marriage with Miranda, who responds with less eagerness: "you may give him Joy; for 'tis the first Day of his Reign" (5.3.53). Miranda likens herself to his future property, as Constant will "reign" over her, though he assures her that "'twould be ungrateful to use it [happiness] to the prejudice of your Power, from whom I have receiv'd it" (5.3.54). Whatever feelings of love that Constant expresses towards Miranda, he will become, as her husband, a "ruler" over her in every legal sense, and it appears that Miranda admits to loving him because she realizes he will control her after marriage. Her flirtation with Beaumaine throughout most of the play

compromises her declaration of love to Constant at the end. Though her earlier behavior and language indicate that she despises Constant, she knows that she has already tried his patience, which she believes will run out: “I begin to be terribly afraid, I shall certainly love you, and you have lov’d me to the last, you must be near the end of the Race, before I am set out” (5.3.54). Her newfound love for Constant appears to result from the realization that he might lose his affection for her. Constant reassures her that “’tis an endless Race,” encouraging her to “endeavor by to overtake [him]” (5.3.54), presumably in love, but Miranda understands that the race ends with only one loser—the wife.

This “endless Race,” to Beaumine, becomes “a dreadful Omen” (5.3.54) of his upcoming loveless marriage with Lesbia. He laments losing Miranda since “there was so much sympathy between” their libertine natures. He implies that they might continue to see one another, predicting, “I’m afraid it reaches into our Destinies too” (5.3.54), despite her choice to marry Constant, a more considerate husband than Beaumine, if a less desirable or witty one. Instead of reaffirming her commitment to her new husband, Miranda playfully considers Beaumine’s veiled suggestion that they may be lovers even after her marriage, asking him: “Do the Planets encline to Conjunction then?” (5.3.54) She has already shown him her desire, confessing that she could not “forbear coming to enquire how your [Beaumine’s] Affairs went” (5.3.54) with Lesbia, her rival for his affections. Though attracted to Beaumine, she votes for him as Lesbia’s husband because she is both sympathetic to Lesbia, who needs Beaumine to marry her, and smart enough to know that, though Beaumine would make a terrible husband, he might become a potential lover. She recognizes that Lesbia is caught between “Love and Honour”

(5.3.54), or Grandfoy, whom she loves, and Beaumine, who has compromised her honor. Only Miranda's vote forces him to fulfill his promise to Lesbia, and, even then, she appears to have other motives that recall earlier Restoration comedies, when unhappily married female libertines take young, attractive lovers like Beaumine.

Beaumine too recalls earlier rakes from Restoration comedies, but he is a weak version of the Hobbesian libertine figure and one that inspires neither Miranda nor Lesbia to feel adoration for him. Bonsot, the fool, describes Beaumine's treatment of Lesbia's honor, arguing: "Let it be what it will, I am never of Honour's side, it's good for nothing but to make People uneasie, and I wou'd have every body please themselves, whether they can, or no" (5.3.54). Though a stock comic character, Bonsot reflects Beaumine's outlook and actions, and Trotter links Bonsot's argument against honor with Beaumine's practice of libertinism to suggest that his treatment of Lesbia is equivalent to a fool's.

Lesbia and Beaumine's future marriage articulates the division between following one's desires and following social rules, and the voting scene at the end of the play examines this tension, which drives two of the couples together. The partnerships between Constant and Miranda and Lesbia and Beaumine appear less motivated by love than by social obligation. Ironically, it is the dishonest Cleon who argues for a legal solution to the marital unhappiness that seems inevitable, even between the couple that does appear to love one another, or Lucilia and Phillabell.

Perhaps hoping to dissolve their marriage, Cleon suggests, "I don't know why it should not be brought into the Custom to Marry, as to Divorce by Vote" (5.3.55). He casts his vote for Beaumine as Lesbia's husband, "Since there is so good a Relief, for him

that will soonest be weary of her” (5.3.55). Through Cleon, Trotter presents a radical alternative to bad marriages, or divorce, anticipating Farquhar’s Mrs. Sullen, unhappy in her marriage. Unlike Lesbia, Mrs. Sullen can follow her heart with Archer after he contrives to help her separate from her husband, and, though the play is not sentimental, Mrs. Sullen’s pleas of distress are meant induce our understanding of her plight. According to Cleon, Beaumine can marry Lesbia quickly so he can divorce her quickly, and perhaps this is the best solution for her, since it saves her reputation yet releases her and Beaumine from a lifetime of unhappiness. Lucilia, however, reminds the audience of the reality of early eighteenth-century courtship rituals and marital relations, which expect women to marry their seducers and which do not typically allow for divorce. She also votes for Beaumine, but her vote does not reflect a radical alternative. Instead, she votes for “him that can plead most right in her” (5.3.55), or Beaumine, who has most right *to* her, since he seduces and thereby compromises her. In this way, Lucilia punishes Lesbia, voting against the man Lesbia has confessed to loving.

Constant, whose name signifies his adoration for Miranda, votes for love, which is a vote for Grandfoy, and Bonsot votes for peace, anticipating Beaumine’s final lines to the audience. Miranda changes her initial argument that Lesbia “lay the Yoke upon a fresh Lover, that will hold out longer” (5.3.55) to one “for him that she loves least” (5.3.55), or Beaumine, breaking the tie. Her arguments could equally apply to her choice in Constant for a husband, since she appears not to love him, despite her declaration. She perhaps recognizes too that Beaumine loves Lesbia least because, as he admits, he “shall be least with her” (5.3.55) after marriage. Her vote implies that Beaumine might be both

unfaithful and the easiest to cuckold, and her suggestion alludes to a solution to marital disillusionment that recalls Restoration comedies, or “open” marriage. Such a suggestion remains purely speculative, but Miranda’s playful consideration of Beaumine’s suggestion that they have “destinies” together indicates that they, like many of Behn’s libertine couples, have possibly found a libertine solution to marital unhappiness.

Lesbia’s response to Beaumine’s flimsy declaration of love is not to reciprocate it, and her last lines before the Epilogue convey a warning to him, one that also alludes to the Restoration solution for marriage: “for all our quiets, I propose that for the future, Grandfoy, be a Stranger to us” (5.3.55). Lesbia’s suggestion implies that she loves Grandfoy, whose presence might result in adultery, an outcome Beaumine dismisses. She already admits in Act One to preferring Grandfoy, and the play closes without conclusively deciding if Lesbia intends to remain faithful. It is also unclear to whom Grandfoy addresses his last lines: “I must submit, but may have still, I hope, some pretence to your Friendship” (5.3.56). Beaumine assumes Grandfoy addresses him, but Trotter leaves this open. Grandfoy’s promise of “Friendship” to Beaumine could be taken ironically, as it is when Mrs. Fainall calls Mrs. Marwood her husband’s “friend,” really his mistress, in Congreve’s *The Way of the World* (1700). The suggestion of adultery is reinforced if Grandfoy directs his “Friendship” to Lesbia, whom he admits to loving best. Lesbia has already shown that she can revenge herself on one man by using another sexually, and Beaumine’s final declaration, ostensibly a vow of faithfulness to his intended wife, reveals his underlying motivations, which are partly to keep his wife from revenging herself with another man:

I resolve to show those Marry'd Men, whom I have laugh'd out of the fondness, or civility, for their Wives, that I have learn'd by their weakness, how to avoid giving 'em a Revenge, and will so shamelessly boast of loving mine, that 'twill put railery out of countenance; and by preserving my complaisance for her, shew I know how to value myself. (5.3.56)

This passage implies that wives cuckold neglectful or unloving husbands, who, if they know “how to value” themselves, not, importantly, their wives, will keep them from looking elsewhere for satisfaction. Beaumine does not say he will shamelessly love his wife, only that he will “shamelessly boast of loving” his wife.

Beaumine's love for Lesbia appears affected, and his very last words reinforce the necessity of keeping a wife from straying:

For treating them with rudeness, or neglect,
Does most dishonour, on our selves reflect;
If that respect which their own Merit drew,
We think, by their becoming ours, less due:
And as in chusing, we their worth approve,
We tax our Judgment, when we cease to love.

Constance Clark reads this speech as Beaumine's reformation, calling it “a moralizing verse on the proper treatment of wives” (84), yet Beaumine's vow to regard and love Lesbia seems a quick reversal from moments earlier in the scene, when Miranda's vote for the one who loves Lesbia the least becomes the deciding one for Beaumine. In his last lines, he says that men typically treat their wives with less respect, and certainly his prior rudeness towards Lesbia after he seduces her seems a likely predictor of his future conduct. Whether Beaumine really loves Lesbia or not, he uses economic language in his last lines that make his point clear: ceasing to show love for one's wife, whether real or

not, “taxes” the husband’s reason, or “Judgment,” since it reflects poorly on the husband’s honor, which Beaumine considers more than Lesbia’s. The speech seems artificial, even insincere given Beaumine’s reluctance towards marriage. Though he acknowledges to having learned his lesson, I am not persuaded that Trotter converts him, Lesbia, Miranda, or Lucilia to moral characters that will reform by marrying. Trotter’s examination of marriage and its alternatives, including divorce, suggests that she treats it more complexly.

Hobbesian competition, deceit, and veiled implications of adultery, all features of earlier Restoration comedies, emerge throughout the play, and Lesbia’s initial suggestion that her lovers throw dice for her indicates that she views herself as an object for play between them, perhaps alluding to *Gayman* and Sir Cautious’s treatment of Julia at the end of *The Luckey Chance*. Miranda’s modification that they vote instead of gamble gives Lesbia no better odds, as she still must marry Beaumine, who calls a kind of truce between them in his last lines. Beaumine’s declaration at the end to love, honor, and respect Lesbia might signal the end of the Hobbesian struggle between husbands and wives, but the Epilogue suggests that this will not involve freeing women from the necessity of marriage as a punishment for social transgressions, especially sexual ones.

The Epilogue, spoken by Lesbia, may or may not have been written by Trotter, but it draws attention to the underlying issues that the play raises about women’s treatment before and after marriage and works as an interpretation of the play’s point about the problems experienced by female libertines. Lesbia has become a victim to the

social and legal consequences of her sexual freedom, which she now pays in a lifetime of future unhappiness:

What certain Hazards do Poor Women run!
 They hear, believe, they tast, and are undone;
 As they to Men their yielding Hearts resign,
 And think to meet such after-Claps as mine.
 Lest therefore, the mistaken Sex should plead
 Custom from me to venture and succeed,
 And without Hymen's leave, too rapidly prove
 The Dangers that attend unlawful Love.
 Let those whose Breasts of softer Mold are made,
 And seem more liable to be betray'd,
 From me these Observations rightly take
 That Vertue is esteemed for Vertue's sake,
 And Hands, and Seals, and Oaths cannot secure
 A mind like Man's unfaithful and impure,
 Tho' I by chance have gain'd the wish'd for Prize,
 And have my Lover fast in lasting Tyes.
 When once posses'd, we like fine Garments shew,
 That last a while, and are flung by for New,
 And tho' ten thousand LESBIAS may be seen,
 Where is that Man alive would act BEAUMINE?

I think we can read this speech in either of two ways, depending on which man, Grandfoy or Beaumine, is meant as Lesbia's "lover" in line sixteen. If it means that she has Beaumine fast in lasting marital "Tyes," then the last question—"Where is that Man alive would act BEAUMINE?" appears sentimental, even appreciative that Beaumine has had a change of heart, or, rather, a change in mind, from one "unfaithful and impure" to one more respectful. The beginning of this speech, however, indicates otherwise. It laments "Hazards" that "Poor Women run" when they love freely. If Lesbia had admitted to loving Beaumine, then we might read her "hazards" as her lost virginity. However, since she confesses early in the play to loving Grandfoy despite her pursuit of Beaumine, the

wealthier choice and also her seducer, then her “hazards” not only imply her lost virginity, which makes her unmarriageable, but also her marriage to Beaumine, which her seduction makes necessary. If the “yielding Hearts” described imply also “yielding bodies,” then Lesbia means Beaumine. But if we read “Hearts” more literally, then we must read Grandfoy as the man to whom Lesbia yields her heart, despite the “after Claps” of marriage that will tie her to another man legally and socially.

