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**The dramatic works of Aphra Behn: A comparison/contrast
of her views of women and their interaction with Restoration
society with that of her male contemporaries**

Prescott, Anne, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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The Dramatic Works of Aphra Behn: A Comparison/Contrast of
Her Views of Women and Their Interaction with Restoration
Society with that of Her Male Contemporaries

by

Anne Prescott

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
English in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
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1992

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Anne Prescott

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF APHRA BEHN: A COMPARISON/CONTRAST OF HER VIEWS OF WOMEN AND THEIR INTERACTION WITH RESTORATION SOCIETY WITH THAT OF HER MALE CONTEMPORARIES

Adviser:
Judith Milhous

by
Anne Prescott

This dissertation analyzes the plays of Aphra Behn in relation to those of the male Restoration playwrights. Due to the male-centered construct emerging from the patriarchal system of Behn's age and succeeding ages, most (male) critics have been content to focus on her gender and personal life as a way to proclaim her work wanting in merit. But in order to achieve insight into Behn and her beliefs, it is her work which must be given primary attention. Unfortunately, there have been moments in scholastic history when Behn's work, only because of gender-specific prejudice, has been jettisoned as a viable means of determining her value and contribution as a dramatist. The overall result for Behn and her work has either been relegation to the periphery of the literary world, or worse, the denial of her participation in that world. Behn was, however, a vital participant, and this dissertation advances the notion that she engaged with her society as a playwright working within literary conventions, and yet shattering the boundaries thereof.

It is essential to obey the dictates of historical accuracy: thus, I have first placed Behn in her age by

defining the social and literary framework of the Restoration. To be sure, Behn shared playwriting elements with her male counterparts. The Restoration conferred certain literary obligations on a dramatist. Like the men with whom she competed, Behn included the expected characters--the irresistible, charming rake-hero, the feisty, independent-minded heroine, the dictatorial parental figure, and the ridiculous, yet loveable fop. Behn also adhered to Restoration literary conventions by utilizing stock situations, the most common of which was the stock plot of forced marriage, and in which the above characters are the prominent players. Behn possessed a shrewd understanding of what her audience wanted, and she rarely disappointed theatre-goers. I contend that in following the literary rules, Behn was able to insert serious social messages suggesting that women--and men--were oppressed by her male-dominated society. And perhaps the message was all the more potent because it was included in so many of her comedic works. Humor can conceal and reveal.

The crux of my dissertation is that Behn's true significance consists in her approach to typical Restoration characters, and the way she employed them to reflect her concerns about how women were viewed and treated. Behn does not, like most of the men, condemn the prostitute, the unchaste woman, the older, learned woman, and the female warrior. For Behn, the first two women/characters are

victims, and the last two are not always absurd, as tradition would have it. It is society that stands condemned, for it is society that is responsible for the devastating economic circumstances which produce such women as the prostitute and the unchaste woman. I believe that Behn reserved her strongest attack for the institution of forced marriage, the most visible manifestation of a one-sided world.

I argue a cautious feminism in my approach to Behn and her plays. I assert that as a woman, Behn was especially concerned with the status of women. Surely this challenge to patriarchal authority induced anxiety in Behn; nevertheless, she defended herself. It is critical to realize that Behn, in her comprehension that women were oppressed, did not advocate the oppression of men. This dissertation culminates with the firm conviction that Behn, a multi-dimensional woman and writer, did not believe that prevailing inequities could justify new ones.

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Propitious events occur in all of our lives. I had the great fortune to experience such an event when I came into contact with Prof. Judith Milhous of the Theatre Department at the Graduate Center. I, coming from an English Literature background, benefitted from her theatre training. And since my dissertation deals with Aphra Behn, a dramatist, I needed the fresh insights that Prof. Milhous provided on Behn's plays and those of the male Restoration dramatists whom I discuss. This is not all that Prof. Milhous has done for me. She had the kindness and generosity to supervise the dissertation of a student from another department--how easy it would have been for her to instruct me to secure an advisor from the English Department! The word "busy" hardly comes close to describing the amount of work she was doing--and is continually doing. Yet Prof. Milhous undertook the supervision of a massive project. There were times when I thought I could not do this, times when I thought I could not rise to the exacting standards Prof. Milhous expects and deserves. But her constant encouragement, astute advice, and right-on-target criticism provided the necessary

incentives, and allowed me to complete my work. Prof. Milhous had faith in me, thus helping me to find faith in myself. It has been an honor to work with you, Prof. Milhous. I do not believe I could have found a finer scholar and teacher to aid me in my work. Thank you. My gratitude is boundless.

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Prof. Rachel Brownstein of the English Department at the Graduate Center was my third advisor. Prof. Brownstein's area of study is not the Restoration, and this was an advantage for me, because it allowed her to step back and survey my dissertation from an objective distance. From this vantage point, Prof. Brownstein was able to "see" ideas which I had not thought about. Thank you, Prof. Brownstein, for your suggestions, your feminist viewpoints, and your keen editorial eye.

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Aphra Behn, the subject of my dissertation, presented a singular challenge. But I like challenges, and engaging with the monumental output of Aphra's mind enabled me to expand my own. I regard Aphra with deep affection: the three centuries that separate us vanished, and she became my friend.

Dedicated to:

My mother, Athena Doulides Prescott: Mom, you have always been a true mother. Thank you for the unqualified love, support and wise guidance you gave and continue to give me. All endures. I love you forever and a day.

And my maternal grandmother, Merope Thessalonikaos Doulides: Yaya, when I tell you I love and miss you, how terribly inadequate these words are--they cannot come close to what I feel. Agape mou, you are and will remain the light in my heart.

To Aphra:

"Pilgrim Soul,

You beckoned and bade me follow.

I went."

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CHAPTER ONE

Aphra Behn in Her Age

This dissertation will examine Aphra Behn's view of women and their interaction with the male-dominated society of her age as shown in her dramatic works. This necessitates a comparison/contrast with the male Restoration playwrights' attitudes toward women, because they represent the historical context in which Behn must be measured and understood. Because it is virtually impossible to explore all the male Restoration dramatists, I will concentrate on William Wycherley, Sir George Etherege, John Dryden, John Crowne, Thomas Shadwell, Thomas Otway, and Thomas D'Urfey. These playwrights have also been chosen because they are the primary dramatists with whom Behn competed; hence they will provide the most significant comparison/contrast with her.

In this first section, I will briefly discuss the historical backdrop of the Restoration, the age in which Behn lived and wrote, the status of women at that time, and Behn's literary participation with her era. Even though it is imperative to supply a historical focus for a more adequate insight into Behn's life and work, expediency demands a relatively short exploration; works which will

enhance the reader's knowledge of the Restoration will be found in the footnotes.

The restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660, after an exile of lengthy duration on the Continent, catapulted England into an age marked by a noticeable loosening of the moral code, a most striking contrast to the rigid Puritan ethic imposed by the Commonwealth. From 1649 to 1660, the English people lived under the Puritan dictates of Cromwell's Commonwealth and Protectorate. Consequently, when Charles II, the son of the executed Charles I, ascended the throne, taking back the stewardship of England with the overwhelming consent of his subjects, the country was more than ready for revelry. And the theatres, having been closed for eighteen years, flung open their doors with cheerful alacrity.

Not all segments of the Restoration populace considered the king's attitudes acceptable: the Puritans did not simply vanish, and they could not be expected to cast aside the tenets which gave definition to their lives. But since Charles II and his cavalier courtiers were now in charge, those citizens intent on retaining their Puritanism provided the perfect comic fodder. Although the play world and the real world represent two distinct domains, Allardyce Nicoll does have a valid point when he says, "In the comedies, and the comedies are but a reflex of real life, the citizens' wives are made fair game for the debauched

sparks, their husbands the mere butts for ill-placed wit and buffoonery."¹

The relaxed moral code found expression in the re-opening of the theatres, closed during the Interregnum. Since the theatre is one chronicler of historical trends, and since this study deals with the medium by which the theatre asserts itself--plays--a few words about the stage are not out of place here. The plays that dominated the stage during the Restoration have scandalized many, from the Puritans themselves to the Victorians, and even some modern critics. Jeremy Collier's diatribe, A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698), initiated an attack which was to have tenacious staying power. Collier self-righteously states that "the business of Plays is to recommend Virtue, and discountenance Vice."² So extremely strident was Collier's tone, that even such a widely used cliché could not soften the effect Collier's piece had on most playwrights. Though it is generally conceded today that the plays are not as immoral as once thought, they still heralded an immense change in the value system: "As is evident from the dialogues in the comedies the conversation of men with men or of women with men reaches a freedom seen at no other period of our history."³ This daring dialogue is exhibited most effectively in Restoration comedy's ubiquitous stock situation: the recurring theme of witty courtship involving equally matched

lovers, where the heroine holds her own in elegant banter with the rake-hero. Witness the exchange between Harriet and Dorimant when they spar in Etherege's The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter (1676):

Dor. I will renounce all the joys I have in
friendship and in wine, sacrifice to you all the
interest I have in other women--
Har. Hold! Though I wish you devout, I would not
have you turn fanatic. Could you neglect these
a while and make a journey into the country?
Dor. To be with you, I could live there and never
send one thought to London.
Har. Whate'er you say, I know all beyond High Park's
[sic] a desert to you, and that no gallantry can
draw you farther.⁴

Though free dialogue is closely associated with satire on marriage, it is a fact that the young principals marry at the close of the plays. So marriage is still a strong and abiding concept. The Restoration playwrights did not sanction unbridled licentiousness. They did not wish to consign marriage to oblivion; a loosening of moral strictures cannot be equated with the annihilation of societal institutions. We must not forget that comedies traditionally terminate with marriage. The rake, who embodies so well the relaxed atmosphere, usually repents his debauchery, so the libertinism that he reflects is refuted when he surrenders to the societal injunction to marry. As Robert D. Hume affirms:

Dryden, Behn, Shadwell, Otway, and Southerne are unanimous in their contempt for genuine libertinism. The rebellion of the Court Wit outlook against social convention is faithfully mirrored in these comedies--and so is its inevitable failure. Rakes in these plays are seldom anything but comic exaggerations, satiric butts,

and bedroom farce conventions. Reputation notwithstanding, "Restoration comedy" gives precious little support to libertinism. Its authors accept a moral code which was anathema to the Victorians and remains so to serious Christians. But they did not endorse libertines nor were they genuinely hostile to marriage.⁵

While the new code affected both sexes, it imposed special problems for women. A possible consequence of free sexual behavior is pregnancy, which brings social, moral, and economic dilemmas. A single woman of the middle or upper classes who was unfortunate enough to find herself in this situation had no name to bequeath to her child; she was ejected from her class, and the station it conferred; morally she was a loose woman and economically she was destitute, a pariah. A married woman of the middle and upper strata who engaged in an adulterous affair compromised her husband's honor as well as her own. Lawrence Stone asserts:

...women have for millennia been regarded as the sexual property of men and...the value of this property is diminished if it has been or is being used by anyone other than the legal owner....Thus a man's honour depended on the reliability of his spoken word; a woman's honour on her reputation for chastity. But the honour of a married man was also severely damaged if he got the reputation of being a cuckold, since this was a slur on both his virility and his capacity to rule his own household.⁶

This absolute "doctrine" of chastity was one of monumental strength and influence on both sexes. Almost from the cradle, women were raised to be modest and virtuous, and to conduct themselves at all times with the utmost propriety; this upbringing exerted a tremendous authority over their

actions. So firmly entrenched were these rules of female behavior, that transgression from them brought swift retribution at the hands of an unforgiving society. Of course, women of higher social standing were subject to most pressure because the future of their fathers' estates depended on unimpeachable conduct: "...the higher one goes in the society and the greater the amount of property likely to change hands with a marriage, the greater the stress on pre-marital chastity."⁷

It must be remembered, though, that the Restoration was characterized by a relaxation of the moral code--a relaxation that placed women in a double-bind. It is certainly true that nothing had changed for women in the sense that if they were caught indulging in free sexual behavior--or even suspected of such infidelities--they were roundly castigated. Yet the slackening of the moral code encouraged them to fulfill desire by surrendering their chastity to the men they loved. This is the insidious nature of Behn's period. In previous ages, women knew how they must behave, for there was no ambiguity on this point. But in the Restoration, they were sent a message that the old ways did not apply to them any more, which in reality was not true, for if women decided to obey the voices that told them to follow their desires, they discovered that they were no better off than their predecessors. It is the poets and the playwrights who instructed women that they need no

longer obey the summons of societal regulations of female propriety. The Restoration theatre was a reflection of the restored authority structure, comprised of Charles II and his courtiers; playwrights wrote to please the Court. Although it is difficult to deduce exactly how potent literature is in influencing human conduct, it probably does exert some influence. Women attended the theatre. Some women--mainly upper class--read the poems of Rochester and others. Many were aware of the king's stable of mistresses, and of the mores of his court. Two choices were presented to women: adherence to virtue or fulfillment of passion. If they remained loyal to their upbringing, they were out of fashion, and if they spurned the principles by which they were raised, they were whores, unmarriageable, and, therefore, ruined. While women endured the worst humiliations, men, especially unmarried men, could satisfy their sexual needs with impunity, as they had always done. The double standard was alive and thriving, made more treacherous by the relaxed morality. Maureen Duffy claims that "Seventeenth-century society gave women a curious mixture of greater freedom and yet greater oppression than perhaps at any time in English history."⁸

There was another aspect of this double standard that rendered it even more intolerable--the entrenched idea, carried into the Restoration and beyond, that while men remained attractive and could have affairs with young women,

women became antiquated at a young age and would appear ridiculous if they turned to younger men. And, of course, women had to restrain themselves from enjoying too many affairs, and even flirtations. A fine balance had to be maintained. Women were constrained to walk a hair-thin tightrope which separated fashion from whoredom. As Angeline Goreau declares:

If the end for women of the Restoration game of love was inevitable, the time she could play it was short, only as long as her beauty lasted--"at twenty-five in woman's eyes/Beauty does fade, at thirty dies." Male attractiveness, on the other hand, went far beyond that age, and the libertines seduced girls at a progressively greater distance from their own age, while the young women who had been their contemporaries were discarded as no longer "fresh." This apparently was so widely and unquestioningly accepted that the wits even used it as a "persuasion to enjoy" device in their poems, arguing that a woman ought to take full advantage of her brief moment of beauty, as all too soon she will be no longer desirable. She had to be careful, though, not to take too full advantage. Sexual experience reduced the value of a lady even as it served to make a gallant more charming. Too many love affairs inevitably branded her a whore.⁹

Goreau recounts the fate of the actress, Elizabeth Farley, which clearly demonstrates that women were considered amusing playthings that could be cast aside when they no longer amused. After having a short affair with Charles II, Farley was discarded by him, and then took up with a lawyer, James Weaver. He grew weary of her and threw her out of the house they "shared." She was saddled with debts and merchants threatened to haul her into court. Farley could not be arrested because she was a member of the King's Company, but this respite from despair was tempered by the

fact that she was not allowed to act when it became known that she was pregnant--some "decent" people protested. Farley's infant was born, her reputation was destroyed, and she vanished into the labyrinthine slums of London. A shattered life. Naturally, the king and the lawyer went blithely about their business, smugly cocooned in the security their male-dominated world guaranteed them.¹⁰

Considering the pitfalls of the unwedded life for the Restoration female, one might assume that she would fare better in marriage. After all, she is now under the protection of her husband, her children have legitimacy, and she and her children enjoy refuge from financial deprivation. Despite all of these advantages, however, there was one huge disadvantage that could strip her of security: under the law she was a mere appendage of her husband, as she had been under her father. In the most fundamental ways, the law failed to extend protection to her as a human being. Lawrence stone says: "By marriage, the husband and wife became one person in law--and that person was the husband. He acquired absolute control of all his wife's property, which he could sell at will."¹¹ Goreau is more specific about what a woman could expect under her husband's dominance:

If a young woman of Aphra Behn's generation had few choices outside of marriage, once married she had fewer. Under Common Law, she became a femme covert, which meant that she had no legal rights or identity outside her spouse's: she could own no property, make no contract, and have no right to her own children. She did not even

have guardianship of her sons and daughters if her husband died unless he so specified in his will--otherwise, they automatically became the wards of her father-in-law.¹²

This oppression in marriage is sometimes mirrored in the Restoration play. In The Plain-Dealer (1676), by Wycherley, the Widow Blackacre exclaims: "Matrimony, to a woman, is worse than excommunication in depriving her of the benefit of the law and I would rather be deprived of life."¹³ In actuality, life is hardly worth living if one has no rights and no power--there is no dignity in such a position. Restoration women could not hope that their lives would be appreciably different--or better--than those of preceding generations of women. The "freedom" they were exhorted to exercise was entirely illusory. Told to behave as they pleased, they were then denigrated for it. This "mixed message" has more power to destroy than straightforward oppression, for there is no relief from the utter confusion resulting from it. In view of this, perhaps it can be said that the Restoration was an age of uncompromising cruelty for women.

Into this world emerges Aphra Behn, a woman and writer steeped in the social mores and literary conventions of her time, yet venturing beyond both. In a milieu such as this, there had to be consequences for Behn when she dared to live and write according to her feelings. Her poetry, especially, evinces a remarkable outspokenness about the right of women to explore and enjoy their sexuality. This

summons to revel in the joys of nature had become the new credo, its best-known disciple the Earl of Rochester, that embodiment of Restoration libertinism. Since Behn enjoyed a certain popularity with the coterie of Charles II, it is quite likely that she was influenced by the fashionable playwrights, poets, and courtiers--and they by her. Behn's poetry parallels her life experience; she practiced sexual freedom, perhaps taking many lovers. Goreau says of Behn's poetry:

Within the stiff form of pastoral convention, she was taking a position that was revolutionary for a woman writer of her time. Not only was such direct acknowledgement of her own desire considered unfeminine in a woman, but her equal activity in sexual advance--"and I returned the same"--must have been disconcerting even to the rakehell fops and seducers who pretended a disregard for female honor. Aphra's poem, called "The Willing Mistress," was putting a period to "The Coy Mistress." She had taken a position for sexual freedom, for women as well as for men, that would make her name a scandal to be reckoned with for three centuries. Aphra's views were, of course, more complicated than a single advocacy of feminine sexual liberty: she was, at first, very much aware of the practical difficulties of such a position, and second, too much subject to the conventional wisdom about women that was part of her education and upbringing to avoid equivocation. But the fact remains that she boldly ventured her stand, however much she might later attempt to elude the consequences.¹⁴

"The conventional wisdom about women" that Goreau speaks about warns the reader of Behn's plays to refrain from labelling her a feminist in the modern sense of the word, for it is inappropriate and inaccurate to assess one age according to the standards of another. In doing so, the reader disregards--and disparages--social trends in history,

and so misconstrues what she/he is required to understand. To judge Behn according to our definition is misleading, and this caution also applies to female authors of past generations. In Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England (1982), Katharine M. Rogers makes such a point about eighteenth-century women writers: "Obviously, none of these women--including the radicals--was a feminist in the contemporary image. Social conditions and assumptions were too different from those of today."¹⁵ It would rather be more apropos and fair to define Behn as a proto-feminist, as Maureen Duffy does:

Her understanding of sexuality and her attempt to redefine the rules for its conduct along rational and humane lines without the dictates of religion is what makes Love Letters, in spite of its baroque dress, seem so contemporary to us and ultimately accessible to a new audience, perhaps more so than at any time since her death. She also offers no concessions to concepts of male superiority and this places her as a proto-feminist, who could make a bid for 'the poet, the masculine part of me' to be heard on equal terms.¹⁶

"Rational and humane lines without the dictates of religion" is a phrase that also can be applied to Behn's plays. The subject of forced marriage is inextricably welded to organized religion, and Behn attacks both in her dramatic works. These two "accomplices," religion and forced marriage, are repugnant to Behn, because they negate real love arising out of free choice, and the mutual exchange of vows to consecrate and seal that love. The Judeo-Christian amalgamation comprises doctrines antagonistic to feminine liberty; the one doctrine particularly adversarial to women,

and responsible for the oppression they have endured for centuries, is the concept, stemming from Eve's temptation of Adam, that Woman is hopelessly corrupt. Her sexuality must be rigidly monitored and controlled, as it is voracious, and she will consume male "uprightness" within the vortex of her appetite. The Church Fathers, in their sexism--there is no other word--loathing, and fear of the female being, have shackled women and betrayed their own weaknesses. The Felix Culpa has not been at all happy or fortunate for women. This fatal combination of forced marriage and ecclesiastical doctrine will be explored in the chapter on forced marriage.

Quite simply, Behn was utterly unlike the vast majority of women in her age. The incredible courage it took for her to live her life as she saw fit and to express her ideas freely is indisputable. She required even more fortitude to battle the negative reaction that her writing engendered. Victimized by her society, to a degree that her male colleagues were not, Behn found that the double standard was detrimental to both her personal and professional lives. She was thrust into the position of defending herself and her work against a society that enticed women to act with greater freedom, yet condemned them for doing so. As a consequence of her outspoken stance, Behn became the recipient of a curious attitude: the biased inclination to judge her as depraved because she was a woman who wrote what she felt. This tendency to

confuse the woman with her work can be seen in many cases of female authorship, but Behn was more than most women writers the victim of this particular form of sexism. This is hardly surprising, given that Behn was the first woman in England to earn a living by writing. Here is yet another example of the double standard, for the personal lives of male writers are rarely used as a moral yardstick in the examination of their works. The critic attempts to determine the merit of the male author's work by concentrating attention on the words he has written. And that is as it should be. By confounding Behn's life with her work, and declaring both wanting only because she was a woman who lived and wrote on her own terms, too many scholars have dismissed her plays as morally unacceptable, hence worthy of no attention (Behn's detractors will be discussed in the following section). Dale Spender claims:

On the grounds that it is the work of women, literary men have disqualified women's writing from even being considered as worthy of inclusion in the canon. For women it has been much more than a case of an unfair hearing, it has often been a case of no hearing at all. Every facet of the literary process, from start to finish, is examined on the basis that it is not the writing, but the sex which is responsible for the poor ratings given to women's work in the literary world of men...One of the reasons that women have been discouraged from writing--and that their writing has been dismissed--is that the woman writer has presented an alternative world. Which is why it could be said--that you don't have to read women's writing to know that it is (patriarchally) subversive.¹⁷

Behn did present to the reader and the theatre-goer "an alternative world." This, coupled with her gender, provoked

a singularly virulent attack on her as a woman who dared to write "patriarchally subversive" material.¹⁸

Behn's Critical Detractors

In this section I intend to chronicle the long critical attack on Behn, which unfortunately extends into this century. The critical barrage levelled at Behn centers on the fact that she was a woman who had the temerity to write--and to write what she liked. From this, her detractors conclude that she was morally depraved, for no respectable woman would choose to expose herself to public scrutiny by entering the literary arena. Worse, Behn lived as pleasure demanded, which outraged her foes all the more. Because she was a woman, they assume she surely was not capable of the creativity, wit, and intelligence necessary for literary production, for only men possessed these qualities. Ergo, her work has no merit whatsoever. Behn was, in the minds of her attackers, irrevocably abandoned to licentiousness as a woman, and deficient as a writer.

The denunciation of Behn began early. Dryden castigated Behn for her risque works in a letter to Elizabeth Thomas (letter 69), a hypocritical position indeed, given the fact that he had many a bawdy play to his credit:

...but you, who write only for your Diversion, may pass your Hours with Pleasure in it, and without Prejudice, always avoiding (as I know you will) the Licenses which Mrs. Behn allowed herself, of writing loosely, and

giving (if I may have leave to say so) some Scandal to the Modesty of her Sex. I confess, I am the last Man who ought, in Justice to arraign her, who have been myself too much a Libertine in most of my Poems, which I should be well contented I had Time either to purge or to see them fairly burned.¹⁹

Notice the first sentence of the passage--it is indeed telling. When Dryden informs Thomas that she writes "only for diversion," and so can take "pleasure in it," he is revealing the societal belief, accepted by both genders, that women should never write in a professional capacity. Women were obliged to keep their ideas close to home, never disclosing their beliefs to the outside world, most especially if those beliefs challenged the existing male power structure. If a woman had any ambitions regarding publication, she had better repress them; the thoughts and feelings of the female mind and heart had to remain cloistered. According to Dryden, Thomas is able to write "without prejudice." One can only guess what he meant by these words, but it can be surmised that they could reflect the concept that if a woman interjected herself into the literary arena, she could not avoid challenging ideologies which should not be challenged; and from a woman this is "prejudice." The coercive tone of the words, "as I know you will" is unmistakable, as is the obvious contrast Dryden makes between Thomas and Behn--all designed for Thomas' moral edification. Behn has stepped over the social barriers. She has offered her work for publication and production on the stage. She has refused to conduct herself

as a decent woman must--"licenses," "writing loosely," and "giving some scandal to the modesty of her sex."

At least Dryden is fair, however. In later life, after he had converted to Roman Catholicism, he felt obligated to repent by upbraiding himself for writing bawdy plays. Frank Harper Moore speaks of Dryden's penchant for remorse concerning literary "transgressions:" "The same moral tendency may be seen in his private correspondence during this period."²⁰

The letter to Thomas is not a serious condemnation of Behn's work, tempered as it is by Dryden's condemnation of his own work. One could say that Dryden was being rather gentlemanly in contrast to Wycherley, who reveals his character in a far more unsavory manner than he does Behn's. In his poem, "To the Sappho of the Age, Suppos'd to Ly-In of a Love-Distemper, or a Play," Wycherley is zealously intent on savaging Behn:

...Once, to your Shame, your Parts to all were shown,
But now, (tho' a more Public Woman grown,)
You gain more Reputation in the town;
Grow Public, to your Honour, not your Shame,
As more Men now you please, gain much more Fame;
...Barren Wits, envy your Head's Off-springs more,
Than Barren Women, did your Tail's before;
More Fame you now (since talk'd of more) acquire,
And as more Public, are more Mens Desire.²¹

Wycherley's nasty little passage is not only sexist, but unfair and erroneous. "Parts" means abilities or capacities. But there are strong intimations that Wycherley is employing "parts" in other ways: the negative exposure a

woman endured when she wrote, and private parts ("to your shame," and "to all were shown"). A woman's emotional and physical attributes were to be hoarded for her husband, not disclosed to the public. Behn has become "more public" because she has dared to publish, and reveal her mind and her sexuality. From this arises her "reputation" as the whore-writer, and as she grows more "public," she accumulates more "fame" as a whore. Wycherley then claims that Behn has no skill as a playwright by saying only "barren wits" would "envy" or admire her work, and tacitly implies that Behn only has literary acclaim because she is "talk'd of more." Again, there is another meaning here: Behn gathers negative fame because her free lifestyle is the subject of endless gossip. These ideas are confirmed by "barren women" envying Behn's sexual prowess--fertility and possibly, illegitimate children--and by the last sentence, which asserts that as Behn becomes more well known in both the literary and sexual senses, more men want her. It is probable that Wycherley's attack on Behn is motivated by envy--I shall use his word. After all, he wrote only four plays to Behn's seventeen. This defamation of her character typifies the tendency of some male authors and critics to obsess on a female writer's private life rather than what they should regard: her work. There is the strong suggestion that there is an equation between writing and whoring. Wycherley's poem is all the more venomous because

he infers that Behn is not to be taken seriously as a woman or a writer--only a whore.

There is a critic who surpasses Wycherley in sheer hatefulness, though. Wycherley's poem has an element of humor--not surprising when one considers that he possessed a rapier wit. But there is not an iota of humor in Dr. John Doran's infamous diatribe against Behn. He is largely known for his puritanical bombardment of Behn's character; perhaps if Doran had not written his malicious denunciation of Behn, he would have faded into oblivion. Though Doran wrote four extensive volumes on English drama, this is what stands out, for not since Collier have we seen such prudish squeamishness. Of course, the passage of over a century has somewhat diminished the sting of Doran's attack. Frederick M. Link addresses this point: "The Restoration drama has now largely freed itself from the two centuries of diatribe against its looseness, and Dr. Doran's judgment of Mrs. Behn as a 'mere harlot, who danced through uncleanness,' seems today not merely absurd but amusing."²² Due to the extraordinary nature of Doran's assault on Behn, despite the "absurd" and "amusing" qualities it has, it is essential to quote the passage in its entirety, because the poison it evinces has been responsible for influencing some people, keeping them from reading Behn's plays and deciding for themselves:

Her opportunities for good were great, but she abused them all. She might have been an honor to womanhood;--

she was its disgrace. She might have gained glory by her labors;--but she chose to reap infamy. Her pleasures were not those which became an honest woman; and as for her "Muses," she sat not with them on the slopes of Helicon, but dragged them down to her level, where the Vices and their unclean votary wallowed together in the mire. There is no one that equals this woman in downright nastiness, save Ravenscroft and Wycherley; but the latter of these had more originality of invention and grace of expression. To these writers, and to those of their detestable school, she set a revolting example. Dryden preceded her, by a little, on the stage; but Mrs. Behn's trolloping muse appeared there before the other two writers I have mentioned, and was still making unseemly exhibition there after the coming of Congreve. With Dryden she vied in indecency, and was not overcome. To all other male writers of her day she served as a provocation and an apology. Intellectually, she was qualified to have led them through pure and bright ways; but she was a mere harlot, who danced through uncleanness, and dared or lured them to follow. Remonstrance was useless with this wanton hussy...she adapted skillfully; and she was never dull. But then, all her vivacity is wasted on filth.²³

By saying that Behn might have set an example to other women, but instead chose to be a "disgrace," Doran with dexterous subtlety belittles the whole sex by intimating that one woman was capable of besmirching the honor of all women. For Doran, Behn "chose" to sully herself; she made a conscious decision to devote herself and her work to moral degradation. And just as he gives no credit to women as a group--Behn is obligated to safeguard their ethics--he actually asserts that she had the power to violate the integrity of poetic inspiration ("Muses") by writing in a lewd manner. Not content with smearing Behn, Doran also attacks Ravenscroft, Wycherley, Dryden, and the Restoration dramatists in general ("those of their detestable school"). At least he credits Wycherley with talent as a playwright.

Wycherley and Dryden would probably not be at all amused to find themselves the objects of an attack similar in tone to those they directed at Behn. Thus circles close. How ludicrous of Doran to imply that the male playwrights were almost obligated to apologize for Behn's risqué plays! Interestingly, after destroying Behn's character, Doran praises her intellectual ability--then refutes his praise by saying that she chose the path of sin, thereby qualifying his compliment. Another qualification appears at the end: Behn has skill and creativity ("never dull," and "vivacity"), yet these talents are "wasted on filth." It is to Doran's credit that he has obviously read Behn's plays before passing sentence on them. There is, however, a telling peek into his psyche here: when he says that Behn is "never dull," he admits that he found her plays to be enjoyable. Intriguing indeed, for why would a man so revolted by bawdry spend the time required to read plays which clearly disgusted him? Sequestered safely in his study or in the recesses of a hushed library, perhaps Doran relished in his secret heart the "impurities" he imputed to Behn. There is another factor at work in Doran's diatribe. By asserting that Behn had such a strong effect on those coming into contact with her work, he awards her a magnificent--and unintentional--power. It is quite odd that Doran failed to understand that though there were many who would be dissuaded by his remarks from reading Behn, there

were many who would hasten to obtain her works after perusing his assessment of her; the more one initiates and creates controversy, the more titillated is human curiosity. In this respect, it could be said that Doran did Behn a great favor, a complete reversal of his intent, which was to bury her. And his failure to inter Behn is her victory over him.

The last two critics to be discussed in this section, George Sherburn and John Wilcox, do not, like the previous critics scold Behn as indecent because she wrote what she wanted. Nevertheless, Sherburn and Wilcox impute no value to her work, and I believe that some degree of gender bias was present when they scrutinized her plays. Let me reiterate the relevant passage from Spender (see page 13): "it is not the writing, but the sex which is responsible for the poor ratings given to women's work in the literary world of men" (footnote 17). It is my view that this whiff of sexism earns Sherburn and Wilcox a place in this section.

