

THE RISE OF THE LIBERTINE HERO ON THE RESTORATION STAGE

by

JAMES BRYAN HILEMAN

(Under the Direction of Elizabeth Kraft)

ABSTRACT

Structured in the style of a printed play of the period (though with only three acts), this study focuses on the proto-libertine hero in the plays of the restored stage of the 1660s and on the plays from whence he sprang. My goal is to revise the thinking about this figure, to cleanse him, and the times that produced him, of centuries of cultural effluvia by taking all these accumulations into account. He attained the zenith of his cultural career during the 1670s; his best representations, outside of the poems and the lives of noblemen such as the Earl of Rochester, are on the stage. In a sense he represents and embodies the last full flowering of the aristocracy before the commercial classes and their characteristic, Idealistic, Christian-humanist, bourgeois modes of thinking came to dominate English culture and to alternately effeminize and demonize this figure as “the Restoration rake.” His Epicurean Materialism also parallels the rise of experimental science, though his fall does not. I examine his practice and the theory that informs him, his emphasis on inductive, *a posteriori* reasoning, the fancy-wit that combines sensations and ideas in order to create new conceptions, his notion that desire for largely physical pleasure is humanity’s (and even women’s) primary motivation, and his valuing the freedom to act and think contrary to “official,” moral constraint, often in subversive, playful, and carnivalesque ways. This character’s primary dramatic precursors are featured most prominently

in the plays of John Fletcher, the most popular playwright of the seventeenth century, but also in those of James Shirley, Sir John Suckling, and Thomas Killigrew. Playwrights of the 1660s, most prominently John Dryden and George Etherege, but also William Davenant, James Howard, Thomas Shadwell, Sir Charles Sedley, and others, under the encouraging patronage of King Charles II, finding him still callow, led the proto-libertine hero, by the end of the decade, to the cusp of being fully-formed and ready to assume the dominant role he would play in the 1670s with the introduction of cuckolding and the addition of formidable judgment-wit and a broader range to his basic type.

INDEX WORDS: Libertine, Libertinism, Materialism, Restoration Drama, Restoration Comedy, Rake, John Fletcher, Caroline Drama, Renaissance Drama, Sir John Suckling, James Shirley, Thomas Killigrew, Sir William Davenant, George Etherege, Sir Charles Sedley, Samuel Pepys, Charles II, John Dryden.

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PREFACE

In the spring of 1664 there appeared on the stage of Lisle's erstwhile tennis court in Lincoln's Inn Fields something not yet seen, an innovation, though not as epochal, and certainly not as lasting, as the introduction of actresses--"probably" by the King's when they opened on 8 October 1660 at Vere Street--or of "moveable and changeable scenery"--"probably" by the Duke's on 28 June 1661 at Lincoln's Inn Fields) (Avery xcvi, xxxv)--but significant nonetheless: one Sir Frederick Frolicke, hero of George Etherege's *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*. He was the first of the rake-heroes, a hectoring, sexually obsessed tribe, occasionally admired for their roguish charm but ultimately and rightly deplored for both their immorality and irresponsibility, who dominated the most licentious period, 1660 to 1720, in English dramatic history. So the old story goes. Sir Frederick, however, was not nearly as definitive and unprecedented a break from theatrical tradition as the vast majority of critics have heretofore been wont to assume; he was, at least, likely the most prominent prototype of a new species, albeit as yet embryonic, whom various playwrights would soon both elaborate and refine--the libertine hero, who would recur on the London stage for the remainder of the Restoration. He was nothing epochal, though, but rather simply another small step in a long tradition.

The libertine hero, an exemplary, comic character, "glamorous and successful" though never quite flawless, and never more than "mildly satirized" (Hume 41), possessed, for a brief arc peaking in the 1670s, a near-heroic and admirable social dominance, while still savoring of the rebel and the outsider, not concatenated in any single dramatic figure before the Restoration. An aristocrat, a man of leisure with charm, significant parts and, above all, a transcendent and

facile wit, this most prominent of Restoration theatrical types based his actions, centering on the pursuit of pleasure, both intellectual and sensory, on Materialistic principles.¹

Various forms of Idealism, and not Materialism, have traditionally been the dominant, official codes of abstract belief and of practical morality in the West, though both basic notions have unequally coexisted at least since the foundations of Western culture. Epicurus, Lucretius, and Hobbes all promote Materialism, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, and Orthodox (in the broad sense) Christianity Idealism, and the latter have almost always had the upper hand. The basic principles of Materialism are that all, or at least all humanity can know, is either matter or void, that matter is not illusory and not evil or corrupt by nature, that all we know, we know through our senses, and that if the supernatural, which this philosophy does not necessarily preclude, does exist, it does not guide or even directly influence our actions; rather, we are driven by our not inherently evil, and perhaps even good, sensual, bodily urges and corresponding passions, which we temper and direct with reason. Idealism is, basically, the obverse of Materialism, adding “spirit” or “soul” to the mix and tending to deplore matter and the senses in favor of abstractions such as “good” and “evil.” Dale Underwood defines libertinism aptly enough, but rather too combatively, and with too negative a connotation, as “an egocentrically oriented concept of nature in which indulgence was purchased through aggression, and pleasure through conquest, and in which by definition individual fulfillment and social order were in perpetual opposition” (28); libertinism is, at its core, but Materialism applied to the social sphere.

Christian-humanism, the form of Idealism most prevalent in the seventeenth century, bases itself, along with most, if not all, other forms of Idealism, on an obligation to serve an abstract, greater good than one’s own joy and pleasure, which the materialist sees as often, if not always, derived from power in its multitudinous expressions. This “good” virtually always

involves a duty to serve the church or state, whatsoever church or state that may be, and its representatives; thus a fully Materialist, libertine philosophy has never been official state policy or the official doctrine of a religious sect aimed at a widespread appeal, as an Idealistic devotion to a transcendent, shared goal, be it a socialist utopia or the greater glory of God, primarily perpetuates the institutions that promulgate it.

A minority in every culture has always found Idealism's governing, hegemonic ideals to be meretricious, that these ideal pursuits and practices lose their lacquer of beauty and truth under the harsh light of reason. This glare revealed to the gallants of the seventeenth century, for example, the hypocrisies inherent in the hymeneal practices of the day, stripped the patina of sanctity from an institution so frequently mercenary. This same reason, however, also reveals the omnipresence of self-interest. Thus, though John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, for example, the most famous Restoration expositor and exemplar of libertinism, may well "hate all Monarchs and the Thrones that they sitt on, / From the Hector of France to th'Cully of greate Brittain" (p.86), he still was no Republican. Rather, he realized fully that the political structure of which Charles II was the lynchpin, and the personal loyalty that the King owed him as the son to the first Earl, perhaps the King's most loyal companion, granted him power that supported his freedom to pursue his desires.

Libertinism, however, valuing freedom above all, is based on the acquisition and enjoyment of personal, not institutional power. Its proponents thus tend to be those, the destitute and the *déclassé*, who have little power to gain from established institutions, or those, in the seventeenth century the aristocracy, for whom a substantial modicum of power is assured. The latter, of course, both possessed the education and leisure requisite to participate in the literary conversation themselves and made for far better patrons; they thus, at times, wrote for

themselves, and others frequently wrote for them, and these writings are the primary means by which posterity understands the past.

Dramatic license was not, however, the exclusive province of the higher orders; on the Renaissance stage, such playwrights as Thomas Dekker, John Middleton, and Richard Brome flitted about the boundaries of popular morality as it applied to the middling orders and probed its weaknesses. The two playwrights most honored by later generations, William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, though, both tended to restrain themselves well within the boundaries of moral decorum, the former's heroes and heroines, for example, consistently and constantly validating chastity and the latter's plays consistently reinforcing the Stoic side of Renaissance morality. None of these dramatists themselves, however, was born to or raised among gentlefolk, and only Jonson wrote largely, if far from entirely, for an aristocratic audience.

James Shirley, Sir John Suckling, William Davenant, Thomas Killigrew, Philip Massinger, Francis Beaumont, and, most importantly, John Fletcher, on the contrary, were all born to at least the gentry and all wrote primarily for an audience of gentlefolk and courtiers, the classes to whom libertinism has always been endemic, if rarely pervasive among them or clearly articulated by them. Thus, though Shirley and Davenant in particular may not have been intrinsically amenable to the intellectualized practice of barely restrained license, such was the direction in which many of their less-than-ideal characters tended to stray.

The monopoly established by King's and Duke's theaters in 1660, though not entirely effective, still pushed other, unlicensed dramatic performances to the margins. These two main theaters, expensive and elaborate enough to make regular attendance prohibitive for all but the economic elite and their retainers, catered primarily, though not exclusively, to the court and the town, the latter consisting largely of the minor aristocracy and their sons. The audience thus

mirrored largely, and in many cases was descended directly from, the audiences for the indoor theaters of the Renaissance, and the early Restoration stage inherited their repertoire. These plays, of which the works of Fletcher were the most popular and prominent, naturally, as the theater, perhaps more than any other genre, builds on past successes, provided models for the rising generation of dramatists. They thus inherited these plays' proto-libertinism, present in practice but as yet ill-defined in theory, and defined, refined, and expanded it.

English society, never monolithic of course, was particularly bifurcated in the seventeenth century; the Puritan, republican, and mercantile interests had triumphed in streams of blood in the 1640s, and the High Church, royalist, and aristocratic party had returned to power in a nearly bloodless swoop in 1660. Though perhaps somewhat of an oversimplification, these two extremes, Puritan and atheist, alderman and gallant, both very much felt a need to define themselves against and separate themselves from their opposite pole after the Restoration. The same year, 1667, that saw the debuts of John Dryden's *Secret Love* and his and Davenant's revision of *The Tempest* also saw *Paradise Lost* first published, and Dryden's notoriously bawdy *Mr. Limberham; or, The Kind Keeper* ventured out simultaneously, in 1678, with John Bunyan's *A Pilgrim's Progress*. In this sense the development of the libertine hero in the 1660s was a reaction to the Commonwealth, but no more so than Bunyan's Christian was a reaction to the restored monarchy.

Restoration stage-libertinism was the product of far more than just earlier plays; the resurgent philosophic Materialism of Pierre Gassendi and others in France and Thomas Hobbes in England, the French *libertin* and Epicurian circles, the debates within the system of court Platonism in the 1630s, the lustiness and tolerance and easy good nature of Charles II, and the need to distinguish the aristocratic mode from the common one in a flippant as well as an earnest

register were all vital motivations for and influences on the evolution of the callow wild gallant, the proto-libertine hero, into the polished and dominant Dorimants and Horners of the 1670s.

The plays, however, are central: one need look no farther to find characters possessing most of the Restoration proto-libertine hero's qualities, and these qualities presented in a positive light, particularly in the comedy, than the hundred-odd plays presented on the Restoration stages from the reopening of the theaters until *The Comical Revenge's* debut. These plays are the primary materials from which Etherege created Sir Frederick, Thomas Killigrew created Careless and Wild, and Dryden created Celadon, progressively, if not quite linearly, extending and expanding the tradition of libertinism on the London stage.

DISSERTATIONIS PERSONAE

Male Characters

The *Proto-Libertine Hero*. Variouslly termed a *wit*, a *debauchee*, a *wild gallant*, and an *extravagant rake*, he possesses at least several of the following qualities, though not nearly all:

a robust and unapologetic lust for women and for drink,

a desire to flirt with chaos,

a generosity,

a belief that wealth is but a means to pleasure and, after wit, to power,

a significant collection of parts including a knowledge of and ease with ancient and modern literature,

a marked distaste for legal and moral strictures,

a homosocial, gentlemanly *virtu* as it pertains to other men of wit and of his own class or above,²

an ability to bridge high and low classes and registers while skirting the

middle, a love of wit in women and a joy in engaging in repartee with them,

a Materialist emphasis on the tangible over an Idealistic devotion to abstraction,

a sparkling wit, consisting of both fancy and judgment, comfortable with both the heroic and the anti-heroic, the aetherial and the real, the conceptual and the sensory,

a highly-developed sense of play,

a protean urge to assume different identities,

a sense that his true and only “business” is the pursuit of pleasure, primarily his own but that of others as well,
a tendency and an ability to sublimate the needs of his society and even of his class to his own, personal desires,
a habit of lashing satirically the hypocritical and the weak-by-choice,
a measure of scorn for the softer, more vulnerable emotions,
a view that pleasure lies in pleasurable things and not in painful ones,
a creative urge that leads him to form, consciously, rather than express or conceal, his own “self” and to assume the role of Demiurge in his own comic world,
an aristocratic status.

The *Libertine Hero*. An exemplary character possessing all, or very nearly all, of these qualities, he only fully assumes his role in the 1670s.

Miserly Fathers/Guardians, Cits, Fops, Earnest Young Lovers, Petty Princes, Soldiers, Rogues, Servants, &c.

Female Characters

The *Ingénue*. As witty, if not more so, than the proto-libertine hero, she agrees with him in principle, though not in practice due to the biologically-based but culturally overemphasized double standard that circumscribes her behavior, prominently requiring her to preserve her virginity until marriage.

The *Widow*. Similar to the *ingénue* but wiser to the ways of the world and a bit freer in her behavior.

The *Witty Whore*. The most worldly-wise and perhaps the wittiest of all the ladies, she, disbarred by her social status from marrying a wit, works with the proto-libertine heroes to obtain a wealthy coxcomb for a husband.

Vertuous Queens and Princesses, Waiting Women, Hypocritically Lecherous Cits' Wives, Controlling Mothers, Ignorant Country Misses, Country Wenches, Serving Maids, &c.

Dramatic Poets

The *Triumvirate*, consisting of:

John Fletcher (1606-1625).³ Frequently in collaboration with *Francis Beaumont* and *Philip Massinger*, &c., he was by far the most important Renaissance figure to the development of the libertine hero, as amours and, most importantly, gentlemanly *wit*, particularly fancy-wit, fell under his purview.

Ben Jonson (1596-1636). High among the greatest poets and certainly the greatest critic, to the Restoration he personified the dramatic art, the unities as well as plot and character construction, though he tended to be regarded as somewhat mean.

William Shakespeare (1591-1613). Though rather old-fashioned and unpolished, he excelled at presenting *nature*, both emotions and low-to-middling characters, realistically and movingly, and offered occasional moments of purest poetry.

Other Renaissance Playwrights:

James Shirley (1625-1642). Though explicitly no friend to libertinism, his many highly competent, if not particularly highly regarded plays, popular on the early Restoration stage, contain significant evidence of the presence of libertine ideas among the Caroline gentry.

Sir *John Suckling* (1637-1642). His plays, chaotic but with brilliant flashes, indicate the pervasiveness of Materialism, albeit largely in reaction to hyper-Idealistic *préciosité*, in the Caroline court, of which the Restoration court was, of course, a direct descendant.

Thomas Killigrew (1636-1664) and Sir *William Davenant* (1627-1668). The two most important individuals to the theater of the 1660s, as they managed the King's and Duke's companies, respectively. They both contributed plays both before and after the Interregnum, the former being more amenable to libertinism, particularly in *The Parson's Wedding*, and having more influence at court, and the latter being the by far more skilled, if also more traditional and moderate playwright and poet, and the superior impresario and manager.

Francis Beaumont, Philip Massinger, Richard Brome, William Berkeley, Henry Glapthorne, John Middleton, William Rowley, William Habington, Jasper Mayne, William Cavendish, Earl (later Duke) of Newcastle, John Denham, Abraham Cowley, &c.

Restoration Playwrights:

John Dryden (1663-1694). He was unquestionably the most important poet and critic *and* the most important playwright of the last half of the seventeenth century, for both his talent and his range. Dryden's comic leads from the 1660s, *Loveby*, *Wildblood*, and *Celadon and Hippolito* in particular, are central to the development of the libertine hero and the Materialist creed that underlies his character.

George Etherege (1664-1676). Though his importance has been overemphasized, and his first two plays are far from the sole important ones to the libertine tradition to appear during the Restoration's first decade, *The Comical Revenge* and *She Would if She Could* are, along with Dryden's plays, are the finest comedies early Restoration, and the exuberant *Sir Frederick* and the machinating *Courtall* both milestones in the development of the libertine hero.

James Howard (1662-1667). An important early playwright whose *All Mistaken; or, The Mad Couple* added a new dimension, farcical yet high still, to the proto-libertine hero.

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (1667-1683). A major political and cultural figure, perhaps the second man in the kingdom. Though only an occasional playwright, his revision of *Fletcher's The Chances* both reflects the importance of *Fletcher* to Restoration comedy and illustrates the evolution of aristocratic culture from *James I's* time to that of *Charles II*.

Thomas Shadwell (1668-1692). Perhaps the central comic dramatist of the Restoration, a good deal of libertinism percolates through particularly his early plays despite his explicit claims to be a moral satirist in the line of *Jonson*.

Sir Charles Sedley (1668-1687). Though only a mediocre playwright, he was one of the leading, libertine wits of *Charles II's* court.

Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) (1659-1673). His influence on Restoration comedy, though certainly important, was more one of plot and dramatic structure than of ideology.

Sir Robert Howard, Thomas Porter, Sir William Killigrew, Richard Rhodes, Richard Flecknoe, Edward Howard, Robert Boyle, Earl of Orrery, John Lacy, Thomas St. Serfe, John Fountain, &c.

Other Participants

Queen Henrietta Maria (1609-1669). Daughter of *Henry IV* of France, wife to *Charles I*, and mother of *Charles II* and *James II*, witness to her husband's execution and her son's restoration, she was largely responsible for the importation of the cult of *Platonick* love into England and patronized its dramatic exponents.⁴

King Charles II (1630-1685). Robust, genial, witty, shrewd, immensely tolerant, and loyal to his friends, his very active support of the theaters allowed and encouraged them to flourish. He also,

though himself no philosopher, was perhaps as much an exemplar of a libertine hero as was possible for the embodiment of the nation to be, most famously (and notoriously) in his pursuit of pleasure with his three major (*Barbara Palmer*, later *Lady Castlemaine* and *Duchess of Cleveland*, *Nell Gwyn*, and *Louise de Kerouille*, later *Duchess of Portsmouth*) and many minor mistresses, leading to 18-odd bastards, but also in his good nature, wit, generosity, and love of play.

Samuel Pepys (1660-1669). The single most important source on the theater of the 1660s, he presents a moderate, personal perspective on the stage and its milieu.

Charles I, *Humphrey Moseley*, *Thomas Hobbes*, *James, Duke of York*, later *James II*, *John Evelyn*, *Nell Gwynn*, *Charles Hart*, *Charles Sackville*, *Lord Buckhurst*, later *Earl of Middlesex* and *Earl of Dorset*.

Critics

Gerald Langbaine, *Thomas Rymer*, *James Wright*, *Jeremy Collier*, *Charles Gildon*, *Joseph Addison*, *Sir Richard Steele*, *John Dennis*, *Alexander Pope*, *Giles Jacob*, *Theophilus Cibber*, *Samuel Johnson*, *Horace Walpole*, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, *Charles Lamb*, *William Hazlitt*, *Leigh Hunt*, *Lord Macaulay*, *George Meredith*, *George Saintsbury*, *John Palmer*, *Allardyce Nicoll*, *Joseph Wood Krutch*, *Bonamy Dobrée*, *Kathleen Lynch*, *Montague Summers*, *Guy Montgomery*, *L. C. Knights*, *John Harold Wilson*, *Albert Harbage*, *William Van Lennep*, *John Harrington Smith*, *Thomas Fujimura*, *Dale Underwood*, *Norman Holland*, *Virginia Ogden Birdsall*, *Robert Hume*, *Edward Burns*, *Rose Zimbardo*, *John Vance*, *John Loftis*, *Robert Markley*, *Douglas Canfield*, *Brian Corman*, *Harold Love*, *Derek Hughes*, *Christopher Wheatley*, *Henry Ten Eyck Perry*, *W. Heldt*, *John Wilcox*, *Leslie Hotson*, *Vivien de Sola Pinto*, *William Archer*, *John Wain*, *F. W. Bateson*, *K. M. P. Burton*, *Frank Harper Moore*, *D. R. M. Wilkinson*,

Gunnar Sorelius, James Sutherland, Andrew Bear, Arthur H. Scouten, Harold Weber, Robert Jordan, Elizabeth Kraft, &c.

Scene London, Spain, and Italy.

PROLOGUE

You saw the matter, sense, in sparkish clay,
O Libertine, you gloried in your day,
O'er fops, and cits, and coxcombs of some parts,
And those with fantasies of wounded hearts.
No Sade, no devil, harsh to earnest souls,
To hypocrites who hid like timid foals,
In underwoods of laws and moral holes.
You never cared for laws designed for all,
As they were there to keep the mob in thrall;
An *honnete homme* you were towards your peers
An atheist in love to pretty dears.
A window, head, or cup well might get broke,
The fetishes of faithful bus'ness folk;
Such power over matter sometimes flaunted,
Did only seek to show them what they wanted.
Above all free, not tied to any creed,
But that based on the human body's need.
And misses want from time to time to swive,
'Tis but the sign that they too are alive.
You needed to create, and on the stage,
Was where such things were done in Charles's age;

The lyrics, songs, the repartee and rant,
Served as a tonic to fanaticks' cant.
But more they sang the active joys of play;
A fencing, fancy-wit, all brisk and gay
That trumped with joy the melancholy way.
Avatars of flesh lived what was writ,
But they too by their lives gave birth to it.
So Dryden, Etherege, and Killigrew,
So Sedley, Shadwell, Bucks and Howard too,
Took Fletcher, Shirley, Suckling; made them new.
They thus revived the stage, renewed the life,
All but extinguished by intestine strife.
The sixties, vigorous, all fresh and clean,
Were when you first arose, O libertine.

ACT I: THE COMMENTATORS.

The most popular and most highly regarded playwrights on the newly restored stage were John Fletcher and Ben Jonson.⁵ That Fletcher and Jonson were the twin stars guiding the course of, particularly early, Restoration comedy, however, has been the dominant view only since the 1920s, despite the fact that John Dryden himself, among many others, says as much near the dawn of the Restoration, in his “*Prologue to the Wild Gallant as it was first acted,*” and thus, presumably, in 1663, when he grants the bays for comic “*Wit*” to his “*Elder Brothers*” John “*Fletcher and Ben*” Jonson (8: 5) and thus acknowledges these two as his primary models.⁶ This blindness to the continuity of English drama springs from the practice, nearly as old as the professional stage itself, of judging the plays’ artistry by a moral standard, and one inextricably linked to class loyalties.

This standard, certainly from Jeremy Collier’s 1698 *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* onward, was very much not that of Charles II’s court; rather, it was that borrowed from “the early church fathers,” and “the sterner sort of Pagans,” who tended to argue that “pleasure . . . in the end . . . was . . . really not pleasure” (Krutch 89).⁷ The ascending commercial classes trying to seize the cultural high ground tended to adopt this view, as they found it amenable to their interests, and indeed, though they, for the most part, did not share Collier’s zeal, Collier was the enemy of their enemy and was willing to plunge into the breach. After 1688, with their enemy harried, weakened, at bay, the ascetic, pleasure-damning, Collier-

led pack, frothing with humorless bombast, was able to pounce. By the mid-eighteenth century, with aristocratic libertinism soundly defeated, and morality, and not wit, having become, outside of wealth, the arbiter and defining characteristic of power, criticism of these plays evolved into these same now-triumphant interests reveling in and imposing their cultural hegemony. Only in the twentieth century did they weaken, after one last reactionary, rear-guard attempt to preserve traditional, bourgeois tastes and values. And these tastes and values, this ideology, were essentially, if not profoundly, Idealistic throughout.

Mainstream criticism, or, perhaps more accurately, commentary, as many a “critic,” particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, examined but a handful of Restoration comedies, and those cursorily, and then proceeded to make sweeping judgments of forty-odd years of London theater, was for well over two centuries largely a history of “critical condemnation, confusion, and indifference” (Holland 199). It divided with the dawn of the eighteenth century into two major channels that remained almost entirely distinct until the 1950s, and both of them focus on, more than anything else, the lightning rod that was the libertine hero. On one side are those who, from Sir Richard Steele to Lord Macaulay to George Meredith to L. C. Knights, find the morality and the Materialistic vision of Restoration comedy so utterly deplorable and fetid that they raise it into consideration only better to dissect and bury it—“As all looks yellow to the jaundic’d eye” (Pope, “Essay on Criticism” 559)—and to this end they tend to emphasize the plays as realistic social documents. Opposing them have been those who, from John Dennis to Charles Lamb to Edmund Gosse to John Palmer, though they too disagree fundamentally with the plays’ ethical and moral stances, still find in the plays some significant matter worth appreciating and preserving, and rather downplay their realism. The former tend to be far more on the side of judgment, the latter somewhat more appreciative of fancy. What they

share, though, is a decided tendency to interpret the plays through the hegemonic class-based lens of their own time, involving both a distaste for the landed aristocracy and a prudish and priggish vision of, especially female, sexuality.⁸ These two sides, distinct, though far from mutually exclusive, spent over two hundred years largely sniping (with the occasional artillery barrage) over whether or not Restoration comedy was material worthy of extended, serious critical analysis. The comedies themselves, thus, outside of perhaps a handful of canonical works, basically those of Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, sometimes Vanbrugh and Farquhar, and occasionally Dryden, received some focused attention, but a fraction of that devoted to the first, “Elizabethan” sixty years of the English professional stage, as did the question of from whence they sprang, until well into the twentieth century.

Scene I: The 1690s and the Eighteenth Century.

A grand debate surfaced in Collier’s wake over the uses of the stage, questioning whether its very existence was defensible in a Christian nation, driving its defenders to define the utility of plays. James Wright, in his *Historia Histrionica*, though largely “the gleanings and speculations of a dilettante” (Milhous and Hume x), defends the comedies as social histories, the reading and viewing of which can lead one “to discover the manners and behavior of several ages, and how they altered. For plays are exactly like portraits” (401), a notion that later critics would adopt to defend the study of Restoration comedy, though mostly to deplore it. Another major defensive tactic, citing the exemplary, pedagogic function of drama, found its defenders in both pure critics and in practicing playwrights and, most prominently, soon after in Sir Richard Steele. Thus, the continued presence of the stage was safe, and, for all the attacks of Collier and

his cohorts, the existence of the playhouses never seriously threatened, for that experiment had already been tried and rejected within living memory. Most recognized “an allay of Cant and Hypocrisy in their Zeal” (Gildon, *Comparison* 77) and “the audience was,” and always is, “more eager for amusement than instruction, and if it got the one, it was not over particular about the other” (Krutch 76). The days of the libertine hero on the Late Stuart stage, however, already compromised as he was, most certainly were numbered, and the content of comedies further altered more rapidly and significantly than it might otherwise have been.⁹ As he, and the witty minxes whom he pursued, and who sometimes allowed themselves to be caught, were at the vanguard of the aristocratic offensive against the traditional values of the city, so he, and along with him the literary dominance of the stage, was the first to fall to the counterattack of the commercial classes.

Indeed, as early as 1702, the relatively genial and moderate *Comparison of the Two Stages*, most likely by Charles Gildon, has the cit-like critic Chagrin note that if Dryden’s *Limberham* “were now to be acted, the Women wou’d sicken; nay, the young Fellows wou’d hold their Noses at it” (35). This sort of direct attack on sexual “vice” as noisome filth would grow to be a critical commonplace, largely replacing any sort of subtle reading of any play expressing a positive libertinism. Chagrin’s companion, the gentleman Ramble, confessedly “a *Proteus* in my Appetite” (4), still defends Dryden, and indeed the whole Fletcher-associated genre of “Tragi-Comedies” (36), but his is, though not yet a defeated one, clearly a losing cause.

Similarly, John Dennis, very possibly the first “to make a living” as a critic, though “emphatically not a wit” (Krutch 60, 155), in his “Large Account of the Taste in Poetry,” from the same year, retains significant traces of the earlier, lighter, more open attitude towards comedy. He finds that “People had an admirable taste of Comedy” in Charles II’s “Reign of

Poetry and of Pleasure,” and that “the dialogue in Comedy ought to be as free as the air” (279, 291, 280). His vision of the aristocracy of that reign, however, is already turning nostalgic, for in those freer days men and their “human, gay, and sprightly Philosophy” were able to choose whether to spend their time “dissolv’d in the wantonness of ease” or in “trac[ing] the winding of [men] up to their very springs” (292). Yet still, despite his criticism being “a veritable catalogue of demands for realism” (Hume 50), Dennis applies a top-down, playwright-first, Idealistic, deductive, neo-classical theory, adapted to his own more commercial age, in order to force comedy farther away from the aristocracy and farther towards the far more practical world of the city, as he finds that “Humour is more the business of comedy than Wit” and thus that “low Comedy is to be preferred to the high” (281). His program, emphasizing the plays’ morally instructive rather than their pleasure-giving function, effectively follows Thomas Shadwell’s and that of his ideal audience, the “men of Sense,” in that “it is not Wit, but Reason and Judgment, which distinguishes a man of Sense from a Fool” (288). Dennis, though, a far less successful playwright than Shadwell, more emphasizes providing the majority of the audience what they *should* want rather than what they *do*; Dennis “never made it [his] chief aim to please the generality” (285). As a playwright, he was rousing successful in this endeavor, so to some degree, this argument is but the rhetoric of failure; his play did not please the audience, so the fault is perforce theirs.

Dennis bases his theory of what constitutes true comedy on the notion that “writing Wit is the effect of the Fancy, and the writing of Humour is the work of the Judgment” (282), and thus values the latter, Jonsonian pairing over the former, Fletcherian one. Though nowhere near so bereft of reason as the current farce and opera that “has gone a very great way towards the enervating and dissolving of” the “minds” of his contemporaries, he pushes fancy-wit in that

direction and away from the proper domain of the man of sense (293). These men of sense, with their increasingly well-defined and fixed dicta, dominate the current “Reign of Politicks and of Business,” for “there are ten times more Gentlemen now in business, than there were in King *Charles* his Reign” (1.294); to them “Wit must often be shocking and nauseous,” and “what is always agreeable . . . must be preferable to that which is sometimes shocking” (291, 294, 282).¹⁰ Thus, though Dennis does equivocate here significantly, libertinism certainly, and by association any sort of verbal profusion or the “wretched glimmering of Fancy,” particularly that issuing from gentlefolk, and thus high comedy from Fletcher onward, he devalues in a move far more closely aligned with Steele than with Dryden (288).¹¹

Joseph Addison and, especially, Sir Richard Steele, equivocated far less than these more minor commentators and employed their superlative rhetorical skills to compromise and temper, to intellectualize and rationalize Collier’s rants, and to tailor them to fit the aspirations of the rising middle-class towards cultural hegemony by seizing and redefining reason and nature in their own image, along the way seeking “to repress rakishness and coquetry, and to recommend the contrary ideals” (Smith 199). The professed program of Addison’s series on wit in *Spectators* 58 to 63 is “to banish vice and ignorance” (no.58; 1: 245), in that order, and the royal road to this goal is to render one’s mind “broken and cultivated” by “Reason, Reflection and good Sense” so that it might bear nought but the good fruit of “true wit” (no.61; 1: 259). As for his devaluation of “false wit,” and its “obvious materiality” that perforce associates it with “female frivolity” (Kraft 634, 635), it is “very natural for all Men of Sense to agree to it” (no.62; 1: 262), and anyone who deviates from this path of right reason is thus perforce “unnatural,” and monstrous even. This right path of “true wit” deals in “Ideas” and not mere “Words” (no.62; 1:

265); thus Addison wrests wit away from the fancy and towards judgment, away from the material and towards the ideal, away from a sensual basis and towards an abstract one, as he subordinates “image to meaning, sign to significance, word to thought” (Kraft 634). For him “the Basis of all Wit is Truth,” not a relative, shifting, deductive truth, but a fixed, Ideal, Christian-humanist one, from which spring, as Steele expresses it, “the eternal Rules of Reason and good Sense” (no.52; 1: 268, no.75; 1: 255). Whereas Restoration wit had tended to emphasize multiplicity, variety, generosity, and freedom, expressed with “graphic, materialist detail” (Kraft 641), the fancy-driven formation of new ideas, these become, in *Spectator* 63’s phantasmagoric dream, effeminized figures in the ranks of “FALSEHOOD,” all banished by the dawn of the glorious, singular, ideal light of “TRUTH” (no.63; 1: 274).¹²

Addison’s enemy in the abstract was “the depravity of our Fancies”; Steele, however, was the one to apply this same Idealistic, judgment-based position more specifically to plays in which “our Judgments are not at all exercis’d” (Gildon, *Comparison* 31). He nominally intends opera and performances appealing primarily to the senses, but also comedy, and especially of the aristocratic and not heavily satirical variety, the kind more calculated, like much of Fletcher’s and Etherege’s and Dryden’s, to provide its audience with sophisticated pleasure than to ridicule vice or to inculcate virtue. Addison allows comedy a place under the banner of truth, but only the very last one, two steps below “*Satyr*” (no.63; 1: 274); Steele’s attempt is to lop it off altogether, or at least to banish those Materialistic comedies still breathing from “the Seat of Wit, . . . the Play-house” (no.65; 1: 278). Steele’s mission in particular was to redirect audiences towards the appreciation of sentimental, Idealistic romance, and emotionalism rather than wit, either to redefine wit or at least cause it to be “thought of as undesirable,” a quest which he very nearly saw “through to complete victory” (Smith 214, 226).

Much of Steele's attack on the comedy of his own age and that of the preceding one, as heir to not only "the whole trend of the [1690s] toward sense, reform, and the sympathetic mood" (Smith 202) but also to Collier's fear of comedy, seems at first to stem from a rather too obvious dread of female sexuality, as he expresses his "great Aversion to the forward Air and Fashion" of, particularly, nubile young ladies; they emulate too much the actresses, who with "lascivious gesture of Body" display "the whole Structure of the fair Sex," leaving the pitiable, innocent spectator "Insulted by the Petticoats of their Dancers" (no.51; 1: 215, 217). This "insult," however, seemingly inherent in the display of the female form, he dismisses as brutish, as it appeals to a "Temper, . . . below the level of [the] Understanding," the sphere of "the Man," below that of "the Man of Sense" (no.51; 1: 217). He next associates with this lower sphere the early female playwrights Mary Pix and Aphra Behn, and then the denizens of "*Bartholomew Fair*"; thus he manages to render open expression of heterosexual desire both effeminate and common, and turn the appreciative theatrical patron into "a Pimp to ravishing Tyrants, or successful Rakes" (no.51; 1: 218, 219). Clearly this is not the reasoning of a critic along the lines of Dryden or Dennis seeking to understand the workings of dramatic poetry, but that of a reformer who fully intends to impose his agenda by any means necessary, his goal being by no means an understanding the texts themselves, but rather "the Advancement of Morality, and . . . the Reformation of the Age" (no.446; 4: 66-67).

His manipulation, albeit insidious, is masterful, unlike Collier's or his fellow playwright Colley Cibber's, though Steele and Cibber particularly pursue much the same end, as Steele defines it some years later in his prologue to *The Conscious Lovers*, "*To Chasten Wit, and Moralize the Stage*" (304). His list of ideal qualities in a male lead highlights these ends: he is to be, in any genre, "Temperate, Generous, Valiant, Chaste, Faithful and Honest," and only after

these come the lesser qualities he should also possess, “Wit, Humour, good Breeding, and Gallantry” (no.5; 1: 220). Thus Steele joins the traditional, ideal components of *virtu*, generosity, valor, faithfulness, and honesty, with two qualities historically usually less emphasized, temperance and chastity, and these last two lead off each triad. As for temperance, even earnest, Shakespearian masculine ideals possess this quality but ambivalently, and such heroes as Dryden’s Almanzor have none of it, a lack they share with many a comic hero, particularly of the extravagant variety. Generosity and valor too being fundamentally homosocial qualities, temperance preceding them implies it to be the most important quality for a man to exercise when dealing with other men. Temperance, of course, has forever been a virtue preached to the lower orders, as excessive passion of any sort inhibits labor; particularly, though, intemperance is the bane of the commercial classes, as an intemperate tenant still has to pay his rent, whereas an intemperate wage-laborer produces less and is more likely to shirk his duties, thus reducing profit. A stoical temperance, too, then suggested a more general restraint in thought and expression as well as in indulgence of any appetite, and not just for drink. In addition to being a traditional hallmark of those devoted to commercial gain, both for reasons of the need for constant negotiation and a desire not to waste, temperance also was perhaps the key quality by which the newly ascendant businessmen of the early eighteenth century separated themselves from the barely restrained pursuit of pleasure of, prominently still, Charles II’s court, this king having gone to his reward but a generation before.

The second trio, chastity, faithfulness, and honesty, turns, with the placement of chastity first, towards heterosexual relations. Male chastity on the seventeenth-century stage had, of course, been a quality clung to by many a hero, but only those actively enamored, and even they tend to make some effort towards preceding formal union by consummation. The placement of

this term too governs the next two; instead of faithfulness emphasizing the homosocial virtue of being true to one's word or kin, its following chastity emphasizes rather being true to one's plighted troth, in essence not attempting to lure women into intimate conversation with a promise of marriage. Honesty as well, such an extremely multivalent term in the seventeenth century, indicating anything from loyalty to the King to behaving in accordance with one's own sexual desires, he here attempts to fix as the male equivalent of female virtue, to designate an "honest" man as one who refrains from sexual intercourse before marriage and limits himself to his wife's embraces afterwards.

The libertine hero was generous, and he was valiant; temperate he could be, but mainly as a matter of policy and not of principle. He was not chaste, except perhaps after his fifth-act conversion, and in many cases did not even desire his female equivalent to be so. He was often faithful, but not in the sense Steele here implies, for he was not faithful to abstractions such as marriage but rather to those individuals he deemed worthy of trust, mainly in a homosocial sense. And as for honesty, that for him meant something different. All of these qualities, however, were to him abstractions that he sought to shape to his will; Steele, to the contrary, posits them as ideals more solid than the material. Whereas to Steele these abstractions were far more important than such outward expressions as "Wit, Humour, good Breeding, and Gallantry," to the libertine heroes of the Restoration stage, and indeed to their precursors, these latter were the Truth, a truth that Steele puts forth all his rhetorical genius to devalue.

Steele's central quarrel with the libertine hero, and all those men of parts who did not share his tastes, moral or otherwise, put forth in plays as exemplary characters, is that he exercises the agency to decide moral questions for himself. According to Steele no gentleman capable of being "Loud, Haughty, Gentle, Soft, Lewd, and Obsequious by turns" could possess

aught but “a corrupted Imagination,” for this suggests that he is “in Doubt”; if he holds a thing “Sacred,” as he must “the Dictates of Honour and Religion,” he does not do so, as he should, because it is “of itself” sacred, but rather for pragmatic reasons (no.75; 1: 300). He does not follow the one true path, nor indeed does he limit his behavior to rigidly-defined ideals of any sort. Thus he is on the side of chaos, and is particularly threatening because of his social position and his wit. He chooses for himself, and that choice tends to be on the side of earthly pleasure. Steele’s own distaste for material pleasures is, at its base, no less than that of Collier, as he finds that “the greatest purpose of his Life is to maintain an Indifference both to it and all its Enjoyments,” though the rewards of this indifference he concentrates more on, as following such will make one “a Generous and a Brave Man” in possession of both “Humour and Shine” (but not, significantly, of wit) (no.75; 1: 301). He presents a new model of man, a proto-Sir Charles Grandison, an anti-libertine hero, and he goes to any Jesuitical length to convince his audience that his model is superior in every way; any author who conceives an exemplary character on any other model is guilty of “Barrenness of Invention, Depravation of Manners, or Ignorance of Mankind” (no.446; 4: 68).

The work of no one man can effect an ideological and literary shift of the magnitude the upper-classes experienced in the decades following Charles II’s death, and “comedy” in particular tends to be “a wild jade that refuses to be bound” (Krutch 132). Steele, however, certainly goaded the Late Stuart stage even farther away from performances suggesting any sort of positive libertinism, and critics from granting such ideas any measure of validity. Doubtless identifying themselves with “the sober and valuable Part of Mankind,” defenders of “Order and Decency,” and “men of true Taste,” virtually all commentators for the next two and a half centuries have concurred in the main with his view of Restoration comedy (no.65; 1: 280, no.51;

1: 220). Few followed Steele so far as to agree that a goal of comedy is to “smite and reprove the Heart,” but most have followed him in debasing the libertine hero as, in this case describing Dorimant, “a direct Knave in his Designs, and a Clown in his Language” (no.51; 1: 220, no.65; 1: 278-279); Steele resents his circumventing the respectable classes and borrowing rather from the low in order to cut the middle out altogether. The realistic strain of criticism would long agree that Dorimant is natural, but “Nature in its utmost Corruption and Degeneracy” (65.v.1.280), and thus beyond the pale of serious, scholarly discussion, fit for receiving only the respect of, in Addison’s characterization, the “Cluster of Coxcombs, . . . who want all manner of Regard and Deference for the rest of Mankind, . . . those who know no Pleasure but of the Body” (no.502; 4: 282). Steele’s model for “poetic justice,” in which any falling off from a strict moral standard must be punished profoundly, and leaving off any “rakish” tendencies to become a “man of sense” brings with it, and rightly, financial remuneration, though “a childish oversimplification” and “magnificently absurd” in regards to the comic realm, gradually became the new standard (Holland 203).

To this end, Steele provides, to a degree early in his career as a playwright but explicitly later, a new model of a gentleman, epitomized by *The Conscious Lovers*’ Bevil. Bevil’s *raison d’être*, clearly stated in the play’s preface, is to provide “the Effect of Example and Precept” to drive away the hordes of “*Goths and Vandals*” who still, in 1723, “frequent the Theatres,” in order that “a more polite Audience” (299), who seek to “*Judge Politely*”(Prologue 304), may fill the vacuum. He is the star of not a comedy so much as an embourgeoisified heroic drama written for “ordinary, contemporary, middle-class people” (Holland 211), the enemies to a cultured and threatened yet creative aristocracy. These new-model cits would displace the libertine hero, already well in decline, as the ideal gallant on the stage, and subsequent

generations would concur in their valuation of morality over wit, of judgment over fancy, of the mere gentleman over the aristocrat, and, perhaps most importantly, of the ideal over the material. This new hero's goal is clearly not laughter, but rather "an Improvement of it, . . . a Joy too exquisite for Laughter" (299). This "Joy" inspires "Tears" that, absurdly enough, flow from the springs of "Reason and Good Sense," a direct inversion of the libertine sense of reason's effects on "a right Disposition, and the natural Working of a well-turn'd Spirit" (300). This new direction for "comedy," coupled with the rise of literacy and of the novel and the concurrent reduction in the literary centrality of the stage, would doom the libertine hero and his antecedents, with all their unquestionable youth and verve, to a very long and dark night in critical, and eventually popular, esteem.

The catalogues that revised Gerard Langbaine's *Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, published in its final version in 1691, provide a similar, if more mainstream and less didactic, image of this cultural shift away from the Restoration stage and its most distinctive type. Attempting, or at least pretending, to promote no specific cultural agenda, and offering, as Langbaine says in his preface, to the "disingag'd Reader," but the product of having "mis-spent my Time in these Lighter Studies," these works, first Langbaine's, then Charles Gildon's anonymously published *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (1698), Giles Jacob's *The Poetical Register: or, The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (1719), and Theophilus Cibber's *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (1753), though granted for this last work dramatic poets are but one variety, provide in their occasional comments a far more accurate impression of the popular attitudes of their age than the obviously agenda-driven criticism of authors such as Collier and Steele and, albeit to a lesser degree, that of

the more strictly literary critics such as John Dennis.¹³ The goal of all of these intense devotees of the stage, which quality alone places them far from the moral extremists of their day, as Gildon says in his preface, is to play the role of “Critick and Historian at once, whose Object ought always to be Truth,” in this case the objective variety. They may not achieve this goal, but their biases are at least the ones most prevalent among the moderates of their times, more reflective of their ages than leading or pulling them.

Their gradual movement is away from an aristocratic and permissive view and towards a more populist and more morally strict one. Certainly none of the last three refers to Charles I as a “Martyr . . . of Blessed Memory” (4) or to “the Pious King [who was] forc’d by wicked Subjects, to fly” (338), or speaks of Charles II in nought but the most respectful terms, and as “a sovereign Judge of Wit” (94), as does Langbaine. By 1753, Cibber has come to emphasize “the blemishes of that luxurious Prince’s character, and the errors of his reign” (2.189). These dramatic encyclopedists thus, paralleling this line, each one more than the last, emphasize license and not loyalty as the defining feature of the Restoration, and their tendency to judge authors on moral grounds, and on the potential negative social effects of their “immoral” plays, increases with each iteration. Langbaine and, to a lesser degree, Gildon, tend to regard the sexually suggestive as not intrinsically wrong, but rather merely a sign of vulgarity when poets refer to these matters too blatantly. For example, Langbaine condemns Thomas Duffet to “the third Rate” mainly because he wrote but “Farce, and Low-Comedy,” and that “with so much Scurrility,” and “such Ribaldry,” that it cannot but “offend the modest Mind” and pleases “none but the Rabble” (177), whereas Fletcher’s “witty Raillery was so drest, that it rather pleas’d than disgusted the modest part of his Audience” (204). Jacob to a degree in 1719, and certainly Cibber in 1753, however, find sophisticated bawdry to be the worst sort of all, as it shows “the

harlot face of loose indulgence, and by dressing up pleasure in an elegant attire, procure[s] votaries to her altar” (2: 55).¹⁴ This practice of making sensuality publicly palatable by expressing it with wit and grace, and thus aiming to please more so than to instruct, so long attributed to Fletcher and later to most Restoration comic dramatists, gradually becomes worse than broad bawdy, as generosity gives way to gain, wit to feeling, pleasure to duty, and the sophisticated, aristocratic sinner becomes the most threatening enemy of all.¹⁵

The way in which they treat John Dryden alone suggests all of the paths by which later critics would approach and condemn Restoration comedy, even though overall Dryden resists the trend of significantly increasing condemnation of his age by these authors, as the last three all feel it their duty to mollify the “private and ungenerous Malice” (Jacob 73) that Langbaine casts upon him. Too, all four consider Dryden’s comedies to be of less importance than his poetry, his criticism, his translations, and his earnest drama, and Jacob also has Congreve’s praise to factor in, and Cibber Pope’s as well.¹⁶ Jacob, however, still finds that “many of his Dramatical Performances are Airy to a Degree, and border upon Obscenity,” though he absolves him from culpability for this, as “his Necessities obliged him to a Constancy of writing for the Entertainment of the Town, the Taste of which was very much deprav’d” (86). Cibber, however, apparently feels some pressure not to criticize Dryden too harshly, so he diplomatically avoids all discussion of his comedies: strong traces, though, of later critical attitudes towards his work and towards the Restoration stage in general creep in regardless. Cibber more so than the others insinuates a cold intellectuality, for Dryden is not “irresistibly moving” like “Otway, Lee and Southern,” but rather his general effect is to “enchant and” to “instruct the mind,” a product of his following “the popular taste” of his day, but not of Cibber’s (3: 68). That Restoration comedy is at best light and amoral and at worst wicked and immoral, that it is fundamentally

passionless, and that its attractions are but a superficial, meretricious *ignus fatuus*, and that all this was due not so much to the agency of the playwrights themselves but to the jaded, debauched sophisticates to whom they were forced to pander to earn their bread, encapsulates the vast majority of critical attitudes towards Restoration comedy until the last half-century. And Fletcher was the playwright from whom, more than any other, this theater grew, and its most prominent flowering was the libertine hero.

Another important development in the criticism of seventeenth-century drama in the eighteenth century, the apotheosis of William Shakespeare, parallels this shift of class loyalties among critics and the concurrent moralization of criticism, though critics tend to downplay as “coincidence,” or simply ignore, that “the same tendency [the pathetic] which led to the deterioration of the modern drama brought about the vindication of Shakespeare” (Sorelius 200). In 1691 Langbaine confesses that “I esteem his Plays beyond any that have ever been published in our Language” (454), though he offers this as a matter of personal taste; by 1753, according to T. Cibber, “his genius was almost boundless” (1: 123), and Shakespeare has “advantage . . . over all men in the article of wit” (1: 132). Shakespeare indeed has become the dramatic standard, and the fetish, of the times, as “our age . . . demonstrates its taste in nothing so truly and justly as in the admiration for the works of Shakespeare” (1: 143). Neither an abstract, yet still pragmatic, notion such as the ability to give pleasure, nor a classical/French system such as the neo-Aristotelian unities, nor even the effectiveness and clarity with which plays taught the hegemonic moral values of the time, but rather Shakespeare’s work, which, granted, largely shared the dominant values of the eighteenth century, became the new standard by which all aspects of a play, from morality to style, were judged. Even up to the present, “critical misreadings of Restoration comedy occur . . . because . . . we all expect these plays to be Elizabethan” (Holland

210), though this statement takes too much for granted with its “we all” and “Shakespearian” might be more precise and apt than “Elizabethan.” However, Gary Taylor is right in noting that “Nothing in Shakespeare equaled the intelligent sexual frankness” (10) of Restoration high comedy, but more fundamentally, Restoration comedy and its characters overall, and particularly the libertine heroes, are by no means dutiful, religious, or earnestly moral; rather they are generally contemptuous of obligations, and especially of commercial ones, irreligious, if not atheistic, and subscribe to a fundamentally flippant and elastic moral code. All this, coupled with the fact that Restoration comedy developed primarily from Fletcher, Jonson, and other Renaissance comic playwrights and but vanishingly from Shakespeare, doomed both these Restoration plays and their Renaissance predecessors to a steady decline in popularity throughout the eighteenth century, and if they continued to breath at all, they generally did so excised and mangled and emasculated almost beyond recognition.

Though Restoration plays only gradually disappeared from the early eighteenth-century stage, a process that accelerated around mid-century, the image of Restoration comedy and those who applauded it as profoundly aristocratic, utterly unfeeling, and riddled with vice was from this point fixed in the popular and critical imagination. The move away from the aristocracy, particularly in its libertine but also in its heroic expression, was far more than just a mere pendular swing, as the pendulum never swung back. Middle-class “propriety,” diametrically opposed to “license,” became, in the eighteenth century, and remained, until the twentieth, “the final criterion” (Palmer 5) of a play’s quality, as “the middle class, which was not only more regular in life but also less capable of regarding literature with moral detachment, made its influence felt” (Krutch 153). Late seventeenth-century aristocratic notions of decorum, style, and of the purpose and practice of plays obviously differed greatly from those of the bourgeois-

dominated eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries, the period of “the triumph of morality and criticism over wit,” and correspondingly of the bourgeois over the aristocracy, of earnestness over flippancy, of passivity over activity, and of Idealism over Materialism (Krutch 253). As “benevolence [took] the place of *esprit* as the most admirable human characteristic” (Krutch 193), so performances and new editions decreased, and virtually all of Restoration drama slid slowly into obscurity.

In the late eighteenth century, Restoration comedy was largely ignored; what remained on the boards was tamed, perhaps even castrated, the language softened, the bawdy excised, and sentiment inserted, by David Garrick and others.¹⁷ Shakespeare’s plays had become a theatrical force far more pervasive than the work of all of the other seventeenth-century playwrights combined, and the stage had lost its place to the novel as the primary narrative form. The moralists, now triumphant, could afford to regard Collier as a “narrow-minded fanatic” (Krutch 120), as reform had done the job better than abolition of the stage ever could have. Of all the seventeenth-century dramatic poets, only Shakespeare really matters to Samuel Johnson; he never even bothers to mention Fletcher or Etherege, and Wycherley merits only a cursory insult. Johnson considered only Dryden, Congreve, and Otway worthy of appearing in his lives, and what little commentary Dryden’s comedies receive is curt and dismissive, as they had already been effectively dismissed and therefore offered no real threat.

Scene II: The Nineteenth Century.

Critiques of Restoration drama into the nineteenth century gradually took on a utilitarian aspect in a culture that increasingly eschewed “all glitter not strictly sensible” (Krutch 156-157).

Though the stage had always “tend[ed] to undermine the industry and application necessary for success in trade” (Krutch 157), Restoration dramas of all sorts actively combat “industry,” heroic leads certainly never engaging in commerce or the mechanic trades and the acquisitive city being the target of satire perhaps second only to the fop. They also, and generally, very much encourage activity, but activity in the pursuit of passion in the earnest plays and pleasure in the comedies, and not so much of duty or gain, and in the service of no one short of one’s beloved or the Monarch.

The attacks on these plays increasingly focused too on not only their perceived vulgarity and blasphemy, à la Collier, but also on their perceived lack of “realistic” emotion. The increasing tendency from the late seventeenth-century into the eighteenth of critiquing Restoration comedy as “artificial” they based not on aesthetic principles but moral ones, as they came to define “nature” by an Idealistic, Christian-humanist moral standard, centering on the warmly inspired passions and sentiments and not the low, heated, fecund senses or the high, cold reason, a process that peaked with the Victorian discovery of the “moral sense.”¹⁸ They exalted this definition of “nature,” and “art,” identified with the aristocracy and their formal, baroque gardens that appealed to reason and not to emotion, became “artifice” and was thus consigned to the bottom half of the nature / artifice binary. Most all Restoration drama, and most specifically the libertine hero, thus repelled them as much by its perceived coldness as the heat of its lubricity.

Early in the nineteenth century the intensity of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s deification of Shakespeare blinkered him to the beauties of any drama outside of the bard’s nimbus, though had he been able to see, he clearly would not have approved. Among the late Romantics, however, Charles Lamb, in Wycherley and Congreve, at least, “recognized the importance of emphasizing

the nonutilitarian nature of the comic art” (Birdsall 11), but then his characteristic bias was towards “dramatic poets—not dramatists” writing “poetry of . . . affective power,” leading him to champion primarily tragedians and middle- and lower-class playwrights (Jensen 218, 215). Lamb does rebel against critical orthodoxy, but towards the refined and internalized sensibility of “the critical imagination” and away from the material and the flippant; his “rejection of bourgeois values” (Bear 11) is against a quotidian utilitarianism and not an imposing and earnest Idealism. He thus finds, in his essay “On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century,” an attractive freedom in the witty, aristocratic stage that inspired in him a wistful longing for a life not in a “cage,” unfettered by “restraint” and the “shackles” of a “toilsome” morality (142). He, though, like so many before and after him, was so bound by this morality, and so dazzled by Idealism’s *ignus fatuus*, that he could not focus properly on expressions of a joyous Materialism, and thus posited the very material world of Restoration comedy to be but a “fairy-land,” a “Utopia of Gallantry, where pleasure is duty, and the manners perfect freedom” (143), a land populated by witty “profligates and strumpets,” by “a chaotic people” (144), familiar and recognizable and sympathetic enough to the Restoration audience, whose actual existence Lamb could not comprehend.¹⁹

William Hazlitt takes a calmer, more reasoned look, and a closer one as well, at the works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar at least, in his *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*. He, like Lamb, longs for some “escape from this dull age to one that was all life, and whim, and mirth, and humour” (70). He does find these, and other “great excellences” (70), in Restoration, or more precisely, primarily Late Stuart comedy, though he still regards this era as, at heart, one of meretricious fripperies; in these plays “the springs of nature, passion, or imagination,” his definition of these terms being very different from that of the libertine hero,

“are but feebly touched” (73), whereas for him they are caressed by Shakespeare and in the strains of Renaissance drama that he admired.

Late Romantic critics, in an age of relative doubt, not entirely convinced of the rightness of their own age, thus did at least a little to revive the reputation of the body of aristocratic Restoration and Renaissance drama, only to have the Victorians, who knew themselves to be right, at least in “high” criticism and in the licensed theaters, either ignore or, if they must be dealt with, drive a stake through the heart of virtually all comedies, from Fletcher to Congreve, with even the faintest whiff of a positive libertinism about them. These critics largely applied Collier’s old ““subject-matter test”” (Smith 99) to Restoration comedy. They found that the matter with which it deals, its questioning and challenging of Christian-humanist values, inspired in them nothing but revulsion, and deserved nothing but condemnation, and it was most shocking to their sensibilities in its foregrounding of positive female sexual desire. They thus deemed Restoration comedy unworthy even of passing on to the next stage, an examination of its treatment of these matters, much less of an aesthetic examination of these plays as fine literature.

Leigh Hunt, very much in dialogue with Hazlitt, in his bowdlerized, illustrative “selections” from various old poets and dramatists, provides the transition from Late Romantic fanciful longing to Victorian excoriation. Still romanticizing “the love of truth and beauty,” finding in this case Jonson far more caught up with an unfortunate “love of self,” he finds him at times “execrable” (73, 74). Likewise, Beaumont and Fletcher, despite much “poetry of the highest order,” he regards as riddled with “alas! revolting matter,” including the “grossest effeminacy” and the “slavishest of the doctrines,” replete with “those foul places . . . which nauseate a modern reader to the soul”; “their Hippocrene” they mix with “ditch-water” in a “loathsome pottage” (75, 279, 280, 283, 76). Indeed, he speaks alternately in the registers of

both Lamb and Macaulay, calling much of Fletcher's particularly comic work "a torrent of feculence" at worst, at best "a dream, or a sort of madness" (280). Along with some insight, his criticism does partake primarily of the moral order, as he finds Dryden, to his discredit, "more sensual, by far, than spiritual," for his "Venus was not the Celestial," and Shadwell naught but "a great fat debauchee" who had to offer naught but "the very dotage of pertness" (200, 202). He adopts the role of not so much a critic as a bourgeois warden of the unspeakable subject(s), enemy of both "the court and the *canaille*," providing for popular consumption but what is right and proper above all safe for "the most cautious member of the family . . . in circles most refined" (287, 289), certainly in their propriety and not in their wit.

Lord Macaulay then, whom one might expect to be no friend to the Restoration stage, spearheads the true reaction with his characteristic "metallic exactness and . . . fatal efficiency" that rendered him "one of the most remarkable products of the Industrial Revolution" (Strachey 45). He regarded Hunt's views far too liberal and soft. In more of a continuation and an updating than merely "a repetition of Collier" (Holland 202), he deems the Restoration "a disgrace to our language and our national character" (339), simply too morally reprehensible, too execrable, "too filthy to handle, and too noisome to approach" (369).

George Meredith, if such is even possible, and somewhat surprisingly and "despite his vaunted love of mirth" (Holland 202), showers these plays with even more vitriol, which Kathleen Lynch finds "puzzling and disappointing" (5). The results of working from a Molièrian standard turning out to be no different in effect from employing a Shakespearian one, he regards Restoration comedy as but Molière "clownishly handled," his "noble entertainment spoilt to suit the wretched taste of a villainous age" (122). His perspective, like Macaulay's, is very much class-based, for, to him, "in all countries the middle class presents the public which . . . knows the

world best,” and “Molière is their poet” (120); he therefore finds all aristocratic comedy, differing as it does from Molière and from Shakespeare in its mores, “vacuous as the mask without the face behind it” when it comes to the “Comic idea,” containing “neither salt nor soul” (117-118). Thus, icing over again after the late-Romantic thaw in self-righteous prudishness, these nineteenth-century critics still focus centrally on demolishing the aristocratic ideology of the Restoration and extolling the moral vision of the Renaissance commercial classes, on venerating Shakespeare and his French *confrère* and the values of their own they find reflected in their works. None of them, for many of the same reasons as their eighteenth-century predecessors, sense more than obscurely the connection of the comedy of the Renaissance to that of the Restoration; if they bother at all to cast about for some origin for Restoration comedy, which admittedly could not have sprang *ex nihilo*, they tend to settle on the French stylistically, and on Molière in particular, corrupted or not. They imagine the genesis of the comedies’ licentious content as entirely and merely a reaction of the Restoration aristocracy against the restrictions of the Interregnum, with no purpose more profound, no other motivation than simply “to deride and outrage the Puritan” (Meredith 115).

Scene III: The Early Twentieth Century.

With the twentieth century, at long last, with the professionalization of scholarship, came the first in-depth, scholarly examinations of the drama of the period, a topic that had fully absorbed the attentions of no amateur scholar or professional writer for centuries. Though much Victorian prudishness, with its many limitations on what can and cannot be expressed, still clings to these early studies, they inevitably evince, if but due to the depth of their focus, more

sympathy and appreciation for their subject matter; though it can be done, devoting three hundred pages to an antiquarian subject one deplores is no easy task. The first modern work of criticism, by a decade, and the inaugurator of “a new phase in the criticism of Restoration drama” (Heldt 119), John Palmer’s 1913 *The Comedy of Manners*, takes for granted still “the enormous sinfulness” of the Restoration stage (6). Palmer does, however, make some attempt at least to judge these comedies aesthetically and by their own standards and not those of Steele and his descendants, whose moral criticism and didacticism, he claims, “is irrelevant” (10).²⁰

Palmer, an heir to the Lambian, aesthetic tradition, and like Lamb not so enamored of his own age, finds something to admire in the *joie de vivre* of these plays’ “light-hearted, irresponsible attitude” (70), yet ultimately dismisses them because they are not in earnest, so they do not so much matter. Thus, he tends to reduce them down to exemplars of finely-wrought but “frigid, frivolous, artificial, vapid, drawing-room comedy” (Hume 64). Palmer works from the assumption that human existence is profoundly, fundamentally earnest, and he extrapolates from his limited selection of the period’s comedies that playwrights over a fifty-year span tended not to regard life as such. This observation leads him into absurd over-generalizations such as that “Men and Women of the Restoration saw nothing sacred or romantic in the act of sex” (42). He does, however, offer many an insightful half-truth, and, most importantly, from the soil of this work the first flowering of criticism of the period was to spring.

Allardyce Nicoll, in his *History of Restoration Drama*, and several others in the 1920s, including Bonamy Dobrée, Joseph Wood Krutch, Kathleen Lynch, and John Harold Wilson, along with new editions of the major Restoration playwrights edited by Montague Summers and revivals by the Phoenix Society, finally began in earnest to lift the shroud of popular obscurity and critical opprobrium in which Restoration comedy had been wrapped for nigh on two-

hundred years.²¹ Though all, and Nicoll and Krutch in particular, were still largely under the spell of *haut-bourgeois* late-Victorian morality and decorum, tending to echo stylistically their vitriolic bombast, the former even fearing that any sort of discussion short of a rabid condemnation of these plays, “not at all in the taste of the present time,” would lead to accusations by “modern moralists of a perverted judgment and of an uncultured taste” (Nicoll 1), they at least attempted to judge, and with some success, Restoration comedy aesthetically by the “harmonious standards of its own” (Lynch 2), and “not [to] confuse moral and aesthetic values” (Dobrée 23).

They finally gave the question of continuity and the origins of Restoration comedy some focused attention, and some concerted thought, finding among much else that the “discontinuity” between 1642 and 1660 was not “drastic” but more a “reshuffling and re-establishment”; similarly, Molière’s influence, though certainly present, was neither “pervasive” nor “determinative” (Hume 233, 236, 233), but more a matter of borrowed plot and structure than of ideology. Nicoll’s conclusion is that “out of Jonson and Fletcher, then, tempered by reminiscences of Molière, of the *commedia dell’arte* and of Calderon grew the comedy of the Restoration” (181). This claim speaks, perhaps not intentionally, to the range of Restoration comedy, as all but Fletcher have little to nothing of its much-vaunted licentiousness about them. Jonson’s comedies, and even more so his critical writings, represented primarily judgment and theater craft to Restoration playwrights and the three foreign influences served largely as plot-mines for them. The “more sensual” English, who “delight more in double entendre and playing with their wit on subjects vulgar or immoral” (Nicoll 178), found French comedies, primarily Molière’s but also those of the Corneilles, Quinault, and Scarron, rather insufficiently suggestive. The Restoration comic playwrights, however, also considered the values they espoused to be too

redolent of the Idealistic morality they associated with the city. The Italian influence was but occasional and wholly on the level of farce. The Spanish plays they viewed, like the French, to be overly tame. The Spanish, though, added to this the “intense jealousy” of many of the characters and their exaggerated and pervasive sense of personal and familial honor, which “seemed to the English People of Quality more the attribute of the Town than of the sophisticated dwellers round the Court” (Nicoll 179), though the Court certainly appreciated the earnest, intrigue-laden Spanish mode for a span in the 1660s. Nicoll’s notion that Fletcher alone, then, inspired all of the most notable innovations of Restoration comedy, the wit combat and the epigrammatic style, the Materialism and the licentiousness, is close to the truth. Such an interpretation, though closer than his critical forbearers, is still wanting; the Caroline drama, however, fills these gaps.