The lesson communicated to other women in this speech warns them against acting on their sexual desires before marriage since it has devastating aftereffects that take away a woman’s liberty. It reminds the audience about how women are treated: “When once posses’d, we like fine Garments shew, / That last a while, and are flung by for New.” Lesbia feels bound in “Interest and Duty” (1.1.4) to pretend love for Beaumine, and if she marries Beaumine because of “Interest and Duty” rather than love, then she might “by chance have gain’d the wish’d for Prize,” or an advantageous marriage with Beaumine. Only he can redeem her in society’s eyes, though his sudden reform at the end of the play appears dubious. After all, the Epilogue reinforces the idea that “Hands, and Seals, and Oaths cannot secure / A mind like Man’s unfaithful and impure,” or a mind like Beaumine’s. He already swore fidelity, constancy, marriage, and other binding vows to Lesbia once but became neglectful. She might marry him, but he is not the lover she wants. The last question, “Where is that Man alive would act BEAUMINE?” reinforces Lesbia’s distaste for him and responds to his ill treatment of her throughout the play. What kind of man, this question asks, would mistreat a young woman by vowing and consummating a sham marriage, neglecting his fiancée, and

openly trying to seduce another woman? It is only when Miranda casts her vote that Beaumine suddenly reforms, if he reforms at all.

The final lines in the Epilogue raise the same questions about women's agency that Trotter's Olinda does in her letters. Lesbia looks to the audience to empathize with her and to look at the consequences for women, "more liable to be betray'd" perhaps not only by men like Beaumine, but also by society, which holds that "Vertue is esteem'd for Vertue's sake." It does not raise the "unfaithful and impure" minds of men, yet it punishes women severely for their sexual freedoms. Only Grandfoy offers Lesbia real sympathy, though she does not appear to believe or marry him. He cannot marry Lesbia, since, as suggested in the Epilogue, women must pay for their sexual sins. Her punishment is to marry Beaumine, which the vote, a symbol of society's condemnation of her actions, forces on her.

Trotter offers no conclusive answers in her texts to the social problems that face the female libertine figure. Both Lesbia and Olinda seek love, and both are denied fulfillment with the men they really want. But whereas Olinda refuses marriage, expressing her libertine longings in her writing, Lesbia must marry Beaumine to be reintegrated into the social world, ready to condemn her for her "unlawful Love." The play's happy ending is qualified by the Epilogue, which does not, I think, suggest happiness, since it ends by lamenting society's treatment of women like Lesbia. Both the play and the novella try to work out this problem but cannot. Lesbia's last stage appearance and delivery of anguished lines demonstrate her need to share her distress and find sympathy from a condemning world, while Olinda's pleas to Cleander and Cloridon

look for a written community to share her struggles and grief. Neither finds someone who feels or shares their problems, and they, like Behn's Julia, are isolated figures made miserable by social confinements.

Trotter's concentration on women's social and emotional distresses and their desires for happiness, love, and sexual freedom concerned her throughout her dramatic career. Her earlier tragedy, *Fatal Friendship* (1698), demonstrates how she wanted audiences to respond to her anguished, betrayed, or otherwise unhappy heroines: with sympathy. Lamira, for example, sympathizes with Felicia's suffering at Gramont's death. Despite having been betrayed, she shares her emotional burdens.

Trotter's focus on women's pain becomes a shaping feature of her art, and in her Dedication to Lord Hallifax in *The Unhappy Penitent* (1701), she more clearly defines art's purpose, to move the passions of the audience. In her evaluation of Dryden, she argues that he

but little moves our concern for those he represents; his Genius seems not turn'd to work upon the softer Passions, tho' some his last Translations are excellent in that kind, nothing more lively, more tender, or more moving.

She apologizes for her own work because she argues that the chief fault is that "the Distress is not great enough," with the lover "at once deserve their Sufferings and our Pitty." In *The Unhappy Penitent*, Trotter's heroine, Margarite, and the King must marry, despite their loving other people. Margarite breaks her engagement to pursue her love, but eventually enters a nunnery and a celibate lifestyle, much as Olinda seems to promise Cloridon in her farewell letter. Like Olinda, Margarite ultimately must recognize that she

cannot live with her lover, even as his wife. The tragedy does not involve bloody revenge or heroic suicide but the singular anguish of a woman who transgresses sexual codes of conduct, anticipating Nicolas Rowe's Calista in *The Fair Penitent* (1703) and Jane in *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1715), both the tragedies that concentrate on the suffering of fallen women.

Trotter's intention was not so much in "redeeming" the female libertine figure from her bawdy Restoration heritage, but in creating her as a new kind of heroine who reaches out to others for compassion and acceptance, calling on them to feel for her plight rather than to judge her for her life choices. This aesthetic, perhaps Trotter's greatest legacy from Behn, is predicated on the values of sensibility that strove to understand women's erotic longings and provide a literary, if not a social, space for them. She recognized, however, that this often did not correlate with the moral instructiveness that she knew audiences increasingly expected from women writers or their heroines, condemned in later eighteenth-century works for their sexual promiscuity.

Though Trotter eventually stopped writing fiction and drama, subsequent writers continued to look at troubled female libertine figures. Works by Manley and Haywood, as Ballaster has shown in *Seductive Forms*, continue the legacy that Behn and Trotter had started by looking at the female libertine's struggle to express her desires in an unforgiving world. Haywood's Melliora in *Love in Excess; or, The Fatal Enquiry* (1719-20), for example, only narrowly keeps her virtue because she falls in love with a married man. Much as Trotter's Olinda tries to reject the desires of her heart and body in *Olinda's Adventures*, Melliora tries to resist D'Elmont's attempts to seduce her. She is also,

however, a sexual being who dreams of D'Elmont and locks her door against him as much to prevent him from coming in as to control her urges. She cannot, however, lock him out of her mind, which is filled with Ovid's stories.

Manley presents several characters punished for their sexual transgressions and dangerous reading practices like Charlot in *The New Atalantis*, volume one. Charlot, like Melliora, reads Ovid, but unlike Melliora, she suffers for it. Melliora withholds her body from D'Elmont, despite her erotic dreams and reading of amatory works, and she is rewarded by marriage to him. By contrast, Charlot's seduction by a father-figure, the Duke, results in part from the corruption of her mind, first trained for virtue, then for vice. The Duke leaves Charlot after imprisoning and raping her, and her tearful expressions of pain, confusion, and desire result in his rejecting her for the more cunning Countess, a model for later female libertines like Fielding's Lady Bellaston, who lacks any feelings of sensibility. Fielding responded to the culture of sensibility already well-established by Richardson's novels and heroines, which he often ridiculed. But he is not the first novelist to react against writers, texts, and characters of sensibility. In the next chapter, I will examine Defoe's *Roxana*, which responds to popular works of amatory fiction by creating a heroine seemingly lacking compassion for others. The work returns to the Restoration era, its figures, and its interest in Lucretian philosophy, which drives Roxana to refute religion, morality, and God. As a result, she feels tremendous anguish, almost experiencing a mental collapse when she believes that her maid, Amy, has killed her daughter, Susan. The novel's rejection of characteristics of sensibility suggests the importance of them by the 1720s, and it presents a heroine whose lack of feeling

articulates the growing division between the heroine of sensibility and the female libertine, which became complete by the middle of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER VI

DEFOE'S LIBERTINE AMAZON AND THE REAL DEVIL OF DISTRESS

In the last two chapters, I have considered female libertines by Behn and Trotter that have qualities typically associated with sensibility, and these characteristics define heroines in the early novel, which, as Catherine Gallagher persuasively argues, demonstrates women's experimentation with new literary forms that feature women prominently.⁸⁴ According to Sarah Prescott, by 1720, fiction became more profitable than drama for women writers (18-9). Though Trotter did not continue composing fiction or drama after her marriage, Delariviere Manley continued to write scandal fiction, and Eliza Haywood was a bestselling novelist. Her *Love in Excess* inspired others during the decade (Prescott 18-9), and she became a rival for other popular authors, including Defoe. His *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress, or a History of the Life and Vast Variety of Fortunes of Mademoiselle de Beleau, afterwards called the Countess de Wintelsheim in Germany, Being the Person known by the Name of the Lady Roxana in the Time of Charles II* (1724) features an exciting, independent, and possibly murderous heroine that is similar to Behn's Isabella, who also demonstrates violent tendencies. Though Defoe's

⁸⁴ Gallagher claims in her introduction that "nobody's story" is not about women as nobodies but about "literal nobodies: authorial personae, printed books, scandalous allegories, intellectual property rights, literary reputations, incomes, debts, and fictional characters. They are the exchangeable tokens of modern authorship that allowed increasing numbers of women writers to thrive as the eighteenth century wore on" (xiii). While I do not wish to confuse or misrepresent her position, since the idea of fiction as "nobody" is both intriguing and well argued, her title poses intriguing possibilities in terms of the actual women who wrote. In social, political, and legal terms, they *were* nobodies. Publishing might have given them economic rewards, even literary fame and personal reward, but more often than not, it made them targets for derision or disapproval.

Roxana, like Isabella, experiences tremendous anguish, she cannot repent the probable murder of her daughter, Susan, who shares her name. She lacks any visible signs of erotic or maternal desires; instead, she appears incapable of feeling for others, an important characteristic of sensibility that defines similar libertine heroines in earlier and contemporary narratives.

The novel returns to the late seventeenth century, and Roxana's character, a "Wit" and a "Beauty" (7), recalls the more brutal depictions of female libertines in sex comedies in the 1670s, particularly by William Wycherley, and in the 1690s and 1700 by Thomas Southerne and William Congreve. Wycherley's hypocritical and scheming Olivia in *The Plain Dealer* (performed in 1676) keeps her fiancé Manly's money, though she marries his false friend, Vernish. She falls in love with Manly's page, really Fidelia in disguise, and believes she makes an assignation to sleep with the page, not Manly, who rebukes her and plots revenge by exposing her as an adulteress. Congreve's Mrs. Marwood, Fainall's mistress in *The Way of the World*, maliciously plots with Fainall against Mirabell, whom she desires, and who rejects her for her rival, Millamant. To quote Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Marwood "profess[es] a libertine" (2.1. 33) because she disavows "those insipid dry discourses, with which [her] sex of force must entertain themselves, apart from men" (2.1.24-6). She desires "To be free" (2.1.23) but also to hurt others, pretending friendship to Mrs. Fainall and then trying to ruin her reputation to get what she wants. Similarly, Southerne's vicious Mrs. Witwoud in *The Wives' Excuse; or, Cuckholds Make Themselves* schemes throughout the play, which finally ends with her public exposure and disgrace with Friendall, her unintended lover. Like Roxana, she

shuns marriage, preferring to choose her sexual partners even though she cannot openly live with them.

Defoe casts Roxana in a similar mold as these characters, foreshadowing later depictions by Henry Fielding and William Makepeace Thackeray. Unlike earlier libertine heroines, however, Roxana suffers intense anguish throughout the novel, and Defoe focuses attention on her mental distress, which she cannot share with anyone except her maid, Amy, who “knew” her “Disease, but was able to do nothing as to the Remedy” (239). A “wit” and a “jade” (41), Amy is an extension of Roxana’s vicious character, and though Roxana pushes Amy away after it seems that she kills Susan, Roxana cannot escape her past, her desires, or Amy, who ends, like Roxana, in misery.

Defoe concentrates on Roxana’s “Distemper” (239), showing a direct legacy from Behn and Trotter, who also focus on their heroines’ afflictions, but he nevertheless wanted to distinguish *Roxana* from texts that prominently feature characters of sensibility. The first part of the title, *Roxana The Fortunate Mistress*, ironically recalls one of Eliza Haywood’s novellas, *Idalia, or the Unfortunate Mistress*, which was published just a year before *Roxana* in 1723. Defoe responds to Haywood’s emphasis on pathos by omitting it almost entirely from Roxana’s “history.” Defoe could not have created a heroine less demonstrative than Roxana, who resembles, both in her French background and association with the “Protestant Whore,” Nell Gwyn, several of Charles II’s court mistresses, including, besides Gwyn, the Duchess of Cleveland, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and the Duchess of Mazarin. The latter two were French and, as I argued in chapters one and two, often attacked in literary satires written during the 1670s, which

suggest that they are pretentious, cold-hearted, and mercenary women not unlike Roxana, who also earns her titles and wealth through her liaisons with powerful men.