Sherburn, in his entry entitled "The Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1660-1789)," for A Literary History of England (1948), overgeneralizes in claiming that Behn did not surpass all the male playwrights ("the men"); consequently the following statement can be argued:

"In character Mrs. Behn was definitely emancipated; and her compliance with the state of the time, together with the prime fact that her plays came from a woman's pen, gave her a reputation for shocking indecencies as a

dramatist. She simply tried to write like the men, whom she in no way surpassed."²⁴

The fact that Behn's plays were produced and published more often than those of many of "the men" does not refute the last sentence; nonetheless, one must pause to ponder the credibility of such an assessment. Behn was a popular dramatist, and it is beyond belief that those who saw and read her plays would have squandered their time and money on a playwright who lacked the skill to draw an audience. And surely Behn was a more accomplished playwright than some of the men with whom she competed, for instance, Otway, Crowne, Shadwell, and D'Urfey. Otway greatly admired Behn's work; he sought her out on his arrival in London, and she acted as his mentor. This indicates that he was influenced by her, perhaps attempting to emulate her literary prowess. It is disturbing that Sherburn is not specific--"the men" tells us very little. Since Sherburn was contributing material to a volume on the literary history of a nation, it behooves him to supply names. It is important, however, that Sherburn acknowledges that Behn's reputation for indecency was a consequence of her gender.

In turning to Wilcox, it is as though we have regressed in time, back to those critics desirous only of traducing Behn. Although Wilcox is entitled to say whatever he wishes about Behn, his estimation of her work is nevertheless distressing to any reader who wants to arrive at a balanced--and reasoned judgment. In The Relation of

Molière to Restoration Comedy (1938), Wilcox expresses general hostility to the English Restoration playwrights, for they are no match for the impeccable standards set by his subject, Molière. Wilcox, a Francophile, allows his overwhelming admiration for Molière's plays to color his treatment of the English Restoration dramatists--it is no wonder that they receive short shrift. But it is his incredibly callous and wholly unjustified dismissal of Behn which is so objectionable. Wilcox refuses to accord her work any merit:

"In all, Mrs. Behn wrote fourteen [sic] comedies between 1670 and 1696. None has any distinction on its own account, and none contributed anything to the development of the Restoration comedy of manners. The sole merit for the modern reader is the indication of the taste of a time that found them worth applauding."²⁵

With a wave of his mighty hand, Wilcox repudiates not only Behn's entire corpus, but an entire period of English literary history because its "taste" does not suit him. Though Molière's plays were, by comparison with Behn's, relatively pure, they could quite easily be bawdily interpreted and performed, if the director and the actors so chose. But since Wilcox so unabashedly venerates his subject, and not the English Restoration drama or Behn, he ignores a possible bawdy interpretation of mole, while deploring bawdiness in Behn and her age. Unfortunately, there are all too many readers and playgoers who will accord unqualified credence to his ides without investing the

necessary effort requisite for understanding Behn and the Restoration.

Worse, Wilcox's scholarship is shaky on three critical points, a reflection, perhaps, of his contempt for Behn. Behn did not write fourteen comedies, but seventeen. And she most definitely was not writing anything in 1696, having been dead for seven years--she died in 1689! Wilcox is referring to the posthumously produced The Younger Brother, staged at the Drury Lane theatre in 1696.

Furthermore, Behn did not write a Comedy of Manners, so how could she have contributed to a play category in which she was not involved? Behn was engaged in writing a Comedy of Intrigue, being influenced by the Spanish playwrights, undoubtedly another strike against her from Wilcox's perspective. For him, the Comedy of Manners deserved the highest esteem, and there is nothing inherently wrong with this. What is "wrong" is the penchant of so many critics to focus only on the Comedy of Manners, because in so doing, a literary era of astonishing variety and complexity is compressed into one niche. This misrepresentation belittles not only the age, but the dramatists. The insistence that anyone writing plays during the Restoration was obliged to contribute to but a single play category, to the exclusion of all others, smothers our appreciation of individual creativity, effectively draining a literary period of its vitality.

In conclusion, the above critics can be said to be motivated by varying degrees of sexism, Wycherley and Doran to an extreme degree, since their attacks on Behn stem from the idea that a woman was a whore if she published, and expressed "free" opinions in her writing. Doran, as he credits Behn's work, obliterates his praise by claiming her talent was cast away on smut. Dryden's attack is not nearly so noxious, because his gender bias is moderated by his attack upon himself. Sherburn and Wilcox, while not hurling accusations of whoredom at Behn, betray themselves as possibly gender biased by refusing to concede any value in Behn's corpus.

Moderate Critics of Behn

This section will be devoted to those critics who, on the whole, laud Behn's work. George Saintsbury, Edmund Gosse, and James Sutherland see merit in Behn's efforts, and do not hesitate to say so. Yet they cannot avoid some qualification of their general approbation, and each scholar displays a disparate reason for his admiration--tempered by "buts."

In 1903, an extensively detailed opus on every aspect of England's history made its debut. Given the relatively early date, and the Victorian/Edwardian ages it reflected, one might quite reasonably expect severe condemnation of Behn, yet this is not the case with Social

England. It is true that Saintsbury, the author of the entry dealing with Restoration literature, qualifies his regard for Behn at the end, but there is no doubt that he considers her to be talented. He also read her many plays before attempting assessment:

Aphra Behn, one of the legendary figures of English literature, of whom everybody has heard, and of whom few, save students, know much, wrote, besides prose tales of a merit not contemptible, and in a style rather anticipating the narrative episodes of the great Queen Anne essayists, many plays--bustling, lively, and not much more indecent than their fellows, though a couplet of Pope's has labelled them as being so. All these, however, are far behind Etherege and Wycherley in the true vis comica.²⁶

Saintsbury is indulging in hyperbole at the start of the passage. Is it really probable that "everybody" had "heard" of Behn in his day? To play "devil's advocate," however, maybe a writer of such exuberant phrasing can be excused this excess. Saintsbury seems to be linking two ideas: Behn was a "legendary figure" ergo everyone had at least heard her name. It is fascinating that he credits the populace with having heard of Behn, but now knowing about her--only students "know" her. The difference between "heard" and "know" is substantial. Nonetheless, Saintsbury overgeneralizes when he strongly suggests that all students know Behn--have studied her. After all, it was customary to neglect female writers at this time. Even today, many, even most, students have neither heard of Behn, nor studied her. After the effusive praise which Saintsbury awards Behn, he seems to descend into anti-climax--this is the qualifier.

It is almost as if, with the last statement, st. has remembered that he is reviewing the work of a female author, and so must say something negative; this concluding sentence has an abruptness which hints that it is an afterthought. Etherege and Wycherley are superb playwrights, but Behn was, at her best, accomplished in the "vis comica."

Gosse, in his entry for The Dictionary of National Biography (1917), is lavish in his praise of Behn, but his qualifier relates to her life, not her work, as with st.:

She deserves our sympathy as a warm-hearted, gifted, and industrious woman, who was forced by circumstances and temperament to win her livelihood in a profession where scandalous writing was at that time almost obligatory. It is impossible, with what we know regarding her life, to defend her manners as correct or her attitude to the world as delicate. But we may be sure that a woman so witty, so active, and so versatile, was not degraded, though she might be lamentably unconventional.²⁷

Gosse is wise and objective enough to understand that though Behn--to him--failed to observe the proprieties, this did not preclude her being a decent sort and a proficient playwright. This is a tremendous shift in attitude; Doran was incapable of comprehending any good in Behn. Gosse genuinely likes Behn the woman and Behn the writer. And though he feels that she was "lamentably unconventional," this does not prevent him from realizing that unconventionality cannot be equated with moral degradation ("was not degraded"), unlike Doran, who saw the two as cause and effect.

Sutherland, in English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century (1969), displays a curious attitude, acknowledging that Behn was aware of the pain that forced marriage engendered--in this there is some degree of praise because he is recognizing her significance as a social critic--yet attacking her work in a unique way:

"As a woman Mrs. Behn may have been more than usually interested in the problems which contemporary marriage practice created for her own sex, and to some extent she succeeds in stating them...There has always been a tendency (due perhaps to masculine gallantry) to treat her plays too kindly."²⁸

Sutherland is original. He does not indulge in insults against Behn's reputation, as do Wycherley and Doran, and instead of directly stating a belief that her work is deficient, he equivocates. Behn's plays have been given credit because the gallant male critics could not bear to be unchivalrous to a woman! In actuality, the reverse is true: Behn's plays have seldom been treated kindly by male critics. Too, she certainly needs no "masculine gallantry" from male critics to bestow the precious consecration--her work stands on its own as quality work. Sutherland's declaration is more offensive than direct condemnation because he infers that Behn requires special handling as an inferior from superior beings in order to achieve validity. Behn was blunt. She attacked her enemies with honesty, and in return, would very likely prefer the same. Nevertheless, since Sutherland does recognize Behn's social relevance, it would be unfair and too extreme to label him a "detractor."

Sutherland and Gosse stand poised at the edge of the modern critical movement in reference to Behn, for both men attempt an objective analysis of her writing. The fact that they cannot resist interjecting qualifiers is not of much import, considering the times in which they wrote. The central point is that, in a very real way, st and Gosse transcended the prevailing attitudes of their periods, refusing to bow to the idea that a woman was a whore if she wrote, and that the toil of the female brain was not--and never would be--deserving of any serious consideration.

Pre-Feminist and Feminist Critics of Behn

Though it is not strictly accurate to call Virginia Woolf and Allardyce Nicoll "pre-feminists," the term has relevance here; it also supplies an easy-to-understand reference point, separating Woolf and Nicoll from their predecessors. Since these critics evinced concern for the special problems of women in their writing, and clearly comprehended that Behn was of large significance because she reacted forcefully against the oppression of her sex, Woolf and Nicoll foreshadow the feminist critics to come. In fact, I strongly feel that Nicoll has yet to receive his due as the enlightened scholar on Behn that he was. Woolf has been given her just due as a writer troubled by the treatment of women--she has been embraced by feminist

critics. I include Woolf and Nicoll with the feminist critics because both represent a foundation for me.

The feminist scholars differ from Woolf and Nicoll in that they are more cognizant of society's oppression of women, and they are very direct in announcing their beliefs. Of course, present-day feminist critics have the distinct advantage in this regard because they were weaned on the earlier feminist movement in a way that Woolf and Nicoll were not. Although the latter could not have failed to be aware of the suffragettes and the movement they generated, there is a vast difference between Susan B. Anthony and Betty Friedan or Germaine Greer--in fact, the last two feminists diverge ideologically, proving that there are movements within movements. This is a caveat against lumping people together in one monolithic structure. While the early feminists were fighting for specific rights, suffrage being pre-eminent, and were not intent on altering the fabric of society, the later feminists, in contrast, had a far more radical agenda. For such women, simple rights were not sufficient; they campaigned for a changed society where women would be granted equality with men--and feminists are still struggling for full parity--after all, the Equal Rights Amendment has been shelved by Congress, and the right to choose a medically sound abortion is imperilled. Yes, a woman can vote, but if she is still

dominated by her husband and her government, she is not free or equal.

At this point, it behooves me to be clear about how I am defining "feminism." I do not mean radical feminism, which for me indicates the desire to replace the male-dominated system with a female-dominated system; this switch is merely another form of sexism. I am adopting a cautious feminism because I believe that radical feminism, like any extreme, hampers objective and balanced assessment. For the purposes of this dissertation, I define "feminism" as a belief system which advocates working within the existing social order to effect change for women. Jill Dolan terms this concept "liberal feminism:"

Liberal feminism takes its cues from liberal humanism. Rather than proposing radical structural change, it suggests that working within existing social and political organizations will eventually secure women social, political, and economic parity with men...The National Organization for Women and the National Women's Political Caucus are exemplary of liberal feminist work within American politics. These organizations lobby to create legislation that will promote parity between men and women within the dominant system.²⁹

Liberal feminism is a most useful tag for the feminist scholars who appear in this dissertation. With the exception of Laura Brown, Cathy Gallagher, and Dale Spender, the critics herein can be called "liberal feminists."

Though some critics might balk at the word "feminism," I must nonetheless utilize it as a clarifying yardstick; when Link and Root, for instance, convey their awareness of Behn as a social critic, they fit into this category. Since a

veritable multitude of feminist scholars is in evidence today, it is inadvisable to quote all of them--and impossible. At any rate, this matter is not really a question of representation.

A Room of One's Own (1929), by Woolf, stands as a seminal work because it draws attention to the plight of women who wish to carve out a niche for themselves in the professional sphere of writing. This male stronghold was virtually inaccessible to female aspirants to authorship; even the possibility that they might breach its walls was almost unimaginable. Woolf's title represents the theme of the book: a woman, just like a man, requires solitude and tranquility to think and to transfer her thoughts to paper--to write. But women have never known the quiet dignity of such privacy as men have, for they are in constant servitude to their families, who expect this, and would be shocked and resentful to discover that wives and mothers actually desire--and deserve--a bit of peace. Why would a woman need the privacy to engage in a profession that is rightly reserved for men? Woolf makes a plea to men here: kindly grant us the same desires which you feel are your absolute right. Since Woolf was tracing the history of female oppression, and vehemently reacting to it by insisting that women must fight to realize their potential, it is appropriate that she devoted time to Behn, whom she considered a pioneer:

And with Mrs. Behn we turn a very important corner on the road. We leave behind, shut up in their parks among their folios, those solitary great ladies who wrote without audience or criticism, for their own delight alone. We come to town and rub shoulders with ordinary people in the streets. Mrs. Behn was a middle-class woman with all the plebeian virtues of humour, vitality and courage; a woman forced by the death of her husband and some uncomfortable adventures of her own to make a living by her wits. She had to work on equal terms with men. She made, by working very hard, enough to live on. The importance of this fact outweighs anything she actually wrote, even the splendid "A Thousand Martyrs I have made," or "Love in Fantastic Triumph sat," for here begins the freedom of the mind, or rather the possibility that in the course of time the mind will be free to write what it likes. For now, Aphra Behn had done it, girls could go to their parents and say, You need not give me an allowance; I can make money by my pen. Of course the answer for many years to come was, Yes, by living the life of Aphra Behn! Death would be better! And the door was slammed faster than ever. Aphra Behn proves that money could be made by writing at the sacrifice of certain agreeable qualities; and so by degrees writing became not merely a sign of folly and a distracted mind, but was of practical importance...All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, which is, most scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds. It is she--shady and amorous as she was--who makes it not quite fantastic for me to say to you tonight: Earn five hundred a year by your wits.³⁰

Woolf is correct in ascribing pioneer status to Behn. Behn did make it easier for the female writers of succeeding generations to earn their bread with that most potent of all instruments: the pen. For all women who aspired to authorship, she was an exemplar of perspicacity, tenacity, and sheer fortitude. The fact that Behn was a member of the middle class is of real import, for it establishes that if she were to eat, it was incumbent upon her to stake a professional claim equally with men, substantiating her

extraordinary strength. It is interesting to note that Woolf mentions Behn's reputation ("shady and amorous as she was"), as if she cannot avoid doing so. After all, there is no discernable reason to speak of it; Woolf's prose will not suffer a loss of integrity if she fails to discuss Behn's reputation. Perhaps Woolf was influenced by the thread of attack on Behn's life which started with the Puritans and was still flourishing in Woolf's day. And it must be understood that Woolf was conditioned by the Victorian and Edwardian eras, no matter that she rebelled against the moral restraints of both. Despite this glance at Behn's reputation--and that is all it amounts to--Woolf's declarations about women and Behn are remarkably radical for the time.

In his book, A History of Restoration Drama, 1660-1700 (1923), Nicoll devotes considerable attention to Behn, fully acknowledging her social relevance and the impact she had on other women writers; he attaches significance to her work. Despite the fact that over half a century has passed since his study was originally published, subsequent Behn scholars have not rendered his ideas archaic. Simply because he finds Behn bawdy does not negate the importance of his theories; he merely states the truth. Behn's plays are bawdy--and this is one reason why they are so very entertaining. Nicoll also cannot resist a small swipe at Behn's reputation, but what the reader notices is that he

attributes pioneer status to his subject, as does Woolf, and that he clearly comprehends her role as a social critic:

Aphra Behn may have been licentious, but she was establishing a surer position for her sisters than any of the Elizabethan women has succeeded in establishing...Mrs. Behn, by almost every Puritan critic, has been cold-shouldered on account of her supposed indecency. The fact is that she is no worse, and is often a great deal better, than the average playwright of her age. Indecent, free, sometimes positively vulgar, she was in several of her plays; but, on the whole, when we compare her works with similar productions of D'Urfey and Shadwell, even of Dryden, we must be prepared to admit the comparative purity of her dialogue. She has, moreover, on many occasions introduced thoughts and ideas which not only display her unconventional and modern attitudes towards life's relations, but also formed the basis for not a few moralisations in the sentimental eighteenth century to come...She is the first of the modern women...The modern world has given us the ideal of women's equality with man. It is the latter ideal which Mrs. Behn represents.³¹

In recent years there has been an increase in publications concerning Behn. This is in keeping with the movement which seeks to bring women writers out of the obscurity in which they have languished for far too long, and a distinctive offshoot of the feminist movement. The following critics are representative of feminist interpretation; they understand that female authors have been deliberately neglected, and so they have an interest in upgrading the position of these women within the literary sector. All of them to some extent certify Behn's contribution by furnishing extensive information about her concern for the status of women during her period.

Anyone wishing for a well reasoned and perceptive analysis of Behn should read The Prostituted Muse (1988), by Jacqueline Pearson. Pearson takes a feminist stance, but not one so radical that she is unable to consider any other option. Pearson does not offend when she describes Behn's views:

It is precisely what makes Aphra Behn so attractive to twentieth-century feminists that made her so unacceptable to seventeenth-century feminists...For Aphra Behn, the central feminist issue was women's rights to sexual freedom equal to that of men, and she insisted by her writings and her example that women had sexual desires that deserved as much respect as those of men.³²

I have one objection, and that is the use of the phrase "seventeenth-century feminists." It would be useful to know who Pearson had in mind, and defer any criticism that she is making modern value judgments about another period with the word "feminists." Perhaps Pearson is thinking of Mary Astell and/or Daniel DeFoe--there are others--both of whom can be seen as "feminists" within the confines of a century in which they would have been considered radical. However, Pearson makes her point well enough, and her book is characterized by distinctly mature evaluations.

Two popular biographies of Behn are The Passionate Shepherdess (1977) by Maureen Duffy, and Reconstructing Aphra (1980) by Angeline Goreau. Duffy concentrates on Behn's life and how she was affected by her daring living. Goreau's book is a more richly detailed work conveying that Behn was a woman of great complexity in a complex age. Both

biographies do not scrutinize Behn's texts to any significant degree. As textual analysis is crucial to the examination and understanding of an author, the reader is cautioned that neither biography should be relied upon as an authoritative reference on Behn's works. However, since Goreau, more than Duffy, does provide insight into Behn's problems as the first professional female writer, she will be quoted in this dissertation where relevant.

Frederick M. Link, in his book Aphra Behn (1968), professes theories that can be termed "feminist." His study of Behn is not only reliable, but for a rather short book, paradoxically extensive. Because Link discusses the many aspects of being Aphra Behn at a time when this could only bring tribulation, I feel that he deserves the last critical word of this section:³³

Despite her extensive use of conventional themes and forms, Aphra Behn retains considerable individuality as an artist. Specific political and social convictions, for example, find expression in nearly every work associated with her name--Aphra Behn is worth reading, not because she ends or begins an era, or contributes significantly to the development of a literary genre or to the progress of an idea, but because she is an entertaining craftsman whose life and work reflect nearly every facet of a brilliant period in English literary history. She wrote successfully in every important genre except the epic, and she won the praise of most of her contemporaries and the patronage of the public. Moreover, she achieved her reputation without independent income or the advantages of birth and education; and she competed with men in a society where they had ever professional advantage...The preoccupation with major authors and the passage of nearly three centuries have left her little more than a few pages in the literary histories. But much of her work is still fresh and meaningful, and nearly all of it is sufficiently interesting to need no apology.³⁴

Thus far, I have discussed differing feminist ideologies, and the problematic nature inherent in the word "feminism." It is now appropriate, as this chapter nears its end, that I more fully clarify how the concept of liberal feminism relates to Behn herself. If any definition of feminism can be associated with Behn, "liberal feminism" it would be. Behn was not advancing an overthrow of the male-dominated power-structure of her day--not only is there no evidence of this ideology in her work, but it was inconceivable in the Restoration that there could exist any such prospect. It is most important to understand that Behn was not against men; she believed that both sexes had the right to free expression, in private and public life. If women were disentangled from the bonds placed on them by society, then men would also benefit--we will see this in The Widow Ranter (1690). For Behn, the truly secure men wanted a strong woman to compliment him. Any critic adopting a feminist approach to her work must realize that Behn's world-view did not exclude the male gender. Without such an understanding, the scholar--feminist or otherwise--cannot comprehend what mattered to Behn. In deference to the above, when I use the word "feminism," I will do so with caution--and a smattering of reservation. Since, however, my fundamental approach to Behn and her world is feminist, the concept will serve to illustrate her position on the oppression of women: she saw that women were deprived of

basic freedoms, and so reacted passionately and consistently to this. In effect, Behn's plays were vehicles which announced the social problems she witnessed and experienced. Perhaps her plays were also designed to alert both sexes to societal inequities. The feminist approach I have chosen to take regarding Behn--indeed any approach to any author--carries with it the burden of bias. I am obligated to admit that my treatment of Behn and her work is biased, because my thesis is merely one way of viewing my subject. But because a mature assessment of Behn is critical to me, I will attempt to deal with her and her work as objectively as possible, according her the respect she has earned.

This dissertation will fill a gap: Behn has not been studied in relation to her male contemporaries, and her plays have not been as extensively examined as they should have been. This study will attempt to do both. It is Behn's work which must be analyzed in order to determine in what ways she was like her male colleagues, and in what ways she felt compelled to take a divergent path. I plan to do this, emphasizing the ways in which Behn differs. The differences primarily lie in Behn's presentation of unique characters that reflect her social concerns. Of course, she depicts the stock characters of Restoration literary convention, but she also forges new depictions of the prostitute, the unchaste woman, the older learned woman, and the female warrior, characters that have usually been

stereotyped in literature--before, during, and after the Restoration. The other difference set forth in this dissertation is Behn's opposition to forced marriage, which I believe to be the most visible and important way in which she differs from the men. Behn, more than any other dramatist of her period, formulates a strong, angry, and persistent attack on an institution she perceived as pernicious to the well-being of her sex. But Behn, displaying objectivity, understands too that forced marriage has a deleterious effect on men; this will be evident in The Town Fop (1677). It is my contention that these differences effectively separate Behn from the male playwrights with whom she so resolutely competed. Although Behn was not a feminist in the modern sense, the ideas she held and presented in her plays were radical for her age. This fact, combined with the courage with which she struggled to hew out a dignified place for herself in a restricted world, make her a writer of stature and a figure worthy of respect. Her crowning achievement, The Rover (1677), is proof enough, and the laugh-out-loud wit of Sir Patient Fancy (1678), has seldom been equalled. Behn has been relegated to the category of minor playwrights for much too long. I hope this woman, vilified or virtually shunned for centuries because of her gender, will finally be rewarded her rightful place alongside the male Restoration playwrights. For Aphra Behn is owed a debt by every female writer, indeed all

writers who cherish the elation--and the pain--of free expression.

This study is based on my reading of the plays of Aphra Behn and the male dramatists mentioned in the introduction. Though I have read and studied all of the plays of these dramatists, only those relevant to my dissertation warrant inclusion here.³⁵

My intentions for succeeding chapters are as follows. Chapter Two will cover the literary conventions common to the Restoration. Behn, like her male colleagues, was operating within a system which demanded some compliance to literary formulas. The reasons why this was so will be analyzed. Behn was influenced by her age--this chapter is designed to place her in that age by illustrating her portrayals of stock characters and stock situations. Since the ways in which Behn is similar to the men are less important to the purposes of this dissertation than the ways in which she diverges from them, this topic necessitates one chapter. Chapter Two terminates the first section of this study. The most crucial segment is comprised of the chapters dedicated to how Behn differs from her male competitors; these chapters will be introduced by a brief synopsis of her unique characters and her opposition to forced marriage. This interlude will not only separate the two parts of my dissertation, but also serve to clarify for the reader what comes next. Chapter Three analyzes Behn's

prostitutes in relation to those of the male playwrights. She takes an unusual position regarding a character she felt was a victim of society; Behn is sympathetic to prostitutes, and she presents them as whole human beings rather than mere stereotypes. The focus will be on Angelica Bianca from The Rover, and La Nuche from The Rover (Part II). This chapter will also explore a comparison between Behn's Angelica and Thomas Killigrew's Angellica from his Thomaso; or The Wanderer, the source play for The Rover. Two types of unchaste woman, the cuckolding wife and the kept woman, or mistress, will be given attention in chapter four. These characters deserve a separate chapter from the prostitute, because they are simply not synonymous. Sometimes the unchaste woman is branded a "whore," and the words "whore" and "prostitute" are for some people interchangeable. But a whore is not necessarily a prostitute. Chapter Four will demonstrate the ambiguous nature of the term "whore." Lady Fancy from Sir Patient Fancy will act as a good example of an unchaste woman for whom Behn has sympathy. Lady Lambert from The Round-Heads is another unchaste woman who will appear in this chapter--but with her, it is not so easy to determine if her creator feels sympathy for her, because the play is a vehicle for Royalist political propaganda, and Lady Lambert is a "Roundhead." Chapter Five is dedicated to the older learned woman, long a figure of fun in literature. Behn, however, provides an alternate treatment of this

character; Lady Knowell in Sir Patient Fancy is not a mere poseur, as she possesses genuine learning. Chapter Six, the last character chapter, features the female warrior. In contrast to the female fighters of most male dramatists, the title character from The Widow Ranter is not just a woman who dresses as a male and fights. She is truly courageous and is on an equal footing with her lover, Daring. Another of Behn's female warriors, Cleomena, in The Young King, represents a more traditional viewpoint of this character; she is indicative of adherence to convention rather than departure from it. These two women will supply a fascinating juxtaposition. A most significant subject, forced marriage, will be thoroughly discussed in chapter seven. Because there is controversy surrounding Behn's views on this issue, there will be a survey of critical response concerning the subject. After the critical sampling, the positions of Behn and her male contemporaries will be compared/contrasted--and Behn feels very differently from most of them. Chapter Eight, the concluding chapter, will concentrate on the special tensions Behn experienced as the first woman to write professionally, and her counter-attack on her detractors. Because she was the first woman to write for a living, it is possible that her life and work were bound together to a greater degree than those of other authors; consequently, I will offer speculation about how Behn's life and work may have converged.

Plays of Behn that are not discussed in this dissertation are The Counterfeit Bridegroom (1677), The Debauchee (1677), The Feign'd Courtezans (1679), The Revenge (1680), and The City Heiress (1682). After studying The Feign'd Courtezans and The City Heiress, I concluded that the characters and any ideas they might reflect would not enhance my arguments to any significant degree. And the three other plays are attributed to Behn. Of course, Behn could very well have written these plays, but attribution, in my estimation, is reason enough to deem them inapplicable to this study.³⁶

Since publication dates neither interfere with nor alter my arguments, I will use them, rather than premiere dates.

ENDNOTES

1. Allardyce Nicoll, A History of Restoration Drama, 1660-1700, (1923; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 7-8.

2. Jeremy Collier, A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698) in The English Stage: Attack and Defense, 1577-1730, Arthur Freeman, ed., (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1972), 1. Jeremy Collier, famous--or more properly infamous--for his definitive tirade against what he considered the utter depravity of Restoration drama, is an author who should be read for a more complete understanding of the period; he demonstrates that everyone was not consumed by licentiousness--in his way of thinking--and that not all people approved of the devotion to pleasure that Charles II and his court reflected. Collier believed that many Restoration playwrights were in the business of encouraging vice, rather than discouraging it, as he felt they should; he wanted them to further the cause of virtue by depicting the triumph of characters that were its embodiment. Consult Aristotle's Poetics for the basis of this controversy.

3. Nicoll, 22.

4. Sir George Etherege, The Man of Mode, in The Dramatic Works of Sir George Etherege, H. F. B. Brett-Smith, ed., 2 vols. (1927; reprint St. Clair Shores: Scholarly Press, 1971), Vol. II, 278-79 (Act V, sc. ii). The familiar spelling of "High Park" is "Hyde Park." Etherege did use the former variation, as evidenced by a photostat of the original copy in the Harvard College Library.

5. Robert D. Hume, The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1660-1800, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 175.

6. Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 503.

7. Stone, 504.

8. Aphra Behn, Introduction, in Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister, Maureen Duffy, ed., (London: Virago Press, 1987), 13. In this brilliant epistolary novel, Behn fictionalized the true-life scandal of the illicit love between Forde, Lord Grey of Werke and his sister-in-law, the young Lady Henrietta Berkeley. The novel is remarkable for its many attacks on societal custom and fm, both of which bring misery to the lovers. This is a strong indication that Behn clearly saw that men were also sacrificed to societal strictures. Since my dissertation focuses on Behn's plays, textual material from the novel will be included in the endnotes of Chapter VII, which deals with fm.

9. Angeline Goreau, Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn, (New York: The Dial Press, 1980), 175.

10. Goreau, 173-174.

11. Stone, 195.

12. Goreau, 82.

13. William Wycherley, The Plain-Dealer, Act V, sc. ii, in The Complete Plays of William Wycherley, Gerald Weales, ed., (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 508.

14. Goreau, 165.

15. Katharine M. Rogers, Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 239.

16. Duffy, 16-17.

17. Dale Spender, The Writing or the Sex? or Why You Don't Have to Read Women's Writing to Know It's No Good, (New York: Pergamon Press, Inc., 1989), 1, 94. This book is extraordinarily fascinating, both informative and entertaining. Spender "pulls no punches" in her discussion of how some male academics, the self-righteous guardians of the preservation of male writers and male perspectives, have deliberately and consistently excluded women writers from the canon on the grounds that they cannot write because their gender precludes intelligence. Let me stress that, of course, not all male academics are guilty of sexism--and there are some female academics who are also sexist. At the back, Spender includes dialogues she has had with male academics that betray their cruelty and ignorance concerning female authors.

18. For those interested in pursuing a more involved study of the Restoration than I was able to provide here, the following references are most useful. In order to help the reader gain a more comprehensive understanding of various facets of Restoration life, the first book deals with politics, the second with social issues, and the third with the drama. A Short History of 17th Century England: 1603-1689, (New York: Blandford Press, Ltd., 1963) by G. E. Aylmer, a noted historian of the seventeenth-century, is for those interested in governmental policy. Aylmer is excellent at explaining the intricacies of the interaction of the Stuart Monarchs with parliament and people. This book is well written, densely detailed, and understandable. There is a chapter entitled "The Restoration Era" with some theatre background. Lawrence Stone is a highly respected and reputable scholar of English society. His The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 is an opus which covers almost every aspect of the English world for three centuries. It supplies extensive--and superlative--information on social mores, laws, the status of women, and discussions of relevant authors, including Behn. The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) by Robert D. Hume, a reputable and perceptive scholar, advances innovative and well reasoned theories on Restoration drama. Hume recognizes that by concentrating on only the Comedy of Manners, many critics have failed to comprehend that Restoration drama is comprised of various types of play categories, including the Comedy of Intrigue, in which Behn specialized. Hume analyzes five hundred plays representative of this era, and also takes issue with the term "Restoration comedy," which he avers is misleading: he prefers "Carolean" because it more accurately defines the drama of the age. This work is imperative for anyone who is serious about understanding the Restoration.

19. John Dryden, The Letters of John Dryden: With Letters Addressed to Him, Charles E. Ward, ed., (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), 127.

20. Frank Harper Moore, The Nobler Pleasure: Dryden's Comedy in Theory and Practice, (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1963), 168.

21. William Wycherley, "To the Sappho of the Age, Suppos'd to Ly-In of a Love-Distemper, or a Play," in The Complete Works of William Wycherley: Miscellany Poems, As Satyrs, Epistles, Love-Verses, Songs, Sonnets, Montague Summers, ed., 4 vols., (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1924), III, 155-56.

22. Frederick M. Link, Aphra Behn, (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1968), 153.

23. Dr. John Doran, "Their Majestie's Servants," Annals of the English Stage: From Thomas Betterton to Edmund Kean, 4 vols., (ny: W. J. & Widdleton, Publisher, 1865), I, 163-64. In a work called The Biographica Britannica (1778), which Fidelis Morgan uses, a certain Dr. Kippis wrote an entry on Behn. Morgan quotes him in her introduction to an edition of Behn's The Lucky Chance, (London: Methuen, 1981). Because Kippis and Doran are similar in their attitudes to Behn, it is suitable to quote Kippis here. His extreme prudishness and deliberate ignorance of Behn are quite unmistakable. Notice that Kippis claims her wit is common knowledge, yet he refuses to read her work to determine if that wit contains any value. He was composing an entry on Behn, but he would not read her--incredible! At least Doran read Behn's plays; this is an important contrast between these critics. Apparently, Kippis arrived at an opinion by inculcating the puritanical attacks of others. Fortunately, he did not achieve his aim, which was to see Behn's plays obliterated:

"The wit of her comedies seems to be generally acknowledged and it is equally acknowledged that they are very indecent, on which account I have not thought myself under any obligation to peruse them. It would have been an unworthy employment nicely to estimate a wit which, having been applied to the purposes of impiety and vice ought not only to be held up in the utmost detestation but consigned if possible to eternal oblivion (1).