Despite thinking the wits lived “futile lives,” that their comedies are full of “utter filth” and “depravity,” that they express “no definite sincerity, no individuality of utterance,” and offering up gross absurdities such as “contemporary science, contemporary philosophy did not touch them” and positing “a line of vulgarity below which art ceases to be art and becomes mere vicious and vulgar writing,” a line he locates somewhere around the collar (3, 5, 20, 4, 187), Nicoll still provides the first comprehensive, modern examination of the full theatrical output, and in context, of the period.²² Extending his liking to about the same point as Hunt or Hazlitt, he does find, in the more canonical plays at least, “grace and . . . wit and . . . elegance,” though this they countermines with their exceptionable license, as well as “a callousness that was more disastrous and soul-destroying than the vilest libertinism” (25, 211). They were “thoughtless and depraved, but they were cultured,” at least, these same sirens who had seduced Lamb with their “inverted spiritual existence” that makes us “for the moment pagan,” luring us towards the “life

of a world far from ours, where hearts are atrophied” (though “not tenderized” would be more apt, as their sensitive emotionalism has not decayed, but rather never it formed, as it was never pounded into them) (187, 188, 225). Unlike Lamb, however, he works from the wise principle that “less than any other art is the drama ahead of its time. It reflects, very rarely prophesies: its basis is in the world of sentiment around, not before it,” though he rather oversimplifies the case in concluding that “comedies are but a reflex of real life” (5, 8). This emphasis on the plays as social history positions him more in the realistic than the aesthetic line, and to a point he proves to be a moralistic wolf in aesthetic sheep’s clothing, despite imagining himself in the reasonable center between “Puritans who see all art through the dark spectacles of their morality “ and “moral perverts who take delight in pornographic literature of any sort” (186). His judgments, though erudite enough, thus find little to admire in the libertinism of the Restoration, or even in the aristocracy, so contrary he sees its worldview to be to the hegemonic beliefs of his own time that he wholeheartedly adopts.

Joseph Wood Krutch follows this same line of Nicholl’s, deciding to “accept this conventional judgment” of Restoration comedy and similarly attempt to steer the safest course between being “blinded by its brilliance, as Lamb was” and being “a Puritan and see[ing] only the immorality” (1). Too, though in his defense his book’s primary focus is on the period after the Restoration, and he is far more supple and less dogmatic when dealing with early eighteenth-century stage, he adopts the egregiously oversimplified view that “Restoration comedies belong almost exclusively to one type,” at least noting that that type descended primarily from “Fletcher and Shirley” (2,1). Following the main, moral line, he lambasts the libertine hero from the two traditional points of attack, as such a character cannot but “disgust one” with both his “looseness” and his “hardness” to the point of “absolute brutality,” and any philosophy he might

seem to have is but “rationalizing debauchery into a philosophical system and producing a great corpus of mock casuistry” (4, 11). Later, however, and such contradictions abound in this decade, torn at is was between moralistic and aesthetic criticism, he offers that “to object to anything about Restoration comedy on moral grounds is childish” (200). His reading, albeit often incisive, is, though claiming to be inclusive, every bit as myopic as most of the readings of the moralists, as he takes the few comedies that have happened to make it into the canon as the only true representative of forty years; this leads to such gross oversimplifications as “the more debauched a hero was, the more completely he was a hero” and characterizing Dryden as a dramatist as but a “respectable hack,” but “a clever journalist” whose “depraved” comedies “were written in cold blood and without enthusiasm” (17, 19). He regards these plays, as do Nicoll and the long line of moral critics, as “merely holding a mirror up to nature,” and the nature of no aristocratic, non-Idealistic culture can possibly merit his approval, but then neither can the “somewhat crude and narrow piety” of the great masses; his base is old as that of Shadwell, an assumption that “men of sense . . . no doubt hated . . . vice” (35, 37, 40), though he fails to recognize fully, as moralists long have, the wavering, topical, temporal nature of “vice.”

Bonamy Dobrée’s take on the period is a decidedly more impressionistic one, and rather short on scholarship, though studded with insights and pointed epigrams. He values earnestness still over flippancy, finding that the very best comedy resembles tragedy “in its philosophy, its implications, and its emotional appeal” (10), but then his is the first full-length study to drop the Victorian cant of “odious” and “vile” and “foetid” when referring to notions and behaviors that his own age does not officially condone. The line of Lamb rises to the top here, as he defines “Free Comedy,” for example Etherege, as “possible only in a world where nothing matters, either because one has everything, or because one has nothing,” thus linking the very high with

the very low without passing through the middle, though still assigning to these comedies an unwarranted air of unreality.²³ He does, at least, find this non-Idealistic world “all spontaneous and free, rapid and exhilarating,” a place where “we are permitted to play with life” (14), though one must wonder precisely who or what forbids “us” from doing so elsewhere.

Most importantly, though, Dobrée is the first to attempt truly to separate morality from aesthetic value, and to regard what critics had heretofore merely dismissed as “filth” as “an attempt to be frank and honest,” an expression of “a deep curiosity, and a desire to try new ways of living,” and particularly to “rationalize sexual relationships” (22, 23). He throws aside the old Elizabethan Golden Age model and suggests that Restoration drama is an innovation rather than a dissolution. The court and town in these years “dealt with everything more intellectually, more urbanely, more cynically perhaps. It was gayer, and did not take its wisdom with so desperate a seriousness; it was entirely without the metaphysical element” (32). Though he works with much the same set of evidence as did his forbearers, the tone in which he conveys and interprets his observations is truly novel; here he sees, most importantly, the devaluation of earnestness, the want of appeal to powers higher than one’s own reason and observation as not negatives, not sins. The “essential point” of, particularly, the libertine wits, “is to penetrate the attitude towards life, any life” (38), to sense more and thus to have more and more vital evidence from which to form conclusions, as they found the old ones built on faith and tradition sadly wanting.

Though more suggestive than logically convincing, and vague and qualified at times, Dobrée is still the first critic to notice the class-bias against the Restoration stage, and to find Restoration libertinism to be a native and natural, valid and defensible philosophy, if perhaps not an ideal one. “The theory of art for art’s sake has never been popular because it is part of a doctrine that, however consistently acted upon, people have generally been loath to admit—

namely, that pleasure is the highest good” (Krutch 72); libertinism, of course, accepts this notion and promulgates it boldly. Dobrée is the first to examine Restoration comedy closely from the vantage of this dictum, if but implicitly.

A somewhat slighter, more popular effort, Henry Ten Eyck Perry’s, contributes little in the way of scholarship, but does, along with the Phoenix Society’s revivals of many a seventeenth-century play not by Shakespeare, indicate more than the more profound studies that Restoration Comedy, in a post-Great War London looking for new answers, had once again become relevant after languishing as but closet reading for the more adventurous or jaded gentleman for nearly two hundred years. Perry’s reading centers on his professed moderation and his adoration for “the supremacy and genius of Jean-Baptiste Poquelin” (xii), as filtered through Meredith, so his focus is very much earnest, post-Romantic, Idealistic, and on the emotions; for him “thinking is certainly not all of the world or even the most important part of it,” and neither is laughter, involving as it does a “temporary subjugation of the emotions” (6, 4). He takes the romantic side of the aesthetic line, emphasizing the lack of passion more than the violation of moral codes as the central want of these same five playwrights, all “too sophisticated and unscrupulous to evoke the deepest and truest comment on life,” for they “often neglected its basic humanity,” which, for him, consists of the more passive, more tender passions (9, 8). All the Restoration has to offer is “the sparkle and vivacity” of Molière “without taste and without moderation,” thus producing but “a superficial literature” (131); all Perry has to offer is a step back to Meredith, as he comprehends almost nothing of libertinism or its theatrical origins, for “Ben Jonson in England and Molière in France” alone do not a Restoration comedy, much less a libertine hero make (140).

The last contributor to this initial burst of works on Restoration comedy, Kathleen Lynch, joins Nicoll and Dobrée in finding Restoration comedy and its characters to be a natural development rather than a radical shift, and more clearly than any of her predecessors sets herself against “the conventional absorption of these critics in . . .the moral standards of their time” and “Collier’s test of morality” towards which such a view tends to lead (2, 3). Despite her rejection of the moral critics, though, many of their opinions underlie her analysis, albeit subtly, by her taking for granted, for example, that Molière offers “a much more vital interpretation of human experience” than any Restoration playwright (9). One can, by this point, unabashedly appreciate these comedies, but not yet as a scholar defend the ideas that they promote, and her way to avoid agreeing with them is not to deplore their morality but rather to lament the “artificial codes of conduct, which make intrigues the main business of life and continually exalt all varieties of graceful love-making for fashion’s sake” (194), merely another approach to much the same end. She does, however, break with the past in examining the works best able to justify her assertions rather than focusing strictly on the same few authors, but then still makes blanket statements referring to Restoration comedy that only apply to the most noted subset. She is also at times simply misguided in her assertions, such as her insistence on the importance to the Restoration of Middleton and Brome, who are similarly bawdy but too concerned with the middle orders to be very influential, and her separating Etherege too entirely from other dramatists of his time.

Her vital contribution, though, is in her introduction of French romances, most notably Honoré D’Urfé’s *L’Astrée*, as an important force in shaping Restoration comedies, both directly and through the Caroline court drama and Henrietta Maria’s cult of court Platonism that both expressed and fed it. As she amply demonstrates, the style of these ethereal debates on the nature of hyper-idealized love, with all their ornate similitudes, underlies both the style of

Restoration repartee and its focus on “the artificial temper of the social game” (79). Here too lies her weakness, alas, as she tends to deny these authors agency, “rooted” as they were “in the curious artifices of *preciosity* and still controlled by its mannerisms,” and even “dominated by artificial standards of social discipline” (177, 217). She also considers Restoration dramatists nearly bereft of “human passions” and “restrained and stereotyped” (217), in essence blaming them, like their Caroline predecessors, as artists for not doing what they sought to avoid and for promoting what they sought to promote. Her approach to Restoration comedy from primarily a single angle, that of the “social mode,” however, if not entirely convincing, does clearly imply that the topic is a vital one and not merely a curiosity, a lacuna in English literary history that needs plastering over.

Montague Summers too generally fits in with this school of critics, as much as he fits anywhere. Iconoclastic, immensely erudite, combative, and charmingly florid, with a gift for finding *le mot juste*, he distances himself from the academy in a negative sense, by often failing to cite his sources and occasionally phrasing suppositions as fact, but also positively by not limiting his utterances out of respect for other, more “official” scholars and critics, whom he finds, on some evidence, to be frequently “superficial and bell-wethered” (*Playhouse* 252). Though perhaps more of a commentator than an analyst, frequently not bothering to justify his assertions with evidence, he likes what he likes with appealing candor, and what he likes includes, refreshingly, most Restoration plays, but neither Puritans nor “complex and analysis, . . . Freud and fiddle” (*Playhouse* 9). He is not without his biases, but as these tend to be primarily pro-Roman Catholic, pro-aristocracy, and anti-academy, they offer a refreshing change from the vast majority of commentators on the subject. Devoting the most attention to Restoration dramas of all sorts in *The Playhouse of Pepys*, he finds that after the defeat of the “sour despots” and

eighteen long years still “there was a coherence; there was a succession” to the drama of the Restoration; “the waters were clear from their source” (2), as the “younger generation” perforce “looked to the race before the flood for guidance,” whose “influence can hardly be overestimated” (149). The French and Spanish but provided “foreign gold” that they changed “to true English ore” (259).

Despite this relative lightening, however, old-line, moral critics continued to wield the scourge. Contemporaneous with this first enlightenment, the Dutchman W. Heldt, in his review of Restoration comedy’s reception, still thinks that entire court but for “Clarendon and Evelyn . . . presented a revolting spectacle,” and he roundly damns “the profligacy of the times,” of which “comedy” was the “rankest manifestation” (41, 45). He even attacks Collier himself for having the temerity to commit the “sheer blasphemy” of daring to criticize “the master mind of his race” Shakespeare (48). The aesthetic strain of criticism, however, is by this point making its presence felt even in the most rabid anti-libertines, as he admits that Macaulay’s criticism “is manifestly unjust” and lacking in “deeper insight,” and Meredith’s “criticism is really a step backwards; he is always harping on the same string—the immorality” (57, 59). Despite allowing but two, earnest responses, to either “grow angry . . . or sad” to that bugbear “indecenty,” and condemning “swearing, for which, of course, no sensible excuse can be made,” he does admit that “moral laws are not eternal,” rather “lasting but not everlasting,” and thus “in Restoration comedy the Good are rewarded and the Wicked punished—though their notions of good and bad are not ours” (123, 125, 124, 125).

Other moral critics, however, were not nearly so subtle. William Archer, perhaps the last to be so blatant in his moralizing, and whose criticism Summers annihilates as “ignorant and ill-informed, vulgar, rancorous, and abusive” (*Playhouse* 307), characterizes the aesthetic critics,

the descendants of Lamb, as a “clique of enthusiasts” who fetishize the “fetid fairyland, this unsanitary Alsatia” of Restoration comedy, and whose non-absolutist approach is “the negation and the bane of sound criticism” (172-173).²⁴ His example of “sound criticism” in practice, rather, is to denigrate Materialism hyperbolically as “*a sort of perverted, would-be morality*” that, in “its brutality, its bestiality,” he finds, as expressed in the comedy, to be “*stupid, nauseous and abominable beyond anything else that can be found in the world’s dramatic literature*” (173). Though useless as actual criticism, rife with contradictions, and reliant, as he claims, on “absolute principles that are universally valid” (194), his ranting, based more on class than on religion, does, ironically, in a sense validate the importance of the libertine heroes, as they are capable of remaining a significant threat over two centuries after their exit from the stage.

Guy Montgomery’s all-too-brief, and thus over-generalized “The Challenge of Restoration Comedy” provided the only true glimmer during this decade, outside of Dobrée’s and Summers’s flickering at least, and one that would not be revived for decades, that Restoration comedy might have something more viable and vital to it than mere “cuckolding and wenching” (138), or that even these practices might have some validity. Even the “enlightened” modern critics who “have not been able to damn [Restoration comedy] on its own account have easily found the age responsible for its iniquities” (137), and this he suggests, albeit very warily and guardedly, to be a product of their own patriarchal, anti-aristocratic, and Idealistic cultural biases. Though he still aligns himself not entirely with the libertines, he does build on a solid base of evidence their connection to the then burgeoning experimenters, for the gallants and ingénues took “an approach to conduct, if not technically scientific, yet genuinely experimental” as they voiced their “distinct desire to know how to *live*” (139, 140). He finds them well “in the process of *becoming* honest” as they sought a new, more rational basis for social intercourse, but

then he counteracts his lucidity with such phrases as characterizing the Restoration audience as “heated with wine and infected with the pox” and referring to the “wicked, insinuating, abandoned and godless comedy” (142, 144), though these calumnies do have a definite air of irony about them. Finding too in these comedies a definite tendency towards reducing gender inequalities, he rightly attributes much of the critical condemnation of these tendencies to simply the elderly, or those striving to seem so, resenting the “shamelessness” of “youth triumphant” (146); the sparks and jillflirts in these plays want what all healthy young people always have wanted and always will want, and if one cannot accept this, then one should abandon the theater and “continue attendance at any conventicle, where he may to his heart’s peace hear denounced without variation the perennial lewdness of fallen humanity” (146).

Though this article received far less attention than L. C. Knights’s upcoming one, it was decidedly prescient for its day, accusing the moral critics of simple “denial” in the face of the obvious evidence “that theories of conduct did,” and still frequently do, “not square with the facts of conduct” (143, 147), and the libertine heroes were disillusioned precisely because they pierced the Idealistic veil of traditional Christian-humanism. Attempts to characterize Restoration aristocratic culture as but a “reaction against the Puritan prohibitions,” as “an abnormality induced by the extraordinary nervous strain of Puritan domination,” are “weak” as well as misleading, as they turn an affirmation of experience into a negation of principle (148, 151, 148). The spirit of Restoration comedy, to “be found where youth, curiosity, impudence, courage dwell in the heart of a sensitive individual,” were crushed not by the weight of their own iniquities, but by “business and morality—the crowd” after 1688, when “the pious demon rose in all its mediocrity” (149). This “rising tide of cant,” with Steele shifting “the divine right of tyranny” from “individuality” to “society, law, order,” deluged the libertine heroes, “for the

current against them was over strong” (150). Such a message, alas, that Restoration comedy and its concurrent joyous libertinism was no mere “curiosity,” but rather “one of those recurring efforts to maintain . . . integrity in a world threatened by the confining limitations of law” (151), was not a message academic dramatic critics were prepared to embrace in 1929, nor a challenge they were yet willing to take up.

The gauntlet they were willing to seize, both to promote and condemn, is that thrown down by L. C. Knights’s surprisingly influential 1937 essay “Restoration Comedy: The Reality and the Myth,” which, as of 1972, “still seem[ed] to be the most influential critique of the plays to have appeared this century” (Bear 2), though this debate is far more about the twentieth century than the seventeenth. Less an analysis than an attack, Knights obviously, intrinsically, and largely for class reasons, seeks to denigrate Restoration drama by any means necessary, seeks a “way to stop a literary conversation” rather than to reinvigorate a debate (Bear 19), which he makes clear by his observation that “English literature, English culture was ‘upper-class’ to an extent which it had never been before, and was not, after Addison, to be again,” which by his view “plainly resulted in impoverishment,” for he regards the native aristocratic qualities to be “attenuation and enfeeblement” (123, 126). The moral angle being overdone, he must find a new approach for a new age, which he does by accusing “the bulk of” all “Restoration drama” of being “insufferably dull” (122). Knights looks for realism and utility and praise for duty, a sense that tragedy is the basic, natural human condition, and an emphasis entirely on the personal, earnest, joyless, emotional expression of the liberal subject, written in a direct, non-metaphorical style; not finding these bourgeois values promoted, he finds the plays “trivial,” because they do not deal with earnest emotions, “gross” because they address sexuality as not entirely emotional, and “dull” because they raise in him no sympathetic response (143).²⁵

Though this article is not without a few valid criticisms, it is rife with absurdities and blind spots, many of them fully conscious. For example, if Restoration comedy “has no significant relation to the best thought of the time” (125), then this thought must be limited to Bunyan and Milton and not extend to Hobbes. He also seeks an author’s “natural voice” (125) in tragedy, refusing to imagine the validity of a comic Materialism that views tragedy as, by its very nature, by its exaltation and fetishization of suffering, unreal. And too he acknowledges but “five or six comic dramatists who count,” a notion that he obviously has not bothered to justify himself, so of course they tend to share to a degree a “narrow set of conventions” (126, 133); their relative uniformity is one reason why these same few authors were canonized in the first place. The central fault in his evidence, though, is that he fails to recognize these works as dramatic utterances. His main method of highlighting the flaccidity and “monotonously repeated” phrasing of the language is to compare it to the prose of the period, which is simply absurd; “it isn’t, really, very subtle” (127, 128) because a successful play’s language cannot afford to be so or else the audience, hearing it but once, would miss its significance. Too, that “the characters accept the usual conventions” (137) he finds a fault, forgetting that, if they did not, then the exposition would take too long and the audience would grow restive.

Essentially, he does precisely what Steele and Macaulay before him had done: he finds these plays were not written for him, and thus, working on the principle that his own values and tastes are universally correct, and with a “total imperviousness to any point of view but his own” (Smith 179), judges the plays wanting by standards that they do not value and some of which they do not even consider; despite “all the protestations that he is not talking in moralistic terms, it soon becomes clear that that is exactly what he *is* doing” (Bear 22). The tragedy of such a rhetorically effective conservative backlash and its accompanying “critical subterfuge” (Bear 19)

is that it at best deflects attention from the plays themselves, from any attempt to understand them on their own terms, and from an inductive, analytic close reading leading to an evaluation. Instead, those who find themselves in sympathy with the texts are driven to defend their very validity as literature, as with the Collier controversy. At worst, though, as with Macaulay, such an article dissuades scholars from even discussing the texts for fear of seeming morally suspect. This latter was indeed the case, as but two important books on Restoration comedy, and one tangential to it, appeared in the subsequent twenty years.

The tangential volume came from John Harold Wilson, who had taken a far more traditional, moralistic line in his 1928 *Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher*. Twenty years later he has acquired the wisdom of age in *The Court Wits of the Restoration*. The court wits, Buckingham, Rochester, Sedley *et alia*, “were libertines by instinct (as most young male animals are), but they were libertines by conviction as well, for they saw no ethical values in their world, no purpose in living save the gratification of their senses,” which he moderates by allowing that “their only truth was that which could be proved by the test of the senses, their only good was the action which brought about the satisfaction of the senses. They were downright empiricists” (17, 18). Though they, practically, conceded to certain abstractions, loyalty to friends and to England and to the King and so forth, Wilson here, crucially, brings them, and their stage-avatars, within the pale of perfectly natural behavior, reasonable rather than sinful or vicious. The same evidence that had drawn down so much wrath he now interprets as their happily “flippant attitude toward the phenomena of life,” for “the comic spirit (handmaid of Reason) had touched their trembling ears; life was devilishly diverting,” and “love was lust—no more; a matter to be considered apart from all questions of morality, religion, or the code of a gentleman” (74, 94). Wilson still makes allowance for the moralists, admitting that the “rediscovery” of the literature

of the Restoration court and stage may be “merely a passing fad, a phase of a momentarily frank and easy generation,” but he also implies that treating such matters as if they were but “a stench in the nostrils” (108) may in truth be the “passing fad,” and one which, but for a few desperate, rear-guard sallies, was finally about to go down in defeat. Though his voice is still by no means a pro-libertine one, the days of working on the assumption of trifling viciousness in the libertine heroes seem to have passed.²⁶

Despite John Harrington Smith’s opinion that, as of 1948, “so numerous are the good books on Restoration comedy that another might seem unnecessary” (vii), very much remained to be said; even the basic question as to whether these plays’ “indecent” and their focus on upholding Materialistic, aristocratic values cast them without the pale of subjects for serious, scholarly discourse had yet to be definitively decided, though his *The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy* goes far towards rendering a verdict. Though still ignoring issues of class, performance history, and taking Shakespeare’s preeminence in every possible way for granted, he examines a phenomenon most highly developed during the Restoration and most crucially influenced by the Caroline stage, the witty courtship debate between a couple on a par with one another, a sort of comic flyting, and reasonably justifies its value and its place in English dramatic history. He by no means defends libertinism, as he offers an “apologia” for seeming honestly fond of his subject, finds such a “code” too extreme to be in accord with “any reasonably respectable modern one,” retains the more moderate Victorian cant by referring to scenes as “positively offensive” and “noisome,” and interprets Libertinism as “both in theory and practice” entirely “inimical to” the interests of women, whom he broadly stereotypes and would rather see pitied than pleased (75, 100, 102, 136), in essence imposing his own bourgeois, humanistic beliefs as had so many critics in the past. By examining a relationship in which libertines figure largely,

however, he implicitly values their code and their behavior, at least establishes it as an entirely valid subject for scholarly inquiry.

Scene IV: The Late Twentieth Century (and the Early Twenty-first).

Thus, in 1952, Restoration comedy still found itself “in a region of twilight approbation,” though Thomas Fujimura was perhaps not the one best suited to provide for it “an adequate apologia” (vi). *The Restoration Comedy of Wit*, which apparently required “the emergence of naturalism as a major philosophical position” (vi) in order to be written, is largely an attempt to justify his change in nomenclature to describe the works of the same five authors. He attempts to avoid the perils and biases of both the moralistic school and the “manners” one, the former demonizing the libertine hero and the latter emasculating him, by focusing on the definition of wit, though it seems a great deal of bother for a comparatively slight gain in the accuracy of the terminology. He really does little to undermine the core of traditional opposition to Restoration comedy, for asserting that they were (and he is never entirely clear as to precisely who “they” are, though he presumably means Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve) more “sensible, cultivated gentlemen” than “filthy-minded, immoral dramatists” (15) emasculates them in but another way by stripping them of all rebelliousness and wildness and some agency. They were “unusually gifted men, who offended more orthodox contemporaries by subscribing, often unwittingly, to a naturalistic philosophy,” but that by no means precludes them, as he suggests, from being simultaneously, or at least alternately, “a dissipated circle, idle, drunken, and debauched” (56). Indeed, his primary goal is to refute the “manners” school of the 1920s by justifying the canonical Restoration dramatists as intellectuals, though in doing so he relies on a

definition of wit, emphasizing judgment over fancy, “judicious[ness]” over “suddenness, copiousness, and sparkle” of expression (38), that is far more true of the Late Stuart stage, of late Shadwell and Congreve, than of the early and High Restoration and of comedy derived from Jonson more so than that evolved from Fletcher.

Though he says much of real insight and value, his understanding of the philosophy of his unlikely bedfellows “Zola, . . .Hobbes and Spinoza,” “naturalism. . .as a point of view which excludes the supernatural and accepts the empirical method” and a “distrust of dogmatism and ‘enthusiasm’” (40,43), leaves much to be desired. He approaches libertinism from a fruitful angle, that of “naturalism” and its expression as wit, but he elucidates it with not so much historical context or awareness of the preceding drama or perspicuity or brevity or apt terminology, and tends to rely more on vehement, generalized assertions, often of the almost painfully obvious, than evidence, of which his book has a decided lack. Aptly, though, he does find the libertine hero, the Restoration wit, to be “against the idealist, . . .the practical man, . . .[and] the moralist who condemns pleasure,” so thus these types, so dominant for so long, strike back by accusing him of “cynicism, frivolity, and immorality” (70). That libertine heroes really defend “modesty, sincerity, and truth,” and create a world “harmonious, graceful, and free, . . .vivid, complete, and pleasurable” (72), however, is perhaps more wishful thinking undertaken in an attempt to refute the “manners” critics than a valid conclusion derived from the plays themselves, even from his limited, canonical sample. Fujimura is, in a sense, Sir Frederick Frolick of pro-libertine critics, with all the urges in place but lacking the sophisticated polish and intellectual and analytic depth that his successors would provide.

Here, right on the cusp of Restoration comedy assuming its rightful place in the English dramatic canon, comes one last haymaker from the last of the virulently moral critics, John

Wain's "Restoration Comedy and its Modern Critics." One must wonder, though, if this disciple of Knights was not set up to take the fall, as F. W. Bateson both edited the journal in which this article appeared and provided, along with Norman Holland, a rebuttal. Wain feels that Restoration comedy "calls for no comment beyond an acknowledgement of its [historically] diagnostic value" as "the fever-chart of a sick society" (367). Dripping bourgeois bias, for example suggesting that the Commonwealth did not last because the English "are too romantic, too hungry for tradition, too snobbish and too hostile for anything logical and time-saving" (368), he is at least conscious, as too few previous critics had been, of the centrality of class to Restoration drama. He is correct in noting that "it was the theater that carried partisan spirit furthest" (369), but then he interprets this as but the "pitiful bravado" (370) of a rightfully dying breed. They were incapable of producing "an acceptable code of aristocratic *mores*," and thus the stage of the time only "abuts on to literature" on rare occasion (372). Wain is, not surprisingly, a devotee of that "celebrated essay by L. C. Knights," to him "much the best writer on Restoration comedy" because he wrote "a blistering attack on it!" that "has gone unanswered," so thus he is still "the reigning champion" (374, 376). Wain does score a few hits against earlier critics, but can do nothing to the plays themselves that they have not already survived; though he "cannot claim to have read the whole corpus," and pretty definitely not even a tenth of it, still he feels "fairly sure" in his ability to judge it all (382). He can still characterize Wycherley as "little better than an idiot, and a nasty idiot into the bargain" (383) at least. He is the hectoring fox and these plays are his grapes, as he feebly swipes at their "smart-Alec 'combats of wit,'" but then the journal invokes the mercy rule and cuts off his tirade "owing to pressure of space" (385).

With Bateson's and Holland's responses, along with William Empson's little cut at "our fiercely moral young men" (318), can the truly modern age of criticism of Restoration comedy be said to commence. Bateson's "Second Thoughts: II. L. C. Knights and Restoration Comedy," addressing both Knights and Wain, is decidedly moderate and cagey, agreeing that "phrase-making and aestheticism and naughtiness of the 1920s" offered but "elegant or sophisticated nonsenses" (57, 56). Finally, however, and after twenty years of relative silence, "the time, it seems, has come when it is necessary to say, politely but firmly, that" Knights's and Wain's moral "line . . . misses the essential critical point about Restoration comedy," this point being that "it is no criticism of chalk that it isn't cheese. The question is whether it is good or bad chalk" (57, 59). Most immediately, Knights had considered Restoration dramatic prose wanting because it was written to be spoken and not read, but perhaps more than any other genre, Restoration drama has been consistently deplored for not being what it never desired to be; it is neither Shakespeare nor Molière, but then never did it have any intention of being so, as Restoration borrowings from and adaptations of these two poets make clear. And Bateson too is wise enough to state boldly that "sexual impropriety is still, of course, the real bone of contention" (59) even when critics claim to base their arguments on other objections. Because he can detect poor criticism, though, does not mean he has anything of substance to add in Restoration comedy's defense, as he thinks that but "three masterpieces," and only five other plays, from five playwrights total, "really matter" (57). Too, he considers nothing important but what is earnest and expresses a prudish attitude towards sex, finding Addison and Steele of all people to provide a happy compromise between libertinism and Puritanism, and thus finds comedy essentially trivial and thinks that "a defense of Restoration comedy must demonstrate that its sex jokes have a serious social function" (59). But then his main function is to enter

Knights as “just another *number* on the roll of sparkling charge and countercharge that has constituted hitherto the critical history of Restoration comedy. Jeremy Collier, John Dennis, Lamb and Hazlitt, Macaulay and Thackeray. Mr. Dobrée, Mr. Knights—all lively and all wrong!” (67). He is no more right than they, and less right than some, but he does put to bed finally the detrimental caviling that had frequently hitherto masqueraded as “criticism” of Restoration comedy.

To Holland then, in “II. Restoration Comedy Again,” falls the task of moving forward on the basis that at least the best of Restoration comedy is obviously complex and finely-crafted literature, dealing with the conflict between “natural desires” and “social conventions” as does much, if not most, if not all literature, and thus should be treated as such regardless of moral content. Alas, so many critics still “write as though Restoration comedy were ‘about’ sex. It isn’t” (319). Like all good literary language, the language of these plays “reveals and disguises simultaneously” and “has meaning in the fullest sense of the word” (319, 321). His “point” truly “is simple,” and would seem self evident with regard to most any other period; Restoration comedies need to be analyzed “*as plays*” before they can be validly interpreted on “moral, sociological, or aesthetic grounds” (321). All he asks for is to bring modern criticism to bear on these plays too, along with all the ones that happened to catch T. S. Eliot’s fancy. Centuries have been ignoring “the muse of Restoration comedy,” who “waits yet, like Sleeping Beauty, behind an unpenetrated hedge” (322); the time has finally come to penetrate her “hedge.”

Though Holland would soon do so himself, Dale Underwood was the first to bring at least Etherege fully within the modern walls of literature, to take a “firm step forward” (Holland 209), and to justify the plays’ “solid intellectual substance” with his own (Hume 86). From this point onward, the essential validity of Restoration comedy is at long last beyond serious

question, leaving critics free to explore the corpus from different angles. Though Underwood limits his primary focus to Etherege, he does so not to reduce Restoration comedy but to these three plays, but rather to provide a base from which to extend back to, primarily, a discussion of the libertine hero's origins. He attempts to establish the philosophical base of libertine mores, exploring the division between Epicureans and the Cynics (primitivists) on the Materialist side and the Stoics and most Christians, particularly the Humanists, on the other, with a far more profound understanding of the history of ideas than that of previous critics of these plays. Too, he feels no need, at least explicitly, to conform to the hegemonic beliefs of his own day, and thus feels himself free, if need be, to criticize "the unnatural and restrictive custom of matrimony" (51). Lynch's "social mode" falls quickly before his emphasis on the age-old male/female *agon*, for instead of concentrating almost solely on restriction and reaction, on "orthodox ideals violated," he focuses nearly as much on "positive values affirmed" (60). Similarly, rather than simply deploring the nounal and metaphorical, aphoristic style characteristic of the period, he takes it, unlike far too many previous critics, as it is, and attempts, and with some success, to plumb its effects.

He also pellucidly traces the history of libertine-leaning characters in the English professional drama from its beginnings in Lyly, if with rather too much bias towards the Elizabethan and against the Caroline, though following only what he perceives as "the line of development" (129) without any attempt to divine whether Etherege would have known these plays. Etherege, though, and almost all of his contemporaries, were almost certainly but hazily aware of any English drama before Shakespeare's. Dividing the Materialist and Idealist strains in English drama along a Stoic/Epicurean split, he finds that, before 1660, the Stoic "prevailingly reflects the conviction and values of the dramatist," rendering the Epicurean "an unequivocal

corruption of nature,” though his general lack of appreciation for Fletcher and for the Caroline stage, in the latter of which he sees little but “stilted formalism” (124, 125), leads him to discount significantly the presence of an incipient “Epicureanism” in their plays. Granted, he does tend to generalize and over-emphasize the earnest significance of his interpretations in an attempt to justify the validity of his subject, for example that “the final comic meaning of wit, like that of total play, is to express the confusion, uncertainty, and ambiguity of human life” (109), but still his is easily the most vital and challenging contribution to the study of Restoration drama up to his day, and the true sign that Restoration comedy had at long last returned from its banishment to a critical backwater.

With Underwood having “answer[ed] Knights with a vengeance” (Hume 68), Norman Holland can now, in *The First Modern Comedies*, say this of those who have “damned or belittled” Restoration comedy: “I think they are both silly” (3). He still feels the need, though, to go to the trouble of pointing out that “Restoration comedy, is *not* simply a decadent form of Elizabethan drama” (223). By adopting entirely one side, the side toward which Dryden leaned, of the old argument and deciding that “the purpose of literature” is “simply pleasure” (3), the moral objection falls right away, leaving but possibly one’s personal sense of “indecenty” to limit that pleasure (3, 4). His focus he intends, like the comedies themselves, to be not so much on sex but, and rightly, on “masks, play-acting, disguise, intrigue, and . . . language,” and he eschews an earnest tone on the understanding that “all we know is foolish and trivial, but it is all we know, and therefore worth caring about” (4, 6), an approach far more in line with the subject matter and the attitudes its creators themselves express. He somewhat overemphasizes his own radicality, preferring to give his reader “something he disagrees with than complete silence on a particular topic,” for example examining but the traditional triumvirs of Restoration comedy, but

doing so with the “somewhat unorthodox plan” of taking them in strict chronological order, though still his self-proclaimed “prejudiced and crotchety guide” (7, 8) has certainly the breath of a new, more reasonable age about it.

Holland presents a perfectly reasonable, if fairly traditional, at least in the early twentieth-century version, view of English theatrical history, seeing the Restoration stage rightly as “simply a continuation of the coterie tradition of English drama”; “the conclusion” reached by scholars of his period “seems final that . . . the major plays of the period represent an essentially English combination of Ben Jonson’s realism with John Fletcher’s sophistication” (12, 206), though this is obvious enough from Dryden’s and Etherege’s prologues to their debuts. He does also take Restoration performance history into account when assessing an older play’s influence, the first modern critic to do so. Even admitting he lives in a “bardolatrous age,” though, he still finds all of the Shakespeare adaptations to evince a “remarkably bad taste in drama” (14), and he simply cannot parse the heroic mode, and thus falls back by damning “the heroic play” as but “a peculiar . . . aberration” of “the most depraved period in English social history” (18-19).

Though falling short of Underwood’s profundity and sense of theatrical and philosophical context, he makes up for it by exceeding him in the perspicuity of his readings, despite tending to interpret the characters as being, at times, failed attempts at presenting rounded, liberal subjects with “real selves” at their core (33), rather than what they are, a conglomeration of constantly shifting personae that only the truly witty can perceive and control, though he at least concedes that “personality is hard to know under the pretenses it puts on” (50). His view that “people cannot make themselves over into what they would like to seem” (62) applies to most, but not to the figures at the core of his study; with wit and parts and sufficient self-awareness, the libertine hero, and his female equivalent, can do just this, and this quality is perhaps the central one that

separates the libertine hero from other exemplary characters before and after. The only nature they cannot deny is the sensual; as for the rest, they get the pleasure of manipulating it as they will.

Despite these advances, however, the more popular view still lagged somewhat behind. K. M. P. Burton's succinct overview of *Restoration Literature*, for example, views still Restoration drama as "mainly given up to entertainment and make-believe," and feeding "the depravity and irresponsibility of the so-called nobility," with whom the experimental philosophers of the time, who were "were apparently setting matter above spirit" and "operating on a materialistic standard," had no connection (11, 15, 32). Libertinism, though now valid to the vanguard, still provoked the traditional condemnations among the body of scholars, and would continue to do so for some time.

Frank Harper Moore, while certainly examining the plays, structures his much-needed, traditional, and certainly competent, if somewhat workmanlike book on Dryden's comedy more around Dryden's theoretical pronouncements than his praxis, to which it bears at best a very interesting, though decidedly dubious relationship. Similarly, Gunnar Sorelius's *Giants of the Earth* fills a much needed gap, but then *The London Stage* filled that same gap, almost contemporaneously and somewhat more completely, and Sorelius's interpretation of the information he gathers adds relatively little. He cleaves with little questioning to the traditional, moderately moral line, for example doing all he reasonably can to emphasize the influence of Shakespeare and poorly understanding the lack thereof. In his view "courtly aspirations . . . more than anything else distorted the Restoration view of the old drama," so thus he makes his bias, albeit a popular one yet, entirely clear (197-198).

D. R. M. Wilkinson, however, while examining the Restoration stage from the angle of courtesy literature, a genre that adapts “philosophy and theology” (2) to the quotidian, reverts significantly by taking as his critical models the commentators Samuel Johnson and Knights, whom he awkwardly contrasts with Underwood and Holland, who of course focus on the Restoration stage in far more detail. Thus, limiting himself to the same small slice of plays, he finds regarding these “Knight’s analysis of stock assumptions of Restoration comedy . . . still to hold good,” and his own “conclusions . . . seem to reflect rather closely and to enlarge upon much that appeared in his essay” (9, 11). He thus, unsurprisingly, considers the conduct manuals to have a tone “positive, conservative and assured,” with “a rich conformity of conscience,” whereas Hobbes and his followers’ beliefs he views as but “an argument from despair,” and a bullying, cowardly one at that, as Restoration dramatists, “in exploiting meanings, they do not define them so much as evade them” (16, 23, 24).²⁷ Clearly preferring “an exposed sensibility” to “concealing emotion beneath an air of indifference,” and frequently inserting minor jabs at Restoration gallants, he calls them, with something of the petulance of a bullied adolescent, “trivial” and “anaemic” men who, lacking a “useful function in society,” spout but “fashionable social assumptions” and lack “heart-felt convictions” (41, 39, 58, 45). Such ignorant rhetoric and consistent attempts to emasculate his subject, of which the preceding is but a very small sample, drawn far more from writers on the plays than from the plays themselves, and influenced by the authors of courtesy manuals who regarded Restoration, aristocratic mores with a scorn born of envy, such criticism of authors for not doing what they clearly had no intention of doing, and the substitution of a mass of easily deflated and at times absurd generalization for specific examples, such a debasement of laughter as trivial or fear of it as pure scorn—for the libertine hero, “nothing was safe or strong against laughter” (89)—in a purported analysis of a body of

comedies, all adds up but to Knights extended to book length, and poorly at that. Despite his book being a thinly-veiled moral and class-based attack, though, in Wilkinson's defense, he does do a valuable service by interpreting the conduct manuals. This book, as was Wain's article, is in many ways that last of its kind, for moralistic criticism was soon to be overwhelmed entirely.

Opening coyly by describing the "narrow and superficial" comic theater as a way of setting up her enemy (3), Virginia Ogden Birdsall, in *Wild Civility*, provides a decided tonic for the previous, reactionary effort; her study is the first unabashedly, enthusiastically pro-libertine analysis of Restoration comedy. She pellucidly posits Restoration dramatists as the heirs to both English "meaning and . . . morality," but not "the comedy-romance tradition of Lyly, Shakespeare and Shirley" (4, 5). Rather, they represent the strain in which "social or moral authority is gleefully and triumphantly challenged by the defiant individual," a strain that generations of "carping critics," having no regard for play "in its own right" (10, 20), instead implicitly condemned for being not earnest and not utilitarian, for not following their external, traditional rules, for these critics were more concerned with imposing on and controlling texts and thus the readers thereof than on representing the play-texts as they were and are. Certainly inspiring with her emphasis on freedom, on the "laughing, boisterous irreverence" that challenges "rigid and stultifying creeds and institutions" (5), she sees the libertine hero largely as the heir to the *servus callidus*, though she only traces such in the native English tradition, though the Latin was far better known in the Restoration. What the libertine heroes do is borrow and elevate the wit of the low, transforming into a sort of "verbal farce," mirroring the gradual transformation of the aristocracy from a primarily physical caste to a primarily intellectual one, and along the way leveling the playing field betwixt the sexes. They use this wit as a weapon with which to combat their own and their culture's "social and moral repressions" (7), and all the more effectively due

to their place and parts, as they, the creators, are able with their wit to overawe the preservers. They “create their own morality, which has little to do with conventional morals and which may be termed a morality of honesty or of integrity in the most basic meaning of the word,” an “immorality” that is both “crucial and positive,” which of course the “official” forces of order have long objected strenuously to (8, 20). She rightly focuses on sexuality as an expression rather than an end, on, inspired by Huizinga, “the most crucial thing,” the libertine heroes’ vigorous creativity, as “they become at once dramatic artists, acting out roles in drama of their own devising, and artists of their supremely subtle game of life, insistently dictating the rules according to which the game must be played” (9-10); they make their interior world even as they remake the world around them. Thus, for them, the town becomes “the playground,” the Materialist philosophy “the rules,” their social class “the nonutility,” and the *agon* with chaste, Idealistic values “the tension” (11), and, as their culture “has become sterile or confining” (12), they seek movement, variety, repeated tension and release, to inject the stuff of comedy and thus of life.

The libertine hero’s activities, including both those on the more boisterous and on the more controlling poles, she expresses as “a dance of life,” though perhaps the art of the fence would be a more apt metaphor, for in this civilized mode of combat they positively and creatively thrust and lunge against victims suffering in no substantial way, rather than parrying dully against earnest yearning. This creation is primarily the product of the deductive fancy and not so much of the inductive judgment, and seeks to express not a unified “true self” but rather, and entirely consciously, to “leave no aspect of his essential nature out of account” (19). And sexuality is inextricably linked with this creative urge, a central thrust of which is to “put the animal vitality back into the male-female relationship, not to the exclusion of emotion but of

emotionalism or sentimentality,” the only sort of romantic attraction, in truth a mere “prettified falsification,” spared the epithet “unspeakable” for so very long (22, 34). Seeing no sense in the Idealistic, Christian paradox that the body is evil, but life is good, sex is at worst the vilest of sins and at best tolerated, but the new souls it creates are a blessing, the comic libertine hero takes creation and material life as his central good, whereas the tragic Machiavel seeks destruction and death; they may use the same means, their wit, but the former uses his fancy-wit to bring together a new order, the latter his judgment-wit to cleave the existing one apart. They believe, along with, and inspired by, Hobbes and Rabelais and Lucretius, that matter is good, and thus one must enjoy the pleasures of the game while one can still play it.

Despite her decided tendency to rhapsodize, or perhaps because of it, her reading of libertinism is extraordinarily persuasive, and goes quite some way towards explaining an appeal that so many, for so long, sensed, but struggled to grasp, or demonized because they could not do so. Unfortunately, though, despite reading them closely and insightfully, Birdsall takes the traditional route by limiting her focus but to the same Restoration triumvirate, and thus provides but limited support, and not the most apt available, for her ambitious thesis. She is weakest when relying on accepted opinion, for example accepting what “has been generally agreed,” that “Etherege largely drew his comic heroes in his own image” (40), but her argument is still highly compelling, as she justifies Restoration comic Materialism as the libertine heroes themselves might have done, or certainly would have at least appreciated. The most striking thing about this book, however, is how long it took for someone to write it; in no other period have the most highly regarded authors of their own day had to wait anywhere near three hundred years for a champion.

Robert Hume, apparently grown weary, and rightly so, of the same three to five playwrights, “a tiny and atypical part of the whole,” and thus of books “seriously vitiated by ignorance of historical context and indifference to theatrical history,” decides in *The Development of English Drama in the Late seventeenth century* to craft a much-needed “historical prolegomenon” of the “theatrical fashion” of the period, the first with such a range since Nicoll and Summers (12, viii). By this point, at least, and finally, he can dismiss “the idiotic squabble over morality” and the generations of critics whose “expectations [are] based on Shakespeare” (ix), and even every “profundity-zealot” (30) who ignores the plays as popular entertainment, and move forward to the examination of these plays as literature in context. Eminently reasonable, he places the drama on a sound footing and provides a new taxonomy, albeit a bit Ptolemaic, but still better than Nicoll’s, the central point of it all being to demonstrate and evaluate the “radical diversity” (62) of dramatic utterance and its development over fifty years.

Continuing to broaden Restoration comedy to include all of the plays, he turns more specifically to the libertine heroes in “The Myth of the Rake in ‘Restoration Comedy.’” Here he offers that previous critics, even Underwood and the “extreme” Birdsall (140) to a point, but most definitely nearly all the others, have “oversimplified and misunderstood them” by deeming nearly every less than traditional, earnest, and pious lead a “rake” (138). The true ones are relatively few, and not simply anti-matrimonial, but rather “hostile to marriage of economic convenience, and especially to ‘forced’ marriage” (142); with regard to Hymen, they virtually all understand it as an inevitability for which they merely seek to negotiate the best terms. He here guides a tour through the criticism and along the way forms several more taxonomies, first cleaving “the debauchee,” a simple, lusty humour, always treated with some contempt, from the

“rake,” a comic lead of some parts (155). He further splits these proper “rakes” into three classes, rendered appropriate in one of four ways for theatrical presentation, though the “extravagant rake,” a term appropriated from Robert Jordan, is the only category relevant to the wilder gallants of the Restoration’s first decade. As for the “four basic strategies for rendering libertinism acceptable on the stage, . . .comic exaggeration, . . .the victims could be made contemptible, . . .libertinism could be harshly satirized, . . .or it could be abolished by a salutary moral reform” (154), the first of them predominates with the extravagant rakes.²⁸

Other critics and commentators, of course, have had much to say, some of it very valuable and much of it not, on the figure of the libertine hero in the nearly three and a half centuries since first flowering in the 1660s; the following are only those who were particularly telling or influential or who have something significant to say concerning the genesis of the libertine hero in the first decade of the Restoration, and others not yet addressed will appear in the following pages. Restoration drama, at least for the past several decades, has received the attention appropriate to an unquestionably valid field of literary inquiry. Edward Burns relates the London comedies to the pastoral tradition, Rose Zimbardo and John Vance read Wycherley, John Loftis examines the Spanish sources and the comedy of the early eighteenth century, and Robert Markley, Douglas Canfield, Brian Corman, Harold Love, Derek Hughes, and Christopher Wheatley expand and reinterpret Restoration comedy and its leading man. Though the story commentators have often told has more to do with their own times than with that of the plays in question, the general trend was from reform to neglect in the eighteenth century, from a kindling interest to virtual demonization in the nineteenth, and in the twentieth at first a grudging, qualified acceptance finally giving way, after some resistance, to a full acceptance of these plays as not only literature but literature also with a distinctive vitality. The lightning rod for criticism

and the central figure for the recent valorization of Restoration comedy has always been the libertine hero; though far from the only distinctive or valuable creation of the period, he is likely the one who offers the greatest challenge.

And he is a native Englishman. The French played some part, certainly, and the Spanish and Romans a bit, but the libertine hero, and his philosophy and habits, sprang not directly from them nearly so much as from the English stage, though not from the plays now regarded as the finest of the first sixty years of the English professional theater. To Shakespeare he owes little, and to Jonson and Middleton little more; rather, he is most directly a descendant of gallants in the comedies of John Fletcher and his collaborators, and to a lesser degree those of the Caroline playwrights, plays written for the upper orders and thus largely buried by subsequent more “democratic,” more bourgeois ages.

ACT II: THE LIBERTINE HERO IN HIS YOUTH

Scene I: Of John Fletcher and Fancy-wit.

John Fletcher was arguably the most popular playwright, and certainly one of the greatest, of the seventeenth century. Fletcher's place ahead of Jonson and Shakespeare, the other members of the triumvirate of playwrights that dominated the seventeenth century, in popularity during the Restoration and at least alongside him in terms of critical reputation, particularly as a comic playwright, seems clear, and indeed the records of plays staged confirm his preeminence. John Harold Wilson in his 1928 study *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Restoration Drama* presents this data, gathered from Pepys's diary and various other sources, all now readily available in Gunnar Sorelius's *The Giant Race Before the Flood* and in William Van Lennep's volume of *The London Stage*, covering the years 1660 to 1700, at some length. Wilson clearly demonstrates with a profusion of data that John Fletcher had at least a hand in approximately two plays for any one from any other Renaissance dramatist performed on the Restoration stage, in perfect accord with Dryden's 1668 observation that "two" of Fletcher's plays were "acted through the year for one of *Shakespeare's* or *Johnsons*" (*Of Dramatick Poesie* 17: 57), up to 1700, so but a few pieces of evidence from the early days of the theaters should suffice to clarify Fletcher's especial preeminence in this formative period.

The newly formed dramatic companies perforce relied primarily on older playwrights, and primarily on older plays, until a younger generation could develop the requisite skill and sense of stagecraft necessary to produce stageworthy drama, though they by no means "revived

and imitated the old dramatists almost indiscriminately” (Krutch 14). They much preferred certain playwrights, and of these playwrights, John Fletcher was undisputedly pre-eminent, with Shirley, Massinger, Beaumont, Jonson, and Davenant occupying the second rank along with Shakespeare, though, over the next forty years, Shakespeare rose somewhat while Shirley fell precipitously, with the rest more or less retaining their place. That “Argus-eyed and Briareus-handed despot, Sir Henry Herbert” (Summers, *Playhouse 2*), in his *Dramatic Records*, compiled a list he entitled “Names of the Plays Acted by the Red Bull Actors” (Herbert 82) in which he lists twenty plays performed by the early proto-company, consisting of the most prominent actors from before the troubles under the nominal direction of both Davenant and Killigrew, soon to split off into the King’s and the Duke’s.²⁹ These plays, “revived . . . some before 10 Sept. 1660, some afterwards,” include the following:

*The Humorous Lieutenant, Beggars Bushes, Tamer Tamed, The Traytor, Loves Cruelty, Wit without Money, Maydes Tragedy, Philaster, Rollo Duke of Normandy, Claricilla, Elder Brother, The Silent Woman, The Weddinge, Henry the Fourthe, Merry Wives of Windsor, Kinge and no Kinge, Othello, Damboys [Bussy D’Ambois], The Unfortunate Lovers, The Widow.*³⁰

Of these twenty, Fletcher (to the best of our knowledge) was the sole author of three and the co-author, with Beaumont (four) and/or Massinger (three) and possibly others, of six more, for a total of nine; Shirley and Shakespeare each contributed three, and Chapman, Davenant, Jonson, Killigrew, and Middleton one apiece. The players’ choices are likewise temporally varied, spanning forty-two years from *Henry IV* (1596) to *The Unfortunate Lovers* (1638), but they center on twelve Jacobean plays, flanked by three from the Elizabethan period and five from the Caroline. As the membership of this company included virtually all of the principal players

remaining from before the Interregnum, including members of the two leading Caroline companies, the King's and the Queen's men, plus a few of Beeston's Boys, the company that Davenant had managed before the playhouses closed, these players had the rights to and thus were free to choose from the whole of Renaissance drama, limited only by the availability of the scripts. They had effective free rein to give their audiences what they wanted, and what the companies gave them, and thus presumably what the audiences wanted most, as the theaters were, after all, commercial enterprises reliant on public support, though the wealthier and better-connected portion of their audience was able to support them in far more ways than simply but purchasing tickets, was Jacobean drama, both comedies and tragedies, though the comedic predominates slightly, and, significantly more than those of anyone else, the works of John Fletcher.

The plays that the newly-formed King's and Duke's companies chose soon after bear out these predilections. The first season, from October 1660 to August 1661, saw the formation and debut of these two companies whose choice of plays mirrored that of the earlier Red Bull players. Killigrew's company, by the Autumn of 1660 already "essentially a going concern" (Hume 20), who began playing first and, by virtue of their membership consisting of the most celebrated of the old players from the King's primarily and also the Queen's men, Charles Hart and Major Mohun and so on, retained rights to most of the old repertoire, acted at least thirty-one different plays, and the Duke's thirteen; the hand of John Fletcher is in sixteen of these, over three times as many as any other playwright, a proportion nearly identical to his share in the Red Bull list. Indeed, his influence is, if anything, even more pronounced, as nearly twice as many (seven) of his single-authored plays were produced as those of any other author (Shirley, Shakespeare, and Davenant all with four). One last piece of evidence confirms this dominance:

in December of 1660 Davenant, “full of enthusiasm and fire for the theatre resurgent” (Summers, *Playhouse 2*), was able to obtain a warrant for his newly-formed company conferring exclusive rights to act eleven plays (plus his own), including nine of Shakespeare’s, and he also received rights to six other plays, but only for the period of two months; five of these were Fletcher’s (Van Lennep 22). In the following six months, up to the opening of the new Theater in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the Duke’s men produced four of these plays of Fletcher’s, and none of the Shakespearian ones. The work of Fletcher was thus clearly the far more desirable commodity, his plays deemed more likely to fill the pit, boxes, and galleries than those of Shakespeare or of any other.

Of the approximately one hundred and thirteen plays (extant and of known provenance) produced in London before the closing of the theaters due to plague in 1665, six are relatively faithful translations from Latin or French and twenty-nine are either new productions or adaptations. Of the remaining majority, all performed as far as we know without significant alteration, thirty originated in the Caroline or Cavalier period, thirty-seven in the Jacobean, and only ten (seven of them Shakespearian) in the Elizabethan. In these, too, Fletcher still clearly predominates, having a hand in twenty plays, twice as many as any other dramatist. Shirley and Shakespeare occupy the second rank, the former with ten plays and the latter with eleven (including Davenant’s three adaptations), along with the impresario Davenant with nine, followed by Massinger with seven and Beaumont with six, largely in collaboration with Fletcher, Jonson with four and Brome with three solo productions, and finally Killigrew and Rowley with three apiece followed by many others with two or one.³¹ These figures are, besides being somewhat uncertain, occasionally misleading; when taken as a percentage of the accepted corpus of each author, Fletcher still predominates, though not by as much. Jonson’s four comedies were

also somewhat more popular than their small number might suggest, and Shakespeare's less so, for though several of his tragedies were popular, his comedies rarely appeared, and never held the stage, unless significantly altered. Regardless, the overall repertoire of the London companies reinforces that of the early proto-company at the "irrepressible Red Bull, which seemed able to survive anything," most notably repeated, almost regular raids during the Interregnum, at least until it disappeared around 1665 (Hotson 55): early Restoration audiences got, and thus presumably wanted, predominantly Jacobean and Caroline plays, particularly those of Fletcher, and primarily those produced for the Blackfriars and other indoor theaters.

The what of Fletcher's dominance is statistically clear; what is less clear is the why. He retained his place in the critical triumvirate and his plays held their place in the repertoire over the entire course of the late seventeenth century, more of his plays being revived unaltered than those of any other in each of its four decades (Sorelius 72-73). Indeed, actors over the course of the entire seventeenth century likely spoke more words on stage written by John Fletcher than composed by any other playwright. Yet, judging by the attention he has received from the vast majority of post-seventeenth-century commentators on Renaissance drama, he would seem to be, at best, a third-rate playwright, below such authors as Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Middleton, and John Ford, all names barely known to the Restoration. Indeed, his fall from the heights of critical and popular esteem parallels the fates of most Restoration playwrights.

The first real signs that the wax was beginning to melt from the wings of Fletcher's popularity appeared in the 1690s, when it became a commonplace criticism, and not just that of Thomas Rymer, that among his plays "there is scarce one regular (Gildon 57). Too, a hint of condemnation on moral grounds began to creep in, for though "their Comedies are much the best; yet of them take away five or six, and they will not bear Acting, scarce reading by a nice

Judge” (Gildon 57). This process would accelerate in the early eighteenth century, when Fletcher plummeted into the sea of obscurity from whence he has barely risen; though Theophilus Cibber, reporting from 1753, still finds Beaumont and Fletcher to be “wits of the first magnitude,” their “plays are not acted above once a season, while one of Shakespeare’s is represented almost every third night,” for “it is now fashionable to be in raptures with Shakespeare” (1: 158-159). Their perceived lack of regularity by this point is far less of a concern, as “their plots are allowed generally more regular than Shakespear’s”; the problem is with their language, for “there is a coarseness in dialogue, even in their genteelest characters, in comedy, that appears now almost unpardonable,” despite that “they touch the tender passions, and excite love in a very moving manner,” which, granted, has little place in the pure comedies unleavened by earnest sentiment (1: 158). Fletcher’s fall and the concurrent deification of Shakespeare, from which Jonson too suffered greatly, though for a very different quality, his comedies being “totally without tenderness” (Cibber 1: 243), are due far more to class-based, ideological, moral, and to a lesser degree, stylistic preferences rather than any absolute measure of quality. The relative reputations of Renaissance dramatists, however, are somewhat beyond the scope of this inquiry; what is relevant is why these plays, particularly the comedies and tragicomedies, were so popular in the early Restoration, and what in them might appeal to the emerging generation of playwrights.

One answer is that the gentlemen and ladies of the early 1660s regarded as positives many of what critics have considered Fletcher’s failings since the eighteenth century. Leigh Hunt finds in his plays both “a certain aristocratic tone” and signs of “ultra-loyal breeding,” positives on the Restoration stage that, by the nineteenth century, had become contemptuously

regarded expressions of “the artificial superiority of their birth and breeding,” the very qualities that, in the nineteenth century, “threaten their names with extinction” (279). But then Hunt seeks out and values “earnestness of mind and a tendency to believe in whatever is best and wisest,” striving to express only “the diviner portion of spirit” (279), qualities not so in line with the desires of the leading lights of the court in the 1660s. From his perspective, thoroughly that of the dominant caste of his time, he thinks Beaumont and Fletcher would be “in possession of a thoroughly delightful fame” (280) had they but been born in the middle rungs and thus free of an intimacy with and a desire to please the court, as they, “by a combination particular to the reigns of the Stuarts, became equally the delight of the ‘highest’ and the ‘lowest circles’” (280), the opinions of whom, and particularly the former, guided the Restoration audience.

Though Lawrence B. Wallis, in his *Fletcher, Beaumont & Company: Entertainers to the Jacobean Gentry*, makes some attempt to rehabilitate Fletcher’s overall reputation, much of his praise is backhanded. He primarily explains Fletcher’s seventeenth-century popularity by compartmentalizing him and his collaborators, similar to the process by which critics have long dismissed Restoration drama as insular, coterie drama, noting that they were “practical playwrights, writing in a definite milieu with high technical competence for a definite theater and audience” (3) (as if Shakespeare were any different). This audience, and Fletcher’s comic spirit, matched the festive air of the Restoration court and of Restoration comedy. Wallis also finds that Fletcher did not elucidate “deeper, spiritual issues,” that he wanted “perception of the deeper ironies,” and thinks that his characters “lacked any inner struggle” (116). Implied in these statements, however, is that Fletcher would have focused on such if he could have, denying the possibility that he did not recognize such as “issues,” and that these elements improve a play, a

proposition with which Fletcher himself or his Restoration audiences would likely not have agreed.

Dale Underwood similarly does not think Fletcher explores “the larger social and moral problem of the epicure versus the stoic” or is even “interested in the problem of man or of love at all” (138, 132). All these core concepts are certainly at issue in his plays, though he tends to work his dramatic conflicts out through situation more so than through dialogue, and the fact that “from the ideological point of view so inconclusively” does he pass moral judgment places him squarely in line with the ever questioning, ever probing Restoration, as Fletcher, to a degree, implicitly suggests an alternative to traditional Christian-humanism by the very act of not explicitly endorsing it (132). Underwood admits that at least the Etheregian strain of high comedy, which he characterizes as “Restoration comedy,” possesses “a pervasive equivocality in terms of final convictions and values” (146), but he never makes the connection between Restoration equivocations and Fletcher’s.

Wallis also finds Fletcher, despite his impressive range and his being one of the favorite elder tragedians as well as comedians on the Restoration stage, “Unmoral and fun-loving” with “a liking for honesty and independence” (163), and thus very much to the taste of the Restoration wits. Again, as with most older critics, Wallis views any derivation from Shakespearean qualities to be a constitutional flaw rather than a conscious choice, and he does concentrate on Fletcher’s tragedies, which he finds not quite to work as earnest drama, the high Idealism of which, of course, the libertine heroes are constitutionally opposed.³²

E. H. C. Oliphant, in his examination of the authorship of the Fletcherian canon, along with painting Fletcher as a extraordinary facile, albeit shallow, entertainer, makes a very telling comment on him: “he had to go outside of nature to conceive real virtue in either . . . men or

women” (42). This statement would have seemed absurd to the more libertine-leaning of Fletcher’s heirs, as “real virtue” is oxymoronic, and even if such a monster existed, it could exist nowhere but “outside of nature.” Though writing from a very different and more current perspective, Sandra Clark too, in her *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation*, faults Fletcher for qualities that would not be negative ones to a Restoration audience; she finds that “it is not easy to identify ‘real’ selves” (8) in Fletcher’s characters, something for which particularly the more Materialistically-inclined audience members would by no means be looking, as they saw the “self” in a far more social, performative, and protean light than many a modern heir to the Idealist tradition.

Fletcher’s oft noted lack of a “firm perception of character” too, with his women being “particularly vacillating” (Lynch 23, 20), would not have struck a seventeenth-century theatrical audience, unaccustomed as they were to novel reading and not yet liberal subjects, as much of a weakness. This also has something to do with his style. On the linguistic level, Underwood’s elucidation of Etherege’s characteristic noun-and-adjective style in which “the verbs . . . seldom carry the weight of the meaning,” thus leading to an emphasis on “establishing relationships among” and certain key abstract nouns, “Nature, art, reason, passion, love, honor, wit” (94-95, 99), virtue, honesty, etc., applies nearly as well to Fletcher, and also the Caroline court playwrights, but not nearly so much to Shakespeare or Jonson. The signification characters grant these terms, almost as much as their specific diction, defines them as wild gallants, booby squires, Idealistic lovers, *etc.*, and the use of the same key terms, albeit with different connotations, renders them “highly complicated and charged with comic meaning” (98) in a maze of double and triple and quadruple entendre. Thus, and mildly ironically, Fletcher’s and Etherege’s characteristic mode of expression leads even the most sensual and Materialist of

comic characters, at least those among the aristocracy, to intellectualize and conceptualize sensory experience, largely in an attempt to exert “the intellectualizing force and consciousness of an aristocratic society” (Underwood 109), one link between both Mirabells, Fletcher’s and Congreve’s, and all the proto- and full and post-libertine heroes in between.