The historical connections are important for Defoe's initial instructive purposes and for distinguishing *Roxana* from other, seemingly similar novels. His Preface states that his "history" should be read for the "Instruction and Improvement of the Reader," who can learn from Roxana's "wicked Courses" (1), though the category of wickedness comes to be reassessed as the narrative progresses. In "real" time, *Roxana* should take place in Georgian England, but the novel shifts the setting from the 1720s to the 1680s so that Defoe can evaluate Charles II's court, composed of "real life" libertines engaged in both fascinating and shocking behavior without visible results of divine retribution. John Richetti, among others, argues that Defoe satirizes the court, directly alluding to it during Roxana's "Pall Mall" days, when she acquires her name and expands her wealth (*Daniel Defoe* 114), and such a reading emphasizes Defoe's continued opposition to the Stuarts, a lingering threat that persisted into the eighteenth century. The promise of a moral "profit" in the Preface is left ambiguous, however, since the novel ends inconclusively, making a reading of *Roxana* as a clear work of satire difficult to determine.

The narrative begins with Roxana reflecting on her arrival to England in 1683 with her parents, also French Huguenots, as a child of ten. At fifteen, she marries a brewer, whom she calls a "fool" since he spends all of their money and leaves her without means to support herself or their five small children. With only Amy to help her, Roxana must make several difficult decisions, including leaving her children with her in-laws (through several ruses) and entering into a life of prostitution with her landlord, the

Jeweller. Defoe reinforces Roxana's extraordinary beauty and charm in her ability to attract several aristocratic lovers after the Jeweller's murder. She purchases a Turkish costume in which she performs a French dance for the Carolean court, and she attracts Charles II, who becomes her lover. Her eldest daughter, Susan, then unknown to Roxana, works as a servant in her mother's house and sees and later recognizes the Turkish costume after her mother has married the Dutch Merchant. She searches for her mother, first believing her to be Amy, but then she realizes that her mother is likely Roxana, who is nearly driven to madness with fear of discovery. Amy suggests killing Susan, but the reader does not know whether or not Amy murders her. Susan disappears from the narrative, Roxana sends Amy away, and both Roxana and Amy "fell into a dreadful Course of Calamities...the very reverse of [their] former Good Days" (330). The details of this "Course of Calamities" are not fully disclosed, but Roxana repeats that she felt "Misery" because of her "Crime" (330). The novel ends without a clear punishment for Roxana, and, as far as the reader knows, she keeps her looks, her money, and her husband.

Defoe seems to have planned to provide another redemptive narrative like *Moll Flanders* (1722), in which the heroine ostensibly repents of her sins and finds salvation, but in *Roxana*, no such religious or spiritual conversion occurs. If, as Janet E. Aikins argues, Roxana's fictions finally seduce herself, it is a seduction that ends in obscured misery (533). Whatever Defoe's intentions were about Roxana's character at the outset of the novel, he creates a heroine whose libertinism unravels the narrative. Michael Shinagel has noted that *Roxana*, the novel and the heroine, runs away from us, herself, and Defoe

and that her character becomes increasingly unstable by the end (192-4). Readers such as C. R. Kropf, however, have argued that her progression from virtue to vice suggests a moral framework indicative of overall narrative cohesiveness (480). Similarly, G. A. Starr has read Roxana's misery as Defoe's punishment of her vice, and Robert D. Hume suggests that "the novel is conceived almost as a morality play," with unity achieved by Roxana's "undoing" after reaching security with the Dutch Merchant (483). Maximillian Novak asserts that Defoe punishes Roxana through her "near madness that descends upon her when she is at the height of her prosperity" (*Daniel Defoe* 622), and Lincoln Faller calls *Roxana* Defoe's "most pointedly moral" criminal novel (202), contending that the narrative complexities enrich its moral power (229) rather than make it, as I believe, impossible to accomplish. Roxana moves the reader headlong through her psychological and emotional states as she recounts her life experiences. Her reflections become more invested in libertine violence as the narrative unfolds, and though James H. Maddox argues that, as a libertine, Roxana has no inner life, no private self (674), she experiences tremendous inner turmoil, defining the private Roxana that her daughter, Susan, finally and seemingly fatally uncovers.

Roxana is Defoe's darkest, last, and most complex novel, and while he perhaps initially intended to write it as a kind of Christian morality tale, he moves *Roxana* away from a religiously ordered understanding of the world by the end of the narrative, when conversion and salvation appear impossible for her. Instead, what replaces a clearly articulated theological, specifically Calvinist, framework for understanding the novel is a philosophical system predicated on chance and chaos, Epicurean atomism. As I discussed

in the introduction, seventeenth-century arguments made against Epicurus were based on his association with atheism, his reliance on chance, and his argument for the mortality of the soul, all heterodox ideas.

Defoe likely would have been familiar with the debate about Epicureanism, and it is possible he could have heard sermons railing against it by preachers, often quick to link Epicureans to libertines. He also could have read one of the popular editions of Thomas Creech's full-text translation of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. Whether or not Defoe ever read these translations is uncertain, but his works show that, despite his strong Calvinist beliefs, he remained fascinated by the kinds of ethical questions that Lucretius's text poses. The emphasis on rationalism during the eighteenth century increasingly rejected the bible as a source for establishing authoritative truth, and Epicureanism had, as Kroll reinforces, "deeply permeated some English cultural assumptions," despite its association with Hobbes (147). Defoe's early education at the Dissenting Academy of Charles Morton, a minister, at Newington Green was influenced by atomism because the entire approach to science there did not concentrate on the Aristotelian theory of elements, derived from Empedocles's belief that everything was made of earth, water, fire, and air, but the "mechanical theories of the passions of Descartes and Gassendi" (Novak *Daniel Defoe* 47). Lucretius does not refute the quaternary system, but he proposes that atoms compose these elements. Atomism influenced Morton's book on physics, *Compendium Physicae*, written around 1680, when Defoe had likely already left the academy, and the book, which refutes the Ptolemaic system for the Copernican one and quotes from

Gassendi, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton in his sections on astronomy, influenced Defoe (Girdler 587-9).

Defoe discusses his early education years after attending the Academy during the 1670s. In Defoe's *The Present State of Parties* (1712), he mentions studying philosophy at the school, though is not specific in regards to the approach to philosophy. Lew Girdler speculates that Defoe was exposed both to metaphysics and ethics along with natural philosophy while there (578), and he reminds readers that Defoe made claims to reading Latin in several articles, including *Review*, II, No. 38 (Thursday, May 31, 1705) (580) and *Review*, VIII, No. 114 (Saturday, December 16, 1710) (581), though he likely did not learn in at school since Defoe praised Morton's English exercises (590-1).

Even if Defoe exaggerated his having acquired five languages, including Latin (*Review*, VIII), English versions of Gassendi's works, which were dismissed by Morton (Girdler 584) and had influenced Dryden, were available in English versions from the middle of the seventeenth century, and even if Defoe never read these or one of Creech's popular translations of Lucretius, he had been exposed to methods derived from works profoundly influenced by Epicurean thought.

Defoe also read the dissemination of Epicurean ideas through another source, Rochester, who had partially translated Lucretius's text. Rochester was among Defoe's favorite writers, despite Rochester's appearing to live by principles of excessive self-gratification, often mistaken for Epicureanism's pleasure ideals (Novak *Daniel Defoe* 144-5). In his verse, Rochester appears intrigued, liberated, and disturbed by the scientific and aesthetic implications of Lucretius's explanation of a world not based on a divine

ordering of things, though he became an iconic figure representing Epicureanism's emphasis on pleasure during the 1670s. Defoe partly models sections of an earlier poem and political satire on the divine right of kings, *Jure Divino* (1706), on Rochester's *Satyr Against Reason and Mankind*, which anticipates the ideas about human's capacity for brutality and suffering that Defoe tackles in *Roxana*. Like Rochester's speaker in the *Satyr*, Roxana considers the possibility that an atomistic universe replaces divine agency by her consistent return to chance as an underlying factor for her misfortune and by her devaluation of humans, including her children, to entities described by Creech as "atoms and seeds."

Roxana does not, however, like Behn's speaker in "To Mr. Creech (Under the Name of Daphnis) On His Excellent Translation of Lucretius," express feelings of great liberation and exultation in atomism's possibilities for her. Defoe mistrusted ideas that proposed to eradicate religion, the superstitious source, in Lucretius's text, of ignorance and pain, but he could not dismiss them. Defoe was, as Novak asserts, certain "of being right in a bad world" and "reared in a manner that gave him a certainty about his religious beliefs that could never be shaken" (*Daniel Defoe* 29). He nevertheless contemplates the purpose and role of religion in an afflicted world of disease and violence, one in which vice rather than virtue is rewarded.

Defoe experienced hardships throughout his life, and his earliest years in the 1660s were a constant struggle because he was from a Nonconformist family. A series of acts passed by Parliament under the Municipal Corporations Act of 1661 made life difficult for Protestant Dissenters, and Defoe had to copy out parts of the Bible in the fear

that Charles II would return England to Catholicism and take away their privileges, including their bibles, from them (Novak *Daniel Defoe* 28). His *Journal of the Plague Year* (1721) implies that plague and fire serve as divine punishment for a “sinful” people in the 1660s, when Defoe was a small child. He participated in the Duke of Monmouth’s unsuccessful rebellion in the 1680s, a decade that ended with the Glorious Revolution and Defoe’s hopes for a protestant monarch fulfilled with William III’s relatively peaceful accession.

Defoe returns to the Restoration in several works because it provided an ideal setting to revisit and tackle the philosophical questions about human suffering that he had wrestled with in earlier novels like *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Though he might, as Novak suggests, have been sure of his religious beliefs during his youth, Defoe does not show this assurance in *Roxana*, which lacks the same Christian response to suffering that *Robinson Crusoe* more clearly provides. *Roxana* begins with a clear sense of “Virtue and Honour,” which is tested when Amy suggests that she sleep with the landlord. She believes that “a Woman ought rather to die, than to prostitute her Virtue and Honour, let the Temptation be what it will” (29), but she makes a practical decision that she must either sleep with the landlord or starve.⁸⁵

Roxana claims she enters into her notorious lifestyle because of poverty, but she does not leave it willingly, if at all, until she tires of years of vice. She enters into her relationship with the landlord, a more “agreeable” man than her wastrel, absent husband,

⁸⁵ As Everett Zimmerman suggests, “Defoe’s creation of *Roxana* implies his recognition of psychological necessities” (186) along with economic ones.

and “Besides this” (39), by which she means “the Devil of Poverty and Distress” (38),

Roxana says that she

was young, handsome, and with all the Mortifications...met with, was vain, and that not a little; and as it was a new thing, so it was a pleasant thing, to be courted,caress'd, embrac'd, and high Professions of Affection made...by a Man so agreeable, and so able to do [her] good. (39)

Roxana’s description of her relationship with her first lover is one of the only times she appears happy in the novel, but even before she describes their affair, she qualifies the pleasure of all her liaisons by reflecting on the “Brutallity and blindness of Mankind” (4), which recalls Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. She cannot escape this “Brutallity” even after reaching financial security, and Defoe’s attention to the exact details of Roxana’s finances, the initial motive for her entering this life, has intrigued scholars interested in considering how her concentration on wealth influences her decisions.

Studies by Sandra Sherman, D. Christopher Gabbard, and Ann Louise Kibbie look at the importance of the interconnectedness between emerging capital markets, consumerism, and credit in the novel. Kibbie attributes Roxana’s self-destruction and the unraveling of her narrative to Defoe’s creation of Roxana’s character as both capitalist and capital (1024), while Shawn Lisa Maurer believes Roxana’s “Amazonian independence from male economic and sexual control...leads both to her own destruction and to that of the daughter who bears her name” (382). Roxana becomes consumed by her wealth, deriving more satisfaction from this than she does from her relationships. She

asks herself repeatedly, “*What was I a Whore for now?*” (201),⁸⁶ but she cannot understand her actions or desires, in part leading to her despair and atheism.

Roxana’s irreligion offers perhaps the best interpretation for how Defoe saw Restoration figures, including the court mistresses and Rochester’s glittering character. Like these libertines, Roxana rejects sacred and social institutions, including marriage. Instead, her “Heart was bent upon an Independency of Fortune” (170), indicating that she gives herself over to the Lucretian world of chance and to acquiring wealth, another meaning of “fortune.” In one of her arguments against marriage, Roxana tells Sir Robert Clayton, her financial advisor, that she

knew no State of Matrimony, but what was, at best, a State of Inferiority, if not Bondage; that [she] had no Notion of it; that [she] liv’d a Life of absolute Liberty now, was free as [she] was born, and having a plentiful Fortune...did not understand what Coherence the Words *Honour* and *Obey* had with the Liberty of a *Free Woman*...seeing Liberty seem’d to be the Men’s Property, [she] would be a *Man-Woman*; for as [she] was born free, [she] wou’d die so. (170-1)

Sir Robert calls her language “*Amazonian*” (171), alluding to the Amazons from classical myth who created an entire culture without men, capturing them only for procreative purposes. Both beautiful and malicious, these figures appear as vicious predators that make war and kill or mutilate their infant males and often the men they capture to father their children. They do not marry, and they pose one of the greatest threats in myth to Greece’s patriarchal culture. As Maurer has pointed out, Defoe connects the Amazons’ violent tendencies and their rejection of submissive roles to

⁸⁶ Variations of this question appear again on pages 202 and 203.