24. George Sherburn, "The Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1660-1789)" in A Literary History of England, Albert C. Baugh, ed., (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), 770.

25. John Wilcox, The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy, (1938; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1964), 150.

26. George Saintsbury, "From Restoration to Revolution: 1660-1688" in Social England, J. S. Mann and H. D. Traill, eds., 6 vols., (1903; reprint New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), IV, 599-600.1 This magnificent work is indispensable for the serious student of English history. Despite the early date, the contributing authors are, in the main, objective. Behn is given a place--in many literary histories, she is ignored. Saintsbury mentions the famous Alexander Pope couplet from "The Epistle to Augustus:" "The

stage how loosely does Astraea tread./Who fairly puts all characters to bed." Humorous though it is, this couplet indicates that Pope was pre-occupied with Behn's reputation as a bawdy women and writer--an all too common attitude.

27. Edmund Gosse, "Aphra Behn" in The Dictionary of National Biography, Sir Sidney Lee and Sir Leslie Stephen, eds., 30 vols., (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), II, 130.

28. James Sutherland, English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 133, 137.

29. Jill Dolan, The Feminist Spectator as Critic, (Ann Arbor: U. M. I. Research Press, 1988), 3-4.

30. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, (1929; reprint New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978), 66-9.

31. Nicoll, 25, 220-21.

32. Jacqueline Pearson, The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists, 1642-1737, (ny: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 143.

33. The following critics view Behn's work as positive. Many of them--perhaps most--also employ a "feminist" approach to Behn, in that there is general acknowledgement of her social importance. These scholars, in their varying degrees of "feminism," attempt mature evaluations of Behn's plays, while refraining from attacks on her personal life: Vita Sackville-West in Aphra Behn: The Incomparable Astrea (1928), Joseph Wood Krutch in Comedy and Conscience After the Restoration (1949), Jean Gagen in The New Woman: Her Emergence in English Drama, 1660-1730 (1954), Henry Allen Hargreaves in his dissertation The Life and Plays of Mrs. Aphra Behn (Duke University, 1960), Alberta Gregg Barrett in her dissertation Plot, Characterization, and Theme in the Plays of Aphra Behn, (University of Pennsylvania, 1965), Frederick M. Link in Aphra Behn (1968), Clayton S. Scott, Jr. in his dissertation Aphra Behn: A Study in Dramatic Continuity (Texas Christian University, 1972), Lawrence Stone in The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (1977), Maureen Duffy in The Passionate Shepherdess (1977), Susan Staves in Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration (1979), Nancy Cotton in Women Playwrights in England, 1363-1750 (1980), Angeline Goreau in Reconstructing Aphra (1980), Judith Gardiner in "Aphra Behn: Sexuality and Self-Respect" for Women's Studies (1980), Laura Brown in English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760 (1981), Robert L. Root in Thomas Southerne

(1981), Robert Adams Day in Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815 (1986), Harold Weber in The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England (1986), Edward Burns in Restoration Comedy: Crises of Desire and Identity (1987), Eric Rothstein and Francis M. Kavenik in The Designs of Carolean Comedy (1988), Jacqueline Pearson in The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists, 1642-1737 (1988), Cathy Gallagher in "Who Was that Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn" for Women's Studies (1988), Dale Spender in The Writing or the Sex? or Why You Don't Have to Read Women's Wiring To Know It's No Good (1989), Katharine M. Rogers in "Aphra Behn" for DLB (1989), Mark Lussier in "'The Vile Merchandize of Fortune': Women, Economy, and Desire in Aphra Behn" for Women's Studies (1991), and Naomi Jacobs in "The Seduction of Aphra Behn" for Women's Studies (1991). For full publication information, see the bibliography.

34. Link, 157.

35. Following is a list of plays which appear in this dissertation: Aphra Behn: The Forc'd Marriage, (1671), The Amorous Prince (1671), The Dutch Lover (1673), The Town Fop (1677), The Rover (1677), Abdelazer (1677), Sir Patient Fancy (1678), The Young King (1679), The Rover (Part II) (1681), The False Count (1681), The Round-Heads (1682), The Lucky Chance (1687), The Emperor of the Moon (1687), The Widow Ranter (1690), and The Younger Brother (1696). William Wycherley: Love in a Wood (1672), The Gentleman Dancing-Master (1673), The Country Wife (1675), and The Plain-Dealer (1676). Sir George Etherege: The Man of Mode (1676). John Dryden: The Wild Gallant (1663), The Rival Ladies (1664), Sir Martin Mar-All (1667), Marriage A-La-Mode (1673), and The Assignation (1673). Thomas Shadwell: Epsom Wells (1672), The Woman-Captain (1679), The Squire of Alsatia (1688), and Bury-Fair (1689). John Crowne: The Country Wit (1675). Thomas Otway: The Cheats of Scapin (1676), Friendship in Fashion (1678), and The Souldier's Fortune (1680). Thomas D'Urfey: Madam Fickle (1676), and The Fond Husband (1676).

36. Although Maureen Duffy does not discuss The Revenge, she does speak of The Counterfeit Bridegroom and The Debauchee. Duffy has this to say about the plays attributed to Behn: "Critics who attribute them to Aphra Behn generally do so because of their quality as stageable pieces" (The Passionate Shepherdess, 151).

CHAPTER TWO

Common Elements in Restoration Plays

While in some respects Aphra Behn was a woman and playwright ahead of her time, she was also a product of it, adhering to established stock situations and characters in the construction of her plays. Hence, a brief analysis of the playwriting elements that Behn shared with her male contemporaries is required in order to ascertain how she was like them and why. The purpose of this chapter is to place Behn in her age. It is my intention to concentrate on the stock situation of forced marriage, since that is one of the most prominent in the Restoration drama. The heroine, rake-hero, parental figure, and fop are the principal stock characters involved in the forced marriage plot; they impel the plays to the inevitable comedic resolution of marriage. Because so many Restoration plays feature forced marriage and its attendant stock characters, it is inadvisable and unnecessary to discuss every one; a representative sampling will serve the purpose. Examples from the following plays will be included: John Dryden's The Wild Gallant (1663), Dryden's Sir Martin Mar-All; or, The Feign'd Innocence (1667), William Wycherley's Love in a Wood; or, St. James's

Park (1672), Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master (1673), Aphra Behn's The Dutch Lover (1673), John Crowne's The Country Wit (1675), Sir George Etherege's The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter (1676), Behn's The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers (1677), Behn's The Town Fop; or, Sir Timothy Tawdrey (1677), Behn's Sir Patient Fancy (1678), and Thomas Shadwell's Bury-Fair (1689).¹ I have chosen these plays for specific reasons, and these male dramatists because they were Behn's direct competitors, writing the same types of plays, with greater or lesser success than she. The Wild Gallant, written earlier than any of Behn's plays, offers an example of the stock independent heroine (Constance), and so may have influenced Behn's depiction of the same character. Likewise, Gertrude, the heroine of Bury-Fair, may have been modelled after some of Behn's heroines, for instance, Hellena and Florinda in The Rover, or Lucretia and Isabella in Sir Patient Fancy. The playwrights, working within the exclusive world of the theatre, forming a community of sorts, and bound by literary convention, must have been influenced by each other's work.

Anyone familiar with Restoration plays, especially the comedies, immediately notices that the stock situation of forced marriage appears in many of them. The marriage of convenience was the ideal plot, not only for the Restoration playwrights, but for many playwrights, from the Greeks to modern times. This ubiquitous plot provided conflict

between older and younger characters, and tension resulting from intrigue as the children scheme to wed those they love. The intrigue produces the outcome: marriage arranged by lovers as opposed to marriage arranged by parents. The stock characters caught up in this conflict are the independent-minded heroine, her authoritarian parent or other relative, the man he intends her to marry--usually the fop--and the man she loves--usually the rake. The Restoration audience enjoyed the forced marriage plot; people were well acquainted with it and knew exactly what to expect--no surprises here. It is no wonder, then, that the Restoration dramatists, like their predecessors, so frequently made use of such a convenient plot device. Behn, who wrote for a living and so had to give the audience what it wanted, was adept in the construction of the forced marriage plot.

There are a variety of possibilities within the plot of forced marriage. The most common is the standard heroine/fop conflict. The plays used to illustrate this variation will be Behn's The Dutch Lover, in which the heroine, Euphemia, is contracted by her father, Carlo, to marry the boorish Haunce van Ezel, and Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master, in which Hippolita, the heroine, is designed by her father, Don Diego, to wed the absurd Monsieur de Paris. The well-known "May/December" pairing is another common reason for the heroine's rebellion. This

variation will be exemplified by Behn's Sir Patient Fancy, wherein young Lucia, Lady Fancy, is compelled to marry the title character, an old man she does not love, due to financial destitution. A less common but more probable variation within the theme of forced marriage involves the heroine and a man who do not love one another, yet are pushed together by their elders. But here the man is not a fop. We see this clearly in Etherege's The Man of Mode, where Harriet, the heroine, and Young Harry Bellair, are expected by their parents, Lady Woodvill and Old Harry Bellair, to marry. These three variations on the stock plot of forced marriage all reflect societal disregard for the feelings and rights of women. I must stress, however, that Young Bellair is also a victim. Although forced marriage was an institution mainly affecting women, men too were its prey at times. Behn was quite strong in her insistence that men suffered the torments of forced marriage as well as women: The Town Fop in the chapter on forced marriage will be employed to demonstrate this fact. Nevertheless, forced marriage is predominantly a woman's issue, a product of a sexist mind-set arrogantly proclaiming that women were mere commodities to be disposed of as their fathers saw fit. Any "feminism" in the forced marriage stock situation consists in the heroine's persistence to free herself from her father's domination in order to marry the man of her choice.

Though forced marriage represented a familiar yet exciting plot, there is a more prosaic reason why so many playwrights utilized it. Traditionally, comedies terminate in marriages--marriages the audience likes to think will be happy ones. In his History of the Theatre (1968), Oscar G. Brockett traces the history of the happy marriage ending, which began with Greek New Comedy of the 5th century B.C., and was developed as a convention throughout Europe when Renaissance writers imitated the Roman comedic playwrights, Plautus and Terence, who had based their plays on Greek models:

The final scene, or Kommos, usually concludes with the reconciliation of all the characters and their exit to a feast or revels...the works of Plautus and Terence survived through the Dark Ages...Since critics turned to them once more during the Renaissance as the foremost examples of comic drama, their characteristics are of special interest. All of the plays are adaptations of Greek New Comedy...Comedy was said to have happy endings.²

"Reconciliation" could easily imply happy marriages for some characters. Also, in the majority of Restoration comedies, the reconciled characters seal their unions with a dance: "revels." If the heroine were to be coerced into compliance with her father's wishes, the comedic imperative would be violated. The audience, expecting the heroine to end up married to the man she loves, might be greatly displeased with any innovations.³ Hence, the dramatists explore the avoidance of forced marriage--this avoidance contained within the heroine's attempts to free herself from societal

restraint in the person of her father--because this approach lends itself so well to the happy marriage outcome. Another factor related to avoidance of forced marriage is that comedy, by its very nature, precludes inclusion of overly serious messages. Since most Restoration playwrights, including Behn, relied on audience support for their wages, it is not likely they would have risked audience disapproval by tampering with a comfortable formula. While the heroine may evince a certain "feminist" independence, the need for a propitious termination had to be satisfied.

The characters involved in Restoration versions of the marriage of convenience are quite conventional: stock situation and stock character types. For most Restoration playwrights, the heroines are clever and independent-minded; the rakes routinely endeavor to debauch them and other attractive women who come within their orbit; the parents rarely swerve from trying to force their daughters and sons to marry those they despise; and the fops never deviate from foolishness. As Robert D. Hume says: "Not only plot patterns and characters are formulaic, but so to a large degree are comic devices, situations, and scenes."⁴

Dryden's Constance, for example, in The Wild Gallant, truly typifies the stock independent heroine, displaying insight into the female predicament. Her "cry" is a rallying point for all women who have been denied free expression of their feelings. But since societal convention

dictated that women, primarily of the middle and upper classes, conduct themselves with the utmost propriety, free expression of personal feelings was emphatically discouraged--a lady, if she wished to remain such, did not divulge the romantic secrets of her heart. Her sexual yearnings had to be kept closely imprisoned within. In view of this, Constance's outcry is rather remarkable; she boldly exhibits her consternation that women must not be candid about their desires:

Const. I did not say I lov'd you, but if I should take a fancy to your Person and Humour, I hope it is no Crime to tell it you: Women are ty'd to hard, unequal Laws: the passion is the same in us, and yet we are debarr'd the freedome to express it. You make poor Grecian beggars of us Ladies; our desires must have no language, but onely be fastned to our breast.⁵

It is essential that the heroine be witty and inclined towards independence, for she is reacting against the older generation and the marriage of convenience this generation held as an absolute. For the sake of her integrity, the heroine had to forcefully proclaim her right to liberty, as Shadwell's Gertrude in Bury-Fair does: "I am a free Heiress of England, where Arbitrary Power is at an end, and I am resolv'd to choose for my self."⁶ And since the other characters act as a foil for her, serving as butts of her wit, and much of the play revolves around her, the heroine must be assertive--and attractive.

The Restoration rake-hero is also assertive and attractive, but in him these qualities acquire a taint. The

heroine wishes to choose her husband, so her assertiveness is designed to liberate her from an oppressive society. On the other hand, the rake's assertiveness only serves as a tool to aid him in attaining the satiation of his lust. Both the heroine and the rake are selfish, but where the heroine's selfishness is intended to help her win the man of her choice, the rake's is intended to achieve the satisfaction of unadulterated sexual desire--the distinct division between love and lust. The rake is not concerned with the feelings of others; they exist to further his needs. Three such rakes are Ranger, in Wycherley's Love in a Wood, Ramble, in Crowne's The Country Wit, and Willmore, in Behn's The Rover. The ideas they express are entirely standard:

- Ran. Intending a Ramble to St. James's Park to night, upon some probable hopes of some fresh Game I have in chase, I appointed her (he refers to his mistress, Lydia) to stay at home, with a promise to come within this hour, that she might not foil the scent and the prevent my sport.⁷
- Ram. The world is Nature's house of entertainment, where men of wit and pleasure are her free guests, tied to no rules and orders.⁸
- Will. Faith I'm glad to meet you again (he speaks to his friend, Belville) in a warm Climate, where the kind sun has its god-like Power still over the Wine and Women.--Love and Mirth are my Business in Naples.⁹

The rake's personality is revealed with utter clarity in the above selections. "Love," "mirth," "entertainment," "wit," "pleasure," "no rules and orders," "ramble," "fresh game I have in chase," and "my sport" act as beacons in our understanding of this character. These words symbolize the

self-centered pursuit of pleasure to the exclusion of all else, without regard for the well-being of others, particularly women. Ranger's ode to pleasure is certainly the most disquieting. He has "appointed" Lydia to remain at home, which in this context is virtually synonymous with "ordered." And phrases such as "fresh game I have in chase" and "not foil the scent" represent a metaphorical construct for the Restoration "game of love"--Woman as sexual bauble to be cornered in a hunt where man is the predator and woman the prey, the victim.

Of course, the play world is not the real world--all men did not behave in this manner towards women. The common male citizen certainly did not attempt to debauch every female with whom he came into contact. For that matter, not all upper-class men indulged in constant seduction attempts. The upper-class male engaging in non-stop sexual exploits was--and is today--somewhat of a stereotype; some men cannot be universalized into all men. I will present an alternative view of the rake in the endnote section; Thomas D'Urfey's A Fond Husband; or, The Plotting Sisters (1676) will be used to demonstrate that the rake is not always content to play the profligate ravisher.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the rake mirrors to some extent, however small, a counterpart in the real world. Given this, Wycherley's hunting metaphor stands as a paradigm for the way in which society viewed its female members. Indeed, the rake can be

seen as an "anti-feminist" element in the plays. Consequently, many feminist scholars would be troubled that Behn portrayed the quintessential rake. For instance, Katharine M. Rogers says about Willmore in particular, "And there is no evidence of criticism in Behn's presentation of him," and the rake in general, "Behn's presentation of the rake-hero betrays a similar insensitivity to exploitation of women."¹¹ I believe that Behn criticizes Willmore's behavior simply in allowing the prostitute, Angelica Bianca, to speak her mind and retain her pride, in effect triumphing over Willmore. At any rate, Behn could hardly have avoided depicting the quintessential rake, because he was a mandatory and fascinating ingredient in Restoration drama--Behn had to follow a playwriting standard, as did her male colleagues. The rake is integral to the action, no less indispensable than the heroine. And for the rake to be the rake, he had to be indifferent to the feelings of others, while remaining attractive. Behn was no dullard--she knew how to craft a Restoration play. Remove the reprobate rake, and voilà, an entire body of period literature is consigned to oblivion. I strongly feel that this is the reason why Behn did not condemn the thoughtless escapades of her rakes. To keep pace with the tastes of her age and the dictates governing the playwriting standards of that age, she had to conform to a large degree. The other reason is this: how could she, being the first woman to earn her living by

writing plays, jeopardize herself by altering the personality of a character so central to the success of any Restoration dramatist? In short, Behn's refusal to chastise the rake should not be perceived as a feminist issue, but as a reflection of her understanding of the literary standards of her time, and her keen knowledge that a playwright--especially a female playwright--of Restoration England could go only so far.

The authoritarian father is as crucial to the forced marriage plot as is the rake, and Behn portrays many in her plays. Since I will devote attention to this figure in the forced marriage chapter, it is more appropriate here to concentrate on a father substitute. This character is an extension of the authoritarian father; he tries to carry out his father's wishes regarding his sister's marriage, and he is just as strict as his father. The father substitute is equipped with all the male authority he requires to force his sister to comply with the father's will. In The Rover, Behn presents a father substitute in the person of Don Pedro, the brother of Florinda. Don Pedro has been instructed by his father to marry off Florinda to the elderly Don Vincentio, a man of wealth and power. Don Pedro tries to persuade his sister that Don Vincentio would be a suitable match, but since she loves Belvile, she refuses obedience. What complicates matters is that Don Pedro has his own agenda; he wants Florinda to marry Don Antonio, his

friend. So while he does attempt to obey his father's will, he is not overwhelmed with anger when his sister will not acquiesce. Because the father is absent, Don Pedro, on the scene, becomes a more formidable threat to Florinda than her father. Don Pedro introduces the subject of Don Antonio with disturbing craftiness:

Pedro. As for you, Florinda, I've only try'd you all this while, and urg'd my Father's Will; but mine is, that you would love Antonio, he is brave and young, and all that can compleat the Happiness of a gallant Maid--The absence of my Father will give us opportunity to free you from Vincentio, by marrying here, which you must do to morrow.¹²

Don Pedro would "free" Florinda from Don Vincentio, yet she "must" wed Don Antonio the next day. How very charitable of him to free her from one cage only to imprison her in another! In carrying out his father's orders in a half-hearted way, and in trying to coerce Florinda to marry Don Antonio, Don Pedro has disobeyed his father--but not for love of his sister, for he is totally preoccupied with his own desires. If he had defied his father's commands in order to help his sister wed Belvile, the reader would consider him an admirable character. But in subverting his father's wishes only to advance his own, he is wholly unsympathetic. Naturally, all turns out well, in keeping with the traditional comedy ending. Don Pedro agrees to the union of Florinda and Belvile.

A trait that many parental substitutes and authoritarian fathers share is the conviction that every man

is in pursuit of their precious sisters and daughters, so the unfortunate young women must be safely sequestered where no lusting male can get at them. One wonders whether these dictatorial figures really care for the sisters and daughters in their charge or simply view them as valuable commodities to be sold to the highest bidder--the latter, most likely. Master Moody, from Dryden's Sir Martin Mar-All, is just such a father. He believes obsessively that there are droves of men "that lye in wait for my Daughter," and to prevent them from sexually corrupting her, he will keep her "at home this Afternoon."¹³

Behn's repressive parental substitutes and tyrannical fathers are no different than those of the male dramatists. These characters all have the same concerns: securing a man of means and status for their sisters and daughters, giving potency to the idea that authority figures' needs supersede those of the young women in their charge.

The fop, a significant character in the forced marriage plot, supplies much of the humor in a Restoration comedy. He is a would-be rake and wants to be perceived as utterly irresistible to women--most especially to the charming heroine. The fop is the perfect buffoon, and he plays his part to the hilt. Unlike the rake, who initiates so much of the action, the fop, instead, is the one acted upon, though he would dearly love to think otherwise. He

constitutes only a potential threat to the heroine he aspires to, because though he is often engaged to marry her, he never does. The fop is a passive element within the play, serving as a fool to be toyed with by the other characters. He likes to believe that he defies the tired old societal conventions, but with his penchant for complete affectation in fashion and speech--which he mistakes for style and wit--he presents no danger to the manners he considers antiquated. No woman need fear the fop, for he can never achieve what he tries so hard to emulate--the suave expertise of the rake. We invariably think of Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter, the archetypal fop, but Restoration comedy abounds with fops, and would be quite unfinished without them.

Behn depicts two hilarious fops, Sir Timothy Tawdrey, in The Town Fop, and Sir Credulous Easy, in Sir Patient Fancy. They are here presented because they are typical fops, evincing no disparity from those of the male playwrights. Sir Timothy and Sir Credulous are both determined to marry women of large fortune, and of course, they think they are the epitome of fashion:

Sir Tim. The Wench I never saw yet, but they say she's handsom--But no matter for that, there's Money, my Boys.¹⁴

Sir Cred. Come undo my Portmantle, and equip me, that I may look like some body before I see the Ladies.¹⁵

The standard plot device of forced marriage is most often exemplified by the heroine/fop conflict. In Behn's

The Dutch Lover, Carlo, the authoritarian father, attempts to force his daughter, Euphemia, to wed the ridiculous Haunce van Ezel. Of course, she has no inclination to obey her father by marrying the Dutch merchant, who is constantly inebriated, keeps an iron grip on his money, and is absolutely spineless. Euphemia must act quickly if she is to thwart her father's demands that she chain herself to van Ezel. The next step is the intrigue, which she undertakes with Alonzo, her lover. Both the father, Carlo, and the fop, van Ezel, will be duped by the lovers. The intrigue in question consists of a disguise, so often used in Restoration comedy to urge the plot to completion. Alonzo conceals his true identity by passing himself off as Haunce van Ezel, and Carlo is fooled. Thinking Alonzo to be the intended van Ezel, the dictatorial father is pleased to bestow Euphemia on him. At the close of the play, tensions are resolved and a happy marriage ensues. The Dutch Lover is entirely representative of Restoration comedic standards. Behn portrays stock characters in the stock situation of forced marriage. The theme of forced marriage produces the struggle between young and old, the young people endeavoring to mold a new world for themselves through free choice, and the old people doing whatever they can to obstruct this through loyalty to the decaying forms of a dead age. This conflict, in turn, causes the young people to contrive an intrigue designed to outwit their elders, and the intrigue

leads the way to the outcome: happy marriage. It is a formula, a step-by-step process that could hardly fail with the audience.

Wycherley makes use of the same formula in The Gentleman Dancing-Master, though his heroine, Hippolita, is more intriguing than Behn's Euphemia. Hippolita's father, Don Diego, wants her to marry the preposterous Monsieur de Paris, but the very idea is anathema to her. He is as ludicrous as it is possible for a fop to be, with his love of all things French, his pompous affectation, and his utter stupidity. He is certainly no match for the beguiling Hippolita, who is aware that she deserves better and determinedly sets about obtaining it. Katharine M. Rogers claims in William Wycherley (1972): "The most appealing feature of The Gentleman Dancing-Master is the character of Hippolita and the enlightened view of marriage she represents. She is witty and resourceful, like the typical Restoration heroine, with the brave self-reliance and unsentimental honesty which come from an independent spirit."¹⁶ This "enlightened view of marriage" is well demonstrated below, with Hippolita recognizing that for women forced to marry, the state of wedlock is just what the word implies--imprisonment:

Hippolita.	Our parents who restrain our liberty, But take the course to make us sooner free, Though all we gain be but new slavery. We leave our fathers and to husbands fly. ¹⁷

The character of Hippolita is not a simple one. Critics of Restoration comedy have exhibited opinions of her ranging from one extreme to the other. This, I think, is a testimony to her complexity of character. On one hand, there is the admiration of Rogers for hippo's independence and awareness. In direct contrast, Bonamy Dobrée, writing in 1924, expresses a negative view of hippo in Restoration Comedy, 1660-1720: "Underlying all there is a hatred Wycherley has for Hippolita because she has the desires natural to an animal...Wycherley's joy was spoiled by his puritanism, and this in turn was cankered by skepticism."¹⁸ Perhaps the more modern critic is inclined to hold a more favorable opinion of Hippolita. After all, an independent-minded woman was not received with much appreciation in 1924, despite the so-called freedom of the "Roaring Twenties." In The Four Plays of William Wycherley: A Study in the Development of a Dramatist (1975), W.R. Chadwick holds much the same view as Rogers:

As elemental woman she drives towards future marital security; as a lady she banters in terms suitable to the contemporary mode; and as a girl she exhibits a simplicity and bluntness that somehow add to her vulnerability. Above all, she is a human being who possesses an abundance of native wit and judgment.¹⁹

The qualities that Rogers and Chadwick find admirable--independence and a need to choose freely in marriage--Dobrée sees as the basest instinct. The statement he makes about Wycherley's "puritanism" is true, but it is

manifest more clearly in The Plain-Dealer (1676), where Wycherley sours an otherwise brilliant play with a heavy-handed moral sense. The Gentleman Dancing-Master is a delightful play, with none of Wycherley's "puritanism" apparent. It is possible that Wycherley may have felt some dislike for hippo, because she is rather overbearing in her insistence on her own maturity. This "elemental woman," as Chadwick describes her, is all of fourteen years old! I feel, however, that in the main, he found his heroine endearing. He begins and ends the play with her, and this fact may tell us something about his attitude. Hippo's opening speech emphasizes her extreme youth; by juxtaposing the age factor with her adult speech, Wycherley could be informing us that she is overstepping herself by playing at what she is not: a grown woman. Yet, at the end, her words convey a distinctly mature awareness of the priorities of life. This is not the shallow Restoration heroine satirized by wyc:

Hippolita. To confine a Woman just in her
rambling Age! take away her liberty
at the very time she shou'd
use it! O barberous Aunt! O unnatural
Father! to shut up a poor
Girl at fourteen, and hinder her
budding; all things are ripen'd by
the Sun; to shut up a poor Girl at
fourteen...
When children marry, parents should obey,
Since love claims more obedience than
they.²⁰

This play offers the standard heroine/fop conflict within the confines of the forced marriage plot. hippo and

her love interest, Gerrard, must plan an intrigue to foil the plans of her father, Don Diego. As in The Dutch Lover, there is a disguise. Hippo devises a scheme to be with Gerrard; under her tutelage he is transformed into the dancing master of the title, thereby romancing her under the unsuspecting nose of her father. Though Don Diego is irate, in accordance with the stock situation of forced marriage, he relents at the close of the play. The required outcome of a happy marriage has been met.

In most of these plays, the forced marriage is in its incipient stage--not yet reality. But in Behn's Sir Patient Fancy, it is a fait accompli. Unlike Euphemia and Hippo, Lady Fancy had no father coercing her to marry a fop. She married old Sir Patient for monetary support. This is one type of forced marriage, simply another variation within the familiar stock plot. In a world of limited choice for women, Lady Fancy did not have much recourse. If she decided not to marry the man she did not love, she would have been at the mercy of a society that allowed her only to be a governess or a prostitute. So it was precisely this society that cruelly demanded she marry Sir Patient, because the above options were, in effect, no options at all. If she had refused obedience to the rules, she could either starve or sell herself--it would not have mattered to an uncaring world. In a very real sense, Lucia becomes a

prostitute by marrying a man she cares nothing for in exchange for her support--by becoming Lady Fancy.

Lady Fancy's loveless union is intolerable from its inception, especially since she loves Wittmore. Sir Patient, a gullible hypochondriac, plays right into their hands when they realize that they must intrigue if they are to stay together. Sir Patient decides to leave London, and since this would keep the lovers apart, they act quickly to upset his plans. Because he lives in constant terror of ill-health, Lady Fancy and Wittmore have no trouble convincing Sir Patient that his death-bed awaits. Completely subjugated by hypochondria, he believes them. Of course, circumstances are resolved to everyone's satisfaction at the end. Obviously, there can be no marriage between Lady Fancy and Wittmore, as she is already married. Sir Patient and Lady Fancy will live separately, and he agrees to allow her money to live--this after she admits that she only married him because she and her lover needed support! Sir Patient repents his former ways and decides to make the best of a situation he cannot change. Though he is a stock character, the old man cuckolded by his wife, he is presented in so lively a manner by Behn, that he is more interesting than many of these old men. And Lady Fancy is not merely the heartless cuckolding wife in search of a brief affair. Because she genuinely loves Wittmore, the reader honestly cares about her.

In Etherege's The Man of Mode, there is a different variation on the theme of forced marriage: old people trying to bring together two young people not inclined toward each other, but instead of the man being the fop, he is a sincere and decent person. Young Bellair is the man in question, and he bears no resemblance whatsoever to Huance van Ezel and Monsieur de Paris. Harriet, the heroine, has been contracted to him. Though the two like one another, they are not in love. But that is of no consequence to her mother, Lady Woodvill, and his father, Old Bellair. Harriet and Young Bellair are in love with other people, she with the rake, Dorimant, and he with Emilia. The fact that his father actually wants to marry Emilia further complicates the situation. Old Bellair cannot have Emilia, for only the young lovers can be joined at the end. Harriet and Young Bellair agree to defeat their intended marriage, and each sets out to capture her/his choice. It will be very difficult for Harriet, since her mother, Lady Woodvill, has heard gossip about the fatally attractive Dorimant which makes her determined to hide her daughter from his clutches. Dorimant, knowing this, must find a way to win the favor of the mother before he can win the favor of the daughter. In her company, he is Mr. Courtage, and in this guise he thoroughly charms Lady Woodvill. When she discovers his true identity, she is angry, but is persuaded to change her negative opinion of Dormiant when she realizes that he is

sincere in his love for her daughter. Harriet is the typical Restoration heroine--determined to marry for love: "Shall I be paid down by a covetous parent for a purchase? I need no land; no, I'll lay myself out all in love."²¹ Etherege is conventional in his treatment of the forced marriage plot: stock characters, an intrigue to disrupt the designs of the parents, in this case, Dorimant assuming the identity of Mr. Courtage, and the standard comedy ending of happy marriage--Harriet with Dorimant and Emilia with Young Bellair.

Behn, constrained to exercise her wit in writing plays that would not fail her, took advantage of the familiar, formulaic plot device of forced marriage. In this, she is no different than her male competitors--and ironically, this may have been the only equality she was granted. But in her creation of characters that reflected her social concerns, and particularly her vehement attack on the loathsome institution of forced marriage, Behn, as will be demonstrated, separated herself from literary and societal convention. In the dignity of her separateness, Behn proclaimed that she, though a woman in a world defined by men, had the right to express her concerns--an inheritance all female authors must be grateful for.

ENDNOTES

1. In comedy, the forced marriage is averted, so no damage is done. But a tragi-comedy allows for tragedy, and sometimes the forced marriage is permitted to take place. Two tragi-comedies by Behn also deal with the subject. Her first play, The Forc'd Marriage; or, The Jealous Bridegroom (1671), reveals the unfortunate consequences of the title plot. Erminia, the heroine, is constrained by her father, Orgulius, to wed Alcippius, a man she does not love. She loves Philander, but marries Alcippius in obedience to her dictatorial father. Erminia refuses to consummate the sham union, but swears fidelity to her husband. He, thinking that she has been unfaithful to him with Philander, strangles her. Behn saves the day with a *deus ex machina*--Erminia is not dead after all, and the lovers unite, foiling the authoritarian father and husband. Although there is a happy ending, Behn does convey the very large possibility of tragedy if a forced marriage is allowed completion. In The False Count (1681), we also see the selfishness of the authoritarian father. Francisco tries to coerce his daughter, Isabella, to marry Antonio, a wealthy man. Francisco refuses to consider love as a necessary component of marriage: "A Pox of all Lovers, I say; for my daughter Isabella is to be married, as you know, to Antonio, a young rich Merchant of this town" (Act I, sc. ii, 108). Orgulius and Francisco are stock authoritarian fathers; there is nothing special about these characters.

2. Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968), 20, 61, 129.

3. In Etherege's The Man of Mode, Harriet and Dorimant come to an understanding at the end which indicates marriage. The audience is supposed to believe that they will actually marry--that is part of the convention. We are also to believe that the union will be happy. This is how the audience participates in the world of the play. But there is no evidence that Harriet and Dorimant will marry, or if they do, that they will live "happily ever after." How many marriages are truly happy? We assume that the lovers will wed and live a blissful life together, for this is what we expect from a comedy--in this there is catharsis, and a fulfillment of the contract between the play world and

the real world, represented by the audience. These assumptions apply to all Restoration comedies.

4. Robert D. Hume, The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 136.

5. John Dryden, The Wild Gallant, Act II, sc. i, in The Works of John Dryden, Vol. VIII, John Harrington Smith, Vinton A. Dearing, and Dougald MacMillan, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 33.

6. Thomas Shadwell, Bury-Fair, in The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, Montague Summers, ed., 5 vols. (London: The Fortune Press, 1927), IV, 339 (Act III, sc. i).

7. William Wycherley, Love in a Wood, Act I, sc. i, in The Complete Plays of William Wycherley, Gerald Wealer, ed., (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 21.

8. John Crowne, The Country Wit, in The Dramatic Works of John Crowne, W. H. Logan and James Maidment, eds., 4 vols., (London: H. Sotheran & Co., 1873, 1874), III, 44 (Act IV).

9. Aphra Behn, The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers (Part I), in The Works of Aphra Behn, Montague Summers, ed., 6 vols. (1915; reprint New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1967), I, 18 (Act I, sc. ii).

10. In D'Urfey's A Fond Husband; or, The Plotting Sisters (1676), there is a rake who does not fit the stereotype. Ranger does enjoy the pursuits a rake should enjoy, but he grows bored and disgusted at having to maintain rakish behavior patterns to keep his reputation above reproach. Ranger gives us insight into a period which expected libertinism from its fashionable men:

'Tis a damned thing this wenching, if a man considers seriously on it; and yet it is such a damnable age we live in, that, Gad, he that does not follow it is either accounted sordidly unnatural, or ridiculously impotent (Act V, 248).

11. Katharine M. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 80, Paula R. Backscheider, ed., (Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1989), 9, 14.

12. The Rover (Part I), Act I, sc. i., in Behn, Works, I, 14-15.

13. John Dryden, Sir Martin Mar-All, Act IV, sc. i, in The Works of John Dryden, Vol. IX, John Loftis and Vinton A. Dearing, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 143.

14. The Town Fop, Act I, sc. i, in Behn, Works, III, 8.

15. Sir Patient Fancy, Act I, sc. i, in Behn, Works, IV, 16.

16. Katharine M. Rogers, William Wycherley, (ny: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972), 53.

17. The Gentleman Dancing-Master, in Wycherley, Complete Plays, 170 (Act II, sc. i).

18. Bonamy Dobrée, Restoration Comedy, 1660-1720, (1924; reprint London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 85.

19. W. R. Chadwick, The Four Plays of William Wycherley: A Study in the Development of a Dramatist, (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1975), 63.

20. The Gentleman Dancing-Master, in Wycherley, Complete Plays, 130, 234 (Act I, sc. i, and Act V, sc. i).

21. Etherege, II, 221 (Act III, sc. i.).

Section Two

Introduction: Departures from Convention

In order to clearly understand Aphra Behn as a woman and a writer, it is essential to elucidate the ways in which she diverges from her male colleagues. For the purposes of this dissertation, the differences between Behn and the male Restoration playwrights have more importance than what she shares with them as a writer--hence it is these differences that will receive emphasis. In section one, chapter two, I placed Behn in her age by discussing the playwriting elements she had in common with her male contemporaries. Section two will take Behn out of her time by focusing attention on the ways in which she differs from them--and why.

One of the most critical differences is manifested in Behn's depiction of uniquely exciting characters that will be presented herein as a contrast to certain stock characters in Restoration drama. The most singular difference consists in Behn's markedly persistent attack on the institution of forced marriage, which, as I have shown, supplied a most convenient stock plot. I must emphasize that Behn's fascinating characters are not new; it is her

approach to them that separates them from those of the male playwrights. Behn's characters digress by possessing a personality depth that is unusual, and consequently serves to remove them from stock presentation. Because they function as symbols of societal inequity, it was necessary for Behn to flesh them out as a reflection of her social concerns. Likewise, Behn's steady opposition to forced marriage suggests that she viewed it with trepidation and fervently hoped to communicate her desire for change.

The prostitutes, Angelica Bianca and La Nuche, in The Rover; or, the Banish'd Cavaliers (1677) and The Rover (Part II); or, The Banish'd Cavaliers (1681), respectively, are not the standard Restoration stock prostitutes. Angelica and La Nuche are fully realized characterizations, wholly human in the range of emotions they experience in response to their untenable positions in an oppressive world. Unlike her male competitors, who portrayed prostitutes as women consumed only by concupiscence and acquisitiveness, Behn portrays these prostitutes as complex women painfully aware of the consequences of earning their bread by selling their bodies in a man's world, marked by a lucid comprehension that love exposes them to great risk. The stock prostitutes depicted by the male dramatists are possessed by cupidity, while Angelica and La Nuche are possessed by love for the captivating but cruel rake-hero, Willmore. Love will force them into an agonizing--yet

ultimately liberating--examination of themselves in relation to their society, and by extension, the place of all women in society.

The unchaste woman in the Restoration play, depicted as the cuckolding wife or the kept woman, is also a stock figure. She is interested in satisfying her lust or desire for money. To the contrary, Behn's Lady Fancy in Sir Patient Fancy (1678), is presented sympathetically, as a woman satisfied with the more abiding feeling of love for Wittmore. Lady Fancy adds another dimension too: she reflects her creator's displeasure with the societal injunction that women must marry men they do not love because of financial distress. She embodies Behn's belief that a loveless marriage is not a marriage. Lady Lambert, in The Round-Heads; or, The Good Old Cause (1682), is not so easy a character to decipher as Lady Fancy. Because she is a Roundhead woman appearing in a play replete with Royalist propaganda, her characterization may be colored by Behn's political ideology. Lady Lambert loves a cavalier, Loveless. As we shall see, this romantic alliance imbues the play with political conflict--softened by love. It is also quite possible that though Lady Lambert is not above reproach--she was mistress to Oliver Cromwell with her husband's consent--love may have the power to redeem her. The situation surrounding the relationship of Lady Lambert and Loveless is interesting too: invariably lovers are

divided by forced marriage in the plays, but here the romance is a new experience for both because they did not previously know one another. Lady Lambert, the Roundhead; Loveless, the cavalier; and Behn's Royalist sympathies, are all elements which conspire to create confusion about Behn's attitude towards this unchaste woman--a complex character within a complex play.

Most of Behn's male contemporaries delighted in portraying eminently foolish older women, following a very old playwriting tradition in which these women are derided as jokes, not worthy of one whit of serious consideration. Two examples are Lady Squeamish in Thomas Otway's Friendship in Fashion (1678), and Lady Fantast in Thomas Shadwell's Bury-Fair (1689). Lady Knowell in Behn's Sir Patient Fancy is also ridiculous in that she aspires to a young man, Leander, thereby displaying a characteristic common to many older women in the plays. But I strongly believe that Lady Knowell differs in one crucial respect from the older women of the men--she possesses genuine learning. Though she shows off by flaunting her knowledge of the Classics every chance she gets, and annoying some of the other characters, especially Sir Patient, with this display, she still has learning. In the portrayal of Lady Knowell, there is the suggestion that Behn was poking fun at her--but not at her learning, only at her pedantic preening. Through Lady Knowell, Behn is saying that women are capable of

understanding what they read and benefiting from it. Without learning, the older woman is presented by most male playwrights as sufficiently absurd; if she has the temerity to learn, she incurs the mockery of the men to an even greater degree, for the acquisition of knowledge was a male province. Although Lady Knowell is foolish in some respects, Behn, in my estimation, was deadly serious about this character's capacity for knowledge--there is no mere pretense of learning. With her depiction of Lady Knowell, Behn boldly affirms that the older woman, indeed any woman, acquires dignity with knowledge--just as men do.

The Widow Ranter, in Behn's The Widow Ranter; or, The History of Bacon in Virginia (1690-posthumous), is a free-thinking and free-acting female warrior, refusing to bow to social convention. When the male Restoration dramatists deal with the female warrior, they invariably create women who dress as men and fight. But these women do not fight like men, instead behaving as the stereotypical meek female, reluctant even to flirt with danger. They may attire themselves as men, but they will never have the "male" attributes of strength and courage. The Widow Ranter, not at all intimidated by the possibility of injury or even death, battles by the side of her lover, Daring, like a Spartan warrior. Their relationship represents Behn's credo that women and men must have equality in a love match.

The divergent characters presented by Behn are not simply one-dimensional stock characters; they become, in their ability to comprehend and grow, human beings who care about themselves and the world in which they live. Is it significant that Behn's unique characters are women? I believe so, for women were the principal victims of a society that operated by such a blatant double standard. Since Behn was acutely aware of this fact, it is apropos that she would employ female characters to serve as symbols of inequity, and ambassadors of change. In the succeeding chapters, the richness of their personalities will emerge, illustrating their creator's concerns and why she felt it so necessary to offer them to us, not simply as material for laughter, but more importantly, as representatives of serious social questions.

One critical issue regarding Behn has been the subject of forced marriage. While some scholars, such as Katharine M. Rogers and Robert D. Hume, assert that Behn's treatment of forced marriage was no different from the male playwrights, other scholars, such as Lawrence Stone, Frederick M. Link, Robert L. Root, and Angeline Goreau, claim that Behn's treatment was appreciably different--not merely a plot device, but an attack on a virulent institution. Although Behn did use the forced marriage plot as a stock situation--obviously she could not avoid doing so--she was still deeply troubled by it, and thus felt

compelled to express this concern in her work. Behn writes about the horrors of forced marriage much more often than the men with whom she competed, and her assault is characterized by strong language. She uses specific words and concepts, creating a paradigm of female imprisonment within the confines of the male power-structure, and the theme of real love versus forced marriage. Her lovers are apt to repudiate organized religion because it sanctions what they reject: forced marriage. The depth and persistence with which Behn expresses these themes is not evident in the plays of the men. It is true that some male dramatists also attack forced marriage, such as John Dryden in The Assignation; or, Love in a Nunnery (1673), and Thomas Otway in The Cheats of Scapin (1676), but not with the frequency of Behn. This indicates that she was not just obeying playwriting standards. Being a woman, she was also in a special position to see what most men could not or did not care to see.

We must not forget that Behn, like her male counterparts in the Restoration theatre--excepting Sir George Etherege, who was attached to the Court of Charles II--depended upon her plays for her living. In this regard, her use of an advantageous ingredient for success--the forced marriage plot--is hardly surprising. I also believe that Behn may have utilized comedy to render a serious message more palatable to the audience. Behn, a

skilled dramatist, must surely have realized that unadulterated gravity would emasculate her comedies by killing the humor. As a woman, it was incumbent upon her to be vigilant about what she wrote--she had to avoid offending the people who came to see her plays. Hence, neutralizing a serious social issue by placing it within a comedy would allow her to continue writing in some safety. More abuse she certainly did not need, for she had quite enough to contend with. No one can determine with utter certainty how far Behn was prepared to argue against forced marriage--after all, mere discussion of the subject constituted a challenge to patriarchal authority. But given the vehemence and persistence with which Behn did attack the long-entrenched institution, and the recurring imagery of female subjugation by her male-dominated world, it appears that Behn felt the issue of forced marriage merited more serious treatment than her male colleagues did. In my view, Behn's handling of this subject transcends ideology, and as I will attempt to show, crystallizes into pure vision.

Chapter Three

The Prostitute

In this chapter, I will concentrate on the prostitute, the professional whore who is engaged in a strict business transaction, by exchanging sexual favors for monetary compensation. This chapter will demonstrate that Behn--perhaps because she was a woman--saw the prostitute as a victim of a male-dominated society, thus necessitating the presentation of a more "human" character that is an integral participant in the world of the play; we shall see that, on the whole, Behn's male contemporaries do not accord the prostitute such importance. This character is basically a stereotype for most male Restoration playwrights, a low personage who has little or no impact on the action of the play. I believe this attitude to be a reflection of masculine societal conviction that the prostitute exists solely for male sexual gratification--her *raison d'être*. Consequently, the prostitute has minimal value as a human being in both the plays and the real world. For illustration, I intend to explore the following characters: the two prostitutes, designated as first and second whores,

in John Dryden's The Wild Gallant (1663); Flirt and Flounce, with a heavy emphasis on Flirt because she has the larger role, in William Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master (1673); Angelica Bianca, in Aphra Behn's The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers (1677); La Nuche, in Behn's The Rover (Part II); or, The Banish'd Cavaliers (1681); and the three prostitutes, designated as first, second, and third whores, in Thomas Otway's The Souldier's Fortune (1681). Since it would be inappropriate to separate the discussions of Behn's prostitutes, I will first deal with the prostitutes of the male dramatists.

Because Behn took the prostitute, Angelica Bianca, from Thomas Killigrew's Thomaso; or, The Wanderer (1654), an analysis of the similarities and differences between the two Angelicas is relevant, and so will be presented here. Though Behn appropriated entire scenes from Thomaso, we will see that The Rover is different from Killigrew's play, displaying thematic alteration, comparative brevity, and an Angelica more aware of her position in a restrictive society. It is my contention that the differences between Killigrew's and Behn's treatments of Angelica are significant enough to warrant the assertion that Behn was more deeply touched by the dilemma of the prostitute. And although Killigrew's Angelica does possess some awareness of her position, Behn's Angelica surpasses her in this regard, and in overall depth of personality.

In Restoration comedy there are not many prostitutes: I think this signifies that this character was not considered central to the plot. After all, the heroine, rake-hero, authoritarian parent or parental substitute, and the fop, move the play along--they do not require the input of the prostitute to goad the play onward to resolution. Also, the dearth of prostitutes in the Restoration play may reflect societal views that she is of quite marginal importance--it is doubtful that society would be in danger of collapse if the prostitute did not exist. So it is hardly surprising that the prostitute is either not present in the plays, or is not essential to the action. Those we see are fascinating, in that they supply humor, but they are not truly integral to the play, with the exception of Wycherley's, and most especially Behn's prostitutes. For instance, if Dryden's prostitutes in The Wild Gallant were not present, or to a lesser extent, Otway's in The Souldier's Fortune, we might not question their absence. Nevertheless, and this may seem paradoxical, the prostitute does serve a function in the plays in which she appears. She gives us comic relief because she represents a relaxation of moral stricture. The Restoration prostitute can be vulgar both in word and deed, and very few will take umbrage, for this woman, being the low character that she is, is permitted her vulgarity. The prostitute, I suspect, fits the condescending and largely unthreatening stereotype

that many members of the middle and upper classes like to ascribe to her. The upper-class characters, principally the heroine and the rake, though bawdy, euphemize vulgarity with refined language. The prostitute, armed with permission to be profane--to be what she is without elegant pretension--serves to throw into relief the hypocrisy and double standard of the upper-class characters. Despite the fact that the prostitute is considered inferior by upper-class characters, the rake, for example, often patronizes her, utilizing her services. The rake can be himself with her, relaxing thoroughly, as he cannot with the heroine. With the prostitute, the rake can dispense with facade; with the heroine, he must uphold it. The prostitute serves a like purpose in Restoration plays similar to that of other minor characters, such as the maid. The prostitute and the maid, being low characters, can behave in a manner unbefitting the upper-class characters. The maid speaks freely: standing as a classic example of this idea, she often has a wide control over the life of her mistress, advising her on appearance, friends, and love. The maid is allowed to express herself with astonishing candor, because her mistress cannot do without her, and since she is a lower-class character, she poses no peril to upper-class security--her "place," rigidly assigned to her, and from which she cannot hope to escape, accords her a unique freedom. Mrs. Loveit's maid, Pert, from Sir George

Etherege's The Man of Mode (1676), is the embodiment of the outspoken, intelligent, and quite independent-minded Restoration maid.

At this point, a summary of the various treatments given the prostitute character by the playwrights here will provide a guide to the specifics to come. Dryden's prostitutes, not even permitted the dignity that a name confers, could be removed from The Wild Gallant without disturbing its integrity--they serve no function in the plot, not even peripheral. I must stress, however, that though the plot can do without them, perhaps the play cannot. At the very least, they increase the range of classes represented, and from a feminist perspective, if not from Dryden's, they show women as victims of the system. Otway's prostitutes have no names either, but they are allowed more dialogue than Dryden's prostitutes. Nonetheless, Otway's prostitutes do not evince the personality depth of Behn's. It is as if Dryden, and Otway, to a lesser degree, included them as filler, and the fact that these women are not named may indicate that they possess no real identity, no distinction as human beings. Yet, Otway's prostitutes, like Dryden's, add to the rich variety of the social spectrum, so obviously Otway had a valid reason for including them. Wycherley's prostitutes serve a more notable purpose. They have wonderful names which mirror their identities--Flirt and Flounce. These

women, particularly Flirt, play more of a role than the usual Restoration prostitute; The Gentleman Dancing-Master would be incomplete without them. But Behn, in striking contrast to the above dramatists, depicts prostitutes who have major significance in both parts of The Rover. The presence of Angelica Bianca in the first part and La Nuche in the second part is imperative to the action of these plays, for in portraying the two prostitutes, Behn seems to want the reader and the audience to understand the classic dilemma of the prostitute: love interferes with economic and emotional well-being. Behn's intense involvement with her two prostitutes and her attitude toward them suggests that she was interested in the heartbreaking confusion suffered by the prostitute when she yielded to love, and also the untenable position forced on her by a hypocritical and repressive society. Behn's prostitutes will show us that she was deeply concerned about the rights and feelings of women, while her male counterparts, with their stereotypical prostitutes, did not see, or did not care to show, that the prostitute also deserved fundamental rights, and that she was effectually helpless in the face of an unforgiving world. Katharine M. Rogers declares: "Behn's prostitutes are remarkable for being presented as real women with serious problems: she realistically portrays them as hardened, but also reveals their motivation, their vulnerability, their self-contempt, and the painful

insecurity of their position."¹ Behn's characterizations of Angelica and La Nuche are indeed divergent from those of her male competitors.²

In The Wild Gallant, Dryden's prostitutes, classified as the first whore and the second whore, appear in a scene so minute that it is a wonder the reader should notice it at all. In fact, these are the only prostitutes presented in his comedies. The entire scene consists of Constance, the heroine, asking the prostitutes where they live; their reply is frank:

1st Wh. In Dog and Bitch Yard, and't
please your Ladiship.
2nd Wh. And mine in Sodom, so like
your Ladiship.³

I believe that there is relevance in this brief exchange. Two prostitutes are speaking to a woman of much higher station, thus providing a clear juxtaposition between high and low. Why does Constance stop to speak to prostitutes? Many women of middle and upper-class backgrounds certainly would not even contemplate such a "conversation." Constance could just as easily pass them by, for the scene ends so quickly that there seems no justification for its inclusion. Yet, I strongly feel that there is a purpose behind this little interlude. The very fact that Constance takes the time to talk to these women suggests that Dryden wanted to show the reader and the audience that his heroine is not a snob. In fact, Constance is an honest, assertive woman who is not intimidated by societal injunction (see chapter two).

The prostitutes, on the other hand, may be snobs, since at times, some lower-class members can evince more snobbery than upper-class members. Perhaps the prostitutes take delight in saying words--"Bitch" and "Sodom"--which they feel will shock an upper-class lady. Too, the fawning nature of their replies to her query about where they reside--"and't please your Ladiship" and "so like your Ladiship"--could possibly be sarcastic and conceal a hatred of the upper class in general. The conclusion is this: while the middle and upper classes do, in the main, think they are superior to the lower class, the lower class, in the main, stands guilty of the same attitude. Although I believe that the above interpretation is what Dryden had in mind when he wrote this tiny scene, there are always other interpretations. Perhaps the scene has no meaning whatsoever; it could be a simple exchange, with no mockery intended by the prostitutes, and no desire on Dryden's part to exonerate Constance from any accusations of snobbery. However, since Dryden was a skilled playwright, it is rather unlikely that he would write a scene devoid of significance. But whatever the case may be, if this interlude were expunged, neither the plot nor the character of Constance would suffer. She is delineated with more than enough complexity anyway. In contrast, the two prostitutes are virtual non-entities. Whether this implies disgust by their creator for the prostitute character, or whether it is only

that he did not feel they would enhance his play, is uncertain. What is certain is that in Dryden's comedies the prostitute is conspicuous by her absence--an absence not unusual in the plays of the male Restoration dramatists.

In contrast to the almost invisible prostitutes of Dryden, Wycherley's have some impact on The Gentleman Dancing-Master. The bestowal of names is most important, for this establishes identity. Identity invariably leads to the achievement of true character status. This amalgamation of essential elements allows Flirt and Flounce a healthy participation in the action of the comedy. Though they lack the awareness, depth, and stature of Behn's prostitutes, there is no denying that they are well-rounded, primarily Flirt. They are extremely clever too; Flirt speaks like a Restoration heroine, elegantly and correctly, and she expects to obtain the advantages of life. Moreover, she acts as a catalyst to the plot's resolution when she convinces Monsieur de Paris to keep her. By the close of the play, their relationship is neatly resolved. Although Flirt has graduated from the streets, with the dubious living they supply, to the position of a woman kept by a man who will remain under her dominion as long as they stay together, Flirt does not enjoy the benefits that complete security would confer. True, being a kept woman is better than being a streetwalker, but it is hardly a considerable climb up the social scale, and Monsieur de Paris is not the

most reliable keeper. Flirt will be able to look down on Flounce, who has remained a streetwalker, but that will constitute the extent of her "elitism." Monsieur de Paris is the typical Restoration fop, foolish, Frenchified, and because he is the eternal gull, totally harmless. Of course, the savvy Flirt feels no love for him; he is merely a symbol of financial stability. In this way, she is identical to John Crowne's Betty Frisque from The Country Wit (1675), who will be discussed in the chapter on the unchaste woman. Flirt is unlike Behn's prostitutes in that she does not love. Angelica and La Nuche gain stature through love, but also risk the loss of financial and emotional security because they love. Love makes Behn's prostitutes more human, but perhaps Flirt is luckier--and happier--in concentrating on money, something less likely to threaten emotional safety.

In snaring Monsieur de Paris, Flirt exhibits her shrewd nature by bombarding him with such extravagant flattery that any defense he might mount to counter her is annihilated with astounding finality:

Mons. Why, do you love me?
Flirt. Indeed I cannot help telling you now, what my modesty ought to conceal, but my eyes would disclose it too:
--I have a passion for you, sir.
Mons. A passion for me!
Flirt. An extreme passion, dear sir; you are so French, so agreeable French --but I'll tell you more of my heart at home: come along.
Mons. But is your passion sincere?
Flirt. The truest in the world.⁴

When she has secured her dupe, Flirt exacts the terms of surrender. Naturally, she wants everything he can offer, while returning almost nothing. In the way of all fools who keep mistresses in Restoration comedy, Monsieur de Paris accedes to Flirt's demands with unqualified capitulation:

Flirt. We mistresses suffer no cohabitation.
Mons. Nor wives neither now.
Flirt. Then separate maintenance, in case you should take a wife, or I a new friend.
Mons. How! that too! then you are every whit as bad as a wife.
Flirt. Then my house in town and yours in the country, if you will.
Mons. A mere wife!
Flirt. Then my coach apart, as well as my bed apart.
Mons. As bad as a wife still!
Flirt. But take notice, I will have no little, dirty, second-hand chariot new furbished, but a large, sociable, well-painted coach; nor will I keep it till it be as well known as myself, and it come to be called Flirt-coach; nor will I have such pitiful horses as cannot carry me every night to the Park; for I will not miss a night in the Park, I'd have you know.⁵

In Flirt's defense, kept women do not necessarily stay with one keeper, and they have absolutely no legal recourse if the man refuses to honor his part of the "contract." Given Flirt's position within a male-dominated world--though she has moved up somewhat--one could claim that she has the right to demand all she can while it is in her power to obtain material advantage. In conclusion, since she has not substantially advanced up the social ladder, and she is not

truly secure, her greed is justified and softened by these mitigating circumstances.

Wycherley's prostitutes are entirely mercenary. There is nothing new in that; it is simply part of the stereotype of the prostitute. But Flirt and Flounce are not solely interested in money. They also find it amusing to play with the other characters. For instance, Monsieur de Paris is contracted to marry the heroine, Hippolita, and though he is a complete fool whom she does not wish to wed, it would be hyperbole to assert that he deserves to suffer over-much. On the other hand, he is "cheating" on hippo when he gets entangled with Flirt. Flounce has him confounded when she informs him that it is their business to ruin matches, in response to his plea that she say nothing. True, Flirt and Flounce are witty, but this is not tantamount to approval by their creator.

There is a strong inference in Wycherley's plays that he experienced revulsion for those who pursued fashion to the exclusion of all else, and Flirt displays this trait when she dictates terms to Monsieur de Paris. She has a compulsion for money and the fashionable life it affords. There is nothing inherently wrong with the desire for fine possessions, but Flirt is a slave to materialism, and obsession with tangible goods sometimes precludes human feeling. I do not believe that Wycherley approved of his prostitute's single-mindedness in this regard. Flirt is

obsessed with money in the same way as the Widow Blackacre in The Plain-Dealer (1676) is with the law and its intricacies. Ultimately, however, I do not think that Wycherley was such a prude that he was incapable of experiencing some amusement for the antics of his prostitutes, though it is unlikely he thought them admirable. Let us not forget that clever as they are, and though aiding the plot as far more tangible characters than Dryden's prostitutes, Flirt and Flounce are still stereotyped as mercenary whores. They are entirely without the appealing humanity of Behn's prostitutes, and if Wycherley had admired them and expected us to, he could have plucked them from the limitations imposed by stereotype by having them experience interests other than money--love, and the elation and pain it brings--exactly as Behn did.

Turning to Otway, we find that his prostitutes, whores one, two, and three, possess more substance than those of Dryden, and less substance than those of Wych. Interestingly enough, they are not listed in the *Dramatis Personae*, a possible indication of Otway's attitude toward them. This omission might not be germane; after all, Otway does devote some stage time to these prostitutes. The lines that follow, occurring in Act I, sc. i, show the three women strolling through the Mall, a popular Restoration locale frequented by high and low. As they walk, they happen upon Sir Jolly Jumble, a jovial, fun-loving man:

- 1 Who. Well I'll swear, Madam, 'tis the finest Evening: I love the Mall, mightily...
- 2 Who. Really, and so do I; because there's alwaies good company, and one meets with such Civilitys from every body...
- 3 Who. Ay, and then I love extreamly to shew my self here, when I am very fine, to vex these poor Devils that call themselves Vertues, and are very Scandalous and Crapish...
- 1 Who. Oh Papa, Papa! where have you been these two days, Papa?
- 2 Who. You are a precious Father indeed, to take no more care of your Children: We might be dead for all you, you naughty Dady, you.
- Sir Jol. Dead, my poor Fubses! odd I had all the Relations I have were dead, a dad I had: Get you gone you little Devils Bubbies; oh Law there's Bubbies; odd I'll bite 'em, odd I will...Come along with me, come along with me, sneak after me at a distance, that no bodie take notice.⁶

Although Sir Jolly never refers to himself as a pimp, Beaugard, the soldier of the title, does call Sir Jolly a pimp. Beaugard gives us insight into Sir Jolly's personality and interests:

- Beau. I am lately happened into the acquaintance of a very reverend pimp, as fine a discreet, sober, grey-bearded old gentleman as one would wish; as good a natured public-spirited person as the nation holds: one that is never so happy as when he is bringing good people together, and promoting civil understanding betwixt the sexes: nay, rather than want employment, he will go from one end of the town to t'other, to procure my lord's little dog to be civil to my lady's little languishing bitch.⁷

Beaugard, in need of employment after being away, has become part of Sir Jolly's escort service. The above passage, humorously sarcastic though it be, does convey Beaugard's

liking for Sir Jolly. This is hardly surprising when one considers his Falstaffian vivacity; Sir Jolly is unashamedly risque--and only someone with no sense of humor could dislike him. He is a most singular pimp, not at all "traditional" in the way he operates. Sir Jolly asks for no monetary compensation in return for bringing interested parties together. Not only does he enjoy his "profession," but he also requests that he be permitted to watch the sexual proceedings that he has initiated; since he is impotent, this is how he "participates." For him, this is more delightful than money.

There is too a strong suggestion that Sir Jolly is a homosexual, because when Beaugard arrives on the scene, he is greeted with effusive compliments by Sir Jolly, the tone of which are overtly physical. Since men do not, unless they are homosexual, speak to each other in this way, it can be deduced that Sir Jolly thinks of Beaugard in sexual terms: "my Hero! my darling! my Ganimede! how dost thou? Strong! wanton! lusty! rampant!"⁸ Otway has made a place in this society for an impotent, homosexual voyeur, one who is quite happy. Although Sir Jolly is most probably attracted to Beaugard, he is not the least bit jealous of Beaugard's love for Clarinda, Lady Duncce. She was married to the horrid Sir Davy Duncce while Beaugard was away in France. Now that he is back, Lady Duncce persuades Sir Jolly to get his picture for her, and also asks the "reverend

pimp" to tell Beaugard that she wishes to see him; and so the meeting is arranged by Sir Jolly. He receives no money for his part in the lovers' reunion--in return, he wants to share their joy by having fun with them, as an equal. Perhaps Sir Jolly is not the companion anyone of a higher station would choose if a more suitable option were available, but there is a telling message here. Otway may be suggesting that a society which possesses the cruelty to burden Clarinda with Sir Davy Dunce, instead of allowing her to marry Beaugard, does not merit more respectable matchmakers. This world deserves Sir Jolly.

Sir Jolly is also not the usual pimp in another way. He treats his girls well, and they truly like him because of this. In the selection quoted previously, we understand that the relationship between Sir Jolly and his prostitutes is affectionate. These characters are comfortable with one another, because they are friends; this is certainly not the classic prostitute/pimp connection. What is even more striking is that these prostitutes do not seem to view themselves as victims; like Sir Jolly, they feel no degradation. This is due, I believe, to Sir Jolly himself. He never mistreats his girls, as pimps are wont to do. If he abused them, demanding large amounts of money, and knocking them around when they failed to deliver, they would naturally feel victimized. Sir Jolly has considerable power within the play, for not only does he bring major characters

together, but by virtue of his unusual behavior toward his girls, he becomes a motivating force. Otway's prostitutes, content with their lives, look down upon the upper class, a very neat switch indeed! They are cognizant that many upper-class people, while condemning the prostitute, conduct themselves in a similar manner, and see no contradiction therein. These three streetwalkers employ the language of their "betters," thereby lampooning those they despise with a scathing dexterity of wit: Otway uses the satirical literary device of the low imitating and lampooning the high to excellent advantage. And by allowing Sir Jolly to be a controlling influence in The Souldier's Fortune, Otway sends the unmistakable message that because the upper class has surrendered to debauchery, it has earned no better than to associate with the Sir Jollies of the world.

Otway's treatment of his prostitutes implies that, for him, all share the guilt for making the world a whorehouse. Those of the higher social echelons are more responsible, for many middle and upper-class men procure the services the prostitute offers, while some of their wives are cuckolding them. But Sir Jolly Jumble and his prostitutes cannot be wholly acquitted: they are essential ingredients in this all-encompassing societal cesspool.

Despite Otway's intriguing prostitutes and his extraordinary Sir Jolly Jumble, it remains for Behn to redefine the character of the prostitute. In Behn's

personality extension of the prostitute; in her inclusion of this character as an integral component of the play; in her comprehension that the prostitute is a human being; and in her realization that this unfortunate character is a victim of society, Behn's treatment of Angelica Bianca and La Nuche surpasses the portrayals of Dryden, Wycherley, and Otway.