John Harold Wilson, along with presenting much useful information, and with the Restoration certainly in mind, takes a similar line, albeit one more steeped in post-Victorian prudery (which he would mollify in his later work). He finds, for example, *Much Ado about Nothing*’s Benedick and Beatrice to be “clean, normal, and natural” and lacking his deplored “cynical bawdry” (40), essentially implying, as the latest in a long tradition, that Restoration playwrights and audiences were simply too dissolute, and too aristocratic, composed but of “vicious debauchees,” their lackeys and their punks (Hume 24), to know “truth” from dissimulation, to know what was good for them.³³ While never challenging the underlying assumptions of his own cultural milieu, Wilson does nevertheless find much, albeit negatively connoted, in Fletcher’s comedies, and particularly in the plays most popular during the Restoration, that the new playwrights would adopt and audiences would appreciate, such as their “disregard for morality, their disbelief in the virtue of women and the honesty of men, their extreme sophistication,” all of which Fletcher’s characters “express in the gayest terms,” as well as their “attitude towards marriage,” their “cynical frankness on matters of sex,” and their “obscene repartee” (86, 87, 89), these adjectives being of course far more of the early twentieth century than of the seventeenth, but clearly much the same as those traditionally applied to Restoration high comedy.

Wilson goes to great lengths to characterize the Restoration libertine hero--and to lesser lengths to describe his female equivalent, “a fine lady, well-mannered and witty” though

nonetheless “a romping hoyden”--of whom he is obviously none too fond, as “the wild gallant”: he is “always a gentleman by birth,” he shows “little respect” for received pieties, he “has no religion,” he loves above all “drinking and venery,” and he is “witty always, sometimes with the type of wit which we should call low cunning, that which in Elizabethan [and certainly in Roman] comedy is the peculiar property of the gulling servant” (99-101). This last observation is a crucial one--though Wilson does little with it--that suggests the social diving, the usurpation of the wit of the *servus callidus* by the libertines in order to encircle the commercial classes. He also leaves out many of his gallant’s more positive qualities, his generosity, his animosity towards hypocrisy, his sense of play and of creation, his sense of joy. Regardless, Wilson finds that such a character appears in Fletcher but does “not appear in the domestic comedy of Heywood and Dekker, Chapman, Middleton and Massinger” (102), which was, of course, not written (with the possible exception of Massinger on occasion) for or by the aristocracy. He does find, however, that “the wild gallant,” one of “the truly important and distinctive characters of seventeenth century comedy,” was “taken by the Restoration from Beaumont and Fletcher” (112-113).

More practically, part of the explanation for the popularity and influence of Fletcher’s comedies is that they were more linguistically approachable and more verbally pleasing than those of Shakespeare or Jonson. Fletcher was frequently praised for the smoothness and grace of his verse and his apt and pointed metaphors, as opposed to the knottiness and more elaborate conceits of a Shakespeare or a Donne, a limpidity that fits in nicely with the stylistic preferences of an age and class that placed Waller and Cowley above all poets. Far more importantly, however, Fletcher himself was a product of the town and produced his plays for an audience closely resembling the Restoration audience.

He was, like Beaumont but unlike Shakespeare and Jonson, a gentleman born. He was the son of a Bishop of London, the nephew of Giles Fletcher the Elder, and the recipient of an MA at Cambridge, and thus was, with or without Beaumont, intimately, “unmistakably quintessentially” (Taylor 27) a gentleman familiar with the language of his class and its aims and fears and desires; he “perfectly understood breeding, and therefore successfully copy’d the Conversation of Gentlemen,” and “knew how to describe the Manners of the Age” (Langbaine 204), the manners of the court of James I, which from the nineteenth-century perspective plumbed the “depths of crime and enormity” to a degree surpassing even the Restoration (Hunt 279). His plays, which he produced with remarkably rapidity, were written for two companies primarily, his early plays for the Children of the Queen’s Revels and his later plays, after a period of transition in the early 1610s, for the King’s Men at the Blackfriars.³⁴ The Queen’s Revels was a children’s company, consisting solely of boys and adolescent males, whose audience was composed of “chiefly aristocrats, lawyers, and members of the inns of court, as well as provincial gentry in London on legal business. In other words . . . actual, potential, or self-styled figures of power and responsibility” (Shapiro 68). The Restoration audience, neatly characterized by Wilson, similarly consisted predominantly of “idle courtiers, officials, members of Parliament, bureaucrats, aspiring tradesmen, country gentlemen, ladies, prostitutes, and Mr. Pepys,” but never of “Republicans, Puritans, most ‘citizens,’ and all godly people” (*Court Wits* 142), for whom the theater was both “expensive and ungodly” (Hume 29). The only significant difference between Fletcher’s audience and that of the Restoration theaters, besides the passing over fifty years, was thus the increased Restoration presence of ladies of various sorts, royalty, and Mr. Pepys.

Upon the decline of this first company, and after casting about for a few years, Fletcher found a new home for his work at the Blackfriars, “unquestionably the most reputable playhouse of the . . . period” (Gurr 145), catering to essentially the same audience as he had before, and where, as far as we know, all of his plays from 1614 to his death in 1625 were staged. Fletcher thus, though he had other options available, chose to stage his plays before an audience approximately equivalent to that frequenting the King’s and Duke’s companies after the Restoration. What then Restoration audiences and budding playwrights found in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon were plays written by and for people essentially like themselves, albeit more experienced in the dramatic arts, and these they very much liked and sought to appreciate and to emulate; “Beaumont and Fletcher ruled supreme in the hearts of the theater-going public” (Sorelius 81) for the first decade at least of the Restoration.

The specific quality that Fletcher represented most to the Restoration theater is “Wit,”³⁵ and to achieve this quality, more than “Art,” primarily craft, knowledge and perspicuous observation and the application thereof, as well as dramatic construction, or “Nature,” centrally pathos, and to a lesser degree realism,³⁶ was the primary aim of the generation of playwrights that emerged in the 1660s. Wit, of course, like art and nature, was and is a notoriously protean concept. It is always positive, however, and always designates a process or ability or expression of the mind; its workings, and thus its expressions, are primarily verbal, and almost always quick.³⁷ “Wit” began the seventeenth century expressing a generalized intelligence, a sense preserved in phrases such as “to lose one’s wits” or “half-witted”; this cloud of meaning, however, soon divided into two distinct regions associated to some degree with the two upper levels of the tripartite division of the mind, though in practice the word “wit” could commonly

refer to either or, more usually, both. Wit could be the product of the imagination or fancy (fancy-wit) or of the reason (judgment-wit).³⁸ This fancy-wit, the rapid connection of ideas, the forming of a coherent whole from diverse conceptions or sensations, one arrives at by a deductive, *a posteriori* process, whereas judgment-wit, a process of winnowing the chaff, the application of general principles to specific circumstances, is the product of *a priori* induction. The former tends to be flippant and playful, and thus comic, and often primarily dependent on the senses, and thus Materialistic; the latter tends to be earnest and principled, and thus tragic or heroic, and relies on abstractions, and is thus Idealistic. Wit, then, in its broadest sense, encompasses both nature and art, or, perhaps more precisely, is nature filtered through art, similar to Pope's "Nature to advantage dress'd" ("An Essay on Criticism" 297). Judgment, however, particularly in the mid-seventeenth century, increasingly crept out from under wit's umbrella, leaving fancy-wit more often to assume the mantle of true wit.³⁹ Though the plays in the Fletcher canon, in the dominant seventeenth-century assessment, and Fletcher himself deserve the laurel for both varieties of wit, the view of Fletcher's personal contributions shades towards praise for his fancy-wit, as "*Fletcher's Fancy, and Beaumont's Judgment*" together created the "Monuments of their Wit" (Langbaine 204). This fancy-wit in all its "Life and Briskness" (Langbaine 204) is the type most prevalent in, particularly early, Restoration high comedy, and thus in both the proto- and early libertine hero and in his female equivalents.

Critics, of course, traditionally tend to apply judgment-wit to texts, to employ a few fixed principles in order to dissect, evaluate and judge them. Thus they have tended to canonize those authors who do the same and dismiss those who do not. Shakespeare morally, and Jonson morally and formally, both operate on relatively fixed principles; Fletcher tends not to. Judgment-wit is also more prominent in Wycherley and Congreve in particular than in most of

their fellows, even Dryden, whose active fancy supplery and constantly shifted, and particularly in his comedies. Overall, though, fancy-wit is far more prominent in seventeenth-century high comedy, which has met with far more critical disapproval and dismissal than has the middle and lower comedy and the earnest drama of the period, which have received far more critical approbation. This alone does not fully explain Fletcher's and the Restoration libertine hero's fall from grace, but it does underlie it.

James Shirley, the leading playwright of the Caroline stage, and more than any other Fletcher's heir, though he reaches not quite Fletcher's poetry and shades more realistic and more moral, recognizes Fletcher's most extraordinary quality in his prologue to *The Sisters*, written for the King's Men at the Blackfriars, and as far as we know the last new play they performed before the closing of the theaters.⁴⁰ "Shakespear" he regards as an old-fashioned playwright whose primary gift was in conveying nature, which he defines as pathetic, essentially feminine, emotion, highlighted by his suggestion of menstruation: "So lovely were the wounds, that men would say / They could endure the bleeding a whole day." To "Jonson" he gives art, for "wise Art did bow, and Wit / Is only justified by honouring it." As for Fletcher, "Upon whose head the laurel grew," as it does on the frontispiece of the 1647 folio, his "wit / was the time's wonder, and example yet."⁴¹ Here is the essential attribution of qualities to the triumvirate that would generally hold through the rest of the century, with Fletcher and wit inextricably linked, and wit by implication valued certainly above nature, though not blatantly so, and equivocally above art.⁴²

The 1647 folio, *Comedies and Tragedies*, of Beaumont and Fletcher's works, was, according to Louis B. Wright, "the most noteworthy single landmark in dramatic publication" from the 1642 closing of the theaters until the Restoration, and its "forty-three pages of

commendatory poems . . . almost a literary manifesto by Cavalier writers” (80, 82) that voice the same valuations.⁴³ The commendations are, of course, precisely that, puffs that extravagantly praise the folio’s contents to help sell the volume. The praise, however, is far from blind, and focuses on specific laudatory qualities of Fletcher’s plays, and above all Fletcher’s wit. These paeans taken together constitute almost a manual to which young playwrights doubtless turned to learn what constituted a good play.

Granted “wit” is an easy rhyme in English, but virtually every one of the paeans praises the wit of Fletcher and/or Beaumont to some degree, and perhaps half of them focus on it. Richard Lovelace finds in Fletcher an “*Aeternall Motion / of Wit,*” Sir John Berkenhead a “*Sanguine Wit,*” Sir Aston Cokaine “*lasting Monuments of naturall wit,*” one G. Hills the “*Monarch of Wit!*”, and the publisher, Humphrey Moseley, terms them “The most unquestionable *Wits* this Kingdome hath afforded.”⁴⁴ Robert Markley, in his “‘Shakespeare to *Thee was Dull:*’ The Phenomenon of Fletcher’s Influence,” analyzes these commendations, finding that they glorify Fletcher and his work, particularly in its “wit, style, and theatrical genius,” as “a model that promotes many of their literary and cultural beliefs” and “reaffirm[s] the value of an aristocratic culture temporarily in eclipse” (111, 113, 111)—no wonder this same culture would again turn to these plays when the sun reappeared in 1660. That Fletcher was himself, unlike Shakespeare and Jonson, a self-identified “gentleman” like these Cavalier poets, and thus a symbol of and speaker for the better time of James when the loyal aristocracy was not fighting desperately for its very existence, is entirely clear from their paeans; they liked him because they were like him, and found in him validation of their culture. What is less clear, however, is the precise definition and valuation of “wit” according to these Cavaliers, of which they find such an exemplar in John Fletcher.

Markley defines “Fletcherian Wit,” as wit couched in verse “allusive rather than evocative” (95-96), as “a form of social gamesmanship” (101), and he finds that “the nature that Fletcher is true to . . . is the nature of theatrical performance” (100). This definition might seem like unqualified praise, particularly for a comic playwright; Markley qualifies it, however, by noting that “This notion of wit does not (in Freud’s sense) reveal anything significant about the speaker’s subconscious desires or disorders,” and that Fletcher “mirrors a social world, rather than a moral universe,” the net result of which is “a narrowed, almost Baroque perception of the theater” (100, 101, 120). This “perception,” and the corresponding style in which Fletcher expresses it, renders Fletcher’s work, in the dominant modern view, which Markley admittedly shares, “vastly inferior to Shakespeare and Jonson” (120), implying that the praise of Fletcher from the folio is not wrong so much as misguided, the work of those shallow courtiers who “shie[d] away from tragic perceptions of life” (105) and thus could not appreciate the true literary worth that lies in naturalistic, subconsciously evocative, earnest language and characters.

The theater of the Restoration, however, in general shares Fletcher’s values; its playwrights and audiences are culturally Fletcher’s sons and daughters. The notion that all social relationships are essentially and fundamentally a game courses through the Restoration stage; according to Dryden’s Prince Frederick in *The Assination; or, Love in a Nunnery*, “Heaven . . . playes at one Game, and we at another” (II.i.137-138), a wooing song in Francis Fane’s *Love in the Dark; or, The Man of Bus ’ness* expresses that “Love is Game, Hearts are the Prize. / Pride keeps the Stakes, Art throws the Dice” (II.i.p.17) and so forth. Furthermore, the libertine heroes of the Restoration stage have no desire whatsoever to reveal their “subconscious desires or [particularly] disorders,” “significant” or otherwise. Indeed, the ability to mask such things, to control them and translate them into creative, positive expression, as much as anything defines

“wit,” as the inability to do so is the shared, defining quality of the myriad flavors of coxcomb. As for the notion that we live in “a moral universe,” and not a merely “a social world,” one need look no farther than Rochester’s “Satyr against Reason and Mankind,” the philosophy of which was presaged by and reflected in many a Restoration play: “Our sphere of action is life’s happiness, / And he who thinks beyond, thinks like an ass” (l. 96-97). Fletcher’s wit is simply fancy-wit, wit born not of principles applied but of sensations and ideas processed and combined, the wit of questioning and doubt and creation from which new concepts are born, the type of wit that would lose its intellectual cachet with the fall of the aristocracy late in the century and into the next. To imply as Markley does that the Baroque is somehow a “narrowed” view is simply a modern, anti-aristocratic cultural bias. And libertines, and particularly comic heroes, simply did not regard existence as “tragic”; rather than “sh[ying] away” from tragedy, they faced down, refuted, and rejected Idealistic, tragic morality. Thus Fletcher, more so than any other Renaissance playwright, appealed to the writers for and audiences of the Restoration stage, and “Fletcherian Wit,” with its “careless grace” (Lynch 215), became a model for a theater growing to maturity and finding its voice in the 1660s.

These libertine heroes never refer to themselves or their own kind by the scurrilous designations “rake” or “rakehell,”⁴⁵ but rather by a variety of terms, often “gallant,” but also “blade,” “spark,” etc., though the most common, specific term, and the one least likely to enfold all young men of some parts, is “wit.” This designation becomes, by the 1670s, common to the point that Dapperwit, in Wycherley’s *Love in a Wood; or, St. James’ Park*, though himself a coxcomb, albeit a clever one, takes pains to separate lesser wits into four several degrees, “your Court-Wit, your Coffee-Wit, your Poll-Wit or Pollitick-Wit, [and] your Chamber-Wit or Scribble-Wit,” and he ends with the fifth, “Your Judg-wit or Critick,” who “is all these together,

and yet has the wit to be none of them;. . .he is your true Wit,” the quintessence of wit, and the apex of the social pyramid (II.i.242-244, 273-274, 277). Though, granted, Wycherley does tend to shade more towards Jonsonian judgment-wit than fancy-wit, which, along with his work’s brilliance and insight of course, has retained for him his place in the canon among critics who have had the option of regarding him as essentially a moralist and disdainful of his culture that they so much deplored, in a social, theatrical world and world-view, wit of either sort is still the crowning quality, the defining one of a true aristocrat, the greatest of all parts, a fact that even Richard Flecknoe could not fail to absorb.

Richard Flecknoe was the first Restoration playwright to spell out these same valuations in critical prose, in his “Treatise of the English Stage,” “the best thing he has extant” according to Langbaine (203), published with his 1664 “Pastoral Trage-comedy” *Love’s Kingdom*, performed but a month or two before *The Comical Revenge* and published shortly after, though Dryden’s *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* would of course soon follow. Flecknoe’s context and character are relevant to his exposition: he has here no intention of breaking from tradition, as this note following the list of “Persons represented” clearly implies: “The Scene, Cyprus, with all the Rules of Time and Place so exactly observ’d, as whilst for Time ’tis all compriz’d in as few hours as there are Acts; for Place, it never goes out of the view or prospect of Loves Temple.” These are the words of a man seeking acceptance who, lacking the spirit, obeys the letter; he would later wonder why he was not achieving the acceptance he so obviously craves, and lash out in frustration with more than one “gratuitous assault” (Summers, *Playhouse* 206) at those he felt were his enemies, thus rendering him a perfect target for Dryden.⁴⁶ At this point, however, he is still hoping for acceptance, so when he gives his version of London stage history, he echoes

the opinions of his superiors in wit. These represent not so much his own take on the matter, but rather the dominant voice of the aristocratic literati, doubtless including William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, an ardent admirer of Jonson and the only aristocratic playwright of his generation who “had preferred comedy to romance,” to whom this play is dedicated and in praise of whom Flecknoe had already published a paean (Harbage, *Cavalier Drama* 252).⁴⁷ Thus, that his opinions had “little influence” (Krutch 55) does not much matter, for this treatise is important instead for what it reflects. Flecknoe’s voice, though, is not just of his contemporaries; he also parrots both Shirley and the commendatory verses to the Beaumont and Fletcher folio.

Fletcher, according to Flecknoe, does tend toward chaos, but also abounds in fertility, for he excels in “wit, being an exuberant thing, like *Nilus*, never more commendable then when it overflows.” All three of these master playwrights, however, overindulge in some way, for Shakespeare “wanted weeding” and Jonson “was too elaborate.” Fletcher’s superfluity is the only one of the three that correction would not improve; “Nature” and “Art” are best tempered, but any damming of wit is not to be borne, as such would destroy a positive fecundity. This “Wit, it is the spirit and quintessence of speech . . . in pleasant and facetious discourse,” equivalent to “Eloquence . . . in grave and serious,” and it is the product of “Nature and Company” rather than of “Art and Precept.” This attitude toward wit and towards Fletcher’s fancy-based version of it is thus largely an identification with the court; Shakespeare, representing the masses and the commercial classes, and Jonson here the scholars, both must have bounds, whereas Fletcher, as the voice of the aristocracy, is best left, as are they, to flow freely.

Flecknoe’s criticisms of Fletcher, however, unlike his praises, reflect less on Fletcher’s plays themselves and more on how badly Flecknoe misreads the tenor of the Restoration court

that it was his Sisyphean effort to please. He finds that “*Beaumont* and *Fletcher* were excellent in their kinde, but they often err’d against *Decorum*, seldom representing a valiant man without somewhat of the *Braggadoccio*, nor an honourable woman without somewhat of *Dol Common* in her: to say nothing of their irreverent representing Kings persons on the stage, who shu’d never be represented, but with reverence.” Restoration playwrights in the main concurred with this notion of stage decorum, though they had obvious classical if not stage precedent not to do so always, for example the characters of Hector and Helen and Agamemnon in *The Iliad*. More topically, however, was the presence of many a “valiant man,” an “honourable woman,” and the King’s person, in the audience. Abstract principle thus withered in the face of reality, for who but, for example, the Duke of Newcastle should decide what was allowable “*Braggadoccio*” for “a valiant man”? This social diving, in both language and behavior, this flanking the middle classes and borrowing from the low and the marginal, is one of the distinct qualities of the Restoration wit, and the fine ladies and gentlemen in attendance found no violations of decorum in Fletcher worthy of objection. As for his view of decorum as it relates to the character of a King, the immensely tolerant Charles II, the properest judge of such matters, had some minor scruples concerning such, but then he allowed *The Maid’s Tragedy* a free run until sometime after May of 1668, despite that it depicts a regicide justified by a practice, a King supporting a nominal husband for his mistress, similar to that in which he himself had engaged in with Barbara Palmer, Lady Castlemaine.⁴⁸

Flecknoe continues on to note that “*Fletcher* was the first who introduc’t that witty obscenity in his Playes; which like poison infused in pleasant liquor, is always the more dangerous the more delightful.” As for “witty obscenity,” it almost goes without saying that this is the most immediately striking, though far from the most vital, quality of Restoration comedy

and indeed of the Restoration court, and the one that has led more than any other to the critical opprobrium under which this period so long languished. Flecknoe's vision of the Restoration court is an idealistic and somewhat ignorant view of the court of the late Charles I; however, the courtiers of the waning days of his reign saw no obscenity in Fletcher, as William Cartwright praises his plays "*cleane, chaste, and unvext*" and Lovelace, though finding Fletcher's wit "*wanton,*" regards it as by no means obscene, for he knew how "*to clothe*" it "*aright. / .Without her nasty bawd attending it.*"

The Restoration, likewise, found little obscene in Fletcher; Dryden's oft quoted judgment in the last paragraph of his preface to the Fables that "there is more Baudry in one Play of Fletcher's, call'd *The Custom of the Country*, than in all ours together" (*Poems* 1462) is not from the Dryden of *The Wild Gallant* and *Limberham* but from the beleaguered and defensive Dryden, writing after Jeremy Collier's 1698 attacks on the immorality of his own comedies, "weary of controversy" and perhaps "of life," and thus willing with little protest to "kiss the rod" of the moralists (Krutch 121). Restoration playwrights, including Dryden himself, instead, and in general, rather increased the "Baudry," but the amount and suggestiveness of the *doubles entendres* matters little. The crucial change is in who utters these lines, and why, and in what sort of language they couch them, the best-known early example of this shift being Sir Frederick Frollick, a knight and cousin to a lord, a Materialist on the side of creative and comic joy.

Scene II: The Early Restoration Proto-Libertine Hero

Etherege's debut, the romance-comedy *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*, came in March of 1664 at the Duke's House.⁴⁹ Pepys thought little of it, regarding it as but "a silly play"

(7: 347), and he found in it “no wit at all” (6: 4), yet he did see it thrice.⁵⁰ Despite Pepys’s low opinion and its “mixt nature” (Langbaine 187), its “fugue of intrigues” (Burns 22), its awkward tonal patchwork of heroic couplets and low comedy, with “Falstaffian tavern humor” cheek-by-jowl with “a sophisticated and effete court world” (Birdsall 42), and “crammed” as it is with “every popular type and situation of the early Carolean theatre” (Hume 245-246), the play caught on in court circles, and remained popular for nearly ten years.⁵¹ The assembled court appreciated the relative grace of the verse, but that they could easily have in any number of heroic plays; in the comic scenes featuring Sir Frederick lay its primary appeal.

Etherege definitively presents his models for *The Comical Revenge* in the prologue, when he speaks of the near-impossibility that some “*Pen*” might “*Match Fletcher’s Nature, or the Art of Ben*”; in this, having granted already both of these masters the laurel for “*Wit*,” using the term in its broad sense encompassing both fancy and judgment, trueness to type and perspicuous observation, he appoints Fletcher the lord of Shakespeare’s province as well. That Sir Frederick Frollick will have more than a whiff or creative chaos about him is evident from his first introduction, for not only has he just returned from France, like Monsieur Thomas and Mirabell, but his “saucy impertinent” (*Personae Dramatis*) servant Dufoy also curses him, but not without some affection, to a fellow servant before his master enters as a “bedlamé, mad-cape, *diable de matré*” (I.i.10). The two work together very well though, as does Sir Frederick with servants (and particularly serving maids) in general; indeed, Sir Frederick, having chosen “by experiences and sympathies” the lower world (Birdsall 42), himself adopts some of the cleverness of the *servus callidus*, the clever slave/servant of Roman/Renaissance comedy. He is very much given to debauch, upon this particular morning “feel[ing] more qualms than a young woman in breeding” for it (I.i.26-27), which does not stop him from his other passion, attractive women of

any sort or degree, as he immediately propositions a “pretty Rogue” (I.i.136) of a maid, Jenny, whose mistress he is pursuing.⁵² He is also unquestionably in possession of casual charm, an engaging, “urbane self-deprecation” (Underwood 47), a measure of “undeniable vitality and artistry” (Birdsall 14), and sufficient *virtu*, as he acquits himself honorably in the combat betwixt the gentlemen in the high plot and the Widow he pursues is, after all, Lord Bevil’s sister. He, finally, is the very spirit of generosity, tipping profusely throughout, and granting generous marriage bounties in the end; money is for the spending, but a means and by no means an end, as, shaking his pockets, he discovers “Here is Wine and Women in abundance” (V.ii.166). Though only tangential to the high plot, he is a presence in it, and adds a “breath of common sense” to its “febrile neoplatonism” (Holland 22, 25). He is, however, very much in charge of the lower two (or three), which “lend substantial support to the libertine attitudes and tone” (Underwood 55) of Sir Frederick and the Widow’s courtship, as he grants favors, high and low, when and where they might best “divert . . . melancholy” and engender joy (V.v.147). His presence in this middle zone also emphasizes his moderate earthiness, as being below the zone of heavenly ideals but above the pandemonium of farce, he can engage in both “the freeing of the natural man from . . . artificial restraints and” in “creative formalizing” (Birdsall 55). He also ends up by no means worse off than he began, due to both his generous nature and his wit, as well as his giving “nature of libertine appetite and freedom” (Underwood 57). His goal is to provide pleasure to himself and to others, and in this he, having the place and parts to do so, succeeds with a flourish.

Sir Frederick Frollick, however, is at best a proto-libertine, or more precisely a proto-comic libertine, a proto-libertine hero; despite being traditionally wrenched into the “rake” category and the play into “the manners school” (Nicholl 223), such connections are

“surprisingly few,” and Sir Frederick more resembles characters from “half a dozen or more of Fletcher’s plays” (Lynch 142) than the later libertine heroes of the High Restoration.⁵³ He may well be “more consciously anti-platonic and anti-romantic” than many of his predecessors, and he may act more “upon principle” than “upon instinct only” (Smith 53), but this is, at most, a slight difference of degree. The play overall has “very little genuine wit” (Birdsall 51), and Sir Frederick’s wit in particular “sputters now and then, but is never sustained” (Fujimura 90). He relies more on tricksiness than on verbalization, and “his characteristic genre is not narrative but enacted masquerade” (Hughes 62).⁵⁴

Underwood admits that Sir Frederick still waffles between “Christian sinner and libertine hero” (53), and finds that he differs from later libertine heroes in three major ways: he chases a widow and not a virgin, he is a bit of a bully and “broad and frankly physical,” and he is “genuine” rather than “feigned” in his “good nature” (50). The female lead being a virgin, though, is not always the case later in the Restoration (for example, Beaugard and Porcia in Otway’s *The Atheist*), and is largely a product of the libertine moving up to the high plot and thus playing for the greater rewards. A tendency to bully, too, relates to this elevation, as Underwood admits, and many a play implies, later libertine heroes did not so much abandon hectoring, but rather playwrights, as the libertines became more socially acceptable, featured them more frequently in the high plots, where, outside of farce, broad physicality has never had much of a place. This shift from the supporting cast and the underplot to the central and most powerful male role is a major difference between Sir Frederick and, for example, Courtall from Etherege’s *She Would if She Could*. The former, unlike the latter, though respected by those of the play’s highest plot, is not vital to it, and he dominates no one in it; Lord Beaufort countenances his frolics, though he voices no desire to join or to emulate Sir Frederick in them.

Underwood's last point, that Sir Frederick's easy nature suggests more "the merry scapegraces of Fletcher's comedies" (48) than later, more socially dominant heroes, demonstrates the general trend of the "physical giving way to verbal aggressiveness and trickery" (Birdsall 51), though it also suggests the central quality that the libertine hero would add to these early avatars: the fully-rounded wit encompassing not just the fancy but the judgment, the intellect, the control. Though he is pleasant and certainly facile of speech, Sir Frederick's wit and cleverness clearly do not reach the heights that Dorimant's and others' later will, and he, crucially, has not the cultivated intellect and, more importantly, the intellectual, philosophical base to undergird and justify his actions. Though he does act on Materialistic principles, he does not articulately voice them, expressing them instead via his rather "sophomoric . . . escapades" (Fujimura 88), and indeed is presumably but vaguely conscious of them, lacking the degree of conscious "awareness," for example that "love" is but "an appetite and transient," that Underwood credits him with (52). He is thus not a libertine hero, for he lacks judgment-wit, and indeed he has, as yet, no principles from which to judge; he is still in the process of creating them. He is, however, slightly closer to being one than any character from the Jacobean or Caroline stage, and closer than any other character who debuted before him on the Restoration stage, in the preceding several years that featured far more than the death pangs of "the Elizabethan comedy of humours, pale, withered, and exhausted" (Palmer 64), but rather the early glimmerings of the next great age of English comedy.

He is also far from the radical break from the past that so many critics have wished him to be: comments such as that Etherege's "contemporaries . . . had not yet seen a comedy upon the English stage in the least resembling *Love in a Tub*" (Palmer 64), or that his scenes "set the whole tone of Restoration Comedy" (Dobrée 61), are unfounded on several levels, and in

particular several figures in Restoration plays pre-dating *The Comical Revenge* share some, and a few many, of Sir Frederick's proto-libertine qualities. While the more political comedies, such as Sir Robert Howard's *The Committee* and Abraham Cowley's *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, cleave closer to Plautus and steer clear of such elements as might tend to compromise their heroes and confuse their central thrust at the wrongheadedness and hypocrisy of the Commonwealth, others edged, if but slightly, towards a more libertine vision. Mirzano, the hero of Sir Robert Howard's *The Surprisal*, "us'd to brag his heart was fortifi'd / With scorn and cheerfulness!" (III.iv.p.32), a paradoxical mix he shares with many a libertine hero, though he has, by the time of the play, converted to the church of true love, and the Websterian villain Villerotto has far more of the dark side of the Materialist about him. Alberto, in Richard Rhodes's "lively, bouncy" (Hume 242) and "excellent comedy," the charming *Flora's Vagaries*, certainly enjoys a debauch and witty repartee, and, though a gentleman, carries naught in his pockets "but brass money and false Dice; and here nothing but an Antidote against the Pox" (IV.p.36), but he is essentially a supporting character, unquestionably faithful to his extravagantly saucy mistress the "sprightly Flora" (Summers, *Playhouse* 356). Indeed, the play's finest wit and "quick sure strokes of vigour and good fun" (Summers, *Playhouse* 357) radiate from Flora, played admirably and enticingly by Nell Gwyn, and Alberto shines in his best light but in her reflected glory.⁵⁵ Similarly Welbred, in James Howard's *The English Monsieur*, has a strong anti-Idealistic, anti-Platonick streak, and thinks that to weep for love, "'twould argue me a child" (I.p.7). Despite that Smith finds this the first play in which "the gay-couple pattern appears full-blown" (48), however, it is "entirely lacking any 'libertine' tone" (Hume, "Myth" 150), and Welbred is wildly outclassed, as are all the men in the play, by the women's wit, in his case Lady Wealthy's, whereas the libertine heroes have wit sufficient to match the women, if

rarely to defeat them; “a clever gallant is not to be shamed by a lady” (Lynch 158).⁵⁶ These characters all, generally respected, good-natured gentlemen of some parts, exude still more than a whiff of the jester, a scent that only the full libertine heroes of the high Restoration will be able to mask.⁵⁷

Three more characters, however, in three more plays preceding or contemporaneous with *The Comical Revenge*, approach the character of Sir Frederick far more nearly, the first of these being the ironically-named Don Felices in Thomas Porter’s *The Carnival*.⁵⁸ Don Felices is perfectly willing to “be in love with . . . any mans wife in Christendom that desires it” (I.p.5), for a lady’s “maid will serve [his] turn, or any thing / That’s Woman” (II.p.17), and he is of a decidedly “sprightly active” (I.p.9) temper, for “Melancholly” is “a disease” which he has never been “troubled with” (III.p.38). He also believes in and practices “the Sacred Rule / Of honourable Friendship” (IV.p.43), which does not, of course, preclude breaking the occasional window while on a frolic. He thus fully shares Sir Frederick’s good-nature and desire to bring joy to others, particularly as he helps his brother Fernando to the bride whom he desires, as well as his *virtu* and his indiscriminate and unabashed fleshly lusts. His end, too, resembles that of Sir Frederick in that he concludes the play with no significant conversion; the little ingénue Miranda likely has wit sufficient to tame him, “but plague on’t, she’s too young” by “three or four years” (V.iii.p.68), and thus he ends as he began, implying that he is in no need of conversion. He is a secondary character, regarded by the main characters as mildly foolish, but he is one of them, and his opinions are by no means beyond the pale of gentlemanly behavior.

The second of these proto-libertines is Clearcus (and to a lesser degree his kinsman and the “Right Heire” Lonzartes) in Sir William Killigrew’s *Pandora; or, The Converts*.⁵⁹ This “fine old courtier,” six years the elder brother to Thomas Killigrew and long-time prominent civil

servant, though a neophyte dramatist, was definitely not a contemporary of the rising generation of new playwrights, being fifty-six years old at this play's debut; "at the Restoration he was conspicuously favoured by the Queen-Mother" more so than by the son (Summers, *Playhouse* 252). Sensing the tenor of the times, though, he converted this play from a tragedy, despite the fact that, according to a prefatory poem by Lodowick Carlike, "some thought [Clearcus] too gay." Though this play is still very much in the Caroline mode, Killigrew presents the cutting edge of it, emphasizing the proto-libertine elements most amenable to the coming age; though he shows decided respect for the old Platonick abstractions, he still significantly undercuts their absurdities.

Pandora prominently features Clearcus, the self-confessed "most debauch'd man in *Syracusa*" (I.p.4), who "has been spoiled by his success "with women (Smith 33), and Lonzartes, the second most debauched; the latter has serious moral qualms about his activities, the former none. In their relationship, mildly echoing Falstaff and Prince Hal's, Clearcus takes the lead, and opposes his principles against the more traditional ones of Lonzartes. Clearcus eschews a "cloath of Gold-Dame," preferring "a better shape, a softer, or a whiter skin" that lies underneath; "give me the Woman," he cries, "and keep her virtue to your selfe" (I.p.4). Whereas Lonzartes speaks of "an ill Conscience" he is like to receive from his dalliances, for Clearcus, his "tender Conscience" ironically tells him to "take what I can find, for ready money; which I freely enjoy" (I.p.3). Indeed, Clearcus focuses on the role and definition of the conscience, a major debate of the Restoration, and he, as will the later libertine heroes, definitively takes his stand: "Out upon these tender Consciences, they spoyl more mirth, then they are worth; let old folks hear Homilies, while we enjoy the time we have, and not whine away our youth, on dreams of

virtue, which signifie we know not what!” which he follows with a striking brief expression of the satirist’s creed, “I hate Hypocrisie” (I.p.8).

Clearcus is a gentleman decidedly more robust than a mere rambunctious young gallant, a man with some Materialistic basis for his actions. Much, however, of his philosophy is merely a simple inversion of the Platonick notions so prevalent in Henrietta Maria’s circle in the last reign; much of his goal is to “blow away those bubbles, those ayrie Lectures of chast love! Which leads silly mortals into slavery,” to tell the Platonick lover to ”Go whine, fond Lover, go whine, I say, go whine, / While we chear our hearts with Wenches, and Wine, / I say go whine” (IV.p.35). Even more importantly, though, he is neither the play’s dominant male, nor does he represent the play’s moral center; that honor would go to his higher-ranking kinsman Lonzartes, who, along with the rest of the court, ultimately judges Clearcus, finds him wanting, and converts him to entirely unironic virtue. Lonzartes, though he does participate with Clearcus in some of his early frolics, finds Clearcus’s behavior to be a “humour” that he needs to “expell” (I.p.9), and all the court, and especially the titular heroine, work steadily at this task throughout the comedy. Granted, they convert him via a great deal of elaborate and clever farcical play-acting, but, in the end, Clearcus, after a battle between his anti-Platonisms and Pandora’s Platonisms, does succumb, falls, in fact, with a resounding thud into wedlock, and turns his previously-held convictions on their heads. In the end “both lose and win” (Smith 33), as he now asks Pandora to appreciate his “heart thus chang’d, from a rude distraction, to an extasie of Bliss; from a deformed Satyr, with a confus’d *Chaos* of dark thoughts, and blacker actions, by your glorious Beauties, and brighter Virtues, new form’d into the Figure of a man” (V.p.45). They, at the very least, “in some vague far-off manner . . . remind one of Dryden’s Celadon and Florimel, although Killigrew’s lay figures have not the spark of vivacity of that delightful pair”

(Summers, *Playhouse* 255), though Clearcus is far closer to Celadon than Pandora is to Florimel. Though he begins the play with, if anything, more of the libertine hero in him than Sir Frederick, he ends with far, far less.

The importance of Loveby, in Dryden's *The Wild Gallant*, which has "at least as good a claim as any other play to be called the first Restoration Comedy" (Krutch 8), to the development of the proto-libertine hero is more in his pedigree, his being a titular character, his living in London and not in the land of romance, and his being the first creation of his creator than in his character itself. Debuting on 5 February 1663, though not printed until 1667 after being revised, thus making the surviving, printed text as much a product of 1667 as of 1663, Dryden's first comedy met with little success, and was quickly eclipsed by his other works.⁶⁰ Moderately Fletcherian, resembling Mirabel or Monsieur Thomas in his youthful lustiness and in occasional flashes of his wit, but somewhat lower and more humourous, more Jonsonian than they, Loveby is "still not very wild, as Restoration gallants go" (Moore 15), and is in truth little more than "just the irresponsible reckless spark" (Krutch 16).⁶¹ He, according to the witty, arch jillflirt Isabelle, with her "Fletcherian elevation" (Hume 243) really the closest thing to a proto-libertine hero(ine) in the play, "has not Braines enough, if they were butter'd, to feed a Black-bird" (IV.ii.53-54). He is simply too limited, too low, and he lacks the judgment necessary to be anything but yet another variety of coxcomb, albeit a pleasant, whoremasterly, and gentlemanly one who can at least outwit tailors and parasites and attract nubile young women of the sort more sympathetic to wildness.⁶²

One key habit of this new generation of gallants is their practice of adopting general signifiers, often from the religious register, to their own purposes, in some cases entirely inverting the "customary meaning" of "universal significances" (Underwood 52). This practice,

old as language, of course, but particularly significant in the seventeenth century, and fairly frequent in Fletcher, had become somewhat more common as the culture clove into two opposing camps (as much as any culture can ever do so) under Charles I. Both sides, for example, considered themselves “honest,” the loyalists because they remained true to their King and the Parliamentarians because they clung to their perception of divine law; this one word in particular became almost a Royalist shibboleth. Too, court Platonism under Henrietta Maria relied on certain key terms, “honor” and “virtue” and so forth, that the resisting side in this overwrought game attempted to wrest to their own purposes. Far more than the simple knee-jerk contrarianism of “inverting vice and virtue” (Wilkinson 82), most, if not all, of this contest over signifiers was, and is, a way of asserting power, and one practiced by both sides alike. The novelty in the way that Restoration gallants sought to control terms such as “honest,” especially when referring to sexuality, however, was that it had its basis not in belief or tradition but in reason based on observation rather than principle. Men and women, for example, alike experience sexual desire before marriage and for people other than their intended; not to admit this, and perhaps not to act on it, is thus fundamentally dishonest to the more liberated Restoration gallant. Thus these inversions are often not ironic, not new creations so much as appeals to renew the fundamental meaning of primary conceptual terminology, to strip it of its “official,” Idealistic trappings.

Sir Frederick Frolicke, though he is somewhat more successful in his designs than they, possesses little that his fellows Felices, Clearcus, Loveby and to a lesser degree other gallants who appeared in new plays before March of 1664 do not, yet he is the one still remembered and analyzed. The critical argument has been largely whether he is a watershed or “a revolutionary

rebirth” (Lynch 137), and whether “the play did” create or “define a new comedy” (Holland 26); though Sir Frederick is, in truth, neither a watershed nor a “rebirth,” he was one of but a handful of important proto-libertine heroes to appear before the plague, and the play itself is a distinctive creation and combination, though far from an unprecedented one.⁶³ Anyone who bothers to examine the Restoration’s earliest comedies will find “crucial evidence about the modes which were firmly established before Etherege began to write and on which he and others clearly drew” (Hume 238), but rarely do critics more than cursorily acknowledge their existence. This attention lavished on Etherege is somewhat validated by the success of the play, for, as the old prompter John Downes recalls in his *Roscius Anglicanus*, it “got the Company [Davenant’s Duke’s] more Reputation and Profit than any preceding Comedy” (57). More importantly, however, Etherege has been consistently in print, largely due to his creator’s two later triumphs, whereas, outside of Dryden’s *Loveby*, none of the other gentlemen who even approach proto-libertine hero status have seen the printed page, much less the stage, in over three hundred years. The pages devoted by critics to this play and *She Would if She Could*--granted this assertion is but an impression, but one I make with some confidence--exceed the pages devoted to all the other new plays of all genres produced during the 1660s combined.⁶⁴ Granted, most of these other playwrights do not possess Etherege’s arsenal of skills, and his gift for witty dialogue in particular; many, though, do match or even surpass him in certain aspects of the craft, and, though largely forgotten now, did match or at least approach the influence and popularity of Etherege’s plays in their time. That they have been left behind in the process of canon-formation, much of which occurred in periods highly critical of libertinism and of the aristocracy in general, or not officially “rediscovered” or repopularized as Aphra Behn has been, does not diminish their importance to the story of the development of the libertine hero.⁶⁵

Scene III: *Epicoene* and Five from Fletcher.

Such characters as Sir Frederick and his more congenial predecessors exist nowhere in Shakespeare, the closest analogue, and a distant one at that, being Prince Hal before his conversion to responsibility, or perhaps Benedick. Indeed, that in general “the Restoration knew and cared too little about Shakespearian comedy to have been influenced by it ” (Wilson 42) has long been recognized, though commentators have long reacted with “astonishment, even indignation” (Sorelius 77) at this undisputable fact, so rarely if ever has it been boldly stated: Restoration audiences and players and playwrights were fully aware of Shakespeare’s comedies, but simply did not much like them.⁶⁶ Shakespeare’s comic vision of the aristocracy, of its mores and its language, was to them rather like his vision of the seacoast of Bohemia, shimmering, yes, but second or third hand, often incorrect, old-fashioned and lacking in decorum, and shading towards the values and speech patterns of the city or country, but not of the town and definitely not of the court. His young couples too rarely engage in the Restoration mode of conversation between the sexes. Nubile men and women on the Restoration stage enjoy, for the most part, sparring on an equal plane, a thrusting and parrying and engaging in repartee of equals, similarly armed. Shakespeare’s high couples in his romantic comedies, however, for the most part are either too earnest for comedy (the couples in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, etc.), lacking in playful antagonism, or too unbalanced (Oliver and Rosalind, Petruchio and Katherine). Only the lovers in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *Much Ado’s* Benedick and Beatrice approximate the Restoration witty pair, and the older play Restoration dramatists considered, if at they did so at all, quaint and stilted. Otherwise, they tended to regard Shakespeare’s humor as but clowning in trunk-hose.

Thus, among the triumvirate, Shakespeare's contribution to the evolution of the libertine hero was minimal, nowhere near that of Fletcher, despite the esteem in which he was held; likewise Ben Jonson, though his influence on Restoration comedy as a whole was far greater than that of Shakespeare, and indeed perhaps equal to that of Fletcher, primarily worked a vein not amenable to libertinism or to its aristocratic mouthpieces. The Restoration considered Jonson to be far and away the greatest English literary critic, which inevitably colors the critical praise his plays received. To say, though, for the "top-wit" at least, "to depart from [Jonson's] canon was damnation," and that he "was the final arbiter in all matters of taste and poetry" (Summers, *Playhouse* 278) takes the case rather too far, as Fletcher for plays and Cowley and Waller for poetry certainly came in for a share, though Jonson's influence was profound and far-reaching. Audiences too, though, the majority of which even in the Restoration cared little for abstractions such as the unities, very much appreciated Jonson's comedies as well, despite suspicions of his "laboriousness and his lack of ease" (Sorelius 93), his general lack of aristocratic characters, and his almost total want of romance of any sort. These qualities, along with the plays' accompanying emphases on humours and on low characters, alone preclude any near approach to a proto-libertine hero in Jonson; thus his influence primarily flowed through the farcical channel of Restoration comedy and not the higher, wittier watercourse in which most of the libertines swam.⁶⁷ Humours characters often populate plays along with libertine heroes, granted, but they tend to be high humours, humours of the aristocracy, and more affectations, "semi-conscious pretense[s]" (Holland 50) that these characters choose to adopt, as opposed to Jonson's characters, who frequently suffer from near medical conditions.

Epicoene; or The Silent Woman, however, is somewhat of an exception. Though generally now regarded as the fourth-best among Jonson's comedies, after *The Alchemist*, *Volpone; or, The Fox*, and *Bartholomew Fair*, *Epicoene* was the most popular and by far the most influential of Jonson's plays during the Restoration, "accounted by all, one of the best Comedies he have extant" (Langbaine 296), though by no means *the* "ur-Restoration comedy" (Burns 2), and thus readily available in print. It is the first play Pepys mentions a performance of in his Diary, on 6 June 1660 (1: 171), and in November of 1660 it was "the first play presented at the Cock-Pit in Whitehall" (Van Lennep 21). It was performed at least seven times before March 1664, and Pepys himself saw it four times total, finding it at first, in early 1661, "an excellent play" (2: 7), and in 1668 "the best comedy, I think, that was ever wrote," and he notes that, "sitting by Shadwell the poet, he was big with admiration of it" (9: 310). This popularity had much to do with the quality of the play of course, but also with the social class of the characters, as the play's witty heroes are gentlemen and not humours, and their dialogue is distinctly more learned and refined than in Jonson's other major comedies. Though a Materialistic libertinism was very much not in Jonson's worldview, Clerimont and Truewit "have the effervescence and the verbosity," if not "the obsession with love" (Jordan 79-80), of the Restoration gallant, and thus do play some role still in the genesis of the proto-libertine hero.

That this play, written for the Children of the Queen's Revels, was intended for an aristocratic audience, and to a lesser degree their retainers, but not for the commercial classes, is evident from Jonson's prologue, as he offers "cates," he hopes, that are "fit for ladies: some for lords, knights, squires, / Some for your waiting wench, and city-wires, / Some for your men, and daughters of Whitefriars." Truewit and Clerimont are the leading figures of perhaps not "a distinctly epicurean order" but at least of a coherent social unit (Underwood 151), and in this

they resemble most Restoration wits more so than most of Fletcher's gallants, who tend to be linked to other young gentlemen, if at all, solely through ties of blood. These two are unquestionably gentleman, and play the straight men, "the only successful players" (Teague 192) in the play's game and thus the conduits through whom the audience laughs at and scorns the humourous characters. Truewit, more "pedestrian" than Fletcher's gallants, as he possesses less "wildness and fire" (Sorelius 108), directs more than a bit of satirical contempt towards traditional gentlemanly pursuits, thinking them "nothing: or that, which when 'tis done, is as idle" (I.i.30); indeed he generally thinks the pursuit of sensual pleasure leads to "vanity and misery" (I.i.47), oddly prescient of many a later moral judgment concerning Restoration comedy. His friend Clerimont fights back, at least, accusing Truewit of having read "Plutarch's moral, or some such tedious fellow," imbibing a "Stoicity" that threatens to "spoil [his] wit utterly" (I.i.54-57). Indeed Jonson's vision of aristocratic ideology is essentially Stoic and has "Seneca" and "Plutarch" (II.iii.40-41), with the satirists Horace and Juvenal lurking, at the fore of Classical authors, and Epicurus and Lucretius nowhere to be found, not even among the twenty-five Greeks and Romans the coxcomb Sir John Daw lists in II.iii. While Clerimont does find Seneca and Plutarch "very grave" (II.iii.45), and flirts with Ovid, he does little to counter their philosophy, and proves ultimately subservient to Truewit. Granted, few wild gallants of the Renaissance actually cite Lucretius as a formative influence, but, though he may not be a conscious disciple of Epicurus, the libertine hero by no means shares Truewit's Stoicism.⁶⁸

The play does not entirely lack Materialist sentiments (though it of course abounds in lower-case materialistic ones), but when they do appear, such as the question "Why should women deny their favours to men? Are they the poorer, or the worse?" (IV.iii.30-31), they issue from the mouth of a foolish lady of the collegiate, and the two encouraging responses, "Is the

Thames the less for the dyer's water, mistress?" and "Or a torch, for lighting many torches?" (IV.iii.32-33) from the coxcombs Sir John Daw and Sir Amorous La Fool. Neither Truewit nor Clerimont, and thus the play, approve of or encourage such views; though they might on occasion imply that they are "in revolt against the orthodox or 'stoical' values of their time," they are in truth far "more on the side of the traditional moral order than against it" (Underwood 146, 147).

These gallants do, however, have something significant upon which early Restoration playwrights drew in the formation of the proto-libertine hero. Truewit and Clerimont, the former of whom Dryden characterizes in his 1671 preface to *An Evening's Love* as "*the best character of a Gentleman which Ben. Johnson ever made*" (10: 208), and who thus offers, unlike most of Fletcher's gallants, a model of a witty gentleman in the role of an exemplary character, stand solidly on the side of conviviality, and speak in hawking metaphor (IV.iv.167-168). They also, though not so much concerned with seizing what "freedom and pleasure" they can (Underwood 150), go to great lengths in defining their exclusive wit-club against incursions from the city. Truewit, more importantly, exercises through his wit, albeit far more judgment-wit than fancy-wit, an increasing social dominance as the play progresses, for example in IV.i when he lectures his companions on how to win any woman: all woman can be and want to be won, and men must be willing to play any game in order to do so. Most importantly, though, Truewit usurps the role of the *servus callidus* while retaining his status as a gentleman, not for commercial gain but both to help his friend Dauphine Eugenie to his uncle Morose's inheritance and for the sheer pleasure of the sport. He directs the "tragi-comedy" (IV.v.27) in which Daw and La Fool agree to be beaten, and he dresses up as a parson--though he does feel he must justify this act "since they are but persons put on, and for mirth's sake" (IV.vi.47)--all to these ends, and benefits in no

practical way from these frolics. In this generosity, this love of play, and this social diving by gentlemen lay the pith of the play's Restoration appeal and influence.

Fletcher, a gentleman born and by nature and inclination far from a Stoic, however, is a different case entirely. Writing almost exclusively for indoor theaters, Fletcher's plays, unlike Jonson's, are replete with aristocratic characters possessing many of the proto-libertine heroes' traits, though to say that "young libertines . . . through the pages of his comedy" in going rather too far (Lynch 21). Many of his plays have little to no libertinism about them, and no one of Fletcher's characters blazes in full constellation, but traces of libertinism, along with young men full of "impudence, cynicism, and taste for witty speech and unscrupulous intrigue" (Lynch 21), course through many of his plays and surface in five in particular: *The Wild-Goose Chase*, *Monsieur Thomas*, *The Scornful Lady*, *The Chances*, and *Wit without Money*. All of these, with the exception of *The Scornful Lady*, a collaboration with Beaumont, are solo plays; thus the proto-libertinism in the canon of plays produced by Fletcher and his collaborators shines through most clearly in the absence of Beaumont, Massinger and the others.⁶⁹

The most oft-cited pre-cursor to the Restoration libertine hero in Fletcher's plays is Mirabell in *The Wild-Goose Chase*, though his name alone likely has something to do with this. Many have shared the view that this play is "more like a Restoration comedy of manners" than any other (Moore 19); Wilson even goes so far as to claim that it "anticipated by forty years the main trend of the Restoration" (7), and Underwood finds that Mirabell's "convictions . . . are precisely those of the Etheregian hero" (135).⁷⁰ Granted the play does possess "the same air of graceful abandon" as many a Restoration comedy, but seeing in it, as does Nicoll, "the same loss

of all more sober social standards” (170) is misleading; it has not lost these standards, but rather the play rejects them. Attributing too much influence on the early Restoration to this play, however, is problematic, as we have no definite evidence for a performance before January 1668, when Pepys first saw it, though he had “long longed to see [it], it being a famous play” (9: 19), strongly implying earlier Restoration performances.⁷¹ Additionally, Humphrey Moseley was unable to locate a copy of the play in time to print it as a part of the 1647 folio, though he did issue it separately in folio in 1652, apparently “designed to go with, and even to be bound with, the 1647 Folio” (Bowers 228). Essentially, Restoration audiences before the plague most likely saw the play, and early playwrights almost certainly had easy access to it in print.

The central quality of the eponymous wild goose, Mirabell, a creature of “eccentric personal whim” (Lynch 22), is not merely his “more than ordinary gusto and obstreperousness” (Underwood 133), but that he values freedom from any sort of confinement above all; according to Oriana’s brother de Gard, “he was ever / A loose and strong defier of all order” (I.i.146-147). What he wants is variety, fresh sights, “a fresh Mistris, / And a fresh favour” (I.ii.78-79), primarily to be got via travel, for “Till we are travail’d, and live abroad, we are coxcombs” (I.ii.14). His desire is to experience and to spend, not to own; he desires “to be wealthy in pleasure, / As others do in rotten sheep, and pasture” (II.i.157-158). He thus despises and indeed fears marriage, for he thinks of it as a strict abridgement of his liberty—as he informs the nubile Oriana, “I must not lose my liberty, dear Lady, / And like a wanton slave cry for more shackles” (II.i.134-135). Throughout the play he bucks against all forms of cultural restraint, treating “Modesty, and good manners” as “May-games” (III.i.18). In freeing himself from restraint, however, he leaves himself without truths, without a codified set of behaviors and beliefs, and thus must create his own. For example, he proposes to “set up a Chamber-maid that shall out-

shine” Oriana (II.i.207), one, he hopes, who will not be able to shackle him in marriage; he thus wishes to re-order the social system to suit his desires. His lust for liberty also, and perhaps most importantly, extends to the linguistic, as he must design himself a language to justify his urges and behaviors; what they call “Wilde” he himself calls “self-will’d; / When I see cause” (IV.iii.26, 29-30). De Gard further defines him as “A glorious talker, and a Legend maker / of idle tales, and trifles; a depraver / Of [his] own truth” (II.i.200-2), essentially a linguistic demiurge, playing in the creation of his own truths and thus a “depraver” but of “official” ones. As he himself says, “I had rather make my own play” (II.i.3).

The aristocratic parts and the love of liberty and the creative urges and the sense of play Mirabell certainly has; other characteristics, however, of the libertine hero he decidedly lacks. Underwood is apt in noting that he, along with most of Fletcher’s other wild young men, seems “a little like a rowdy undergraduate,” lacking the “studied restraint and ironic self-consciousness” (132) of his later descendents. The earlier proto-libertine heroes, Sir Frederick Frollick and his like, however, do share much of this rambunctiousness. Mirabell does act on principle at least, but his principle is that he has “no faith in women” (III.i.320), more simple misogyny than a well-defined Materialism, and thus he is “innocent of a distinct ideology” (Underwood 132), or rather more correctly, of a viable, defensible one: “I have more to do with my honesty than to fool it, / Or venture it in such leak-barks as women,” and only “as Ass ordain’d for sufferance” would expect to find “constancie, or secresie, from a woman” (II.i.97-98, 107-108) provide a woefully insufficient foundation for a sound and appealing philosophy. He claims to have “enjoy’d [virgins] at [his] will, and left ‘em” (II.i.152), and thinks to have left them none the worse for it, though he makes no effort to improve them, to liberate them from their passive ideology. His reputed conquests largely serve as mere additions to his “Inventory”

(II.i.168) of mistresses, which he literally keeps in a little book. Mirabell at his core admires and desires chastity and traditional, virtuous behavior in fine ladies, but simply does not think them capable of it. He wants to think them capable of such, though, and is all too willing to “burn [his] book and turn a new leafe over” (V.vi.87) when Oriana overmasters him. He is thus not “subjected to the rigors of a stoic conversion” (Underwood 123), but rather merely falls to a will and a wit more powerful than his own, a conclusion far more congenial to libertine notions of the primacy of power than the far more Idealistic tamings of the more morally traditional playwrights from Shakespeare to Shirley to Steele.

He is also, importantly, not the trickster, despite his bent in that direction, but rather is easily cozened by others to satisfy their agendas, not his own. Oriana and her friends fool him twice, gulling him easily, and he only regains his self-possession when they reveal. After the second trick, Mirabell vows to Oriana that if “thou hast a Trick above this: then Ile love thee” (IV.iii.147), and of course she does, for her wit, at least when supplemented by that of her tutor and her brother, clearly exceeds Mirabell’s. Mirabell, though he is certainly the hub around which the play revolves, in fact only overawes with his wit two characters in the play, Pinac and Bellure, who are coxcombs both and whom the witty ladies Lylia-Biancha and Rosalura bat about at will. He, finally, is more conceited than rightfully self-assured, is very weak in judgment, and has but his fancy-wit and his still callow parts on which to rely. The brusqueness with which he expresses his weakly-founded pride, for example chastising Rosalura as “An hypocrite, a wanton, a dissembler” (II.iii.80), leads Lylia-Biancha and Rosalura to escape from his orbit; indeed the former “hate[s] him, / And would be marryed sooner to a Monkey” (III.i.68-69). This pride is also what Oriana and her supporters play on to break him of his wanderlust and of his forceful, if inaccurate, definition of his “self” as a rover, capable of pleasing and

enjoying choice others but accountable to none. As Mirabell admits, “My one fear is, that I must be forced / Against my nature, to conceal my self” (II.i.13-4); this “self” in the later heroes, and to a lesser degree in the early ones, is subservient to the wit which has the power to put in active voice and to shape “nature” in the service of desire. Mirabell has not this power; Sir Frederick and his fellows have it but to a degree. They both, however, point towards those who will.

Monsieur Thomas, like *The Wild-goose Chase*, is “generally regarded as the sole work of John Fletcher” (Gabler 6: 227), but unlike the previous play, it was definitely performed on at least three occasions during the 1661-1662 season, and, though not in the 1647 Folio, was available in a quarto edition, under the latter title, “published to coincide with” (Gabler 6: 423) these performances.⁷² The eponymous hero certainly qualifies as a wild gallant, though he, like Mirabell, is but a homunculus next to his fully mature descendants.⁷³

Monsieur Thomas, his sobriquet having been earned by his having, like Mirabell, freshly returned from his grand tour, is a young man seeking to satisfy the demands of, besides his own urges of course, his mistress, Mary, who desires a tamer husband. To that end she is intent on shaming the vulgarity out of him, contrary to the wishes of his father, Sebastian, who encourages his roaring and hopes his son retains still the wildness he possessed before his travels. Sebastian, who, like the disabled debauchee of Rochester’s poem, desires his son to “fear no lewdness he’s call’d to by Wine” (45), as the Restoration tendency to refer to the play as *Father’s Own Son* implies, would have suggested to the audience the relationship between the elder generation of Cavaliers, such as the first Earl of Rochester, hardened by conflict and exile and more simply robust in their desires, and their soon-to-come-of-age sons, similarly lusty but more sophisticated

in their expression, more reliant on their wit's thrust than their rapier's, yet their fathers' own sons still.

Thomas is unquestionably, as Wilson points out, "a wencher, witty and cynical, . . . a scowrer, . . . a duellist and a hard drinker" (106), certainly more than a mere "naughty boy" possessing a "rather healthy animality" (Under wood 138), and, due to his father's encouragement and training, is more accomplished in these vices than Fletcher's other young and wild gallants. Thomas, however, aspires to be more than merely these things, or to at least be able to pretend to a greater range, as he utters such extravagantly cit-like sentiments as "Nor do I think it any imputation / To let the law persuade me" (II.iii.49-50) despite the fact that he engages in a mad frolic in the city, roaring all over town and causing all manner of chaos to the cits and their forces of order. He justifies these contradictions by claiming that he can "Be mad too when I please: I have the trick on't" (I.ii.91-92), a skill in dissembling that he implies he learned on his travels. Whether he is the master he claims or not is questionable; that he can both serenade his Mary with such chaste and sophisticated sentiments as "*The love of Greece and it tickled him so, / That he devised a way to go*" and feign outrage by asking such rhetorical questions to his tutor in his father's presence as "I touch Authoritie ye rascal? / I violate the Law?", however, yet still gain the former's hand and "love. . . extreamly" and the latter's respect and inheritance (III.iii.88-89, IV.ii.90,91, V.xii.130), suggests that he has some substantial skill in dissimulation, that "conscious pretense" (Holland 50) that he practices both for the sheer joy of it and the greater good. To these qualities he also adds a highly developed penchant for play; indeed, he spends virtually the entire fifth act in a dress, generally being mistaken for his sister Dorothy, which allows him such "rare sport, . . . Sport upon sport" as, among other incidents,

giving his father “a sound knock” when the old man propositions him and “play[ing] revell rowt” in a nunnery (V.ii.23-34, V.i.51, V.x.21).

Thomas, though, falls far short in many qualities necessary to enroll him among the libertine heroes. He is a product of, essentially, his father’s influence mixed with his travels, and from neither has he picked up more than the merest fag-ends of a classical, philosophical education. He, also, though unquestionably a gentleman, with no intentions of engaging in any sort of commerce outside of the matrimonial or gaming or spending kind, is no aristocrat; he is a mere Tom in pursuit of his Mary, as opposed to the Valentine/Cellide/Francis triangle of the high, romantic plot. Most importantly, perhaps, is that, though he is the central character, he is no dominant one; though he does get his rewards in the end, Mary consistently outwits, trumps, and bobs him, and indeed the only character above a servant he himself dominates is Hylas, a gentleman, true, but one whose humour is that he will happily have any woman “from fourscore to fourteen” and “of what degree or calling,” regardless of “defect” (IV.iv.31-33). Though the text is somewhat ambivalent on this point, and indeed this play, overall, is one of Fletcher’s hastier efforts, the inference is that Tom triumphs despite of his libertinish qualities more so than because of them. Despite these significant shortcomings, however, the joy he takes in play and dissembling, and the substantial wit with which he expresses his protean nature, and also the play’s lack of condemnation of such, places him alongside Mirabell in the ranks of Fletcher’s proto-libertine heroes.

Though both of the previous plays were played and known in the Restoration, *The Scornful Lady*, which, though again not in the 1647 folio, did exist in at least seven quarto editions, “with two pirated ones having appeared in and around the year 1661” (Hoy 2: 452), is

another matter entirely, for it was the “comedy,” if not the play, “by Beaumont and Fletcher which was undoubtedly most popular in the Restoration” (Wilson 76). At least six specific performances predate the hiatus of the theaters in 1665-6, five attended by Pepys, and many after; even Charles II himself, before the closing of the theaters, at age eleven, had requested a command performance of this play.⁷⁴

Though neither of the brothers Loveless alone quite qualifies as a proto-libertine hero, the two, when taken together, share every bit as much with Sir Frederick as does Mirabell or Thomas. Young Loveless, the prodigal, younger son, thinks himself a lord of misrule, entirely generous and devoted to pleasure and to the moment: as for the three hundred pounds his brother leaves him as an allowance while he is pretending to travel, Young Loveless vows “wee’l have it all in drinke, let meate and lodging goe, th’are transitory, and shew men meerey mortall: then wee’l have wenches, every one his wench, and every weeke a fresh one: weele keep no powderd fleshe: all these wee have by warrant under the Title of things necessarie. Heere upon this place I ground it: the obedience of my people, and all necessaries” (I.ii.113-119).⁷⁵ His good nature is never in question, yet still, when his poet friend offers to write Young Loveless’s life, he plans to make him “equal with *Nero* or *Caligula*” (II.iii.110-111). Here the poet strips the patina of cruelty from the characters of these emperors, leaving them but, according to his captain friend, “two roring boyes of *Rome* that made all split” (II.iii.113). Young Loveless calls these companions of his “the Morrals of the age, the vertues, Men made of Gold” (I.ii.76-77), subverting official language and dragging it down to the lower register, as he does with his brother’s “Pagan steward,” vowing to “convert” him to a happier faith (I.ii.55).