Roxana, whose arguments against marriage are considered unnatural and preposterous to the Dutch Merchant (366).

Defoe attaches Roxana's desires for freedom to the Amazons to indicate that she is an unnatural and unfeeling character with stereotypically masculine qualities. As a libertine, she is a kind of hermaphrodite, asserting "masculine" privileges while also exercising "feminine" wiles. She believes

a Woman was a free Agent, as well as a Man, and was born free, and cou'd she manage herself suitably, might enjoy that Liberty to as much Purpose as the Men do; that Laws of Matrimony were indeed, otherwise, and Mankind at this time, acted quite upon other Principles; and those such, that a Woman gave herself entirely away from herself in Marriage, and capitulated only to be, at best, an *Upper-Servant*... That the very Nature of the Marriage-Contract was, in short, nothing but giving up Liberty, Estate, Authority, and every-thing, to the Man, and the Woman was indeed, a meer Woman ever after, that is to say, a Slave. (147-8)

Roxana resembles libertines who prize their freedom above social restriction, conventions, and rituals, particularly marriage. Her argument recapitulates Mary Astell's *Some Reflections Upon Marriage*, which offers similar claims about women's poor treatment after marriage, and it recalls Behn's libertine heroines, who desire freedom from unhappy marriages. But Roxana is not held up as an exemplar of female independence; instead, she is meant to be read, as Maurer asserts, as a "monstrous, indeed inhuman" (366) character with a "*Man-Woman*" identity.

I began this dissertation by citing the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s general exclusion of women from the libertine identity. The definition implies that a female libertine is a nonexistent being and, at the least, an unnatural one. Defoe's creating Roxana as a "monstrous" and unfeeling character supports such an idea, which, as I will

demonstrate in the conclusion, persisted in the depiction of this figure in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Part of Roxana's "monstrous" behavior is shown through her inability to love others. I argued in chapter two that, during the Restoration, male and female libertines most often see love as a feminine disease likened to madness, and they typically reject overt declarations of affection. Etherege's Dorimant fears voicing his feelings to Harriet, who does not believe him, and she will not confess her feelings to him, even when their marriage appears assured. Harriet must adopt a "masculine" perspective to avoid catching a "feminine" disease, which afflicts Belinda and Mrs. Loveit, and she sees that Dorimant humiliates Mrs. Loveit, whose histrionics provide the libertines with a visual spectacle.

Not only does Roxana, as a "*Man-Woman*," approach love similarly, she also thrives on performance. Her survival depends on preserving the fictive worlds she creates, ones in which she can exercise control over others. The novel collapses along with Roxana's many fictions mainly because she appears to compel Defoe, who, like almost all of the characters in the novel, seems to become attached to her character, unwilling to subject her to a clear punishment at the end. Even if Defoe had intended to reform or denounce Roxana because of her vice, as a novelist he could not and still preserve the complexity of her character, and in this way, the novel and its heroine contribute to the unraveling of Defoe's initial moral intentions for an instructive narrative. Much like Gwyn, the actress, or Mazarin, the adventuring mistress of Charles II, Roxana is a skillful artist carefully negotiating and manipulating a world that does not always treat her fairly. By describing her downfall, Defoe would compromise the artistic

power attached to Roxana's libertine identity, and this is a notable departure from his narrative technique in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, where the title characters ultimately conform to Christian ideals of repentance and salvation.

Roxana likely both compelled and shocked Defoe, who would have remembered other, similar female libertines, the court mistresses. In the first two chapters, I considered the mistresses as figures providing the visual spectacles that Dryden and Rochester target and that Etherege re-imagines in Mrs. Loveit's character. To Defoe, they must have appeared to be rewarded materially despite their "sinful" lifestyles. They were often regarded by John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys with a mixture of moral indignation and curious fascination, not only for their decadence, but also for their prominent positions at court, which were eyed with suspicion even by poets like Dryden. Charles II's mistresses appeared immune to divine punishment, as several of them, including the most politically dangerous one, Portsmouth, continued to enjoy the advantages of wealth and privilege even after their perceived control over the king had come to an end. Defoe, who witnessed much of Charles's reign as a young man, must have looked at their rise, wealth, and luxurious lives with something like disgust, astonishment, and a kind of voyeuristic pleasure—a similar reaction that he seems to have to Roxana.

Roxana's performances throughout the novel reflect the same libertine ethos of pleasure that these women came to represent, both in real life and in art, and she describes her libertinism as unavoidable and thus natural to her early in the novel:

Heaven would not suffer us to be punish'd for that which it was not possible for us to avoid...So possible is it for us to roll ourselves up in Wickedness, till we grow invulnerable by Conscience; and that Centinel once doz'd, sleeps fast, not be

awaken'd while the Tide of Pleasure continues to flow, or till something dark and dreadful brings us to ourselves again... (69)

The “Tide of Pleasure,” particularly the pleasure of disguise and multiple identities, defines Roxana, who cannot separate or avoid them. Perhaps more importantly, Roxana includes everyone in this “Tide,” preferring the collective “we” rather than the solitary “I,” which suggests that the “tide of pleasure” is a natural human condition, universal rather than individual, and that the world she describes is one in which everyone lacks a conscience, not just, in Calvinist terms, the “reprobate,” those not part of the “elect” of God.

Roxana lives in a world without divine agency, reward, or retribution, and while *Roxana* is Defoe’s chance to punish her, and, by extension, the actual figures she resembles, she is materially rewarded for her “sin.” Since we do not know what the “dark and dreadful” event is, we cannot know if Defoe condemns her or if he actually meant to rebuke Charles II or his court.⁸⁷ Instead, Roxana appears to wield strange power over everyone. Her daughter Susan rejects monetary compensation for an acknowledgement that she belongs to Roxana, and even the most “moral” characters in the novel, the Dutch Merchant and the Quakeress, appear captivated by her.

The Dutch Merchant appears as an imaginative recreation of William III, a hero of Defoe’s, and he seems the likeliest character to “save” Roxana from her life of prostitution and vice. He treats her more honorably than her first husband or other lovers,

⁸⁷ Although Richard West believes that Defoe condemns Roxana, he draws intriguing parallels between Defoe’s life and the novel, arguing that Roxana’s state of mind reflects Defoe’s “chronic misery and despair over his bankruptcy and incarceration” (288), as does her wastrel husband, who, like Defoe, squanders his wife’s inheritance.

and his view of marriage is grounded in a Christian tradition that Defoe shared. When Roxana protests that she does not want to marry again, the Dutch Merchant reinforces the social and religious significance of their union, particularly since it will legitimize their unborn child:

Marriage was decreed by Heaven; that it was the fix'd State of Life, which God had appointed for Man's Felicity, and for establishing a legal Posterity; that there cou'd be no legal Claim of Estates by Inheritance, but by Children born in Wedlock. (151)

Defoe compares the Dutch Merchant's beliefs and values with Roxana's at several points in the novel to contrast two actual social worlds, that of Charles II and James II and that of William III, which ultimately clashed in 1688. The Dutch Merchant's argument for the transference of property to his legitimate heirs corresponds to Defoe's support of what he saw as William III's legal, legitimate rule of England. Roxana's indifference about whether or not her children are legitimate implicitly critiques Charles II's perceived negligence with regard to his multiple illegitimate offspring, one of which, Monmouth, attempted to overthrow James II, a Catholic, whose claim to the throne, though legally legitimate, was morally wrong to Dissenters like Defoe. The Dutch Merchant stands for the Whig concentration on "liberty and property" that Defoe supported, and even Roxana cannot initially imagine joining her "*ill-got wealth, the Product of prosperous Lust, and of a vile and vicious Life of Whoredom and Adultery*" with the Dutch Merchant's "*honest well-gotten Estate*" (259), possibly reflecting Defoe's hesitation to merge their very different characters and philosophies. Apart from her reservations about blending her money with his property, however, Roxana wants to maintain her autonomy, and she

cannot believe that heaven “decrees” anything for her. Her world exists only materially, not spiritually, and she sees marriage as a disempowering prison. The division between both characters is heightened by Roxana’s own sense that she is unworthy to marry him.

The novel does not, however, support a strictly allegorical reading of these characters, with Roxana representing vice and the Dutch Merchant virtue. Because the Dutch Merchant has a premarital affair with Roxana and helps her to avoid facing prosecution for stealing jewelry, he is not an ideal Christian candidate to “save” Roxana. He is inexorably drawn to her, even after she rejects his initial offer of marriage, and the moral promised in the Preface in part breaks down in their relationship, which is built upon the lies that Roxana struggles to maintain. Rather than confess her past to the Dutch Merchant, she continues to conceal it.

Her friend, the Quakeress, emerges as another possible candidate in the novel to convert Roxana, though Dissenters often rejected Quakers’ concentration on the “inner light” over the Bible. The Quakeress nevertheless shows Roxana Christian charity and appears as “a most courteous, obliging, mannerly Person; perfectly well-bred, and perfectly well-humour’d...so grave, and yet so pleasant and so merry” (210). Though she helps Roxana, she too is fascinated by her. Roxana performs in a different costume and a different voice, one that mocks Quakerism’s concentration on honesty and plain speaking. She “dress[es] like a Quaker” and uses language like “THEE and THOU, that [she] talk’d like a Quaker too, as readily and naturally as if [she] had been born among them” (213). Defoe places Quakerism in opposition to libertinism to indicate Roxana’s mocking and perverting of religion, part of the profane performance that defines the

libertine's identity, and her irreverent physical and verbal disguises serve as another mask for concealing Roxana's identity from others.

Roxana re-fashions herself perpetually, constantly recasting herself as the heroine of a multitude of roles directed by, edited by, and scripted by the star, Roxana. Rochester, who also adopted different masks, both literally and figuratively, provides another possible model for Roxana's sacrilegious character. His desire to shock his audience is registered in his verse through multiple characters that lie, cheat, steal, and commit sadistic acts. His poetry, like Defoe's novel, reveals a complex relationship to libertinism, and not all of his poems praise hedonistic desire. In several poems, Rochester's speakers appear disturbed by the consequences of their avarice and blasphemy, articulating a bleak view not only of pleasure but also of human experience, which Defoe re-imagines in Roxana's reflections on her life of vice. Rochester's "To the Postboy" (written after June 27, 1676; first pub. 1923), for example, features a speaker who recounts an evening of debauchery. The poem alludes to Rochester's outing with a Captain Downs, who beat a constable. The constable summoned help from the watch, and Downs was killed (Vieth 131). The self-deprecating speaker of the poem uses the experience as an occasion to question his actions, which have led to the violent death of a friend: "Pox on 't, why do I speak of these poor things? / I have blasphemed my God, and libeled Kings! / The readiest way to Hell" (ll. 13-5). The speaker's expressions of disillusionment with human experience parallel Roxana's, and she is equally consumed with spectacle and self-revulsion, contemplating Hell despite her inability to recognize God and the Devil as clearly articulated entities. Like Rochester's speaker, however, she

tries to come to terms with the reality of life as she experiences it, desiring to understand her own vicious propensities and amoral choices, which lead to the death of her daughter.⁸⁸

The greatest source of Roxana's initial disillusionment emerges from her recognition of what motivates others, particularly the "Folly of Men of Quality," the source of her wealth. She reflects that "Nature had given [her] a good Skin, and some agreeable Features" but cannot understand why it "should suffer...Beauty to be such a Bait to Appetite" since men "do such sordid, unaccountable things, to obtain the Possession of it" (74-75). She sees herself as a tempting lure and a sexual object for men to consume. Though Roxana describes the "Tide of Pleasure" overwhelming her, she does not appear to experience pleasure in most of her relationships, which parallel several of those found in Creech's 1682 translation of Lucretius's fourth book of *De rerum natura*. Love appears as a pernicious, betraying form of lust, a pleasing delusion that "breeds cares and fears, that fond disease, / Those raging pains, if noursh't, will encrease." Love begins "when from a *beautous* face / Some *pleasing* forms provoke us to embrace / Those *Bawds to Lust*" (132). It ends with a sordid vision of prostitution that betrays the lover and ends in the desire "To hurt what ever 'twas that rais'd the *fire*" (133). Roxana's relationships with men demonstrate that she has a similar experience, leading her to deny any spiritual attachment to love as a life-affirming emotion that brings humans together. Rather, her relationships teach her that only erotic love exists,

⁸⁸ Malinda Snow gestures towards this kind of analysis of Roxana's character by concentrating on her rhetorical responses to the situations she encounters. She argues that "Defoe's narrative method encourages us to seek a "right way" to talk (to ourselves and others) about our choices rather than seeking a "right choice" (534).

and that, as Creech translates, “*Love deludes poor men*” (133), ultimately driving them apart.