To begin the exploration of Behn's prostitutes, it is expedient to quote Jacqueline Pearson, for she clearly understands and appreciates Behn's ideas about the interaction of women with society, no matter what role they play:

Behn is most original in repeated treatment of sexual outlaws, seduced maids, kept women, adulterous wives, courtesans, and prostitutes, who are invariably sympathetic figures. She is unusual too in insisting that prostitutes are only extreme examples of society's economic oppression of women...Angelica Bianca in the first part of The Rover and La Nuche in the second part are less business-women with their bodies than romantic subversives, exposing by their frank emotion the hypocritical and mercenary nature of "respectable" society.⁹

Yes, for Behn, "pps are only extreme examples of society's economic oppression of women." After all, Angelica and La Nuche--and, by extension, all prostitutes--exist because men require them to. The sole *raison d'être* for the prostitute is the sexual demand placed on her by men: if this demand were not present, there would be no justification for the prostitute's existence. The economic conditions of the Restoration, and other ages as well, constrained too many women of a lower social status with the additional burden of

educational deprivation to consign themselves to the streets.

But let me play "devil's advocate" for a moment. Many of these women would have no means of financial support if the demand for prostitutes did not exist. Thus, one can quite reasonably inquire which is worse: economic oppression or poverty perhaps leading to outright starvation. I think Pearson's point is that society, mainly male society, creates the insufferable economic restrictions which force some women into an intolerable life of bartering their bodies for monetary subsistence. If society can create such conditions, then society can remove them. Since society does not choose to undo the damage, it stands condemned of "economic oppression." Along with economic oppression comes social oppression--the two are inextricably entangled. The lower class endures poverty because wealth is the province of those more fortunate; it is not their "right," not their "place," to be financially secure. When Pearson writes that Behn's two prostitutes are "romantic subversives, exposing by their frank emotion the hypocritical and mercenary nature of 'respectable' society," she is connecting with this concept of social oppression. By rejecting complete immersion in monetary aggrandizement, and by refusing to be the coarse, greedy prostitutes which many members of the higher classes believe they are, indeed, want them to be, Behn's prostitutes exercise their right to

love. They are "romantic subversives" precisely because they represent a revamping of the Restoration prostitute, the stereotypical figure the male playwrights crank out. Angelica and La Nuche are so refreshing because they actually assert their inherent right to love, placing romance before financial gain.

For Behn's Angelica Bianca, love is the prime motivating force in her life, and we shall see that this causes her to experience a misery that the prostitutes of Dryden, Wycherley, and Otway seem incapable of suffering. When Angelica feels love and its attendant pain, she is able to examine the effect that both bring her. She grows primarily through the compelling influence of romantic love. It is love that rounds her out as a character, love that makes her whole, and love that renders her human and so deserving of our sympathy. The love Angelica has for the rake-hero, Willmore, who does not merit her sincere attentions, acts as a catalyst to her growth. And as Angelica gathers stature thorough the transcendent force of love, so she transcends conventional morality, something which can no longer contain her.

Angelica's defiance of accepted behavior, also her creator's attitude, is related to Behn's refusal to judge her remarkable prostitute as immoral. In actuality, considering Behn's abhorrence of the societal prohibitions which inhibit people, especially women, from loving whom

they wish, and her insistence that everyone has the right and the obligation to choose her/his lover, it could be confidently said that Behn viewed Angelica as a moral entity. Too, Behn knew that Angelica had to earn a livelihood in a world that offered almost no alternative at all. Angelica is unmarried--there is no husband to insure her financial comfort. From the well-spring of Behn's compassion for women and what they endured from an uncaring, smug society, emerges the human prostitute, a woman for whom condemnation would be a crime. Eric Rothstein and Francis M. Kavenik comment that "Behn has less interest in moral points about whores, not a common theme in Carolean comedy, than in what is perhaps the most insistent theme of Carolean comedy, the self-creation of personal value, hence of personal power."¹⁰ Rothstein and Kavenik utilize the term coined by Robert D. Hume to describe what is more commonly called "Restoration" comedy. I will not argue that individual value and power were abiding themes in Restoration comedy, but I wish to stress that Behn, probably more than any other playwright of the period, strongly believed that "personal value" and "personal power" were crucial for women, including prostitutes--perhaps because women enjoyed so very little of these ennobling assets. Indeed, a study of her work will easily convince the reader that this is so: Behn's plays, novels, and poetry consistently advance the idea of individual merit standing

tall against the enervating strictures of societal mores-- the crippling effects of custom.

Behn herself was a victim of rigid social custom. Thus it could be that Angelica parallels Behn's search for freedom in a repressive society. We cannot decisively say that Angelica was representative of her creator, but Behn was well aware that some--certainly not all, otherwise she would not have seen her plays produced and published--of her male competitors felt that she had gone too far in proclaiming her right to make a living by writing. A woman was not supposed to write, and if she had the gall to do so, she had better not proffer her work for publication. Behn defied this social convention: she absolutely declined to remain quietly and safely cloistered, and bared herself to public scrutiny. Cathy Gallagher points out that if a woman dared to publish, she was considered no better than a whore, shamefully revealing what she should conceal:

The equation of poetess and "punk" (in the slang of the day) was inescapable in the Restoration. A woman writer could either deny it in the content and the form of her publications, as did Catherine Trotter, or she could embrace it, as did Aphra Behn. But she could not entirely avoid it. For the belief that "Punk and Poesie agree so pat,/You cannot well be this, and not that" was held independently of particular cases. It rested on the evidence neither of how a woman lived nor of what she wrote. It was, rather, an a priori judgement applied to all cases of female publication. As one of Aphra Behn's biographers, Angeline Goreau, has astutely pointed out, the seventeenth-century ear heard the word "public" in "Publication" very distinctly, and hence a woman's publication automatically implied a public woman. The woman who shared the contents of her mind instead of reserving them for one man was literally, not metaphorically, trading in her sexual

property...Publication, then, quite apart from the contents of what was published, ipso facto implied the divided, doubled, and ultimately unavailable person whose female prototype was the prostitute. By flaunting her self-sale, Aphra Behn embraced the title of whore; by writing bawdy comedies, which she then partly disclaimed, she capitalized on her supposed handicap.¹¹

Gallagher has contributed valuable information about how seventeenth-century ideas concerning female authorship hampered women who had the temerity to publish, but I must quarrel with her last sentence. Behn's prefaces and epilogues, explored in the final chapter of this dissertation, suggest that she may have been "flaunting her self-sale," but I feel that Gallagher is making hyperbolic claims. When she asserts that "Aphra Behn embraced the title of whore," she is, I think, going too far. There is simply no way any scholar can know this for certain. Is Gallagher really arguing that Behn, though outspoken about her rights as a female writer, and about male oppression of her sex, would actually embrace such a dubious identity? Perhaps Gallagher is speaking figuratively, but the aggressive, unambiguous language gives one pause. The idea "[Behn] capitalized on her supposed handicap" implies that she deliberately, with conscious intent and absolute comprehension of her motives--and the attendant derision--took what was a distinct disadvantage for other women writers, and transmogrified it into a most lucrative advantage. In short, Gallagher proposes a psychological dynamic that might explain Behn, but is quite unprovable.

Though no scholar studying a deceased author can root out the secrets of her/his psyche, we can with a bit more certainty discern what was important to the author by carefully examining the work produced. And one thing that mattered very much to Behn was to portray the character of the prostitute with dignity, as she did in The Rover.

Before Angelica meets Willmore, the attractive rake who wins her heart, she shares the same concerns as other prostitutes: "But inconstancy's the Sin of all Mankind, therefore I'm resolv'd that nothing but Gold shall charm my Heart."¹² These are the words of the Universal Prostitute. But there is irony here, for Angelica will soon forget the lure of money, and romance will threaten her very survival. She would do well to heed her own advice, since she stands poised on a threshold, precariously balanced on the dividing line between the clarity of financial pursuit and the confusion of romantic pursuit. Angelica crosses this threshold when she falls in love with the dashing Willmore, thereby inviting despair. Her awareness of her situation serves to exacerbate her unhappiness, because she comprehends that a woman who sells herself to live should not fall in love. Her serving woman, Moretta, also realizes that for the prostitute, danger attends love, and she marvels at Angelica's self-control: "I wonder what has kept you from that general disease of our Sex so long, I mean that of being in Love."¹³ Moretta is the wise, canny, and

eternally pragmatic maid, a familiar stock character of Restoration comedy.

After Angelica meets Willmore, passion for him consumes her; love becomes her entire universe. But he is the typical rake-hero, full of fancy phrases and arrogant posturing. There is little about him that indicates sincerity. When Willmore speaks of love--"those wounds your eyes have made,"--he is using the words of all rakes, with no honesty intended.¹⁴ What cannot be ignored is the starkly simple fact that Willmore marries Hellena at the close of the play. In the last confrontation between the "curtezan" and Willmore, Angelica, made bitter by her pain and knowing that he will wed Hellena, flings this accusation at him, and by extension, all rakes:

Ang. When a Lady is proposed to you for a Wife, you never ask, how fair, discreet, or virtuous she is; but what's her Fortune--which if but small, you cry--She will not do my business--and basely leave her, tho she languish for you.--Say, is not this as poor?¹⁵

Love is not the central motive for men like Willmore. Eric Rothstein and Francis M. Kavenik assert that Willmore has a "half-teasing devotion to love and honor."¹⁶ This condemns him and renders him worse than the woman who gives herself in economic exchange. Angelica is willing to relinquish material gain for love, while Willmore is content to sacrifice love for money. She says to him, trying desperately to help him understand that it is love which is her primary motivation: "the Pay I mean is but thy Love for

mine--Can you give that?"¹⁷ At the end, Angelica comes to the tragic realization that women like herself never triumph, that Willmore will marry Hellena, the heroine, because the "virtuous" woman always wins, and that she has sacrificed economic stability for the false vows of a man who intends to follow the safe route by marrying a woman approved of by a hypocritical society:

Ang. All this thou'st made me know, for which I hate thee. Had I remain'd in innocent Security, I shou'd have thought all Men were born my Slaves; And worn my Pow'r like Lightning in my Eyes, to have destroyed at Pleasure when offended.¹⁸

When Angelica refers to staying "in innocent Security," she is paradoxically looking back on her previous way of life, when she catered to many customers--or perhaps they catered to her. She talks about "all Men" being her "Slaves;" translated, this means that her clients were sexual slaves in that they needed her services. But in reality, Angelica was not truly secure before meeting Willmore, because her "johns" could have left her if she failed to please, and procured the services of another prostitute. Angelica is intensely aware of this sobering fact too; before The Rover begins, she was a kept woman, a position conferring more security than the uncertainties of the streets, but not so secure that she cannot be abandoned by her keeper. Indeed, she has been "abandoned" by her former keeper, a Spanish general--he has died. Consequently, Angelica is in search of another man who will keep her in the splendor she has

lost. Willmore asks Belvile, "What Gallant has she?" Belvile replies, "None, she's exposed to Sale, and four Days in the Week she's your--for so much a Month."¹⁹ Angelica's position, both as a prostitute and a kept woman, can never be absolutely safe, so talk of "innocent Security," and men as her "Slaves," is fraught with irony and serves to point out that she is merely a sexual tool to satiate male lust--she is the slave, and will remain such in a male-dominated world. Now that Willmore has arrived on the scene, her security will be endangered in a different manner, through love, the enemy of the prostitute. Even though Angelica is more than ready to swear romantic allegiance to Willmore, perhaps with the transfer of vows, the rake will never reciprocate that allegiance.

The exchange of vows is central to Behn's philosophy that love should and must be bestowed freely by both parties, and that marriage need not be involved. Since forced marriage was the order of the day, love was not presupposed in the overwhelming majority of matches. Angelica, intensely preoccupied with her love for Willmore, is content "to've worn my Chains, hadst thou not broke those Vows that put them on."²⁰ Even though Willmore may have genuine feelings for Hellena, he is incapable of experiencing real love for Angelica, so he most assuredly would not consider their mutual vows as serious. Unconstrained vows between lovers are a necessary component

of a relationship, and allow genuine love to flourish. Willmore, however, severs his vow to Angelica in a most insulting way--he has the cruelty to offer her gold in order to extricate himself from any obligation to her. He thus demonstrates that he has learned nothing; for him, she is only a prostitute, and will forever be a prostitute, a woman for whom the pre-eminent interest is money. Since Willmore cannot conceive that Angelica can actually fall in love and put romance before money, he does the only thing his imagination is capable of in this context: proffering money to the prostitute.

When we hear the words "honor" and "virgin," we do not associate them with prostitutes. However, Angelica, not the usual prostitute, appropriates these terms, and in so doing, initiates a redefinition of them. Angelica yearns for honor--she so much wants respectability, though she knows that she will never attain it, at least in the context of societal definition. The rules of society prescribe honor as the exclusive property of aristocratic ladies and gentlemen--the fact that many of them abrogate the conception of honor they are required to uphold has little or no effect on the definition they invented. This ideal certainly excludes the prostitute; she has never possessed honor and never will, while aristocratic males patronize her, yet retain the honor they have always enjoyed. Of course, an upper-class lady could lose her honor with

frightening speed if she stepped outside the periphery of respectable conduct--the old reliable double standard. There was far more pressure on the aristocratic female to conform, since she had everything to lose, and in this sense, the prostitute was better off, for she could not lose what she never had. But simply because the prostitute operated outside of circumscribed limits, does not preclude her feeling positive and illuminating emotions. Angelica, relegated to the seamy netherworld of society, can elevate herself with ennobling emotions, and for a few precious moments, perhaps forget the agony of her existence. The important thing to remember here is that Behn rejects the codes of society in depicting a sympathetic prostitute. Hence, Angelica is able to declare that she has given the ungrateful Willmore her "Virgin Heart," because she has not loved before.²¹ In loving a man unworthy of her, she has lost her most cherished asset: "my richest Treasure being lost, my Honour, all the remaining Spoil cou'd not be worth the conqueror's Care or Value."²² Because Angelica has lost one type of honor by selling her body, there is a double meaning here. And for Willmore, honor, love, and fidelity are empty ideals to be wielded as weapons in the game of romance. Underscoring the above is the name "Angelica Bianca," white angel.

Killigrew deserves credit for these concepts, for it is he who invented this prostitute and her name, thus

allowing her to be honorable in a non-traditional way: she is fundamentally decent. Naturally, Behn retained Angelica's decency. With daring, both playwrights flip the idea of the prostitute on its head--here is an honorable prostitute! By associating this word with such a woman, they tell us that "honorable" can have various meanings, depending upon personal viewpoint and social standing. Irony is intended, perhaps, because Killigrew and Behn must surely have realized that most could not conceive of such a character; "honorable prostitute," in general, consists of mutually exclusive ideas. It is possible that Killigrew and Behn were granting their societies a sarcastic bow--the white angel is a woman of honor because she is good, yet, for some, she is dishonorable because she is a prostitute. Despite the fact that Killigrew created a remarkable prostitute, the following assertion of Joseph F. Musser, Jr., as we shall see, could never be applied to Thomaso. Musser says that though The Rover "is not a consciously feminist play," it "subtly but insistently shifts the basis of sexual and social power."²³

I will leave the final words to Angelica Bianca. They convey her compassion for other women in similar circumstances, and so mirror Behn's understanding of the untenable position of women in love living in a world that does not extend to them the acknowledgement of their right to feel:

Ang. Tell me how many poor believing Fools thou hast undone; How many Hearts thou hast betray'd to ruin!--Yet these are little Mischiefs to the Ills Thou'st taught mine to commit: thou'st taught it Love.²⁴

In The Rover (Part II), Willmore has also taught La Nuche's heart to love him. As with Angelica, love for Willmore is the prime focus of La Nuche's life. In the second part, Angelica and Hellena are not present: Angelica has been left behind in Naples and Hellena is dead. Willmore, the ubiquitous rake, is very much alive, and promptly proceeds to destroy the well-being of another prostitute. La Nuche, in permitting him access to her heart, contributes to her own torment. There is a different locale, Madrid, and the prostitute is different, but Willmore and the love he inspires remain the same. He is unswervingly constant to the belief that all women are dying of love for him. Yet, for all this, he is attractive, as only the rake-hero can be. La Nuche, although susceptible to the same danger as Angelica if she lets herself love, is not exempt from his considerable charm. We understand his true nature when he woos La Nuche, while announcing his love for the defunct Hellena:

Will. How does Love's great Artillery, the Fair La Nuche, from whose bright Eyes the little wanton God throws Darts to wound Mankind?...Oh name not Hellena! She was a Saint to be ador'd on Holy days.²⁵

Willmore, continuing in this way, bombards La Nuche with pretty--and false--words; but for the time being, she is not

deceived: "Have you done, Sir."²⁶ She knows what he is, and knowing, loves him nonetheless. La Nuche, like her counterpart, Angelica, is so consumed with love that she cannot adhere to a steady course in relation to Willmore. She vacillates, one moment determined to retain her dignity, the next moment, sacrificing it:

La Nu. Tho I love him more than Power or Interest, I
will be Mistress of my fixt Resolves...You shall
not go--Plague of this needless Pride.--stay--
and I'll follow all the dictates of my love.²⁷

Unfortunately, La Nuche is not as independent as Angelica. While Angelica refuses to yield so completely to Willmore, La Nuche surrenders to him, dispensing with her pride. Behn does not deride La Nuche for her servitude to Willmore, and for the feminist critic, this is unfortunate. Katharine M. Rogers avers that "her self-destructive decision is presented as womanly and right."²⁸ I am in partial agreement with Rogers. There are quite naturally times when Behn cannot remove herself from societal codes. There is no denying that La Nuche enslaves herself to love for the undeserving Willmore, but it is probable that Behn had a good reason for the depiction of a servile La Nuche. Since Behn's treatment of La Nuche and her predecessor, Angelica, suggests that she wanted to show the devastating results of a prostitute in love, Behn may have felt the theme would acquire more strength by playing up La Nuche's utter weakness for the rake. True, Angelica also loves him to distraction, but these are two different characters; why

should Behn portray them as having the same emotional resources--or lack thereof--when confronting love? Where is it written that a dramatist must present two characters facing a situation with similar personality responses? Angelica is simply a stronger woman, and therefore capable of handling Willmore with more assertiveness and independent-mindedness than La Nuche. Behn, as a skilled playwright, may have wished to differentiate between the ways in which her prostitutes dealt with the same love object, thus bringing to the fore two disparate personalities. This accrues to Behn's credit, not her disparagement.

There is another factor which warrants attention. When the audience views a play, especially a very well-performed play, most people are so engrossed that they will not permit their participation with the play to be violated by analyzing how a character present compares to a character absent. This would distract viewer attention and reduce the enjoyment theatre-goers should experience. Hence, it is not likely that those attending a performance of The Rover (Part II) would engage in a mental comparison of La Nuche with Angelica. This type of analysis is best reserved for post-performance conversation, and in any case, educated people are the ones most likely to debate the differences and similarities of Behn's prostitutes.

La Nuche does possess positive qualities, however. Like Angelica, she understands what moves the world: profit. Willmore, who has some difficulty giving credence to the loftier human virtues, believes that prostitutes must naturally be obsessed only with acquiring money; he is not only a cynic, but a man who has little insight. Consequently, he misjudges La Nuche when he says to her that "Interest more prevails with you than Love."²⁹ This is what he wants to believe, in fact, what he must believe. To have faith in something deeper, more abiding, would obligate him, and that is what he is determined to avoid. La Nuche challenges him to behave in a responsible fashion when she responds: "All the Universe is sway'd by Interest: and would you wish this Beauty which adorns me, should be disported about for Charity."³⁰ In reply to Willmore's accusation that she is "a slavish mercenary Prostitute," La Nuche displays reason and pragmatism in informing him that she would be a fool to squander her sexual attributes for no monetary restitution.³¹ She has much to offer--why shouldn't she be paid?--and, less glamorous perhaps, she must eat.

Willmore is not the only man La Nuche has to contend with. Beaumond is in love with her; the two once had a relationship of some duration. It is unfortunate for Beaumond that he still loves La Nuche, because he is contracted to marry Ariadne, who loves Willmore and has been

pursuing him relentlessly. Ariadne is quite determined to secure Willmore: "He is in love, but with a Courtezan--some Comfort that./We'll after him--'Tis a faint-hearted Lover,/Who for the first Discouragement gives over."³² Beaumont, jealous and possessive of La Nuche, is enraged when he discovers Willmore and La Nuche together:

- Beau. Would any Devil less than common Woman have serv'd me as thou didst? say, was not this my Night? my paid for Night? my own by right of Bargain, and by Love? and hast not thou deceiv'd me for a Stranger?
- Will. So--make me thankful, then she will be kind.
[Hugs himself.]
- Beau. Was this done like a Whore of Honour think ye? and would not such an Injury make me forswear all Joys of Womankind, and marry in mere spite?
- La Nu. Why where had been the Crime had I been kind?
- Beau. Thou dost confess it then.
- La Nu. Why not?
- Beau. Those Bills of Love the oftner paid and drawn, make Women better Merchants than Lovers.
- La Nu. And 'tis the better Trade.
- Will. Oh Pox, there she dasht all again. I find they calm upon't, and will agree, therefore I'll bear up to this small Frigate and lay her aboard.
[Goes to Ariadne.]
- La Nu. However I'm glad the Vizor's off; you might have fool'd me on, and sworn I was the only Conqueror of your Heart, had not Good-nature made me follow you, to undeceive your false Suspicions of me: How have you sworn never to marry? how rail'd at Wives, and satir'd Fools oblig'd to Wedlock? And now at last, to thy eternal Shame, thou hast betray'd thy self to be a most pernicious honourable Lover, a perjur'd--honest-nay, a very Husband. [Turns away, he holds her.]³³

The striking thing here is that Beaumont links payment with love. He has made a "Bargain" with La Nuche--he pays, and in return he receives "Love." What he does not understand is that the true bargain is love for love, and though La

Nuche must eat, the yoking together of money and love is an unholy alliance. Love can never flourish under such conditions. When Beaumont exclaims that he will forsake the "Joys of Womanhood," take notice that he separates sexual joy from marriage--for him, as with many men, the two elements do not blend. This bodes ill for his future wife, Ariadne, unless she subscribes to the same philosophy. So he will "marry in mere spite." How childish, for though this remark is intended to break La Nuche's heart, he will only succeed in spiting himself since he has no desire to marry Ariadne. Their marriage will not be the happiest union. La Nuche, in control of the situation, mocks Beaumont for his hypocrisy--constantly rebelling against marriage, here he is prepared to accept it, and for reasons why no one should marry: to spite a former lover.

There is another impressive denunciation of hypocrisy by La Nuche; this time, her target is Ariadne. Though the following scene is not truly consequential in the play's context, it has import because Behn is allowing her prostitute to confront a representative of society, one who is the English ambassador's daughter-in-law. The outcast, the pariah, is the one who triumphs, for she unmasks Ariadne as a hypocrite, a mere pretender to virtue. By extension, La Nuche reveals all people as hypocrites who believe themselves to be the embodiment of virtue. Behind La Nuche is Behn, reproaching those who choose to conceal and subdue

their real feelings behind the protective curtain of societal convention, posing as what they are not, while breaking the rules in secret:

La Nu. ...My Beauty and my Business is only to be
belov'd not to love; I leave that Slavery for
you Women of Quality...
Aria. Ay this is something; what a poor sneaking thing
an honest Woman is!
La Nu. And if we chance to love still, there's a
difference, your Hours of Love are like the
Deeds of Darkness, and mine like cheerful Birds
in open Day.
Aria. You may, you have no Honour to lose.
La Nu. Of if I did, why should I double the Sin by
Hypocrisy?³⁴

La Nuche, in her desire to maintain dignity in this confrontation, claims she does not love, yet we know she has fallen prey to love for Willmore. It is fascinating that she equates love with slavery but sees no contradiction; after all, love has made her its slave. What is significant, however, is the depth with which the prostitute understands the double standard, and holds her head up before it. La Nuche is unashamed of what she is--she conducts her affairs, like her business, openly, with no attempt to hide. The poseur, Ariadne, knowing she will be chastised if caught, instead conceals her amours. The implication is that while La Nuche remains honest in this way, some women of quality, while sneering at the prostitute, indulge in the same activities, but feel constrained to maintain a hypocritical secrecy. On the other side, to be fair, upper-class women had everything to lose, so it would be not only unrealistic, but callous, to

their husbands did not have to be so careful--they were supported by a double standard that told them they should bolster their masculinity with many women--upper-class ladies were just as much victims as prostitutes, only in a different way. What Behn takes issue with is the hypocrisy of some representatives of society; she does not dispute that they are victims. In essence, I feel that Behn condemns such women because they make other women victims, in collusion with male strictures. Given this, who is truly dishonest? The prostitute, realizing that she has no honor in the eyes of her "betters," keeps her brand of honor, refusing to play the hypocrite by being furtive about her affairs. Ariadne, stunned by La Nuche's boldness, can only wonder that honest women are now thought "sneaking." Despite the fact that La Nuche eventually surrenders to Willmore, she nevertheless has great dignity in her understanding of the manner in which the world operates and her role in it. And Willmore? As Jones De Ritter says: "Willmore is damned by Behn's sympathetic treatment of the women he assaults."³⁵

Through her portrayals of Angelica Bianca and La Nuche, Behn signals her contempt of a society that permits women so few choices. If they do not choose to marry the men hand-picked by their parents, they are left with little. So Behn does not scold her prostitutes: she reserves her

scorn for a society that regards women as chattel. I am in agreement with Laura Brown:

For Behn, the introduction of free or romantic love as a momentary possibility in an action governed by the rules of commercial necessity produces a central disjunction that generates all the contingent terms of moral judgment. Typically, she bases her moral criticism of society, as does Wycherley, on its reduction of human relationships to economic exchange. Prostitution, of course, is the epitome of that reduction, where love, the essentially spiritual, is exchanged for money, the essentially material. But her assessment of the inevitable ways of the world enables her to criticize society at large rather than its particular victims. Her sympathy for the fates of individual women permits her to provide a social context in which their actions are justified in relation to the general materialism of her whole depicted world.³⁶

Materialism was the glue which held the Restoration world together; the central reason why women were forced to marry men their fathers chose was the securing of wealth and position. Daughters of prominent men were not bestowed on poor men. The prostitute was forced to earn her bread by offering her sexuality for sale, and repressing any love she might feel so as to safely continue living. Human emotion was demolished before the onslaught of materialism. As Brown states, Wycherley too was against overt materialism-- witness Flirt and Flounce, his prostitutes who convey with their thirst for material gain the shallowness of their personalities. But Behn's prostitutes, Angelica and La Nuche, with their sacrifice of money for love, make us feel how much more important it is to put emotions before materialism, thereby retaining personal dignity while remaining victims. Behn fought this battle too--in a sense,

she had to prostitute herself--so it comes as no surprise that her prostitutes are multi-dimensional, in contrast to those of Dryden, Wycherley, and Otway, all of whom present the stereotypical prostitute. Behn had a clear understanding that the prostitute might simply be an unfortunate woman forced to live in a way that she would not willingly choose if legitimate options were made available to her. Since the male Restoration dramatists did not share with Behn the unease about the inferior status of women, they perhaps were unable to conceive of the prostitute as an individual with actual rights and the need to give voice to those rights. The prostitute was just one more reward, one more commodity to be enjoyed in a man's world. Behn, as a woman, was receptive to possibilities that her male colleagues would not and could not visualize. She lived the injustice, as they did not.

Angelica Bianca: From Killigrew to Behn

In the seventeenth century, it was common practice for writers to imitate their predecessors--to erect new additions on the previous foundations. In most cases, this was not construed as plagiarism, for literature was not considered property; it was a means of honoring admired authors, a respectful bow to the past which gave definition and meaning to the present. It is no wonder, then, that Aphra Behn also utilized the accepted practice of imitation when she wrote her plays.

The male Restoration playwrights imitated too, but they were, much of the time, spared the criticism for it that was levelled at Behn. What was considered appropriate for them was thought of as cheating for her. Though she was not attacked any worse than Dryden, who, being so influential and prolific, may have inadvertently invited attack from jealous competitors, the tone of the plagiarism accusations against Behn was different: because she was a woman, she did not have the mental originality to create her own plays. The charge of plagiarism became one more weapon in the arsenal of sexism used against her. Being a female writer, she could do nothing right. Constantly subjected to vitriolic attacks for imitation, bawdiness, and lack of education, Behn fought back, a necessary action that became all too familiar to her.

This section is devoted to a discussion of Thomas Killigrew's Thomaso; or, The Wanderer (1654) and Behn's The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers (1677). The Rover bears a great deal of resemblance to its source play, especially in the character of the prostitute, Angelica Bianca. Because the scenes in which Angelica appears in Thomaso are excessively lengthy, it is not possible to include all of them. Further, to set them down line by line along with the scenes in which Behn's Angelica appears would require another dissertation altogether. In view of this, I will include scenes from both plays having relevance to this

study, a carefully considered selection.³⁷ Also, I will not discuss La Nuche from The Rover (Part II), because no such character is found in Thomaso--the focus is on the two Angelicas.

Behn was quite naturally attacked for taking so much of Thomaso, and her contemporaries could not have failed to notice that her prostitute, right down to the name, was terribly familiar. Maureen Duffy offers an explanation of how Behn was able to bring The Rover into being:

Killegrew [sic] owed her a favour and would therefore be unlikely to make a fuss. Indeed since he was master of the revels (he had succeeded Sir Henry Herbert in 1673), his permission must have been necessary. He could have made theatrical life impossible for her if he had so wished. I don't believe the rewriting of Thomaso would have been possible without his consent even though she doesn't allude to it in her note to the published edition where she rebuts the by now familiar charge of plagiarism.³⁸

Duffy is referring to the Post-Script to The Rover, where Behn defends herself:

Had I the Dexterity of some Poets who are not more expert in stealing than in the Art of Concealing, and who even that way out-do the Spartan-Boyes I might have appropriated all to myself, but I, vainly proud of my Judgment hang out the sign of Angelica (the only Stol'n Object) to give Notice where a great part of the Wit dwelt.³⁹

This is not a full confession, of course, because Behn in fact took entire scenes from her source play, but at least she does admit to appropriation, accompanied by her usual brilliant mockery of her detractors; her candid admission that she "filched" the character of Angelica is bold indeed. There seems, in Behn's half-confession, an attempt to

deflect criticism from other authors. If she fails to mention taking whole scenes, perhaps some readers will not notice that she did just that. But many of her male competitors were bound to be familiar with Thomaso, even though it was a closet drama. Behn's justification for the retention of Angelica is eminently logical and reflects her discernment. Angelica is the wittiest character in Thomaso-her admission is not merely rationalization. Because Behn pinpoints the singularity of Killigrew's prostitute so astutely, she is, albeit in an indirect manner, congratulating Killigrew on a job well done. The prostitute is not only the wittiest and most entertaining character, commenting sarcastically on the societal double standard, but an impressively full-bodied character that is central to the action of the play. Hence, it is not the least bit unusual that Behn, a woman who understood the factors that would captivate her audience, concentrated on Angelica. Killigrew's Angelica was the most unconventional character in Thomaso, so Behn, who held unconventional views, retained the character that reflected those views. Here was an opportune chance to demonstrate something rather revolutionary: the prostitute, the lowest member of the female gender, the most oppressed woman in society, could actually be looked upon as a victim, and a human being with rights and feelings. Angelica symbolizes the woman crushed within the remorseless grip of a world which forces her to

barter her sexuality for a "living wage." Behn's reply to her accusers, who were, of course, quite correct, is so characteristic--when she is attacked, she does not merely defend herself, but launches a savvy offensive. She is the real "star" of the Post-Script, for it is she herself who possesses the "Judgment" to prominently "hang out the sign of Angelica."

Behn's treatment of Angelica, though evincing some similarities with Killigrew's treatment, is essentially divergent in ways that show Behn's prostitute is more aware of her impossible circumstances, more assertive in speaking out about them, and in consequence, a lot more knowledgeable about the position of women such as herself in society. Killigrew's Angellica does display some outrage and some independence, but as I will show, she still, on the whole, displays more complacency and defeatism about a situation she feels helpless to alter. There is an acceptance in her which is not evident in Behn's prostitute. Killigrew's prostitute is capable of rebellion--perhaps this is what captivated Behn in the first place--but Behn's Angelica has the edge in this respect. This matter is one of fine distinctions, rather delicate, making exploration of the two courtesans quite difficult. My intention is not to disparage Killigrew in order to make Behn appear the superior playwright. After all, Killigrew depicted more depth of personality in his courtesan than the male

Restoration dramatists did in theirs, despite the fact that he preceded them. Is this not an exceptional aspect of Thomaso? And since Behn's treatment of the prostitute suggests that she wanted to demonstrate her views concerning this character's interaction with society, it was imperative to enhance Angelica's personality to accommodate those views. Before proceeding to specifics about the two Angelicas, I wish to discuss a large difference, immediately noticeable, between Thomaso and The Rover.