His elder brother is at first a model of thrift and faithfulness, an idealized young cit; he is driven towards the lusts of the flesh, however, by the titular and never named Lady, leaving him,

at the end, “almost as wilde as” his brother (V.iv.121). The Elder Loveless initiates all the play’s disguises, his own and that of the suitor Welford in his attempt to revenge himself on his scornful beloved. More important, though, is the extraordinarily inventive range of responses her steady scorn drags out of him. Traditional courting not having the desired effect, he nearly loses all control of himself; he first tries his brother’s style of mirth with the lady, but she trumps him there. He then switches to railing, and with this, he strikes home, but she does not show it; she swoons, and he whines, and she shuns, and she mocks.⁷⁶ He is able to win her only by dissimulation, by first showing a facile, protean mind, and then employing it to make her jealous through disguising Welford as his new mistress, thus overreaching her and taking his own wit, and thus his own fate, in hand. Thus fancy-wit flourishes as feeling fails, a process entirely comprehensible and amenable to and admired by the cultured and controlled libertine hero.

The brothers, though, do both fall lamentably short on several counts. Young Loveless has all of the desires, and is fully cognizant of them, but possesses a very limited wit; that he is most at home with captains, travelers, tobacco-men and “a forlorne hope of Poets” (I.ii.52) stands to reason, considering that he does not even know who “*Nero* or *Caligula*” is. Also, though he enjoys his wenches, he does so not so much out of principle, and he does marry directly when presented the opportunity, but then in his defense he is penniless and she a wealthy widow. His elder brother possesses far too little self-control, leading him to his fatal flaw, unflinching constancy, and though he does recognize feminine desire, he has not the wherewithal to satisfy it, as he laments “Would I had bin a carter, / or a Coachman, / I had done the deed ere this time” (V.i.19-20).⁷⁷ These brothers together though, still, possess a significant portion of proto-libertinism; they are not “different stages of his evolution” (Wilson 77), but rather two sides of the Fletcherian wild gallant’s character, the younger extravagant and charming and

cognizant and in control of his desires, but deplorably ignorant, and the elder possessing substantial fancy-wit but little control over it. Thus, weeding out the tamer or weaker characteristics of each leaves another Thomas or Mirabell, both witty and wild, another mine of materials from which to forge the early Restoration proto-libertine hero.

The next of these popular and influential comedies, *The Chances*, entirely the work of Fletcher, was both readily available and played in the early Restoration; it was included in the 1647 folio, and it was performed at least three times and likely more in 1660-1661, and almost surely remained a stock play in the repertoire until the debut of the Duke of Buckingham's revision. This alteration debuted in February, 1667 at the latest, though "probably" this "revision was on the stage by the spring or summer of 1664" (Hume and Love 1: 11), contemporaneous with *The Comical Revenge*. That Buckingham chose to alter this particular play only reinforces the play's popularity and influence in court circles, from at least the margins of which the new generation of Restoration playwrights were about to spring.

Don John, introduced as an admitted whoremaster and devotee of *gross* sensuality who credits himself for "the dire massacre of a million / Of Maiden-heads" (I.v.18-19), is *The Chances'* leading man and, along with Mirabell, Monsieur Thomas, and the Brothers Loveless, another of Fletcher's primary proto-libertine heroes, and likely the most mature of them all.⁷⁸ Don John clearly defines for the audience the masculine ideal he hopes to represent: he wants to be known as "A handsome man, a wholesome man, a tough man, / A liberal man, a likely man," and a man who seeks and is capable of delivering a "perpetuitie of pleasures" (II.iii.85-86, 89). In this he makes both heterosexual and homosocial (but not homosexual or heterosocial) appeals, hoping to be attractive to all, free of venereal disease for the ladies, and able to hold his own in a fight amongst the men, as well as a proper gentleman, generous and with a fine future ahead of

him on account of his parts, and a giver of pleasure as much as a receiver. His awareness of and desire to perpetuate his aristocratic stature he emphasizes by his vow never to be “An honest morall man; ‘tis for a Constable” (II.iii.84); his “morality,” particularly with regard to sexuality, is above the city’s conceptions of honesty by being below, down amongst the material of life, as he obeys his desires and not the codes and laws of the official world.

His code cleaves clearly along class lines. The “Honour” to which he does cling is that of loyalty to his equals and of primacy amongst the pack, his homosocial *virtu*; he values a reputation for being “trusty, / And valiant” (II.iii.96-97), which he demonstrates early in the play when he defends the Duke, whose identity he is unaware of, upon finding him in martial distress. This *virtu* extends to the ladies of his class as well; he is perfectly willing to challenge the Duke for having “whord [the] sister,” Constantia, of a fellow gentleman, one Petruchio (III.iv.41). Even though he would prefer that she, the play’s only desirable lady, be “not honest” (II.iii.22) so he might have some opportunity to converse with and perhaps even to enjoy her, when he finds she is “honest,” and married to the Duke no less, his behavior towards her enters the realm governed by aristocratic honor, and he no longer attempts to suborn her vertue in either word or deed. His own *virtu* overrides his lusts and thus his incipient Materialistic principles, as Constantia, both by being the sister to and the wife of an aristocrat, becomes no longer a potential object of desire for him. What matters most to him is that he steer “cleere of all dishonour, / Or practice that may taint my reputation” (IV.i.42-43).

As “Honour” applies to the lower orders, however, his attitude is very different, at least in regard to the women, for he encounters no men outside of his own and his companions’ service. His behavior to his Landlady has led her to regard him as “the arrantest *Jack* in all this City, / . . .the Devill himselfe, the Dog-dayes, / The most incomprehensible whore-master” for whom

“Twenty a night is nothing”; in her eyes, “Whose chastity he chops upon, he cares not. / He flies at all” (III.iii.31, 35-37, 45-46). She, however, due both to her hypocritical leanings and her own barely suppressed desire for his person, wants to blacken his character to Constantia; she has also only witnessed his dealings with common women. With them, though, she is not far from the truth, as regards his desires and attitudes at least. When Don John overhears the second Constantia, labeled “Whore,” in her speech tags, in a tavern singing a song in which she “spake of liberty, and free enjoying / The happy end of pleasure,” he is decidedly intrigued, even more so when she admits “I am a whore indeed sir,” and but “A plaine whore, / If you please to imploy me” (IV.iii.24-25, 78, 80-81).⁷⁹ He would please to do so, for he finds her “A handsome whore, . . . a stout whore, . . . a quick ey’d whore, that’s wild-fire,” and he is all for “such stirring ware” (IV.iii.135-7), though he never gets the opportunity. Don John is “not honest, nor” does he “desire to be” (II.iii.51) in the eyes of cits, or when a wench is involved. He rather desires to be admired for his *virtu* by his peers; as for being thought “A modest gentleman!” though, “Hang up your Eunuch honour,” for in it lies no “wit” (II.iii.96, 98).

Don John’s libertinism is not quite the stuff of principle, as it extends little beyond whoremastery and makes no incursions into the territory of his own class. He does, however, complement his openly carnal desires with other libertinish qualities; he demonstrates his sense of play by playing the devil to mock the overly sanguine Antonio, and cannot resist an opportunity for Puritan-mocking, as he conjures up an image of making devils “eate a bawling Puritan, / Whose sanctified zeale shall rumble like an Earthquake” (V.ii.7-8). Most importantly, though, he values reason and observation over superstition, basing his belief on the tangible. He has no respect for the efficacy of the summoning of spirits, for, speaking of the devil, if “all the Conjurers in Christendome, / With all their spells, and vertues call upon him, / And I but thinke

upon a wench, and follow it, / He shall be sooner mine than theirs; where's vertue?" (V.ii.25-28). On one level, he might here be simply implying women are the quickest path to the devil, that he will sooner get the devil to be his by lascivious thoughts than by magical arts, "vertue," in this case connoting but "effectiveness," or "power." Reading "She" for "He," however, and thus the purpose of the conjuring as the seduction of women, makes as much or more sense, rendering his own direct approach the dominant one and also implying the non-existence of "vertue," in a wench at least, the "nothing" to which seventeenth-century aristocratic comedy often reduced feminine honor. Regardless, Don John clearly trusts far more in what he himself can see and hear and feel than in that which he must trust by belief in custom. Though he expresses his philosophy almost entirely through his actions, and his lusty Materialism lacks applicability to his own class, Don John does contribute much to the formation of the proto-libertine hero through the fact that he himself is a gentleman entire and his notions are not controverted by his peers. He expresses atheism in love matters, at least with regard to all women beneath his station, as do most all proto-libertine heroes, but he extends his empirical reliance on his senses so far as to dismiss the demonic realm, a bold move more characteristic of the Restoration than his own more demon-haunted time.

Wit without Money, another solo play of Fletcher's, which was, along with *A King and no King*, one of the most frequently performed plays during the Interregnum, tends to be at best slighted, and usually ignored, in discussions of the genesis of the Restoration libertine hero due to its hero's lack of sexual lusts.⁸⁰ It was one of the most popular plays during the early years of the Restoration, however, as it appears on the Red Bull list, was the second play acted at the Cockpit by the briefly united company in October of 1660, and was staged at the Middle Temple

and by the King's at the Red Bull the next month. That it was the first play, in February 1672, presented by King's Company "after the Burning" (Langbaine 216) of their theater at Bridges Street, with the King in attendance and a new Dryden prologue, suggests that it held an almost iconic status on the early stage, though no definite record exists of a performance after this date.

The lead, Vallentine, "play'd by that compleat Actor Major *Mohun*" (Langbaine 216), unlike Fletcher's more callow wild gallants, is about far more than mere "buoyant and wayward self expression," but focuses rather more on an intellectual and "conscious self-discipline" that Lynch believes Fletcher's heroes never to possess (24). Vallentine, being the best-favored and by far the wittiest man in the play, the possessor of a "manly handsome bluntnesse" that leaves women "sicke ath *Valentine*" and the man who "talkes the best they say, and yet the maddest" (III.ii.195, 214, III.iv.5), is closer to an exemplary character than are Fletcher's other wild gallants. Vallentine, raised in the country, is clearly superior to his brother Francisco, but a dollop of whose moderate earnestness, picked up during this latter's childhood spent with his father's second, city wife "amongst the mist of small beere Brue-houses" in the city (V.ii.40), Vallentine needs to be complete. He is introduced as a near-humour, an elder brother who has nought but scorn for wealth, who "wants, and which is worse, / Takes a delight in doing so"; he cares for "Wit and carriage" rather than "state, or means," doubtless an inspiring quality to an audience of young men awaiting their inheritance, thus rendering him, in the eyes of his cit of a maternal uncle and his "Merchant" friend, "so harsh, and strange" (I.i.5-6, 19-20, V.ii.88). Desiring above all freedom to play, to create, Vallentine dislikes not wealth so much as the dull responsibility estate management entails; a landlord's "minde enclosed, nothing lies open nobly" (I.i.171), whereas he seeks "the way of nature, / A manly love, community to all / That are deservers" (I.i.171, 189-191). He may somewhat arbitrarily break from the expectations of

the role is supposed to fill, but he does so on no mere whim, instead powerfully and reasonably justifying his rebellion.

He has judgment to his wit, and principle, though his belief in freedom tallies not well with his observation, leading to a satirist's misanthropy, as he reduces most men to three types of fools: "An Innocent, a Knave foole, a foole politicke" (II.ii.14). This satirical pride is buffeted, though he retains his pride and principle even at his ebb, refusing to grovel to even "the tartest tit in Christendome" (IV.iii.19), and triumphs without having to compromise. He vows that, as to the "wind-suckers" who betrayed him, he will "dogge um, / And double dog um," and that he does (IV.v.83, IV.iii.4-5). Where his judgment is fallacious, however, is in his misogyny.

Women lead him to rail on sense, for "What doe we get by women, but our senses, / Which is the rankest part about us," and he thus regards it "a monstrous thing to marry at all, / Especially as now tis made" (II.ii.49-50, 45). He thinks himself infinitely superior to them as a creative force, his initial belief being that women are but bear cubs who can be "Lickt over" to whatever "forme" he pleases and that "Theres a vertuous spell, in that word nothing"(I.i.33, II.ii.89, 92). This opinion, of course, needs but a witty woman to overturn it, and the widow Lady Hartwell is more than up for this task. Thus he is by no means the example of "dramatic instability" that Underwood claims (150); he is conflicted, true, but only in the manner that a complex character who attempts to work out for himself his own way must necessarily be.

The widow begins to win him by outrailing him, by accusing men of being "no Whoremasters; alas no Gentlemen" for fear, and "envious, / False, covetous, vaine glorious, irreligious, / Drunken, revengefull, giddie-eyed, like Parrats, / Eaters of others honours" to boot (III.ii.136, 145-148), a tirade that suits his own observations and which he would be hard-pressed to match. Though he finds her "as goode a woman, / As any Lord of them all can lay his legge

over,” a woman “able to redeem an age of women” (III.ii.136, 180), he is not yet tamed. He is vulnerable, though, and his old falconer, Lance, softens him further by preaching the value of the senses, for the widow “is flesh, blood, and marrow, / Young as her purpose, and soft as pitty; / No Monument to worship, but a mould / To make men in” (IV.iv.143-146). Despite all this, and various tricks, he only mildly compromises, adding but some acknowledgement of the validity of sensuality and of women’s wit. He never truly falls; despite the widow’s vow that she “shall rocke” him, and significantly mollified as he is by sack, the farthest he will go is to proclaim that “In pitty, and in spite Ile marry thee, / Not a word more, and I may be brought to love thee” (V.iv.49, 74). The play thus, besides being crucial to the gay couple tradition, though not acknowledged as such, justifies, as Vallentine is not converted, many of his beliefs, and these beliefs, so far as property and play and homosocial relations and, most importantly, the primacy of freedom go, place him squarely and importantly, despite his want of whoremastery, at the fore of Fletcher’s proto-libertine heroes. Far from being a type, Vallentine is as complex a character as *A King and no King*’s Arbaces, a man of significant standing and parts working out a new way of living for himself, and this new way resembles in as many aspects as any pre-Restoration play the path of the libertine hero.

Though these five plays present the most clearly proto-libertine characters in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon, virtually every quality possessed by Sir Frederick and the early Restoration proto-libertine heroes one character or another expresses in the eighteen of other plays of Fletcher’s presented on the Restoration stage before 1666. Fletcher’s lead characters are almost invariably gentlemen, amenable to debauchery and sexual desire, and devotees of both masculine and feminine wit. These plays feature many a generous gallant, and many gentlemen

who are flexible enough with their identities to disguise them joyously. Social and linguistic diving, intentional adoption of mores and expressions of the lower orders, and contempt for legal and moral strictures, though not quite as prominent, flit through these plays as well.

Though Fletcher's non-tragic plays almost all end in chaste weddings for the aristocratic characters, many bits of pleasant bawdry pop up along the way, for example when Aminta in *The Maid in the Mill*, after a duel breaks out in her presence, is "sure their swords were between [her] leggs" (I.i.85). Insignificant courtiers have much to add in defense of sexual desire, as Granpree in *Rollo, Duke of Normandy; or, The Bloody Brother* imagines a tribunal in which "Lechery, our common friend" and "bawdry in a French-hood" decide that "after twelve / Virginitie shall be carted," a suggestion that his friend Verdun finds "Excellent!" (I.i.46-51), and an anonymous gentleman in *The Humorous Lieutenant* curses "The enemie to our age, chastitie" (IV.i.15). King Antigonus in this same play, described in the *dramatis personae* as "*an old Man with young desires,*" finds the chaste Celia attractive more than anything for her wit: "Now by my crowne a deinte wench, a sharpe wench, / And of a matchlesse spirit: how she Jeer'd 'em! / How carelesly she scoff'd 'em!" (III.iv.81-3). Finally Jaime and Leandro, in *The Spanish Curate*, joyfully adopt a number of disguises and spend a great deal in the process of winning their women.

Fletcher & Massinger's *Beggar's Bush*, provides perhaps the most interesting take on class in the Fletcher canon.⁸¹ In this play the aristocrats, young and old, entangle their affairs with a band Gypsies, through whose agency they resolve their quarrels and return both triumphant and wise. These outsiders sum up their basic beliefs in song: "To beg on the way, to rob all thou meetes; / To steale from the hedge, both the shirt and the sheetes: / And lye with thy wench in the straw till she twang, / let the constable, Iustice, and Divell go hang" (III.iii.152-5).

These Gypsies embody a primitivist philosophical trend much in line with libertine thought. In their distaste for gain by labor and derision for gain by trade, their natural desire, and their contempt for moral “law,” both in its state and church arms, they mirror on the low end what the libertine aristocrats hope to accomplish, for themselves at least, on the high.

Critics who have examined Fletcher’s *oeuvre* in the light of his comic leads’ relationship to the Restoration libertine hero rarely if ever get beyond Mirabell and Monsieur Thomas, and thus assume that Fletcher presents nothing but a “wild gallant,” a lusty and winning but foolish young spark who is little more than a “rowdy undergraduate.” The Brothers Loveless, Don John, and especially Vallentine, however, add to this callow pair every other one of the individual ingredients that constitute the libertine hero (listed in the *Dissertationis Personae*). They never quite coalesce in any single figure, though, and no one of them, although all possess significant appeal, is an exemplary character, as every one of them possesses a significant flaw, and that flaw tends to be a lack of polish or a lack of self-control and self-awareness. They charm, but they do not dominate, although they do provide every piece necessary for the creation of those who will.

Fletcher’s wilder, wittier comic heroes, however, are not the only wild gallants playwrights such as Etherege had at hand. Several characters in Caroline plays, the products of a period in which values were by no means universally “known and accepted” (Holland 224), nor the age of “Caroline melancholy” (Burns 23), but rather an, at times, nervously joyous age in which they were very much in vivacious conflict and in flux even within court circles, confirm and occasionally even enhance the proto-libertine strain of the Fletcherian wild geese. Fletcher, granted, was far more respected, nay revered under the reigns of both Charleses than any

Renaissance playwright who followed him, and Fletcher's plays were staged more often than those of any other, so his wild gallants exerted a more profound influence than those of any of the Carolines. Still, though rarely mentioned in the criticism of the time (or of any time since, for that matter), James Shirley's plays in particular were, after Fletcher's, the most popular and vital and immediate precursors of the comedies featuring the proto- libertine heroes.

Scene IV: The Carolines - Shirley, Suckling, Killigrew and Davenant

At least eight of the plays of James Shirley, the most consistently popular playwright of that most maligned of periods, the Caroline, were definitely presented in the formative period before the plague.⁸² By this measure, Shirley's popularity equaled Shakespeare's and trailed only Fletcher's; though, granted, their runs tended to be short, his plays were significantly more than mere "stop-gaps in the theatrical emptiness of the early years" (Wilson, *Influence* 4). Though rarely mentioned in the same breath with the triumvirate of Fletcher, Jonson, and Shakespeare, "he was the chief of the Second-rate Poets" to Langbaine, and "some" at least regarded him as "equal to *Fletcher* himself" (474), whom he resembled in being not quite a courtier, but certainly "a gentleman well received and at home in court circles" (Lynch 36). By the 1690s, however, his reputation had plummeted, his plays disappeared from the boards. He came to be regarded, echoing Dryden from "MacFlecknoe," as but one of "the indifferent Poets" along with "*Heywood &c.*" (Gildon 131), with whom he shared but copiousness, to some degree due to "the heavy middle-class moralism that mars certain of the author's plays," though this explanation seems insufficient (Sorelius 84). Regardless, Langbaine is closer to the truth than most later judges, for Shirley was by no means a decadent playwright, but rather a highly skilled

craftsman, consistently witty in a variety of genres. He was an also essential figure in the development of, particularly, the “true comedy of manners” (Lynch 37) fitting as he was the final principal playwright for the King’s Men at the Blackfriars, succeeding Massinger, who had collaborated extensively with Fletcher, upon his death of the plague in 1625.⁸³ Montague Summers is not much overstating the case when he praises “the delicate and graceful comedies, the roseate tragi-comedies of Shirley’s sweet fertility” (Introduction to *Restoration Comedies* xiii), and that Shirley’s plays in all genres should be staples of the new theaters is no surprise, as the Restoration stage picked up where it had left off eighteen years previous, with many of the same actors, much the same repertoire, a similarly aristocratic audience, and Killigrew and Davenant.⁸⁴

Critics tend to cite, at most, Shirley’s *The Lady of Pleasure*, and, to a lesser degree *The Witty Fair One* and *Hyde Park*, as the plays of his most amenable to a Restoration audience and most prescient of and influential on later developments in high comedy. No evidence whatsoever exists, however, of the first of these being played, so that it “embodies more fully the epicurean mode than any work since *Epicoene*” (Underwood 134), even if true, makes little difference to the Restoration stage. The second appears only on one of Downes’s general lists, and the last did not appear until 1668. Granted, Restoration dramatists certainly mined many an unperformed old play for plot elements, but to borrow character types or modes of thought and expression from unstaged plays counters the way the theater, perhaps more than any other genre, evolves, building success on success in response to audience reaction. Granted these plays were all available in print to neophyte authors seeking models, but unperformed plays would be,

logically, the last to which they would turn when seeking to define an audience-pleasing subject matter and ideology.

Shirley's plays, in which "virtue usually triumphs" (Krutch 12), and resoundingly at that, which end with "an idealistic reimposition of order, a return to unquestionable rules" (Burns 2), but not always, and not for every character, generally promulgate a decidedly romantic and Idealistic view of the world, and his characters, and his main-plot heroes in particular, are largely devoid of material lusts (though they still managed to offend Victorian critics consistently). They are, however, notably class-conscious, identifying with the "people of leisure" (Lynch 36) and dismissive of, if not downright hostile to, the commercial classes, and thus aligned with the copious cit-mocking prevalent in the Restoration. For example, Justice Landby in *The Wedding*, no peer himself, though obviously landed, would "sooner match [his daughter] with an Ethiope / Than give consent she should disgrace our blood," and the "generous thoughts / She suck'd from her dead mother," than marry the "profitable vermin" Rawbone, a miserly usurer (I.iii.26-7, 30-31, 21). Modest Shirley was, though, and frequently moralistic, particularly in his high plots, in which his characters frequently "pursue with gravity a program for their soul's salvation" in "the old Elizabethan tradition" (Lynch 39). His underplot characters, however, are often a different matter, uttering and acting on libertine sentiments, if not full-fledged philosophy. Though they rest on weak foundations, and thus either convert wholeheartedly to the conservative, traditional vision of virtue, as Shirley fairly consistently, at least in the fifth act, "frankly condemn[s] . . . the immoralities of fashionable gallantry" (Lynch 215) in "a ritualistic cleansing of the body social" (Underwood 155), or remain on the fringes of aristocratic society, they do still inject the anti-Idealist sentiments that were a decided, though not dominant, element of Caroline court and town culture.

Several of Shirley's characters who did unquestionably appear on the Restoration stage, notably Wilding and Hazard in *The Gamester*, Luys in *The Brothers*, and Lodwick in *The Grateful Servant*, bear a close resemblance to Fletcher's wilder young men, and do possess some glimmers of "the new spirit of cynical *abandon* and immorality" (Krutch 12), and thus prefigure the proto-libertine heroes of the early Restoration. No definite evidence exists, however, that the first pair appeared on the Restoration stage before 1670. Luys, the protagonist of the underplot in *The Brothers*,⁸⁵ though, definitely appeared, strutting across the Restoration stage at least twice in 1661-3 (Van Lennep 38, 52), and the play was printed by the aristocrat-friendly Moseley, in 1652, and again in 1653's *Six New Playes*. Though it definitely appeared in early 1669, evidence for *The Grateful Servant*'s early staging is less certain; the only evidence extant is its appearance on a list of plays attended by one Edward Browne (Van Lennep 35-36) of somewhat uncertain date. All the rest of the plays he claims to have seen, however, were performed in 1662 or 1663, so a staging seems far more than likely.⁸⁶ The play, at least, was certainly available in two early editions (1630 & 1637) and one later one, undated but almost certainly printed shortly after the Restoration, which also strongly suggests a performance in the early 1660s.

Luys in *The Brothers* is perhaps the most striking of Shirley's proto-libertines. Luys's father, Don Carlos, introduces him to the audience as a wild one whom he hopes has reformed, and Luys attempts to keep up this appearance, but soon reveals his "angry heat of blood" in his inability to contain his distaste for superannuated ladies; he claims to be "strangely alter'd / From the wild garb, and can discourse most gravely" on any subject but "old and toothless women" (I.p.197). Wild he still is, as he does desire but to "pay some scores, / Maintain [his]

negro, and a brace of whores,” finds “There is no wit in wiving; give me a whore,” and he likewise has no desire to be matched with “a simpering piece of honesty” (II.p.221, III.ii.p.232-233). He too is not controlling, and clings not to familial honour, as he tells his sister Jacinta to “Love where you please yourself” (II.p.208). He takes this rather too far, however, for he is entirely willing to pimp her, and, regarding her potential rape by Don Alberto, an otherwise good match, he tells this Don that she is “no sister of [his] if she cry out / For such a business; she has more wit” (IV.ii.p.244), “wit” thus, for him, signifying largely an ability to manipulate one’s reputation. Control, indeed, is his weak point, as he misinterprets “wit” in order to cover his lack of control of his self and of others, and he is too purely greedy and lacks true wit or generosity (though he does at least say “Hang money!” [V.iii.p.258] to his father, albeit in his cups). He is, however, a gentleman, and thus one of the fold, if a troublesome one. Luys too, importantly, and this fate is rare for Shirley’s wilder characters, does not convert or even significantly repent, and he is in no wise punished, meeting with a moderately happy end; he may not get his widow, but he does attain a place in Don Pedro’s, the elder debauchee’s, household, where he “shalt never want” (V.iii.p.271) for a wench. He has the urges, and the boldness to proclaim them to his peers, and nearly the parts; all he lacks is the control and a philosophical base upon which to justify his desires and behaviors, leaving him but an “engaging and irrepressible young scapegrace” (Nason 338), though one possessing much of the libertine hero in embryo, particularly in his philosophy and his vibrant love of variety.⁸⁷

Lodwick in *The Grateful Servant* has much of the polish that Luys wants, though he lacks his compatriot’s more positive ending and must suffer for his rebellion from virtue. He is a distinct oddity among those toying with libertinism in any sort of a positive way, being of a very

high rank, in his case the younger brother to the Duke of Savoy, and married as well, albeit to a bride none of his own choosing; these facts alone, by seventeenth-century dramatic logic, doom him to a resounding conversion to virtue. Shirley does allow Lodwick, however, a very good run before his taming, and his repentance being somewhat too hasty and thus ringing rather false, his sensuous Materialism retains some lambency even after his apostasy.

Lodwick clearly labels and defines himself in his first speech as “No stoic, yet I thank my stars I have / A power o’r my affection,” and thus, unlike his brother the Duke, love shall not “melt [him] into Sonnets” (I.i.p.7). He has freed himself from haunting by “Aristotle’s ghost”, representing official, Idealistic principles and codes of conduct, and his rebellion is thus more mature and considered than that of Fletcher’s wild gallants. He thinks himself to “have more wit” (I.i.p.8) than his brother because of this self-control, though they remain on good terms. His ideal is to head a Rabelaisian, Restorationesque “court of flourishing pleasure, where delight, in all her shapes, and studied varieties, every minute courts the soul to actuate her chief felicity” (II.i.p.36), the sort of statement that might edge him into the type of the ambitious villain, but he is far too good natured, too honest, and his conversation far too brisk for him to turn Machiavel. Indeed his amorality has far more appeal than his wife Astella’s somber, suffering virtue; though he reminds her that “the proudest heart is but flesh,” she has nothing more to offer in return than an almost masochistic devotion to suffering, for to her, “if it be grief ‘tis welcome” (IV.i.p.64). Lodwick espouses the basic tenets of a joyous libertinism, which in an official, romantic, Christian-humanist world of frequent punishments and but rare rewards, simply cannot stand.

The striking plot leading to his conversion in III.iv begins with his old governor Grimundo attempting to win his trust by claiming to be “at heart one of your own sect, an epicure” (p.56), which system he proceeds to outline in some detail, in more detail, in fact, than

ever before on the English stage. This faux-confession from his Stoical old tutor flabbergasts Lodwick, who asks “You were a christian; how came you to be converted?” (p.56), implying an absolute bifurcation between Christianity and Epicureanism, more Shirley’s than Lodwick’s, which, true or not, was rarely emphasized by devotees of Materialism, who did, after all, have to make their way in the world. Grimundo presents his own, sexually-focused version of Epicureanism in the same tone in which Irenaeus presented the Gnostics, sensationalizing and misreading and over-representing the parts with which his own creed differs. He feigns to spurn “the foolish world, that holds voluptuousness a crime, which you and I, and every wise man, knows, to be the only happiness in life, and the inheritance we are born to” (p.57), an interpretation far too doctrinaire and absolute, and he hypocritically espouses hypocrisy, that “delicate white devil” (p.58). His over-the-top and inappropriately connoted claim, that “lechery is the monarch of delight,” and that he therefore has made himself “the greatest whoremaster in the dukedom” (p.58), especially allows Lodowick to pierce his “toothless satire,” his “mock-ballad” (p.60), though Grimundo nevertheless persuades Lodwick to attend the tryst with a beautiful woman that is the next part of his plot. A more positively connoted, less absolute, and less extravagant expression of Epicureanism by the old tutor would be far more persuasive; his presentation of the philosophy, however, is more truthful to the old man’s character, and reveals more clearly the vein of weakness in Lodwick’s. More importantly, this exposition convincingly demonstrates both that such ideas, regarded positively, were current in Caroline aristocratic circles, and that Shirley, consistent with the ideology he promulgates in his other plays, rejects their fundamental validity, though he does sympathize with them somewhat. A simple reversal of the spin and tone of most of these notions and they could be uttered by any of the libertine heroes of the high Restoration.

Lodwick's central flaw is, besides living in a world in which his philosophy is not the dominant one and thus cannot be allowed to stand, his fear of hell, a subject that he, sensibly enough, tries not to think on, as doing so "always makes [him] melancholy" (II.i.p.36). He does plan to do so eventually, but then he reasons "I am now in the spring of my life, winter will come on fast enough; when I am old, I will be as methodical an hypocrite, as any pair of Lawn Sleeves in Savoy" (II.i.p.36). Unfortunately, Grimundo's plot will not give him that leisure, and his wish that Grimundo could just "enjoy [his] religion" (II.i.p.38) he makes in vain, for Grimundo's joy, if it can be termed such, lies in imposing his Stoical creed on others.

Lodwick then accedes to Grimundo's false pandering and agrees to meet an Eve in a garden, who, after some masquing, reveals herself as "the devil" (IV.v.p.76) (actually Grimundo's wife Belinda); Lodwick, to his shame, falls for the plot far too readily as his desire turns to fear. Though he does not run to priestcraft, as even in his greatest devil-distress, he still cannot "abide such melanchollie people" (IV.v.p.80), his conversion from this point on is assured: he will now "lie with [his] own wife" and "be honest, spight of" the supposed devil and her minister (V.ii.p.92). Before this reconciliation of sorts, however, Lodwick demonstrates the fruits of his new character. He had asked his companion Piero to seduce his wife so as to allow him to obtain a divorce, which attempt of course fails, as Astella is entirely sheathed in Idealistic, Romance logic and thus deaf to Piero's Materialistic arguments. Now, the reclaimed Lodwick wants to fight Piero for his claiming to have done but what the old Lodwick requested him to do, though he desists when he learns that his friend too has converted. Piero attributes his failure to seduce her not to his "hope of heaven / Which I had almost forfeited," but rather to his notion that "she / Relieved me with her vertue" (V.i.p.86). This fear of eternal and irrevocable damnation for one act of coerced adultery, and this recourse to deviltry, upon which Shadwell

would later rely in *The Libertine*, is Shirley's means to disprove Lodwick's Epicurean philosophy. Though, granted, this logic was doubtless more persuasive to a culture in which fear of the devil and his minions was pervasive, this argument is, by most any standard, a weak one, an appeal to faith in tradition and not at all to reason in an age and for a class that increasingly valued the latter. Shirley further weakens the validity of Lodwick's repentance by making his post-conversion Lodwick a far less amiable character, paving the way for the Restoration libertine hero to disassociate sex outside of the strictest legal bonds, and indeed sensuality in general, from the demonic.⁸⁸

Lodwick thus prefigures the libertine hero, that joyous devotee of Epicurus, in most all but his weakness, his superstition, and the end he comes to because of it, though his expression of his philosophy is perforce limited as he is enmeshed in a relatively earnest, romantic plot (and marriage) constructed by an author whose dominant interests lay not in the promotion of libertinism.

Lodwick is at least, however, the well-developed creation of a practiced playwright; the characters of most other Caroline playwrights are not so lucky. Character-drawing and development and plotting are far from Sir John Suckling's greatest gifts, and, writing for an audience if anything better educated than Shirley's but also deeply involved in the court of Queen Henrietta Maria, his milieu necessarily became a romance-world of convoluted plots and emphasis on fine, high discourse. Though his characters have nowhere near the fullness of Fletcher's and Shirley's proto-libertine heroes, Suckling's plays, featuring at least "the ideal conversation of gentlemen and the sureness of his comic touch" (Squier 95), do express much of the same philosophy.

Though primarily known, and rightly so, as perhaps the most talented but certainly the most cavalier of the Cavalier poets, a man who lived fast and died young yet still could “think as coolly, and Reason as justly, as Men of more Years, and less Fire” (Jacob 253), Sir John Suckling’s three finished “eccentric and wayward plays” (Lynch 43), *Aglaura*, *The Goblins*, and *Brennoralt; or, The Discontented Colonel*, appeared on the early Restoration stage, the first and last before 1664 and the middle one in 1667.⁸⁹ Granted these plays are rambling, poorly constructed affairs, as were most of the French romance-based plays written to please Henrietta Maria’s court, but their witty, graceful, metaphorical style and their strains of both the high heroic and Platonick and of proto-libertinism in conflict with them assured them a measure of popularity as long as the old Caroline aristocracy still frequented the playhouses. Though these plays feature little in the way of character development and somewhat sketchy character definition, they do trot out a rapid cavalcade of plot twists and tumble out a torrent of wit. Though “Suckling’s polite allegiance to the new code” of Platonick love, so pervasive in Henrietta Maria’s court, “is amply demonstrated” (Lynch 71) in his plays, nearly as prominent is his direct, visceral, and reasonable reaction to this “woman-devised regimen of unclimax’d dallying” (Harbage, *Davenant* 57).⁹⁰ Effusive *bons mots*, couched in an ornate, balanced, and highly wrought style, gush from the mouths of all Suckling’s characters, and, alongside traditional, honorable, ultra-Idealistic sentiments, a few of these characters reveal a joyful, Materialistic, flippant philosophy very much congenial to the later libertines.⁹¹

These pearls of wit and, particularly, the debates on the merits of the Platonick ideal, the ladies who loved it and the gentlemen who grudgingly tolerated it, albeit rather one-sided in the comedy, held a significant appeal to a court looking to reconnect with its past. The aristocracy largely attempted to pick up at the Restoration where it had left off before the Civil War, and it

did so by renewing the debate over the merits of Platonick love that, beginning in the mid 1630s, continued well into the 1660s. This system, as it, and “court authority, became suddenly annulled” (Lynch 80) perhaps ten years after its rise, had not had time sufficient to implode on its own; the 1660s thus completed this interrupted process.⁹² That the court would revert initially to the culture of eighteen years earlier comes as no surprise, as Charles II, and indeed the royalists in general, as much as they wanted to revel in their triumph, also wanted to efface the Commonwealth, and one way of doing so was to replay and then further explore the Materialist/Idealist bifurcation in the court of Charles I.⁹³

Though some, and particularly many of the ladies around whom it centered, seem to have managed to lose themselves in this baroque, otherworldly system of flirtation, others, almost from its first importation, clearly saw it as entirely a game in which to lose, to fall from the empyrean to earthly consummation, was to win. The “male of the predatory sort” (Smith 16), which likely encompassed most all of the young male courtiers, certainly seems to have regarded this neo-Platonism cynically, defending his objections largely by appeals to common sense, as well as pointing out the sensual weaknesses of any lady who doth object too much. These anti-Platonicks countered with their “atheism in love” an Idealism that had refined passion into a “a sacred, a religious matter” (Birdsall 34, 33). They formed almost an inherent half of a dualistic system, the libertine Ahriman to the Platonick Ahuru-Mazda, often flirting with misogyny, though they rarely crossed over, rarely confused the code for the woman underneath. For them “woman worship . . . was simply not good sense” and was “plain treason to the male cause” (Smith 39, 37). Even the Caroline plays of Davenant, that consummate courtier who largely owed his laureateship to Henrietta Maria’s favor, possess “a lively sense of the limitations of the new faith” (Lynch 62). He suggests in his *Platonick Lovers*, in which he is “decidedly

rationalistic” but also, characteristically, “essentially cautious” (Lynch 88, 89) in his “ridicule of the prevailing fashion” (Summers *Playhouse* 21), that indulging the senses was Platonick love’s real end, though he remains well within the bounds of the system. Suckling, however, stretches its borders, and more clearly suggests the alternative which was eventually to supplant this high Idealism, with the decided support of the new monarch, as the dominant comic mode.⁹⁴

Libertine, and indeed all Materialist philosophy is, of course, diametrically opposed to the Platonick, based as it is on an impossible Idealism, and Restoration libertines owe much to their forbearers, such as Suckling himself, “mainly an anti-platonic . . . duellist of sex” (Smith 17-18), who through much of his poetry and through the male characters in his plays frequently attempts to batter and to scale and to infiltrate the defenses of the *précieuses* erected on an Idealistic base. Among these characters is *Aglaura*’s Orsames, whom Suckling describes in the *dramatis personae* as “a young Lord antiplatonique.”

Readily available, along with Suckling’s other plays, in his *Fragmenta Aurea*, the fourth, and pirated edition of which was published in 1661-1662, *Aglaura* was performed at least thrice in 1661-1662, and available with both tragic and tragi-comic endings, both of which seem to have been performed.⁹⁵ *Aglaura* is simultaneously “a failed revenge play, a Platonic drama, [and] an anti-Platonic libertine drama” (Squier 68) indebted to both Fletcher and French romance. Pepys, upon reading the play, found that it had “nothing of design in it” (5: 263), or perhaps, which amounts to much the same thing, too many designs; its scenes tell like beads loosely strung together and but tied off at the end. Much the same may be said of Suckling’s other two plays, *The Goblins*, a comedy, not played until 1667 but performed at least thrice in that year, and *Brennoralt*, a tragedy, performed at least once in both 1661 and 1662 and several more times in 1667-1668 (Pepys saw it a total of four times). Though no one character in any of

these plays expresses nearly the libertinism of a Vallentine or a Mirabell, largely because no one character is as defined or nuanced as most of Fletcher's leads, all three plays contain significant traces of libertine philosophy issuing from a variety of mouths, both that of Orsames in *Aglaura* and those of several other gentlemen.

Aglaura's dramatis personae, with Semanthe described as a "*platonique*" and Orsames an "*antiplatonique*," suggests that the play will feature a debate between these two codes, and it does deliver, though their dialogue gets whirled away too soon by other tempestuous plot complications. Orsames, a man of parts and privy to the earnest high plot, though not a vital part of it and one who survives the carnage in the tragic version, rails with his companion courtiers at the Platonick misses directly, albeit metaphorically, "a really spirited arraignment" (Lynch 89), the essence of which being that the whole system is but "a meere tricke to enhance the price of kisses" (II.ii.28-29). Before this valuation, though, he has had an opportunity to convince Semanthe of the error of her ways, and to that end, offers the following morsel of wisdom: "'Tis there, where the wise people of the world / Did place the vertues, i'the' middle—Madam" (I.v.49-50). This phrase at first, as it lacks stage directions, seems to suggest that he is encouraging moderation in behavior, the Golden Mean. He, however, which a mere point of his finger would clarify, is trying to pull her down from the Idealistic empyrean, telling her she, like all women, "must be / Flesh't in the chase" (I.v.14-15). The "middle" thus becomes neither suggestive of moderation nor of class, but rather physical and literal, indicating the belly and by juxtaposition the organs of generation and pleasure just below, and grants this realm not to the common, but to "the wise people." Orsames thus promulgates a decidedly Materialistic vision, though, granted, he does so in direct reaction and opposition to an Idealistic one.

Suckling's characters are never drawn and colored, but merely sketched, so comparing them to more developed characters would be a misleading and ultimately fruitless exercise. Comments and attitudes amenable to libertinism, however, litter his three plays. His characters are nothing if not active, and consistently deplore passivity: Ariaspes, the Machiavel in *Aglaura*, attributes the people's love for "the name of vertue" to their desire for "ease" (I.iv.102-103), implying that "vertue," if a positive at all, is primarily so for the lazy and unimaginative. The mildly machinating courtier Jolas also finds that "passive nature nere had glorious end," and "'tis one motion to strike and to defend" (II.i.43,45). The "*blunt brave*" Zorannes even wonders whether "This Devill Beautie . . . Has in't more active tempting, / Or more passive tempted" (II.iii.84, 86-87), granting activity and agency even to something generally considered so gravitational as physical attraction. Indeed no characters of Suckling's suffer passively or repine their fate; rather, all actively strive to obtain their desires. Even Orsabrin in *The Goblins*, who falls into an extraordinarily chaotic evening of adventures involving his killing two men in self-defense and being thrown in jail among much else, has no more complaint to make than to note that "Mischiefe vexes" him "like a quotidian" (III.iv.15).

An emphasis on activity, however, though certainly a quality all libertines possess, is far from theirs alone; they share this tendency with, among others, the heroes of the heroic drama. The Earl of Orrery's or Nat Lee's heroes, though, by no means share the dismissive attitude towards traditional sexual morality and indeed towards religion in general that courses through Suckling's plays. In Suckling's world, the goal for all, whether they choose to admit it or not, is pleasure, even when it conflicts somewhat with virtue. Prince Theramnes and the titular heroine of *Aglaura* are perfectly willing to enjoy one another without marriage rites, refraining only because the distressing situation they have found themselves in would keep them from properly

savoring their pleasure, and the valiant Brennoralt mourns briefly “the pretty daughter, / Of the Forrester, *Lucillia*” (I.ii.50-51) whom he apparently had enjoyed at some point in the past. From these same heroes issues very little in the way of religious sentiment, though neither do they express any particular disdain for the never-specified church.⁹⁶ The characters who do so tend towards the side of ambitious villainy, though they are none of them entire villains, and some effectively neutral characters. The “Poet” in *The Goblins*, for example, has been left by his captors “to tell strange lies, which hee’le turne into verse; and some wise people hereafter into Religion” (III.vii.141-3), and Ariaspes dismisses “vertue” as essentially a political tool. The latter, however, at least has personal valor, and the former his talent, as he is a direct and rather rancorous parody of Suckling’s literary *bête noire* Ben Jonson, whom he “relentlessly lampooned” (Beaurline ix).⁹⁷ Furthermore, in *Brennoralt* the Pallatine of Mensecke encourages his followers and compatriots to “Presse much religion, / For though we dresse the scruples for the multitude, / And for ourselves reserve th’advantages, / (It being much pretext) yet it is necessary” (II.iii.29-32). Miesla, a counselor, similarly, views “Religion / And Liberty” as being “like the Bills of subtle Mountebankes” that are, “by the wise, / Pass’d by unread as common cosenage, / Yet, By th’unknowing multitude they’re still / Admir’d, and flock’t unto” (III.ii.74-75, 78-81). Neither of these characters has any particularly negative personal qualities or associations, as neither has a significant role in the plot and the former is on the rebel side and the latter on the side of the King. Their cynical attitudes towards abstractions promulgated by officialdom thus voice a real and substantial critique. Essentially, all of Suckling’s characters think little of religion but in the haziest, most romantic sense, and view organized religion as little more than a coercive tool to keep the lower orders in line. To the cost of others or not, they all pursue the pleasures they know they can obtain here and now, though they neither refer to nor

rely on any specific, well-defined code to justify these beliefs. They see the same cracks in the official, Christian-humanist worldview and in traditional institutions as do the libertine heroes, but their solutions are but pragmatic, as they lack both a philosophy to defend their beliefs, something the post-Hobbesian libertines of the High Restoration would not want for, and are generally in no position to promulgate their beliefs openly without reprisals, not so much the case in the libertine-leaning court of Charles II as in the court of his father.

Suckling's leading and princely characters, however, still generally utter and follow sentiments characteristic of Fletcherian or French romance-heroes; like Orsames, though, several characters in both *The Goblins* and *Brennoralt* do not, and these gentlemen are, importantly, just that, and neither servants, nor cits, nor fools. "The saucy cavaliers Nashorat and Pellerin" in *The Goblins*, friends to Samorat, a rebel but still the best friend and most noble gentleman that the exemplary lead Orsabin encounters, though "their career has no vestige of dignity" (Lynch 91, 92), speak with all the insouciance of the Restoration libertine heroes, and share their essential concerns and attitudes. They are "on the side of common sense" (Lynch 91), and thus find it absurd "to besiege a face three moneths for that trifle" (IV.iii.27), an aristocratic maidenhead, on occasion make and then "breake an appointment with a Merchants Wife" (V.iv.12), fail to pay their debts, and regard a legal proceeding as "but a solemner kind of Puppet-play (V.v.11-12). They thus have little regard for the morality characteristic of the city and indeed man the front lines in the aristocratic struggle against it.

Similarly, three soldiers in *Brennoralt* consistently craft clever metaphors, notably Grainevert's comparison of sleeping on the ground to committing "Incest" with "mother earth" (I.iii.32-33).⁹⁸ Grainevert also reduces high political matters to low matters of the body, for "the State is but a little drunke, and when 'tas spued up that that made it so, 'twill be well again"

(II.ii.2-3). His companion Villanor voices the common libertine attitude towards marriage, wondering why “A race of half-witted fellowes quarrel about freedome? And all that while allow the bonds of Matrimony?” (I.iii.49-50). Such sentiments had been uttered before by common soldiers, but these men are no common soldiers; rather, they are, in the *dramatis personae*, “*Cavaliers and Officers*,” and thus gentlemen of some parts and authority. Doran, also, a “*Friend*” to Brennoralt, and no servant, confronts Brennoralt’s idealized passion with self-control and plain-dealing, claiming that he can “spit out” his own passion when need be, and belittles Brennoralt’s flights over his beloved’s chastity by noting that, for a woman, “’Tis her ruine to be otherwise” (II.iv.32, 45). Such comments and attitudes had generally, on Renaissance stage, come from the mouths of fools, soldiers, and commoners, if from any at all; all of these notions, though, in the Restoration, enter the province of the aristocratic wit, of which Suckling himself, as a playwright and a poet and a person, was an early type.

Thomas Killigrew, another writer of courtly drama, though by no means a superlative playwright, was an exceptionally skilled courtier and, along with Sir William Davenant, the most important figure in the reestablishment of the theaters in the early Restoration.⁹⁹ He was, though, at least a competent playwright capable of great wit, and three of his plays, and perhaps more, were performed in the 1660s not merely because he managed the King’s company but due to their own stageworthiness.¹⁰⁰ Though Pepys cared little for any of them, two tragicomedies of his that had been performed before the war definitely reached the Restoration stage, *Claricilla*, likely the best and most popular of Killigrew’s plays, at least thrice before 1664 and at least once after, and *The Princess; or, Love at First Sight* for two nights in 1661.¹⁰¹ *The Parson’s Wedding*, a comedy, though first composed in the early 1640s, was almost certainly first acted on

October 5, 1664 (and by an all-female cast no less), so, though a central work in the development of the libertine hero, any discussion of its influence on *The Comical Revenge* and on the Restoration plays preceding would necessarily be based on a very insecure foundation. Scripts of these tragicomedies were doubtless available from the playwright himself, and they were soon to be published in the 1664 folio, *Comedies and Tragedies*, containing all of Killigrew's dramatic work. The printing of this volume commenced in 1663, as many of the individual plays' title pages attest, so, coupled with their performance, that they were known well, at the very least to those closely connected with the King's house, seems sure.

His two tragicomedies, *Claricilla*, which at least "has the merit of vigour; it never falters, and it is not dull," and *The Princess*, neither great plays, but both "strangely attractive" (Summers *Playhouse* 71), focus primarily on the workings of the romance-honour code amongst a wealth of incidents and plot complications. Both, however, also feature characters, Timillus and the Lieutenant respectively, who oppose this code, yet are still respected by and amenable to the high characters, thus validating and extending to two poles the philosophical and behavioral possibilities for the aristocracy.

Easily the best crafted and most dramatically effective of Killigrew's tragicomedies, and one of the better plays produced by and for the Caroline court, *Claricilla* tells an earnest tale of "the stichomythia of Love and Honour" in clear, if uninspired prose (Summers, *Playhouse* 16). The tone and sentiments expressed in the play by both the heroes and the villain are almost uniformly high and earnest, with a single, notable exception, Timillus, no servant, but rather the boon companion, of the hero Melintus. Timillus differs from his friend immediately in the matter of amours, for, upon hearing that Melintus has some interest in a woman, proposes that "we'll share" (I.iv.197), hardly a viable option for the hero of a Caroline romance. All women

are to Timillus essentially pleasure, and “the Who and What belong to those fools inquiry that hunt Marriage”; he seeks but the warm flesh, and cares little for the “cold Honour” (I.iv.205-206, 214).¹⁰² Melintus regards all this as “fooling” (I.iv.233), but in the friendly fashion of one who tolerates minor differences of opinion with a close friend. Timillus later gets involved in a duel with the major characters, is wounded, and “begin[s] to have serious thoughts” (III.vii.41); instead of converting to earnestness, however, he manages to stave off these thoughts successfully. After this point, he has no role in the plot, though having him die after the duel would make far more sense dramatically than allowing him to live. He returns in the last act, however, to offer his opinion on “this scurvy honourable Matrimony,” and to inform all that he has safely “lain with a hundred unsound Wenches,” and to vow “they shall geld me” if he ever changes his opinion on the matter (V.ix.22-26). He appears but for this and to speak the final couplet; thus, though but a minor character, he is a necessary and important one. He represents a vital aspect of Cavalier ideology, the flippant, proto-libertine element, and Killigrew goes to lengths to include, and not condemn, his attitudes and behavior, thus reflecting and justifying their importance.

The Princess; or, Love at First Sight, which Van Lennep finds to be “the best of Killigrew’s plays” (“Killigrew Prepares his Plays” 807), is, like *Claricilla*, a convoluted romance, though a decidedly less successful one, overloaded as it is with incident and tonal shifts and in great want of weeding.¹⁰³ The courtly faction here contrasts greatly with the camp, though, importantly, the two also connect, and the former validates the latter to a degree. The play’s common soldiers, a far sight from Timillus and from Suckling’s lusty “*Cavaliers and Officers*,” as common soldiers are wont to do, baldly express direct sentiments: when they capture an attractive young woman, one of the soldiers begs his lieutenant “Pray, Sir, leave

talking, and fall to, that we may have your leavings” (I.i.p.6). Virgin powers, though, do prevail and no one ever does “fall to.” The unnamed Lieutenant, however, is a cut above his men, and bemoans that he is but “ignorantly wicked, and subject to fits of conscience” (I.iv.p.14). His attitude towards women--“there’s but three steps to a womans bed, liking, alone, and consent” (I.iv.p.14)—contrasts greatly with his commander Cilia’s, who upon meeting the same lovely prisoner, “return[s] as from the Altar, struck with holy despairs” (I.iv.p.15). When Cilia is ill with unrequited love, the Lieutenant “understand[s] not [his] raptures,” and thinks he is complaining because he has caught “a Clap” (V.i.p.53,52). Despite this severe cleavage between codes, though, Cilia does still regard the Lieutenant as his “kind old Friend,” and this rough soldier who thinks from the bottom up gets a dying lament, moaning “Oh! for a Beer Glass of Sack, or Crab, and a Catch, to prepare for the Melancholy, and cold grave” (V.i.p.52, V.v.p.60). As with Suckling, Killigrew does not pose the Materialist vision as a contemptible contrary to high, heroic Idealism, but rather a necessary and valid complement, if a rather vulgar one.

All of Suckling’s plays, and Killigrew’s staged ones except for *The Parson’s Wedding*, generically presage and influence the heroic drama and the comedies of Spanish intrigue far more so than the witty high comedies down to the *basse comedies* where the libertine heroes and their Restoration precursors dwelt.¹⁰⁴ Comedy was not much in vogue in the threatened court of the 1630s, due largely to the earnest predilections of Charles I and, primarily, his Queen. That Suckling and Killigrew stretched the romantic and the tragic far enough to include libertine sentiments, however, and frequently in a comic mode, indicates the importance these ideas had to the self-definition of the Caroline aristocracy, and thus to that of their immediate descendents, who, newly confident and resurgent after the Restoration, and under a monarch given far more to

pleasure than to earnest abstraction, subtracted unwarranted realism from the tragic and made the comic their rightful home.

Other works by several well-known playwrights also contain libertine strains and characters who reflect and presage later libertine heroes. Follywit, in Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters*, is often cited as one of these characters; little evidence, however, exists that early Restoration playwrights and audiences were familiar with him, or indeed, more than cursorily with his creator.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Richard Brome's *A Mad Couple Well Match'd*, which Bonamy Dobrée thinks "the first play in the Restoration manner" (45), does seem to presage the Restoration, but it too was not played, though other works of its creator were.¹⁰⁶ John Marston's characters, written for the Children of Paul's, also voice many a proto-libertine sentiment, but his work and name, like Middleton's, were little if at all known.¹⁰⁷ John Webster's two great tragedies, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, however, were known and performed, though the Materialism voiced in them savors far too much of the villain to have much influence on the usually brisk and fundamentally flippant libertine heroes.

Several Caroline plays by lesser playwrights that were performed in the dawn of the Restoration contain decidedly libertine traces. *The Lost Lady* by William Berkeley, later Governor of Virginia, features Ergasto, in the comic subplot, who has come into his apparently significant estate, so now he might concentrate on freely on a life of the senses, "seeing, liking, and enjoying, finish'd in a meeting" (I.p.7). The play also voices, out of the mouths of the men but even more eloquently those of the women, a spirited defense of pleasure above morality, in this case "inconstancy," calling it "A Monster without teeth"; "the gods give a blessing to it, for / None live happier, than those that have greatest / Abundance of it" (III.p.28). The Duke of

Newcastle, a devoted disciple of Jonson, to the point of almost “painful fidelity” (Lynch 160), and, if not quite the founder of the “Newcastle dynasty” (Burns 3) of Jonsonian playwrights, certainly the “*English Mecaenes [sic]*” of the early Restoration who, though Langbaine’s flattery of quality does tend to be fulsome, had “a perfect Knowledge of what was to be accounted True Humour in Comedy” (386), with the help of leading dramatists, contributed several comedies both before and after 1660. Though very much comedies of humours, Sir Francis Courtwell, in *The Country Captaine* “must cuckold” for he “cannot helpe it” (II.iii.p.39), though his “court tricks” (IV.iv.p.92), including his exploiting précieuse sentiments to seduce Lady Huntlove, do not bear the desired fruit.¹⁰⁸ Much closer than these, though, to the libertine hero is Thorowgood, in Henry Glapthorne’s poorly structured *Wit in a Constable*, performed, according to Pepys, at the Duke’s house in May of 1662; “so silly a play I never saw I think in my life” (3: 90). He converts his too bookish cousin to “*Aretins* Politicks, and *Ovids* Art,” and he does have his priorities straight, as he will “swear all fortune is compris’d in wit” (*I*). He too is a trickster, adopting roles and outwitting his peers, and using his wit in defense of his class, the petty aristocracy, though he has no effective defense against women’s wit. Wit does conquer in this play, though it is of a lower order, and generosity and sensual desire and a free and easy nature dominate, despite pervasive chaos.

Killigrew’s brother-manager, Sir William Davenant, *de facto* Poet Laureate from 1638 until his death in 1668, was, most importantly, a brilliant, energetic, and innovative impresario, the man who “did more for the interest of the drama, than any who ever wrote for the stage” (Cibber 2: 63), and was, all told, “a far greater and more important figure . . . in theatrical history” (Summers, *Playhouse* 4) than his competitor. He was also, however, a playwright with an

“exceptionally keen sense of the theatre” (Summers, Introduction to *Restoration Comedies* xiv), both before and after the Interregnum, his name even being added, on occasion, as a fourth to the triumvirate.¹⁰⁹ Though this degree of praise is unwarranted, throughout his exceptionally active and varied career he remained a smooth, skilled versifier who produced a passel of consistently fine, though never quite brilliant, original and adapted plays in all the standard genres, and he even created a few of his own; he both introduced the word “opera” and his version of it and “burlesque to the Restoration stage” (Harbage, *Davenant* 218). Almost surely the son of a respectable London tradesman, a “Mercurial Son of a Saturnine Father” (Langbaine 106), though perhaps the bastard son of William Shakespeare, a very slight possibility for which, deplorably enough, he is perhaps best known, his works are those of a diplomat, experimental in form on occasion, but never in content, reflecting the moderate ideology of two periods and always staying tactfully within bounds.

In all of Davenant’s plays, and particularly the Caroline ones, he keeps his carnival almost exclusively to the lower orders, and his grand sentiments to the high. His tragedies and romances have none of the libertine-leaning characters that Suckling’s and Killigrew’s do, and his comedies a studied and elegant restraint. Young Pallatine, for example, in his Caroline play *The Wits*, does have the wit, and thus the power, but his wit is fundamentally Terentian, and his trickery entirely in the service of traditional morality. This is not to say, however, that his conception of morality is ever entirely that of Shakespeare’s bourgeois Idealism or of Jonson’s classical Stoicism; Davenant’s plays were calculated to please his aristocratic contemporaries and reflect their values.

Davenant produced or had a share in a total of four Shakespearian adaptations, three of which appeared after March, 1664, and of which more will be said later, particularly of his

collaboration with Dryden in their version of *The Tempest*. *The Law against Lovers*, which borrows liberally from both *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, the main plot taken from the former and the underplot, featuring Benedick and Beatrice, from the latter, was the first and least successful of these to appear, in February 1662.¹¹⁰

Davenant here retains the pithier bits from Benedick and Beatrice's somewhat puerile sniping, but adds to them several distinctly aristocratic and proto-libertine stances. For example, Benedick refuses to kowtow to ecclesiastic authority, as he thinks friars, and more generally any clergy, "should not trouble us with their good counsel / When we are young, and in good health" (IV.p.167), and he thinks it absurd to "behave . . . / To Heaven, as boys do to their pedants: they / Must not say grace, without making their legs" (II.p.136). Beatrice, too, resists order to the end, intending that "This house shall be all carnival, / All masquerade" (IV.p.168). As a pair, instead of finally admitting a passion that has been pure and idealistic and respectable all along, but merely obscured by their humours, they in this version do not conclude "with Hymen the old way" (V.p.208), but rather with a Hymeneal union imposed by the Duke that does not auger at all well for future peace. That marriage is not the universal happy ending Benedick's friends Balthazar and Lucio clarify vividly; the former thinks it but "a noose for ninnies," and as for the latter, his vow is that "If I ever marry, let mine eyes be / Pickt out with the pen of a ballad-maker / And hang me up at the door of a brothel / For the sign of a blind cupid" (II.p.134). Davenant's essential moderation did not change over the Interregnum; the appropriateness of such anti-Idealist sentiments issuing uncondemned from moderately aristocratic characters, however, had, for what, during the Caroline period, had been controversial among the aristocracy was, after the Restoration, rapidly becoming *de rigueur*, as this early period, "more fertile in promise than in actual performance" (Summers, *Playhouse* 259), begins to bear fruit.

Alfred Harbage admits, in his *Cavalier Drama*, that “the materials and methods of the Sir Frederick scenes are all present in English comedy of the preceding thirty or thirty-five years” (87) (and most of them farther back), but then he is arguing primarily against the old notion that Restoration comedy was essentially derivative of Molière. He still, though, downplays this continuity and regards Sir Frederick Frolick as a significant new type, but the only qualitative difference he has to offer is the author himself, “the individual skill of the writer,” the “superior comic talents” of Etherege, and his “philosophical temper” (87). Here though, he falls victim to the great man fallacy, attributing a cultural shift to an individual genius, and qualities to one alone that are shared by many. He also refers to Sir Frederick as an “ideal,” now “for the first time wholly codified and accepted” (87); Sir Frederick, however, is by no means yet “codified” and, in 1664, not “wholly . . . accepted,” but rather an early prototype, albeit the most finished as of his debut, for the polished and socially-dominant models that will appear by 1668 and flourish in the next decade.

According to Harbage, “The character of Sir Frederick . . . can be explained only as reaction. Restoration social comedy was an expression of that same social coterie which had previously expressed itself in a type of drama utterly antithetical—romance of the Cavalier mode. This is in the nature of things. The coat had been worn one way, and now it was turned inside out” (88). This statement echoes the old argument that the “licentiousness” of the Restoration court and stage was merely a knee-jerk reaction against the strict moral statutes of the Commonwealth. Harbage is correct in noting the cleavage between the high and low modes of Restoration drama, but the Stuart stage had possessed reversible coats even under James, with Fletcher as a prominent example. By the Restoration, and with the adoption of a sanguine and

valid sensual and philosophical Materialism by much of the theater-going gentry, the peerage, and even the King himself to accompany the pre-existing aristocratic, romantic Idealism, the colors of the two faces simply became sharper and better defined. Tragic and romantic aristocratic characters ascended higher and the comic, and the libertine hero in particular, dove lower all in a largely unconscious attempt to encircle the burgeoning “middle class [that] was increasingly threatening aristocratic hegemony” (Canfield 27), and Sir Frederick was but a mildly significant step in this process that would peak in the mid-1670s and not go into significant decline until Charles II’s death in 1685.¹¹¹

The old story that the roots of Restoration comedy lie in France and in reaction is not false, but rather is simply a small part of a much larger story. France did precede England in the introduction of actresses, in scenery and machines, in rhyme, and in adherence to the unities, but the first two were inevitable developments, rhyme faded fairly quickly, and almost instantly in the case of comedy, and the vast majority of Restoration comedy was less regular than Jonson’s. More important, however, is what they did not take from the French: speeches remained relatively short, double or triple plots abounded, and, crucially, they did not replace the sophisticated, comic materialism that had been developing since Fletcher with the more moral, bourgeois-tinged vision of Molière and his fellows, so “profoundly different” it was from that of more libertine-leaning Restoration comedies (Krutch 22). The Restoration stage borrowed enhancements from the French, and owed Molière in particular “a great debt indeed in respect of plot” (Summers, *Playhouse* 150), but the Restoration stage remained a very English tradition.