If Roxana begins by seeing brutality in others, she ends by seeing this viciousness in herself, an unspeakable realization that she cannot tell the reader. It is a horror too terrible for her to contemplate or relate, and religion cannot help her understand her actions. Though Heaven and the Devil are the undulating forces governing Roxana’s Wheel of Fortune, these entities reward and punish by chance rather than divine direction and appear to follow Lucretius’s idea that the gods, even if they do exist, never concern themselves with humans. Roxana’s allusions to fate and the Wheel of Fortune, combined with her inability to believe that a divine force governs this wheel, indicate that she loses faith in a Christian teleology of ultimate judgment, though critics have often seen Roxana as a self-consciously Calvinistic narrator.

Paula Backsheider believes that Roxana “may be the most Calvinistic of all Defoe’s protagonists” since “she knows that she is sinful and yet has another ambition continually before her” (*A Being More Intense* 129). Following Novak’s idea that Defoe’s Roxana is not only tempted by the Devil but actually becomes one (*Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe’s Fiction*), Brett C. McInelly and David Paxman argue for Defoe’s working out the theology of predestination and reprobation in *Roxana*, where he “update[s] the Devil” to show that this figure works in subtle rather than supernatural ways in a newly skeptical age that had begun to eschew any belief in such a figure (441). McInelly and Paxman support their main points by citing Defoe’s particular attention to the Devil in later works like *The Political History of the Devil* (1726). Similarly, Starr

considers a Calvinistic pattern of punishment in *Roxana* and provocatively recommends that Defoe and perhaps his readers should “consign Roxana to the devil” (165). But this view presupposes that Defoe’s novel maintains a defined Christianized notion of heaven and hell. Roxana cannot imagine any heaven beyond the “tide of pleasure,” which is qualified by her acknowledgement that she is a sexual object, and though hell is ever-present to Roxana, it is a personal one created out of poverty, shame, and self-loathing.

While Defoe turned to writing works on the devil, like the *Political History*, or on the supernatural, like *A System of Magic* (1726) and *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions* (1727), after *Roxana*, these works do not prove that his earlier heroine transforms into a devil. Roxana suffers emotionally whether poor or wealthy, and she loses any clear sense of Christian virtue, alternately showing charity to her children by her first husband and wishing the eldest of them dead. I concur with Jesse M. Molesworth’s idea that the “Calvinist realm pure of predictability...lapses into an agnostic, even atheistic, realm...” (505) in *Roxana*, which is most like Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year* in its concentration on horrific and terrifying experiences that he either remembered as a small child or heard recounted by his uncle, Henry Foe, the possible model for H. F. Defoe dwells on the suffering that engulfs London, and his scenes parallel the last images in Lucretius’s *De rerum natura*, which ends with images of disease and human cruelty.

Unlike *Journal of the Plague Year*, which presents a Christian moral of compassion and charity towards others, however, Roxana says that she did not have “any Religion, or any Sence of a Supreme Power managing, directing, and governing in both

Causes and Events in this World.” If she had, “such a Case as this wou’d have given anybody room to have been very thankful to the Power who had not only put such a Treasure into [her] Hand, but given [her] such an Escape from the Ruin that had threaten’d [her].” Instead, she “had none of those things,” only

a grateful Sence upon [her] Mind of the generous Friendship of my Deliverer, the *Dutch Merchant*; by whom [she] was so faithfully serv’d, and by whom, as far as relates to second Causes, I was preserv’d from Destruction. (121)

Roxana’s “deliverer” is not God but the Dutch Merchant, and this passage, which occurs after the Dutch Merchant helps her to escape from prosecution, emphasizes her reliance on a visible, earthly power over any spiritual ones. Starr calls this her “practical atheism” (166), and to a large extent I agree that necessity drives Roxana away from religious or spiritual answers. When Roxana debates whether or not she should confess her sins to a Catholic priest, she resolves that she cannot, despite her desire to know if her relationship with the Prince is “a lawful thing” (68). Instead, she declares that she is “a Protestant Whore” (69) like Gwyn, laying claim to a social and political as much as a religious society and reinforcing Defoe’s association of her with the Carolean court and one of Charles II’s mistresses. But her allegiance to Protestantism has little bearing on her individual spiritual state, ethics, or dubious conception of God.

Alison Conway argues that Roxana re-casts the Nell Gwyn legend in darker terms, ones as much invested in individual identity as personal spirituality. While Conway suggests that Roxana, as the “Protestant Whore,” provides no theological answers to the “Restoration’s struggle to sustain the dream of a Protestant community”

(230), which Nell Gwyn's identity articulates, it does signify a relationship to a religious body that Roxana denies, much as Defoe likely saw Gwyn rejecting it, despite her claim to Protestantism. The ironic title associated with Gwyn as the "Protestant Whore" actually mocks religion, since, as the king's mistress, Gwyn can claim no real religious ties.

While Roxana does not mock Catholicism, she does acknowledge that it is "strange that [she], who had thus prostituted [her] Chastity...should scruple any thing" (69). If Defoe initially intended that the novel present a story of redemption, then Roxana's anti-Catholicism and affinity with Protestantism provides an important foundation for her later reform, which, to a Dissenter, must be achieved through a personal relationship with God, the Protestant understanding of confession and repentance. Roxana does not trust anyone, including a divine "confessor," but her anguish indicates that she wants to believe and repent. Her inability to finish relating her misery signifies that she cannot fully confess her "Crime," and though she looks for stability and tranquility, she cannot find it. Instead,

She met with unexpected Success in all her wicked Courses; but in the highest Elevations of Prosperity, she makes frequent Acknowledgments, That the Pleasure of her Wickedness was not worth the Repentance; and that all the Satisfaction she had, all the Joy in the View of her Prosperity, no, nor all the Wealth she rowl'd in; the Gayety of her Apperance; the Epuipages, and the Honours, she was attended with, cou'd quiet her Mind, abate the Reproaches of her Conscience, or procure her an Hour's Sleep, when just Reflections kept her waking. (2)

The description in part recalls Rochester's brief translations of Lucretius's book one of *De rerum natura*, "Two Translations of Lucretius," likely written in the early 1670s.

While the first passage was not published until 1953, the second was published in 1691:

The gods, by right of nature, must possess
 An everlasting age of perfect peace;
 Far off removed from us and our affairs;
 Neither approached by dangers, or by cares;
 Rich in themselves, to whom we cannot add;
 Not pleased by good deeds, nor provoked by bad. (35)

Rochester's depiction of the gods in this short poem suggests that they have reached Epicurean *ataraxia*, or tranquility, the goal of katastematic pleasure that Lucretius advocates as the highest state of pleasure. Despite the seeming easiness of these lines, the ideas that they contain about the gods' remoteness from human affairs at times disturbed Rochester, who, like Roxana, could not find any peace. He frequently experienced periods of mental distress, usually when he had been banished from court, and he alternately celebrates godlessness and questions its possibilities in his verse.

His *Satyr* examines Epicurean ideas about cosmic chaos but with a darker view of humanity than the first translation of Lucretius's text provides, while his "Upon Nothing" (1679) catalogs "reverend shapes and forms" (44) that "flow swiftly into" (51) the void that Lucretius imagines, conceptualized by the speaker as nothingness. These "forms" are comparable to the nationalities of several of Roxana's lovers: "French truth, Dutch prowess, British policy, / Hibernian learning, Scotch civility, / Spaniards' dispatch, Danes' wit are mainly seen in thee [nothing]" (46-48). The *Satyr* extends the ethical possibilities of living in such a world. Far from the liberating landscape that Behn

imagines in her poems praising Lucretius, Rochester's speaker interprets a much different world in his *Satyr*, one of "necessity" (138), upon which many of Defoe's characters must rely to survive, including Roxana:

Birds feed on birds, beasts on each other prey,
 But savage man alone does man betray.
 Pressed by necessity, they kill for food;
 Man undoes man to do himself no good... (129-132)
 With voluntary pains works his distress,
 Not through necessity, but wantonness...
 For hunger or for love they fight and tear,
 Whilst wretched man is still in arms for fear.
 For fear he arms, and is of arms afraid,
 By fear to fear successively betrayed;
 Base fear, the source whence his best passions came:
 His boasted honor, and his dear-bought fame;
 That lust of power, to which he's such a slave,
 And for the which alone he dares be brave;
 To which his various projects are designed;
 Which makes him generous, affable, and kind;
 For which he takes such pains to be thought wise,
 And screws his actions in a forced disguise,
 Leading a tedious life in misery
 Under laborious, mean hypocrisy....
 And honesty's against all common sense:
 Men must be knaves, 'tis in their own defense.
 Mankind's dishonest; if you think it fair
 Amongst known cheats to play upon the square,
 You'll be undone. (137-163)

In Rochester's terms, Roxana continually "screws [her] actions in a forced disguise," or into many disguises that she needs to survive. Through her performances, she recognizes that "Mankind's dishonest" and that if she trusts others, she could be "undone." Having been "undone" once by her husband in a lawful, Christian union, Roxana by no means intends to be "undone" again, either by a lover, a husband, or a daughter.

Experience teaches Roxana that no one cares, and even if Defoe could provide some firm conclusions about Roxana's misery, she does not trust us enough to relate her most insidious secrets. Like Rochester's speaker in the *Satyr*, she believes that all men are dishonest and self-interested. John McVeagh suggests that, to Defoe,

Rochester, mistaken in principle, is very often right in fact. And of course that leads, as it must, to moments when he is not sure whether even principle as well as practice may not be on the side of the cynic, and whether the religious believer, as well as being a failure, may not also be a fool. (533)

McVeagh does not consider *Roxana* in his essay, but the novel forges an undeniable link between Rochester and Defoe that illustrates McVeagh's points about both writers.

McVeagh's view of Defoe's admittedly contradictory portraits of human nature, however, indicate a kind of hopeful optimism about Defoe's works that *Roxana* denies to readers.

Roxana consistently searches for resolution to her misery, an Epicurean "everlasting peace" that Rochester describes in his brief poetic translation of Lucretius's text, but what she finds is a false sense of "Tranquility." She

wonder'd at the Stupidity that [her] intellectual Part was under all that while; what Lethargick Fumes doz'd the Soul; and how it was possible...[she] was yet under a continued Inquietude on account of the wicked Life [she] lead, could now live in the most profound Tranquility, and with uninterrupted Peace. (69)

Defoe means for the reader to connect the references to the "Stupidity" of her intellect and lethargy of her soul with her inability to believe or live according to Christian principles. At no point does Defoe indicate that Roxana is actually stupid. Like many of

Defoe's major characters, she is a resourceful character self-identified as "want[ing] neither Wit, Beauty, or Money" (7), and she can captivate and persuade other characters to act for her. To a Dissenter like Defoe, however, the lethargy is meant here as moral laxity, a clear indication of Roxana's libertine vice, despite her "continued Inquietude" and "considerable Disturbance" (69) about her wickedness. Defoe likely reflects the misperception that Epicurean pleasure is excessive gratification of the senses, and unlike Dryden, who advocates Epicurean moderation and equipoise, Defoe implicitly contrasts his interpretation of false Epicurean tranquility with Christian peace, the true source, for Defoe, of pleasure and serenity.