Behn compresses Thomaso to five acts, in startling contrast to Killigrew's ten acts. The unbearable length of the speeches, including those of Angellica, strains the reader's patience--I stress "reader" because Thomaso was a closet drama. When Killigrew wrote it, there was no theatre in England, courtesy of Cromwell. Therefore, the play was meant to be read rather than performed. Let me emphasize that Killigrew's contemporaries had a patience that is wanting in even the most voracious readers today. Thus, readers of Killigrew's era were able to read Thomaso with impressive forbearance, being accustomed to excessive length, and even expecting it. Nevertheless, Killigrew almost buries Angellica's personality beneath mounds of verbosity, at times coming dangerously close to obliterating the gist of the passage. I would not be surprised if even some seventeenth-century readers squirmed restlessly, their endurance challenged by Killigrew's linguistic maze. It is

as though he writes almost for the sake of seeing his words on paper--this tendency of Killigrew's to misplace the essence of his characters within a verbal labyrinth renders Thomaso virtually unreadable to us. Behn improved not only the character of Angelica, but metamorphosed Thomaso into an eminently enjoyable effort, both to read and to see performed. As Katharine M. Rogers states: "The Rover is a vastly improved version of a ten-act closet drama by Thomas Killigrew, Thomaso; or, The Wanderer."⁴⁰ Behn's ability to eliminate the verbiage, hence accentuating the essential message of Angelica, testifies to her skill as a playwright. She streamlines Angelica's characterization, throwing into sharp relief the critical aspect of the prostitute's personality--her realization of her miserable position as a courtesan in love. Behn retained the best of Killigrew's Angelica by expunging superfluous language. Alfred Harbage astutely asserts: "There is no question, however, but that she has improved upon Thomaso; or, The Wanderer, and her play is a tribute to her literary dexterity if not to her taste in choosing subject matter."⁴¹ What Harbage means by Behn's "taste in choosing subject matter" is open to interpretation, but he may be taking issue with the risque nature of situations engendered by prostitution, or taking a swipe at Thomaso--or it could be both.

One similarity the two Angelicas have in common is the realization that the societal double standard allows men

to indulge their hypocrisy, while condemning women for the same behavior. Killigrew's Angellica, like Behn's, knows that she will always be construed as a disreputable woman, because of the living she makes. She says to Thomaso, Behn's Willmore:

Angel. After all this severe truth, what are we guilty of that you have not confess'd? What crime staines us that you would not now act? You men are strangely partial to your selves, you would not despise us else; Is the fault single in us? If not, why should we lose Honours in the Act, when you think it an Honour to be the Actors? Who made the Law against Love? Or where will you find it obligeth women onely? If the Law be general, must not the crime be so too?...Onely (once a whore and ever) is the world adage; yet there may be degrees of ill.⁴²

The idea that men are guilty of the same conduct for which they upbraid women is compressed in Behn. Although Behn's prostitute is speaking about how Willmore, and rakes in general, desire fortune in impending marriages before other attributes a lady may possess, the concept of the hypocritical male is similar:

Ang. When a Lady is proposed to you for a Wife, you never ask, how fair, discreet, or virtuous she is; but what's her Fortune--which if but small, you cry--She will not do my business--and basely leave her, tho she languish for you.--Say, is not this as poor?⁴³

Angellica's speech has brilliant form; she hurls a series of questions at Thomaso, pelting him with accusations, and informing him of the way the world operates for both genders. There is not one false note in her tirade; Angellica speaks from her heart, intellect, and experience.

She has righteous power when telling Thomaso that prostitutes degrade themselves--in the eyes of society--when they act as prostitutes, while their "johns" cover themselves with honor just for engaging in the sex act. For the man, sexual activity with any woman, prostitutes included, represents male potency and freedom: for the woman, the very same act lowers her, making her a social outcast, while serving as a vessel for male sexual pleasure. This she is good enough for; this is her function. Although Angellica appeals to the law, in reality those--men--who invent and enforce it, will not so much as twitch to aid her if she should seek protection. Angellica feels, and rightfully so, that the law should serve both sexes, and if the law were impartial, men as well as women would be considered culpable when indulging in the same conduct ("If the Law be general, must not the Crime be so too?"). The utter perniciousness and cruelty of this double standard can never be over-stated. Angellica understands that a world ruled by a frightening, and quite unbeatable, myopia, will forever view her as a whore. Even if she earned her living in this manner for but a week, the word "whore," and the stigma it carries, will always sully her well-being, while her clients can never know the despair of such a taint. The important clue to the personality of Killigrew's prostitute consists in the words, "once a whore and ever." There is a strong suggestion that she feels so trapped by what society

considers her, that it is far easier to surrender thorough acquiescence to this view. She must not be blamed for accepting this code--for it is that--and she is no coward, for how exhausting it would be if she decided to stand alone against this monolithic society. Perhaps Angellica thinks that she is obligated to shoulder the guilt of being a prostitute, while in reality, she is the victim, not the perpetrator, of economic and social oppression. There is the intimation in her words that she is to blame, and while it is true that her society imposed mores seemingly impossible to combat, maybe it is not beyond the realm of possibility for her to strike back, even a little. Angellica could do this by arriving at an understanding that in truth she is a valuable human being, not the degraded creature society insists her to be. By refusing to capitulate to this assumption, Angellica could accrue the fortitude and pride required to stand tall. Because there is some truth in the observation that one must consent to one's victimization, she could cease being a victim if she declined to see herself in this way.

Behn's Angelica approaches life differently. Though she realizes she is a victim of her society, she absolutely will not resign herself to it, and will not share the culpability for it, because it is not hers to share; her customers are to blame. Behn's courtesan triumphs in that she comprehends her own value, thus she wins. This is the

finest triumph--and the finest revenge--of all: the knowledge of self-worth, no matter what others think, and the refusal to yield. I believe this is the most telling alteration Behn made in the character of Angelica, and it reveals that, by contrast, Killigrew's Angellica lacks such a comprehensive knowledge of herself in relation to her society. This could be indicative of Killigrew's attitude toward prostitutes, or women as a group. Harold Weber declares:

Killigrew uses her love as a way to punish her for her immoral life, because she understands from the beginning that Thomaso will never marry a whore...Thomaso's utter contempt for a "common Whore" accentuates the play's ambivalence towards female sexuality--its desire to punish in the female what can be forgiven in the male rake...Angellica remains, in spite of Killigrew's condemnation and the triumph of Serulina, the play's most powerful female presence.⁴⁴

Even though Killigrew does give Angellica some assertiveness, the play belongs to Thomaso. Killigrew allows him the "upper hand;" Thomaso may very well be his creator's alter-ego, a representative of the dramatist's possible belief that the world is created by men for men. Jones De Ritter says that the main thrust of Thomaso is the almost unwavering support and sanction of Killigrew for his rake, and I concur: "Although Angellica's momentary anger and Serulina's laborious defense of her lover's infidelities demonstrate Killigrew's awareness of the difficulty created by Thomaso's ambiguous nature, that awareness is intermittent at best, and the play as a whole never strays

very far from its primary objective, which is to provide general and uncritical approval for the title character."⁴⁵ So, in the main, Thomaso, along with the male values he embodies, represents the controlling dynamic in the play: Further, he could be a symbol for Killigrew, the ideal of masculine supremacy.

Behn, writing from a female perspective, may have viewed her rake with more critical evaluation. Though Willmore is the protagonist of The Rover, Angelica is a pivot around which he dances. Behn endowed her prostitute with more resources, more power to challenge Willmore and the system he reflects, than Killigrew gave his. Angelica is a medium by which Willmore is brought to understand that his needs are not always absolute. Angelica is a necessary ingredient in rounding out Willmore's character. She renders his rakish ethos almost ineffectual by proclaiming his shortcomings--his inability to demonstrate love and loyalty in relation to the opposite sex. The prostitute tames the rake, and in so doing, announces that women have rights, even the lowly streetwalker. The following comment by Katharine M. Rogers, though dealing with The Rover in general, bears relevance to Willmore: "Indeed, Behn's most famous play, The Rover (1677), reveals a more masculine set of values than do the works of Etherege or Wycherley."⁴⁶ Since it is best to refrain from a discussion of Etherege and Wycherley here, I will content myself with saying that

their plays have no less a "masculine set of values." Whether Rogers was specifically thinking of Willmore is not certain, but he is the epitome of a "masculine set of values." But though he is the very distillation of Restoration masculinity, I do not believe that his credo ultimately rules The Rover. Of course, Willmore eagerly participates in the activities expected of the rake-hero, which are an indelible component of rakish characterization. If the rake did not devote his time to drinking, brawling, and the compulsive hunt for women to seduce, he would not resemble the rake one whit. Francis M. Kavenik and Eric Rothstein affirm the above factors, and advance a fascinating theory: "The Rover himself plainly enacts the wishes of many men in the audience, for he epitomizes male success in fighting, drinking, taking risks, maintaining gaiety and wit, and attracting women."⁴⁷ Willmore, a character in a play, is a safe conduit through which the fantasies of male theatre-goers can flow--these men, Walter Mitty's all, for a few precious moments live vicariously through Willmore's adventures. Although there is amusement in this, there is also a disturbing side. Members of the male audience, wanting to emulate a rake, are embracing the male values responsible for the subjection of women--this is not surprising, given the ideologies of the Restoration. And I believe that these were the very aspects of male conduct that Behn challenged: in allowing Angelica to

express her dissatisfaction with her position, and Willmore, a symbol of her oppressive age, Behn was not presenting a "masculine set of values." Quite the contrary--Behn "feminized" The Rover through the confident criticism she allows her prostitute, and the ultimate triumph, as I will show, of that extraordinary character.

One of the most appealing qualities of both Angelicas is that they do not demand money from the men they love in exchange for romance. The two prostitutes comprehend that genuine love has nothing to do with monetary matters; they suspend financial compensation for thomaso and Willmore, desiring instead the truly equitable exchange of love for love. Compare Killigrew's version of the following speech with Behn's:

- Angel. Put up your money, Sir; for though I wish thy purse as great as thy heart, and thy credit as good as thy humour, or nature, yet know I would not sell thee a kindness but for kindness sake; By this and this I swear...Can you forgive a fault, and love for love?...Kindness is all I ask, and for that command me.⁴⁸
- Ang. The Pay I mean is but thy Love for mine.--Can you give that?⁴⁹

Both Angelicas are requesting the same thing: love. But there is a supplicating tone to the words of Killigrew's Angellica. She almost begs for Thomaso's love when she asks his forgiveness, and this pleading quality extends into the last line ("all I ask," and "command me"). While she importunes Thomaso to "forgive a fault," Behn's Angelica, in sharp contrast, asks Willmore a straight-forward question

after the clarification of her wishes. It is impossible to imagine Behn's courtesan assuming a beseeching posture before Willmore or anyone else. These two scenes are a clear indication of how Killigrew and Behn felt about their prostitutes, and by extension, how both felt about women and their interaction with society.

The two Angelicas are cognizant that marriage to the men they love is not a possibility, but their responses are not the same. Killigrew's Angellica is more accepting of the mores dictated by society; conversely, Behn's Angelica does not care for them at all. As the passage below will show, at one point Killigrew's prostitute wonders why she cannot marry Thomaso, yet at the same time denigrates herself; she lacks the self-worth and self-knowledge of her counterpart. For the most part, Angellica believes that she has no right to expect Thomaso to marry her, and tells him so. Though she is disgusted by male hypocrisy and rails against it constantly, Angelica is unable to go beyond the concept that a prostitute does not deserve marriage to the man she loves--if he is of the upper class, that is. Perhaps this duality contributes to her vibrancy as a character. Love for the unworthy Thomaso, and the need to make a living in a harsh, hidebound world create a terrible strain on her. Her changing reactions to this world serve a two-fold purpose. When she embraces the codes of society, she avoids responsibility for initiating change. When she

rejects societal codes, she holds society accountable for her misery, relieving herself of the burden of blame:

Angel. Me he will not marry, nor shall not if he would; because I love him he shall not for my sake be guilty of any action he may blush for;...though honour be that I think not of, because the custom of the world has plac'd it beyond our power;...Kindness and faith to my Lover, good nature and charity are the height of our ambition;...Nor will I bid you marry me, because I know your heart will still upbraid me with want of honour...Fool that I was not to try my Fortune before; Why should I believe my self the onely Woman not fit for a man of Honour to marry, when thousands have married Women of as ill life and Fame as mine.⁵⁰

This woman is truly good, and has genuine honor, not the sort conferred with a title. Angellica wants very much to believe that Thomaso will be faithful to her; in a better world, he would feel fortunate that such a fine woman wants him, but as things stand, this is not the case. He quite obviously does not deserve her love. It would be so much easier for Angellica if she realized that he is not "a man of Honour." But Angellica has absorbed the notion of societal honor so deeply, that she is blinded to the fact that her "lover" lacks the real honor that resides within--innate honor. Of course, this is my interpretation, not Killigrew's: since he, for the most part, gave approbation to Thomaso's behavior towards Angellica, Killigrew would have undermined his rake's characterization by endowing him with inherent honor. As Killigrew's Thomaso will betray his Angellica by marrying Serulina, so Behn's Willmore will betray her Angelica by marrying Hellena. In the context of

a feminist reading, the message is clear in both plays: true honor belongs to the prostitutes; false honor belongs to the rakes, the men unreservedly loved.

There is another difference in the treatment of the two Angelicas that signals personality divergence, and provides insight into the intentions of the dramatists. These factors are found at the end of the plays. In the second part of Thomaso, Angellica is still in love with the rogue, but is being pursued by a man who sincerely loves her, Don Pedro, once a commander in the Spanish army. The last scene in which Angellica appears is in Act V, sc. vi, in part two. She is still professing love for Thomaso: "...and all my crimes were but so many loves of him."⁵¹ After this scene, Angellica is only mentioned by other characters, and the most important conversation that occurs about her is the one wherein her fate is decided. Don Pedro will finally secure her, for he has made a kind of bargain with Thomaso: he persuades Thomaso to relinquish Angellica, and in return, Don Pedro consents to the marriage of his sister, Serulina, to Thomaso:

Pedro. ...'tis now the season and O [sic] for mirth,
that I may have some share in your Joyes,
'twill, I hope, be neither unseasonable nor
unreasonable to expect you should relinquish
to me Angellica...

Thomaso. ...though her kindness may want discretion,
yet she wants not good Nature; and I shall not
onely relinquish, but use all my power with
her to admit Don Pedro, and onely him;...⁵²

Immediately noticeable is the ugly fact that these men are disposing of Angellica without her knowledge and/or her consent. She is a commodity, fit only to be traded from former lover to prospective husband--a piece of property, sexual in nature. There is no comprehension on the part of Thomaso and Don Pedro that Angellica is an actual human being who has the inherent right to decide her own fate, the only one in this situation who should be making a decision. But Don Pedro wants her--and his desire is all that is required. Society will not intervene. Don Pedro is society. Killigrew, in permitting this trade to take place, leaves no doubt in our minds that he approves. Rogers' phrase, a "masculine set of values" applies more to Thomaso than to The Rover. Any significance that Angellica had is weakened by the fact that she is prevented from choosing the course of her future life. Because Killigrew does not let his prostitute play a role in an action concerning her, there is the suggestion that he believes women do not have the right to make decisions which will determine their lives. Men will do it for them. Angellica quietly vanishes, without a single protest. She has fought hard indeed for the unworthy Thomaso and now her role is finished.

Behn's Angelica, on the other hand, leaves a most impressive mark on the play when she exits. She decides what she will do--there are no proxies for her. Angelica is

so furious at Willmore's treason that she threatens to shoot him, but she cannot go through with it. Jacqueline Pearson makes an interesting point about women and weapons in Behn: "Male sexuality in Behn is often an instrument of power, and she allows women to compete for this by allowing them to share the phallic power of swords, daggers and pistols."⁵³ A pistol puts Angelica on a more nearly equal footing with Willmore, but in actuality she does not need the weapon. Not only will she decline to use the pistol, but she has a very potent weapon at the ready--her words. In allowing him to live, she hurls the final insult. Willmore does not merit the effort Angelica will expend in dispatching him:

Ang. Ah thus, 'twas thus he talk'd, and
 I believ'd. [Pointing to Will.]
 --Antonio, yesterday,
 I'd not have sold my Interest in his Heart,
 For all the Sword has won and lost in Battle.
 --But now to show my utmost of contempt,
 I give thee Life--which if thou would'st
 preserve,
 Live where my Eyes may never see thee more,
 Live to undo some one, whose Soul may prove
 So bravely constant to revenge my Love.⁵⁴

The exit of Behn's Angelica has a stature that is decidedly missing in the "exit" of Killigrew's Angellica. Behn permits her prostitute the ultimate triumph--the power over Willmore's existence: "I give thee Life." Angelica wins in a way that Willmore can neither know nor understand, because he lacks the true honor, fortitude, and endurance she possesses in abundance.

This startling juxtaposition between the endings of Thomaso and The Rover raises the question of why they are so different. The answer lies with the playwrights themselves. There is little doubt that Killigrew's prostitute is a complex character, aware enough of her situation, and condemning the society that foists that situation on her. Nonetheless, Angellica wavers between acceptance and rejection of societal customs. Yet the very fact that she is depicted as a woman who agonizes over her position with considerable depth surely attests to some open-mindedness in her creator. Angellica is not one-dimensional, as the prostitutes of the male Restoration playwrights most often are. Is it really conceivable that a dramatist of Behn's intelligence would have appropriate a stereotypical prostitute? Angellica's unique personality shines through Thomaso's ponderousness. But Killigrew does abandon his prostitute at the end; he reveals his loyalty to an aggressive masculine ethic when he allows two men to resolve her fate.

Behn, indebted to Killigrew, did retain most of the elements of his prostitute, but altered her prostitute in ways that reflected the concerns about women which Behn held dear. The victorious exit of Angellica may signify that for her, a female writer, the character of the "fallen woman" had special import. The prostitute, left with few choices, yet punished for those she made, mirrored Behn's own dilemma

in daring to write and publish. It is only fitting that Behn would permit Angelica to quit the play with her head held high. Killigrew broke ground, and contributed a significant foundation atop which Behn erected her ideas. Understanding the merits of Killigrew's Angellica, Behn took her, expanding her personality by granting her more awareness, and a more single-minded independence--and perhaps the finest endowment, an exit suitably in keeping with a woman of such impressive stature. Behn did not invent Angelica Bianca. She re-invented her. Invariably, when Behn's contemporaries thought of Angelica, they associated her with Aphra Behn, not Thomas Killigrew--this association has endured for three centuries. And that makes Angelica the property of Aphra Behn.

ENDNOTES

1. Katharine M. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 80, Paula R. Backscheider, ed., (Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1989), 14.
2. Henry Allen Hargreaves, in his dissertation "The Life and Plays of Mrs. Aphra Behn," (Duke University, 1960, p. 288), notes Behn's unique approach to her prostitutes: "The few courtezans that Mrs. Behn presents are treated with a sympathy unknown to her contemporaries."
3. Dryden, The Wild Gallant, Act IV, sc. i, 59.
4. Wycherley, The Gentleman Dancing-Master, Act I, sc. i, in Complete Plays, 153.
5. Wycherley, The Gentleman Dancing-Master, in Complete Plays, 237 (Act V, sc. i).
6. Thomas Otway, The Souldier's Fortune, in The Works of Thomas Otway: Plays, Poems, and Love Letters, J. C. Ghosh, ed., 2 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), II, 105-7 (Act I, sc. i).
7. Ibid., 98.
8. Ibid., 102.
9. Pearson, 164, 165.
10. Eric Rothstein and Francis M. Kavenik, The Designs of Carolean Comedy, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 188.
11. Cathy Gallagher, "Who was That Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn," Women's Studies, Vol. 15, (Great Britain: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, Inc., 1988), 5, 7.
12. Aphra Behn, The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers (Part I), in The Works of Aphra Behn, Montague Summers, ed., 6 vols., I, 31 (Act II, sc. i).

32. 13. The Rover (part I), Act II, sc. i., in Behn, Works, I,
14. Ibid., 39.
15. Ibid., sc. ii, 40.
16. Rothstein and Kavenik, 182.
17. The Rover (Part I), Act II, sc. ii, in Works, I, 41.
18. The Rover (Part I), Act V, sc. i, in Works, I, 95.
19. The Rover (Part I), Act I, sc. ii, in Works, I, 27.
20. The Rover (Part I), Act V, sc. i, in Works, I, 95.
21. The Rover (Part I), Act IV, sc. ii, in Works, I, 70.
22. The Rover (Part I), Act V, sc. i, in Works, I, 96.
23. Joseph F. Musser, Jr., "'Imposing Nought But Constancy in Love': Aphra Behn Snares the Rover," Restoration, 3, (Spring, 1979), 18.
24. The Rover (Part I), Act V, sc. i, in Works, I, 94.
20. 25. The Rover (Part II), Act I, sc. i, in Works, I, 118-
26. Ibid., 132.
27. Ibid., Act III, sc. i, I, 161, 169-170.
28. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in DLB, 80, 9.
29. The Rover (Part II), Act III, sc. i, in Works, I, 160.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., Act I, sc. i., I, 135.
33. Ibid., Act IV, sc. i, I, 175-6.
34. Ibid., 177.

35. Jones De Ritter, "The Gypsy, The Rover, and The Wanderer: Aphra Behn's Revision of Thomas Killigrew," Restoration, 10, (Fall, 1986), 87.

36. Laura Brown, English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760: An Essay in Generic History, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 61-2.

37. Because it is impossible, within the confines of this study, to place side by side all of the scenes in which Angelica Bianca appears in both Killigrew and Behn, I include below a chart of scenes where she appears.

<u>Thomaso (Part I)</u>	<u>Thomaso (Part II)</u>	<u>The Rover (Part I)</u>
Act II, sc. i.	Act I, sc. v.	Act II, sc. i.
Act II, sc. iii.	Act III, sc. vi.	Act II, sc. ii.
Act II, sc. iv.	Act IV, sc. i.	Act III, sc. i.
Act III, sc. ii.	Act IV, sc. iii.	Act IV, sc. ii.
	Act IV, sc. xii.	Act V, sc. i.
	Act V, sc. ii.	
	Act V, sc. iii.	
	Act V, sc. vi.	

38. Duffy, 153.

39. Post-Script to The Rover (Part I) in Behn, Works, I, 107.

40. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in DLB, 80, 9.

41. Alfred Harbage, Thomas Killigrew: Cavalier Dramatist, (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1967), 230.

42. Thomas Killigrew, Thomaso; or, The Wanderer (Part I), Act II, sc. iv, in Thomas Killigrew: Comedies and Tragedies, (1664; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1967), 339.

43. The Rover (Part I), Act II, sc. ii, in Works, I, 40.

44. Harold Weber, The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 156, 157, 160.

45. De Ritter, "The Gypsy, The Rover, and The Wanderer," in Restoration, 10, 83.

46. Rogers, Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England, 98.

47. Rothstein and Kavenik, 185.

48. Killigrew, Thomaso (Part I), 340 (Act II, sc. iv).

41. 49. The Rover (Part I), Act II, sc ii, in Behn, Works, I,

50. Killigrew, Thomaso (Part II), 396, 428, 431 (Act I, sc. v., & Act IV, sc. i.).

51. Ibid., 453 (Act V, sc. vi).

52. Ibid., 462, (Act V, sc. x).

53. Pearson, 158.

97-8. 54. The Rover (Part I), Act V, sc. i, in Behn, Works, I,

Chapter Four

The Unchaste Woman: The Cuckolding Wife and the Kept Woman

My goal for this chapter is to focus on a character that appears in almost all Restoration plays: the unchaste woman, whether she be the cuckolding wife or the kept woman, is quite indispensable in the plays in which she is featured. So familiar is she that the audience and the reader expect her inclusion in the world of the play--her absence would constitute a void. The unchaste woman is part of the risqué nature of the medium, and she causes much of the action to unfold. Before I continue, I wish to make some distinctions. The unchaste woman is not to be equated with the prostitute. The cuckolding wife and the kept woman do not repeatedly sell themselves to any purchaser offering monetary exchange. The kept woman does barter her body for money and material possessions, but with only one man. At times, the prostitute graduates to the "status" of a kept woman, as we saw in the case of Flirt in Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master (1673). There is an important difference between the cuckolding wife and the prostitute as well; invariably, the former comes from the middle or upper

class, and the latter from the lower class. The higher station of the cuckolding wife puts more of a strain on her. If she fails to abide by the social mores of her class, she is considered a "whore," while her husband, who oftentimes exhibits the same behavior, is exonerated. Simply put, she is traduced for enjoying life. The cuckolding wife usually "horns" her husband because he is old and foolish and she was forced to marry him. She can be judged harshly for her conduct--she does commit adultery--but in view of several facts, I believe her actions to be excusable, even though some of these women are depicted as unsympathetic. After all, she is chained to a man too old for her, and as we shall see, his attitude towards his younger wife is not in the least conducive to love. She cannot love him anyway, for she did not choose him as a spouse. A feminist perspective takes into account that since both types of unchaste woman are surviving in a sexist environment, society should be held more culpable for their behavior than they.

A crucial distinction exists between the kept woman and the mistress. Usually, there is some pretense of love in the relationship of the mistress and her man. This is to always so: as I will show, Behn's Lady Lambert declares that she was Cromwell's mistress strictly for gain, not for affection. Lady Lambert is quite unlike Etherege's Mrs. Loveit in The Man of Mode (1676), who seeks sex, not

monetary gain, and who will be ruined if the other characters discover her liaison with Dorimant. Being a mistress or a kept woman implies exclusivity on the woman's part. There are no constraints on the man; he may do as he pleases, and discard her if he grows weary of her company. We saw this in the case of the actress, Elizabeth Farley, first disposed of by Charles II, then James Weaver. Not only can the man discard the woman with no societal reprisals, but he is not bombarded with insults, as is the woman. The kept woman, like the cuckolding wife, is often labelled a "whore." Though the Restoration world was marked by a looser moral code, women were still expected to conduct their lives in accordance with the rules of female propriety. This held true both for the real world and the world of the play. I am not at all implying that the two worlds were the same, only that, at times, similar assumptions and expectations converged in both worlds. Another dynamic at work in the attack on unchaste women--and, of course, attaching the word "whore" to them is the most visible aspect of this attack--is that most men felt threatened by female sexual appetites. Quite possibly, as Felicity Nussbaum asserts, the upheaval of traditional social customs precipitated a persistent attack on women--they were the ones responsible. Though Nussbaum is writing about satires against women, her words can also apply to plays:

...surely the threat to the established order brought about by the Civil War and the Interregnum must have played a significant role in encouraging the eruption of satires against lustful, proud, and inconstant women in the late seventeenth century...Historical studies are just beginning to define the status of women in the period, but certainly women were chipping away at the edges of traditional expectations...The satirist seeks to assuage men's fears that they cannot satisfy women by explaining that women are insatiable by nature, and all women long to be whores. A wench will drain a man dry.¹

Because there are so many unchaste women in the plays of the Restoration, it is necessary to choose a wide enough cross-section to display variety, yet small enough to prevent the discussion from becoming unwieldy. Examples from the following plays will be included: Thomas Shadwell's "whores" in Epsom Wells (1672), William Wycherley's Lady Fidget in The Country Wife (1675), John Crowne's Betty Frisque in The Country Wit (1675), Aphra Behn's Lady Fancy in Sir Patient Fancy (1678), Shadwell's Sir Humphrey, who represents the male attitude, in The Woman-Captain (1679), Behn's Lady Lambert in The Round-Heads; or, The Good Old Cause (1682), and Shadwell's Lucia in The Squire of Alsatia (1688). Since I do not wish to break up the discussion by proceeding according to strict chronological order, Shadwell's plays will be presented consecutively, as will Behn's.

Before I begin the individual exploration of the above characters, a justification of my choices is necessary. Shadwell's "whores" are here mainly to convey how he regards wives who have stepped out of line by

"cheating" on their husbands. Although Shadwell does not use the term "whore" in all of his plays, it all too frequently appears in Epsom Wells, illustrating that Shadwell had a considerable amount of misogyny. There are also "good girls" in the play, Carolina and Lucia. Lucia, the kept woman in The Squire of Alsatia, is a decent woman debauched by Belfond Junior. Her case is fascinating, because kept women, usually members of the lower class, are not decent as defined by society, while Lucia belongs to the middle class, an attorney's daughter, and an inherently good woman. In contrast, Crowne's Betty Frisque, kept by Lord Drybone, belongs to the lower class and is not the "good girl" that Lucia is. Betty Frisque is one of the most humorously drawn kept women in any Restoration play--I also believe that her creator's classification as a minor playwright is an inaccurate placement which denies him the approbation his skill deserves. Lady Fidget, though so familiar to both scholars of the period and readers of the plays, warrants inclusion because, for me, she reflects Wycherley's hatred of pretension and hypocrisy; his treatment of her suggests no sympathy for this unchaste woman. I intend to employ Lady Fidget as a contrast to Behn's attitude toward Lady Fancy and Lady Lambert. It is my contention that Behn felt sympathy for both women, and wanted the same from reader and audience. Of course, Behn copyrighted neither the rebellious young wife in captivity

to an old spouse, nor the adulteress in love; it is her approach that is fundamentally different from the men's, because she does not make it a point to traduce the unchaste woman. This is the essence of my contrast. Not all male dramatists depicted the unchaste woman unsympathetically-- Lady Duncie in Thomas Otway's The Souldier's Fortune is compassionately portrayed.² The Round-Heads is rich in Royalist propaganda: Behn was a loyal adherent to Charles II, and, at any rate, a lavish show of support for the monarchy could hardly hurt her. I have picked Lady Lambert for her complexity of character, and the play itself for its intriguing political aspects.

Shadwell raises the word "whore" to a new level of misogyny, for he uses it to describe almost any woman who crosses the barrier of accepted conduct. Epsom Wells contains the largest number of "whores," and this horde suggests that he was puritanical regarding female deportment. The fact that Shadwell's "whores" are wives who decide to assert themselves supports this idea. Certainly the argument could be made that because some of these women commit adultery, they are whores. But this dissertation takes a feminist approach, and as such, Shadwell's denigration of women who comport themselves in ways inconsistent with accepted codes of womanly behavior must be considered sexist.

However, there is another side to this issue. A specialty of Shadwell's was the construction of low city comedy, at which he was extremely adept, hence he would quite naturally feature surly, revolting characters, including whores, who are the perfect denizens of a shadowy milieu. Adding fuel to this is the fact that most of his "whores" are repulsive, for they are graceless and brutally crass. These unattractive portrayals are an indication that Shadwell did not want the audience and the reader to see these women as positive characters--they are to be viewed as contemptible. In short, Shadwell, worshipping at the shrine of the founder of Humours Comedy, Ben Jonson, would present a character that embodies a particular personality trait--in this case, moral degeneracy. In illustration of my assertion that the "whore" functions as an extension of her creator's misogyny, I present the Dramatis Personae of Epsom Wells:

Mrs. Woodly, Woodly's Wife, Jilting, unquiet,
troublesom, and very Whorish.

Mrs. Bisket, An impertinent Strumpet, Wife
to Bisket.

Dorothy Fribble, Wife to Fribble, an humble,
submitting Wife, who Jilts
her Husband that way, a very
Whore.