Likewise, Restoration libertinism and its comic expression was, to a point, indeed a reaction to the previous, Puritanical regime, and also a continuation of the reaction against the court Platonism of Charles I’s last decade before the Civil Wars, and its excesses “were excesses

of the camp—of a camp of witty, intellectual captains taking their ease between stricken fields” (Palmer 37). This respite, however, was by nature short-lived, perhaps at the root of early incidents such as the Covent Garden Frolick, but surely not operative after the Plague and the Fire. Restoration Libertinism on the stage rather was almost entirely the continuation and expansion and codification of an old tradition.

Very little is known of what older plays the new playwrights of the early Restoration, except for Dryden, read or saw performed. Etherege might well have spent the entire Restoration up to the first performance of *The Comical Revenge* in France for all the evidence extant of his whereabouts. Decently complete records do exist, however, of what was available in print and for the viewing, and the plays that were performed and printed clearly offer a bridge sufficient to span the Interregnum and connect the English Renaissance theater to that of the Restoration. In the plays of Fletcher and others, particularly the Carolines Shirley, Suckling, and Killigrew, but very little in those of Shakespeare or Jonson or most other Renaissance playwrights familiar to the Restoration, exist characters expressing all of the qualities, often several at once but never all, that begin to coalesce in the early Restoration proto-libertine heroes, of whom Sir Frederick Frolick is by far the best known. Underwood’s claim that the Caroline plays, in which he includes *The Parson’s Wedding*, “leave the bulwark of orthodox moral assumptions as essentially undisturbed as do the comedies of Fletcher” (159), is simply wrong, though they do leave this “bulwark” still standing, albeit tottering. These are the plays that the new generation of dramatists, Dryden, the Howards, other minor playwrights and particularly Etherege, turned to create new works that would please contemporary audiences; these Renaissance plays provided the matter from which to shape the new proto-libertine hero,

the next step in a long tradition, who would soon be strutting across the English stage and gamboling about the court and the London streets.

INTERLUDE

The early 1660s, when, in the words of that latter-day Congreve, Thomas Love Peacock, “the profligacy of the Restoration rolled, like a spring-tide, over the Puritanism of the Commonwealth” (3), were, for the royalists and most of the relatively apolitical majority at least, a vernal carnival awash in hope of a new age. This new age, of course, to oversimplify grossly, contradicted almost entirely the previous new age inaugurated less than a generation before; Idealistic fervor gave way to Material lusts, earnestness to flippancy, and moral uprightness to wit as a country long in conflict and decidedly war-weary went on leave. It was also the age in which the stage most closely reflected the tastes of and catered to its monarch and his court aura, in this case that most genial of monarchs, Charles II.

The English professional stage found far more interested patrons in Charles I and Henrietta Maria than it had in James I and Anne of Denmark, and thus had increasingly aligned itself with and devoted itself to the royalist cause, parallel to a corresponding growth in the detestation for the dramatic arts, the antitheatricality amounting to a theatrophobia, voiced by the Puritans. Though the professional theaters still attempted to appeal to the city, in the plays of Richard Brome for example, the works of many new playwrights such as William Davenant, Thomas Killigrew, Lodowick Carell, and Sir John Suckling were intended primarily for court consumption. Their plays embraced the world of French romance, most prominently and popularly delineated in Honoré d’Urfé’s *Astrée*, of which Henrietta Maria and her fellow *précieuses* were so fond.

Charles I, though not nearly so devoted to *précieuse* drama as was his wife, nevertheless involved himself with the stage more than did his father, though less than would his son. He, for example, asked James Shirley to write a play on a plot of his suggestion, the product of which was *The Gamester*, and Shirley served as the king's literary representative in the William Prynne affair.¹¹² Charles II thus, though himself only twelve years-old at the closing of the theaters, by patronizing the stage honored his parents, both his martyred father and his still very much present mother. He, however, took his royal intimacy with the stage a step further than his parents and, more than any previous monarch, clove to the stage, of which he was "the great patron" (Wilson, *Court Wits* 142), and which did suit him right well.

First attending a public performance at the Red Bull on 23 June 1660 (Van Lennep, "Death of the Red Bull" 128), less than two months after his return, Charles continued to occupy regularly the royal boxes at the King's and Duke's theaters, as well as refurbishing and frequently hosting performances at the Cockpit at Court, throughout his reign. By and in them Charles II expressed his "very definite love of the drama" (Nicholl 8), and they served many functions for the monarch beyond a temporary escape from the tedium and trial of ruling.¹¹³ They supplied a nursery for mistresses, most significantly Nell Gwyn, as well as a whetstone for the honing of aristocratic ideology, the working out of class relations in dialogue, an outlet for royalist propaganda, and less subtly as the dynasty was increasingly threatened, a center outside of the court itself for his most devoted partisans, to whom he played the part of an "easy-going uncle" (Sutherland 253), and a showplace for a wit that Aldermen and associated cits could not hope to achieve. The Restoration actors, playwrights, and the leading members of the audience were the vanguard, as resplendent as Suckling's cavalry troop,¹¹⁴ often clothed in vestments borrowed from the court, yet as effective as the New Model Army, in the cultural offensive

properly launched in 1660. Charles desired peace above all, particularly in the first years of his reign during which so much, primarily the ownership of estates, still required sorting out, and practical, moral earnestness was his enemy just as it was of so many young, amorous wits of both sexes on the stage.

The bifurcation between the high and low strains of Restoration drama reflected the King's character; his "punctilious courtesy" and his "rigid self-control" balanced and complemented his "affability" and "almost constant good humour" (Hutton 447-448). He was unbending as Almanzor in his *virtu*, his personal loyalties, the respect due to his position he demanded and received, and to the memory of his father, but immensely tolerant in all else. This same man, who "spawned bastards in ostentatious profusion" (Stone 530) and was the nominal head of the Church of England, signed the Solemn League and Covenant of the Scottish Presbyterians in 1650 and on his deathbed received Catholic communion, the former certainly not the product of personal zeal and the latter likely as much for the ease of his wife and brother and mistresses as out of any concern for his own soul. This monarch, "the hero of all who prized urbanity, tolerance, good humour, and the pursuit of pleasure above the more earnest, sober, or martial virtues" (Hutton 446), was the sun who, when coupled with the effusive swell of wit and the rich, alluvial soil from Renaissance drama, allowed the seeds of the Restoration theaters, and comedy and the libertine hero in particular, to germinate in the early 1660's and flourish in the next decade.

The King and the companion of his youth, George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, were fully men at the dawn of the Restoration, but the other leading aristocratic wits and libertines of the court were in these early years as yet still callow: on the day of Charles's triumphant entry into London, his thirtieth birthday, 29 May 1660, Sir Charles Sedley was

twenty-one, Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst seventeen, and John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester, had just turned thirteen.¹¹⁵ Rochester, because of his mother's influence, had grown up in England, and was, from January 1660 to September 1661, safely tucked away at Oxford, and thereafter, until December 1664, on his grand tour, so he was, as yet, a non-entity in London. Sedley and Buckhurst, however, were very much in London. They were at an age when, as their fathers' own sons, their natural reaction was more against their fathers' enemies than any anxiety of influence concerning the Cavalier generation. A sophisticated rejection of all abstract principle would develop, but at this point they functioned merely as the shock troops of the resurgent aristocracy, and as such they were surely making their presence felt.

Sedley, albeit no peer, had at seventeen come into his baronetcy, and thus a significant inheritance, and shortly thereafter married the daughter of Earl Rivers. Lord Buckhurst had neither yet inherited nor married, though he was son to the Earl of Dorset and the grandson of the Earl of Middlesex by his mother, who had been governess to the King and his siblings; he was elected to the House of Commons in 1661, and he would, in the 1670s, succeed to both of these titles, and thus to the Lords. Essentially they both were powerful and wealthy noblemen, the former soon to become "the oracle of the poets" (Cibber 3: 95), an arbiter of taste, and "every thing that an *English* Gentleman could be" (Jacobs 242), though "his morals were debauched," and the latter long to be renowned for "the sprightliness of his wit, and a most exceeding good-nature" (Cibber 3: 95, 3: 112). Both were influential and welcome at court both for their positions and their parts. These two up-and-coming young sparks, provided, on 16 June 1663, easily the most notorious incident of this first period with their Covent Garden Frolick.

Though no first-hand account of the incident exists, three narratives of the event, those reported to and recorded by Pepys and the Reverend Philip Henry of Flintshire in their diaries

and Anthony a Wood, in four several revisions, and for a broader audience, do survive .¹¹⁶ Their retellings of the occurrence of that day are at best second or third hand and doubtless embellished, yet all share the same basic plot-line and characters, Sedley and Buckhurst and some other young noblemen drunkenly inciting a London crowd to riot through word and gesture both vulgar and profane. These accounts follow, condensed into a single narrative, with Pepys's contributions to the story italicized and Henry's in bold:

Sir Ch. Sedley, Charles lord Buckhurst, Sir Thomas Ogle, &c were at *Oxford Kate's* in Bow-street near Covent-Garden, [**where**] **they had six dishes of meat brought in by six naked women. After dinner**, being inflam'd with strong liquors, they went into the balcony belonging to that house, and putting downe their breeches, they excrementiz'd in the street; which being done, **in their shirts**, Sedley stripped himself naked, *acting all the postures of lust and buggery that could be imagined*, and with eloquence preached, *abusing of scripture*, blasphemy to the people, *a Mountebanke sermon from that pulpitt, saying that there he hath to sell such a powder as should make all the cunts in town run after him.* **There shewing Bottles of wine y^{ei} proclaym'd, Ho every one y^t thirsteth come yee to ye waters--&c. They drank a health to y^e salvation of Judas & another to y^e Babe of Bethlehem.** *And that being done, he took a glass of wine and washed his prick in it and then drank it off; and then took another and drank the King's health.* **After all y^{ei} said, come now let us goe in & make lawes for y^e nation, the one or both being, as y^{ei} say, Parliam^t men.** Whereupon a riot being raised, the *thousand people standing underneath to see and hear him* became very clamorous, and would have forced the door next to the street

open; but being hindred, the preacher and his company were pelted into their room, and the windows belonging thereunto were broken.

This frolick being soon spread abroad, especially by the fanatical party, who aggravated it to the utmost, by making it the most scandalous thing in nature, and nothing more reproachful to religion than that; the said company were summoned to the court of justice in Westminster-hall, where being indicted of a riot before sir Rob. Hyde,¹¹⁷ lord chief justice of the common pleas, were all fined, and Sir Charles Sedley being fined 500*l.* he made answer, that he thought he was the first man that paid for shiting. sir Rob. Hyde asked him whether ever he read the book, called *The Compleat Gentleman, &c?* to which sir Charles made answer, that set aside his lordship, he had read more books than himself, &c. *[He] bound him to his good behaviour (there being no law against him for it) in 500*l.* It seems my Lord and the rest of the judges did all of them round give him a most high reproofe--my Lord Chief justice saying that it was for him and such wicked wretches as he was that God's anger and judgments hung over us--calling him "Sirrah" many times. My Lord Justice asked whether it was that Buckhurst that was lately tried for robbery; and when answered "Yes," he asked whether he had so soon forgot his deliverance at that time, and that it would have more become him to have been at his prayers, begging God's forgiveness, then now running into such courses again.* The day of payment being appointed, sir Charles desired Mr. Henry Killegrew, and another gent. to apply themselves to his majesty to get it off, but instead of that, they beg'd the said sum of his majesty, and

would not abate Sir Charles two pence of the money. (Pepys 4.209-210),¹¹⁸ (Wood 4.732),¹¹⁹ (Henry 158).

Two reports from witnesses of the trial that Vivien de Sola Pinto provides in his biography of Sedley, one in the “quaint jargon” (64) of *Law-French* by Thomas Siderfin and another by Joseph Keble,¹²⁰ confirm the gist of these more embroidered accounts, clarify the legal questions and the sentence, and even add a detail to the debauchery. They agree in Sedley’s “shewing himself naked on a Balkony” (308), for “il monstre son nude Corps in un Balcony” (307), and Keble adds that Sedley was also guilty of “throwing down Bottles (pist in) *vi et armis* among the people” (308). Siderfin additionally, though he unfortunately decides not to go into “particulars de son misbehavior,” confirms the moral tenor of the judges and the blasphemous nature of Sir Charles’s actions and words, as he “fist tiel choses et parle tiel parolls . . . que fueront al grand Scandal de Christianity,” to the point that they “nient solement Christianity mes auxy morality ad estre derelinquy” (307-308). Sedley pled guilty, and, despite some irregularities concerning jurisdiction, the judges “nient intendant son Ruine mes pur luy reforme,” so they fined him “2000 Marks” and sentenced him to a week in prison and three years “del bone porte” (308). As a postscript to the trial, according to Pinto, Sedley did spend a week “in prison,” though he offers no independent evidence to verify that Sedley actually did his time, and as for the fine, apparently “the King exercised his prerogative of mercy in order to reduce the fine by one-half,” so Sedley, a year later, paid but the still substantial fine of “one thousand marks (*l.333 6s. 8d.*)” (66-67).¹²¹

Theophilus Cibber uses this account to evince how Sedley’s “morals were debauched” (3: 95), and Samuel Johnson, in his “*Life of Dorset*,” categorizes the incident as one of “the riotous and licentious pleasures which young men of high rank, who aspired to be thought wits, at that

time imagined themselves intitled to indulge” (4: 61); apparently Buckhurst, at least, was “intitled,” as no evidence exists of his receiving any more punishment than spending a day with Sedley at his trial. More recently, Pinto, though excusing it somewhat as one of “the wild pranks of some hot-headed youths in their cups,” still finds this frolic “foolish and disgusting” (59). Brice Harris, Buckhurst’s biographer, refrains from explicit comment, though he does take pains to note prominently what Pinto but touches on, that, in “a strange coincidence,” on the same day that this incident occurred “Withyam Church, Sussex, the tomb of the Sackvilles” (29) happened to burn down. John Harold Wilson, in *The Court Wits of the Restoration*, cleverly manages to skirt judgment altogether by attributing all but the basic outlines of the frolic to rumor, but according to Krutch, who had no fondness for the perpetrators, “no extravagance will be found worse” (31). None of them, however, deny the entire plausibility of the surviving accounts, though they all shy away from revealing the more salacious accusations.

The true details of the Covent Garden Frolick must, alas, remain speculation; what Sedley and Buckhurst did, however, matters perhaps less than what their contemporaries *thought* they did. Of the three chroniclers, only Pepys likely knew the noblemen even by sight, though all did by reputation, and none of the three had reason for any personal animus against them.¹²² Pepys and Wood obviously disapprove of the frolic, though they editorialize little and seem more concerned with reporting an interesting story illustrative of the times. Henry, however, who had no connection whatsoever to the Court, very much deplored its state after the Restoration; his attitude, though, by no means precludes his rendering an accurate account of what he has heard, for his is both an entry into a private diary and serves but to confirm his prejudices. All three of their accounts are thus most likely entirely accurate at least as to what they heard.

None of the three voice any doubt as to the possibility of these events actually taking place, and the more reliable accounts of Siderfin and Keble of the trial by no means preclude any of the more scandalous details. To these observers, such actions were, though morally reprehensible, not unexpected, for they had all heard of or seen such things before, in the streets or, in Pepys's case, on the stage, albeit with less direct profanity. Sedley and Buckhurst thus, though they almost assuredly did not utter every one of the phrases and act out every one of these gestures that summer evening, and on their day in court, that these reports attribute to them, clearly did improvise performances to the same effect.

Sedley and company's actions and words, or at least the report thereof, however, transcend those of mere drunken, entitled rich young men on a bender. To a degree they proclaim their loyalty to the King, for though such gestures do not perforce identify them as a strong supporters of Charles II, they surely establish them as no well-wishers to an earnest, moral commonwealth; indeed, Puritan-mocking did "seem a sort of piety," at least in the Restoration's earliest days (Krutch 25). What they do definitely constitute, though, is an aristocratic sally in the cultural, class war still being contested, albeit rarely with deadly consequences, on the London streets, and to a degree reflect and most certainly produce echoes that reverberate on the Restoration stage.

Sedley's sins run the gamut from the sexual and the scatological to the blasphemous and the treasonous. He combines food with sex, enjoying the "six dishes of meat" along with their corresponding "naked women" bearers, and brings at least the former strain of this carnality to its logical conclusion as he, in Wood's charmingly pedantic phrase, "excrementiz'd." This gesture is both redolent of the expression of Rabelais' carnivalesque, the first book of *Gargantua and*

Pantagruel having been Englished by Urquhart just ten years before, and of contempt for the cits and commoners below his exalted platform, a contempt and combativeness and an earthiness emphasized by the “pist in” bottles with which he pelted the crowd, though this latter gesture has its practical side as well, as one should never waste good wine. His “acting of the postures of lust and buggery,” however, poses a greater problem; simple thrusting of the pelvis would cover “lust,” but were he acting alone, and acting the part of the penetrator, pantomimed buggery would be indistinguishable from mimed vaginal intercourse. Taking these reports at face value, then, he thus must have either not acted alone, accompanied his demonstrations with dialogue, or have mimed the role of the passive partner. The second of these is almost certainly the case, as in even the most homoerotic poems of the Restoration aristocracy, the author never presents himself in the role of the catamite, and more relevantly, miming such actions would betray a weakness and willingness to assume a passive role entirely out of keeping with the rest of the frolic. Thus, by acting the penetrator, his essential thrust, most importantly, displayed his power in a most visceral sense, but it also identifies his “postures,” in Pepys’ mind anyway, with Aretino, and he acts out these poses in a most theatrical manner. He thus theatrically displays himself a devotee of lusts, and performs them for purposes of both pleasure and power.

These young noblemen, drunk and obnoxious though they must have been, here essentially bring a theatrical performance to those who would never have attended the King’s or Duke’s theaters, albeit a variety of which they especially did not approve. Much of the new stages’ appeal was in the public display of the female form, be it in bodices or in breeches, and these “naked women” provide such, though not, apparently, for the eyes of the assembled crowd. The balcony-show proper begins with the “excrementiz[ing],” prescient of James Howard’s remarkably low scatological farce in *All Mistaken; or, The Mad Couple*,¹²³ in which the “most

extreme fat ass” Pinguister does “daily purge” and thus “daily stink” to impress the arch coquette Mirida, and spends a good deal of the play scurrying off stage to relieve his intestinal distress, reaching his nadir when, locked in a vault with Philidor’s bastards’ nurses and cast mistresses, they bemoan the fact the he has “Shit upon every one of us” (V.p.384, III.p.360, V.p.380). If such acts and functions were material fit for the stage, they were certainly well within the purview of drunken young aristocrats. The “postures of lust and buggery” also extend the tradition of a mannered style of acting necessary to a repertory company performing as many as ten different plays a month for a decidedly rowdy audience often more intent on performing themselves, on pursuing their own flirtations and quarrels, than upon attending to the business on stage. To what degree lewd gesturing formed a staple of low comedy must remain unknown; particularly in the bawdier farces, though, the suggestiveness of such pantomiming by comic actors such as John Lacy must have been substantial. Sedley here, of course, goes beyond normal stage practice by baring his genitalia, but then the displays of female flesh and form, in stripping to the waist and donning skin-tight breeches, struck the more puritanical sorts as equally, if perhaps more appealingly, and thus more dangerously, horrifying.¹²⁴

To this point, Sedley’s pranks differ little from those of many a young man flush with his own personal and social power, with easy access to credit and a relative immunity to prosecution, who happens to be drunk as a lord.¹²⁵ His speech, however, savors far more of his time and place and position and the cultural war which he had inherited from his fathers and was still fighting. The “abusing of scripture” and “blasphemy,” all delivered with indisputable “eloquence,” were and remain among the hallmarks of Restoration drama and court poetry. Adapting language previously and by cits generally reserved for religious subjects, speaking of the flesh in the language of the spirit, are the pith of objections to the Restoration stage from

before Jeremy Collier to the twentieth century. Even more significant is his mode of delivery, his preaching “a Mountebanke sermon from that pulpitt.” A mountebank by definition does not believe his own claims, knows himself not to be speaking the truth, but pretends to primarily for his own gain but also for his audience’s entertainment. The description of Sedley’s speaking from a “pulpitt” implies that he is aping a “preacher,” though of what flavor, is not entirely sure, though a good deal of Puritanical cant was doubtless involved. Thus Sedley’s implication here, coming from a representative of a class of “expositors rather than preachers” (Krutch 44), reasoned out syllogistically from this bare statement, is that those who speak from pulpits are hypocrites who sell such snake-oil as a “pouder” irresistible to “cunts,” enough without specific blasphemies to rouse a crowd doubtless largely composed of former commonwealth-men.

The best-known mountebank on the early Restoration stage was Volpone in Ben Jonson’s *Volpone; or, the Fox*; Evelyn mentions the first known performance in 1662, and though Pepys did not see it until 1665, it seems to have been a stock play. Despite his being “a Magnifico” (*Dramatis Personae*) the titular fox is clearly a rogue consumed by greed, and thus not at all the type of the Restoration gallant. Rochester would famously follow Sedley’s lead, but commit far more completely to the bit, by adopting the mask of Alexander Bendo in the summer of 1676. Actual stage mountebanks, though, are relatively rare, no gentlemen of wit and parts and position having taken on such a role on stage as of 1663.¹²⁶

Disguise or the adoption of a persona is far too common a comic device in the seventeenth century to be vested with much significance, and even donning clerical vestments was no rare thing. Even Grimani, the old, greedy, Aldermanic killjoy of a father/uncle in Richard Rhodes’s 1663 *Flora’s Vagaries*, dresses up as a priest in a futile attempt to hear his saucy niece Flora’s confession. For a gentleman to do so of his own volition, however, as a part

of his own plan and not that of a *servus callidus*, and at least partially for the sheer play of doing so, is somewhat rarer, albeit more common in Fletcher and other playwrights both of and writing for the educated classes. Essentially, Sedley's adopting the cadences and gestures of a mountebank or cleric place him solidly in the seventeenth-century theatrical tradition, though they do not associate him with any specific character or even type, and would strike as inherently blasphemous but those hyper-sensitive to any reflection on clerical dignity. What riled up the crowd was more what he said than how he said it.

His synecdochal reference to women would not be nearly enough to induce a seventeenth-century crowd to "riot," but his blaspheming would. Though "a health to y^e salvation of Judas" may seem an almost charitable act from a modern perspective, this, and particularly juxtaposing it with "another to y^e Babe of Bethlehem," would certainly be enough to send into a frenzy a crowd already no doubt ill-disposed towards his arrogance and the mockery inherent in his vulgarity. The practice of the drinking of healths too was almost a shibboleth of the royalist party, and a practice to which Puritans strenuously objected, regardless of its subject; thus, by drinking a health to any biblical figure, Sedley imposes his own register onto the religious one, draws Christianity into his own cultural orbit and places it under his control. Similarly, few would have questioned any man's right to dip "his prick" in his own "glass of wine" before quaffing, though they no doubt would have preferred he did so privately, but to juxtapose this with drinking "the King's health" is as well-nigh blasphemous as the previous pairing, even to those not particularly devoted to the monarch.¹²⁷

Sedley's parting shot, attributed to both him and his companions, their plan to "goe in & make lawes for y^e nation," though it does ring the falsest of all the reports, being the most prominent of the Puritans' fears, is pitched, as are the other reported statements, for maximum

annoyance. Lending it credibility, however, is the fact that Buckhurst, though only twenty years old, had already held a seat in the House of Commons for two years. Regardless, Sedley's point seems have clearly to have been to do all in his power to raise a fury in the assembled crowd, knowing himself to be bodily safe from them, and in this he seems surely to have succeeded, to the point of driving them to break "the windows," a particular crime against property normally in the province of scouring gallants.

Perhaps partially because the Restoration stage did not desire to alienate the city entirely, these statements of the frolickers transcend its normal rhetoric, though they, in essence, agree with it much in principle. Plays commonly mocked individual clergymen and spoke of the profane in the language of the sacred, though they rarely criticized orthodox doctrine more than obliquely, and rulers as lascivious as Charles II, if generally far less genial, appeared frequently, prominently in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy*, and often went unpunished. As for the matter of parliament, most new plays wisely tended to avoid the subject altogether, though many a stage debauchee even in comedy clearly possessed the powers to make laws and to see to it that these laws were enforced.

Sedley had no direct stage models for his subsequent performance in the courtroom, though justices do feature prominently in several of the Caroline plays performed before 1663. Justice Landby in Shirley's *The Wedding* and Justice Squelch from Richard Brome's *The Northern Lass*, albeit still corrupt and moderately humoural, are men of some wit at least. The unnamed Justice from the Earl of Newcastle's *The Varietie*, however, is but a lecherous humour, and Justice Trice, from Dryden's *The Wild Gallant*, nothing but a humoural coxcomb. This latter, though, is at least a decidedly low, if somewhat endearing one, as he twice plays all the roles in a card game by himself (I.iii, IV.i), gets inappropriately drunk, and is driven almost

entirely by his own belly.¹²⁸ Essentially, judges on the early Restoration stage outrank aldermen, but not by much; they are by no means gentlemen, but rather high-ranking cits, class enemies to the wits and thus figures to be mocked and cozened and cuckolded.

Sedley, in his trial, clearly viewed his judge as such, as he, theatrical and combative, posed his own wit and effusiveness against the forces of moderation and sober judgment.¹²⁹ Wood emphasizes excess meeting with excess in the opposing pole's reaction, as "the fanatical party" went to superlatives, "the utmost, "the most" and to the point of "nothing more," in its reaction, thus setting up the court as a reasonable mean. In the scene that plays out between courtier and judge, however, the fringes of zealotry are excluded, though the judge does represent their interests and the interests of the City against those of the court.

The Court of the Common Pleas and the court surrounding King Charles had, obviously, very different conceptions of morality, though they necessarily had to work together in the interests of social stability.¹³⁰ Sedley, finding himself in this, for him, novel sort of court, responds not with earnestness but with the flippant sort of wit and cavalier attitude characteristic of the court (and the stage) to which he was attached and accustomed, finding the irony in being punished for a necessary, natural function, for simply "shiting." Sedley clearly considered himself protected from any dire punishment under the aegis of the crown, and his status above that of his judge, though his rank was equal, and he thus felt no need to placate this court. In this he was partially warranted, for, though his fine was a heavy one, he had means of redress, at least from full payment of the penalty; had he been a lord, as was his companion Buckhurst, his punishment would have likely been but a day watching the trial and a brief harangue.

That his judge considered Sedley insolent shines clearly through his address, though Sedley holds the judge in the same regard, the regard in which a stage gentleman holds a cit or a

booby squire.¹³¹ Indeed the judge's querying Sedley as to his knowledge of "*The Compleat Gentleman*," Henry Peacham's oft-reprinted conduct manual, echoes many a Renaissance and Restoration mockery of ignorant types, often wealthy or titled, and occasionally a scholar, but not cultured, learning by the book, be it a manual such as the *School of Complements* or a play book, how to behave.¹³² Though grammatically ambiguous, Sedley's reply seems to imply that his judge's book-learning, and his reliance on this over experience, exceeds his own, but has only led him to foolishness and away from the true path of wit.

Sedley, though, was no longer in his own, but in their court now, that of "my Lord Chief justice" and his fellows, and they seem to have been intent on making the most of it, with their "high reproof." Their terms, and the worldview behind them, smack of Puritanical cant and are those of a defeated party, as they demonize Sedley as one of the legion "wicked wretches" and view their age as not one of freshness and joy and promise but one in which "God's anger and judgments hung over us"; they clearly relish this opportunity to vent their earnest bile. The judges' path to power is here through both moral condemnation and through personal insult, as "My Lord Justice" savors his opportunity to belittle his equal in rank as "'Sirrah,'" a tone he likely would not have been able to take in another venue without repercussions. My Lord Buckhurst, though, is a different matter, as the judge has not condemnation for him so much as respectfully delivered advice.

The cultural combat in which these young aristocrats engaged, with repeated thrusts on the balcony and parrying in the courtroom, is the same that had been recently, nominally decided on a grand scale but was still roiling on the London streets and stage. The aristocracy had essentially two techniques with which to combat the moral force and commercial clout of their

enemies: they could overawe them with the high heroic, with Romantic Idealism, or undercut them with the sensual vulgar, with Comic Materialism. The former of these cits could rarely aspire to due to both a lack of education and a commonness of blood, and the latter they feared to attempt as it would indicate a slipping back into the *mobile* from which many of them had sprung. The roots of these two approaches extend to the reign of James I, and Charles I's courtiers continued to refine them; these Caroline models in turn inspired the young aristocrats of the restored court. Unlike their fathers', however, these young men's monarch favored the real over the ideal, and thus the low approach prospered relative to the high, and especially among the young and wild, during the Restoration.

The Covent Garden Frolick was the first prominent, real-life illustration of young Restoration aristocrats galloping down this low road with all the reckless abandon of youth. Though Lord Buckhurst, as the Earl of Middlesex and Dorset and, to a lesser degree, Sir Charles Sedley would later rein in their mounts with advancing age and changing social conditions, this charge, albeit with increasingly less abandon and more refined technique, of the elite cavalry troop of the court wits would continue with devastating effect for the next fifteen years. Though the King's unwillingness to deliver Sedley from his punishment, his allowing him to be hauled before and sentenced in the Court of Common Pleas, clearly conveys that he had, this time, gone too far, Charles's willingness so far to overlook the offence as to lessen eventually the fine implies that his crime was not fundamentally wrong so much as overzealous. The King, their commander, though not encouraging their more reckless sallies, was fundamentally on their side, and they were, despite occasional insubordination, his loyal troopers. And as their wits sharpened, their enemies weakened, and their triumph became more assured, they turned their energies increasingly towards the stage.

ACT III: THE PROTO-LIBERTINE HERO ON THE CUSP

Scene I: Thomas Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding*

Despite the much-vaunted popularity of *Love in a Tub*, the libertine hero, out of place amongst the still popular heroic dramas, farces, and Spanish intrigues, made few significant strides forward in the period immediately following Etherege's debut. But, then, that period was all too brief, but a year, and "the halcyon days were soon at an end" (Sorelius 52), as the theaters, closed by royal edict on 5 June 1665 due to the plague, were not to reopen until late November, 1666, over seventeen long months.¹³³ The only significant play in the development of the libertine hero in this period was not a new play at all, but an old one, one already published, though almost certainly seeing its debut, and that in a striking style: Thomas Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding*, performed by an all-female cast.

This comedy, clearly, albeit "entirely upon internal evidence" (Harbage 178), dates from c. 1640; though Harbage, in his biography of Killigrew, weighing evidence for and against, "cannot say whether or not the comedy was acted before the Restoration" (190n.), it almost certainly was not.¹³⁴ Regardless, as it was not published until the Restoration, Killigrew had every opportunity to revise it before printing.¹³⁵ Thus, when Pepys hears report of it, on 4 October 1664, "Tomorrow, they told us, should be acted, or the day after, a new play called *The Parsons Dreame*, acted all by women" (5: 289), the play is entirely new to him, though already available in 1664's *Comedies and Tragedies*. Partially due to the novel staging, it seems to have been successful, as it was "probably acted through 11 Oct." (Van Lennep 84); though Pepys

appears himself never to have seen it, he is told, on 11 October, by a friend, “what a bawdy loose play this *parsons wedding* is, that is acted by nothing but women at the Kings house,” to which he equivocally reacts, “and I am glad of it” (5: 294). The play with its novel casting apparently remained in the repertoire for some time, as Langbaine mentions a revival, “probably performed in the early summer of 1672” (Van Lennep 195), again “acted all by Women” (313).¹³⁶

Fecund with wit and invention, though in dire need of pruning, “carelessly organized and tediously discursive” (Lynch 101), though original, but for the use of “certain stock incidents” (Summers, Introduction to *Restoration Comedies* xxv), *The Parson’s Wedding* is, along with perhaps *Claricilla*, Killigrew’s best work. The play is perfectly suited to his garrulous proclivities, to the good-humor and wit and willingness to play the fool that kept this “so roysterer and indiscreet a Cavalier” (Summers, Introduction xxvii) in consistent court favor and even gained for him the post of pseudo-official court jester.¹³⁷ Treated by older critics, if treated at all, with “so resonant and exceptionous a strain of obloquy” as to obscure its importance (Summers, *Playhouse* 79), for example Harbage regarding the play as “indescribably coarse,” replete with “terrible vulgarity” and “language that would have disgraced a fishwife,” he admits nonetheless that the “dialogue is nimble and witty,” and “much of the repartee . . . extremely clever” (187-189, 185), agreeing with Summers’s assessment of it as a “consummately clever comedy” (*Playhouse* 79). Harbage similarly finds the play’s ideology not just “immoral but antimoral,” particularly as “adultery is . . . condoned”; the play does fall short of the “moral depravity” (186, 187) of much of the Restoration stage, though, if but in the virtue and verbal decorum of the two leading ladies. Taken as a late Caroline play, which it is fundamentally, though perhaps not entirely, it stretches, though by no means snaps, Harbage’s dictum in his *Cavalier Drama* that Caroline playwrights “were inhibited, besides, by the critical dogma that

tragedy had to do with the misfortunes of the mighty, comedy with the absurdities of the mean” (80). In this case, the philosophy and practices of the “mean,” the Captain and the Parson, differ but in degree from those of the “mighty,” at least in this case gallants who are unquestionably gentlemen, Careless and Wild. The process was already well underway in the gloaming of the Caroline stage, when “*esprit de corps*, like other forms of idealism, was at low ebb and . . .the drama had become a less public institution,” when the theaters “had been deserted by the masses, [so] the [upper] classes could enjoy the parade of their follies with a degree of privacy” (Harbage, *Cavalier Drama* 80), albeit this is overstated, that would culminate in the Restoration. A performance of *The Parson’s Wedding* may well have been at the terminus of this process, though, even more likely, the play extended the comic, anti-Platonick reaction a bit too far for the harried court and stage of Charles I. For the mid-morning of the Restoration, however, it was a perfect fit.

The play opens to a vivacious and whoremasterly and otherwise unnamed Captain, essentially the Lieutenant from *The Princess* promoted, in a vicious and decidedly low and very funny argument with a whore over her disposal in wedding-bonds to a debauched Parson, a trio that doubtless caused many a polite reader over the years to either immediately throw the play down in disgust or at least cease to peruse it in public. These bawdy and plain-dealing characters, though, prove to be far more than they initially seem; the Captain is a gentleman, a respected compatriot of the leads Wild and Careless, the admitted whore Wanton wiser than any other person in the play, and the Parson, albeit unquestionably debauched, at least a good-natured and competent sort after the high characters break him of his hypocritical pretensions to sanctity. Despite his initial vitriol directed at the Parson, the Captain, an essentially jovial devotee of variety to the point of chaos, for only “your pleasing sins” are worth the trouble, and

he “had as live be good, as sin by course” (I.i.p.72), is but a degree of place and thus refinement away from being a full libertine hero of the high Restoration.

The Captain is, if anything, more at the heart of this play than is Sir Frederick Frollick in his, as he both opens and closes the action with long speeches. He is the primary male mover of the play’s various plots, and he leads the cast in linguistic inventiveness—at one point he refers to his friend Wild, while talking him up to a widow as a part of his own plot, as having “whole bundles of Boys in his Breeches” (II.ii.p.90)—and bestrides the high and the low, although, granted, the high in play is none too exalted. He also shares the Restoration penchant for pointed, practical aphorism, informing the virtuous, yet still witty Mistress Pleasant that “’tis folly to believe any Woman loves a Man for being constant to another, they dissemble their hearts onely; and hate a Man in Love worse than a Wencher” (II.vii.p.102), thus valuing himself and his ilk over more devout lovers. He also reminds the same “old Stallion Hunting” widow Lady Love-all (*Dramatis Personae*), the relatively common game he pursues as he lacks the status to fly at higher, that “charity is as great a vertue as chastity, and greater, if we will hear nature plead” (II.ii.p.90).

Indeed, primarily in his empiricist conception of “nature” as “right reason,” of “that Reason which distinguishes by sense” (Rochester 60, l.99-100), does the Captain transcend the mere lusty soldier and don the mantle, exalted or not, of libertinism. Absolutely contrary to Underwood’s claim that the play “nowhere displays the specific interests in the epicurean order” (158), the Captain wishes “a pox upon my nurse, she frighted me so when I was young with stories of the Devil, I was almost fourteen er’e I could prevail with Reasons to unbind my Reason, it was so slaved to Faith and Conscience” (II.vii.p.102). This reliance on the senses and on common sense, and this faith in reason as a means to liberate oneself from the shackles of

traditional, Idealistic morality, is present but in embryo on the Jacobean and Caroline stage. Proto-libertine heroes do act on such sentiments, but never voice them with such clarity, and never so clearly attribute their belief in reason over tradition, the senses over faith, to purely personal agency, to an act of will. Granted Killigrew could have added this passage after the Restoration and after Hobbes, but it could very well have been the work of 1640. Killigrew was, along with Suckling and Davenant, both an intimate in court circles, and thus entirely familiar with both Platonick love and the reaction to it, and a born devotee of Thalia, and his comic muse had always dwelt closer to the earth than those of his fellow playwrights. Regardless, the Captain, though obviously, entirely lacking the polish and control of a Dorimant, shares with him the fundament of his Materialist creed.

His reason tells the Captain that life is a free and open jest; he forgives the Parson entirely, as soon as he converts to good and generous nature, for “any thing but anger is sufferable, and all is jest, when you laugh” (IV.iv.p.129). He also does not impose this creed upon others; he is entirely happy to debauch any lady who should be willing, but he can live with and respect women’s chastity should they so choose, primarily when they have something socially substantial to lose by relinquishing it. As for whores, though, “Women that,” because of their station, “are kind” and have nothing significant to gain by chastity, they “ought to be free” (IV.iv.p.129). The Captain finds Wanton’s decision to “share fairly” her favors with her husband the Parson and the courtier Jolly to be “but reason” (V.iv.p.152).

The Captain, alas, despite being characterized in the *Dramatis Personae* as “A Leading Wit, full of Designs,” is but a Captain, somewhat below and to the right of the aristocracy, albeit closer to them than to the cits, so he can be but a fellow-traveler and boon companion to a

libertine hero. More precisely, he, more their equal than a *servus callidus*, fills the parasite's role with regard to the leads, plotting more for their pleasure than for his own.

This lead pack, a coherent social unit characteristic of Restoration comedy and of *Epicoene* but not so much of Fletcher's plays, consists of Careless, "A Gentleman, and a Wit," and Wild, "A Gentleman," with Jolly, "A Humerous Gentleman, and a Courtier" in the tertiary role (*Dramatis Personae*). This latter character's humour is essentially the same as the Captain's, although with the focus more purely and entirely on sex, so, as "a Courtier," he links the ethos of the rough, lusty soldier to the refinement of Careless and Wild. At first he seems a mere hanger-on; however, though not worthy of chasing the more noble game, he is unquestionably one of the gallants, perhaps even standing in for Killigrew himself.

Jolly enters in the company of the coxcombs Constant and Sadd, but soon defines himself as far more amenable to the wits in his disparagement of the country, for on his last visit there he, apparently, enjoyed a "milkmaid," and, finding her excessively vulgar, in hindsight would "as soon have taken the Cow" (I.iii.p.80). His role is essentially to say what Careless and Wild might want to say, but have too much tact and polish to say, for example regarding "Widowes [as] but Customary authoriz'd Wenches" (I.iii.p.83). His truck is not with the fine ladies, but rather the same as the Captain's, with whores and with the older and thus more readily available sort of widows. He is, alas, no match for Wanton's wit. He still, though, after the trick that renders the Parson amenable to donning horns, and after Wild insists that he set his "Wife" at "liberty" and "deliver [her] for our use" (IV.ii.127), receives a willing Wanton as his reward. He thus gets his comic desert for being a good-natured gentleman of some wit, and as for her, Jolly, being a gentleman, is a significant upgrade over a Captain or a Parson; the rich and foolish do deserve the witty and poor. Careless and Wild, respecting her and having her fate at their

disposal, do not fob her off on an entire fool. Indeed, though he cannot quite live up to the standard set by his betters, he does share their view of nature; he excoriates the fact that pretty young women must often take old nasty husbands as “Mercenary and base; The generous heart has onley the Laws of Nature and kindness in her view” (V.iv.p.149), and not of interest.

As for the lead gallants Careless and Wild, their relations to the extraordinary Wanton define their roles and parts as much as do their own words and actions. The witty, pretty Wanton, the Nell Gwyn-esque “courtesan idealized” (Harbage, *Killigrew* 186), whose wit and judgment, unlike later, almost preternaturally prodigious, witty ingénues, she has significantly enhanced by her experiences with the ways of the world, ends up mistress to first the Captain, then the Parson, and then Jolly, though her preference is for Careless and Wild. She finds them to be “the wits of the time, . . . friendliest men, the readi’st men, the handsom’st men that had wit, and could tell when to be civil, and when to be wild” (IV.vii.p.133), men of both natural parts and honest urges who possess the sophistication to master those urges the better to satisfy them. The first two of the superlatives, and possibly the third, apply equally well to the Captain, whom she has served up to the play’s opening in the capacity of “Livery Punk” (*Dramatis Personae*); the last, however, the self-control and the discerning judgment, is a quality, unfortunately for her, above her quality, despite her charms. Though Careless finds her to have “excellent flesh and a fine face,” and Wild thinks her “a delicate wench” who promises “Comedy all day, and a Faire at night” (IV.i.p.121), pure and pretty Carnival, she is still merely a “wench” to them, worthy to enjoy, but no more. She is perforce left to Jolly upon the fruition of their plot to marry the fine Ladies, as the rich and foolish deserve the witty and poor. Her judgment, still, is impeccable, as she identifies and desires the dominant males and the key quality, their sophistication, their self-

control, in which they surpass the “vulgar and roistering” (Harbage 186) Captain and separate themselves from him.

Being above the Captain allows Careless and Wild the option of marrying not merely for beauty and wit but also for wealth and station. To accomplish this, for they “will have nothing to do with subjection to the opposite sex on any terms” (Smith 21), they need to outwit both their intended wives, the Widow (Wild’s aunt) and Mistress Pleasant, and these ladies’ prospective suitors, Constant and Sadd. The latter task, as the suitors’ names clearly imply, is no difficult one. Wooing and winning the ladies, however, takes more doing, but in this the gallants have a distinct advantage over them, though, overall, “the two sexes are seen to be essentially on a par” (Smith 23), especially by those who saw the initial theatrical run. Their gender allows them to draw on registers of wit personified by the Captain, whereas, as respectable ladies, the Widow and Pleasant are barred by the necessity of retaining their virtue from Wanton-like speech and actions, though they at least have “ceased even to pretend” allegiance to the old Platonick Idealism (Smith 24). The ladies thus, partially because no matter how much they “kick against the pricks” (Smith 78) they must marry themselves to gentlemen, in the end, resemble Wanton but in their quickness and good-nature, and in their attraction to and valuation of wit, as Pleasant wants “a Gentleman that has wit and honour, though he has nothing but a sword by his side” (I.ii.p.78), whereas the gallants share the Captain’s lusty, Materialist verve and sense of play, essentially ennobling his anti-Platonick attitudes. The gentlemen thus resemble the Captain as much as they can, dive as low as they can, while still retaining the *virtu* of their class; the ladies, in parallel, do list in Wanton’s direction, but they do not follow her course nearly so closely as Careless and Wild do the Captain’s, for their code of virtue is, at this juncture, yet far stricter than the gallant’s equivalent.

Many of Careless's and Wild's attitudes do express a mere "conscious reaction against the courtly cult of platonic love," and an exposé of "the nether springs of human conduct" (Harbage *Killigrew* 187) in direct opposition to what Careless terms the "spiritual Non-sense" (I.iii.p.86) so prevalent in the Caroline court. Such a mode is still to them "a brave habit," though, albeit a decidedly meretricious one (Lynch 106). Poor Sadd voices the pathetic side of the Platonick strain with his despairing plea "Yet I love, I must love, I will love, and I do love"; alas for him such puling love cannot match the vibrant wit of Careless. Sadd flails hopelessly against Careless's equally devout prayer "Lord deliver me from Love," and even the vertuous Mistress Pleasant begs "No more of Love, I am so sick on't" (II.vii.p.102).¹³⁸ Their philosophy, however, and thus the ideology of the play, transcends mere reaction. Careless later continues in his ecclesiastic strain with a prescient vow: "take with me into thy hand a glass of eternal Sack, and prophesie the restauration of senses and the fall of a Lover from grace" (III.v.p.117). Here appears the shoot of a new creed still struggling towards light and moisture, and somewhat more than simply sparring in an insular dialogue, courtier against courtier. He pledges to her not just a moment of joy but a bottomless cup of it, and he predicts not the "resaturation of" common sense but of the "senses." Careless, and with him Wild, share the Captain's essential, empiricist belief that what one can see and hear and touch is all that matters, all that is "real" and all that is right, and thus forms the only logical, reasonable base on which to construct any system of personal ethics. Such a philosophy had often issued from stage *servi callidi* and clowns and fools and Machiavels, but rarely, if ever before, so clearly from gentlemen of parts, though it would soon become a commonplace of the Restoration libertine heroes.

What Harbage finds to be but "vice . . . put on parade" in a "conscious desire to shock" (*Killigrew* 187) and even Underwood considers "sheer and abandoned lubricity of wit" (159) is

but rational Libertinism, and this same philosophy put into practice, as the gallants “gaily exploit” Platonick love’s “conventions” and its inherent hypocrisy, which they regard as but “meaningless ritual, lightly and cynically garbled and openly scoffed at” (Lynch 102, 103). As Wild “believe[s] none fair, none handsome, none honest, but the kind” (II.v.p.95), “kind” indicating throughout a woman willing to grant her favors for the simple pleasure of doing so, he wrenches “honest” from its traditional connotation for women of “chaste” and makes it signify instead acting in accord with one’s own urges, and if the act itself bears no stigma, then neither does discussing it. Wild’s credo is that “Any thing, Good, Bad, or Indifferent,” is permissible “for a Friend and Mirth” (I.iii.p.86), and to this end Careless, sharing this creed, is perfectly willing, as a gentlemen and if she be willing, to share a wench with his fellows. They also engage in most of the common pastimes of Restoration wits: drinking, railing with substantial logic against marriage, and of alliance in particular, mocking and beating canters and their creditors and tailors and such, and generally abusing cits whom they find greedy and hypocritical in word and deed. They too, reasonably, are entirely willing to marry if such will produce pleasure for all involved, and to this end overreach the Widow and Mistress Pleasant in order to skip the tedious wooing process. They marry because it makes sense to do so, and without promises of eternal faithfulness, and the best advice Wild has to offer to the bride of such a gallant as he or Careless is pragmatic and fleshly; when a husband “will long for these Girles, as children do for plums,” all she need do is “put him into [her] bed, and fol’d him close in [her] Arms” (V.iv.p.151), thus combating a desire for pleasure with the application of the same.

The Parson’s Wedding, if taken as a Caroline play, presents the most important precursors to the Restoration libertine hero of any play before the Interregnum; if taken as a Restoration play, it is the debut of fully-fleshed (albeit, ironically, in female flesh) libertinism on

the Restoration stage. Though much of the libertine philosophy is voiced by characters, the Captain and Jolly, on the fringe of gentlemanly status, Careless and Wild, very far from being but “two young rakes,” descended from Brome, who together form “merely an unusually bawdy type of Fletcherian wencher” (Underwood 158), both by finding these others entirely amenable and in their own actions and speech, more than “closely approached the true flavor” of the Restoration libertine hero (Smith 25). Rather, they qualify in every aspect as slightly rough elder brothers to the Dorimants and Horners of the high Restoration. *They* are the first of a new breed, a step beyond both the wild gallants of Fletcher, Shirley, and Suckling and Sir Frederick and his early-Restoration compatriots, though the seeds of everything they say and do lie in their Renaissance precursors. The libertine philosophy the play promulgates, along with the bawdry worthy of John Lacy, might explain why no evidence exists as to the play’s early performance. Killigrew, already the author of two fairly successful high romance-comedies and a tragedy, had already made a name for himself by 1640; perhaps he simply ran out of time before the closing of the theaters, but quite possibly this first comic venture of his was simply too controversial for a stage already under tremendous pressure from the enemies of its morality. Killigrew also waited four years to stage this play and until it was already published along with the rest of his works, though, as the director of the King’s company, he could certainly have done so earlier. Perhaps, noting the success of Sir Frederick Frollick for the Duke’s company, he released this play to counter and indeed to one-up his rival Davenant. For whatever reason, he felt the time was right, and thought this play an appropriate one for his experiment in casting; the play’s week-long run proves he was right, and that audiences were ready for the premiere of the libertine hero; though he is as yet not fully polished, he has certainly arrived.¹³⁹

This debut, however, was not immediately followed up on, though granted the theaters remained open for but eight more months, time normally insufficient to conceive, compose, and rehearse an original play. The five new plays were either heroic dramas, comedy's consistent Restoration counterweight, or Davenant's Shakespearian adaptations. Finally, after the *annus mirabilis* and the Dutch War, the plague and the fire all burned themselves out, did the theater return, and with it the comedy and the libertine hero, though his presence would sputter for a few years before fully blazing in the new decade.

Scene II: *The Chances Redux*.

As 1667 dawned, a stable of new playwrights able to provide the playhouses with sufficient new works of a quality on par with the as-yet-unplayed works of the older playwrights had yet to develop, so still fully half of the debuts were of older plays, albeit often adapted. Notable among these older plays is Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The Custom of the Country*, featuring the antics of the "monstrous lusty" (III.iii.80) Rutilio, who accepts a position as a whore to the lusty ladies of the town, replacing a Dane whose "main Spring's weaknd that holds up his cock" (III.iii.9). The comedy here is that of humour and situation, with Rutilio getting and then regretting what he asked for, being almost done to death by servicing fourteen ladies in a day (IV.iv), the situation that Dryden doubtless had in mind when famously citing this play for its excessive "Baudry" (*Poems* 4: 1462). The high plot, though, and the language throughout, are generally decorous, and as Rutilio is clearly but a humour and no gentleman, for he calls another a "slubberdegullion" (I.ii.28). Despite occasional claims to the contrary by those focused on but the sexuality, the play owes little to the development of the libertine hero outside

of finding humor in the entirely natural, and thus acceptable, sexual desires of both men and especially of women. Most comedies produced on the Restoration stage, old and new, contain veins of unalloyed bawdy, but “smut” is merely tangential to libertinism.

After the debut of Suckling’s *The Goblins*, the next major play to take the stage was not new at all, but rather a revision of an old play, this time by that mercurial dilettante, that “Nobleman of incomparable Parts in the Reign of King *Charles* II, and the greatest Ornament of that Prince’s Court,” George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham (Jacobs 264): John Fletcher’s *The Chances*.¹⁴⁰ Fletcher was a natural choice for revision, as he was both the dominant elder playwright and a prolific and somewhat slipshod author whose works, though brilliantly faceted, often offer ample opportunity for further polishing, particularly in the characterization and dramatic construction of their last acts.¹⁴¹ For the Restoration audience, though, they did not *require* such, as they flow with the easy, sophisticated wit of a gentleman of significant parts writing for his fellows, whereas particularly Shakespeare’s comedies did not, his “Comick wit degenerating into clenches” (Dryden, *Dramatick Poesie* 17: 55) and his bourgeois-tinged vision of the aristocracy and their morality and ideology savoring too much of garlic for the Restoration palate.¹⁴² This play too was a natural choice in that the Materialism of its characters, and particularly of the aptly named Don John, favors the ideology that Buckingham and the other court wits strove to emulate and to promote. Buckingham does so, however, not so much by changing Don John’s character as by granting him a female equivalent and clarifying his expression, increasing his self-awareness, and emphasizing the logical validity of his views.

The Chances, already a popular, stock play, debuted in Buckingham’s revision on 5 February 1667, when Pepys, having already seen the original version twice, offers his opinion:

“A good play I find it--and the actors most good in it . . . The whole play pleases me well” (8: 45-46). The new version, “very much improv’d,” was immediately successful, superseding the original version and receiving “extraordinary applause” (Langbaine 207) to the end of the century and beyond. It was reprinted in 1682 and 1692 and performed outside of the normal venues at both the Middle Temple in 1683 and at court in 1686 (Van Lennep 317, 346).

The first three acts of Buckingham’s version do little to alter the original, as, besides slimming down the low plot, they largely but update slang and cultural references and regularize grammar. When Buckingham does change the wording, he generally does so in the interest of clarity and sense; for example, when describing an as-yet-unseen miss, he alters Fletcher’s “shape and vertue” (I.i.21) to “Shape and Beauty” (I.i.20). In this he follows Davenant’s already established Restoration precedent, and a sensible one at that, of clarifying language in the interest of the theatrical audience trying to follow a plot in a far from sedate venue. Unlike the plays Davenant chose to adapt, however, *The Chances* was already well known, so Buckingham changed less than did (or would) Davenant in his adaptations of Shakespeare. He also, of course, remained relatively faithful to the original because the language of Fletcher was already amenable in its smoothness, suppleness, and relative simplicity, more that of Waller than of Donne, to his own and to that of his aristocratic audience.¹⁴³

Not until the last two acts, the “*fag end of [the] Play*” (Epilogue), does Buckingham’s revision become substantial. These last two acts are, in Fletcher’s version, not without interest and invention, but they are sketchily drawn and brief, but 527 blank verse lines between them, only slightly longer than a single act in most Restoration plays. Buckingham recasts these in prose, cuts all the conjurer business, and greatly expands the role of the “Whore,” the Second Constantia, as a partner for Don John. In the original, the only two developed female characters

are Constantia, a virtuous and mildly witty lady, and the Land-lady, approximating the cast mistress, if a rather low one. Buckingham adds to these by taking the original “Whore” and transforming and expanding her into an ingénue, a saucy jillflirt, a younger version of Killigrew’s Wanton, albeit still a virgin due to her would-be keeper’s shortcomings, with a hypocritical, affected “damn’d Bawd” (V.iii.97) for a mother, both “new and living characters,” the latter of whom Summers finds to be “a creation of real genius” (*Playhouse* 288). These additions both better balance the play and providing a role perfectly suited to the talents of the King’s players.

This new Constantia, almost certainly played by Nell Gwynn, on the lookout for not just a trick but rather “a handsome young fellow I can love” (IV.i.53), is a perfect match for Don John, created by Charles Hart, who had gone unpaired and unrewarded in the original, for she “cannot endure,” as neither can he, “sinning without pleasure” (IV.i.43); he finds her, as she ironically enough was, “made a purpose for me, she is so just of my humour” (IV.ii.94). This second Constantia provides for him a situation parallel to that of his companion Don Frederick with the first Constantia, as well as making his role more realistic and expanding it by providing much opportunity for heterosexual repartee. Don John retains his character here, his fondness for witty women of the lower sort, as he is much pleased to find his Constantia “a mettled whore,” and after seeing her face, he “pray[s] Heaven she be a Whore,” and thus available, unlike her namesake (IV.ii.60, 65-66). For Don John, a woman being “No Maid” makes her “so much the better,” for she is “then more experienc’d; for my part I hate a bungler at any thing” (IV.ii.86-87); he is interested in wit and beauty but not wealth or place, as least as pertains to a woman.

Don John, though, despite Brian Corman's assertion that Buckingham transforms "Don John, a Fletcherian blade," into "a full scale Restoration rake (a don juan)" (195), almost entirely retains his original character, and is far closer to Fletcher's original conception than to the libertine heroes of the high Restoration. Don John clings to his *virtu* still; "though I love a Wench perhaps a little better, I hate to do a thing that's base" (IV.iii.95-96). The line for him between a wench and a lady remains a strict one; for all his directness to the Second Constantia, he remains courtly to the equally attractive First, as he vows to her that "I do so highly honour your Ladyship, that I would venture my life a thousand times to do you Service" (V.ii.34-35). He has never broken his "word with a Woman," or at least "Never before I lay with her" (IV.iv.38-39), and thus he has never lied to a lady, for any woman he has lain with is performe a wench. Buckingham does stretch the bounds of Don John's *virtu*, but only in the direction of plain dealing, for, unlike Francisco, who is "for flames and darts, and those fine things," Don John prefers "the old plain downright way" (IV.iii.72-74). In this he aligns himself with Materialist side of the not-quite-dead Platonick/Anti-Platonick debate, the same that had inspired new boldness in the Materialistic strain of the aristocracy between Fletcher's time and the Interregnum. He takes this plain dealing, though, somewhat far for a proto-libertine, as he is not much given to books, he is "not good at lying" (IV.iii.32), and he expresses no real sense of play. He is, still, a lusty Materialist and a gentleman, though, and far more clearly a gentleman than in Fletcher's last two acts.

As a gentleman, he is on the side of flippancy and pleasure, and this he defends with logic. He finds that "a grave man, especially if he pretend to be a precise man, will do ye forty things without remorse, that would startle one of us mad Fellows to think of" (IV.ii.3-6), thus placing the burden of sin on the aristocracy's cultural enemies and finding "true" morality on the

side of comedy. Don John continues to justify his assertion by explaining that, “Because they are familiar with Heaven in their prayers, they think they may be bold with it in anything: now we that are not so well acquainted, bear greater Reverence” (IV.ii.6-9). Granted his logic here is somewhat spurious, but he does manage simultaneously to identify “true” morality with the light-hearted pursuit of pleasure and, by analogy, to exalt the Material above the Ideal, as being apart from Heaven and the Ideal and focusing on the material of this world becomes, in his logic, greater in the eyes of Heaven than does an attempted, conversational intimacy with Heaven itself, an enthusiasm that smacks of hypocrisy.

This Don John truly finds his opposite number in the new Constantia, whom he vows to be “kind to . / .as often as I can” (V.iv.36, 39). *She* desires that *he* “use what words [he] please[s], so they be but hearty, and are not those spoken by the Priest, for that charm seldom proves fortunate” (V.iv.44-46); sweeter words were never spoken to a Restoration gallant by a beautiful young woman, and in their passion they make their own swift vows. She is possessive though, “resolv’d to have all or nothing” (V.iv.110), but her case is compelling, as Don John vows to “never more touch any other Woman for her sake” (V.iv.136-137). Constantia’s reply of “Never; / We’ll find out ways shall make ‘em last for ever” to his question of “when shall we consummate our Joys?” (V.iv.182-184) implies by no means that they shall not enjoy one another immediately and often. Rather, they play on the more strict, Latinate sense of a “consummation” as an “ending”; they instead propose that their initial coupling is but the beginning. Don John’s closing couplet, “Now see the odds ‘twixt marry’d Folks and Friends: / Our love begins just where their Passion ends” (V.iv.185-186), is thus a statement of principle against a dull marriage, though not a passionate monogamy. Thus, though Don John’s love of variety breaks down and falls at the feet of her charms, he at least retains his vigor and much of

his independence as he and she both resist formal, official marital bonds. Buckingham's revision does make for a better play, but his Don John emerges as a more limited character, a proto-libertine hero certainly, a lover of wit and of passion unconstrained by outside strictures, but little more than a lusty yet still traditional lover. His substantial parts and his significant adherence to the code of the Restoration gentleman, however, and the clarity and self-awareness with which he expresses himself, add a solidity to his character and thus a validity to his beliefs beyond that of Fletcher's original, rather callow whoremaster.¹⁴⁴

Scene III: Dryden's *Secret Love* and Howard's *Mad Couple*.

Dryden's second significant attempt at comedy, at least in the subplot, *Secret Love; or, The Maiden Queen*, the very next play to debut, in late February of 1667, is of "enormous importance in the gay-couple tradition" (Smith 55). As importantly, though, it is also, with the possible exception of *Mr. Limberham; or, The Kind Keeper*, his farthest venture into libertinism, though an essential Materialism percolates through all his comedies and comic underplots, and even bubbles up in his most high-heroic dramas.¹⁴⁵ Unlike *The Wild Gallant*, this play was a decided success, over which Pepys, who saw it six times in the year after its debut, raves, for it "pleases me infinitely" (8: 235). Indeed his initial liking later turns to love, as on March of 1667, he comments that "the more I see the more I like, and is an excellent play"; ten months later, he has expanded this same sentiment to "the more I see the more I love, and think one of the best plays I ever saw" (8: 129, 9: 37).¹⁴⁶ Audiences apparently seconded Pepys's judgments, as the play appeared at least eight times in its first year and with some frequency thereafter, at least until Dryden's eclipse, along with his *King*, in 1688.

Dryden leans here far more heavily on Fletcher, in his romantic mode, than, as he did in *The Wild Gallant*, on Jonson, and the result is unquestionably a better play, as Fletcher, with his smooth, gentlemanly wit, is clearly more amenable to Dryden's muse. Oddly, though, in the play's first prologue he refers to it as "a mingled chime / Of *Johnsons* humour, with *Corneilles* rhyme." Assuming the last phrase to refer to the high plot's couplets, then the previous one must refer to the low. If "*Johnsons* humour" then refers to Celadon and Florimell, they would share the same humour, and neither exhibits quite an "extreme eccentricity" and neither is treated with even a "suggestion of contempt" (Jordan 82), though Moore conjectures with some validity that Dryden might have conceived their "wild gaiety," and particularly Florimell's, to be such (46). Dryden, though, was very well aware that Fletcher, whose name fits the meter, though his characteristic quality, his "wit," does not, had created several Celadonesque characters, and Jonson none, and also Celadon is clearly far less of a humour than his predecessor Loveby. The sisters Olinda and Sabina might fit this bill, and Dryden does in this prologue emphasize how much the play conforms to "Th' exactest Rules," with which Fletcher was rarely associated. Regardless, Celadon is very much a new type, albeit presaged somewhat by Hylas in D'Urfé's *L'Astrée*, though Nicoll cannot help but conflate him with Dryden's earlier creation: "Dryden, following Jonson and Fletcher in half a hundred ways, yet delineates the new type of comic hero in his Celadons and Lovebys" (183); he is as far from the callow Loveby as Fletcher is from Jonson. As is Dryden's already established pattern, in this, his fourth solo play, and one written nearly contemporaneously with his *Essay of Dramatic Poesie*, his most striking characters are the women, primarily the exquisitely conflicted Queen and the "wilde" Florimell (I.i.48). Celadon, however, provides for her the opposite number that Isabelle in *The Wild Gallant* lacks,

a proto-libertine hero only shy of full status by being a natural inhabitant of the Sicilian romance-world.

Celadon, who lacks any close companion save his sister Asteria, the “Queens Confident” (*Dramatis Personae*), is unquestionably high, despite his only speaking in prose, and very much vital to the court, as are all the characters here, the only clear class distinction being between majority of the cast and the two, Lysimantes and Candiope, who share the Queen’s royal blood. Celadon’s relations with the other two male characters, his cousin Philocles and Lysimantes, receive but scant emphasis beyond their treating one another as more-or-less equals. He is thus free of all class-conflict, of any necessity of exercising his dominance over cits and coxcombs, as this world contains no such characters of note, nor fools or villains neither; the rest of the world exists only by reference or in brief irruptions of soldiery. This “Fletcherian Siciliy” may be “quarantine[d] from the social and even the psychological contingencies that accrue so satisfyingly to London comedy” (Burns 38), but then this setting leaves Dryden free to concentrate almost entirely on Celadon’s amours, admitting only the extra-amorous material necessary to establish character. And Celadon establishes his place by an off-hand reference to his “damnable Father, a rich old rogue, if he would once die!” (III.337-338). As for his habits when not at court, Celadon demonstrates at least his place and his preferences in the outside world, as, when called upon to muster a troop, he has recourse to “Taverns and Gaming-houses, and Bordells” to fetch his “score or two of Madcaps,” all “Gamesters, and Whoremasters, and Drunkards” (IV.i.196-197, 268-269). He even defends their honour from Lysimantes’s accusation that they are mere “ruffins” (IV.i.266), but, then, though they do serve their purpose, when given a moment of truce, they fall straight to dice. Regardless, they are by no means “poor sober Rogues” (IV.i.296), the emphasis being, of course, on “sober”; for such men Celadon has

nothing but contempt, though he has few opportunities here to express such. Celadon apparently prefers a Falstaffian world of low, honest, and lusty companions devoted to play and chaos, so by implication he scoffs at cits and their Idealistic morality, but the outside world only hovers at the margins of this play; the portion of Celadon's life Dryden presents here is almost entirely heterosexual and not homosocial.