Roxana's "peace" is preceded by intense "Inquietude," which results from her becoming increasingly horrified by the effects of poverty and wickedness on her actions, a similar reaction that Lucretius has at the end of *De rerum natura*. One of the last images described in book six is of plague and pestilence, and this book dwells on humans' inabilities to cope with such ills and on their neglect of traditional religious rituals, including those for burying the dead. Creech's translation of these images captures the solitude and misery of human suffering:

Now no *Religion*, now no *Gods* were fear'd,
 Greater than all, the *present Plague* appear'd;
 All *Laws* of *Burial* lost, and all confus'd;
 No *solemn Rites*, no *decent Order* us'd;
 But as the State of Things would then permit,
 Men burnt their Friends, nor lookt on just, and fit;
 And *Want*, and *Poverty* did oft engage
 A thousand Acts of *Violence*, and *Rage*:
 Some, *O imperious Want!* A Carcass spoyl,
 And burn *their Friend* upon *another's* Pile; (221-222)

Both *Roxana* and Lucretius's sixth book end by responding with pessimism to the psychological and theological complications that attend affliction. Roxana ends without relating what happens to Susan, whose body goes missing from the text. This is a significant omission in a work that concentrates so much attention on seeing performing bodies, and the lack of details about Susan's death indicate that she no longer matters in the story to Roxana, who cannot face her, dead or alive; she sends Amy away to escape any visible reminders of an unpleasant truth. Religious principles and rituals, such as caring for and burying one's child, are lost to Roxana, and she does not provide more information about Susan because familial relationships, like theological maxims, are no longer important to her.

Instead, Roxana reacts with "Acts of Violence, and rage" against both Susan and Amy, whom she almost forces to bed the landlord after she becomes his lover. Though Roxana admits that she does not want to lose her virtue or honor by losing her chastity, her greatest concern after confronting starvation is the lowering of her class position to a kept woman. When Amy initially proposes that Roxana sleep with the landlord, she represents to Roxana a new class status. As the landlord's mistress, Roxana occupies a position lower than her servant's. Amy's "Rhetorick" early in the novel compels Roxana as much as the devil of "poverty and distress": "Amy had but too much Rhetorick in this Cause; she represented all those Things in their proper Colours she argued them all with her utmost Skill" (39). Amy refracts Roxana's inmost urges, initially convincing Roxana to act on her basest desires, and Roxana interprets her servant's arguments as challenges to her authority. Though seemingly inexperienced, Amy "was a Girl of Spirit and Wit;

and with her Talk she made us laugh very often, and yet the Jade manag'd her Wit with all the good Manners imaginable" (41). Amy consistently appears in these early pages unlike a servant, but a higher class "wit," which, during the Restoration, characterized libertines who targeted religious, social, and political figures and structures. Amy's wit becomes a threat to Roxana because she appears as a rival libertine, and her suggestion that Roxana become a kept woman potentially disrupts the power distribution between mistress and servant.

Roxana's putting Amy to bed with the landlord rebalances the power dynamic. It occurs as a result of Amy's initial challenge to Roxana, and it connects Amy with Roxana through violence. She forces Amy to sleep with the landlord not only to control her maid, but also to gain power over her first lover. The landlord debauches Roxana, who has little choice but to comply with his desires or starve. Undressing Amy and forcing her to lose her chastity allows Roxana to take control of her relationship with the landlord and to keep Amy from assuming a position of power over her. If Roxana becomes a whore, she rationalizes that her maid must also so that she "should not reproach [her] with it" (47). Roxana must watch Amy's moment of degradation to ensure that her maid participates in a world that she scripts and then watches performed before her.⁸⁹ It provides a visual spectacle that is part of the popular libertinism that Turner describes, and it responds to the violent libertine culture that Behn also examines both in her plays and fiction. Roxana is not the Georgian libertine, capable of reform, but a Restoration libertine, a Hobbesian predator of inveterate, unrepentant vice.

⁸⁹ See Richetti's explanation of this scene. He explains that Roxana uses Amy's "naturalism" and the landlord's mastery of social forms against them both and distances herself as she controls them and the narrative, leading them into her world (*Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures* 210).

It is important that Amy initially suggests to Roxana that she sleep with the landlord because Amy illustrates the darker aspects of Roxana's libertinism, indicated most forcefully in Susan's murder. Amy's prominence at the beginning and ending of the novel signifies her importance in the momentous psychological and emotional turning points for Roxana, and Terry Castle describes the importance of the rape for establishing a mother-daughter relationship, a duality, and a projection of Roxana's "self" through Amy. Castle argues that Roxana is passive, while Amy is the active character ("Amy, Who Knew My Disease": The Psychosexual Pattern in Defoe's *Roxana*" 87), and I agree that Defoe means for us to see Amy as carrying out Roxana's desires. She represents a vision of a corrupted self that becomes increasingly terrifying to Roxana, as Amy's suggestion of murdering Susan forces Roxana to confront that "Brutallity and blindness of Mankind" (4) in herself:

Amy was so provok'd, that she told me, in short, she began to think it wou'd be absolutely necessary to murder her: That Expression fill'd me with Horror; all my Blood ran chill in my Veins, and a Fit of trembling seiz'd me, that I cou'd not speak a good-while; at last, What is the Devil in you, Amy, said I? Nay, nay, says she, let it be the Devil, or not the Devil, if I thought she knew one tittle of your History, I wou'd dispatch her if she were my own Daughter a thousand times... (270-271)

When it seems that Amy murders Susan, Roxana must reject her, as Amy acts out of Roxana's deepest desires, fears, and beliefs about humanity. By creating Amy's character as an extension of Roxana and juxtaposing this character against the daughter who shares Roxana's real name, Susan, Defoe sets up a model of the conflicted parts of Roxana. Amy reasons that Susan must die, "let it be the Devil, or not the Devil," because in fact the Devil is "Poverty and Distress," real forces that Roxana both questions and sees as

corrupting powers. She asks Amy: “What is the Devil in you?” (270-1). Is it, in fact, an allegorical demon or a material reality? Or worse? The Devil Roxana sees in Amy is in fact herself, as Amy acts on Roxana’s murderous thoughts, becoming a kind of mirror that reflects Roxana’s inner urges.

The parallels between Amy’s and Roxana’s characters have often led critics to question Susan’s role in the novel. Novak suggests that Susan’s character cannot be regarded as innocent (*Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe’s Fiction* 108), and William Warner elaborates on her destructive power, arguing that Susan rather than Amy represents Roxana’s dark nature divided against itself (168-172). It is important, however, to remember who dies and who kills in the novel. Susan may wish to expose her mother, perhaps in an obsessive desire to have power over Roxana or perhaps just to know her real mother, but it is Roxana who wishes her dead and Amy who likely commits the murder. Whether or not Susan’s curiosity stems from greed or from a natural desire for acknowledgement from Roxana remains inconclusive. Like all of the characters potentially meant to represent categories of “good” or “evil” in the novel, Susan’s character and its meaning is left unresolved, though we might intriguingly read Susan as a representation for the curious reader of amatory fiction, who watches Roxana perform and who wants to know stories about her. Susan’s gaze, like the reader’s, cannot be recognized by Roxana, and she, like the reader, is left out of the narrative. Part of Defoe’s plan for distinguishing his works from other novels, then, would include his not satisfying us, just as Susan is left without knowledge about Roxana. If this was Defoe’s intent, it prevents his providing a clear moral lesson, though it registers our “wicked”

desire for descriptions about Roxana's adventures, which are finally left untold, just as lurid details about her intimate encounters with men are both expected and withheld.

What is more conclusive about Susan is that she loves to see Roxana. During her "Pall Mall" days, Roxana gives a ball and wears a Turkish costume made of "*Persian, or India Damask,*" with elaborate embroidery, jewels, and a turban (174). When Roxana appears in her costume, orchestrating a fantasy of sexual exoticism, she gains the King of England and the attention of the entire court as she performs a dance she learns in France, not Turkey. Roxana's success is derived from the "riotous, titillating air" of the masquerade in the eighteenth century, which Castle describes as having a voyeuristic impulse:

Bodies were highlighted; the event put a premium on the visually sensuous...The mask itself, for instance—traditional emblem of perversely intensified eros—contributed much to the charged ambiance, functioning as an aphrodisiac for the wearers and beholders alike. ("Eros and Liberty at the English Masquerade, 1710-90" 165)

Roxana's body signifies the sensuous allure of the mask, and she exercises this power over the mesmerized audience watching her. She is an exhibitionist, a sign of the masquerade's most lubricious urges, which is why she attracts the Duke of Monmouth, identified as the "Duke of M--," arguably the most debauched libertine at court. Castle argues that the irrepressible "'Liberty' of the occasion...was finally joy rather than degrading, its Protean sensual pleasures revelatory and life-enhancing rather than cynical or satiating" (176), and though the moment reinforces Roxana's self-awareness as a sexual object for consumption, she derives the most pleasure from this performance. She

carries its memory with her, as does Susan, who also eagerly listens to stories about her mother recounted.

The scene is one of the novel's turning points. Roxana receives her name as onlookers cheer her, and this is the name, of course, that the reader knows her by. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Roxana was a byword for a prostitute, with Turkish links to the name Roxolana, the courtesan-turned-wife and empress of Sultan Solyman, who appears in Richard Knolles's *The Generall Historie of the Turks* (first published in 1603). In Knolles's version, Roxolana, a slave, schemes to marry Solyman, who falls in love and frees her. After their marriage, she continues to plot for her sons, and her name becomes linked with luxury, irreligion, extreme ambition, and sexual power (Ballaster 60-1).

Roxana, like her namesake, appears exotic, and she is more exciting to her English audience than the "others" from Georgia and Armenia, who also dance and "really acted to the Life the barbarous Country whence they came" (179). But, as Ros Ballaster notes, it is because their dances are so "wild and Bizarre" that Roxana's dance "pleas'd much better" (179). The audience prefers the "false" Roxana to the "real" Turkish women who perform unmasked. Roxana implicitly links their "barbarity" to their lacking masks, visible markers of Roxana's power since they indicate her knowledge of what to reveal and conceal. Her "spinning fictional versions of her own selfhood" connects her with the Turkish Roxolana, and, like this earlier courtesan, Roxana's exotic and exciting disguise fascinates the audience rather than the authentic, unmasked dancers (Ballaster 64-5). Roxana is defined entirely by the masquerade, a triumphant moment

signifying her seductive power, her objectification, and her final misery. Roxana cannot predict that Susan, who searches for her origins as a symbolic journey for Roxana's need to and fear of finding her "real" self, remembers the costume, a sign of Roxana's identity as a whore, which she finds both disillusioning and powerful. Roxana carries this costume everywhere because of its significations of her many self-fashioned identities, all of which Susan wants to uncover. Roxana's children, particularly the one who shares her name, not only pose as obstacles to her material advancement, they also remind her of a past she wants to forget.

Roxana's ability to dissociate from her children represents her need to distance herself from painful memories, which constantly haunt her. She argues that "Parents always find it, that their own Children are a Restraint to them in their worst Courses, when the Sence of a Superiour Power has not the same Influence" (205). She does, however, try to provide financially for them years after she has grown wealthy, giving her legitimate son money to become an apprentice to a merchant in London. Her children by her lovers are already provided for, but Roxana anonymously sends money through Amy to several of her other children by her first husband. She does not, however, wish to re-enter their lives as their mother because she speculates that they would revile and reject her, and she does not love them. Even her child by the Dutch Merchant has no claim on her affections. She acknowledges that the Dutch Merchant

show[s] that he had more real Affection for the Child, tho' he had never seen it in his Life, than [she] that bore it; for indeed, [she] did not love the Child, nor love to see it; and tho' [she] had provided for it, yet [she] did it by *Amy's* hand, and had not seen it above twice in four Years; being privately resolv'd that when it grew up, it shou'd not be able to call [her] Mother. (228)

Playing the “role” of mother would mean that Roxana could own her past as a mistress, unraveling all of her performances, the source of her libertine power. Though Roxana shows a desire for one of her sons to know who “Favour[s]” (204) him, she cannot bring herself to meet him because she fears his reaction. Though she carries the symbolic Turkish costume as a mask of her sexual identity, she constantly tries to escape it because she fears returning to a position of weakness. She thrives on the continued attention and admiration of others, but she interprets Susan’s fascination with her as a power play she sees herself losing, as her discovery would make Roxana “this Girl’s Vassal,” and “*the very Thought fill’d [her] with Horror*” (280), perhaps as much or more as her daughter’s murder.