Mrs. Jilt, A silly, affected Whore, that pre-
tends to be in Love with most men,
and thinks most men in love with
her, and is always boasting of
Love-Letters and mens favours,
yet a pretender to Vertue.³

Dorothy Fribble is under the tutelage of Mrs. Bisket--she is learning how to manage her spouse, the domineering Mr. Fribble. Fribble treats Dorothy exactly as Mrs. Bisket treats her gentle and naive husband. Mrs. Bisket is depicted as a woman who tortures Mr. Bisket with her distasteful domination of him. She says to her "pupil," Dorothy:

Mrs. Bisket. I am ashamed of you, you betray our cause; submit to a Husband; I'd fain see that Husband that I'd crouch to. I say again, pluck up a Spirit; I keep a strict hand of Discipline over mine. Here he comes, you shall see how I order him.⁴

A very similar tone and meaning are exhibited by Mr. Fribble, who expects his wife, Dorothy, to serve him completely:

Mr. Fribble. Know your lord and master, and be subject to my Government; I though but a Haberdasher will be as absolute a Monarch over you, as the great Turk over his Sultan Queen.⁵

Mr. Fribble seems insecure about his occupation of haberdasher, and to compensate for any feeling of inadequacy, he subjugates his wife. His words suggest that he thinks oppression of another human being will permit him to be more secure within himself--to experience the heady feeling of superiority, false though it may be. More frightening is that society will abet him in his "lordship" over his wife, as Dorothy cannot turn to any social institution for succor. Shadwell makes both Mrs. Bisket and Mr. Fribble disagreeable through their oppression of

their spouses. Mrs. Bisket has usurped the "male role," thus turning tradition on its head; she is a female Fribble. In fact, Shadwell is not only misogynistic but misanthropic, for many of his male characters are repugnant. Witness the words of Sir Humphrey in The Woman-Captain:

Sir Humphrey. But do you hear, Steward; I must have Whores in abundance; see you provide a world of Strumpets. I'll have as many Whores as mortal man can turn himself to.⁶

I do not believe that Shadwell approved of Sir Humphrey--he really is despicable--but there is a possibility that Shadwell had the same opinion of women. Too many "whores," after all, do not indicate a positive connotation of womanhood.

Two "whores" who earned Shadwell's disapprobation are Mrs. Woodly and Mrs. Bisket, adulteresses both. The other two women who appear in the *Dramatis Personae* of Epsom Wells, though whorish in Shadwell's view, cannot be called adulteresses. There is no evidence that Dorothy commits adultery, and since Mrs. Jilt is unmarried at the time, she cannot be an adulteress.

Mrs. Woodly is conducting an affair with the rake, Bevil. She plays "hard to get," pretending that Bevil is coercing her against her inclination to have sex with him. Shadwell presents the brilliant dialogue characteristic of the Restoration game of the sexual chase:

Bev. No more, nay, my Dear, come in, come in.

Mrs. Wood. Nay, pish, ha, ha, ha, ha. I vow, you make me blush! get you gone, you naughty man you.

Bev. You'll make me outrageous; I shall force you; have a care.

Mrs. Wood. Well, I vow you are a parlous [sic] man. Will you promise me then to sit still when you are there, and not stir hand or foot.

Bev. Ay, ay, come, come.

Mrs. Wood. Nay, but will you swear?

Bev. Yes, yes, come allons, my Dearest, she'll soon dispense with that Oath.

Mrs. Wood. Well, I am so asham'd, I Vow, I would not go, but that you said you would force me, and swore too besides. [As they are going into the Bed-Chamber, enter Peg.]⁷

At this point, Mr. Woodly interrupts them, and when his wife has gotten rid of him, she returns to the waiting Bevil. But Peg enters once more. Bevil, very disgruntled by the interruptions, loses his ardor, and tells Mrs. Woodly that he must leave, but will return: "'Tis impossible, I'll wait on you an hour or two hence, but now I am ingag'd upon my reputation, and must not break my ingagement. Your Servant."⁸ So the arrivals of Mrs. Woodly's maid, Peg, and the intended cuckold, Mr. Woodly, postpone the sexual liaison.

Rains, the other rake, is being pursued by Mrs. Bisket. She, unlike Mrs. Woodly, does not pretend that she has virtue to defend. Mrs. Bisket wastes no time on false chatter, as Mrs. Woodly does. She is direct in her request to Rains: "Come, Mr. Rains, Let's in."⁹ This is a clear indication that she intends to commit adultery, and since the scene concludes after her invitation to Rains, we must

assume that the adultery has been accomplished. At the end of the play, when all is resolved, Mrs. Bisket informs her husband, to whom she has decided to submit, that she will never go astray again: "Good Duck, now forgive me; I will never commit Adultery again."¹⁰ Of course, Bisket is more than happy to accept her new subservience, for he has suffered much at her hands. Other characters are aware of Bisket's naiveté concerning his wife. Bevil says of Mrs. Bisket that she "scorns to have any other Pimp but her Husband, who all the while thinks her the innocentest Creature."¹¹ Rains associates with Bisket only to have access to Mrs. Bisket; the "pimp" unwittingly invites Rains to commit adultery with his wife:

Bisk. For Heavens sake, as you love me do not deny me. I shall have no quiet with her; besides, some Cheapside Neighbours of mine are to have a Game at Bowls, and a merry meeting this Afternoon, and she wishes the Waters may ne're go through her, if she'll give leave to go to 'em, unless I bring you to her to keep her Company, and sing and play at Cards with her, therefore, dear Mr. Rains.

Rains. I cannot be so inhumane to refuse a Husband that invites me to his own wife Allons, Mr. Bisket.¹²

There are indications that only Mrs. Bisket and Mrs. Woodly cuckold their husbands. Though Dorothy may want to do so, only the threat is there; she merely grows restive under Mrs. Bisket's influence. Mrs. Jilt, unmarried, is seeking a husband, and the object of her attentions is the much sought after Rains. She beseeches him: "But marry me, that's all I swear."¹³ Rains, while prepared to have an

affair with her, is horrified at the thought of marriage with her, for he is in love with Lucia. This rake is willing to betray Lucia, while proclaiming his love for her. He is the stereotypical rake, and the stereotype also demands that he marry at the end.

In actual fact, there is no marriage at the close of Epsom Wells between the rakes, Bevil and Rains, and the heroines, Carolina and Lucia. The two women refuse to marry the men they love until the rakes reform. Lucia says to Rains: "I do receive you upon tryal," and Carolina tells Bevil: "And I you upon your good behaviour: I think you have gone far enough in one day."¹⁴ The heroines can certainly have their fun at the Wells, but when an event as serious as marriage looms, they demand constancy in their future husbands. For these women, marriage begins with reformation--because they are intrinsically moral, they insist on the same in the men they intend to marry. Not only are Carolina and Lucia strong enough to make this demand of Bevil and Rains, but the men are determined to be worthy of such women. The audience is supposed to believe that the couples will eventually marry, and that their unions will be joyous ones. In contrast to the unchaste women, the "whores," Carolina and Lucia are decent and honorable--"good girls."

Shadwell's The Squire of Alsatia presents the kept woman, Lucia. She diverges from the standard kept woman in

that she is innately good. Lucia is not interested in obtaining material possessions or money from Belfond Junior. All she asks is that her love be reciprocated. He does feel some love for her, but his activities with other women interfere, especially his lapsed relationship with his former mistress, Mrs. Termagant. Her name is a perfect reflection of her personality, for she relentlessly pursues Belfond Junior, and even attempts to abuse Lucia, of whom she is ferociously jealous:

Enter Lucia running, Termagant pursuing her.

Luc. Help, help, help.

Term. Now I have found you, you little Whore--
I'll make you an example.

Luc. Oh Lord! are you here! Save me, Save
me, this Barberous Woman threatens to
murder me for your sake.

Belf. Jun. Save thee, Dear Miss: That I would at
the peril of my Life: No danger shou'd
make me quit thee, Cannons, or Bombs.

Term. Damn'd false fellow: I'll take a time to
slit her Nose.

Luc. Oh Heaven! She'll kill me...¹⁵

There is little to be said in Mrs. Termagant's defense. It is difficult to be a discarded mistress, but given that she is so malicious and vengeful, it is also easy to understand why Belfond Junior left her--and in trying to hurt Lucia, any sympathy the reader may be tempted to feel for her is lost. Shadwell's treatment of Mrs. Termagant leaves no doubt that we are obligated to view her as unsympathetic, for quite obviously, he does.

Because Lucia is a kept woman, she is subject to consequences, the worst of which has happened: pregnancy.

There are those who might feel that Lucia deserves condemnation for allowing herself to become involved in a situation that might produce such a result, and we may ask: why would an honorable, decent woman be kept in the first place? Although these are valid considerations, I believe Shadwell was attempting to demonstrate that the situations of life are not always clear-cut, and sometimes a "good girl" does things that many consider immoral. This shows open-mindedness on Shadwell's part, and he was, most of the time not an open-minded man. For Shadwell, Lucia is exonerated because she genuinely loves Belfond Junior. She replies in response to his query if she loves him: "Yes, I lov'd too much; or this had never happen'd: I could not else have been undone."¹⁶ We feel much sympathy for her, in contrast to the man who has ruined her. He tells her, in a singularly sexist reply, that she was designed for the sole purpose of procreation: "No more than what thy Mother did before thee: No more than thy whole Sex is born to do."¹⁷ Lucia, a truly loyal lover, wants to remain faithful to Belfond Junior, despite the fact that he has placed her in an impossible position:

Luc. I cou'd abandon all the World for thee; if I
 cou'd think that thou wouldst love me always.
Bel. Jun. Thou hast so kindly oblig'd me, I shall never
 cease to love thee...
Luc. Thou art the prettiest, sweetest, softest
 Creature!...¹⁸

Although Belfond Junior loves Lucia, there is no way he can marry her, because he is an aristocrat, the second

son to Sir William Belfond. He was adopted by his uncle, Sir Edward Belfond, and so it is Sir Edward who maintains control of the young man's affairs. Lucia, an attorney's daughter, can never hope to wed her upper-class lover. Since she has been rendered unmarriageable by her pregnancy, she probably would not, in any case, be acceptable to a middle-class man. But Belfond Junior tells his uncle and her father that she is "innocent," and so salvages the situation to some extent. Nonetheless, Lucia is tainted, and must be put out of sight. Thus, Sir Edward will settle money on her, and she will be sent away:

Luc.	And can I live to hear my fatal Sentence of parting with you; Hold Heart a little.
Belf. Jun.	It is with some Convulsions I am torn from you; but I must Marry I cannot help it.
Luc.	And must I never see you more?
Belf. Jun.	As a Lover never; but your Friend I'll be while I have Breath.
Luc. to her self.	Heart, do not swell so. This has awakned me, and made me see my Crime: Oh, that it had been sooner!
Belf. Jun.	Sir, I beg a thousand pardons, that I should attempt to injure your Family, for it has gone no farther yet: For any Fact, she's innocent; but 'twas no thanks to me, I am not so. (If a Lie be ever lawful, 'tis in this case.) aside.
Sir Edw.	Come, pretty Lady, let me present you to your Father: Tho as my Son says, she's innocent; yet, because his Love had gone so far, I present her with 1500£. My Son and you shall be Trustees for her: To morrow you shall have the Money.
Belf. Jun.	You are the best of all Mankind.
Attor.	All the World speaks your Praises justly.
Luc.	A thousand thanks, Sir, for your bounty: And if my Father please to pardon me this slip, in which I was so far from fact,

that I had scarce intention: I will
hereafter out live the strictest Nun.
Attor. Rise: I do pardon you.
Sir. Edw. That's well: And if they be not kind to
you, appeal to me. It will be fit for
you to go from hence with the least
notice that can be: To morrow I'll bring
the Money. Who are the Ladies you have
entrusted me with, Ned?¹⁹

Belfond Junior will escape dishonor by marrying a "proper" woman, Isabella. He has been spared the outrage, then neglect, of his class, his "honor" intact. Born a gentleman, and now able to continue enjoying the benefits that word confers, he will be safe from condescending looks, while Lucia, the attorney's daughter, can never, in her forced seclusion, stain the honor of the man she loves. What makes this situation even more appalling is that Lucia would never harm her lover, for she always put him first.

Shadwell has conveyed most effectively the position of a decent kept woman impregnated by her keeper. Lucia serves as a striking contrast to his "whores," and informs the reader that Shadwell was capable of setting aside part of his misogyny. In allowing Belfond Junior to escape the consequences of his actions, and imputing blame to Lucia by banishing her, Shadwell proved that he was incapable of setting aside perhaps the most pernicious aspect of misogyny--the woman is always responsible. The next play features an unchaste woman for whom there is no sympathy, neither from her creator, nor from the reader and the audience.

Wycherley's Lady Fidget in The Country Wife is the typical upper-class unchaste woman, in contrast to Shadwell's, who are from the middle class. Lady Fidget is out for all she can get, primarily the gratification of her sexual appetite, and she is not at all ashamed of admitting her methods:

Lady Fidget. Our Reputation, Lord! Why should you not think, that we women make use of our Reputation, as you men of yours, only to deceive the world with less suspicion; our virtue is like the State-man's Religion, the Quakers Word, the Gamesters Oath, and the Great Man's Honour, but to cheat those that trust us.²⁰

For Lady Fidget, the world is a hypocrite's playpen; she, the ultimate hypocrite, perceives that everyone is like her. Marvin T. Herrick says of Lady Fidget, among other characters in the play: "Lady Fidget, Dainty, and Mrs. Squeamish are dishonorable, for they are all hypocrites, utterly lacking in the honor and virtue they are always prating about."²¹ Some of the others are completely aware of Lady Fidget's hypocrisy, and make a joke of her incessant talk of honor:

Lady Fidget. But still my dear, dear Honour.
Sir Jasper. Ay, my dear, dear of honour, thou hast still so much honour in thy mouth--
Horner. That she has none elsewhere--[Aside.]²²

There is no character more cognizant of Lady Fidget's hypocrisy than Horner, and this is because he is the very embodiment of hypocrisy, hence able to pin her down and outwit her. It is Lady Fidget's hypocrisy which makes

her susceptible to his grand deception of being a eunuch-- and he knows it. The two are like duelists, but their weapons are witty words:

Lady Fidget. ...but affectation makes not a Woman more odious to them, than Virtue.
Horner. Because your Virtue is your greatest affectation, Madam.
Lady Fidget. How, you sawcy Fellow, wou'd you wrong my honour?
Horner. If I cou'd...
Lady Fid. ...your Women of Honour, as you call 'em, are only chary of their reputations, not their Persons, and 'tis scandal they wou'd avoid, not Men...²³

Wycherley created the perfect scene for his two major hypocrites: The "China Scene." In this familiar witty and risque scene, Lady Fidget commits adultery with Horner, that pretender to eunuch-hood. Sir Jasper Fidget, the embodiment of the Restoration "horned" husband, is unaware of his wife's desire for Horner, and because he really believes Horner is a eunuch, there is no suspicion of his spouse--Sir Jasper thinks his marriage is safe. Because of his foolishness, he deserves his horns. Lady Fidget keeps him "in the dark" about her extramarital yearnings simply by being far more intelligent than he is. Sir Jasper, also the older man married to a younger woman, is ripe for cuckoldry, the fate of these characters. When the ridiculous husband is not within hearing range of Lady Fidget, she speaks the truth--and a very large part of the truth is that the fool, because of his stupidity, aids his wife in the attainment of her sexual desires: "Who for his

business, from his Wife will run;/Takes the best care, to have her bus'ness done."²⁴

There is absolutely no romantic love between Lady Fidget and Horner, as there is with Behn's unchaste women and their lovers. Wycherley's depiction of this pair and their loveless coupling instructs us to see them as rutting animals intent only on gratifying their sexual hunger. Consequently, Wycherley's handling of Lady Fidget carries the unassailable message that he felt no sympathy for her and did not intend that we do. The Country Wife, indeed all of his plays, suggest that he was intensely disgusted with shallow people desirous of quenching their lusts at the expense of others. Whether it was overt greed for sex, money, or fashion, if it was achieved through the exclusion of human feeling, Wycherley's tone was one of aggressive distaste.

Crowne's Betty Frisque in The Country Wit is also a woman who feels no love for the man with whom she is involved. Though it is true that Betty is an unsympathetic character, she is presented with such wit and vitality that the reader almost overlooks her nature. Her "lover," Lord Drybone, is in fact so disagreeable--yet fascinating because of this trait--that we find ourselves cheering for Betty. The kept woman, with so few choices, must survive in any way she can, and Betty is most determined to survive in a luxurious manner. While Lady Fidget is financially secure

because of her marriage, Betty, not a member of the upper class, must get her living in another way. She can vicariously penetrate the aristocratic world by being kept by Lord Drybone, but she will never truly belong to it. But Betty, understanding that she has to grab everything she can, appropriates the materialist trappings of the upper-class milieu by living with one of its representatives.

Despite the fact that Betty can be seen, from a feminist viewpoint, as sympathetic, her personality traits are not admirable--except to those whose ethic is monetary advantage. She is self-serving and unabashedly opportunistic in her pursuit of material aggrandizement. But when she has her way with Drybone, and she always does, we laugh, for he merits the way she treats him. In his attempt to impose fidelity on Betty, Drybone is pathetic and contemptible. He never tires of complaining about the enormous sums he spends to keep the ceaselessly disgruntled Betty from champing at her golden bit. Skittish she remains, and his entire effort must be expended in pacifying her. The man is a masochist, raving about her mistreatment of him, yet relishing it. He says to her: "I am, as formerly, your most obsequious keeper."²⁵ In truth, she is his keeper. Although Betty has the upper hand, Drybone believes he is due respect from her, and she is not the least bit hesitant to undeceive him; his delusion produces the expected acid-coated reaction:

Betty. Yes, I know you to be a thing with a title; or rather nothing with a title: your lordship is titular, your manhood is titular, and everything titular but your money; and your substantial money compounds for your titular person.²⁶

The only thing that has meaning and substance to Betty is money--this is her reality--nothing else about the absurd Drybone has power to impress her. But Drybone, foolish as he is, actually thinks that there may be something of higher value in this "relationship." The fact that his brutally blunt mistress has stated in quite unmistakable terms that his title ("lordship") and his sexuality ("manhood") are non-existent for her means nothing to him. Betty admits that she is with him for the sole purpose of enjoying his riches, yet he is not deterred from loving her. Betty, a woman who knows herself and exactly what she wants, is incapable of deluding herself, while Drybone, in stark contrast, lives on self-delusion. He does not comprehend that love cannot exist in conjunction with financial exchange. Betty has a realistic view of their arrangement lacking in Drybone; she understands that her motivation is money, not love. The following conversation conveys that they are at cross-purposes:

Betty. Well, and I think I have paid dear enough for these things, in enduring all your cross jealous peevish humours.

Lord Dry. What, jealous humours? I love you too well, that's the fault.

Betty. Yes, indeed, you love me very well, not to let me breathe so much as a mouthful of fresh air once in a month and at home not to enjoy an hour of quiet...

Lord Dry. Oh, thou notorious wheedling slut! Shall I
put up with such impudent abuses as these!
Betty. Yes, and be glad of 'em too...
Lord Dry. Go, go hussy! you are an unkind naughty girl,
to make me pay thus dear for every smile and
smirk I get from you. I dare safely say not a
dimple you make when you smile, that does not
cost me, one with another, forty pound a
dimple.²⁷

Any discussion of Betty Frisque must of necessity include Lord Drybone, for his character nourishes hers. These two have pawned themselves to each other's insecurities and selfish desires. They have a symbiotic relationship fed by her avarice and his lust--Betty and Drybone are yoked together, enmeshed in emotional degradation. Their motivations are quite simple: for him, she is a trinket, not a real woman, and for her, he is a means to material gain. We understand that she will persist in abusing him, and he will persist in deserving it, greedily lapping up the meager crumbs she deigns to toss his way. Betty only consents to stay with him because he is persuaded to allow her five hundred pounds a year in perpetuity, a most substantial sum in the period. This "contract" is symptomatic of a diseased partnership. For Betty, Drybone is a repulsive old fool merely to be taken advantage of. There is no genuine feeling for him; the very fact that she is kept precludes feeling. The reader comes away with the knowledge that Betty will never fall in love--it is money she thirsts for. Betty, caged by materialism, is not appealing. Ironically, this disregard for human

feeling, and her worship of money, is what makes her so entertaining. This is a tribute to her creator, who had the skill to render a character obsessed with one thing admirably rich in personality.

On the other hand, Behn's Lady Fancy in Sir Patient Fancy is more sympathetic. She is not a kept woman like Shadwell's Lucia and Crowne's Betty, but an example of the unchaste woman who cuckolds her husband, the old Sir Patient, whom she has married for financial support. Sir Patient shares the characteristic of old age with Sir Jasper Fidget and Lord Drybone--and most cuckolded husbands. There is not a shred of evidence in the play that Lady Fancy has any romantic inclinations towards her husband. We do, however, see evidence of a different sort; her love for Wittmore is proof positive that she does not love Sir Patient.

Lady Fancy declines to remain a hostage to her intolerable situation. She resolves to free herself by surrendering to the genuine love she feels for the young Wittmore. It is precisely this love which allows Lady Fancy to escape blame--in Behn's eyes. Obviously, another interpretation might state that she is culpable, for she is abrogating the marriage vow that declares that both partners must "forsake all others," in reference to extramarital relationships. But Behn was a passionate advocate of marriage resulting from free choice, and love had to be the

primary ingredient in marriage: since these conditions are absent in the union of Lady Fancy and Sir Patient, Behn's treatment of her unchaste woman infers that Lady Fancy has the right to seek love elsewhere. Thus, love makes Lady Fancy sympathetic to her creator and her handling of the subject obliges us to feel the same. Lady Fancy and Wittmore care deeply for one another and yearn to be together:

- L.Fan. I dare not for the world, Sir Patient is now asleep, and 'tis to those few Minutes we are oblig'd for this Enjoyment, which shou'd Love make us transgress, and he shou'd wake and surprize us, we are undone for ever: no, let us employ this little time we have in consulting how we may be often happy, and securely so: Oh, how I languish for the dear opportunity!
- Wit. And cou'd you guess what torments I have suffer'd in these few fatal Months that have divided us, thou wou'dst pity me.²⁸

The serious tone of the lovers' words leaves no doubt that they are sincerely in love. There is absolutely no pretense here, and no false notes, only a profound desire to meet as often as the risky situation permits. Lady Fancy resembles Lady Fidget not one whit: while Lady Fidget twists the meaning of words such as "love," Lady Fancy's use of the term--and the concept it embodies--reflects her honesty of feeling. Lady Fidget, desirous only of sex with Horner, constitutes a significant contrast to Lady Fancy, whose liaisons with Wittmore cannot be divorced from her love for him. Wittmore and Horner exhibit the same disparities as

the women; Wittmore mixes sex with love and Horner views sex merely as a satiation of lust, with no love involved.

Lady Fancy's position is a reflection of Behn's hatred of marriage devoid of love. The crime is not that Lady Fancy has a lover, but that she was constrained to marry a man she did not love in order to obey the demands of economic necessity. Hence, it is not exaggeration to claim that for Behn it is incumbent upon a woman to take a lover if her marriage is loveless; Behn gives priority to the mutual exchange of vows bestowed without restraint, not to marriage, unless there is love and respect between the parties involved. In view of this, since the vast majority of marriages were arranged in Behn's day, there was little or no love and respect. Lady Fancy and Wittmore have freely vowed love for each other, and that is quite sufficient for Behn. Others might judge Lady Fancy a whore--and her creator too--Behn, however, sees Lady Fancy as another woman forced to find some contentment in a society determined to withhold it from such women. What Behn achieved in Sir Patient Fancy is the transformation of a vice--adultery--into a virtue. Love makes it so.

Lady Lambert, from Behn's The Round-Heads, is a more difficult character to decipher than Lady Fancy, and this is largely because the play is a vehicle for Behn's Royalist sympathies. In consequence, Lady Lambert's personality is imbued with political shading.

The Round-Heads is based on actual political intrigues which took place during the final days of the Interregnum. Because the play is set in the twilight of the Commonwealth, there is a great deal of excitement permeating it: Behn skillfully writes about the turmoil and exhilaration of impending political shift, and her characters reflect the clash of incompatible political ideologies. Since it was common--one could say a literary convention--to ridicule Puritans before and after the Restoration, Behn delighted in lampooning the Cromwellian loyalists, who are depicted as hypocrites and buffoons, upholding a strict moral code in theory only. In The Round-Heads, the hypocritical Puritan is best epitomized by Ananias Goggle, a lay elder who pays false homage to chastity; he is susceptible to the charms of the opposite sex. Lady Lambert and her friend, Lady Desbro, married to Cromwellian sympathizers, are in love with Loveless and Freeman, respectively. Even Roundhead women are defenseless against the dashing cavaliers! Because Lady Lambert is more complex than Lady Desbro, and has a more substantial part in the play, I will concentrate on Lady Lambert.

The Round-Heads is not as familiar a play as others by Behn, so background information on Lady Lambert is required. Even though she is married, she has been a mistress to the powerful Cromwell. She felt no love for him; her only goals in this "affair" were political power

and prestige. Lady Lambert is not at all ashamed of her status as mistress, and neither is her husband, Lord Lambert. In fact, he heartily approves, for his wife is aiding him in his political advance. Both Lady and Lord Lambert are offensive because of their decision to violate their marriage vows in such a morally repugnant manner. If their vows ever meant anything to them, they most certainly do not now. Lord Lambert may be worse, because he permits his wife's body to be used so that he might achieve approbation from those who can confer power on him. Of course, the further Lord Lambert's ambitions take him, the more Lady Lambert will benefit. She contributes to her own degradation--though she does not, at the present time, consider what she is doing degrading--and, as such, she bears heavy responsibility for her debased condition. The following dialogue communicates the corruption of their arrangement:

- Lam. My Lord, my Lady is an absolute States-woman.
L.Lam. Yes, I think things had not arriv'd to this exalted height, nor had you been in prospect of a Crown, had not my Politicks exceeded your meaner Ambition.
Lam. I confess, I owe all my good Fortune to thee.²⁹

This conversation, though direct in that Lord Lambert admits his indebtedness to his wife, is more remarkable for the way in which both euphemize what is really happening. Lord Lambert calls Lady Lambert a "States-woman." She is surely that--in bed with Cromwell, the best place to be for an overly-ambitious woman, considering that she possesses the

sexual prowess which would make even the greatest man promise things he would not in less vulnerable circumstances. Lady Lambert's "Politicks" is merely a word employed to dodge the crass reality of the situation--her political method is to cajole her sexual quarry until she secures the promises only he can give. Indeed, Lady Lambert does owe his rise to her, and he knows exactly how his "good Fortune" was acquired. This pair give new meaning to the idea of the woman behind the man. Lady Lambert, gifted with a clever turn of phrase, cannot resist the word "Politicks," for it allows her the savvy use of sexual innuendo; she says of Cromwell that he "first infus'd Politicks into me, by which I may boast I have climb'd to Empire."³⁰ The concept of infusion here carries two meanings: the more innocent meaning is that Cromwell inspired her with ambition; the real meaning--the one that is pre-eminent and the one I strongly feel Behn intended--is that Cromwell "infus'd" Lady Lambert with his seed. Can there be any doubt that this is a calculated double entendre? Lord and Lady Lambert have been unable to conceal the "amour" from Cromwell's widow, who is no fool, and can also utilize the term "Politicks" to advantage: "I may yet live to see thy Cuckold hang'd first, his Politicks are yet too shallow, Mistress."³¹ I believe her use of "mistress" to be ironic--she is saying that she is well aware that Lady Lambert was her husband's mistress. Given that Behn displayed her Royalist sympathies to

unequivocally in this play, one might expect her to portray Cromwell's widow unsympathetically. This is not the case; on the whole, there is very little condemnation in the portrayal. Perhaps this is due to Behn's concern about the position of women, and her recognition that Lady Cromwell has been wronged; a decent enough woman, she did not warrant such treatment. However, one should take into consideration that the woman responsible for wronging Lady Cromwell is also a Roundhead. Nevertheless, I feel that Behn's objectivity, and it is not absolute, of course, is a testament to her fairness and desire for a more balanced play.

Lady Cromwell is not the only person aware of Lady Lambert's affair with Cromwell--Loveless also knows. Not only is he repelled by this liaison, but he is prejudiced against her political loyalties; after all, Loveless is a Royalist and has suffered indignities at the hands of Cromwell's regime. He is incapable of believing that there is any sincerity in a Roundhead--for him, there is no one quite as corrupt as a Puritan. There is truth behind his beliefs, especially where Lady Lambert is concerned; her conduct lends credence to his opinions. Loveless realizes too that many other Puritans are not as "pure" as they would like to be perceived. Though his feelings are no doubt colored by his Royalism, this does not preclude that some Roundheads were hypocritical and corrupt. Because of the

emotional baggage Loveless carries regarding Roundheads, it can only be expected that events will not be completely felicitous for Loveless and Lady Lambert. Before the pair get to know each other, Loveless and his friend, Freeman, who is not as stubborn about Cromwellians as Loveless, have the following exchange. Freeman is teasing the intransigent Loveless about the possibility of romance with a Puritan woman:

- Lov. Not a Night, by Heaven--not an Hour--no, not a single Kiss. I'd rather make love to an Incubus.
Free. But suppose 'twere the new Protectress her self, the fine Lady Lambert?
Lov. The greatest Devil of all; damn her, do'st think I'll cuckold the Ghost of old Oliver?³²

When Loveless actually sees Lady Lambert, he is overcome. She is not too worried that he is a cavalier: "Ah, Heav'ns, that they should prove Heroicks!"³³ Lady Lambert will not let a small thing like political faction prevent her from falling in love, and she falls in love very quickly: "Ha, he's yonder, my Heart begins to fail,/My trembling Limbs refusing to support me--/His Eyes seem fix'd on mine too; ah, I faint--[Leans on Des]."³⁴ It is hardly surprising that she is taken so totally with him--he is a Royalist, and must be attractive; the Puritan husband, Lord Lambert, may not be attractive. Behn interjects her politics even into appearance, and she accomplishes this with her usual smooth wit. The Roundhead wives are the

instruments through which Behn attacks Roundhead appearance and praises Royalist beauty:

- L. Lam. --As thou say'st, these Heroicks have the
strangest Power--
L. Des. I never knew a Woman cou'd resist 'em.
L. Lam. No marvel then, our Husbands use 'em so, betray
'em, banish 'em, sequester, murder 'em, and
every way disarm 'em--
L. Des. But their Eyes, Madam.
L. Lam. Ay, their Eyes, Desbro; I wonder our Lords
shou'd take away their Swords, and let 'em wear
their Eyes.³⁵

Behn's brilliance as a playwright and political propagandist is evident. The implication is that Cromwell's adherents are not only ineffectual as governing officials but also as sexual beings--the physical attributes of the Royalists are far more dangerous than their weapons, and therefore induce greater fear. There is truth behind the humor. A woman's lover can do much damage to her husband, because the lover has considerable influence over her--and in a volatile political situation such as this, the danger is magnified. How easy it would be for Loveless to persuade Lady Lambert to politically sabotage Lord Lambert! Just as Lady Lambert was able to wheedle what she wanted out of Cromwell in the vulnerability of passion, so Loveless would be able to extract promises from her because of her weakness for him. It is fortunate for Lord Lambert that Loveless has no such intentions. Nonetheless, her husband would do well to exercise caution, for his wife is not trustworthy. Lord and Lady Lambert are like twins, because he cannot be trusted

either; he is scheming to grab power after the death of Richard Cromwell.

Given that Lady Lambert and Loveless belong to opposing factions, it is to be expected that conflict will occur, and when the battle finally comes, it is over two opinions of kingship. Here is Behn's description in the *Argument*: "Loveless is brought to Lady Lambert at night. She endeavors to dazzle him by showing the regalia richly set out and adorned with lights. He puts by, however, crown and sceptre and rebukes her overweening ambition."³⁶ Naturally, Loveless is shocked by such blatant disregard for the symbols of monarchy--what is more appalling is that the crown and sceptre belonged to the executed monarch, Charles I. The realization of this fact is designed to stun reader and audience. Because the beheaded king was officially declared a martyr by the Church of England as soon as his son, Charles II, was restored to the throne, Lady Lambert's careless show of his property is exceedingly disrespectful, as Loveless informs her:"--'Tis Sacrilege to dally where it is;/A rude, a saucy Treason to approach it/With an unbended Knee."³⁷ When Lady Lambert attempts to place the crown on his head, Loveless is aghast. The disparity between the lovers' attitudes concerning the dead king's belongings indicates with utter clarity how each views monarchy. Lady Lambert has no respect for the institution of monarchy--or the Church of England, for that matter--but if she were able

to don the crown and sceptre, she would most definitely she respect and demand the same from others, all because she wears them. This is just another negative aspect of her personality: the inability to understand that she is not the final arbiter of what merits reverence, and that if others have profound feeling for something, whatever it may be, she should at least refrain from offending their beliefs. Behn could be suggesting that Lady Lambert is representative of all Roundheads; while condemning monarchy as tyrannical, they covet it for themselves--not only are they hypocrites but the biggest tyrants of all. If one studies the history of the Commonwealth, one will see that there is truth in this. Loveless, the true Royalist, understands the royal possessions must not be treated in so vulgar a manner. They should be considered not as symbols of self-promotion and self-aggrandizement, but as symbols of benevolent rule. Although the tone is propagandistic, Behn is nevertheless making a valid point about where genuine tyranny sometimes lies.