That he is respected by his peers, and never made "ridiculous for the humour of wildness" (Moore 50), however, validates Celadon's very well-developed Materialism with regards to heterosexuality, at least within his class. This raising of heterosexual Materialism into an indubitably aristocratic realm too doubtless pleased King Charles, who "grac'd" *Secret Love* "with the Title of His Play" ("Preface"), though doubtless his dear Nelly's performance as Florimell, so lauded by Pepys, played some role as well. Nell Gywn, perhaps Charles's favorite mistress but unquestionably the most popular of his three main lovers, herself provides an example in the flesh of the libertine tendency to adopt into the higher realm the most pleasing and wittiest elements of the low.

Celadon reveals his fundamental devotion to pleasure and his joyous nature from his introduction, for he "never yet knew any company [he] could not be merry in, except it were an old Womans" (I.i.6-7). His good nature and his quick wit, for he has "never pumpt for a lye in all my life yet" (IV.i.105), are the qualities by which he attains his desires. His primary concern is with his own freedom, and, to a lesser degree, that of others, to pursue pleasure, as he regards "Marriage [as] poor folks pleasure that cannot go to the cost of variety" (I.i.27-28). This desire Celadon views as perfectly natural and perfectly reasonable, for he desires "no superfluties" of women, but enough variety "onely for necessary change or so: as I shift my Linnen" (I.ii.14-15). To this point, and in defense of his "own Maxims" (II.53), he fights a losing battle throughout

the play, as he insists on pursuing two sisters, the small and flighty Olinda and the tall and solemn Sabina, in addition to Florimell; the former pair are both young and sweet, but hopelessly ignorant, and no match whatsoever for Florimell's wit. This Florimell, and his relationship with her, is where Celadon breaks decidedly from his forbears. Whereas previous gallants sharing Celadon's principles had generally pursued, or been pursued by, either witty women of lesser standing, for example Don John his Constantia, or widows, like Sir Frederick Frolick's, or ladies of a more traditional stamp, more devoted to virtue and endowed primarily with beauty and wealth rather than an extraordinary wit, for example Careless and Wild their Widow and Mistress Pleasant, respectively, Celadon's primary intended is a match for him in every way. Not only is Florimell his socioeconomic equal, and his equivalent in age and personal charms, but, and most importantly, she also matches his "gay and impudent wit" thrust for thrust, certainly "highly characteristic of the comedies to come" (Hume 254), and shares fully in his libertine philosophy, and he prefers "a wild bird to a tame one" (Smith 56).

Florimell, according to Asteria "as wilde as [Celadon], and a vast Fortune" to boot (I.i.48-49), "emancipated, heart-whole, and gay" (Smith 55), still qualities more associated with widows than with virgins, and the theatrical heir to, among others, Rhodes's Flora, explicitly desires what Celadon just so happens to be. He is no "ordinary whining lover," not "one of those solemn Fops; they are good for nothing but to make Cuckolds," but rather, speaking in the falconry metaphor, the official metaphor of the Restoration gallant, "a servant that is a high flier at all games, that is bounteous of himself to many women" (II.62, III.299-302).¹⁴⁷ Indeed, she echoes his desires in her own metaphor as they wittily flirt, for "an old Mistriss or Servant is an old Tune, the pleasure on't is past, when we have once learnt it" (I.ii.81-82), though, granted, the play implies no other amours, past or present, on her part. She does set traditional conditions for

him, demanding that he “grow reserv’d, discreet, sober and faithful” (II.94-95) for a twelvemonth before possessing her, but this conceit, obvious to Celadon as well as the audience, is but a part of the game. The more earnest Philocles thinks one of the fine court ladies will “Convert” (I.iii.19) Celadon, but conversion is not so much Florimell’s desire; rather, she desires that he but prefer her over all others. She wants him to be as he is so she can have not merely the pleasure of wearing him, but of winning him as well. To this goal, in addition to a great deal of repartee, and indeed verbal wit here takes precedence over tricksiness, she dons the breeches and seduces Celadon’s two little birds right from under him, as she acts “madder” than he and vows to Celadon “I’le Tope with you, I’le Sing with you, I’le Dance with you,---I’le Swagger with you.----“ (V.60,61-62). Celadon does ultimately break his “Maxims” for her, primarily the one against marriage, but he needs not be broken to do so; he loses little freedom in joining himself to one who chafes at the yoke nearly as much as he himself does.

Celadon defines himself as being among the brotherhood of “Wenchers,” replying to her using this term as an insult with “Why should you speak so contemptibly of the better half of Mankind? I’le stand up for the honour of my vocation” (IV.i.171-172). Florimell accedes to him on this point of self-definition even to the end, as she take no exception to his response to her query as to whether “marriage [is] as good as wenching”; he admits the former is “very good, but not so good” as the latter (V.560-562), and she is content, as he is content that she has “resolv’d to wear” the breeches when they marry (V.158). This ultimate contentment, though, is very much the product of the principles established in the proviso scene upon which this conclusion directly follows.¹⁴⁸ After more clever sparring and her running down of her rivals, Florimell admits that, despite the social necessity of her desire for it, “Marriage” is yet “such a Bugbear to me,” but then Celadon has a plan, for “we who are wiser will loosen [the knot] a

little” (V.512, 515-516). This “we who are wiser” encompasses not merely these two as a couple, but all those of the Materialistic, libertine stripe who view marriage as an unnatural, Idealistic imposition on mankind’s natural freedom. To this end of defining the unfortunate social necessity of marriage on their own terms, she demands they retain “two wills,” and he desires they pledge “never to be jealous,” to which she agrees entirely, for they shall “e’en love one another as long as we can; and confess the truth when we can love no longer” (V.528, 533-535). In short, they shall remain “Mistress and Gallant,” only adding to it full mutual enjoyment of fleshly pleasures, and if she breaks the conditions. “a month of Fasting-nights,” a Lenten period of no carnal pleasure, and if he does, he will fall “under the penalty of Cuckoldom” (V.552, 554, 556). Essentially, these promises are to provide for themselves and for each other pleasure enough, love enough, so as for neither to long for more.

Thus *Secret Love* is, in a sense, *The Comical Revenge* done right, with the gulling and clowning omitted, the tonal discrepancies ironed out, and the Idealistic longings of the high plot and the Materialistic desires of the low no longer “somewhat clouterly sewn” but rather smoothly joined (Summers *Playhouse* 308). Too, this comedy features neither fool nor killjoy, and thus parallels the high plot which lacks a villain; the conflict, as with much of Restoration drama of all genres, is between individual desires and outworn or impractical social codes rather than individuals either obeying or rejecting unquestioned codes, and the play thus concentrates almost entirely on giving “pleasure” with only “a slight bow to instruction” (Moore 50). Dryden, who does possess “a certain passion and enthusiasm” that Etherege lacks (Nicoll 185), elevates the proto-libertine hero to full aristocratic status and, by pairing him with his opposite number so as to “attain a perfection of wit and humour” (Summers, *Playhouse* 195), validates his philosophy with regards to sexuality by removing him from the sphere of predation. Though Celadon, in

this sheltered world redolent of romance, lacks sufficient opportunity to demonstrate his philosophy *vis a vis* the “real” world outside of the court, he does have ample opportunity to practice his libertinism within. That he might possess all the qualities of a full libertine hero is entirely possible, but that he is strictly bound by his milieu. In this court world at least, though, he is a full member, indeed of rank equal to that of his cousin Philocles, beloved of the Queen. He also, due to his developing alliance with Florimell, offers a sustainable, albeit relatively mild, vision of libertinism, as the pairing of two equally matched, carnivorous creatures by nature precludes a predator/prey relationship; their relationship is very much a game and very little a hunt. With this play, Materialism, particularly in its comic expression, is right on the cusp, as even the noble, romantic Philocles thinks himself one of the “souls ally’d to sence” (V.374); all they need to do now is to bring it home to London.

Between this play on the high and *The Parsons Wedding* on the low side, all the materials for the rule of the libertine hero were now in place, but though occasional libertine heroes and frequent libertine sentiments appear in the plays of the remainder of the decade, the libertine hero does not entirely take hold until the dawning of the next. The stable of practicing playwrights was still relatively bare; as of 1667, the reigning dramatists of the day remained, outside of Dryden and Etherege, Davenant, Sir Robert Howard, the Earl of Orrery, and the farceur John Lacy. Too, as was true of the entire Restoration, high, witty comedies with leads sufficiently elevated to be libertine heroes were but one of several competing genres, most notably the heroic drama, but also villain tragedies, comedies of intrigue, Jonsonian comedies of humours, *basse comedies*, and Molièrian farces. Though none of these genres feature libertines as leads, the first three because they are too earnest and the last three because they are too low, a positive, comic, libertine ethos still flits through most of the comedies of this period.

The Duke of Newcastle's 1667 *The Humorous Lovers*, for example, which for Langbaine at least "equals most Comedies of this Age" (387), offers his usual cavalcade of humours juxtaposed in comical situations.¹⁴⁹ In keeping with the times, however, he offers one Boldman, a "witty rake," though one very much inhabiting a world of "farce and folly" (Moore 62, 63), who justifies his lusts with reason, and engages in an elaborate and successful carnival-game, feigning love-madness reminiscent of Fletcher's *Humorous Lieutenant*.¹⁵⁰ His plot succeeds, and he does succumb to marriage, but to the end he resists the accompanying sentiment of "such a melancholy business"; he still believes that "many a good hearty meal has been made without saying any Grace," and thus he merely agrees to his having "lawful authority to towse" his new bride (V.p.56). For him, the pleasure of the play and of the act far outweigh any official, moralistic concerns.

Adapted, humour-laden *basse comedies* and farces, including Lacy's *Sauny the Scot*, a highly diverting version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Davenant's never-published version of John Cooke's old and, for the Restoration, rather low *Tu Quoque*, and Newcastle and Dryden's *Sir Martin Mar-all; or, The Feign'd Innocence*, his one significant foray into French farce, rose to the fore in the next brief period.¹⁵¹ This last, at least, in Warner, a once and future "witty, profligate gentleman" approximately "of Celadon's species" (Moore 61) who but plays the servant to Sir Martin, elevates the role of the stock *servus callidus* of the French sources to a higher social plane, reflecting the Restoration tendency to reserve all wit, even craftiness, for the leisure class, and the libertine hero who soon was to serve as its male comic representative.

Another of these, though in this case the farce is crudely tacked on to a high romance plot, *All Mistaken; or, The Mad Couple*, by James Howard, second cousin to Dryden's brothers-in-law Sir Robert and Edward Howard, however, despite the pronounced, frequently scatological

lowness of its farcical subplot, provides more than “a mere caricature” of *Secret Love* (Smith 58); rather, it offers a new dimension to the development of the libertine hero. This romance-comedy, first definitely performed in September of 1667, that “some” thought “an excellent Comedy” (Langbaine 275), bears a problematic, albeit close relationship to Dryden’s *Secret Love*. Hume, expanding on a note by James Sutherland, “feels that . . . a 1665 date is entirely possible, or even probable” for this play, a proposition for which he makes a decent circumstantial case, but then “plainly it is possible that *All Mistaken* was written to capitalize on the success of *Secret Love*” (“Date of *All Mistaken*” 428). In the first case, Dryden’s play, though also largely drawn from Madeleine de Scudery’s romances, and Celadon of course being an extension of a plethora of English proto-libertine heroes, is essentially a far more refined version of Howard’s romance-farce and Celadon a far more sophisticated Philidor.¹⁵² If Howard’s play did not appear until 1667, which seems the more likely case, then it functions as a course, if clever, parody of Dryden’s far more polished and decorous romance-comedy, and Philidor a reduction of Celadon to an essence, a humour, the tricky whoremaster. Regardless, *All Mistaken; or, The Mad Couple* still raises very low humor very high indeed.

The *All Mistaken* portion of the play involves a rather pallid tangle of amours and intrigues redolent of Fletcherian and Caroline romance, and particularly echoic of *King and no King*, set among the Italian aristocracy. The *Mad Couple* subplot, “joyously and exuberantly coarse” (Hume 253), connects to the main plot by but the slightest of threads, yet the cord is a strong one, as Philidor, played by Charles Hart, who had also starred as Celadon, is the ruling Duke’s “mad cousin” (I.p.331) towards whom the Duke is entirely, intimately well-disposed. Though the two plots have essentially nothing to do with one another until they, perforce, meet in the final gathering, the amiable relationship between Philidor and the Duke, the high plot’s

highest ranking and central male character, elevates Philidor well above the various Captains and marginal gentlemen who had, previously, represented the whoremasterly humour, and very far above the classical, tricky *servus callidus*. Philidor, be he a broad prototype for or, more likely, a parody of Celadon, is the highest ranking character yet to be so low, both in his desires and in the gulling farce in which he participates.

His character is a very humoural one and his plot entirely farcical. Philidor enters fleeing from the nurses of three several bastards of his, “born within the year,” which was for him “a great nut year,” and he has “three more” too, all in the same street (I.p.334). Add to these the six different women to whom he has recently promised marriage, and most of his stage time he spends parrying or attempting to gull these “fruitful whores” (I.p.337), or else simply evading them. The entrance of Mirida gives him a baker’s dozen of women. She, created by Nell Gwynn, so successful as Florimell, however, is no “fruitful whore,” but rather a ludicrously precocious ingénue who, though “But five years i’th’ teens,” has already “fool’d / Five several men,” which makes her, in Philidor’s eyes and in truth, “I in petticoats” (II.p.345). She, like Philidor, finds great “Pleasure . . . in fooling of mankind!” (II.p.346), though not, like Philidor, and much to his dismay, in touching the flesh of the other sex or allowing her own to be touched; indeed, he never so much as tousles her once. Her pleasure lies entirely in the exercise of her sway, in making her suitors Lean-man put on flesh for her and Pinguister, her “most extreme fat ass” (V.p.384), sweat and purge away his, well, “most extreme fat ass.” Though Mirida never interacts directly with the Duke, he, after overhearing their joint railing against marriage, finds them perfectly “well met” (V.p.396), and has no qualms whatsoever about joining her to his cousin; thus, her wit definitely and her birth likely justify her place in the aristocracy. Thus this witty pair, as the only two members of this aristocracy who have, in the play, dealings with

individuals outside of court circles, define the attitudes of this “Italian” court toward the lesser orders; they are to be batted about, toyed with for amusement, both for the sheer joy of a test of wit and the joy of an exercise of power, the bodies of the women enjoyed and fattened with children by the aristocratic male and the bodies of the men reduced or fattened by the will of the aristocratic female.

Philidor’s wit and sway, alas, are insufficient to enroll him amongst the libertine heroes. The physical body is very much key for him, and the other men of the low plot, and their primary method of exchange, as Philidor has been heretofore providing the nurses of his bastards the services of his own flesh, “Which they took in satisfaction for payment” (I.p.335). Mirida, though, demands a higher price, one that he has not means to pay. He foolishly makes his settlement with her before she accepts his means of payment, and thus they create a bond that is, essentially, no bond.¹⁵³ In a proviso scene they agree that “we two will love how we please, / When we please, and as long as / We please” and that “we will / Both be as mad as we please” (II.p.347, 349), but Philidor forgets the key item that she have as many offspring as he, he, of course, being the one to get them.¹⁵⁴ Thus, for all his bargaining, the close of the play gives no indication that Mirida has any intention of granting him enjoyment of her person, as an item in a marriage contract or otherwise. When the Duke proposes that “Hymen shall light his torch for all,” Philidor wishes with his last words that “me / And my female” be included, but Mirida will allow no such course, as should he attempt to do so, she would “blow it out” (V.p.397).

Despite these decided limitations and weaknesses of his character, Philidor does possess significant wit of the tricky sort and does have some philosophical backing for his actions. He manages to get the better of his cast mistresses and nurses as he dreams up a fake funeral, managing to entrap them all in a vault with the purging Pinguister until they release him from all

responsibility.¹⁵⁵ He also does value his freedom above all, though Mirida clearly has the wit to overmaster this belief should she care to do so. His faith, too, is no wise in the Ideal, for Philidor only knows that “either nature / Or the devil, somebody or something, made / Thee and me for one another” (II.p.348). Be he a crude prototype of Celadon or a parody thereof, though, his significant contribution to the development of the libertine hero lies not so much in his character itself, but in his station; he is a humoural whoremaster, true enough, but simultaneously a vital and respected member of the Duke’s court.

Playwrights during this period, the late 1660s, are essentially exploring the parameters of the proto-libertine hero, clothing the Materialist, witty gallant in different guises in order to see which best befits him; not until the next decade would they decide on a characteristic cut, though the libertine heroes of the high Restoration, of course, wear not all precisely the same suit. For the heroic drama too, the 1660s serve as a crucible, with the boundaries and the heroic code still somewhat poorly defined and refined and the heroes of Orrery, for whom “the creation of obligation is more satisfying than the gratification of desire” (Hughes 33), still clinging to the cold courtliness of Caroline romance, as of yet not spitting the exalted, fiery rant of the high Restoration. The process, however, is well underway, and the results not far off.

Thomas St. Serfe’s *Tarugo’s Wiles; or, The Coffee House*, which appeared likely thrice in October, 1667, like *All Mistaken*, presents a limited, humoural version of the proto-libertine hero set in a farcical Italy.¹⁵⁶ Unlike Philidor’s whoremastery, Tarugo’s lust for cozening is his central humour, as he is a devotee of his “belov’d *Mercury*, thou great God of Tricks,” and a man who thinks “*Proteus* was an Ass” next to himself (I.ii.p.6). He too, besides being Plautine, is

rather old-fashioned, going to lengths no longer necessary, for the horse had by this point been well-nigh flogged to death, to demonstrate himself “altogether Anti-platonick” (I.ii.p.4), as he still finds that “the most obliging despos’d Ladies [in England], will ever be drawn in” the “dress” of a “Shepherdess,” and he then proceeds to cleverly burlesque the pastoral (V.i.p.44). Tarugo bemoans, though, that, as he himself fully realizes, he is no full “wit,” but merely a “Crafty-knave” (V.i.p.40), despite his finely realized metaphors such as “it was as equally difficult to make Women in love with Chastity, as to perswade English *Quakers* to study Heraldry” (II.i.p.7). Despite his decided limitations, Tarugo does make a significant contribution, however, to the rise of the libertine hero via the setting. The Italy of this play is an actual place, and Tarugo the representative of the British gentleman in Italy, of “the English humour” (I.ii.p.4); he is fully English, and fully a gentleman, and fully a trickster, and thus grants the last of these terms validity. The tricky sort of plotting wit, which in Roman comedy had been the sole province of the clever slave, had been generally rising in class throughout the century, and here, in Tarugo, the *servus callidus* very nearly completes his transformation into the *dominus callidus* of the high Restoration.

Scene IV: Dryden and Davenant’s *Tempest*

In this same autumn of 1667 debuted perhaps the most successful romance, and certainly the most successful Shakespearian adaptation, of the Restoration: *The Tempest; or, The Enchanted Island*. Adapted by Davenant and Dryden, with the writing savoring somewhat more of the “sober and judicious” (Dryden, “Preface”) style of the former, who “might almost be called a prude” (Spencer 137), than is the latter’s wont, from Shakespeare’s original, its

production was undertaken at least somewhat in response to Killigrew's production of another island romance, Fletcher's *The Sea Voyage; or, The Storm*. This production, though, despite being initially successful, for the King's house on 25 September 1667 was "infinitely full," with "the King and all the Court almost there" (Pepys 8: 450) for its debut, "*vanish'd on the Neighb'ring shore*" (Dryden, "Prologue"), running for but three days.¹⁵⁷ This latter play of "*our excellent Fletcher, . . . a Copy of Shakespear's Tempest*" (Dryden, "Preface") only in that it borrows certain elements of his plot, is by no means a simple adaptation of Shakespeare, but rather a variation on the same theme. It contains no single character truly approximating a proto-libertine hero, though the whole does have a vigor to it, a lustiness not linked to clownishness, a preference for natural desires over official morality, or enervated sophistication, that Shakespeare's work rarely if ever does. All these qualities that it shares more with the new *Tempest* than with the original, as well as a more realistic island, free of spirits and monsters, more amenable to a new, more rational age. Particularly aglow with this lustiness is one Tibalt, whose language is studded, and his lusts real, and he has the force, and he loves the play. Yet, though he claims "I love a good wench, as I love my life" (IV.iii.69), he is also loathe to face any sort of challenge from a woman's wit, because indeed wine is his true mistress.¹⁵⁸ The attitudes of this island tale of Amazons find themselves reflected in the new, Restoration take on the dream of an enchanted island.

Sir William Davenant, one of the few authors to have written and had performed new plays under the reigns of both Charles I and his son, has received far more attention as an adapter and consequent, almost universal odium as a corrupter of Shakespeare than as a talented artist in his own right, though he was popular and well respected by his peers, albeit in the 1660s they had an obvious ulterior motive to praise him. Though more important as an innovator and

the impetus behind the reestablishment of the stage at the close of the Interregnum, as a playwright he offered before and after the Restoration a consistent competence, if never extraordinary, and his plays reflect the ideology of the ruling classes of their day in its most moderate form. More at home with the commercial classes than his slightly younger contemporaries Thomas Killigrew and Sir John Suckling, and thus more a champion of Shakespeare, his revision of *The Tempest* nevertheless alters the original fundamentally. Though the critic in *The Comparison between the Two Stages* suggests that the play “is intirely Shakespears and Sir William Davenant’s” (36), much of this ideological change is almost certainly the work of Dryden, though the fact that it is not much out of line with Davenant’s other Shakespearian adaptations and the simple fact that he claimed it suggest his full acceptance of the play’s underlying philosophy.¹⁵⁹ That an eminently respectable sixty-one year old theater manager and Poet Laureate, with some help from the most promising new playwright, and his soon-to-be successor to the Laureateship, felt the need to transform the old play’s underlying ideology from a romantic, Idealistic one, reflecting what “*people then believ’d*” (Dryden, “Prologue”), to a far more realistic, Materialist view more appropriate to 1668, demonstrates far more than the frolics of any drunken, lecherous stage-gallant just how far the Restoration aristocracy’s vision of itself had abandoned Seneca and embraced Lucretius, distancing itself from the morally Idealistic vision of the city and its Puritans in the process.

The play’s popularity is in part a testimony to its capturing the spirit of the times, as are its later repeated ravishings at the hands of critics, though the music, dancing, costuming, and special effects doubtless contributed significantly to its lasting theatrical appeal. Premiering on Friday, November 7, 1667, the comic romance ran for seven straight days, and was performed at least eight more times in the next year. Pepys himself saw it a total of eight times, the first time,

ironically enough for later moralists, finding it “the most innocent play that ever I saw” (8: 521-522), and on the sixth iteration it “still please[d him] mightily” (9: 179).

Audiences for well over a century knew *The Tempest* mainly through its later, very similar operatic adaptation. The Victorians knew very well the difference, however, between Dryden and Davenant’s adaptation and the original, Dryden’s biographer Saintsbury dismissing it as a “disgusting burlesque” (44) and H. H. Furness, in an excess of purple moral indignation, includes it in his collection only because “unless we read it, no imagination, derived from a mere description, can adequately depict its monstrosity,--to be fully hated it must be fully seen” (viii). Such a horror, however, is not unexpected, as “DRYDEN’S *Version* is the fruitage of DRYDEN’S times” (ix). In the early twentieth century, Shakespearian critics were nearly as pugnacious and ahistorical in their attacks. Hazleton Spencer, for example, well in line with the majority of Victorian rhetoric on the subject, damns it as “the most degraded . . .and impudent of all the Shakespearean adaptations,” a “monstrous piece,” and a “wretched travesty” like many an offering from Mr. Dryden, that “absolute master of genteel smut” (86, 87, 203).¹⁶⁰ He dismisses the revision as designed but to cause “titters” from the “gallants and coquettes, not to mention the vizards,” of whom he assumes the Restoration audience to have been entirely composed, designed but “to pander” to their depraved taste and thus not even worthy of critical attention, much less praise (197, 201). Moore at least finds it “not so indecent or absurd,” and offers politely that “to young people in their circumstances sexual exuberance would be quite natural,” but then he feels he must resort to Milton’s Adam of all characters “to counter the charges of indecency and absurdity” (70, 71). Holland sees that it “tells us more than” any other Restoration adaptation of a Renaissance play “about Restoration social comedy” (217), though, for Hume, it offers little more than “some smutty humour” in a general “prostituting of

Shakespeare” (257). Hughes at least sees that it “portrays not the regenerative nature of Shakespeare but the nature of Hobbes” (52), but then the “nature” the play values has far more of generation about it than does Shakespeare’s Idealistic fable. Commentary on Restoration adaptations of this and other Shakespearian plays is a subject “unique,” as much as any in the fields of literary criticism, “in its constant ridicule” (Sorelius 146).

The language of Davenant and Dryden’s *Tempest* is much cleaner and clearer than the original, if somewhat less inspired, far from “the heavy tinsel and affected formality” with which Hazlitt accused it of being decked (*View* 235); linguistically, what Langbaine says of *Law against Lovers* is even more true of this play, that they have “taken care to polish it: as to give, instead of many, one Instance” (108). If they streamline the language, however, they contrarily expand the female cast, with a lady sprite for Ariel and sisters for Caliban and Miranda, but then both these features are characteristic of most Restoration adaptations of Renaissance plays. The doubling, too, beyond the majority of the audience’s desire to see as many pretty actresses as possible in a variety of costumes, is a defining feature of both Davenant’s and Dryden’s work; even more so than other playwrights, virtually never does either leave a character without an equivalent of the opposite sex.¹⁶¹

The additions of most interest, however, are Hippolito and Dorinda, the man who has never seen woman and a second woman who has never seen man who provides balance to the play’s presentation of woman.¹⁶² They are the ones who infuse the play with “the new spirit of vulgar wit and suggestiveness,” and Nicoll is not wrong in thinking they lead to a “debasement of Shakespeare’s humour” (165). That they do so, however, is precisely the point; Dryden lowers them to the “the carefree spontaneity of the primitive” (Holland 218), the level of the material and of the comic where nubile innocents would, by the dictates of nature, dwell. The addition of

these characters is, as much as anything, born of Miranda's blinkered Idealism in the original; such statements of such an innocent as, upon first conversing with Ferdinand, "by my modesty, / (The jewel in my dower), I would not wish / Any companion in the world but you" (III.i.53-55) would have seemed to the audience, particularly in a comic mood, as patently absurd and contrary to human nature regardless of gender. Such sentiments (though the word "modesty" sounds at slightly too low a pitch) were, in the Restoration, native almost entirely to the realm of heroic romance or tragedy, to Dryden's *Tyrannick Love* or the Earl of Orrery's baroque drama, to the earnestly overwrought, patently unnatural world of whose artificiality the audience was very well aware. Even in relatively chaste Caroline or early Restoration comedies such as James Shirley's or Sir Robert Howard's, Miranda's claim, in Shakespeare's original, to be motivated in her desire for Ferdinand by "plain and holy innocence!" (III.i.82) would have struck the Restoration audience as but code for, at best, naught but simple ignorance, and at worst rank hypocrisy. Dryden and Davenant remove this play from the sphere of romance, and in the absence of the heroic code operative only in romance world, women, as well as men, are motivated solely and frankly by some combination of lust or love—to the libertine-leaning characters a quantitative rather than qualitative difference—and a desire for sway, a desire to win the game. Other motivations in an innocent, especially, would violate basic human nature, of which this new version in particular is an exploration.

The new *Tempest* makes clear that Miranda's monogamous tendencies are by no means natural, for "'natural' love is . . . promiscuity" (Holland 219), but rather inculcated in her entirely by Prospero. He motivates her to obey the abstractions of chastity primarily by fear, by making man "an object of terrour" (III.i.27), as she believes "she will dye" if Ferdinand is "false," for she has heard her "Father tell of Maids, who dy'd, / And haunted their false Lovers with their

Ghosts” (IV.i.42-44). Such imposing lies are necessary to explain her deeply internalized chastity. Only when she learns to be the passive partner, to restrain her affections until “the thing had first lov’d me” (III.i.19-20), does her father reveal to her the nature of man. Miranda must remain relatively chaste and demure in order to retain the effectiveness of the original romance, and indeed the whole arch of the plot of which it is the keystone, and to pair with the romantic lead Ferdinand, to share his traditional, official, acculturated vision of the relation between the sexes. Shakespeare, however, felt no need to justify Miranda’s monogamous, relatively abstracted longings, but Dryden very much does, and can justify her character only by making her the innocent dupe of Prospero’s insidious falsehoods.

Dorinda, if “a pushing young thing” (Moore 75), is thus, far from being “really pathological” (Spencer 198), a necessary addition, for, in addition to providing a prominent role for another attractive young woman, she represents the fullness of feminine nature that Miranda alone cannot provide. While Miranda tends to accept what her father has taught her, and thus sublimate her natural desires, Dorinda’s will overrides the official morality that Prospero has imposed upon her, for which she sees no sensory evidence. Prospero rightly observes that, rather than “striving” against her “passion” after she has met with Hippolito alone, she “feed’st [her] languishing disease” (III.i.120-123), for she has found her own impressions contrary to those he had taught her to expect. Unlike Miranda, she will not be “couzen’d” by her father again (III.i.143). Dorinda’s reasoning is that “I find it in my Nature, because my Father has forbidden me” (II.iv.132-133); her primal tendency towards trusting her own senses, and her own desires, coupled with her innate rebelliousness, thus balances her sister’s bias towards the abstractions of blind faith and obedience.

These young women actually act like young women, and not idealized, romantic heroines, possessing not that “inborn decency” that naturally leads to “constancy” (Heldt 127); they express Materialistic, Restoration notions of what women are and can be. They, like most Restoration comic heroines, are fully aware that chastity is by no means an inherent urge, but rather a grand, culturally constructed double standard erected on but a narrow biological base, albeit a standard to which they accede without too much of a struggle. Shakespeare’s Miranda next to both of them appears a didactic, moralistic object lesson on a woman’s place, implying that “chaste” and “modest” are not just what a woman should be in a patriarchal culture, but what she naturally is. Davenant and Dryden’s vision is far broader, and far more fluid; Miranda and Dorinda only between them begin to express at least aristocratic womanhood in a near-state of nature. They are both necessary, both vital, and together nearly whole, and since Miranda has her Ferdinand, comic logic thus implies that Dorinda must have her Hippolito.

This Hippolito is clearly no libertine hero, in that he lacks sophistication entirely; in a sense, though, he is the ur-libertine, a man of native parts not separated by his acculturation from his nature. His dramatic role has other functions, of course, introducing intra-generational, homosocial conflict, providing equivalents for the ladies, and reflecting the standard comic pattern, well established before the Restoration particularly by Fletcher and Shirley, of featuring of two male leads, the straight man, the *honnete homme*, in this case Ferdinand, and his somewhat wilder companion, here Hippolito (in Fletcher often a pair of brothers). More than this, however, he establishes, if not the only, certainly one valid model of not so much what man should be, but what he is.

Educated by Prospero, but still resentful of the strict boundaries of his confinement, of being “kept . . . in a Rock” well away from “those dangerous enemies of men call’d women”

(II.iv.14, 31), Hippolito fears none of the enticing danger Prospero warns him of. Rather, he longs for the encounter, vowing to retain the “unblemish’d honour” Prospero has “taught” him only until these creatures called women “provoke” him (II.iv.73-74). When the opportunity finally arises, he meets Dorinda on terms of equal wonder and desire, laced with unknowing *doubles entendres*, and they together commit their “first trespass” (II.v.80) against Prospero, technically but a touching of hands. In this case, though, their “first offence” (II.v.78) leads them towards a temptation to which it is but their right and proper nature to succumb, for even the island’s overlord Prospero admits “How much in vain it is to bridle Nature!” (III.v.121).

And Hippolito’s nature desires pleasure and freedom and variety above all else, and brooks not any abstract limits.¹⁶³ As for monogamy, “I find it is against my Nature. / I must love where I like, and I believe I may like all, / All that are fair” (III.vi.60-62), and he finds Ferdinand’s principle that “You cannot love two women, both at once” (III.vi.69) absurd; why “would” one purposefully “be poor in love,” when one could “be rich” (III.vi.97)? Though, granted, he has to this point seen but one woman, Dorinda, and is thus extrapolating, his philosophy, coming from a man of natural parts and noble blood, and in despite of the “cunning” of Prospero, whom he assumes also wants all women for himself (III.iv.98), fundamentally matches that of the most refined courtiers and stage gallants of the time, or at least the philosophy that had been skirting around the edges of court circles for some time and was now coming fully into vogue. And his “Nature,” like Dorinda’s, follows the promptings of the body in the teeth of a Christian-humanist morality that the play suggests is not necessarily wrong, but most certainly unnatural.

Hippolito, of course, with his ignorance so profound that he thinks informing Dorinda that “there are more Women in the World, / as fair as you are too. / And I’le have ‘em all” will

please her, is no aspiration figure for young courtiers (IV.i.178-179, 181). He is, however, entirely honest, with all the irony this entails in the association of the term with female chastity, as he obeys that which he “lately found / Within,” his “inclinations . . .to love all Women” (IV.ii.268-269, 289). He thus chooses for himself, and does not allow either Prospero or Ferdinand to choose for him, which ideals to hold, acting “In honour then of truth” (IV.ii.291), but valuing his heterosexual desires over his homosocial ones and doing his best to resist the imposition of a, for him, unnatural monogamy. Hippolito, importantly, does not change these opinions through any sort of reasonable argument; rather, he must nearly die in the bad and permanent way, almost lose hold of the “small blew thing that runs about within us,” his “Soul,” to convert to monogamy and a moderately Idealistic view of interpersonal relationships (V.ii.19-20). Only now that what Dorinda terms “the naughty blood, that made / You love so many, is gone out” is Hippolito reduced and weakened sufficiently for a romantic conclusion (V.ii.49-50).¹⁶⁴

This conclusion too is the product of yet another negative, covetousness and jealousy, for Hippolito vows “I never knew I lov’d so much, before I fear’d / *Dorinda’s* constancy; but now I am convinc’d, that / I lov’d none but her, because none else can / Recompense her loss” (V.ii.118-121). Circumstance only, along with dramatic tradition, defeats Hippolito’s philosophy, and not logic. Freedom to love many or one remains in this play the ideal, for when “Nature has done her part, she loves variety” (IV.i.p.243), and indeed the play privileges the “natural” and “honest” desire for variety over its Idealistic counterpart, as the weaker characters are the chaste ones, and the stronger, more defiant characters must be weakened in order to accept chaste limitations.¹⁶⁵ Dorinda and particularly Hippolito, though no libertine hero, here represent the play’s “brave new World” (V.ii.138), a world, though enticing, as yet not quite

skilled and confident enough to defeat the world of entrenched and established tradition, just as, for all his youthful vigor, Hippolito falls to Ferdinand in their duel due the latter's training and experience.

Scene V: Etherege's *She Would if She Could*

After the first recorded performance of Fletcher's *The Wild Goose Chase* at the King's, the Duke's follow up to *The Tempest* was another effort guaranteed an audience, Etherege's sophomore effort, *She Would if She Could*. The success of *Love in a Tub*, as it was always referred to at the time, and Etherege's bountiful wit and good-nature, along with his perfect willingness to attach himself to the most libertine-leaning and thus at this point most powerful courtiers, guaranteed the play a packed house for its debut. Indeed, the house was overfull, as Pepys reports that "there was 1000 people put back that could not have room in the pit," and four of the spots there were claimed by "the Duke of Buckingham," who "openly sat in the pit . . . with my Lord Buckhurst, and Sidly, and Etherige the poett" (9: 54). Despite the massive turnout and the King's presence, the play, according to Downes, "took well, but Inferior to *Love in a Tub*" (29), and the debut itself was a decided failure, as Pepys found "the whole pit," containing this night the best and most important judges, "blame the play as a silly, dull thing, though there was something very roguish and witty; but the design of the play, and end, mighty insipid" (9: 54).¹⁶⁶ Regardless, the play recovered, and due largely to its "trueness, . . . purity and freeness and easie grace" (Dennis 289), it remained solidly in the repertoire, receiving four more performances that season and six more through 1680. After that, though, it fell into abeyance, perhaps, but not definitely, being revived twice in the 1690s but not definitely again until 1705.

This continuing support Shadwell, in his 1671 preface to *The Humourists*, attributes to “the favour of the *Court*,” and presumably these same courtiers, also Etherege’s friends, are the “some of the best Judges in *England* “ who agree with Shadwell, if not Pepys, that “*She would if she could*” was “the best Comedy that has been written since the Restauration of the Stage” (v.I.p.183).¹⁶⁷

Though Courtall and Freeman are far from the first proto-libertine heroes to own the Restoration stage, and it is not with them that “the new age has finally started” (Nicholl 223), they, like Sir Frederick Frolick, are both a combination and culmination of their relatively callow predecessors and, more so than Celadon or any other previous figures, recognizable models of “the Restoration standard of fashion” (Lynch 149) in this fully-fledged, realistic, Restoration high comedy, this comedy of manners. The importance of *She Would if She Could*, “an immense advance” over his first effort, demonstrating everywhere “a firmer and surer touch” (Summers, *Playhouse* 309), is largely that it strips “aura of the ideal” from the “gallant and lady” and places them “in a contemporary setting” (Smith 58) that values “gallantry and flirtation, . . . town and liberty” over “marriage, . . . confinement and the country” (Holland 29); it “exalt[s] the actual at the expense of the ideal” (Hughes 69). The play brings sophisticated, aristocratic Materialism home to London from Italian courts and fantastic isles, and not just to a generalized London, but to very specific London locales, the Mulberry and New Spring Gardens and the Bear, those “playground[s] of the kind” (Burns 26), all haunts of all manner of gallants and whoremasters and jillflirts and cits’ wives ripe to horn their coxcombs of husbands, the same world in which the much of the audience spent their evenings, or at least wished to.¹⁶⁸

These two witty gallants, are the play’s “normative characters” (Burns 32), if not, perhaps, exemplary ones, more part of a social network, as in *Epicoene* or *The Parson’s*

Wedding, than solo operators like Mirabel or Sir Frederick. As Hume was the first to notice, however, they combine not their actions with their talk; “Courtall, to be sure, talks grandly of libertinism, but does not live up to his own rhetoric” (“Myth” 153). Their talk, and Courtall’s especially, in a style that would come to dominate the high, mannered strain of Restoration comedy, “is far more refined, less colloquial and realistic” than heretofore characteristic of London comedies (Hume 266), and is laced with inversion and aphorism and a cynical and pointed wit, brilliant and brittle and wise to the ways of the world. Like few of their predecessors, though like many of their descendants, their wit exceeds, if slightly, that of their opposite numbers; Ariana and Gatty, and not just the various coxcombs, “are outpointed,” or at the very least least matched, “by the gentlemen’s flair for the language of polite deceit” (Burns 33). They tend to, similarly to their predecessors but even more pronouncedly, employ frequent similitudes, which both display and highlight their fancy-wit, their ability to link the seemingly dissimilar, and emphasize the distance between the ideal and the real. For example, they frequently speak in hunting metaphors, traditionally interpreted as evidence of a violent, predatory sexuality, but in fact both pairs play on the obvious disjunction between one sort of chase ending in piercing leading to pain and death, and another leading to pleasure and life, and “the absurdity of a two-legged animal’s pretending its animal desires are something better” (Holland 30). They also emphasize the ironic cultural distance between sexuality and its accompanying emotions, a “naturalistic state of bliss,” and “a very Hobbesian state of war” (Underwood 105), that the idealization of sexuality and the double standard has forced them to adopt.

They do add to Sir Frederick Frollick a level of “refinement and polish,” and Courtall especially is far “more completely the conscious artist than Sir Frederick” (Birdsall 51, 71).

They correspondingly lack, though, something of his *joie de vivre*, foregoing not only emotional but also simple, sensual pleasures, and by no means pursuing “indiscriminate sexuality” (Holland 29), which Etherege displaces to Sir Oliver and, particularly, Sir Joslin Jolly--this latter never punished in the play as he expresses “the eternal fertility spirit, the Dionysian reveler” to be placated and pleased, not reviled (Birdsall 71)--in the interest of the acquisition of primarily homosocial power. To the aesthetic critic the witty pairs, and the gallants especially, seem “considerably less than human” because they express “no pretense of emotional values” (Perry 26), or, more moderately expressed, confuse “artificial and real values” (Lynch 152), and “go almost too far in [their] avoidance of directly expressed feeling” (Burns 32); rather, they express “an emotional and sexual charge that lies not very far below the surface” (Birdsall 68), and they recognize this play of romantic passions, as the “ladies pleasantly twit” the gentlemen (Smith 59), to be as much the play of power as any other social relationship, and power is the desideratum of all at all times. This power they, gallants and ladies alike, obtain and retain by means of their wit, by playing successfully the “conversation game” (Lynch 150) with “reasonable imperturbability and self-control” (Underwood 65), but at the cost of a sacrifice of more carnal pleasures. Fitting in neatly with Fujimura’s one-sided assessment of the Restoration libertine hero as far “more intellectual and esthetic than sensual” (33), “the clearheaded, ingenious” (Birdsall 72) Courtall and Freeman are not so much Sir Frederick split into two, but rather Etherege’s antithesis to his earlier thesis, the synthesis of which will not appear until the high-Restoration debut of Dorimant eight years later.

Courtall and Freeman lard their dialogue from the outset with metaphor, or perhaps more accurately the quick, aphoristic “turns” that tended to, over the course of the Restoration, supersede “the thick ragout of metaphor” of the Carolines (Holland 57). These metaphors are

most commonly of the chase, and of falconry in particular, which establishes them as the most aristocratic of predators, far above the “ravenous kite” (III.i.65) that is willing to fly at lesser game, “to catch up the poultry” (IV.ii.202). Courtall despises “the fatigue, and had rather be bound to back my own colts, and man my own hawks, than endure the impertinencies of bringing a young wench to the lure” (I.i.28-31); he stoops at but ladies with fortunes, and expects his wenches, and his she-citizens, to come of their own accord to or be brought to him. These gallants’ dominance, though, is built not on title or fortune, as neither is a knight or ever as much as hints that he has an inheritance on the way. The men over whom they triumph, the coxcomb Sir Oliver Cockwood and the humorous Sir Joslin Jolly, are both rich knights, and they mere property-poor gentlemen. They do, however, have youth, parts, and, most importantly, wit. Their empire, though, in their case expressing itself almost entirely in repartee, is one of relatively intellectual and sober and controlled judgment-wit, and not of wildness, not of the bountiful and lusty fancy-wit of Sir Frederick.

Courtall and Freeman’s wildness is far more a matter of reputation and theory than of practice. Sir Oliver, who, along with Sir Joslin, consistently either looks forward to, engages in, or feels remorse for debauches involving considerable drunkenness and an almost always-abortive pursuit of whores, considers them like-minded, “honest fellows” (I.i.108). He tries to impress Courtall by implying that the institution of marriage is but for the benefit of the clergy, “a trick that the clergy might have a feeling in the cause” (I.i.154-155), and he brags that “to a true-bred gentleman all lawful solace is abomination” (III.iii.237-238), even though, as is obvious well before the play’s conclusion, Courtall and Freeman by no means take their anti-marriage stance to such an extreme. Sir Oliver thinks even to impress the young gallants by telling them of his having had, in a “ditch” no less, “a tinker’s wife in the country” (II.ii.165-

167). In this Sir Oliver displays his decided lack of perception, parallel to that of Lady Cockwood, far more than that he has “corrupted the expression,” as has his wife, “of their real selves” (Holland 33), as Courtall’s behavior contradicts Sir Oliver’s almost entirely, and thus his braggadocio has not at all the effect he wishes on the young gallants. The young wits never drink beyond moderation, and indeed they take advantage of “the fresh air” to vanquish “the vapours of the wine we have drunk” (II.i.40-42) in order for Courtall to further his plots with more sobriety and judgment. Courtall, the leader of the pair of gallants, also never shows any direct physical desire, and even eschews cuckolding Sir Oliver, despite Lady Cockwood’s entire willingness, as he finds her “so foolishly fond and troublesome” (I.i.265-266), too much in earnest and unwilling to play the new-style game. Freeman thinks, logically enough, that Courtall might as well “oblige her,” which he himself is willing to do, but then Courtall envisions “such plenty” of “good meat” about that he resists developing “an appetite to horseflesh” (IV.ii.153, 159-160). Though Freeman does balance him somewhat in this respect, Courtall ultimately desires no woman whom he can enjoy without the signing of a contract. Courtall’s goal all along is primarily, if not entirely, matrimonial and pecuniary, and Freeman’s largely also so.

Courtall’s talk, and to a lesser degree Freeman’s, often belies his actions, while also explaining how Sir Oliver might form his opinion as to Courtall’s wildness, to the end considering him his “dear rogue” (V.437). His inversions of moral language, frequently echoed by Sir Oliver, pervade his dialogue. “Christian liberty” is to him sex limited only by mutual desire, and “honest” covers for him nearly all positive qualities, from the “honest men [who] hate the fashion mortally” of vizard-masks to the honesty of “confirm[ing] a husband in the good opinion of his wife” when one is cuckolding that same husband (I.i.158, II.i.128-129, I.i.235-

236). Courtall's implication that he is not taking advantage of his opportunity to cuckold Sir Oliver brings the admonition from Freeman "Why, hast thou lost all sense of modesty?" (I.i.243), and Courtall considers, in the presence of his target Gatty, who, granted, has "the verve of a young filly romping about the pasture" despite the fact that she deplores the country (Fujimura 101), "forgetting all shame, [and] becom[ing] constant" (II.i.160). Ironically, though, and contrary to the code he expresses, he maintains "an efficient virtue" (Underwood 54); he never forgets homosocial "shame," retains and expects "constancy" and a measure of "modesty" at least in behavior in both men and women, and chooses both not to undermine and to pursue "honesty" with regards to marriage, the rather traditional, if unsentimental, ideal of "Christian honesty" on which he acts.

Aphorisms too here are markers of wit, and thus of control, and Courtall spouts them far more liberally than any of the other characters. A minority of these pithy statements of principle he reflects in his actual behavior; for example, he offers that "wit and good humour may make a man in love with a blackamoor" (II.i.161-163), and indeed he does find these qualities, after perhaps the possession of large tracts of land, the most appealing ones a woman can possess. Others, such as "it is mere folly to forswear anything, it does but make the devil the more earnest in his temptation," he equivocally adheres to (II.i.73-75); he rarely acts on purely abstract principle, but does in effect shun congress with all women who fall short of his *haut gout*. Some, too, are still in negotiation, as Freeman takes issue with the principle that "the keeping of one's word is a thing below the honour of a gentleman," identifying such dissimulation more with the "paltry citizen" (II.ii.224-225, 227). Yet others, such as "a wife's a dish, of which if a man once surfeit, he shall have a better stomach to all others ever after" (III.iii.297-298), are purely speculative, a way of defining others' desires for them. Finally a few Courtall effects with an eye

to reputation, all the while directly contradicting them by his behavior. He offers that women “seldom think the worse of a man, for running at all” (III.i.110-111), though he only runs at Lady Cockwood as a diversion and a matter of policy, and then takes great pains to hide this affair from Ariana and Gatty. He also offers that “a single intrigue in love is as dull as a single plot in a play” (III.i.114-115), though his “intrigue” with Lady Cockwood resembles not at all his burgeoning amour with Gatty, and the play offers no hints of his participation, past or present, in any other love-plots. These aphorisms are by no means expressions of personal conviction, but rather a means by which Courtall establishes and refines his personae, all calculated to further his own interests.

Though his goals are traditional, conservative ones, essentially a very likely chaste marriage to an attractive heiress centrally for the purpose of bolstering primarily the latter term of his socio-economic status, at least he never makes any “explicit promise or demand of reform or virtue” (Underwood 61). Courtall is not without a fundamental devotion to libertinism in its linguistic expression; his “chief and explicit concern” is not so much “taking one’s freedom in the face of restrictive ‘custom’” (Underwood 60) as speaking freely and unconfined to a single persona, being in “control and . . . not controlled by the language and concepts ” he uses (Birdsall 68). Unlike Sir Oliver’s simple, rather pathetic wish fulfillment, his “talk . . . of wenching, and swearing, and drinking, and tearing” that his wife knows to be but the roaring cant of “an abominable hypocrite” who is “not able to play the spark abroad” as he quaintly wishes he might (I.ii.48-49, 52-54), Courtall’s wit centers on his freedom to do and to say and, most importantly, to be, or at least to be perceived as, which is much the same thing, whatever he wishes. His pleasure lies in the play of wit, and not so much the payoff, and his power lies in his ability to be compellingly both what he says *and* what he is, even when these directly contradict one another.

Scene VI: Of Shadwell and Sedley and *An Evening's Love*.

Comedy had, understandably enough, dominated the stage for six months or so after the reopening of the theaters; a more natural balance, however, was restored in the early spring of 1668, the highlights of which are the finely drawn and very earnest romance *The Great Favourite; or, The Duke of Lerma*, by Sir Robert Howard, and Davenant's pleasant, *basse comedie* of a swan song, *The Man's the Master*. The late spring, however, featured two very important debuts, one unlooked for and the other much anticipated, the former unexpectedly turning out to be by far the more successful and important: Thomas Shadwell's *The Sullen Lovers; or, The Impertinents* and Sir Charles Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden*.

Shadwell, though many "like[d] *His Comedies better than Mr. Dryden's*" (Langbaine 444), or most anyone else's, in his day, has long and unfortunately been regarded, if at all, largely due to Dryden's satire, which "succeeded in persuading the world to take [Shadwell] for a dunce" (Krutch 20), as but an amusingly prolix, at best competent and at worse dull, comic hack, the leader of the "deadening, dulling, uninspiring" crew that kept the stage provided with comic filler, "formless and cruel" (Burns 3) and full of "senseless brutality" (Nicholl 189), to while away the time between Etherege's and Wycherley's plays, and then to fill the almost twenty-year drought between them and Congreve. On the contrary, however, as many modern critics have realized, he was the most consistently popular, likely the most characteristic, and possibly the best professional comic dramatist of the age.¹⁶⁹ Not merely the "foremost among the dogmatic, fanatical, intemperate worshippers at Jonson's shrine" (Summers, *Playhouse* 278), he experimented consistently with comic craft and content, and, while but a pedestrian poet, "his plays have to a large extent that artistic finish and workmanship which characterize the work of a

master hand” (Nicholl 190), though, according to his near-contemporary Gildon, he was “incapable draw[ing] the Character of a Man of Wit” (124). This same, by then Whiggish hand was later to guide the stage away from its Restoration ideals, towards moderate, middle-class “common sense” conflated with reason and, to a lesser degree, “a spirit of reform,” in which “libertinism is associated with folly and honest love with good sense” (Smith 128), and away from the aristocratic combination of empyrean ideals and a libertinism based on the material senses, after 1688. In 1668, however, he was but a talented neophyte trying to make his way in a world that had little sympathy for weakness or dullness.

His maiden effort, *The Sullen Lovers; or, The Impertinents*, succeeded entirely on the stage, critically and popularly, likely more so than the debut of any other Restoration dramatist including Etherege. According to Downes, “this Play had wonderful Success, being Acted 12 Days together” (29) after its 2 May 1668 premiere, and, according to the author, was even granted “great Favour and Countenance” from “His Majesty and their Royal Highnesses” (Preface 9).¹⁷⁰ Pepys attended three of these initial performances, and three later, over the course of which he developed a grudging appreciation. He at first finds “many good humours it [*sic*] it; but the play tedious and no design at all in it,” and two days later “but a very contemptible play, though there are many little witty expressions in it--and the pit did generally say that of it” but he later refers to it as “a pretty good play” that “pleases me well still” (9:183, 185-186, 249, 519). Much of the play’s particular appeal lay in its caricature of Sir Robert Howard in the character of Sir Positive At-all, as Pepys wonders at how the “abuse of Sir Rob. Howard, doth take, all the Duke’s and everybody’s talk being of that,” the parody that “they say is most exactly true” (9: 190, 191). This topicality, along with the ten more plays Shadwell would churn out before the

close of the 1670s, doomed this impressive debut to a relatively short life, the last known performance coming in 1677.

Shadwell does draw much on that “man, of all the World, *I* most passionately admire for his Excellency in Drammatick-*Poetry*,” Ben Jonson (Preface 11), though not to the point that, as Nicoll asserts, “Shadwell idolised him as a god” (189). Shadwell, along with humours, here infuses his topical, personal satire with much of the burgeoning wit comedy and follows Etherege in placing his wits on the London streets and parks, and at a very specific time no less, “In the Moneth of *March*, 1667/8.” He also, despite his stated distaste for the male lead “of late,” whom he characterizes as “a Swearing, Whoring, Drinking Ruffian,” and his vow not to follow “that Indecent way of Writing” (Preface 11), condemns not at all the natural lusts of his male leads, Stanford and Lovel, and their female counterparts, Emilia and Carolina, and clearly countenances the social dominance of the play of wit. But, then, critics have long observed that Shadwell “himself sometimes wrote very much the kind of thing he complained against” (Krutch 3); he held aloof from “the libertinism of his contemporaries in theory if not in practice” (Sorelius 110). His practice is, of course, an artistic choice to a degree, but also well in line with the tastes of the dominant theater-going coterie of the day; his dedicatee, and still the first Maecenas of the stage, was the ardent Jonsonian and “The Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince” the Duke of Newcastle, and if he was not quite yet “at the time on intimate terms with the Wits,” Rochester, Buckingham, Sedley, Buckhurst etc., he certainly desired to be and, after this play, would be for a time (Wilson 178).

The sense of being at the forefront of a new age is strong with Lovel, “an Ayery young Gentleman” (*Drammatis Personae*), who gleefully finds himself in “as pretty an Honest / Drinking Whoring Age as a man wou’d wish to / Live in” (I.p.18). His companion, Stanford,

and he both find themselves surrounded by usurers, earnest types, fops, and all manner of hypocrites, humours, and fools. Whereas Lovel “may laugh a little at those / Monkeys; The Variety of their folly always / Affords new matter” (I.p.21), “amused rather than upset” as he is “by the foppery and nonsense” of the populace (Hume 259), however, Stanford feels he must shoulder the satire, as he refuses to follow his friend and “make this / pleasant to [him] self, and laugh at ‘em” (I.p.19). Their taste in theater too reflects this friendly divide, as their plays are “the Silent Woman, and the Scornful Lady” (I.p.21), the former more amenable to Stanford as is the latter to Lovel. Both feel themselves, with their wit, above fools and above the city, but only Stanford feels the Stoical, Jonsonian urge to correct others; for the brisk Lovel, the latter-day Fletcherian, far more the Materialist of the two, they but contribute to his pleasure.

Pepys’s and the pit’s approbation of the “many little witty expressions in” the play indicates an appreciation of another hallmark of Shadwell’s style, that of loading particularly his more genteel characters’ speech with aphorism, reflecting more Fletcherian wit than Jonsonian satire or Shakespearean emotion. Lovel’s speech is full of such *bons mots*. For him, “Beauty and Impertinence do well enough / Together” (I.p.21), suggesting that he favors no wilting in a woman, but rather a witty challenge. Lovel, however, “an honest lover from the start” (Smith 61), in the Idealistic sense of the term, is rather overmatched by his mistress Caroline, for she bars him from libertinism by usurping that register herself, both the “sense, or Warmth / of Blood” (II.p.30) and the repartee, and quickly converts his incipient wildness into a relatively chaste, monogamous passion. She is the one who desires him to not “bring not this villanous Matrimony / Into dispute any more, lest they make us desire / It; I have known some men by maintaining a / Heresie in Jest, become of that Opinion in good Earnest” (II.p.28), inverting official speech herself and mocking his actual passion mercilessly, albeit still playfully.

Love is thus far more a wild gallant, a fairly traditional, lusty young gentleman, than a libertine hero, and Stanford, whose “misanthropy,” rightly enough, “begins to pall” (Hume 259), is far too sullen to be one, though neither has an Idealistic view of human nature. Emilia, Stanford’s “Counterpart / to a hair” (II.p.31), finds that “folly is become as natural to all mankind as lust” (II.p.38), for, in this world, even the young ladies view “nature” without moralistic gilding. Though the play, and this is, of course, a relative measure, does maintain Shadwell’s promised level of decorum, bereft as it is of whoring and carousing, all wit combat and no real bawdy, the lead pairs do realize, in the words of Caroline, that lust, desire, “’tis the way of all flesh” (V.p.82), and both are entirely amenable to play. Shadwell’s debut thus does not so much further the cause of libertinism and its lead representatives as illustrate just how far aristocratic libertinism and a positive, fundamental Materialism had set. Even in the work of a relatively morally conservative playwright by nature little interested in advancing the libertine cause, or in extending the cultural dominance of the aristocracy, a degree of libertinism beyond that of the Renaissance stage had, by 1668, become a comic fixture, and would remain so at least until the death of the King.

The very next play to debut, being the first fruits of one of the leading court wits, Sir Charles Sedley, of whom “all the world doth expect great matters” (Pepys 9: 203), but who now “has now faded away to a thin piping shadow of a writer” (Summers, *Playhouse* 303), was one of the most hotly anticipated of the Restoration, but wit, alas, does not always translate to the stage. “The King and Queen. . .and all the Court” were a part of “the house infinitely full” for the premiere, but neither “the King . . .nor the company” did Pepys “see laugh nor pleased the whole play from the beginning to the end” (9: 203). *The Mulberry Garden*, though not without

its merits, falls far short of the best plays of the age, and does bear out Vivian de Sola Pinto's conjecture, based largely on the anachronistic references to a post-Restoration society in a play clearly set in the last days of the Interregnum, that Sedley somewhat awkwardly superimposed the more realistic and comic scenes on "a play in rimed verse and of a romantic and sentimental character" ("Editor's Preface" 2: 103), featuring some "truly terrible couplets" (Summers, *Playhouse* 304), he had written several years earlier. Sedley also borrows much from Molière, but then he does "give our *English Wit* the preference: and Sir *Charles* is not to learn to Copy Nature from the *French*" (Langbaine 487). The result is a rather disjointed, if moderately entertaining play, now "almost always treated as an inferior version of *She wou'd if she cou'd*" (Hume 255), only notable for its having "here and there an independent sentence of wit" (Pepys 9.206), and no definite evidence exists that it survived more than one performance past its third day.

The play opens to a scene borrowed directly from Molière's *L'École des Maris*, but soon the gallants, Jack Wildish, Ned Estridge, and their foppish sidekick Harry Modish, all self-proclaimed "birds of prey" (I.ii.46), make their appearance, and with them the modish, nearly full-blown libertinism of the day. Unlike Shadwell's heroes, these men love more than repartee, adding drinking, whoring, and a far less idealized vision of love to their repertoire: Wildish "never let the Disease run on so far, [he] always took it in time, and then a Bottle of Wine or two, and a she Friend is an approved Remedy" (I.ii.108-111). He, far more the libertine than his two companions, being a "Lover of ingenuity" and "the verryest Droll in the whole Town" (IV.i. 269-270, 347-348), is well stocked with witty aphorisms that both defend and add lustre to his lusts: "fine women, like great Tables, though they are maintain'd by men of Fortunes, are ever open to men of parts" (III.ii.45-7). He will never "disasterously sacrifice wit to sentiment"

(Lynch 157), but rather he sticks to “the skillful playing of a conversational game” (Smith 63) for both philosophical and social reasons.

The killjoy of the piece, the hypocritical, mercenary old suitor Forcast, receives his just comeuppance primarily from the representative of the court of the first Charles, Sir Everyyoung, who shares with Wildish the essential philosophy that pleasure is the goal and that control should ultimately remain to the ladies. Modish and Estridge too, though no Wildishes, still hope for “solid and substantial pleasures” from the “young juicy Girls” Victoria and Olivia (IV.i.115-117). Thus, while breaking no new dramatic ground, the play does establish the validity and substance of Wildish’s views, as even the good-natured sorts not constitutionally tending towards libertinism accept its essential premises. Wildish, too, is unquestionably a Royalist, as he deems “to lye in Prison for concealing Cavaliers” a “great merit” (IV.ii.194-195), and thus as his reward for his loyalty as well as his wit and parts, ends up with the lady Olivia. Theirs, however, is no whining love, as it remains in negotiation, and on equal terms, as Olivia accepts him only “when you please, where I please,” and she vows to him “the first Time thou anger’st me, I’le have a Gallant; And the next, make thee a Cuckold” (V.iv.58, 71-73). Wildish is thus still on the leading edge, and his wit “explores the limits and evasions, the blanks and overstatements of the conversational style” (Burns 27), but he need not be idealized, as he has a substantial wedge of gentlemen behind him.

One more major new play closes out this extraordinary 1667-1668 season, a year “memorable in the history of Restoration comedy” (Lynch 154): Dryden’s *An Evening’s Love; or, The Mock Astrologer*, at the King’s, with Hart and Gwynn again starring as the witty pair, in this case Wildblood and Jacintha. Despite Pepys’s report, from the publisher Henry Herringman,

that “Dryden doth himself call it but a fifth-rate play” (9.248), and its slight traces of “haste and weariness” (Moore 81), it was a decided success, with a nine-day opening run. Pepys, however, despite his enduring love for Dryden’s previous comedy, *Secret Love*, that “brilliant original” (Smith 66), was very much out of humour with this effort. Even “though the world commends” it, he “do not like it, it being very smutty, and nothing so good as” Dryden’s heroic plays; in his final estimation, the next year, he sums it up as “but an ordinary play” (9: 246-247, 475). Evelyn too attended a performance, and predictably found it “a foolish plot, & very prophane, so as it afflicted me to see how the stage was degenerated & poluted by the licentious times” (3: 510-511). Regardless, it was, according to Downes, a stock play during the 1670s (39-40), reprinted in 1672, 1675, and 1691, and was apparently a favorite of James’s, as it received a command performance at court in March 1686, and the royal pair came to see another public performance that October.

Though set in Spain, not alone enough to make it a “tarted-up Spanish romance,” so “love and honour” cannot vanish from it (Hume 267, 257), and relatively farcical, as Dryden outlines in his rather defensive preface, his aim is still to present “*natural actions, and characters*” (10: 203) in line with the recent trend in that direction and away from more romantic comedies.¹⁷¹ He regrets, though, having pandered “*too much to the people,*” and not having paid sufficient mind to the wits, adding that “*no man will ever decry wit, but he who despairs of it himself; and who has no other quarrel to it, but that which the Fox had to the Grapes*” (10: 206), clearly aligning himself with the learned wit of the aristocracy, its values and tastes, untouchable, on the trellis, particularly to the relatively uneducated cits, who thus deem wit sour and corrupt. He does express, however, definite defensiveness about his “mak[ing] debauch’d persons . .

.happy,” though he defends himself soundly with precedent from Plautus and Terence, as well as from Jonson’s “*the Silent Woman*” and “*almost all*” the “*Comedies*” of “*Beaumont and Fletcher*” (10: 208). “To reward virtue, and punish vice” he finds to be not so necessary in comedy, as it gets in the way of realism, of presenting the libertinism that he himself observes, and he defends the fifth-act marriage as sufficient to justify demands for morality to win out in the end, albeit after he has spent the first four-plus acts making “libertinism amiable” (10: 208, 210). The goal of this younger Dryden, still intent on marrying the best of Jonson and Fletcher, is to please neither cits nor moralists, from whom he felt no real threat, but rather to cater to the witty and libertine-leaning portion of his audience, still so clearly in the ascendant. Only as he got older, more staid and more moral, and less in fashion and in power, as he moved from “high comedy founded on heightening and wit” to “high comedy founded on naturalness and satire” (Moore 221), did Dryden more favor Shakespeare and bend more to the will of the then-ascending moralists.