Susan threatens to expose Roxana, a terrifying possibility for her. Symbolically, Susan’s sharing of Roxana’s name indicates that Roxana has to face a “real” self she wants to hide. If we are meant to see Amy as an extension of Roxana, then Amy’s suggestion that she kill Susan emerges from Roxana’s deepest fears about herself. Though Roxana initially rejects Amy’s plot to kill Susan, as she “was not for killing the Girl yet” (298), she confesses that she

wanted as much to be deliver’d from her, as ever a Sick-man did from a Third-Day Ague; and had she dropped into the Grave by any fair Way, as I may call it; I mean had she died by any ordinary Distemper, I shou’d have shed but very few tears for her. (302)

That Roxana says “yet” in her initial contemplation of Susan’s murder is important because it signifies that she perhaps intends to act on Amy’s suggestion should her

daughter learn too much about her. Roxana repeats the she cannot bear to hear of Amy “Murthering” (313) Susan, and it is not by accident, I think, that Defoe spells murder in its more archaic form, “murther,” which looks curiously like “mother.”⁹⁰ By distancing herself from Susan, calling her various names like “slut” and “jade” or “the Girl,” Roxana can suppress her maternal instincts, though she cannot completely dissociate herself from her daughter. Instead, she becomes increasingly more miserable in her recognition that she, like the “men of quality” who objectify her, has a violent nature capable of willing her daughter dead, if not actually committing the act. If we see Susan and Amy as parts of Roxana, then we must read the death of Susan as Roxana’s desire to kill a self that has become loathsome to her. Her final act is effectively to write herself, along with Amy and Susan, out of the narrative. Like most of the female libertines considered in the study, the text cannot find a place for Roxana, whose erasing herself from the narrative we could equally read as a sign of protest against her coming punishment. She cannot confess or repent; indeed, she cannot even exist anymore, a legacy that Defoe’s novel leaves to later writers, whose female libertines are banished, punished, or killed off from narratives, even those written by Haywood.

When we compare *Roxana* to Defoe’s earlier works, like *Robinson Crusoe*, we see less of the assured religious writer and more of a disturbed novelist trying to come to terms with the consequences of an increasingly skeptical and amoral world embodied by that most dangerous figure of all, the female libertine. Though the novel asserts a strong need for divine governance and explanations for human motivations, it concludes without

⁹⁰ The last recorded use of the spelling “murther,” as a noun meaning murderer or assassin, occurs in 1658 in the OED.

providing them or a place for Roxana, who remains disturbed by the impossibility of repentance and conversion in a universe that appears like the one presented in Creech's translation of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. The notes to book six, included with the 1682 translation, offer an explanation of the misery depicted in the final lines of Lucretius's text, which, like Defoe's novel, provide no answers, direction, or hope:

if a man follows *Fate* blindly, is *driven* on, not *perswaded* to act, if He is an *Automaton* and moves by *Wheels* and *Springs*, bound with the chain of *Destiny*, tis evident that Fate is the *Cause* of all his miscarriages and the Man no more to be blam'd for wicked actions, than a *Clock* for irregular strikeings when the Artist designs it should do so. No *Example* can prevail on him, no *promises* entice, no *threatenings* affright him; being as unfit to rule himself, or determine his own actions, as a *Stone* in its descent, and a piece of *Iron* may be said to act as freely as a *Man*, if he is led on by Fate, and its motion as *spontaneous*, if *Liberty* consisted in a bare *absence* of Impediments. (46)

We might equally apply this description of the Cartesian body-as-machine working in a Lucretian universe to Defoe's novel, which combines Hobbes's mechanistic experience in *Leviathan* with Christianized, seventeenth-century interpretations of Lucretius's materialism. Characters commit violence because persons or atoms, as "Impediments," have obstructed their progression. As long as Roxana acts in her own self-interest, she believes she can organize her world and the players in it. But all of these players, in a Lucretian context, are merely atoms to be destroyed and created randomly. This is the final horror underlying Susan's death, or the reduction of humanity to matter that, in a cosmic sense, does not matter at all. Her world appears much like the atoms Lucretius describes, and Hell, Heaven, and the Devil become "senseless" and only "Dreams" in a

universe that no longer makes any moral sense to Roxana. There is no resolve, no spiritual redemption, and no narrative closure.

The abruptness of the ending leaves the reader without the resolution that nineteenth-century novels have taught us to expect. The many sequels appearing after the original 1724 edition suggest that Defoe's readers wanted and expected resolution, as Robert J. Griffin's examination of these versions makes clear. But *Roxana* is, as Molesworth persuasively argues, Defoe's most postmodern novel, one that "begs us to reject the unitary aesthetic" (506), to "experience discomfort, perhaps even dread...in witnessing the Newtonian universe of reversible causes and effects crumble into a universe of irreversibility and chance mutation" (505). Predicated on the ideas of a Lucretian universe that destabilizes, bringing along with it our notions about ourselves and our world, *Roxana* cannot reorganize itself into a coherent pattern. Indeed, it should not, since, like Laurence Sterne's very different later eighteenth-century novel, *Tristram Shandy*, disorder is its point. Defoe's heroine, like all of the female libertines considered in this dissertation, forces us to experience the same "discomfort" that Molesworth describes. She is disruptive to stable categories of being, and, as a "*Man-Woman*," she lacks a distinctive gender identity. Instead, Defoe presents her as an "Amazonian," and, as I shall briefly explore in the conclusion, a kind of literary monster, totally lacking virtue or sexual decorum. As a "free agent," she forces us to confront our understanding, since Aristotle, of gender stereotypes and to face a metaphysical question that Defoe's novel implicitly raises: what makes us human?

CHAPTER VII

PHANTOMS AND FOES: LATER FEMALE LIBERTINES

This dissertation has considered representative female libertines from a range of Restoration and early eighteenth-century works. It has shown that historical, philosophical, and cultural influences contributed to the various depictions of this figure, whose pathos and aggression, particularly in Aphra Behn's early narratives, influenced the development of sensibility in England. While John Dryden and George Etherege evaluate the female libertines' resistance to male libertines' assertions of dominance over them, Behn and Catharine Trotter examine the social costs to this figure, whose distress emerges as a prominent characteristic of the female libertine's identity by the eighteenth century. Daniel Defoe's depiction of Roxana as a character lacking sensibility marks the division between the female libertine and the heroine of sensibility, which, by the middle of the eighteenth century, becomes more pronounced, as these heroines almost always appear passive and virtuous rather than sexually assertive or aggressive. Instead, the female libertine emerges as a villain and one, like Roxana, entirely without compassion for others. Her primary characteristic is her malice, which connects her directly with earlier Restoration heroines like Dryden's Doralice and Etherege's Harriet, and she serves mainly to contrast the heroine of sensibility's moral worthiness.

Later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century articulations of the figure concentrate on her viciousness, most often manifested through overt sexual rapacity. Even so, writers

continued to remain fascinated by the female libertine. Henry Fielding presents three versions of this figure in *Tom Jones* (1749), where Lady Bellaston, a town lady who pursues and prostitutes Tom, attempts to have Sophia, the novel's heroine of sensibility, raped. She emerges as one of the cruelest characters in the novel and one that resembles Dryden's Melantha, a less vicious character than Lady Bellaston but one also associated with town values. While Sophia reads Thomas Southerne's tragedy, *The Fatal Marriage: or The Innocent Adultery* (performed in 1694), which is based on Behn's *The History of the Nun*, Lord Fellamar intrudes to assault her. Because Lady Bellaston had "taken care to remove all ears" (659), the rape is almost assured, despite Sophia's screams. Only her father's arrival saves her. Sophia not only feels Isabella's suffering vicariously as a "melancholy" (657) reader of sensibility, she chooses a text of sensibility that foreshadows her own coming distress, orchestrated by Lady Bellaston, who nearly ruins Sophia's relationship with Tom. Sophia also appears to look like "the famous Duchess of Mazarine" (122), with a description of fair complexion, black hair and eyes, and perfect cultivation, as though she had "lived in her youth about the Court" (123-4). Fielding links her with female libertines like Mazarin and Jenny Cameron, mistress of the young Pretender, Charles Edward Stuart, but, unlike these women, and the other libertines in the book, Lady Bellaston, Jenny Jones, and Harriet Fitzpatrick, Sophia remains chaste.

Though Lady Bellaston is the most predatory female libertine in the novel, she is not the only woman to seduce Tom. Jenny Jones, also called Mrs. Waters, appears both as a figure of "virtue in distress" and as a sexual being earlier in the novel. Fielding depicts Mrs. Waters as a promiscuous woman who desires and sleeps with Tom after he

saves her from robbery, assault, and near-rape by a soldier, Northerton, on the side of the road. Fielding does not ask the reader, however, to judge Mrs. Waters harshly for her sexuality. He gives her an important role later in the narrative when Tom is in prison, where she reveals that Tom has not slept with his own mother. Instead, she tells the real history of Tom, the illegitimate son of Bridget Allworthy, which precipitates his reunion with Squire Allworthy and Sophia. She marries Parson Supple, and Allworthy grants her an annuity of sixty pounds. Unlike Lady Bellaston or Harriet Fitzpatrick, another lady in distress, Mrs. Waters is good natured and generous. Both Lady Bellaston and Harriet show varying degrees of malevolence towards Sophia, who suspects Harriet of looking for another man while fleeing from her pursuing husband. Harriet tries to betray Sophia to her domineering father, though both women are united in their desire to escape unwanted marriages, an important link with earlier heroines by Behn and Trotter.

Lady Bellaston, Harriet, and Sophia are related, and they each represent varying degrees of libertinism, with Lady Bellaston embodying London's worst vices, Sophia portraying rebelliousness, but also virtue and wisdom, and Harriet demonstrating qualities of manipulation and malice. Fielding's earlier and more comic depiction of Lady Booby in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) is comparable to Lady Bellaston, though she is not as successful in seducing Joseph as Lady Bellaston is in seducing Tom, who becomes a kept man for a time. Lady Bellaston epitomizes town wickedness, and her viciousness shows a direct legacy from earlier depictions of female libertines like the Earl of Rochester's Corinna in "Artimizia to Chloe." Though Fielding leaves his most sadistic

female libertines unpunished for their avarice, other novelists feature similar figures that suffer for their sexual aggression and rapacity.

William Makepeace Thackeray, Fielding's literary heir in the nineteenth century, depicts several female libertines that resemble Restoration and eighteenth-century characters and novels, and his works clearly articulate the division between the heroines of sensibility and female libertine figures. Becky Sharpe, the heroine in *Vanity Fair* (1848), is a libidinous, corrupt, and scheming character that serves as a foil for the virtuous, long-suffering Amelia, meant to recall the heroine of Fielding's *Amelia*. The line between these figures is further complicated in the mother-daughter pair in *Henry Esmond* (1852), which Thackeray sets in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Rachel and Beatrix Esmond equally compel the hero, Harry, torn between his love for the ideal, virtuous mother figure, Rachel, whom he ultimately marries, and her vain and self-serving libertine daughter, Beatrix. Harry likens Beatrix's brother, Frank, to Rochester, though it is the worldly Beatrix who most resembles Rochester's compelling persona. Like many men, Harry desires her sexually, but he also yearns for the motherly Rachel, who eventually becomes his wife. He compares Rachel and Beatrix obsessively, appearing in anguish for most of the novel, and he tries to win their love despite both women's often cruel treatment of him. It is significant that the virtuous mother rather than the manipulative, wayward daughter earns the "reward," or marriage with the novel's hero. Though Beatrix eventually makes an advantageous marriage, she loses her good looks and is described with scorn by Harry's daughter, Rachel, named for her saintly, long-suffering mother.

Eighteenth-and nineteenth-century writers continued to divide virtuous, passive heroines from their foils, aggressive female libertines. Though eighteenth-century writers of sensibility denounce libertine women, they nevertheless repeatedly consider their social and literary roles, a central concern in works by Behn, Trotter, Delariviere Manley, Eliza Haywood, and Defoe. Later novelists, like Samuel Richardson, distance their heroines of sensibility from earlier ones by focusing on their heroines' purity and virtue—almost to a point of denying their sexual desires completely. Richardson insistently reminds the reader that Pamela and Clarissa are not only virtuous young women, but almost saint-like in their self-denial and commitment to morality, which the male rakes pursuing them constantly test and believe to be false. Lovelace quotes Alexander Pope's definition of the female libertine in the *Epistle to a Lady*, which he, to paraphrase Pope's speaker, sees in every woman's heart, including Clarissa's and Anna Howe's. Anna is a witty character that Lovelace considers as a libertine adversary, whom he fantasizes about raping. Like Clarissa, Anna rejects the idea of forced marriage, though she recognizes, like Trotter's heroines, that society and her mother expect her to marry. After Lovelace tricks Clarissa into leaving her family, Clarissa writes to Anna that she knows that the "mouth of common fame" will likely tell her that "Clarissa Harlowe is gone off with a man!" (370). She speculates that Anna may not be "*permitted* to receive, [her] letters" (370), though she reassures Anna that she is a figure of sensibility to be pitied. She is "harassed and fatigued to death," foreshadowing her actual ending, and she "beseech[es]" Anna "to love [her] still" despite what Mrs. Howe, her mother, relatives, and governess will say (371). Whatever her personal morality, Clarissa knows that, to the

outside world, she has become a fallen woman, a female libertine, and even Anna, more daring, witty, critical, and rebellious, urges her to marry Lovelace, who consistently tests Clarissa's heart, mind, and eventually her body by raping and ruining her.