Dryden here adds a decided note of realism by giving the action a precise time, “the last Evening of the Carnival” in “the Year 1665,” and by casting “two young *English* Gentlemen,” Wildblood and Bellamy, as his leads (*Persons Represented*). He thus offers a compromise between the romantic, fantasy Mediterranean of many a Fletcher play or of his own *Secret Love* and the immediacy of the London comedies of Etherege or of Jonson.¹⁷² Indeed he plays with this relationship between genres, as the lead gallants are two gentlemen from a high comedy of manners who have wandered into the midst of a Spanish intrigue; the “witty, professedly profligate” (Moore 77) Wildblood, “a maturer . . . Celadon” (Lynch 158), “hate[s] your *Spanish* honour, ever since it spoyl’d our *English* Playes, with faces about and t’other side” (V.i.157-

158).¹⁷³ They do make some effort to bridge the gap between the two worlds, as Wildblood admits he is, “to your Ladies . . . a very zealous Catholick; and for fornication and adulterie, I assure you I hold with both Churches” (I.ii.58-59), but refuses to go so far as to adopt an earnest, Idealistic code or even tone. The worlds, however, do remain separate, fair, free England, where, according to Bellamy, women “are *ferae naturae*; our common game, like Hare and Partridge: every man has equal right to them, as he has to the Sun and the Elements” (IV.ii.420-422), and a Spain obsessed with honor and limits and reputation. As for Bellamy, drawn rather against his will into being the titular Mock Astrologer, his “business is with” a lady’s “Beauty, not with her Morals: let her Confessor,” in this context necessarily a Spaniard, “look to them” (III.i.77-78). Materialism falls to the English gallants, and the Idealism is all on the Spanish side, as Bellamy, according to his servant Maskall, is not only “an utter stranger to the Stars,” but “indeed to any thing that belongs to heaven”; he, as does Wildblood, has “more mind to deal with the flesh than with the devil” (V.i.445-446, 441-442).

These two decidedly English wits are very much on the lookout for pleasure, and imagine that “three parts of four” of even “grave plodding fellows . . . are going to their Courtezans,” and thus value pleasure over all, for, to Wildblood, such is “the common design of humane kind” (I.i.55-63). This choice of “humane” instead of “man” too implies, well in line with Dryden’s general characterization, that female desire is differs little from male. These wits’ dialogue is aphoristic and rife with hunting metaphors, primarily the hawking one for themselves, Bellamy fearing that Wildblood desires to “come gingling with your bells in the neck of my Partridge,” and lesser sport for the servants, as Wildblood observes Bellamy’s servant Maskall with Beatrix, the woman to the two young ladies: “Look, there’s your Dog with a Duck in’s mouth—Oh, she’s got loose and div’d again” (I.i.19-20, 209-210). Their being witty Restoration gallants alone,

however, does not render them libertine heroes, though Wildblood is very close. Their world is rather too farcical, and Bellamy's central flaw is that his servant, Maskwell, in classical *servus callidus* form, is, albeit by no great degree, the wittier of the two. Not their wit, though, but rather Wildblood and Bellamy's honesty, and their plain-dealing, is what saves the day and gains them their Spanish brides, as this "son of a whore Farce that's regular" (*Epilogue* 18) closes with them ending "the Carnival abed" (V.i.564).

The 1667-68 season was an extraordinary one in that it featured the true debut, and nearly the dominance, of the libertine hero as a comic lead. Though every play from this season featuring a proto-libertine hero is not a clear advance towards the fully-realized libertine leads of the next decade, their sheer numbers and the variety of their characters clearly establish such figures and their philosophy as a valid. They all share the substantial parts, the high status, the underlying Materialism, and the profuse wit, though certain other stars in the constellation of qualities endemic to the full libertine hero still but flicker; it would take the dawn of the next decade for these sidereal glimmers to produce a steady light.

Scene VI: The End of the Decade.

The next two seasons, though, are relatively, albeit not entirely, light on libertinism and heavy on "action, farce, and . . . *risqué*," (Hume 265), though this is not necessarily indicative of a reaction. New plays of sufficient quality were still not being produced in a quantity sufficient to fit the demand, and, except for Dryden, Etherege, and Shadwell, the next, post-Restoration generation of playwrights had yet to arise. Thus, old courtiers, such as the Earl of Orrery, three

plays of whose were performed during the 1668-69 and 1669-70 seasons, retained still their popularity.¹⁷⁴ As for these three comic authors, Dryden had been ignoring Melpomene for some time, as his own discontent with *An Evening's Love* suggests, and would turn to the heroic drama for the next several years; Etherege, famously lazy, would not finish *The Man of Mode* until 1676, and Shadwell, reveling in his success, would not produce his sophomore original effort until late 1670.

The dominant voice in comedy over these two seasons, likely inspired by the “great popularity” (Moore 56) of *Sir Martin Mar-all*, is Molière’s. Though Dryden, Shadwell, and Sedley had recently borrowed and anglicized certain plot elements from the French master, the plays of these years are more direct adaptations, though still they downplay his “sober incarnations of good sense” (Lynch 170).¹⁷⁵ The 1668-69 season begins with Flecknoe’s *The Damoselles a la Mode*, a not entirely inept, though not particularly adept, mélange of several Molière plays, the next season with Lacy’s *The Dumb Lady; or, The Farrier Made Physician*, from *Le Médecin Malgré lui*, and the 1669-70 season ends with John Caryl’s *Sir Salomon; or, The Cautious Coxcomb*, from *L’Ecole des Femmes*, and Matthew Medbourne’s *Tartuffe; or, The French Puritan*.¹⁷⁶ Lacy borrows but the plot from his original, Medbourne offers, despite his claim on the title page to “*much Addition and Advantage*” but a few minor changes, and but a “wretched, inept, and often stupid translation” (Wilcox 60), and Caryl’s effort lies somewhere in between. Though all farcical, and decidedly below the aristocratic tier inhabited by the libertine hero, these last three all chime in to a degree with the freedom and license now an integral part of the English stage.

Though Flecknoe, whose hope is that, “like the *Bee*,” he has “extracted the spirit of” several plays of Molière’s “into a certain Quintessence of mine own” (*Preface*), “with the

inevitable result, a horrid failure” (Summers *Playhouse* 212), cleaves closely to the morality of his originals, Lacy’s third offering most certainly does not. Like his other plays, this one is a bawdy, witty, and uproarious farce functioning largely as a vehicle for his own performance in the lead role, à la Molière. To his credit, though, Lacy “perform’d all Parts that he undertook to a miracle,” in Langbaine’s eyes, and, hypersensitive to plagiarism as these eyes were, “he has much improv’d the French Play” (317-318). Molière provides but the frame of a plot that Lacy, far more than but another of these “uninspired adapters” (Lynch 159), adorns according to his own lights, lurid-looking to later moralists but shimmering in his day, with a “net effect” greater than merely “to coarsen the tone and remove the point of a cleverly satirical farce” (Hume 263). Though the titular farrier, changed from a woodcutter and renamed Drench, and Lacy’s witty characters in general, are rising mechanics rather than diving aristocrats, they arrive at the same Materialistic center; according to the newly-coined doctor, addressing the reservations of his nurse he is attempting to seduce, “there is no such thing as honesty! The word honesty is a mere bugbear that jealous husbands invented to keep women in awe with, as raw-head and bloody-bones frights children; that’s all, i’ faith,” and for his evidence, he cites the reverend authority, “St. Aratine” (III.i.p.58-59). Such a passage, needless to say, has no parallel in the speeches of Sganarelle. Such low, farcical leads in Molière’s originals and in earlier English drama, extending back as far as the vices in morality plays, had long exhibited libertine tendencies, but never before had they expressed and defended these desires so forcefully.

Caryl’s *Sir Salomon; or, The Cautious Coxcomb*, “a capital piece of work” (Summers, *Playhouse* 369) full of “bounce and bustle” (Hume 263), offers, like Lacy, *basse comédie* in the continental style. As the prologue warns, though, the play “wants of Gyant-Wit the brawny-strength, / And is but *Punchinello* drawn at length.” Though he does effectively

anglicize Molière, rendering his play “essentially British,” still the underlying morality is far more Molière than Etherege, as the “play is clean verbally and free from mockery of conventional moral standards” (Wilcox 56), and thus savors not at all of libertinism. He does, at least, offer a neat definition of nature, “the blind side of our Reason; the soft place in our Souls” (I.i.p.3), and presages Wycherley’s later take on essentially the same plot in *The Country Wife*.¹⁷⁷ The player Medbourne’s *Tartuffe; or, The French Puritan* has rather less than Caryl to offer.¹⁷⁸ Though such a subject, the revelation of hypocrisy in a canting non-conformist, had long been a common theme amenable to the English stage, this is, oddly, the only use of this material during the Restoration; then again, at this point in time, such would be but flogging an already well-whipped horse.¹⁷⁹ Medbourne, in this fairly direct, if poor, translation, though, does adapt his source somewhat to his milieu, representing Tartuffe in terms redolent of the commercial classes, as he makes “Religion a mere merchandise, / Thinking to gain a credit and esteem” (I.p.10), and two servants do fully intend to be as “frolicksom as the most wanton Courtier” (II.p.26).

Even these four Molièrian adaptations, though they represent a strain of English comedy more focused on producing guffaws (granted, a perfectly respectable goal) than on wit, contain traces of their time, and have a libertine-leaning audience in view. And even this most Molièrian period of the Restoration was “not sufficient to alter in any serious way the national tastes of the audience” (Nicoll 179), among whom Materialism, and not Molière’s bourgeois Idealism, had become the dominant, though never the sole, comic philosophy. Restoration comedies were not designed to appeal to but a “special society” any more than were Molière’s. The view of Meredith and his followers, for example Perry and Lynch, that Molière is “broadly human,” yet promotes “a single standard” (Lynch 171, 214), whereas the Restoration dramatists were constrained by fashion to follow a certain, narrow though paradoxically loose code, is more a

product of Molière's more traditional, Christian-humanist moral code having won out, and thus resembling that held by the majority of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cultural elite, than any uninterested measure of the universality and profundity of the Restoration comic code.

The older plays that debuted during these years, with the exception of Shirley's *The Grateful Servant*, are largely the heretofore neglected works of already popular playwrights whose voices and influence on the development of court and town culture were already well established.¹⁸⁰ The works of a few occasional Caroline playwrights, Jasper Mayne's *The City Match*, William Habington's *The Queen of Aragon*, and Sir John Denham's *The Sophy*, however, do have some small things to add here on the doorstep of the high Restoration.

The City-Match of Jasper Mayne, clergyman and royalist, and still alive and in comfortable preferment at the revival of his play, though set amongst merchants, still focuses on the triumph of young gallants' wit. Their roaring is but imitative, but they do use their shiftiness to overcome the strictures of their mercantile elders with plenty of mocking of *nouveau riche* tradesmen and puritanical servants along the way. One of younger generation, the poet Salewit, even adopts the pose of a faux-French curate and, in performing a mock marriage, reads "a fiction out of Rab'lais to 'em / in a religious tone, which [the groom] believes / For good French liturgy" (V.i.p.295).

William Habington's romance *The Queen of Arragon*, otherwise irrelevant, if finely wrought, contains one particular speech, delivered by the "half-witted lord" Sanmartino concerning the "sober courtier" Oniate (*dramatis personae*), that neatly defines the stereotypical qualities of a good cavalier of Charles I's reign:

You mistake him, madam.
Though he talk positive, and bustle 'mong
The sober lords, pretend to embassies
And state-designs all day; he's one of us
At night; he'll play, he'll drink,--you guess the rest.
He'll quarrel too, then underhand compound.
Why, for a need he'll jeer and speak profane;
Court, and then laugh at her he courted. Madam,
Forgive him his pretence to gravitie,
And he's an absolute cavalier. (III.p.363)

What has changed between the waning days of Charles I's court and the waxing days of his son's is not so much the behavior of courtiers and wits and town gallants, but rather the valuation placed thereupon; such behavior is no longer only that of the corrupt, foolish, or vicious, but also, at least in part, that of the wise.

Despite his continued presence and considerable reputation as a wit, Sir John Denham's only play, for whatever reason, did not reach the Restoration stage until almost a year after his death on 10 March, 1669. Though an uneven tragedy of one obviously new to stagecraft, and purposefully bereft of "bawdy mirth," which the playwright still associates with "bottle ale and double beere" ("Prologue at the Fryers"), *The Sophy* still shows some fine flashes. The exotic, Islamic setting allows the playwright to get away with condemning topically the uses to which religion is put, and having Solyman, a foolish-but-wise courtier, refer to his lesser sins as "some few trifles more, not worth the remembring; drinking, and whoring, and swearing, and such like;

but for those let 'em pass" (IV.i.142-144) presages such speeches that begin, in the 1660s, to issue from the mouths of witty lords.

Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, contributed another high, heroic romance, *Tryphon*, set in the world where "Inconstancy Rules only in the Low" (IV.iv.454), but he also tried his hand at comedy during these years during which the popularity of his romances began to wane, twice in fact, with *Guzman* and *Mr. Anthony*; "*Guzman* took very well, the other but indifferent" (Downes 62). The former of these, opening inauspiciously with the word "weep," is Shirlean, humorous in an upper-class Jonsonian way, well colored, but entirely within the lines, and rather too "heavy-handed" in its "sodden language" for its genre (Hume 258). Tame ideologically and bawdy-wise, it does enforce that gentlefolk born, regardless of wealth, should not mix with the lower orders, and that riches and beauty are the ideal, but, failing that, courage and tricksiness will do. In *Mr. Anthony*, however, the Earl, sensing the tenor of the times, tries his hand at high, witty comedy. He casts his eponymous hero as an erstwhile gentleman-scholar, now converted to keeping "a Lewd Debauch'd Society," who fully realizes--though technically referring to being "a Tyrant"--that "we only inveigh against the Name, because we cannot be the thing" (I.92-93, 28, 29-30), again like Dryden's fox and his grapes. Anthony, though, who "never got any thing from a Female but a Clap" (V.i.62-63), and his companion Cudden are but "a brace of noodles" (Summers, *Playhouse* 242), fooled by both the ladies and by their elders, and they lose their brides to the generationally-intermediate Mr. Plot and Mr. Art. The play still values wit over honorable abstractions, though, quite a concession from the first author to attempt a Platonick romance, *Parthenissa*, in English, and arguably the founder of the heroic drama.

The remaining new tragedies, Dryden's *Tyrannick Love; or, The Royal Martyr* and William Joyner's *The Roman Empress*, are both entirely earnest. Dryden, fed up with comedy,

here returns to his tragic muse with a vengeance, despite realizing the work, in his famous epilogue, to be a “godly out of fashion Play” the viewing of which will make the audience, much to their discredit, “be thought devout,” and Joyner viciously denigrates his one Materialistic character, the ironically-named Honorius, in his preface, referring to “his horrid opinions” and his “false Pagan Gallantry.” As for the mixed genres, *Marcelia; or, The Treacherous Friend*, by Mrs. Boothby, an unfortunate attempt to stuff every sort of play into one, is notable but for being the first original play by a woman performed on the English professional stage.¹⁸¹ *The Royal Shepherdess*, Shadwell’s stageworthy rendering of his recently deceased friend John Fountain’s 1661 pastoral *The Rewards of Virtue*, is not without interest, though. Still essentially a high romance in the Caroline mode, Shadwell adapts it somewhat to suit the tastes and philosophy of 1669, and has much to say in his preface.

In classic Caroline style, *The Royal Shepherdess* features pseudo-shepherds debating the merits of the Platonick system. Other, Materialist opinions, however, do get a clear airing, and Neander, “a Vain Lord of high birth” (*The Persons*) in Fountain’s original, whom Shadwell transforms into “a vain, cowardly, vicious, effeminate Lord” (*Dramatis Personae*), is their main conduit. While for Fountain he is simply arrogant and disdains to mix with the lower orders, Shadwell has Neander rail at some length against the hypocrisy of the Idealistic, aristocratic code:

Honour! The Fools Paradise, a bait
For Coxcombs that are poor, and cannot have
Pleasure and Ease; but sell their Wretched lives
(That are not worth the keeping) for that Trifle
Honour; the breath of a few Giddy People (I.i.p.104).

Though the lead characters, and thus the play, roundly condemn his views, and the play is, for the most part, “insistently moralistic” (Burns12), he does voice them with a force and clarity beyond that of the Caroline anti-Platonicks, and he is not alone in his opinions. The virtuous Arcadian priest also sees and expresses the inherent flaws in Arcadian hyper-Idealism in a passage that Shadwell takes *verbatim* from Fountain:

. . .the Vertuous still fix their Eyes
On the Command, not the Temptation,
And think’t enough, if what Heaven gives as Law
Be possible, although not Natural
(Fountain IV.p.63; Shadwell IV.iii.p.152).

Once “divine” dictates come to be viewed as unnatural, become arbitrary and contrary to human reason and desire, the edifice of earnest and official morality totters. Here, even in an unperformed Platonick pastoral of 1661, and repeated on the stage eight years later when the cracks had grown wider, is a priest sapping this structure, the same that the Restoration libertine heroes would do their best to topple.

That libertine heroes and their philosophy and its expression are what the audience now desires Shadwell makes clear in his address “To the Reader”: the play “might have been better received had . . . good Manners [not been] strictly observed in it: (Virtue being exalted, and Vice depressed).” Shadwell thinks his audience wants “most to see Vice encouraged, by bringing the Characters of debauch’d People upon the Stage, and making them pass for fine Gentlemen, who openly profess Swearing, Drinking, Whoring, breaking Windows, beating Constables, &c. “ (“To the Reader”); they desire the “Baudy jest, / To make the Ladies bite their Lips, and then / To be applauded by the Gentlemen” (*Prologue*). All this he is more than willing to provide, and

had in *The Sullen Lovers*, and would in the future, though somewhat less so than most of his fellow playwrights. More importantly, however, Materialist philosophy infuses his early plays, so such acts are negative only as they are vulgar; his objection is not so much with libertinism as with roaring it about in the streets. What he objects to is playwrights being “onley to the Ruffians kind” (*Prologue*), not to mildly libertine drama, for in his 1671 preface to *The Humorists*, he praises Etherege’s “*She would if she could*” as “the best Comedy that has been written since the Restauration of the Stage.”¹⁸²

One other play deserving of a brief mention is the underrated Sir Robert Howard’s sixth and last, *The Country Gentleman*. This very funny *basse comédie* and political satire, “cheerful, lively, and full of brisk dialogue” (Hume 261), tragically banned on the eve of its production due to a scene of personal satire contributed by the Duke of Buckingham, as with Robert Howard’s other comedies, breaks little new cultural ground, offering rather the more “severely decorous” side of the aristocracy, with nary a hint “of the libertine ethic” (Hume 261).¹⁸³ The two wits Worthy and Lovetruth, however, fear not social diving; Worthy prefers “lusty ale” (I.i.346) to sack and takes up the cause of the witty barber Roger Trim and his witty daughters. The enemy they share with the libertine heroes is above all the hypocrite, and like them are more than willing to take anyone into the fold in whom wit and honest *joie de vivre* trumps affectation and earnestness.

These last plays of the decade do drift somewhat away from the libertine ethos that pervades the 1667-1668 season. They do not, however, abandon it entirely, and represent but a temporary halt to progress, not a turning back. The next, 1670-1671 season would see libertinism setting and progressing on to its high Restoration triumphs, built on a base already

well established in the Restoration's first decade, in turn built on the foundation of Fletcher and the Carolines.

Most, if not all of these proto-libertine heroes of the 1660s fall under the rubric, “quintessentially, Celadon” and Loveby, Sir Frederick Frolick, and Don John in “more subdued form” (69), of what Robert Jordan somewhat sketchily and decidedly atemporally defines as the “extravagant rake,” a positive type of the wild young gallant who, with an almost “frantic intensity” (70), “cannot take himself, or anybody else, at all seriously,” particularly “when the subject is love,” best illustrated by his “extravagance of language” and overflowing wit, along with a “breezy vanity, the taste for boasting, and the enormous self-assurance” (70, 72, 73). He is never quite exemplary, though the fact that the “more conventional hero” and other high characters are “quite ready to accept him as a friend no matter how psychologically implausible that may seem,” that “he has self-awareness,” and, crucially, “he is what he wants to be” (78, 76) do make him a hero and no humour and thus his philosophy and sanguinity a positive quality.¹⁸⁴ What he lacks, and indeed what all the Renaissance and early Restoration proto-libertine heroes, none of whom falls into Jordan's category of the “normal . . . rake,” want next to the “more judicious” libertine heroes of the High Restoration, is the “cool sophistication even in their pleasures” (83, 84, 83). This panache, due somewhat to the leads tending to be older, expresses itself in the increased judgment-wit that accompanies their still-abundant fancy-wit, a product also of the confidence born of the second decade in which theirs has been, if not the only, at least one fully-accepted philosophy of the ruling class.

The story of the evolution of Restoration drama, even of Restoration comedy, is the story of immensely more than just the work of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, and far more than

just the rise of the libertine hero, of even of Materialistic philosophy, or even of the increasing predominance of wit. Comedies featuring exemplary leads expressing decidedly libertine sentiments through pointed wit and sophisticated repartee never constituted more than at most a quarter of all plays, even in the high Restoration, performed in any given season. Most nights, particularly in the 1660s, were given over to revivals of Renaissance plays, and farce and high passions never lost their place: courtiers guffawed at characters getting knocked on the head, and whores wept at the plight of maidens caught in villainous snares; ladies snickered at subtle references to what they, of course, knew nothing about, and the lackeys in the heavens felt martial valor stirring in their breasts. Far from being merely a refuge for a debauched, churning mass of drunken lords and whores half-regarding either wickedly clever vice or ludicrously histrionic bombast, the playhouses were houses of masterfully-delivered instruction where Londoners resorted to learn both how to live and what to aspire to. Above all, though, they were houses of communal pleasure.

John Downes, reminiscing about his years as the prompter at the Duke's house, shares only a few anecdotes in his *Roscius Anglicanus*, and this is one of them, regarding a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*:

There being a Fight and Scuffle in this Play, between the House of *Capulet*, and the House of *Paris*; Mrs. *Holden* Acting his Wife, enter'd in a *Hurry*, Crying, O my Dear *Count*! She Inadvertently left out, O, in the pronounciation of the Word *Count*! Giving it a Vehement Accent, put the House into such a Laughter, that *London Bridge* at low Water was silence to it. (53)¹⁸⁵

Such moments of spontaneous, shared pleasure, scripted or inadvertent, so memorable as to remain as one of the highlights of an over forty year career, are the essence of theater. What

separates the Restoration theater, however, from other stages is that such moments, so revelatory of the constant *agon* between culture and its underlying materiality, between restrictive social codes and individual desire, were, for a brief space, that “fat age of pleasure” when “Virgins smil’d at what they blush’d before” and after (Pope, “Essay on Criticism” 534, 543), enjoyed almost without let or hindrance by the socio-economic elite.

The barest essence of the libertine hero’s philosophy, that whatever gives pleasure is good, percolated increasingly throughout the theater of the period, and not just in the high comedies in which he rendered this notion explicit and intellectual and justifiable and appealing. And early libertine heroes, expanding and evolving from their prototypes in Fletcher and others, grew more refined throughout the 1660s, budding in the first few years and blooming after the reopening of the theaters; their full flower, however, would arrive only with the next decade.

CONCLUSION

The 1660s were a transitional period for the nation, and even more so for the theater; eighteen long years had passed since plans for the production of Shirley's *The Court Secret* had been so rudely interrupted, and the revived theaters were faced with the task of first spanning that ravine and then forging onward. The dramatic tradition, however, had been kept alive by the printing of plays and by surreptitious performances, and most of the important actors, Thomas Killigrew, and, most crucially, Sir William Davenant were poised to do just that. Despite significant changes, primarily the introduction of actresses and the new, far more elaborate stages with their moveable scenes, the early Restoration theaters continued the Caroline tradition remarkably seamlessly. The gulf only appears gaping when the Renaissance is viewed as essentially the age of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Middleton, Webster, and Ford. Following the line of Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, Shirley, and Davenant, with Jonson bridging the two streams, however, reveals a clear channel of development flowing into the work of Dryden and Etherege and their peers. The libertinism that was a fundamental and constantly developing current in this later tradition had come in with the Stuarts and the private theaters; it would take the civil wars and Hobbes and the long exile, though, for it to crystallize into its Restoration expression. This expression, though, was still badly in want of polish, its facets muddy and rough; by the end of the Restoration's first decade, it was diamond-keen.

The trends established during the 1660s would surge into the next; "the plays of the sixties were not very dissolute" (Hume 25) compared to those of the High Restoration, or even those of the 1690s, where characters do still exercise substantial license before their reforms.

These early libertine heroes tended to be more joyful and less Machiavellian, more about sensual pleasures than the pleasures of control, and they expressed more purely fancy-wit than fancy leavened with judgment. They would give way to the next phase, that of, as Smith calls it, “cynical sex comedy” (85), plays in which cuckolding by the lead is often at least strongly implied, and frequent intimate conversations occur during play-time; these appear first in the 1670-1671 season with Betterton’s *The Amorous Widow; or, The Wanton Wife* and Wycherley’s *Love in a Wood; or, St. James’s Park*. In these plays of the 1670s, Dorimant, Horner, and their brother libertine heroes come into their inheritance, wielding wit with a force and subtlety and confident ease that Fletcher’s wild gallants could only dream of.

The days of glorying for the libertine hero, and for all of Restoration drama, were 1670s, a period of relative peace and prosperity during which the theater, not a part of the economic base as it is, could flourish, and playwrights, free from party or faction, could continue to explore new forms of expression and better ways of living. Libertinism during this decade to a degree developed linearly but, perhaps more accurately, broadened; the old types remained, and new permutations of the same basic philosophy, and of the same types in different situations, flourished.

Such a halcyon period could not last, however, and with the first glimmerings of the Popish Plot at the decade’s close came its climax. In a city now inflamed with intestine broils and obsessed with questions of Whig and Tory, the theater became somewhat of an afterthought, though also an instrument of Tory propaganda, albeit a very clever one. Along with poor management, this obsession with faction also led to the folding of the King’s company in 1682. After several years of being sapped and harried, when the nation settled again after 1688, the

stage, though similar, was no longer that of ten years previous; something had been lost that would not return. Libertinism was not dead, but it had shifted and was compromised, and had lost its prominent advocates and the vigor of the resurgent aristocracy.

The courtship and the bachelor (and bachelorette) party for the aristocracy and its comic exemplar had come to a close with the passing of Charles II. The libertine hero and his class was, in 1688, compelled into a marriage of alliance with the commercial classes and their accompanying brand of pragmatic Idealism. Though he enjoyed a honeymoon of sorts straddling the turn of the new century, the bonds were tightening, and, as an exemplary cultural figure, by mid-century the libertine hero had enervated into a wan husk. His still-pretty corpse was luridly reanimated by Byron for a space in the early nineteenth century, and his spectre summoned by Lamb, Hazlitt, and Hunt, but he was then banished by the Victorians to the realm of the unspeakable and irrelevant.

Though doubtless always attractive to a sophisticated coterie, only in the late twentieth century has the libertine hero and his philosophy returned to at least a scholarly, if not popular, prominence. Materialism in its scientific form has, since its rise in the seventeenth century, become perhaps the keystone of Western thought. With regards to interpersonal relationships, however, Idealism has retained its sway despite periodic waxing and waning. The past fifty-odd years, though, have seen steady erosion of Christian-humanist ideals, and the ideals that have rushed in to fill this vanished solidity, for example the quest for a soul-mate and the primacy of tolerance, fill the void with little of substance. In these conditions libertinism, and its leading men, have already begun a resurgence, and are well equipped to continue their advance. Ever present, though still by nature unlikely to ever become hegemonic, the philosophy of the libertine

heroes may well be once again cresting to the prominence among the elite it enjoyed in the golden spring and summer under the aegis of Charles II.

EPILOGUE

In dawning days when Fletcher ruled the scene,
Were culled from him new heroes, yet still green;
Sir Frederick, Careless, Wild, Clearcus too
The early prototypes from whom then grew,
The more mature expressions like Don John
That crystalline exub'rance Celadon,
From Shakespeare's isle Hippolito too reared,
His untaught head with freedom that then cleared,
A fresh new path to tread the moral feared.
The way now clear the wits now trod in pairs,
The wiser Courtall taught to Freeman airs,
Dissimulation, charm, ability
That Wildblood too held over Bellamy.
And Wildish shared with Estridge all his wit,
Though not enough to make their play a hit.
The days of glory next, but *tempus fugit*,
When faction rose the libertine would lose it
The climax eighty-eight, the King displaced,

The hard-edged libertine was soon effaced.
He lingered, weakened, waiting to convert,
Polite now, soon a sentimental flirt.
He fell, at last, his province overrun,
By hordes of men of sense who saw his fun
They could not reach, so nor could anyone.
His reason's power lingered for a few,
But not for those who told us what to do.
His rule now lost, in exile he did roam;
He had no place in th'upright, moral home.
The primacy of matter still held sway,
But only with the dead and sparkless clay.
His reason, though, it told him man's a beast,
But told him that was good, that life's a feast,
That sense's pleasures, play of wit and mind,
Are all we know, abstractions do not bind
To ideal codes, so we should then be free;
And if we listen, then we still can be.

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APPENDIX

All the Extant Plays Known to have been Performed in London from the Reopening of the Theaters to the End of the 1669-1670

Season, in Chronological Order by Date of First Performance, with Author, Period of Origin, Genre, Auspices,
Setting, and Degree of Relevance to the Development of the Libertine Hero Provided.

Title (in order of date of first known performance)	Author	Period of Origin	Genre ¹⁸⁶	Auspices	Setting	Degree of Relevance to the Development of the Libertine Hero (1-5)
<i>The Rump; or, The Mirrour of the Late Times</i>	John Tatham	Interregnum	Comedy	London	England	3
<i>Epicoene; or, The Silent Woman</i>	Ben Jonson	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	London	4
<i>The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed</i>	John Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>The Loyal Subject</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Romance- Comedy	King's	Moscow	3
<i>Othello; or, The Moor of Venice</i>	William Shakespeare	Jacobean	Tragedy	King's	Venice	1
<i>Wit without Money</i>	John Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	London	5
<i>The Traitor</i>	James Shirley	Caroline	Tragedy	King's	Florence	1
<i>The Beggars' Bush</i>	Fletcher, Francis Beaumont, & Philip Massinger	Jacobean	Romance- Comedy	King's	Ghent, Bruges	3
<i>Henry the Fourth [Part 1]</i>	William Shakespeare	Elizabethan	Romance- Comedy	King's	England	3

<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	Shakespeare	Elizabethan	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>Philaster; or, Love Lies a-Bleeding</i>	Beaumont & Fletcher	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	King's	Sicily	2
<i>Love's Cruelty</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Tragedy	King's	Ferrara	2
<i>The Widow</i>	Thomas Middleton ¹⁸⁷	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	Capo D'Istria	2
<i>The Maid's Tragedy</i>	Beaumont & Fletcher	Jacobean	Tragedy	King's	Rhodes	1
<i>The Unfortunate Lovers</i>	Sir William Davenant	Caroline	Tragedy	King's ¹⁸⁸	Verona	1
<i>The Scornful Lady</i>	Beaumont & Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	London	4
<i>The Elder Brother</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	France	3
<i>The Chances</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	King's	Bologna	5
<i>The Opportunity</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Comedy	King's	Urbino	3
<i>The Humorous Lieutenant</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	King's	Greece	3
<i>The Alchemist</i>	Jonson	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	London	2
<i>Claracilla</i>	Thomas Killigrew	Caroline	Romance	King's	Sicily	4
<i>A King and no King</i>	Beaumont & Fletcher	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	King's	Armenia, Iberia	3
<i>Rollo, Duke of Normandy; or, The Bloody Brother</i>	Fletcher, Massinger, Chapman, Jonson	Jacobean	Tragedy	King's	Caen, Rouen	2
1661						1661
<i>The Wedding</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Romance-Comedy	King's	London	2

<i>The Lost Lady</i>	William Berkeley	Caroline	Romance-Comedy	King's	Greece	3
<i>The Maid in the Mill</i>	Fletcher & William Rowley	Jacobean	Comedy	Duke's ¹⁸⁹	Toledo	3
<i>Argalus and Parthenia</i>	Henry Glapthorne	Caroline	Romance	King's	Arcadia	2
<i>The Mad Lover</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Paphos	2
<i>The Virgin Martyr</i>	Massinger & Thomas Dekker	Jacobean	Tragedy	King's	Caesarea	2
<i>The Changeling</i>	Middleton & Rowley	Jacobean	Tragedy	Duke's	Alicante	1
<i>The Bondman</i>	Massinger	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Syracuse	2
<i>Love's Mistress; or, The Queen's Mask</i>	Thomas Heywood	Caroline	Romance	Duke's	Greece, Olympus	1
<i>The Spanish Curate</i>	Fletcher & Massinger	Jacobean	Comedy	Duke's	Cordova	4
<i>All's Lost by Lust</i>	William Rowley	Jacobean	Tragi-Comedy	Rogue Company ¹⁹⁰	Spain	2
<i>Rule a Wife and Have a Wife</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	Duke's	Valladolid	3
<i>The Night Walker; or, The Little Thief</i>	Fletcher, rev. Shirley	Jacobean / Caroline	Comedy	Duke's	London	3
<i>The Poor Man's Comfort</i>	Robert Daborne	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	Rogue Company	Thessaly	2
<i>Bartholomew Fair</i>	Jonson	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	Smithfield	2

<i>The Siege of Rhodes</i> Parts I & II	Davenant	Interregnum	Tragedy	Duke's	Rhodes	1
<i>Brennoralt; or, The Discontented Colonel</i>	Sir John Suckling	Caroline	Tragedy	King's	Poland	4
<i>A Jovial Crew</i>	Richard Brome	Caroline	Comedy	King's	England	2
<i>The Merry Devil of Edmonton</i>	?	Elizabethan	Comedy	King's	Edmonton	2
<i>The Wits</i>	Davenant	Caroline	Comedy	Duke's	London	2
<i>Hamlet, Prince of Denmark</i>	Shakespeare	Elizabethan	Tragedy	Duke's	Elsinore	1
<i>The Antipodes</i>	Brome	Caroline	Comedy	King's	London	2
End 1660-1661 Season						Begin 1661-1662 Season
<i>'Tis Pity She's a Whore</i>	John Ford	Caroline	Tragedy	Rogue Company	Parma	1
<i>Twelfth Night; or, What You Will</i>	Shakespeare	Elizabethan	Comedy	Duke's	Illyria	2
<i>Monsieur Thomas; or, Father's Own Son</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	London	5
<i>The White Devil; or, Vittoria Corombona</i>	John Webster	Jacobean	Tragedy	King's	Rome, Padua	2
<i>Love and Honour</i>	Davenant	Caroline	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Savoy, Turin	2
<i>The Country Captain; or, Captain Underwit</i>	William Cavendish, Earl (later Duke) of Newcastle	Caroline	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>The Princess; or, Love at First Sight</i>	T. Killigrew	Caroline	Romance	King's	Naples, Sicily	3
<i>The Variety; or, The Dancing Master</i>	Newcastle	Caroline	Comedy	King's	London	3

<i>Cutter of Coleman Street</i>	Abraham Cowley	Caroline / Restoration 191	Comedy	Duke's	London	3
<i>Aglaura</i>	Suckling	Caroline	Tragedy / Romance 192	King's	Persia	4
<i>Bussy D'Amboise</i>	George Chapman	Jacobean	Tragedy	King's	Paris	1
1662						1662
<i>A New Way to Pay Old Debts</i>	Massinger	Jacobean	Comedy	Rogue Company	London	3
<i>The Law against Lovers</i>	Davenant from Shakespeare	Elizabethan / Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	Turin	3
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Shakespeare	Elizabethan	Tragedy / Romance 193	Duke's	Verona	1
<i>Selindra</i>	Sir William Killigrew	Restoration	Romance	King's	Byzantium	1
<i>The Fair Maid of the West; or, A Girl Worth Gold [Part I]</i>	Thomas Heywood	Jacobean	Romance	Rogue Company	England, the Azores, at Sea, Morocco	1
<i>The Northern Lass</i>	Brome	Caroline	Comedy	King's	London	2
<i>The Surprisal</i>	Sir Robert Howard	Restoration	Romance- Comedy	King's	Sienna	2
<i>The Knight of the Burning Pestle</i>	Beaumont	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	London	2
<i>Changes; or, Love in a Maze</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>Wit in a Constable</i>	Glapthorne	Caroline	Comedy	Duke's	London	3
<i>Doctor Faustus</i>	Christopher Marlowe	Elizabethan	Tragedy	Rogue Company	Germany, Rome	1
<i>The Brothers; or, The Politique Father</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Comedy	King's	Madrid	4

<i>The Cardinal</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Tragedy	King's	Navarre	1
End 1661-1662 Season						Begin 1662-1663 Season
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Shakespeare	Elizabethan	Comedy	King's	Athens	1
<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	Webster	Jacobean	Tragedy	Duke's	Amalfi, Rome Loretto, Milan	2
<i>Volpone; or, The Fox</i>	Jonson	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	Venice	3
<i>The Villain</i>	Thomas Porter	Restoration	Tragedy	Duke's	Tours	2
<i>Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay</i>	Robert Greene	Elizabethan	Tragedy	Rogue Company	England	1
<i>Ignoramus, the Academical Lawyer</i>	Parkhurst from Ruggle	Jacobean / Restoration	Comedy	At Court	Bordeaux	2
<i>The Young Admiral</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Romance-Comedy	At Court	Naples	2
<i>The Committee</i>	R. Howard	Restoration	Comedy	At Court (King's)	London	2
<i>The Valiant Cid</i>	? from Pierre Corneille	French	Tragedy	Duke's	Seville	1
1663						1663
<i>The Adventures of Five Hours</i>	Sir Samuel Tuke	Restoration	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Seville	1
<i>The Wild Gallant</i>	John Dryden	Restoration	Comedy	King's	London	4
<i>The Marriage Night</i>	Henry Cary, Viscount Falkland	Restoration	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Castile	1
<i>Elvira; or, The Worst Not Always True</i>	George Digby, Earl of Bristol	Restoration	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Valencia	1
<i>The Slighted Maid</i>	Sir Robert Stapylton	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	Naples	3
<i>The Step-Mother</i>	Stapylton	Restoration	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Verulam	2
<i>The Cheats</i>	John Wilson	Restoration	Comedy	King's	London	3

<i>The Carnival</i>	Porter	Restoration	Comedy	King's	Seville	4
<i>The Faithful Shepherdess</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	King's	Thessaly	2
<i>The English Monsieur</i>	James Howard	Restoration	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>Playhouse to be Let</i>	Davenant	Interregnum & Restoration	Various	Duke's	Various	1
End 1662-1663 Season						Begin 1663-1664 Season
<i>Flora's Vagaries</i>	Richard Rhodes	Restoration	Comedy	King's	Italy	3
<i>Henry VIII</i>	Davenant? From Shakespeare and Fletcher	Jacobean / Restoration	Romance	Duke's	London, Kimbolton	1
1664						1664
<i>Pompey the Great</i>	Five Gentlemen of Quality from P. Corneille	French	Tragedy	Duke's	Egypt	1
<i>The Usurper</i>	Edward Howard	Restoration	Tragedy	King's	Sicily	2
<i>The Indian Queen</i>	R. Howard & Dryden	Restoration	Romance	King's	Mexico	1
<i>King Lear</i>	Shakespeare	Jacobean	Tragedy	Duke's	Britain	1
<i>Love's Kingdom</i>	Richard Flecknoe	Restoration	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Cyprus	1
<i>Heraclius</i>	? from P. Corneille	French	Tragedy	Duke's	Constantinople	1
<i>The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub</i>	George Etherege	Restoration	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	London	5
<i>Pandora; or, The Converts</i>	W. Killigrew	Restoration	Comedy ¹⁹⁴	Duke's	Syracutia	5
<i>The Rival Ladies</i>	Dryden	Restoration	Romance-Comedy	King's	Alicante	2
<i>Henry the Fifth</i>	Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery	Restoration	Romance	Duke's	France	1

<i>The Court Secret</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Romance- Comedy	King's	Navarre	1
<i>The Old Troop; or, Monsieur Raggou</i>	John Lacy	Restoration	Comedy	King's	England	3
<i>The Vestal Virgin; or, The Roman Ladies</i>	R. Howard	Restoration	Tragedy / Romance 195	King's	Rome	1
<i>Amorous Orontus; or, The Love in Fashion</i>	John Bulteel from Thomas Corneille	French	Comedy	King's	Southern Europe*	2
End 1663-1664 Season						Begin 1664-1665 Season
<i>The Rivals</i>	Davenant from <i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>	Jacobean / Restoration	Romance- Comedy	Duke's	Arcadia	2
<i>The General</i>	Orrery	Restoration	Romance	King's	Sicily	1
<i>The Parson's Wedding</i>	T. Killigrew	Caroline & Restoration 196	Comedy	King's	London	5
<i>Macbeth</i>	Davenant from Shakespeare	Jacobean / Restoration	Tragedy	Duke's	Scotland	1
1665						1665
<i>The Indian Emperour; or, The Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards</i>	Dryden	Restoration	Tragedy	King's	Mexico	1
<i>Mustapha, the Son of Solyman the Magnificent</i>	Orrery	Restoration	Tragedy	King's	Hungary	1
End 1664-1665 Season						Begin 1666-1667 Season
1667						1667
<i>The Custom of the Country</i>	Fletcher & Massinger	Jacobean	Romance- Comedy	King's	Italy, Lisbon	3

<i>The Goblins</i>	Suckling	Caroline	Comedy	King's	Francelia	4
<i>The Chances</i>	George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham from Fletcher	Jacobean / Restoration	Comedy	King's	Naples	4
<i>Secret Love; or, The Maiden Queen</i>	Dryden	Restoration	Romance- Comedy	King's	Sicily	5
<i>The English Princess; or, The Death of Richard III</i>	John Caryl	Restoration	Tragedy	Duke's	England	1
<i>The Humorous Lovers</i>	Newcastle	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	London	3
<i>Sauny the Scot; or, The Taming of the Shrew</i>	Lacy from Shakespeare	Elizabethan / Restoration	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>The Change of Crowns</i>	E. Howard	Restoration	Romance	King's	Naples	1
<i>Love Tricks; or, The School of Complements</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Comedy	King's	Italy*	2
<i>Sir Martin Mar-All; or, Feigned Innocence</i>	Newcastle & Dryden	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	Covent Garden	3
End 1666-1667 Season						Begin 1667-1668 Season
<i>Tu Quoque; or, The City Gallants</i>	Davenant from John Cooke	Jacobean / Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	London	2
<i>All Mistaken; or, The Mad Couple</i>	J. Howard	Restoration	Romance- Comedy	King's	Italy	5
<i>The Sea Voyage; or, The Storm</i>	Fletcher & Massinger	Jacobean	Romance- Comedy	King's	At sea, Desert Island, Isle of the Amazons	3
<i>Tarugo's Wiles; or, The Coffee House</i>	Thomas St. Serfe	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	Spain	3
<i>The Black Prince</i>	Orrery	Restoration	Romance	King's	London	1

<i>The Tempest; or, The Enchanted Island</i>	Dryden & Davenant from Shakespeare	Jacobean / Restoration	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	At sea, an Island	5
1668						1668
<i>The Wild Goose Chase</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	Paris	5
<i>She Would if She Could</i>	Etherege	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	London	5
<i>Horace</i>	Katharine Phillips and Sir John Denham from P. Corneille	French	Tragedy	At Court	Rome	1
<i>The Great Favourite; or, The Duke of Lerma</i>	R. Howard	Restoration	Romance	King's	Madrid	1
<i>Albumazar</i>	Thomas Tomkis	Jacobean	Comedy	Duke's	Italy or Spain*	1
<i>The Spanish Tragedy; or, Heironymo is Mad Again</i>	Thomas Kyd	Elizabethan	Tragedy	Nursery	Spain, Portugal	1
<i>The Spanish Gypsies</i>	Middleton & Rowley	Jacobean	Romance-Comedy	King's	Madrid	2
<i>The Man's the Master</i>	Davenant	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	Madrid	2
<i>The Sullen Lovers; or, The Impertinents</i>	Thomas Shadwell	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	London	5
<i>The Mulberry Garden</i>	Sir Charles Sedley	Restoration	Comedy	King's	London	5
<i>An Evening's Love; or, The Mock Astrologer</i>	Dryden	Restoration	Comedy	King's	Madrid	4
<i>Hyde Park</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>Cupid's Revenge; or, Love Despised</i>	Beaumont & Fletcher	Jacobean	Tragedy	Duke's	Lycia	3
End 1667-1668 Season						Begin 1668-1669 Season

<i>Damoiselles a la Mode</i>	Flecknoe from Molière	Restoration	Comedy	King's	Paris	1
<i>The City Match</i>	Jasper Mayne	Caroline	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>The Queen of Aragon</i>	William Habington	Caroline	Romance	At Court (Duke's)	Aragon	2
<i>The Island Princess; or, The Generous Portugal</i>	? from Fletcher	Jacobean / Restoration	Romance	King's	Tidore, Ternata	2
<i>Tryphon</i>	Orrery	Restoration	Tragedy	Duke's	Syria	1
<i>Women Pleas'd</i>	Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	At Court (Duke's)	Florence	4
<i>Catiline's Conspiracy</i>	Jonson	Jacobean	Tragedy	King's	Rome	1
1669						1669
<i>The Grateful Servant</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Savoy	5
<i>The Royal Shepherdess</i>	Shadwell from Fountain	Restoration	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Arcadia	3
<i>The Country Gentleman</i>	R. Howard & Buckingham	Restoration	Comedy	Unacted (King's) <small>197</small>	London	2
<i>The Lady's Trial</i>	Ford	Caroline	Comedy	Duke's	Genoa	1
<i>The Coxcomb</i>	Beaumont & Fletcher	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	London	4
<i>Guzman</i>	Orrery	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	Salamanca	3
<i>The Roman Virgin; or, The Unjust Judge (Appius and Virginia)</i>	Thomas Betterton? from Webster	Jacobean / Restoration	Tragedy	Duke's	Rome	1
<i>Tyrannick Love; or, The Royal Martyr</i>	Dryden	Restoration	Tragedy	King's	Aquilea	1
<i>Marcellia; or, The</i>	Mrs. Boothby	Restoration	Romance-	King's	France	2

<i>Treacherous Friend</i>			Comedy			
End 1668-1669						Begin 1669-1670
Season						Season
<i>The Dumb Lady; or, The Farrier Made Physician</i>	Lacy from Molière	Restoration	Comedy	King's	London	3
<i>Mr. Anthony</i>	Orrery	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	London	3
1670						1670
<i>The Gentleman of Venice</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Romance-Comedy	Duke's	Venice	4
<i>The Sophy</i>	Denham	Caroline	Tragedy	Duke's	Persia	2
<i>The Little French Lawyer</i>	Fletcher & Massinger	Jacobean	Comedy	King's	Paris	4
<i>Every Man in his Humour</i>	Jonson	Elizabethan	Comedy	King's	London	2
<i>The Gamester</i>	Shirley	Caroline	Comedy	Duke's	London	4
<i>Sir Salomon; or, The Cautious Coxcomb</i>	Caryll from Molière	Restoration	Comedy	Duke's	London	3
<i>Tartuffe; or, The French Puritan</i>	Medbourne from Molière	Restoration	Comedy	King's	France	2
<i>The Roman Empress</i>	William Joyner	Restoration	Tragedy	King's	The Tiber near Rome	1
End 1669-1670						End 1669-1670
Season						Season

I gathered the information in this table largely from Harbage's *The Annals of English Drama* and Van Lennep's volume of *The London Stage*, but also from other sources too numerous to mention, including, most prominently, from the plays themselves.

At least some evidence exists, beyond a text printed in the 1660s with no reference to performance, no actor's names, and no prologue, to suggest that the following extant plays were also staged during these years:

The anonymous *The Faithfull Virgins*
Brome's *The Sparagus Garden*
Carlell's *Aviragus and Philicia*
William Cartwright's *The Lady Errant*
Cokaine's *The Obstinate Lady, Trappolin Supposed a Prince, The Tragedy of Ovid*
The Liar from Pierre Corneille.
John Dover's *The Roman Generals; or, The Distressed Ladies*
Fields's *The Woman's a Weathercock*
Flecknoe's *Erminia; or, The Fair and Vertuous Lady*
Fletcher's *Woman Hater, A Wife for a Month*
Ford's *Love's Sacrifice*
Glaphorne's *Revenge for Honour*
Alex. Greene's *The Politician Cheated*
William Heminge's *The Fatal Contract*
Heywood's *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody, The Royal King and the Loyal Subject*
Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass, The Magnetick Lady*
Thomas Jordan's *The Walks of Islington and Hogsdon.*
Thomas Killigrew's *The Pilgrim, The Princess; or, Love at First Sight, Cicilia and Clorinda; or, Love in Arms, Bellamira Her Dream; or, The Love of Shadows, Thomaso; or, The Wanderer*
William Killigrew's *The Siege of Urbin, Ormasdes*
Middleton's *A Trick to catch the Old One, The Puritan; or, The Widow of Watling Street.*
Thomas Nabbes's *Hannibal and Scipio*
Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*
Shirley's *The Sisters, The Constant Maid, The Witty Fair One, The Imposture*
Stapylton's *The Tragedy of Hero and Leander*
T[homas] T[hompson]'s *The Life of Mother Shipton*

NOTES

¹ I will capitalize all forms of “Materialism” and “Idealism” throughout when I wish to refer to the philosophical schools or principles to differentiate these terms more clearly from their common uses; for example, a boy who thinks people are generally good or a girl who likes expensive shoes would express the lower-case “idealism” and “materialism,” respectively, whereas a description of Milton’s or Rochester’s views would be in the upper. And my choice of “Materialism” rather than “Epicureanism,” favored by Dale Underwood, “naturalism,” favored by Thomas Fujimura, or “Empiricism” is somewhat arbitrary, though “Materialism” seems to me to be the best umbrella term and the one least evocative of a specific time period or school, and it additionally forms a neat dyad with “Idealism.”

² In order to avoid constantly modifying the term “virtue,” so different it is in its masculine and feminine aspects, I will use throughout the Latinate form “*virtu*” to refer exclusively to the code of honour as it is practiced among *vir*i, and “*vertue*,” in fact the at least equally common Restoration spelling, to refer to exclusively feminine honour, basically chastity; when the usage is equivocal with regards to gender, I will retain the modern spelling.

³ The dates are the approximate years during which they all flourished as playwrights, Pepys as a commentator, and the birth and death dates for Charles II and his mother.

⁴ I use the common 17th century spelling “Platonick” throughout to differentiate the term, generally implying as it does “Platonic love,” the hyper-romantic, Idealistic, sexually teasing yet chaste philosophy held primarily in England by Henrietta Maria and her courtiers, from the sense of “of or referring to Plato,” with which it had very little, if anything, to do.

⁵ Restoration critics and playwrights refer often to “Beaumont and Fletcher” as the authors of both their known collaborations and to Fletcher’s work both *solus* and with other playwrights; they somewhat more often refer to “Fletcher” alone, but rarely, if ever, to “Beaumont” alone. Fletcher’s collaborations with Beaumont comprising but a quarter of his total output, I have chosen to refer to “Fletcher” throughout to describe the total corpus of works, some fifty-odd plays, in which he had a hand.

⁶ Though performed in 1663, this prologue was first published, along with its play, in 1669, so Dryden could of course have altered it, though we have no reason to think he did so.

⁷ Lytton Strachey characterizes him beautifully as but “an egregious jackass” possessing “an utter—a devastating—a positively unnerving lack of humour” (46).

⁸ These hundreds of years of caviling could well have been avoided had they simply followed Pope’s dicta: “A perfect Judge will read each word of Wit / With the same spirit that its author writ,” and “Some valuing those of their own side or mind, / Still make themselves the measure of mankind: / Fondly we think we honour merit then, / When we but praise ourself in other men” (“An Essay on Criticism” 233-234, 452-455).

⁹As for the years that Restoration drama encompasses, each scholar who examines them broadly seems to divide them differently--though, granted, “the history of drama, closely considered, is infuriatingly untidy” (Hume 9)--particularly differing on the end-date, as the reasons for starting at 1660 are compelling enough. By “Restoration drama” I mean only the plays produced under the reign of Charles II, the king whose dynasty was actually restored, and after whose reign the drama shifted significantly. Hume calls this period, reasonably enough, “Carolean”; he would prefer “Restoration,” though, “but the broader usage of that term is probably irreversible” (6n.). “Elizabethan,” however, was the central term to refer to all plays

from Lyly to Killigrew at least until the 1950s, offering precedent that an historically absurd term can change (I refer to this early period by the three several reigns, and the whole of it as the “Renaissance,” for “Early Modern,” if accurate in a linguistic sense, is atrociously dull). From the 1685-6 season until the death of Anne in 1714 is thus the Late Stuart period, followed by the Early Georgian.

¹⁰ Krutch neatly summarizes the critical principles that rose to the fore in the new century: “1. The fundamental purpose of literature is to teach morality. 2. It is the duty of the tragic, and perhaps the comic poet, to distribute poetic justice. 3. Decorum demands that types be presented in accordance with their typical rather than their occasional characteristics. 4. Obscenity is a fault of taste” (71).

¹¹ Then again, he does resemble Dryden’s fox cursing the grapes of wit (see page 227).

¹² On Falsehood’s left hand sits “*Caprice*, with a Monky sitting on her shoulder” (no.63; 1: 271), echoing both Rochester’s famous portrait and Flecknoe’s vicious lampoon on Killigrew (see note 46).

¹³ One opinion they do all share, at least, is their disdain for Langbaine’s excessive plagiarism-hunting in general and his bias against Dryden in particular, though they all ironically borrow very much from Langbaine with very little acknowledgement.

¹⁴ T. Cibber reinforces this point in his biography of Sedley, as after seeming to praise him in that “in point of chastity he excels Dorset, and Rochester,” he finds him to be a no “less pernicious writer,” as he presents his “ribbaldry in a dress tolerably decent” rather than “in its own disgusting colors”; thus he spreads as much “poison” as “those whose deformity speaks for their mischief” (3: 99).

¹⁵ T. Cibber highlights this notion that licentiousness and unthriftiness were the concomitant, notorious sins of the Restoration when he blames Hobbes's "lessons of voluptuousness and libertinism" for "poison[ing] the mind of the young King Charles II" (he was, in fact, Charles's mathematics tutor for but a year or so); this led to Britain "having its wealth and treasure squandered by that luxurious Monarch" (2: 215).

¹⁶ Etherege, for example, Langbaine has nothing but praise for, as he was a man of "Wit and Sense, and One whose tallent is sound Sense, and the Knowledge of true Wit and Humour" (186). T. Cibber, however, finds him but "to have possessed a sprightly genius, to have had an excellent turn for comedy, and very happy in a courtly dialogue," in essence, to be talented, but trifling and entirely superficial, a description that echoes many a later critical evaluation of Fletcher. And he blatantly damns Etherege, too, as he also finds that "his works are so extremely loose and licentious, as to render them dangerous to young, unguarded minds," rendering him "justly liable to the severest censure of the virtuous, and sober part of mankind" (3: 39), who, by 1753, are apparently the supreme judges at the court of taste.

¹⁷ See note 144 for an example, Garrick's revision of Buckingham's revision of Fletcher's *The Chances*.

¹⁸ This word "artificial," of course, "is usually pejorative in the twentieth century, a connotative shift the seventeenth century would find surprising and almost incomprehensible" (Squier 95), as for them it was a positive signifier indicating something well-wrought; *ars adeo latet arte sua*.

¹⁹ One wonders what he would have thought of the Elizabethan comedies of John Lyly, that, though having no direct bearing on Restoration comedy, do portray such a world as he describes.

²⁰ “Comedy of manners” did not become a “term” at all until Lamb, though “the Mid-Victorians” did not pick it up; it became pervasive only around Meredith’s time, and was not really set until Palmer’s book (Bateson, “Contribution” 93). The period terms were “high” and “low” comedy, the former often referred to, particularly in the eighteenth century, as “genteel” or “gentile.” This last term, alas, picked up a “lower-middle-class *aura*” (Bateson, “Contribution” 93) in the nineteenth century, and has, by now, largely lost its class association with gentlefolk. Given that “comedy of manners” was coined as a mild pejorative, suggesting “artificial” plays that deal but with trifling and ephemeral social codes, but with “the faint gossamer thread of fashionable and artificial convention” (Fujimura 6), I have chosen to use “high comedy” to refer to comedy that deals primarily with gentlemen and ladies, and whose wit is primarily verbal, and “low” comedy to refer comedies set more among the lower orders and the *déclassé* that concentrate on humours and physical comedy, basically farce. The French term *basse comédie* indicates a somewhat more sophisticated, higher-class version of the latter, in the mode of Molière.

²¹ Summers edited in these years the complete plays of Otway, Shadwell, Wycherley, Dryden, Behn, and Congreve, plus two other volumes, so he may be forgiven to a degree if these editions lack some polish; his is still, however, the most recent complete edition of Shadwell.

²² Absolutely inverting Nicoll’s idea of the lack of a connection between experimental science and the theater, Holland finds Restoration Libertinism to be a “side-effect of science,” though a co-development would be more accurate (224). He is correct, though, in noting that Restoration comedy tended far more towards “the causal one of science, not the analogical view of Shakespeare” (225).

²³ The other two parts of his comic trinity are “Critical Comedy,” basically satire, and “Great Comedy,” essentially romance; he particularly well defines the former, that “strives to ‘cure excess,’” that “supports the happy mean, the comfortable life, the ideal of the *honnete homme*,” as “in a sense prig-drama; it flatters the vanity of the spectator, for whose amusement the weaknesses of his friends are held up” (11).

²⁴ He here, with the phrase “fetid fairyland” in particular, paradoxically if not absurdly, manages to combine the two major lines of objection to Restoration comedy into one in his attempt to express his contempt more forcibly than his predecessors.

²⁵ His “trivial, gross, and dull” became, throughout the mid-twentieth century, the “nasty, brutish and short” of Restoration dramatic criticism, forcing itself to be dealt with in most articles on the subject, though the impact of this phrase has inevitably faded.

²⁶ Though long and somewhat unnecessarily negatively connoted, the following passages does sum up the real-life court wits, and thus the libertine hero, better than any up to this point: “with soft, tender sentiment they had nothing to do. Only the cynical interpretation of experience was valid, and therefore their plays were as cynical as their songs. Since metaphysical speculation seemed empty, they dealt with no profundities. Since their own particular society was obviously well-ordered, they discussed no problems. Since love was a matter not of soul but of body, only lust was important. Characters were seen and drawn with sharp lines and in strong colors. A man was a wit and a gentleman, or a knave, fop, dullard, gull or fool. A woman was a prude, a hoyden, a flirt or a strumpet, but never a ministering angel. The motives of human action were simple—greed, lust, and revenge. . .In their world an honorable man was one who was true to his friends, lent them money, listened to their brags, drank with them, and seconded their duels. But between man and woman there was no honor;

there was only pursuit, conquest and enjoyment. For the most part they enjoyed the spectacle of man the ruttish simian scratching his itches” (172-173).

²⁷ The one conduct manual that stands out from the rest, Francis Osbourne’s *Advice to a Son*, though sharing the values of the others for the most part, differs in railing with “a sharp sense of injustice, of hypocrisy in high places and of thwarted effort,” basically the bilious, “brazen subjectivism” of a cut-rate “Jacobean Malcontent” (27). Thus, though his opinions sometimes align with the Restoration wits’, they differ almost entirely in tone and in the basis on which they ground themselves. And then also, referring to semen as “the venom of Love” is simply not healthy (qtd. on 41).

²⁸ The other two types, neither of whom appear until the High Restoration, are “the vicious rake and . . . the philosophical libertine” (159).

²⁹ William Davenant had been producing dramatic entertainments, albeit politically safe ones, ever since his first public entertainment at his home, the Rutland House, on 23 May 1656, but only after the King’s return could players openly perform the old plays. Three companies sprang up almost immediately after the Restoration, but Davenant and Killigrew, the two men who had obtained royal patents to open playhouses (Killigrew’s from Charles II, Davenant’s from Charles I in 1640), soon seduced away their best actors, including Charles Hart, Major Mohun, John Lacy, and Edward Kynaston, and then suppressed these companies. In the autumn of 1660, they formed a united company that played for but a couple of months before, in November, Killigrew and the leading actors left for Gibbon’s Tennis Court; the official debut of Davenant’s company, the Duke’s, would wait until June 1661, when the alterations to Lisle’s Tennis Court were complete.

³⁰ This list might possibly be of plays performed by Mohun's company slightly earlier, but then this was, regardless, the principle troupe containing most of the best of the old actors who soon formed the nucleus of the King's company, whose repertoire "most faithfully represented the tradition of the English theatres" (Sorelius 39).

³¹ This figure for Davenant, the best example here of how statistics can be counted on to demonstrate no more than the most general trends with regard to Restoration drama, includes all three of his early Shakespearian adaptations, *The Law against Lovers*, *The Rivals*, and *Macbeth*, and each part of *The Siege of Rhodes* separately. These figures are my own, particularly as the three major modern compendiums of performance data, *The Annals of English Drama*, *The London Stage*, and Gunnar Sorelius's *Giant Race before the Flood*, all of which and others have I consulted, do not always interpret the same evidence in the same way.

³² The real-life court wits, though still favoring comedy, did dabble in tragedy, Rochester's revision of Fletcher's *Valentinian* being the most successful example, along with Sedley's decidedly poor *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *The Restauration; or, Right Will Take Place*, a competent revision of *Philaster*, most likely the work of Buckingham.

³³ Harold Love's "Who were the Restoration Audience?" discusses the actual makeup of the Restoration audience in some detail. He deflates the old commonplace of "the moralists and guessers," that they were defined by "severe social restrictiveness, domination by the court, and attendant moral corruption" (21), by reading prologues and other documents with some subtlety, and in context. He discovers that roughly ten to fifteen percent of the population attended the theater at some point, and, though they were still the aristocracy's stages primarily, they were also the "people's theatre at one and the same time," especially "the more accessible Duke's" that cites "had a special fondness for" (39, 31).

³⁴ The 1679 folio, despite being titled *Fifty Comedies and Tragedies*, credits Beaumont and Fletcher with fifty-three plays; according to E. H. C. Oliphant, Fletcher wrote sixteen plays *solus*, eight with Beaumont, eleven with Massinger, and had at least some hand in twenty-four others, plus several lost plays. Though some of Oliphant's attributions have since been questioned, the fact remains the Fletcher was extraordinarily prolific, as his dramatic career spanned but nineteen years from the debut of *The Woman Hater* in 1606 to his death of the plague in 1625.

³⁵ This association would remain in force well into the Restoration, for example in Thomas Shadwell's 1678 *A True Widow*, in which Maggot, according to the *dramatis personae* "a great enemy to Wit, and a great Lover of Business, for Business-sake," despairs that his "roguy Nephew" Young Maggot, who intends, despite his lack of ability, "to make a Wit of himself," has decided to "leave *Cook* and *Littleton* for *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*" (I.p.298).

³⁶ Dryden expresses this notion particularly neatly in his prologue to Nat Lee's *The Rival Queens; or, The Death of Alexander the Great*, though granted in the context of praising Lee's ability to make ladies weep: "Nature Triumphs over wretched Art, / We only warm the head, but you the Heart."