Raymond Stephanson and others have argued that Clarissa and Lovelace endure physiological manifestations of extreme emotional and mental distress, and his argument provides an integral correlation between the heart, mind, and body that was well under way by the publication of *Clarissa* in the mid-eighteenth century. He argues that "Clarissa dies because of her nervous sensibility, or that intimate relationship of mind and body (the nexus is the nerves) in which one's mental state can have a direct effect on one's bodily health (or *vice versa*)" (268). Her physical condition enacts in written and physical forms a protestation first against the constraints her family imposes on her, then against Lovelace, and ultimately against society. Stephanson intriguingly engages the question of what actually kills Clarissa and provides a fascinating study of how eighteenth-century readers likely understood the relationship between the heart, mind, and body in acute distress. Such a relationship is pivotal in understanding sensibility's role in her death, Clarissa's ultimate physical sign of protest that solidifies the textual signs she writes over and over again in her letters. Significantly, Stephanson argues that Lovelace must recognize "that his own behavior and emotional experience are the final proofs of an acute nervous sensibility as well as a belated authentication of the physiological model which has governed Clarissa's fate" (280). In other words, Lovelace becomes a figure of sensibility as much as a libertine one, and both he and Clarissa suffer from moments of mental anguish.

Clarissa's inner goodness versus her outward appearance as a libertine blurs the distinctions between the virtuous and the libertine heroine. Writers of the gothic, however, draw more distinct lines in their heroines of sensibility, who are often tested by an aggressive *femme fatale* figure. Anne Radcliffe, for example, contrasts the *femme fatale* with the virtuous heroine in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), where she features the once beautiful and villainous Lady Laurentini, who attempts to orchestrate the murder of Madame Montoni by her first husband and Lady Laurentini's lover, the Marquis de Villeroi. She later enters a convent, where Emily, the heroine, hears her confess this story. Radcliffe creates a division between the murdering seductress, who has clear links with earlier nun figures like Behn's Isabella, and the virtuous heroine in distress, but other writers of the gothic present conflicted characters torn between their desire to act morally and their libertine impulses. In most gothic novels, women's strongly articulated sexual desires almost always must be suppressed for the virtuous heroine to live a happy, tranquil life. This is not always the case, however. Writers such as Charlotte Dacre experiment with characteristics of libertinism, such as violence and sexual rebelliousness, in their heroines. Victoria in *Zofloya; or the Moor* (1806) appears as an androgynous character whose sexual feelings lead to extreme violence. She is perhaps one of the more psychologically complex later versions of the female libertine figure that shows a direct legacy from Behn's Isabella and Defoe's Roxana.

More often, however, women writers after Behn rejected these figures in their works because of the danger such an association posed for their reputations. Many, like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, did not want to publish at all because of the association

between prostitutes and published women writers. Lady Mary nevertheless demonstrates her desire to transgress appropriate boundaries of feminine decorum through writing, and she assumes a libertine identity in several poems and letters. Like Behn and Haywood, Lady Mary enjoyed adopting multiple masks, particularly in her correspondence with her lover, Francesco Algarotti. Like Trotter's Olinda in *Olinda's Adventures*, Lady Mary found an outlet through fiction for expressing the self and her most intimate feelings. Writing often replaced physical consummation with the absent Algarotti, and Lady Mary dwells in the imaginative pleasure of occupying male and female literary roles in her letters to him.

Algarotti's continued absences from her and eventual breaking off of their relationship pained Lady Mary, who recreates herself in her letters both as a libertine and often as an anguished figure from antiquity. At the very early age of twelve, she writes through the imagined voice of Julia, daughter of the Emperor Augustus, supposed lover of the exiled Ovid, and speaker of "Julia to Ovid" (written in 1701), written in imitation of the women writing to their absent lovers in Ovid's *Heroides*. In her later letters to Algarotti, Lady Mary imagines herself in a similar context because of her separation from her lover. She is a lady of sensibility, "a thousand times more to pitied than the sad Dido" with "a thousand more reasons to kill [her]self" since she has "thrown [her]self at the head of a foreigner just as she did" (10 September 1736 227). Though married to another man, she also styles herself as Penelope, who famously waits for Odysseus's return, by patiently waiting for Algarotti: "I have been the Penelope of your absence" (11 July 1738 235). Yet she recognizes that their relationship exists mainly through letters and her

passionate imagination, and she takes pleasure in this kind of erotic, literary delight, which replaces the pleasure of physical consummation with her lover:

I commend myself to you in all perils like Don Quixote to his Dulcinea, and I have an imagination no less heated than his. Nothing frightens me, nothing diverts me a moment; absorbed in my own thoughts, neither the fatigues of the road nor the pleasures offered me the towns have distracted me for an instant from the sweet contemplation in which I am immersed. (6 September 1739 249-50)

She ends this letter by writing stylized heroic couplets that express her emotional longing and anguish:

Such soft Ideas all my pains beguile,
The Alps are levell'd, and the Desarts smile.
These pendant Rocks and ever during snow,
These rolling Torrents that eternal Flow:
Amidst this Chaos that around me lyes,
I only hear your voice, and see your Eyes. (250)

The imagined lover provides a constant joy amid the frenzy of her emotion, paralleled in nature. Her frank letters of passionate entreaty to Algarotti demonstrate that she recognizes the illusoriness of their love, and she regards it sometimes as a liberating relationship predicated on mutual happiness. Often, however, it is an affliction for her. She writes to him that “It is certain that if I cannot make your happiness you cannot make mine” and that she “does not intend to constrain” him (24 December 1739 259). This did not prevent her from feeling pain at his rejection and neglect. She presents herself as a figure in agony and writes to share and thereby alleviate her pain with her lover. Like Pope’s Eloisa in *Eloisa to Abelard*, which Pope sent to Lady Mary, a possible inspiration

for his writing about separated lovers, in 1717, Lady Mary can occupy multiple emotional, erotic, and intellectual states of frenzied passion as the rejected mistress:

I have begun to scorn your scorn, and in that vein I no longer wish to restrain myself. In the time (of foolish memory) when I had a frantic passion for you, the desire to please you (although I understood its entire impossibility) and the fear of boring you almost stifled my voice when I spoke to you, and all the more stopped my hand five hundred times a day when I took up my pen to write to you. At present it is no longer that. I have studied you, and studied so well, that Sir [Isaac] Newton did not dissect the rays of the sun with more exactness than I have deciphered the sentiments of your soul. Your eyes served me as Prism to discern the Ideas of your mind. I watched it with such great Intensity that I almost went blind (for these prisms are very dazzling). I saw that your soul is filled with a thousand beautiful fancies but all together makes up only indifference. It is true that separately—divide that Indifference (for example) into seven parts, on some objects at certain distances—one would see the most lively taste, the most refined sentiments, the most delicate imagination etc. Each one of these qualities is really yours. About manuscripts, statues, Pictures, poetry, wine, conversation, you always show taste, Delicacy, and vivacity. Why then do I find only churlishness and indifference? Because I am so thick as to strike out nothing better, and I see so clearly the nature of your soul that I am as much in Despair of touching it as Sir [Isaac] Newton was of enlarging his discoveries by means of Telescopes, which by their own Powers dissipate and change the Light rays. (May 1741 285-6)

Algarotti, also a writer, had become, in Lady Mary's mind, the real life lover of her libertine poem, "The Lover: A Ballad" (1747), an intellectual who could appreciate her wit along with her body. She writes to him as an equal, as we might imagine Behn's Julia writing to the misunderstanding Gayman.

Lady Mary's letters articulate both her libertine longings and her need to keep private her written desires, though she made sure that one set of her letters was not destroyed after her death. Her distinctive *Turkish Embassy Letters*, written between 1716-1718 while accompanying her husband, Edward Wortley Montagu, an ambassador, to Constantinople, shows that she was an avid traveler who entered into the erotic spaces

not only of the mind, but also of the Turkish baths. The letters document her interactions with the city, its customs, and its people, which had long-lasting effects for her and for England, as she brought back the smallpox vaccination from Constantinople. Her letters illustrate that these intellectual and cultural interactions changed her perceptions of the city and its culture.

The letters also reveal Lady Mary's interest in experimenting with new verse forms and traditions. She translates Turkish love poetry by Ibrahim Pasha, a leading Turkish poet, and sent some of her translations to Pope, with whom she continued to correspond during her years in Turkey. In one of her letters to him, she compares the Persian lover in the translated text to the lover in the *Song of Solomon*, blending two religious traditions together with an Ovidian one that recalls the tragic story of Philomel's transformation to a nightingale in book six of the *Metamorphoses*. Pasha's poetry permitted Lady Mary to explore indecorous intellectual desires through the erotic voice of the Turkish "other," to give a voice to her experiences as a woman writer without overtly appearing to do so.

Lady Mary's letters show that she could identify with this "other," envisioning the Turkish woman as a sexually liberated figure and an exotic female libertine. Her homoerotic descriptions of the Turkish women who bathe together allow her to draw a contrast between Turkish and English women, who do not have the kind of freedom that Turkish women do. She records that they comment on her body being in confining "stays," that she was "so lock'd up in that machine that it was not in [her] own power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to [her] Husband" (1 April 1717). Lady Mary

admires their “all being in the state of nature, that is, in plain English, stark naked, without any Beauty or defect conceal’d” (1 April 1717). She implicitly critiques restrictions placed on women in her own culture, knowing that, even as she enters the “other” space of the Turkish baths, she cannot, like them, shed her clothes or her customs. She carries these ideas with her, adopting Turkish dress, a sartorial representation of exotic, libertine rebelliousness and a signification of a foreign spectacle she imagines through literal and figurative disguise, when she returned to England. The “disguise” appears on the written page and on the body as a representation of longed-for liberty, found in imaginative spaces that give her artistic freedom because they permit her to share her intimate desire for erotic “otherness.” She depicts the detail of the Turkish women’s free nudity to express an otherwise unavailable freedom to her since her body, like her sexuality, needs concealing.

Lady Mary’s letters, never published in her lifetime, reveal that she could be both intrepid and cautious in how she presented herself in her writing to the outside world. Like Haywood, she experienced derision from satirists like Pope, with whom she quarreled and satirized in her verse. Pope’s formulation of wit as the “dress of thought” has gender implications, and he policed offenders through satire, a vehicle for punishing inappropriately “dressed” writers. To continue the metaphor, women’s “dress” must cover the mind, like the body, entirely. Though she wrote a bitter personal attack on Pope, Lady Mary more often shied away from making herself an object of public scorn. She knew that publishing might have given women personal or economic rewards or literary fame, but more often than not, it made them targets for disapproval. She admired

the freer sexuality that the Turkish women enjoyed, but the works of amatory fiction by women that she read in her youth teach an implicit lesson that women should learn to restrain themselves to avoid becoming social outcasts. She only had to look at Behn's, Manley's, or Haywood's experiences as published writers to understand that her reputation was at stake.

I posed an initial question in the introduction to this dissertation: what is the female libertine? I have shown that this figure plays an important role both in the development of the early novel and in an early discourse of sensibility in the seventeenth century, but it also begins to appear without these characteristics by the early part of the eighteenth century. Whether in real life or in literature, the female libertine exists mainly as a literary creation, if not a kind of phantom. She is, as Haywood's *Fantomina* illustrates, often punished for expressing her identity as a libertine.

Fantomina, however, is not only a story about a woman adopting multiple disguises to pursue a man, Beauplaisir. It is also a story about the sexual woman, the transgressive woman, and the woman writer, who adopts as many masks as *Fantomina* does to pursue different narratives—all of them risky and challenging to social restrictions placed on women. Like *Fantomina*, the female libertine assumes multiple masks in her pursuit of imaginative and physical pleasure, which frees her, giving her an outlet for expressing a provocative, hidden self. Such expressions make her a figure of scorn, shame, and notoriety since, the moment she becomes public, whether as a writer or as a sexually autonomous being, she loses her agency, finding, in its place, derision. This

figure nevertheless left a legacy to later writers through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and she continues to fascinate and perplex critics today.

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