³⁷ As examples of this persistent identification of wit with quickness, Solomon's determination the child's mother (II Kings 3.16-28) is wise, as it was discerning, but witty in that he makes on the spot. Also, one of Addison's major angles of attack, in *Spectators* 58-60, on the more egregious varieties of false wit is just how much time its more devoted practitioners spend on perfection of their demonstrations of false wit.

³⁸ Samuel Jonson still retains these distinctions in his *Dictionary*, as he defines "wit," in its broadest sense, as encompassing "The powers of the mind; the mental faculties; the intellects.

This is the original signification.” His second definition is “Imagination; quickness of fancy,” and definitions three through five are applications of this. “Wit” as “Sense; judgment” comes in only at number six, and he provides no other applications for this sense, and “Wit” as “craftiness” barely makes the cut, coming in the last definition, “Contrivance; stratagem; power of expedients.”

³⁹ This shift is evident in the words of Roger Boyle, from 1665: “being able to find the latent resemblances betwixt things seemingly unlike, make[s] up a great part of what we are wont to call *wit*; so the being able to discern the unobvious disparities of things manifestly resembling, is one of the chief things that displays the Faculty, men call Judgment” (46).

⁴⁰ This prologue, however, was not published until 1652, and then again, along with other of Shirley’s late plays, in 1653’s *Six New Playes*, both by Humphrey Robinson and Humphrey Moseley, so Shirley theoretically could have altered it in response to the Beaumont and Fletcher folio and to his own contribution to the puffs.

⁴¹ These lines are, according to a note by William Gifford in the 1833 edition of Shirley’s works, “all marked in the old copy, as quotations; they had probably been used in some other house, and before some other piece,” though we know not where, what, or when.

⁴² Gildon in 1702 still voices these basic distinctions, for “*Beaumont and Fletcher*, are . . . always gentile and easy, . . . and their Comedies diverting: *Shakespear* . . . always natural” in comedy, and “*Johnson* humorous, . . . and very correct” (33).

⁴³ These contributors include virtually all of the notable non-puritan poets and playwrights of the day, including James Shirley, Sir Aston Cokaine, Sir Robert Stapylton, John Denham, Edw. (presumably a misprint for Edmund) Waller, Richard Lovelace, William Habington, Roger L’Estrange, Jasper Maine, William Cartwright, Robert Herrick, John Berkenhead, Alexander

Brome, Richard Brome, and many others. Two writers notably absent are Sir William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, though, in their defense, they were both in France at the time working for the Royalist cause.

⁴⁴ To this we might add Lovelace's further praise from his commendatory poem to the 1652 single-play folio of *The Wild-Goose Chase*, essentially an addendum to the 1647 folio: "*What Fort'nate Flood is this? what storm of Witt? / Oh who would live and not orewhelm'd in it?*"

⁴⁵ Despite the popular misconception that, as the Wikipedia (3 March 2009), for example, has it, "During the English Restoration period (1660–1688), the word [rake] was used in a glamorous sense," "rake" as a noun describing a person appears not *once* in Restoration drama up to 1696, and "rakehell" but eighteen times before the 1688 deposition of James I (counting the character Mr. Rakehell in *She Would if She Could* as but a single use) and not particularly frequently afterwards. Before 1688 "rakehell" designated but a generalized masculine negative, akin to "scoundrel," and though it specialized and assumed much of its current connotation in the Late Stuart period, it was always a pejorative, akin to "fanatick," whereas "libertine" was a neutral designation, the equivalent to, say, "Presbyterian." I use the term "libertine" in its various forms throughout for the same reason as, writing on, say, Milton, I would not consistently refer to him and those who shared his beliefs as "fanaticks."

⁴⁶ Flecknoe's vituperative, ad hominem attack on Thomas Killigrew, "The Life of Thomaso the Wanderer: an Epitome," with its glorious frontispiece of Killigrew, in a robe festooned with the faces of all the women he had debauched, and from whom he had "Caught fowle diseases," wallowing in a melancholy with his monkey, is a perfect example of Flecknoe "asking for it." And neither did he ignore the manager of the other house, publishing shortly after Davenant's death the pamphlet "*S^t William D'avenant's Voyage to the Other World: with His Adventures in*

the Poets *Elizivm. A Poetical Fiction*,” a somewhat less scurrilous attack but the worse for being a posthumous one.

⁴⁷ This was a short piece of fulsome doggerel entitled “The Portrait of William Marquis of New-Castle to his Lady the Lady Marchioness” printed in London by Thomas Creak in 1660.

²⁰ This is the last appearance of the play during Charles’s reign, as he “for some particular Reasons forbid its further Appearance” (Langbaine 212), though no specific evidence of this ban survives.

She was already engaged in an affair with the Earl of Chesterfield when she married Roger Palmer in 1659, though Charles supplanted Chesterfield a year later, impregnating her within weeks of the Restoration. The King created Mr. Palmer Baron Limerick and Earl of Castlemaine in 1661, though essentially for the sake of his own bastard children. Lord Castlemaine, unlike Amintor, politically remained abroad through most of the 1660’s, and did not formally separate from his wife until she had borne the King three sons and two daughters. *The Maid’s Tragedy* was not revived again, so far as we know, until 28 January 1687, after the King’s death.

⁴⁹ In an attempt to untangle the competing terms that various critics and authors have employed since the seventeenth century to designate genre, I suggest and employ here four basic types, based on two sorts of endings, positive or negative, generally death or marriage, and two different tones, earnest and flippant: Tragedy – negative ending & earnest tone, Romance – positive ending & earnest tone, Comedy – positive ending & flippant tone, and Dark Comedy – negative ending & flippant tone. A hyphenated term indicates plays with two (or more) distinct plots that belong to different genres, the main plot listed first. Thus *The Comical Revenge* would be a romance-comedy rather than a comedy because the main plot, concerning the amours of Bevil and Bruce, Graciana and Aurelia, has to it a decidedly earnest tone and it ends happily,

whereas the central sub plot, starring Sir Frederick and the Widow, ends equally well but is decidedly flippant in tone, and is thus a comedy. History and Pastoral are but subgenres, referring to setting rather than plot or tone. The notion of “History,” additionally, as a basic, seventeenth-century genre is a perfect example of the later tendency to measure all the drama of the period against Shakespeare; it has retained significant currency mainly because Shakespeare happened to write a run of plays based on the lives of English kings. Such a category poorly fits the *oeuvre* of all other popular and prolific seventeenth-century dramatists.

⁵⁰ Pepys, of course, like much of the audience, often went to the playhouse for reasons other than to see the play; the second time, on 29 October 1666, he attended primarily to see his first play after the plague and to see the court assembled.

⁵¹ According to Van Lennep, it was performed at least thirteen times up to August, 1672, and printed thrice, in 1664, 1667, and 1669. After this, the play seems to have been ignored until after 1688, only to see somewhat of a revival under William and Mary, with editions in 1689, 1690, 1697, though a record for only one performance, in December 1695, survives.

⁵² The word “qualms” in the Restoration primarily signified nausea, the physical unease most commonly of a hangover; that this term is now generally used in moral sense, as “moral qualms” or “qualms of conscience,” suggests much of the evolution of English and American culture since the seventeenth century. The change in this word’s connotation mirrors the bourgeois attempts, largely successful, to vitalize the “conscience,” a notion that the Restoration libertines fought so hard to deny, to convince individuals to regard morality as natural, fundamental, universal, and all but tangible.

⁵³ Tragic libertines, libertine-villains, descendants of Machiavels such as Webster’s Flamineo in *The White Devil*, appeared fairly frequently on the Restoration stage, most notably

and regularly in the baroque tragedies of Nathaniel Lee and Elkanah Settle. The central difference between them and the comic libertines, outside of genre of course, is that they take active pleasure in causing pain, whereas the comic libertines generally attempt to bring about joy, or are, at worst, indifferent to others' emotional pain, which they tend to regard as largely self-inflicted anyway.

⁵⁴ Fujimura alas, goes to great lengths to invalidate his otherwise generally valid argument, albeit weak on context, by calling Sir Frederick “an imperfect copy of what eventually became . . .” (95). Birdsall also characterizes Sir Frederick as being “a consummate egotist,” “a terrible gloater in victory,” and “always quite insufferable—the impudence of youth and high spirits incarnate—but still a charming scoundrel” (52, 54).

⁵⁵ Smith badly misinterprets this play as a prime example of a virtuous maid reclaiming a “rake,” as Lodovico only attempts Otrante's virtue out of utter ignorance of how to court a lady; he is not “shaken out of his wildness” (111) by her virtue but rather she simply educates him in appropriate and effective social forms.

⁵⁶ Incidentally, Smith, finds the repartee between Wellbred and Lady Wealthy to be the first “full-blown” incidence of “the gay-couple pattern” (48) in the Restoration (Hughes credits this to *The Wild Gallant* (59), though Loveby is nowhere near on a par with his mistress), assuming that this was played before *The Comical Revenge*, as the preponderance of evidence suggests that it was.

⁵⁷ I also use the term the “High Restoration” to distinguish the relatively calm, peaceful period, which allowed the theater to flourish, the period when aristocratic, Restoration culture was at its height, essentially the 1670s until the Popish Plot broke, from the early Restoration, the 1660s, that was largely occupied with the plague, the fire, the Dutch War, and the reconciliation

of the Interregnum with the *status quo ante bellum*, and the late Restoration, from 1679 to 1688, that was consumed by political turmoil beginning with the Succession Crisis and the Popish Plot and ending with the deposition of James II.

⁵⁸ The life of this “ruffling Major” and son of Endymion was as eventful as his plays; he abducted, was imprisoned for so doing, and then married an heiress, and also killed two men, including his good friend Sir Henry Bellasis, in duels (Summers, *Playhouse* 230-231). As for his comedy, no direct evidence of a specific performance of *The Carnival* is extant, though owing to the high quality of the play, the great and lasting success of Porter’s 1662 revenge tragedy *The Villain*, and a 1664 edition, from the reputable publisher Henry Herringman, claiming it to have been acted at the “*Theatre Royal*,” a performance or several almost certainly occurred in 1663 or early 1664. He is, although the author of but two known plays, the two others signed T. P. being likely not his, a playwright whose works Langbaine does “love and admire” (407).

⁵⁹ This version of the play appeared in April of 1664 and was published in 1665’s *Three Plays*; the earlier tragic version had likely been staged sometime in 1662 or 1663. The index to Van Lennep’s volume of the *London Stage* inexplicably fails to differentiate clearly between the works of William and his younger brother Thomas.

⁶⁰ Largely on the strength of these other works, it was reprinted and thus likely revived in or shortly before 1669, 1684, and 1694, though records of no specific performances have survived.

⁶¹ Frank Harper Moore, in his book on Dryden’s comedies, also claims that *The Wild Gallant* “is new as a combination of Jonsonian and Fletcherian comedy” (24); he seems to be forgetting, however, the existence of Caroline comedy, and particularly of James Shirley.

⁶² Pepys agrees with this assessment of Loveby’s decided weaknesses, calling “the play so poor a thing as I never saw in my life almost, and so little answering the name, that from

beginning to the end I could not, nor can at this time, tell certainly which was the wild gallant” (4: 56).

⁶³ Summers finds a perfectly reasonable and apt middle ground; Sir Frederick’s scenes “partly strike an original note, and partly reflect the dramatists which immediately after the Restoration were the most popular fare of the theater” (*Playhouse* 308). He also here offers a needed reminder, that as much as one might read these plays as social documents, and be tempted to admire Sir Frederick and view him as if he had “stepped straight from the pit on to the boards, “ were we “to meet him in real life,” we would be “apt to prove an intolerable and insolent nuisance” (*Playhouse* 308): effective stage-realism is very much not “real.”

⁶⁴ The Shakespearian adaptations, particularly of *The Tempest*, have, of course, received more attention and sparked more critic debate than perhaps all of the new plays of the 1670s, including Etherege’s, combined.

⁶⁵ The standard pattern in books claiming in their titles to be surveys of Restoration comedy is to begin with a few chapters explaining the critic’s point of approach and then to proceed to demonstrate their theory first in regard to all of Etherege’s plays, then Wycherley’s, then Congreve’s, with examinations of Vanbrugh’s and Farquhar’s works sometimes tacked on. Just in the twentieth-century, Palmer’s *The Comedy of Manners*, Perry’s *The Comic Spirit in Restoration Comedy*, Dobrée’s *Restoration Comedy* (with a chapter on Dryden and Shadwell slipped in), Fujimura’s *The Restoration Comedy of Wit*, Holland’s *The First Modern Comedies* (in which he orders the plays chronologically), Muir’s *The Comedy of Manners* (with added chapters on Dryden and Southerne and one on Shadwell and Otway), Birdsall’s *Wild Civility*, and Markeley’s *Two Edg’d Weapons* follow this pattern explicitly, and most of the others devote an inordinate amount of time to these same few authors. Even Nicoll, who does not take this

approach, still has little regard for the “mass of lesser comic writers who stretch from the Shadwells and the Drydens down to the insignificant Ravenscrofts and Tates” (181). In their defense, however, this canon was largely set as far back as 1702, when Sullen in Gildon’s *Comparison of the Two Stages* lists the finest dramatic authors of the late seventeenth century as “Etheridge, Dryden, Wicherly, Otway, Congreve and Vanbrug” (32).

⁶⁶ *Henry IV* (as far as we know, only part one) and, to a lesser degree, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, were the only Shakespearian plays with any significant comic element to at all hold the stage during the Restoration without significant revision. *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* both appeared in the early Restoration, but sunk quickly, and none of the others even reached the stage in the original. Falstaff they adored, but he is about all. Nicoll’s explanation for this, “that in the early comedies there is too much romance and in the later too chaotic plots” (162), makes no sense whatsoever, as decidedly popular plays of Fletcher’s in particular possess these elements to a greater degree than Shakespeare’s do.

⁶⁷ As critically regarded Jonson’s plays were in most circles, the Restoration theaters staged but just over half of them, *Epicoene*, *Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, *Volpone*, *Catiline*, and *Every Man in and out of his Humour*, definitely and *The Devil is an Ass* and *Sejanus* possibly, ignoring both his three late plays and *Cynthia’s Revels*, *Poetaster*, and *The Case is Altered*.

⁶⁸ By far the most elaborate praise of Lucretius in Restoration comedy comes from Bruce, one of the heroes of *The Virtuoso* (1676) by Shadwell, ironically the most prominent grandson of Ben: “Thou great *Lucretius!* Thou profound Oracle of Wit and Sence! thou art no Trifling-Landskip-Poet, no Fantastick Heroic Dreamer, with empty Descriptions of Impossibilities, and mighty sounding Nothings. Thou reconcil’st Philosophy with Verse, and dost, almost alone,

demonstrate that Poetry and Good Sence may go together” (I.p.105); he then proceeds to from quote *De Rerum Natura* I.44-49.

⁶⁹ These include William Shakespeare, Nathan Field, William Rowley, likely Thomas Middleton, and possibly Ben Jonson, George Chapman, Robert Daborne, John Ford, and John Webster, though Fletcher collaborated with none of them in more than a handful of plays. James Shirley revised the first published edition of Fletcher’s *The Little Thief; or, The Night Walker*.

⁷⁰ Underwood, however, also finds the play to be but of “peripheral importance for the Restoration comedy of manners” (135). For all his general erudition and insight, he is decidedly weak in his discussion of Fletcher and later influences, instead doing all he can to elevate his subject to the perceived heights of the Elizabethan proper, with which Etherege, and the Restoration generally, in truth shares far, far less with than the Jacobean and Caroline stages.

⁷¹ He, incidentally, was entirely disappointed, as he “met with nothing extraordinary at all, but very dull inventions and designs” (9: 19); one cannot help but wonder what his opinion would have been had he seen the play before seeing so very many Restoration comedies.

⁷² The play had first been printed in 1639, though, as of the Restoration, copies remained as yet unsold. The early Restoration edition, which consists of “nothing more than” this same, old edition “issued with a different title-page” is undated but, on the title page, refers to the play’s being acted “now at the Theatre in Vere street by His Majesties Servants” (Sprague 6). Pepys saw this play twice in 1661, once on September 28, and again on November 13, offering no opinion on the latter occasion, but on the former calling it “a very good play, and the first time I ever saw it” (2: 186, 213); the third performance, on April 19, 1662 was noted by Herbert (118).

⁷³ Monsieur Thomas would make another appearance, much later, in Thomas D’Urfey’s *Trick for Trick; or, The Debauched Hypocrite*, in 1678. He and his father are essentially the

same characters; D'Urfey mainly but "drest his Modish Spark fit to be shown, / And made him more Debauch'd, t' oblige the Town," making him now "A perfect and accomplish'd Debauchee" (epilogue). He is still, though, not a full-fledged libertine hero, as he still has rather too much of the rogue in him, and engages in a great deal of low (albeit funny) farce.

⁷⁴ As Herbert notes in his records, "On Twelfth Night, 1641, the prince had a play called *The Scornful Lady* at the Cockpitt, but the king and queen were not there; and it was the only play acted at court in the whole Christmas" (58).

⁷⁵ Charles Surface in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* owes much to him, particularly in the scene where, not recognizing his uncle in disguise standing before him, he drunkenly praises him.

⁷⁶ His parting shot to her delivers what could well be the Gallant's Prayer: "From thee, false dice, Jades, Cowards, and plaguy Summers, Good Lord deliver mee" (IV.i.359-361).

⁷⁷ Rochester echoes this "carter" and "Coachman," this recognition of and respect for the concept that lustful nature can trump all the fine words and devotion in the world, with his "stiff-Prick'd Clown, or well hung Parson" whom he uses to illustrate his notion that "There's something gen'rous in meer Lust" in "A Ramble in St. James's Park" (p.78; l.92, 98).

⁷⁸ His forthrightness in matters of the lower body, particularly when flattering the lower classes, he expresses most directly in greeting his Landlady: "Worshipful Lady / How does thy Velvet Scabbard?" (II.iii.62-63). Generally, though, any blatant bawdy, "till he spend his maine Mast" (II.ii.10) and so forth, is here confined to the servants.

⁷⁹ This second Constantia is but a very minor character in this version; Buckingham, in his revision, much expands her role.

⁸⁰ The records of surreptitious acting at the Red Bull and elsewhere during the Interregnum, collected by Leslie Hotson, are, perforce, very sketchy, though both of these plays were definitely staged. The conclusion is that “Beaumont and Fletcher enjoyed great popularity” over this span, over which, incidentally, “no performance of Shakespeare has been recorded” (Sorelius 35), which the puffs to the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher Folio make clear. “So high was the prestige of these two playwrights and so widely read were they during the fallow years of the Puritan revolution,” in fact (Louis Wright 83), that their significant influence on the Restoration stage was inevitable before Charles even returned. They too were favorites particularly among those most likely to attend illegal plays, and the relevance of these two titles to the political situation alone would seem to assure their repeated staging. *Wit without Money* additionally made for a good marketing gimmick, as the players at least once staged it as a free performance.

⁸¹ This play, Richard Brome’s *A Jovial Crew* and, to a lesser degree, Middleton & Rowley’s *The Spanish Gypsie*, and John Leaned’s *The Rambling Justice; or, The Jealous Husbands*, form a fascinating subgenre of plays in which a group of young gentlemen and ladies find themselves among the Gypsies or beggars. These plays have surprisingly little to do with the Elizabethan “green world,” but rather, in Gypsy society, present a nearly ideal commonwealth, free of mercantile concerns, that closely parallels the Royalist vision and strengthens the bond between those who have sufficient wealth and those who desire none.

⁸² The plays of Shirley that were definitely performed are *The Traitor*, *Love’s Cruelty*, *The Opportunity*, *The Wedding*, *Changes; or, Love in a Maze*, *The Brothers; or, The Politic Father*, *The Cardinal*, and *The Young Admiral*, and we have some indication, mainly from Downes, of performances of *The Sisters*, *The Witty Fair One*, *The Constant Maid*, *The Imposture*, and *The*

Example. Shirley additionally revised the first published text of Fletcher's *The Little Thief*; or, *The Night Walker* and helped the Duke of Newcastle with two of his plays. Six more of his plays debuted after *The Comical Revenge*, the last Restoration debut appearing in early 1670.

⁸³ Though John Palmer long ago thought that "the comedy of manners began with Etherege" (1), a view shared by most commentators since, many other plays, including several of Fletcher's, and most of Shirley's more realistic and less romantic comedies, fit clearly into any definition of the genre based on a broader definition than a description of Restoration high comedy, for example Nicoll's: the "invariable elements" of the comedy of manners "are the presence of at least one pair of witty lovers, the woman as emancipated as the man, their dialogue free and graceful, an air of refined cynicism over the whole production, the plot of less consequence than the wit, an absence of crude realism, a total lack of any emotion whatsoever" (185). Krutch's definition, "comedies depicting realistically and in a sinister spirit the life of the most dissolute portion of the fashionable part of the city" (7), is far too negatively connoted to be of any real value.

⁸⁴ Shirley was still alive at the Restoration, though he was sixty-four years old and had long since withdrawn from stage matters, spending his remaining days, before he died in 1666 from complications brought on by the stresses of the Great Fire, as a schoolmaster.

⁸⁵ A play of Shirley's entitled *The Brothers* was licensed in 1626 but not printed at the time, and a play of the same title was published in 1652 and again the next year as one of *Six New Plays*; these plays, however, are not identical, for as Arthur Huntington Nason conclusively demonstrates in his *James Shirley, Dramatist, The Brothers* of the 1650s is instead *The Politique Father*, a play that was licensed in 1641 but never printed under that title. As far as we know, the earlier play was never published as *The Brothers*.

⁸⁶ It was also “likely” acted “shortly after the theaters reopened in 1667” (Van Lennep 95); finally, Pepys definitely saw it on February 20, 1669 (9: 454), when he thought it “a pretty good play, and which I have forgot I ever did see,” which does imply that he had seen it some years before.

⁸⁷ Nason, very quick to refer to the morality of many a Shirlean character “repulsive,” oddly spares Luys this epithet, perhaps to preserve his contention that Shirley’s late comedies are more “wholesome” (the opposite of “repulsive,” apparently) than his earlier work.

⁸⁸ Harold Weber, in *The Restoration Rake Hero*, focuses on this repositioning of sexuality from the demonic to the natural realm over the course of the seventeenth century and beyond. The Renaissance texts upon which he constructs his argument, however, are either Jacobean tragedies or comedies, primarily Middleton’s *A Mad World, My Masters* and John Marston’s *The Dutch Courtesan*, of which the Restoration stage took no notice (at least until Aphra Behn borrowed their plots in the early 1680s to fashion *The City Heiress; or, Sir Timothy Treat-All* and *The Revenge; or, A Match in Newgate*, respectively) rather than more relevant Jacobean plays as *The Chances* that tend to contradict his thesis. He also ignores the Caroline stage and those Jacobean plays, such as most of those here analyzed, in which sexuality is treated as a perfectly natural function, albeit often referred to in terms suggestive of a painful heat, and the Restoration plays he discusses are beyond the period of the present inquiry. Most damningly, though, he considers the “Hobbesian rake,” whom he never clearly defines, as focused almost entirely on sex, the figure of little more than a seducer who does not believe in demons, as men of “sexual extravagance” whose characters centered on “their understanding that identity depended primarily on an individual’s sexuality” (199). Sexuality is, for libertine heroes, rather as much a symptom, and but one of many, as a cause, and the central way in which they differ from various

coxcombs and heroic types is not that they desire sex more (though occasional ones do, of course), but rather that they are able to realize and quantify and honestly express their own natural lusts and those of others.

⁸⁹ Langbaine mentions that *Aglaura* at least was still “much priz’d at this Day” (497). Suckling’s reputation, though, even as a poet, predictably plummeted as the Age of Sensibility set in; T. Cibber goes to far as to find that “Sir John Suckling seems to have been no poet, not to have had even the most distant appearances of it” (1: 295).

⁹⁰ Harbage also pithily describes this hyper-romantic pseudo-religion in his *Cavalier Drama* as “a species of grouse shooting with the grouse omitted” (36), and Summers, rather insightfully, as “transcendental mysticism, . . . in truth . . . a kind of Catharism,” and thus, like all beliefs based on eliminating reproduction and the practices that lead to it, “bound to vaporize into feckless failure” (*Playhouse* 20).

⁹¹ Traces of the disconnect between “official” sexual conduct and sexual desire are at least as old as monogamy, of course, and using “the courtly paraphernalia of sighs, tears, and protestations . . . as a ‘Machiavellian’ disguise for simple concupiscence,” and the notion that “future possibilities of transitoriness, discord, and disillusion” are incipient in marriage (Underwood 113, 116) appear at the dawn of the English professional stage with Lyly, though he stands at least two removes from the Restoration, the playwrights of which were at most but hazily aware of his existence.

⁹² Anti-Platonick sentiments are common in the comedies of the early Restoration, for example this comment from Jolly’s daughter Aurelia in Abraham Cowley’s *Cutter of Coleman Street*, revised from his hastily-written 1642 play *The Guardian*: “These are your grave Maids that study Romances, and will be all Mandanas and Cassandras [from Scudery’s *Le Grand*

Cyrus], and never spit but by the Rules of Honor” (II.i.15-17). Discussion of Platonick love began to wane by the mid 60s, partially because the court of Charles II, of course, very little resembled that of his father in this aspect. Plays strongly influenced by Molière, however, for example Sir Charles Sedley’s 1668 *The Mulberry Garden*, revived the idea, but by the time of Shadwell’s 1672 *Epsom Wells* the concept had finally died out for good--“Platonick love . . . is more out of fashion in this active Age, than Ruffs, and Trunk-breeches are” (V.p.176)--though similar forms of high, romantic Idealism, of course, very much persevered.

⁹³ After a brief spate of plays staged in the first few years of the King’s return, John Tatham’s *The Rump; Or, The Mirror of the Late Times*, Sir Robert Howard’s *The Committee*, Abraham Cowley’s *Cutter of Coleman Street*, and John Lacy’s *The Old Troop; or, Monsieur Raggou*, Restoration plays ignore the Civil War and Commonwealth period almost entirely and almost pretend that English cultural history skipped straight from 1642 to 1660, at least until a brief revival of the subject in the early 1680s with plays such as Aphra Behn’s *The Rover; or, The Banished Cavaliers* and Thomas D’Urfey’s *The Royalist* appear in the service of the Tory cause. For example, in the eminently quotable Shadwell’s same *Epsom Wells*, the superannuated lover Woodley “can make love from the stiff, formal way of the year 42, to the gay, brisk way of this present day and hour” (II.p.123).

⁹⁴ This mode still lingered directly and positively in the works of such ladies as “the Matchless Orinda” Katherine Philips and the Duchess of Newcastle, and their presence, as well as that of the old Queen mother, encouraged its occasional revival. And of course its influence on the heroic drama was profound.

⁶⁶ We do not know definitely that both endings were performed after the Restoration, though Herbert suggests this to be the case when he lists that, after “Aglaura” was played on 28

December 1661, 27 February 1662 featured “Aglavara the Tragicall Way” (118). Suckling is the first author we know without doubt to have written and have had performed an alternate ending, though some have supposed a lost, alternate ending of *King Lear*, and Professor Erin Kelly has discovered some reason to suppose that Nathaniel Woods’s 1581 *Conflict of Conscience*, a “Comedy” consisting of “a most Lamentable Example of the doleful Desperation of a miserable Wordling” (Langbaine 513) was acted in two versions. Sir William Killigrew, in 1663, finding that his *Pandora; or, The Converts* did not take as a tragedy, rewrote it and had it played and published as a comedy, and Sir Robert Howard, in his *The Vestal Virgin; or, The Roman Ladies*, performed in 1664, follows Suckling in presenting a choice of endings; both of these plays met with some success. Several tragedies were also performed both in the original and with happy endings in the Restoration, notably the lost alteration of *Romeo and Juliet*, by James Howard, from the early 1660s, Tate’s alternate ending to *Lear*, and Waller’s new fifth act for *The Maid’s Tragedy*.

⁹⁶ Suckling never refers specifically to any particular sect, for *Aglaura* is set in Persia, *Brennoralt* in Poland, and *The Goblins* in “Francelia,” which also happens to be the name of Brennoralt’s love interest; even more so than most seventeenth century plays, Suckling’s settings are entirely irrelevant.

⁹⁷ I suspect that at least some of Suckling’s frequently noted and lauded love for Shakespeare is as much the product of his desire to knock Jonson down a peg as it is genuine affection and appreciation; though he no doubt genuinely admired his work to a point, Shakespeare and Suckling were simply very different men living in very different worlds.

⁹⁸ Rochester echoes and extends this notion in “A Ramble in St. James’s Park,” relating how the “Antient *Pict.* / .Would Frigg upon his *Mothers* Face: / Whence Rowes of *Mandrakes* tall did rise, / Whose lewd Tops Fuck’d the very Skies” (p.76; l.14, 18-20).

⁹⁹ Killigrew’s obtaining the patent for the King’s own players and first choice of actors and scripts was doubtless a product of his entire devotion to the court. Though better qualified to manage a theater, Davenant returned and, to a point, compounded with the Commonwealth, whereas Killigrew spend the entire Interregnum in the service of the King on various diplomatic missions, and only returned to England with the royal entourage in 1660.

Davenant was knighted in 1643; thus the “Sir” applies but to his dramatic activities in the Restoration, and not to his career as a playwright in the Caroline period.

¹⁰⁰ According to Van Lennep, “Killigrew prepared *Thomaso*,” among other works of his, “for production in the autumn of 1664,” going so far as to cast the roles, but “no notice of production exits” (84). See his article “Thomas Killigrew Prepares his Plays for Production.” *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*. Washington D. C., 1948. 803-808.

¹⁰¹ In 1661 he says nothing of *Claricilla* itself, but that it was “well acted” (2: 132), though nine years later he finds that it “doth not please me almost at all, though there are some good things in it” (9: 476). As for *The Princess*, he thinks it but “a poor thing, and so I perceive every body else do” (2: 223), which would explain its short run (incidentally, the index to the California edition of Pepys reverses the first entry on *Claricilla* and the entry on *The Princess*).

¹⁰² Timillus proceeds further to flesh this all out metaphorically: “an honest woman to me is a book I could never read in nor [can] I imagine why we should study them, they’re secrets that reach but to one mans knowledge, and the best of ‘em are worst; a knowledge whose virtue

is ignorance”; all this makes him “dry; Look how white I spit; let me go that I may be drunk and forget the sad cause” (I.iv.220-227).

¹⁰³ This play also features one of the most striking anachronisms in seventeenth-century drama, as Virgilius, listed in the *dramatis personae* as “*Son to Julius Caesar*,” is shot with “a Pistoll” (IV.x.p.49).

¹⁰⁴ These plays, of which Sir Samuel Tuke’s *The Adventures of Five Hours* was the most successful, were generally adapted from Spanish plays and resembled Caroline tragicomedies in their masses of intrigue and their general earnestness of tone. They enjoyed a decided vogue in the early to mid 1660s, and indeed were the most popular genre of “comedy” during this early period.

¹⁰⁵ Only two plays of Middleton’s, *The Widow* and *The Changeling*, definitely appeared on the stage before *The Comical Revenge*, and only one more, *The Spanish Gypsie*, after (1668). The first, now considered Middleton’s solo work, was at the time thought to be “writ by Mr. *Johnson*, Mr. *Fletcher*, and Mr. *Middleton*” to the great enhancement of the latter’s reputation, as he was at best “the *Ivy* to their *Oak*” (Langbaine 298, 370). Middleton’s work was, in fact, less well-represented than that of his collaborator on the two later plays, William Rowley, whose solo *All’s Lost by Lust* (albeit by an unlicensed company at the Red Bull, long known for being the playhouse of choice for “citizens and the meaner sort of people” (James Wright 407)) and *The Maid in the Mill*, written with Fletcher, were also played. To suggest, as does Lynch, that Middleton was an influence on par with Fletcher on the Restoration comedy, and thus to cite “the course quality of his realism” as the reason why “critics of Restoration comedy have been more indifferent to his influence on later comedy than to the influence of Jonson and Fletcher” is thus absurd (24). An anonymous Restoration broadsheet elegy on Davenant’s death in 1668, for

example, quoted in Hotson, lists eleven noted pre-Restoration playwrights and Middleton is nowhere to be found (though granted his name is a dactyl, but the poet would have doubtless found a way to include him had he wanted) (224-225). Critics ignored his influence because he was not influential; if Davenant or Killigrew or the players or the major playwrights of the time had considered him important, rather than at best “a Dramatick Poet of the Second Rank” (Langbaine 371), a mere mine for plots, his work would have reached the stage far more often.

¹⁰⁶ These were *A Jovial Crew* and *The Antipodes* in 1661 and *The Northern Lass* in 1662. Behn, however, did borrow much from *Mad Couple* in her 1677 offering *The Debauchee; or, The Credulous Cuckold*. Much of the lack of interest in these two talented playwrights was doubtless class-based, as both Middleton and Brome wrote for primarily the commercial classes and tended to populate their works with favorably-portrayed citizens engaged in a good deal of clowning.

¹⁰⁷ None of Marston’s plays reached the Restoration stage, though an adaptation of *The Dutch Courtesan*, entitled *The Revenge; or, A Match in Newgate*, which was unsigned, though most likely the work of Aphra Behn, that great discoverer and reviver of libertine-leaning works by then-obscure playwrights, appeared in the summer of 1680.

¹⁰⁸ Bullen published this play in his collection as *Captain Underwit* and attributed it to Shirley, who likely corrected it, though it is primarily the work of the Earl of Newcastle; only the much later discovery of an “excessively rare” quarto of *The Country Captain* corrected this mistake (Summers, Introduction to *Restoration Comedies* xv).

¹⁰⁹ William Arrowsmith, in *The Reformation*, casually lists the elder playwrights of note as “Fletcher, Johnson, Shakespear, Davenant” (IV.i.p.47), and this play being performed in 1673, five years after Sir William’s death, leaves no reason to think that the author expected any

significant benefit from this placement, though Davenant's son and widow, who were running the theater at that point, might well still have been pleased.

¹¹⁰ Even Summers, usually open to the good in most any play, is fundamentally against Shakespearian adaptations, and finds this one particularly "deplorable," so much so that he declares that "I cannot bring myself to review this gallimaufry at any length" as it leaves him "owl-blasted and mazed in a damp"; whatever that means, it cannot be pleasant (156, 157).

¹¹¹ A perfect example of this is the minor dust-up in 1673 betwixt Dryden and Edward Ravenscroft, which Langbaine amusingly characterizes as two "profest Plagiaries" arguing like "Whores" (419), an example of "the Old Proverb being verify'd in Poets as well as Whores, *Two of a Trade can never agree*" (349). Dryden, in his prologue to *The Assination; or, Love in a Nunnery*, accuses audiences of foolishly celebrating the entirely low farce of the "Mamamouchi" in Ravenscroft's *The Citizen Turned Gentleman* and his "Hullibabilah da, and Chu, chu, chu." In response, Ravenscroft, in his preface to *The Careless Lovers*, shrewdly finds Dryden's "Almansor," from *The Conquest of Granada*, to be in essence Mamamouchi's opposite number, both equally far from a realistic mean, and from indeed from the middle in any sense; "*whether Grave or Comic Scenes we write, / All's turn'd to Farce, by Hero, or by Knight.*" By presenting such characters, Ravenscroft implies that playwrights are merely catering to popular demand.

¹¹² Prynne, in his massive rant *Histriomastix*, out-railing Jeremy Collier in fact, had, among his many criticisms of the sinfulness of the stage, stated rather blatantly that all women who performed on stage were "notorious whores," a category which would include Charles II's mother Henrietta Maria, who had spoken her part in several court masques; his ears were famously cropped and his person, literally, branded a seditious libeler.

¹¹³Charles did not merely patronize the adult stage; he was also “immensely diverted by the puppets, and all good subjects shared his tastes” (Summers *Playhouse* 114).

¹¹⁴ According to John Aubrey, this was a “Troope of 100 very handsome young proper men, whom [Suckling] clad in white doublets and breeches, and scarlet Coates, hatts, and feathers, well horsed and armed. They say ‘twas one of the finest sights in those days” (288-289); unsurprisingly, these men did not fight nearly as well as they looked.

¹¹⁵ Both the King and Buckingham, the companion of his youth, appear prominently in two notable nineteenth-century novels, Sir Walter Scott’s *Peveiril of the Peak* and Alexandre Dumas’s *The Vicomte of Bragelonne*.

John Harold Wilson, in *The Court Wits of the Restoration: An Introduction*, limits this “fraternity,” upon Rochester’s entrée “in 1665” (9), to these four plus Etherege, though he sees the circle expanding to include nine more members, outside of Wycherley of little literary significance, by the early 1670s.

Buckingham and Rochester were, then as now, consistently referred to by their titles, and Sedley by his family name. Charles Sackville, however, is a more difficult case. He began the Restoration with the courtesy title of Lord Buckhurst, was created Earl of Middlesex in 1675, and succeeded to the Earldom of Dorset in 1677, so I will retain all three of these titles and use whichever is chronologically appropriate. As for their ages at the Restoration, for the sake of comparison, Davenant was fifty-four, Thomas Killigrew forty-nine, Dryden twenty-eight, Etherege probably twenty-four, Aphra Behn was approximately twenty, as was Shadwell, and Wycherley and Crowne were both nineteen.

¹¹⁶ Theophilus Cibber also provides a full version of the incident, paraphrased from Wood, in his Life of Sedley in his *Lives of the Poets*.

¹¹⁷ Both Wilson and Pinto note that Wood has erred in the name of the justice: “Actually he was Sir Robert Foster, who died on October 4, 1663, and was succeeded by Hyde” (Wilson 40n.).

¹¹⁸ Henry B. Wheatley’s Victorian version of the diary, and thus the version at pepysdiary.com, heavily censors much of this account.

¹¹⁹ This is the most polished version of his account, which also appears three more times, the last two being obviously drafts, in Wood’s *Life & Times* 1: 476-477 and 2: 335-336. Though Woods alters the wording and much of the spelling in each, content-wise, the emendations are inconsequential.

¹²⁰ W. F. Prideaux had provided the former in his “Sir Charles Sedley’s Escapade” in *Notes & Queries*, 9.8 (24 August 1901): 157-8.

¹²¹ Summers does accuse this biography of being full of “nebulous inaccuracies” (*Playhouse* 19), though Summers himself is guilty of such practices more than occasionally.

¹²² Henry quotes his account from “a letter from Mr. Joshua Hotchkis to his Brother in law Ralph Eddow”; he then adds a coda and some moralizing on his own: “I heard since, only S^r Charles Sidley was arraign’d & fin’d 4000^{lb}, lord Buckhurst having made an escape. This is that lord Buckhurst who, tis said, murther’d y^e Tanner last year upon ye road near London—if so, evil men wax worse & worse” (158).

¹²³ No record exists of a performance before late 1667, though it very possibly appeared as early as 1665; regardless, the play debuted after this incident, but not too long after (for a discussion of the date, see page 198).

¹²⁴ Dryden, for example, in 1664’s *The Rival Ladies*, manages to write in not one, but two sets of exposed breasts, doubtless small, “hard and round” (Ravenscroft II.viii.54), amenable to

aristocratic Restoration tastes, in IV.iii (he was always fond of doubling), and breasts were frequently bared as evidence of femininity in discovery scenes.

¹²⁵ This expression, tellingly enough, in the form to “*drinke like a Lord*” (IV.i; 6: 135), first appears in a song in Middleton & Rowley’s 1623 *The Spanish Gypsie*, along with *The Widow* and *The Changeling*, the only plays of Middleton’s performed during the Restoration. The second *OED* citation is from Evelyn in 1651, who of course lived on to see, and to disapprove of, scads of drunken lords.

¹²⁶ Sedley could theoretically have been familiar with Willmore’s adopting this pose in Thomas Killigrew’s *The Second Part of Thomaso; or, The Wanderer*, (later adapted by Behn in *The Second Part of the Rover*) written in Madrid during the Interregnum and possibly, though doubtfully, staged during the Restoration. This play was printed some time in 1663 for inclusion the folio of 1664, so the actual printing likely took place late in 1663, after this incident, though with Killigrew being intimately connected to court circles, the story or even a manuscript might well have made the rounds. Notable examples of later gallants posing as similar figures are pretty much limited to the unwilling Bellamy in Dryden’s *An Evening’s Love; or, The Mock Astrologer* and Willmore in Behn’s version of the story.

¹²⁷ This gesture additionally is ironic on two levels, that Sedley enjoyed the King’s favor far more than did most of the throng and that, as by then the Earl of Dorset, he would become a prominent Whig and a major proponent of the James II’s deposition.

¹²⁸ He does have some other interests at least, for when the “little Harlotry” Isabelle tells him “Your minds ever upon your belly,” he responds with “No; ‘tis sometimes upon yours” (II.i.263, 270-271).

¹²⁹ Actual courtroom scenes are rare in Restoration drama, the two most prominent being in Sir Francis Fane's 1675 *Love in the Dark; or, The Man of Bus 'ness* and D'Urfey's 1682 *The Royalist*, and both are allusive rather than directly topical, the former being set in Venice and the latter in the waning days of the Interregnum.

¹³⁰ Francis Beaumont, several of whose plays Sedley clearly knew well, was ironically enough the "youngest son of a judge of the Common Pleas" (Hunt, *Beaumont and Fletcher*, 4: 278), though he obviously rebelled against his family tradition.

¹³¹ The archly witty first epilogue to Dryden's *Secret Love; or, The Maiden-Queen*, first performed in early 1667 and published the next year, "Written by a Person of Honour," might well have been penned by Sedley, so well does it reflect his attitude towards his trial: "*Reason, with Judges, urg'd in the defence / Of those they would condemn, is insolence.*"

¹³² Two relevant plays, neither definitely yet performed but both possibly so, and both available, are Fletcher's *The Wild Goose Chase*, which features Lugier, the learned tutor to Rosalura and Lylia-Bianca, and Shirley's *Love Tricks; or, The School of Complements* with its school for seduction.

As for conduct books, since the days of Erasmus and Machiavelli, according to D. R. M. Wilkinson, they had been gradual sliding down the social scale, making their way down to addressing the "the education of the gentleman" from a "Christian-humanist" perspective, avoiding almost entirely the "Epicurean or sceptical traditions" and drawing largely on the Idealistic "Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca and Plutarch," by the mid-Seventeenth Century (2, 3). The intended audience for *The Compleat Gentleman*, a popular text squarely in the central tradition of the conduct manuals of the late Interregnum, is "the main bulk of the gentry" (6) (though he entirely ignores that such books even now tend to be purchased not for one's self but

for one's younger relatives or dependants), the younger representatives of the upwardly mobile citizenry or squirarchy, and thus such texts downplay aristocratic notions of honor, involving dueling and so forth, and encourage values such as thrift and steadfastness and plain dealing in amours.

¹³³ The Cockpit at Court opened somewhat earlier than the profession theaters, in mid-October at the latest (Nicoll 286-287).

¹³⁴ Herbert's 1664 account of Killigrew's having paid to him £2 for "Parsons Wedinge," the standard licensing fee for a new play, as opposed to the £1 fee for a revived one, but for the possibility of a clerical error, seems conclusive evidence for the play being as yet unplayed (138). Summers finds the fact "that a sum of £2 was paid for the license is conclusive" (*Playhouse* 80), as Killigrew would most certainly not have given Herbert a pound more than he had to.

¹³⁵ Van Lennep, in "Thomas Killigrew Prepares His Plays for Production," details his finding from "Thomas Killigrew's own copy of the 1664 folio of his plays" (803). *The Princess* "he has not touched," but in *The Parson's Wedding*, he marked "more than one third of its lines . . . for omission," a total of "1594 lines," in the first week of May, 1664 (803-804). He cuts no entire scenes, though, and only reorders them once, which is "of no importance"; these cuts were "probably" operative for the first performance (804).

¹³⁶ During this second time when "when the Women acted alone" (Langbaine 213) they also performed at least *Philaster*.

¹³⁷ Long considered an adaptation of "Calderon's famous *La Dame Duende*" (Summers, *Playhouse* 136), it in fact has no connection to it; Summers goes to some length to trace the

perpetuation of this error, the product of scholars implicitly, and perhaps lazily, accepting previous judgments and not bothering to consult the original.

¹³⁸ This conversation leads to a delicious bit of irony for the 1664 audience, when Jolly notes that “’tis such an example to see a King and Queen good, Husband and Wife; that to be kind will grow out of fashion” (II.vii.p.105).

¹³⁹ Despite its importance, *The Parson’s Wedding* exists in no edition more modern than the 1922 Montague Summers collection, which has contributed to its receiving but a fraction of the attention lavished on plays by more canonical authors, notably *The Comical Revenge*.

¹⁴⁰ Buckingham’s character, however, would not long be so fondly remembered as this; a mixture of Dryden’s Zimri with the general opinion of the licentiousness of the Restoration court would later render him a figure who, despite his “great share of vivacity, and quickness of parts,” never “performed one generous disinterested action in his whole life, . . . and as he lived a profligate, he died in misery, a by-word and a jest, unpitied and unmourned” (Cibber 2: 322).

¹⁴¹ Fletcher’s “failing in the two last Acts,” according to Langbaine, is “more to be imputed to his Laziness, than his want of Judgment”; in support of this he cites a rumor that Fletcher got paid after the third act, so he then just “huddled up the last two” (144).

¹⁴² Of all Shakespeare’s corpus, only *I Henry IV* and *Othello* survived the Restoration both popular and unaltered. On the other extreme, Jonson’s plays, though often imitated, were never altered, indeed “no one thought of adapting him” (Nicholl 189), but then he was widely regarded as the greatest of theatrical craftsmen as well as by far the leading scholar of the triumvirate, and he did devote far more time and care to his printed dramatic utterances than did his fellows.

¹⁴³ Four of Davenant's Shakespearian/Fletcherian revisions, *The Law Against Lovers* (from *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*), *Henry VIII*, *The Rivals* (*Two Noble Kinsmen*), and *Macbeth*, were staged before 1665, and all but the second printed.

¹⁴⁴ This version long remained popular, and indeed has the longest stage history of any of Fletcher's comedies, though its popularity flagged as its morality came increasingly into conflict with the rising tide of bourgeois decorum. This necessitated another "unnecessary and anaemic" revision by David Garrick in 1754 (Summers, *Playhouse* 289), in which he "rewrote drastically to enforce marital assumptions" (Hume & Love I: 15), fully evident from his alteration of the final lines. The closing couplet now becomes Don John's vow to "Change the wild wanton for the sober plan / And, like my friend, become a modest man" (V.iii.223-224), featuring two terms, "sober" and "modest," entirely antithetical to Fletcher's and Buckingham's visions of Don John and indeed to any character savoring at all of libertinism. Even this Don John, with his new-found "Eunuch Honour" (Fletcher II.iii.98), "seemed too much of a libertine for the refined inhabitants of the nineteenth century" (Hume & Love 1: 33), so the play, for reasons of morality, fell into desuetude. It was revived briefly, and to some success in the 1960s, with Sir Laurence Olivier as Don John, though "Neither the romantic plot nor the libertine plot was treated with any seriousness, reducing the play to farce" (Hume & Love 1: 36).

¹⁴⁵ *The Rival Ladies*, a romance of Spanish intrigue, first definitely played in the Spring of 1664, features comic scenes, but they do not constitute a separate plot.

¹⁴⁶ Granted, the performers deserve much of the credit for this success, and particularly Nell Gwyn, whose Florimell, opposite the Celadon of Charles Hart, her "Charles I," Pepys found a "merry part, as cannot be better done in nature," and indeed "the most comicall part that was

ever made for woman” (8: 129, 235), yet the virtues of the script itself still drew him out to purchase his own copy as soon as it was published.

¹⁴⁷ Falconry, besides being the most aristocratic of hunting methods, also conjures forth social diving. Restoration gallants when speaking in this metaphor tend to cast themselves in the role of the hawk; they depart, for a purpose, the high, aristocratic, heroic empyrean, dive past the middle, moral air, and down to the earth for their desired quarry, the material and the carnival language and the flesh.

¹⁴⁸ Lynch points out a clear precursor for this scene, one in which Hylas and Stelle work out a “contract insuring their mutual rights on inconstancy” (*Social Mode* 83), in her “D’Urfé’s *L’Astrée* and the ‘Proviso’ Scenes in Dryden’s Comedy” and again in her book. Dryden doubtless read D’Urfé in the original (the relevant debates occurring Part III, Book IX, which part was not in the seventeenth century, and thus presumably never, Englished), though the parallels are not exact enough to suggest a definitive borrowing.

¹⁴⁹ William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, in addition to being perhaps the most prominent patron of the Restoration, was one of the very few playwrights to produce new plays staged under the reigns of both Charles I and his elder son. Generally with the help of one or another of the leading playwrights of the day, Shirley for his two Caroline plays and Dryden and/or Shadwell for his two Restoration offerings, he produced a total of four competent comedies of humours, all very much in the Jonsonian strain, but still reflective of the mores of their times, as well having some significant degree of involvement, most likely providing a rough translation that that Dryden then revised, in 1667’s *Sir Martin Mar-all; or, The Feign’d Innocence*.

¹⁵⁰ This relatively farcical comedy of Fletcher’s was a stock play throughout the Restoration, but remarkably so in May of 1663, when it opened the King’s “New Theatre in

Drury-Lane,” and “was Acted Twelve Days Successively” (Downes 9), an extraordinarily long run.

¹⁵¹ Though Dryden’s name did not appear on any edition until the fourth quarto in 1691, that Newcastle translated either Molière’s *L’Etourdi* or Quinault’s *L’Amant indiscret*, which “have a common source” (Moore 56, 58), and then Dryden revised it was known to Pepys and others at the time, and later scholars have found no real reason to question this attribution.

¹⁵² Hume mentions, in this same article, that “critics have generally agreed” that Dryden based the “split plot of *Secret-Love* on *The Comical Revenge*” (427); this an extreme example of the absurdities to which a focus on but a few canonical works can lead, as romance-comedies of this same basic sort, many of which resemble *Secret Love* far more than does *Love in a Tub*, are one of the most popular genres of the century.

¹⁸ They also sum up their bargain tidily in song:

“Philidor. *My love and I a bargain made, / It is well worth a telling, / When one was weary, we agreed / To part, should both be willing,*

Mirida. *And thus our loves will longer last, / Than fools that still are pining: / We’ll spend our time in joy and mirth, / Whilst doaters do in whining*” (II.p.345).

¹⁵⁴ William Congreve, of all playwrights, echoes this same epiphora in *The Way of the World*’s proviso scene, where Millamont ends four of her demands, and Mirabell one in response, with the words “I please” (IV.210, 212, 235, 237, 242).

¹⁵⁵ This fake funeral had long been a common, comic plot device, occurring in such plays familiar to the Restoration as Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tamed*, Beaumont’s *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and in Etherege’s debut.

¹⁵⁶ Pepys did not much care for it, calling it “the most ridiculous, insipid play that ever I saw in my life” (8: 481), though Langbaine is far kinder, labeling it not “first Rank, yet it exceeds several which pretend to the second” (434).

¹⁵⁷ The 1674 operatic adaptation of *The Tempest*, long attributed to Shadwell, though that attribution has since come into serious question, owes most of its content to the Davenant/Dryden version. It is mainly of interest in terms of stagecraft, as this version, which remained the main acting version until well into the nineteenth century, changes relatively little in terms of ideology. D’Urfey adapted Fletcher’s play in 1685 as *The Commonwealth of Women*.

¹⁵⁸ Tibalt pledges his love to drink in a lovely paean: “But from my youth this was my onely Physick. / Here’s a colour, / What Ladies cheek, though ceruss’d over, comes neere it? / It sparkles too: hangs out Diamonds. / O my sweet heart, how I will hug thee, again and again! / They are poor drunkards, and not worth the favours, / That number thy moyst kisses in these Cristals” (V.ii.28-34).

¹⁵⁹ Dryden freely admits, in his December 1, 1669 preface, for the most part an elegiac encomium for the recently deceased Davenant, that the elder playwright “*design’d the Counterpart to Shakespear’s Plot, namely that of a Man who had never seen a Woman,*” though the details of Hippolito’s character seem far more the younger playwright’s decision; regardless, Davenant at least concurred in the characterization.

¹⁶⁰ Wilson phrases this far more accurately and charmingly: “Perhaps Dryden’s Muse was not a loose slattern, but in his early works at least she was sometimes in dishabille” (*Court Wits* 189).

¹⁶¹ Perhaps because of it being obvious, or more likely out of prudishness, no commentator before 1980 even mentions the Restoration increase in the number of breeches parts being

largely due to merely “the pleasures of viewing female legs in tight pants” (Hume 236). Gary Taylor, though, might be going a bit far by referring to the Restoration stage as “shopwindow for tarts” (19).

¹⁶² Davenant had already written a man, Gridonell, who has never seen woman in his *Platonick Lovers*, as had Suckling, along with a woman who had never seen man, in *The Goblins*, though they are all manipulated to far less effect and far more sketchily drawn than are Hippolito and Dorinda.

¹⁶³ To say with Moore, though, that “Practically all Restoration comedy . . . depends on the naturalness of Hippolito’s” desire “to increase his pleasure by loving not one woman, but all women” (73) is taking the case rather too far, suggesting that sexual promiscuity is the central, defining feature of forty-odd years of comedies.

¹⁶⁴ This same trope of the dominant male needing to approach near to death to render himself appropriately subdued for a love match, of course, and ironically enough, becomes a frequent one in the eighteenth and nineteenth century novel, the most famous case being Jane Eyre’s Rochester. The uses to which these two texts put this same trope reveal a great deal about the evolution of English culture over nearly two centuries.

¹⁶⁵ As an explanation of this native love of variety, the play offers the interesting pre-Freudian insight that “Nurses teach them / Change, when with two Nipples they divide their / Looking” (IV.i.p.243). One must wonder, then, if bottle feeding encourages monogamy.

¹⁶⁶ This criticism of “the design of the play” is a particularly ironic one, as the play is broadly considered the first Restoration comedy of manners--for example, according to Van Lenep, with this play “a comedy of manners had arrived,” and “a new kind of comedy had been

realized” (cxxxv)--the essential difference from its predecessors being its setting. “Design,” however, is a particularly ambiguous term.

¹⁶⁷ Steele, oddly enough, finds this play exceptionally sexual; it is the only play he knows of “professedly writ . . . upon the Basis of the Desire of Multiplying our Species” (*Spectator* no.51; 1: 216-217), though one could, of course, make a case that virtually all comedies are, even Steele’s own.

¹⁶⁸ This play’s wit and sophistication, combined with its realism, would lead Sullen, a defender of “Sense and Uniformity,” over thirty years later to place it in a class with “*Sir Fopling, Plain dealer*, . . . several of *Shakespear*’s, some of *Fletcher*’s, all *Ben*’s” as a play with “every Scene made probable, and of force to make an impression on the Fancy,” (*Comparison* 79, 78).

¹⁶⁹ For the sake of argument, I limit the term “professional” dramatist to those who had staged at least five plays, who at least attempted more than one genre, and who were commoners with no significant estates, and thus relied on third nights for a major share of their sustenance. Into this category, of those who debuted at least before the King’s death, fall Dryden, Shadwell, Lee, Crowne, Otway, Southerne, Behn, D’Urfey, Ravenscroft, Settle, and Tate. Comparing these to occasional dramatists, to those who wrote little for whatever reason or had no pressing need to take financial gain into account, is apples and oranges, chalk and cheese, and does both a disservice.

¹⁷⁰ As Van Lennep points out, these performances could not have been consecutive, as Pepys clearly relates seeing another play at the Duke’s on 7 May, though they could well have all come in that same month.

¹⁷¹ This is in contrast to his vision of “*Farce*,” which “*consists of forc’d humours, and unnatural events*” (Preface 9).

¹⁷² The best known play featuring Englishmen at Carnival in Spain is, of course, Behn’s 1677 *The Rover*, but Dryden was likely familiar with such a device courtesy of Thomas Killigrew’s *Thomaso; or, The Wanderer*.

¹⁷³ Granted Spanish plays full of intrigue and whispering had long been a staple of the English stage, and in particular in the 1660s, a trend to which Dryden contributed, and they would remain so; this statement, however, is still ironic coming from an author about to write *The Conquest of Granada*.

¹⁷⁴ Aphra Behn’s first play debuted in 1670, Elkanah Settle’s, William Wycherley’s, and John Crowne’s in 1671, Edward Ravenscroft’s in 1672, Nat Lee’s in 1674, Thomas Otway’s in 1675, and Tom D’Urfey’s in 1676. All of these playwrights, with the exception of Settle, who (thankfully) never attempted comedy, played a significant role in the expression and development of the libertine hero in his halcyon days, and several in his decline.

¹⁷⁵ Newcastle and Dryden’s *Sir Martin Mar-All* leans heavily on *L’Etourdi*, the opening debate on child-rearing from Sedley’s *The Mulberry Garden* is taken almost directly from *L’Ecole des Maris* (which Molière in turn closely adapted from Terence’s *Adelphi*), Shadwell borrows much of the plot of *The Sullen Lovers* from *Les Facheux*, and Dryden takes hints from *Les Précieuses Ridicules* and *Dépit Amoureux* in *An Evening’s Love*. For a summary of these borrowings, see John Wilcox’s *The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1938).

¹⁷⁶ Summers is rather more harsh on Flecknoe’s *Desmoiselles*, calling it “the sorriest amalgam that ever called itself a comedy” (Summers, *Playhouse* 211).

Van Lennep also finds, in his “Plays on the English Stage 1669-1672,” some reason to suppose that *The Hypocrite*, found on a court warrant from this year, basically a bill for the rent of the Royal Box, to be a never-published translation of *Tartuffe* by Shadwell.

¹⁷⁷ Though this play tends to be ignored as a source of Wycherley’s, who undoubtedly had recourse to the French originals, he likely was familiar with this text as well, as he echoes Caryl’s changes more than occasionally. For example, Caryl’s play contains, albeit in a very different context, the line “you shall write Letters in my Forehead with a hot Iron” (V.p.98), which Wycherley echoes in Pinchwife’s notorious threat to “write Whore with this Penknife in [Margery’s] Face” (IV.ii.92-93).

¹⁷⁸ The title on the first page styles *Tartuffe* *The French Zealot*.

¹⁷⁹ Crowne’s 1690 *The English Frier* bears a mild resemblance to *Tartuffe*, but positing any direct connection is tenuous at best.

¹⁸⁰ These include *The Island Princess; or, The Generous Portugal* (adapted slightly by an unknown hand), *Women Pleased*, *The Coxcomb* (with Beaumont), and *The Little French Lawyer* (with Massinger) from Fletcher, Jonson’s *Catiline’s Conspiracy* and *Every Man in his Humour*, and Shirley’s *The Gentleman of Venice* and *The Gamester*. Two plays from the obscure (to the Restoration at least) playwrights John Ford (*The Lady’s Trial*) and John Webster (an adaptation of *Appius and Virginia*, likely by Betterton, entitled *The Roman Virgin; or, The Unjust Judge*) also appeared. New Shakespeare plays are conspicuously absent; indeed, no new or newly adapted Shakespeare play debuted in the *nine* years separating Davenant and Dryden’s remastered *Tempest* from the 1676 premiere of *Julius Caesar*.

¹⁸¹ Though, most likely, some earlier anonymous plays were female-authored (oddly enough, all surviving original plays from 1660-1674 have been attributed with some confidence),

the only other contender for the title of first staged female playwright would be the posthumous 1668 performances of Katharine Phillips's translation of the first four acts of Corneille's *Horace* (with the last act by Denham). Regardless, Aphra Behn's 1670 debut would eclipse these slight beginnings entirely.

¹⁸² He does not, however, take his admiration for this play to a point anywhere near what Lynch suggests. *She Would if She Could* was certainly not "the great dramatic inspiration" of Shadwell's entire long and varied career, and he never entered a state of "actual discipleship" to Etherege (162, 163); he was by no means "following, though humbly" Etherege "with patient, plodding devotion" (164, 162). Such comments more form a Restoration analogue to the widely held view of the relationship between Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher—substituting Etherege, Dryden, and Shadwell--than reflect the actual relationship between the works of the three.

¹⁸³ Pepys relates this scandal at some length, as do Robert D. Hume and Harold Love in their introduction to the play in their edition of Buckingham's works. Buckingham, in a beautifully turned bit of policy, managed so much to incense the bellicose treasury official Sir William Coventry and his assistant Sir John Duncomb by his very silly lampoon of them, in swivel chairs at a custom-made desk, as Sir Cautious Trouble-all and Sir Gravity Empty, that Coventry, getting wind of it, "told Tom. Killigrew" that if any actor mocked him in any way, "he would cause his nose to be cut" (Pepys 9: 471-472), effectively cancelling the performance. Coventry, "a proud and humorless man" (Hume and Love, 2: 236), then proceeded to challenge Buckingham to a duel, leading to his own dismissal and disgrace. Perhaps the real victim of this scandal was Sir Robert Howard, whose last play was thus never performed and never published; it only survived in a single manuscript edition that "surfaced in 1947, was identified in 1973, and was published in 1976" (Hume and Love 2: 231) by Hume and Arthur H. Scouten.

¹⁸⁴ His evaluation of this type, however, sprawling over fifty years with no regard for development, leads towards not a moral condemnation but a Lamb- and Palmer-like emasculation of “the extravagant rake” and his philosophy, which, due to his being such a risible character, can “be wished out of sight” and reduced to a mere “licensed explosion” that disperses “the tensions built up by the need for social conformity” (86, 87). He thus renders his extravagant rake “not a typical young man or a common type but a phenomenon,” more “an entertaining puppy,” albeit of “a pure breed” (75, 76), than a valid lead; this comes as no surprise, however, from an author who would later go on to edit the plays of Thomas Southerne, who did much the same thing.

¹⁸⁵ This anecdote Downes must have told countless times, since it occurred some forty-five years earlier, “ca. 1662,” and may have been in James Howard’s never-published revised version with the happy ending. Mrs. Holden had been “one of Davenant’s original actresses” who “either left the stage very soon or was of so little consequence that she played no important roles” (Wilson, *All the King’s Ladies* 149).

The plays whose settings are marked with an asterix give no clear indication as to the scene; I have guessed based primarily on the names of the characters.

¹⁸⁶ See note 49.

¹⁸⁷ Believed during the Restoration to be a collaboration with Jonson and Fletcher.

¹⁸⁸ This play later went over to the Duke’s company after Davenant gained rights to all of his own plays on 12 December 1660. (Van Lennep, *London Stage* 22).

¹⁸⁹ This play, *The Mad Lover*, *The Spanish Curate*, and *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, as well as *the Loyal Subject* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, were only on loan to the Duke’s; the rights to them reverted to the King’s on 12 February 1661 (Van Lennep, *London Stage* 22).

¹⁹⁰ The plays labelled “Rogue Company” were all most likely performed by the company led by George Jolly, which staged unlicensed performances intermittently until 1667, at either the Red Bull, Salisbury Court, or the Cockpit in Drury Lane. See Hotson for his story.

¹⁹¹ His revision of his own play *The Guardian* that he wrote hastily in 1641 for presentation to the future Charles II on the occasion of his visit to Cambridge.

¹⁹² See note 66.

¹⁹³ James Howard wrote an alternate, happy ending for the play that was performed in the early 1660s, but never published.

¹⁹⁴ Killigrew originally wrote the play as a tragedy, perhaps performed in 1662-1663, and then altered it into a comedy for production and publication.

¹⁹⁵ Like *Aglaura*, this play has two fifth acts, both of which were apparently played.

¹⁹⁶ See page 172 and note 134.

¹⁹⁷ See page 239 and note 183.