Considering that conflicting political ideologies may infringe on love, and that Lady Lambert is not sincere, the question must be asked whether she truly loves the cavalier. I believe she does. Her romance with Loveless is convincing in part because it is new for both of them; this is not a case of lovers divided by a forced marriage. Lady Lambert has had no time to experience loss of ardor, then

reconsideration of her love. But for some time in the play, the reader ponders whether she is honest in her love. I feel that there are two factors at work as the reader wonders if she is sincere in her profession of love: she is a Roundhead and she has had an extramarital affair, albeit with her husband's consent. Is Lady Lambert more in love with power or Loveless? True, she wants power, but in the feminist perspective, this is not a negative desire, especially when we remember that women had no power at this time. Interpreted in this context, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with Lady Lambert having ambition and craving power. Viewed in the "power corrupts" context, then her hunger for power is negative. Perhaps Behn was giving her female audience a vicarious taste of power through Lady Lambert, and sending a message to her male audience. I, however, am slightly more convinced that Behn was condemnatory of Lady Lambert's yen for power. The most salient factor for me is the way in which Behn handles the partisan politics of The Roundheads. The Royalist propaganda is unmistakable--Royalists are celebrated and Roundheads are derided; they are inept bumbler crawling with corruption. Roundhead wives mock their Roundhead husbands, while gushing over the physical virtues of Royalist males. And the most telling factor within this political labyrinth is Loveless's response to the irreverence with which his lover treats the martyr's

possessions. Lady Lambert is multi-faceted, as Behn's women often are. Her love for her cavalier is not a confused issue, though. Perhaps Loveless evinces more complexity in his love for her. He knows Lady Lambert has some bad qualities; she is arrogant, power-hungry, and she has been a mistress to gain this power. He is not absolutely pleased with her, but he does truly love her. It could be said that he loves her "in spite of, not because." Behn's women invariably have multi-faceted men to love them--and to compliment them.

Near the end of the play, Lady Lambert is still thinking about the glories of power, but she is beginning to soften because of the love she has found: "I never lov'd before; old Oliver I suffer'd for my Interest,/And 'tis some Greatness to be Mistress to the best,/But this mighty Pleasure comes a propos,/To sweeten all the heavy Toils of Empire."³⁸ This is Act IV, and there are lessons for Lady Lambert yet to learn. It is necessary for her growth, and the resolution of the play, for Lady Lambert to be taught that power is a shifting shadow which one is better off without. Through the lesson Behn teaches her, Lady Lambert finally becomes worthy of her cavalier's love.

In the final act, the political events which will culminate in the return and restoration of Charles II happen with extraordinary speed; Behn treats us to the excitement of kaleidoscopic action. Lord Lambert's followers have

turned against him and he is imprisoned in the Tower. The city erupts in fury against Parliament and the Rump is dissolved. Loveless must rescue Lady Lambert, for the enraged mob is hell-bent on punishing a Roundhead woman who surely must pay for the woes she has caused them. Here begins Lady Lambert's lesson, the always painful lesson that power departs more swiftly than it arrives, hence it is unwise to surrender to it. A page enters on the run and informs Lady Lambert that "the Heroick Boys are up in Arms, and swear they'll have your Highness, dead or alive,--they have besieged the House."³⁹ Lady Lambert, frightened and bewildered, begins the lament of her downfall: "Heav'ns, the Rabble!--those faithless things that used to crowd my Coach's Wheels, and stop my Passage, with their officious Noise and Adoration."⁴⁰ Even though her arrogance is still present, she is poignant in her remembrance of a glory which has just died.

Lady Lambert's decline brings humility, and she is never more attractive to Loveless:

- Lov. This News had brought me back, I love this
 Woman, Vain as she is, in spite of all her
 Fopperies of State--
- L.Lam. Alas, I do not merit thy Respect,
 I'm fallen to Scorn, to Pity and Contempt.
 Ah, Loveless, fly the wretched--
 Thy Virtue is too noble to be shined on
 By any thing but rising Suns alone:
 I'm a declining Shade--
- Lov. By Heaven, you were never great till now;
 I never thought thee so much worth my Love,
 My Knee, and Adoration till this Minute.
 --I come to offer you my Life, and all
 The little Fortune the rude Herd has left me.

L.Lam. Is there such God-like Virtue in thy Sex?
Or, rather, in your Party.⁴¹

Behn's naked partisanship here almost overshadows the romantic phraseology, and Loveless has both a condescending male and Royalist attitude--in the latter, he speaks for his creator. But their mutual love comes through. Perhaps it is not the romantic aspect of The Round-Heads which is the most important feature of the play--when all is said and done, the political aspect shouts the loudest. For even when there is talk of love, in saunters politics. Despite the fact that Loveless's Royalist approbation is distasteful--and let me be clear that it is not his Royalism which is distasteful but the way he links it to approval of Lady Lambert--Behn, in my estimation, has an excellent reason for her approach. Behn must permit Lady Lambert to endure the utmost humiliation in order to redeem her; for Behn, Lady Lambert's redemption can only be found when she has been brought as low as possible within the confines of the play, all arrogance and desire for [power gone. A purification occurs. The last time we see the lovers together, the cleansing has been accomplished:

Lov. My Charmer, why these Tears,
If for the fall of all thy painted Glories,
Thou art, in the esteem of all good men,
above what thou wert then?...

L. Lam. Best of thy Sex--
What have I left to gratify thy Goodness...

L. Lam. Adieu, dear mansion! whose rich gilded Roofs so
oft put me in mind of Majesty--And thou, my Bed
of State, where my soft Slumbers have presented
me with Diadems and Scepters--when waking I have
stretch'd my greedy Arms to grasp the vanish'd

Phantom! ah, adieu! and all my hopes of
Royalty adieu.--⁴²

In her farewell to her former state, Lady Lambert has attained humility. There is no anger, regret, or envy in her words. Power has been a dream, for when she wakes, she realizes she had been holding a Phantom," and in her use of the word "greedy," she admits her shortcomings. Behn was leading up to this confession throughout the play, one way in which she redeems Lady Lambert, but there is a more critical form of redemption. That is Lady Lambert's love for Loveless, who was, in a sense, waiting for her to discover what really matters. In order for this journey to self-discovery to reach its conclusion, which is the realization that power is an illusion while love with the right man is real, it was necessary that Behn endow her unchaste woman with handicaps to conquer. Lady Lambert did not promise much: she was a mistress in order to obtain power and grandeur, a shallow woman with very little to recommend her. Yet Behn transformed Lady Lambert from a negative to a positive character, attesting to Behn's skill and courage as a dramatist. Even a woman such as Lady Lambert can be redeemed through love. At first, Behn's treatment of her unchaste woman suggested disapproval. And it is quite possible that any approval Behn has for Lady Lambert is intermixed with the play's politics. Lady Lambert has "cheated" on her Roundhead husband with a Royalist lover--in this there could be sanction by the

Royalist author. Lady Lambert has become a fallen Roundhead, converted so to speak--in this there could be sanction by the Royalist author. However much truth in these statements, I believe the final and truest sanction of Lady Lambert by Behn consists in her ability to love her cavalier.

In conclusion, the unchaste woman cannot always be condemned as a whore, because there were societal restrictions at work which forced her into an unenviable position. The cuckolding wife felt the need to escape the bonds of forced marriage, and the kept woman had to live in a world with few choices, most of them untenable. For the feminist scholar, no blame attaches to these women, for society is to blame. Yet there is that explosive issue of adultery connected to the cuckolding wife. In the Restoration, there is little doubt that in public most people would have vehemently denounced adultery--privately, there is more room for doubt. Today, when so many people like to congratulate themselves for their "enlightened" beliefs, adultery still brings deep disturbance, for no matter how free we wish to consider ourselves, the abrogation of the marriage vows has the power to propel us back to earlier times. An examination of the unchaste women presented by most of the male playwrights tells us that their creators perceived them unsympathetically because they either contemplated or committed adultery. Shadwell's

"whores" and Wycherley's Lady Fidget are negative characters, and neither dramatist intends that we feel compassion for them. On the other hand, Shadwell's Lucia is entirely sympathetic and the reader experiences the same compassion for her that her creator did. In contrast to the gentle Lucia, Crowne's Betty Frisque, though humorous, loses her humanity in the hunt for material gain, and Crowne makes certain that his readers do not mistake her as a positive character. Behn's Lady Fancy wins our approval because she understands that domination, money, and lust are motivations which would destroy the focus of her life: love. And Lady Lambert, because she has had to overcome so many obstacles, earns Behn's approval and ours. Love is the conduit through which Lady Lambert achieves humanity. In the final analysis, humanity is what separates Behn's unchaste women from those of most of her male colleagues. Behn did not invent the cuckolding wife--but because she is consistent in her sympathy for these women, even condoning their adultery when it is for love, she verges on a re-definition of the character.

ENDNOTES

1. Felicity Nussbaum, The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1984), 9, 29.

2. In The Souldier's Fortune, Otway presents a sympathetic portrayal of a young woman married to a repulsive older man. Clarinda, Lady Dunce, has been forced by her parents to marry Sir Davy Dunce, though she loves Beaugard. Hers is a familiar story. Lady Dunce does not consider her marriage valid, and in this attitude, she is like Behn's unchaste women. She tells her friend, Sylvia: "I tell thee, Sylvia, I never was married to that Engine we have been talking of, my parents indeed made me say something to him after a Priest once, but my heart went not along with my tongue. I minded not what it was" (Act I, sc. i, 108-9). When Beaugard returns from France, the former lovers reunite, and he asks her why she has wed the likes of Sir Davy. She pleads forced marriage:

Beaug. ...how could you think of wasting
but a night in the rank surfeiting
arms of this foul feeding Monster?
this rotten trunck of a Man, that
lays claim to you?

Lady D. The perswasion of Friends
and the Authority of
Parents!

Beaug. And had you no more Grace, than to
be rul'd by a Father and Mother?

Lady D. When you were gone, that
should have given me
better Counsel, how could
I help my self? (Act V,
181-2).

Otway's humorous dialogue almost masks the seriousness of Lady Dunce's situation. And though Beaugard is angry to find his former lover married, his callousness is inexcusable; it should be easy enough to comprehend the weight of parental authority in ordering a daughter to forcibly marry. Lady Dunce does the only thing she can in this terrible situation--she commits adultery with Beaugard, the man she loves, and we applaud her, just as we applaud Behn's unchaste women for doing the same.

3. Shadwell, Epsom Wells, in The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, 101, (Dramatis Personae).

4. Shadwell, Epsom Wells, in The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, Act II, sc. i, II, 127.

5. Ibid., p. 126.

6. Shadwell, The Woman-Captain, in The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, Act I, IV, 23.

7. Shadwell, Epsom Wells, in The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, Act II, sc. i, II, 130.

8. Ibid., 132.

9. Ibid., 129.

10. Ibid., Act V, sc. i, II, 178,

11. Ibid., Act I, sc. i, II, 118.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., Act IV, sc. i., II, 153.

14. Ibid., Act V, sc. i, II, 181.

15. Shadwell, The Squire of Alsatia, Act III, sc. i, in Complete Works, IV, 240.

16. Ibid., Act II, sc. i, IV, 223.

17. Ibid., 222.

18. Ibid., Act IV, sc. i., IV, 252.

19. Ibid., Act V, sc. i, IV, 275-6.

20. Wycherley, The Country Wife, Act V, sc. iv, in The Complete Plays of William Wycherley, 351.

21. William Wycherley, The Country Wife, Marvin T. Herrick, ed., (Woodbury: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1970), Introduction, 11.

22. Wycherly, The Country Wife, in The Complete Plays of William Wycherly, 284 (Act II, sc. i).

23. Ibid., 261, 263 (Act I, sc. i).

24. Ibid., 290 (Act II, sc. i).

25. Crowne, III, 124 (Act IV, sc. i).
26. Ibid., 47 (Act II).
27. Ibid., 66, 68, 89-90 (Act III and Act IV, sc. i).
28. Behn, Sir Patient Fancy, in The Works of Aphra Behn, Montague Summers, ed., IV, 26 (Act II, sc. i).
29. The Round-Heads, Act I, sc. ii, in Works, I, 355.
30. Ibid., Act II, sc. i., I, 364.
31. Ibid., 364.
32. Ibid., Act I, sc. i., I, 349.
33. Ibid., 350.
34. Ibid., 351.
35. Ibid., Act II, sc. i, 368-69.
36. Ibid., Argument, 333.
37. Ibid., Act IV, sc. iv, 400.
38. Ibid., Act IV, sc. iii. 396.
39. Ibid., Act V, sc. iii, 418.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., Act V, sc. iv, and sc. v, 421-2.

Chapter Five

The Older Woman

My intention in this chapter is to explore a stock figure of fun in the Restoration play: the older woman. For me, this character falls into two distinct categories--the more common affected older woman who at times pretends to learning, and the truly learned older woman. I focus on these types because they are not only the most noticeable, but also the most consequential. This study utilizes the following examples: the Widow Blackacre from William Wycherley's The Plain-Dealer (1676), Lady Squeamish from Thomas Otway's Friendship in Fashion (1678), Lady Knowell from Aphra Behn's Sir Patient Fancy (1678), and Lady Fantast from Thomas Shadwell's Bury-Fair (1689). Lady Squeamish and Lady Fantast are the standard sort of Restoration older woman; they are artsy, affected, possessed of the idea that anything French is the zenith of fashion, and stubbornly believe that they are still attractive to young men. The Widow Blackacre and Lady Knowell are learned ladies, made fun of by the other characters, but intelligent and independent-minded. Lady Fantast, unlike the Widow Blackacre, and more especially, Lady Knowell, merely

pretends to learning, although she is convinced that she knows everything. It is notable that all of these characters are portrayed as ridiculous by their creators, but each approach is different. The Widow Blackacre is ridiculous because of her overwhelming obsession with the Law; Lady Squeamish is ridiculous because of her affectation, and her single-minded pursuit of a younger man; Lady Knowell is ridiculous because she parades her learning, and is in love with a younger man; and Lady Fantast is ridiculous because of her arrogance and affectation. Since it is my contention that Behn depicts Lady Knowell as foolish because of the above reasons, not because she is learned, I will discuss her last in order to achieve a strong thematic statement: Behn, in contrast to her male competitors, did not lampoon Lady Knowell for having knowledge.

On the whole, affected older women wish always to remain witty, irresistible, and young--in actuality, to be the heroine. Consequently, the personality of the older woman never fails to elicit laughter from the audience, though it is tinged with snide condescension. The only members of the audience who may have experienced some discomfort watching this character were women past their prime--and during the Restoration, this meant those women not yet thirty and older. The affected older woman is shown to be ruled by folly, hence harmless, by the close of the play. Behn challenged this literary convention by

presenting a learned older woman who, though absurd in some ways, has genuine knowledge--and this may very well have threatened the male members of the audience, because, as we shall see, Lady Knowell triumphs. Wycherley's Widow, on the other hand, loses in the end; Wycherley maintains her foolishness, and punishes her, by providing an outcome which is hardly to her liking. The purpose of describing the affected older woman is to supply a contrast to the older learned woman, who because of her true intelligence, emerges as a more serious character, Lady Knowell more than the Widow Blackacre.

Let me emphasize that some of these "older" women are not elderly in a contemporary context. Within the historical framework of the Restoration era, however, women in their thirties or forties were "older." Remembering that women, in general, got married at what we would consider a very young age, had children almost immediately, and lost their feminine charms early, the student of the Restoration should not be surprised that women in their thirties were considered old, and women in their fifties positively ancient. The double standard was responsible for the idea that women lost their sexual magnetism and desirability at a young age, while men stayed attractive beyond their youth. Since I must be loyal to Restoration attitudes in order to write a reasonably objective dissertation--some bias is always present--the character I write about here must

necessarily be referred to as "older," without modern interference of definition.

Though the foolish older woman became very popular in Restoration drama, she has a long, rich history in literature. When Jean Elisabeth Gagen comments on Ben Jonson's *Madame Would-Be* from his Volpone; or, The Fox (1607), she is describing the Universal Older Woman:

Many of her most objectionable traits have been age-old themes of satire on women. She is excessively vain and berates her maid for allowing one of her curls to hang lower than the other. She dominates her husband and forces him to take a grand tour simply because she likes to travel for culture and savoir faire. Of course, she is forever talking, and nothing short of a miracle can silence her.¹

The components of ridiculous behavior in older women--vanity, affectation, the pursuit of young men, and pretension to learning--constitute the formulation of a systematic attack on these women by most male playwrights in any age. Of course, the occasional female playwright portrayed the older woman in this way too, and Behn is one; she was not completely free of the prejudices of her time. Other examples of the ridiculous older woman from the pens of Restoration dramatists are Lady Flippant from Wycherley's Love in a Wood (1672), Lady Faddle from Crowne's The Country Wit (1675), and Lady Blunder and Lady Youthley from Behn's The Younger Brother (1696). Since the characters listed above are presented in such a similar, stereotypical manner, it is unnecessary to supply quotations from these plays. The term "learned woman" was oxymoronic to most male

playwrights, and because so many of them depicted the stock older woman, mocking her, especially if she had real learning, the inescapable conclusion is that male dramatists did not desire women to have access to education. Perhaps they were intimidated by the very notion, fearing that women could actually better them in this sphere. Education was the province, the privilege, of men, and if a woman dared proclaim her learning--which she had to accomplish on her own, in secret--it must be a ruse, a mere pretense. Although Wycherley's Widow does have some learning, she is sufficiently absurd to warrant his ridicule.

In The Plain-Dealer, the Widow Blackacre is just one of a host of distasteful characters that are perfect targets for Wycherley's scorn in the person of that hater of hypocrisy and affectation, Manly. The Widow has no interest in appearance, quality, and breeding--only the law and its attendant intricacies have validity for her. Perhaps the Widow's knowledge of the law can be challenged by lawyers, but to the layperson, her grasp of the legal domain is impressive. Arthur E. Case and George H. Nettleton claim in an explanatory note to The Plain-Dealer: "For once the widow's Law is at fault," indicating that she is rarely incorrect regarding the law.² The extensive notes provided by Case and Nettleton on law prove that they embarked on a thorough study of this area. As I have no reason to quarrel with their veracity or their scholarship, I will proceed on

the assumption that the Widow understands the law well. That dispensed with, it must be noted that she is a distasteful character, and it is precisely her passion for the law that makes her so. Her name says everything: "Blackacre." It signifies the sowing of destruction; where the Widow treads, live things wither, or, more apropos within the confines of the play, anything of value withers. So consumed is she by the law that nothing else merits her attention. This ceaseless immersion in one aspect of life prevents the Widow from participating more fully in the various experiences that life offers. She neglects human concerns such as love and friendship, for her obsession blinds and deafens her to anything but the "joy" of litigation. It is most unlikely that Wycherley approved of his character's preoccupation. Katharine M. Rogers asserts: "The law, as Wycherley saw it, is institutionalized falsity."³ The others in the play do their best to avoid contact with the Widow, Manly most especially. Manly acts as a vehicle to vent his creator's rage, disgust, and bitterness at a world enamored of triviality and drained of human feeling. The Widow Blackacre and Manly, not caring in the least for one another, cannot have the simplest exchange without coming to verbal blows. In the following instance, she takes umbrage at his implication--to her way of thinking--that she is a woman who squanders her time in social endeavors, though Manly is probably not thinking of

this, and could care even less. Ironically, both characters consider the social amenities to be absolutely worthless:

Manly. Pray tell me, when did you see Olivia?

Widow. I am no visitor but a woman of business, or if I ever visit 'tis only the Chancery Lane ladies, ladies towards the law and not any of your lazy, good-for-nothing flirts, who cannot read law-French, though a gallant writ it.⁴

Despite the fact that the Widow's infatuation with the law renders her an unsavory character, she does possess good points. Katharine M. Rogers declares that though the Widow is fixated on the law, she is unafraid of candid speech: "The widow also uses legal jargon, but unlike the lawyers, says what she means. This unabashed plain speaking, together with her tireless misdirected energy and the legal obsession which blots out everything else from her mind, makes her a richly comic character."⁵ I agree with Rogers that the litigious Widow is a "richly comic character," but her tendency to dissipate her energies in fruitless and often cruel lawsuits stains the comic aspect of her personality. In fact, the Widow is involved in dishonest dealings, as the next section demonstrates.

The Widow, willfully determined to win the lawsuits she so loves to initiate, bribes the Knights of the Post, in the form of monetary compensation, to perjure themselves in her favor, forge deeds and wills, and perform other fraudulent acts. This deceitful conduct not only points up the Widow's dishonesty, but the dishonesty of some in the

legal system as well--a widespread cancer pervading the legal institution that Wycherley conveys so well:

Widow. ...And you have done me many a good job for't: and so, here's to you again.
2 Knight. Why, we have been perjur'd, but six times for you.
1 Knight. Forg'd but four Deeds, with your Husband's last Deed of Gift.
2 Knight. And but three Wills.
1 Knight. And counterfeited Hands and Seals to some six Bonds; I think that's all, Brother.
Widow. Ay, that's all Gentlemen; and so, here's to you again...
Widow. Well, these, and many other shifts, poor Widows are put to sometimes; for every body wou'd be riding a Widow, as they say, and breaking into her Jointure: they think marrying a Widow an easie business, like leaping the Hedge, where another has gone over before; a Widow is a mere gap, a gap with them.⁶

The ribald double entendres of the last passage do not obscure the fact that the Widow has an excellent point about widows being taken advantage of by some men. And though she is not really averse to the opposite sex, she certainly will not allow romantic pleasures to divert her attention from the law. Ironically, in the end, it is the law which betrays the Widow, a reflection of the harsh reality that law, like anything else, can be employed to the advantage of both sides.

Major Oldfox, a ridiculous yet appealing character, has true feelings for the Widow. At the end, he accosts her with his "love," which consists of his romantic scribblings. The Widow mistakes his intentions; she believes the Major

has sexual designs on her. The Major, accompanied by two accomplices, restrains the Widow:

Oldfox. Come, Madam, to be plain with you, I'll be fob'd off no longer. I'll bind her and gag her, but she shall hear me. [Aside. Look you, Friends, there's the Money I promis'd you; and now do you what you promis'd me: here are my Garters, and here's a Gag: you shall be acquainted with my parts, Lady, you shall.

Widow. Acquainted with your parts! A Rape, a Rape-- What, will you ravish me? (She's gaged by waiters.)

Oldfox. Yes, Lady, I will ravish you; but it shall be through the ear, Lady, the ear onely, with my well-pen'd Acrostics.

At this point, Freeman enters the scene, and here begins the disintegration of any status the Widow had. Freeman liberates the Widow from Oldfox's clutches, only to imprison her in another way--a legal maneuver. Freeman has been chasing the Widow for her money throughout the play, and she understands that if she acquiesces to his "suit," she will be at a distinct disadvantage. Also, he is much younger than she is, which only adds fuel to his illegitimate intentions. Since the Widow is disinclined to love or marriage, she can truthfully say to the persistent Freeman: "Fie, fie, I neglect my business with this foolish discourse on love."⁸ But though the Widow has endeavored to keep herself free, her efforts prove futile, because she is finally coerced to settle with Freeman. Jerry, her son, collaborates with Freeman to win what both want: money:

Freeman. What means this, Oldfox? But I'll release you from him: you shall be no man's Prisoner, but mine. Bayliffs, execute your Writ.

1 Bayliff. We Arrest you, in the King's Name, at the Suit of Mr. Freeman, Guardian to Jeremiah Blackacre Esq; in an Action of ten thousand pounds...

Widow. O, Jerry, Child, wilt thou vex again the womb that bore thee?

Jerry. Ay, for bearing me before Wedlock, as you say: But I'll teach you to call a Blackacre a Bastard, tho' you were never so much my Mother...

Freeman. ...you have no other way to release your self, but by the Bonds of Matrimony...

Widow. ...that were but to sue out a Habeas Corpus, for a removal from one Prison to another. Matrimony:

Freeman. Well, Bayliffs, away with her.

Widow. O stay, Sir, can you be so cruel as to bring me under Covert Baron again? and put it out of my power to sue in my own name. Matrimony, to a Woman, is worse than Excommunication, in depriving her of the benefit of the Law: and I wou'd rather be depriv'd of life. But hark you, Sir, I am contented you shou'd hold and enjoy my person by Lease or Patent; but not by the spiritual Patent, call'd a Licence; that is, to have the priviledges of a Husband without the dominion; that is, Durante beneplacito; in consideration of which, I will, out of my Jointure, secure you an Annuity of Three hundred pounds a Year, and pay your debts; and that's all you younger Brothers desire to marry a Widow for, I'm sure.

Freeman. ...Well, Widow, Since thou art so generous, I will be generous too; and if you'll secure me Four hundred pound a year, but during your life, and pay my debts, not above a thousand pound; I'll bate you your person, to dispose of as you please.

Widow. Have a care, Sir, a Settlement without a Consideration, is void in Law: you must do something for't.

Freeman. Pr'ythee then let the Settlement on me be call'd Alimony; and the Consideration our Separation...

Widow. But, what, no other kind of Consideration, Mr. Freeman? Well, a Widow, I see, is a kind of a sine cure, by custom of which the unconscionable Incumbent enjoys the profits, without

any duty, but does that still
elsewhere.⁹

So the "settlement" is completed to the satisfaction of Freeman, and Jerry, who will receive forty pounds annually. The Widow, struggling valiantly to retain her independence, has avoided marriage, but is incarcerated within a financial jail. In order to escape marriage, she has had to settle for paying alimony to Freeman, a man to whom she is not even married--he has extorted her money from her. The situation is ironic in two ways: one pays alimony after marriage and divorce, and the one paying the alimony is invariably the man. Wycherley has switched the obligations stemming from male and female roles, and in doing so, has played a very neat trick indeed on his Widow. The Widow, in trying to extricate herself from impending danger, employs the law; she attempts to secure the position of mistress to reduce Freeman's power over her. She is well aware that women have no control whatsoever in the state of wedlock, for she knows that women are second-class citizens. The Widow Blackacre's independence from men is refreshing. She is a "feminist" in her comprehension that a married woman is under the protection of her husband, and this protection is dubious indeed if he decides that his wife is not entitled to be regarded as a human entity--a most tenuous position. It is entirely the husband's decision, for no one will infringe on his "right" to brutalize his wife. For all the Widow's dependence on the law, she falls

victim to it, and to one of its representatives; Freeman, being a man, in a very real sense is the law. Wycherley's message is clear. The Widow's absolute trust in the law merits punishment, because fixation with an institution riddled with corruption is false loyalty. However, I strongly believe that the message goes further: no woman has the right to concern herself with a male preserve, hence the Widow must pay for her impertinence by being forced to submit to a man who uses what she loves most against her.

Whether Wycherley felt sympathy for women in marriage is less certain. He does permit the Widow to speak her mind about the suffering of married women, and this may indicate compassion for them. Too, there is every suggestion that Wycherley was extremely impatient with the hurtful, shallow mores of his age, so he may have been cognizant that women were the real losers in this society. Nevertheless, there is no absolute equation between disgust with societal values and concern for women--especially in Wycherley, an enigmatic writer. Even though simplistic conclusions about Wycherley's characters should probably be avoided, I believe I can say with some certainty that he succeeded in making the Widow as ridiculous as possible, through her obsession with the law, and her defeat by it at the end of The Plain-Dealer.

Friendship in Fashion, Otway's first comedy, is a bitter, angry social satire, a specialty of Otway's. The

title clearly reflects the author's revulsion for those who care solely about the latest fashion, whether pertaining to the latest crazes in attire, or the latest "ins" and "outs" on the social scene. The latter constitutes the thematic focus of the play, for Otway devotes much attention to broken friendships. Otway, an astute critic of the societal values of his era, like Wycherley, would quite naturally portray a character that embodied the shallowness and cruelty he despised, Lady Squeamish. Though most of the other characters degrade the more exalted human emotions, such as love and friendship, by reducing them to frivolous whims, Lady Squeamish is the quintessence of this concept. And she is not learned like the Widow Blackacre. Otway's older woman is entirely stereotypical, exhibiting the usual traits of this character.

Lady Squeamish is brimming over with vanity, praise for decorum, and in love with the "intrigues of the French Court."¹⁰ Like other older women, she is convinced that younger men find her attractive. The object of her affection is the rakish Valentine. Although Lady Squeamish claims Valentine "has no principles nor breeding," she is in love with him and believes that he has been flirting with her.¹¹ Perhaps she only pretends to be disgusted by the lack of the above qualities--in reality, she may find him more alluring because of this very "roughness." After all, one factor in the personalities of these women is their

penchant for exaggeration and equivocation, the tendency to "protest too much." Therefore, when they saw one thing--mainly about men--the reader would do well to believe the opposite. This is a most fascinating component of the older woman, providing a tantalizing intimation of her true character.

Naturally Valentine is merely toying with Lady Squeamish; he is interested in the younger Camilla. Lady Squeamish is viciously jealous and harbors a thirst for revenge. Since Valentine has been playing with Lady Squeamish's feelings, he deserves to be paid back for his callousness, yet it is difficult to feel sympathy for the older woman when she lusts so strongly for vengeance. Witness the venom in her words: "I shall know all your proceedings and intrigues with Camilla, and be reveng'd on your love to her, for all the Affronts and Injuries you have done to mine."¹² Lady Squeamish's towering rage prevents her from seeing the situation in its true light. It would be far better for all concerned for the young people to be together. This is not the late twentieth century, where the pairing of an older woman with a younger man is basically accepted. How long would any sort of union between Lady Squeamish and Valentine endure? Consequently, she would be happier without Valentine, who will never be faithful to her. Also, genuine love demands genuine concern for the contentment of the one loved. The feelings of Lady

Squeamish for Valentine are most likely just as shallow as his for her, though she thinks she loves him. She is probably nursing an insult to her considerable ego--this is "love in fashion." Readers of Restoration plays have seen promises of retribution many times, but one gets the distinct feeling that Lady Squeamish is deadly serious, that she is not simply posturing when she exclaims: "Ah how I love malice."¹³ On the other hand, perhaps she is merely discharging her pain and rage. But other characters notice that her anger could explode into retaliation. Truman comments: "I see mischief in her eyes, 'tis safer provoking a Lancashire Witch, then an old Mistress; and she as violent in her malice too."¹⁴

Lady Squeamish is also a hypocrite, another common trait in older women of her ilk. She would have the other characters think that she is virtuous when she states that comedies are much too bawdy, and that a real lady should not enjoy reading or seeing them performed. Lady Squeamish extols the moral lessons tragedy offers because the female characters display honor and purity. If Valentine would have her, all her prating about virtue would miraculously subside. She claims that she does not require the approbation of society, that she is quite certain of her honor, but her sincerity is doubtful: "So long as I my self am satisfyd in the Integrity of my Honour, the World is a thing I defy and scorn."¹⁵ When Lady Squeamish speaks of

honor, decorum, and virtue, her words and actions belie those concepts, but when she speaks of revenge against those who have wronged her, there is depth below the surface. The prevailing emotions of Lady Squeamish are vengeance and the jealousy that feeds it, converging to form the prime animating force within her.

Otway's treatment of his older woman suggests that he wants the reader and the audience to comprehend that even though she has been hurt by Valentine, she is not blameless. Lady Squeamish has consented to her own pain by being what she is. Along with others in the play, she conveys the impression that this milieu is a shallow one, inhabited by human baubles. And not for one moment does Otway expect us to be deluded by its glittering facade. There is a palpable danger here; these people are capable of striking with the speed of an aroused viper. In his acuity, Otway is one of the most acerbic Restoration dramatists. The final judgment pronounced on Lady Squeamish is not encouraging--she earns neither her creator's nor our indulgence. The next older woman elicits the same reaction.

Lady Fantast, in Shadwell's Bury-Fair, is one of the most biting portrayals of the older woman. She possesses not a single scrap of decency, so the reader experiences a delicious thrill when she brings about her own humiliation through her hubristic vanity. By this time, Lady Fantast has lost any particle of dignity she may have had--or

thought she had--and she is rendered appropriately absurd by her skillful creator.

Lady Fantast has a daughter, Mrs. Fantast, and both incessantly pester the other characters with their arrogance and folly, particularly the heroine, Gertrude, and her father, Oldwit. The Fantast women make life almost intolerable for Gertrude and Oldwit. The father and daughter, with their fidelity to sincerity and rationality, make a stunning juxtaposition to the mother and daughter, who are dedicated to affectation and foolishness. Gertrude is "nature" while the Fantast duo is "art." Lady Fantast's dialogue is liberally sprinkled with the words "wit," "breeding," and "art." Mrs. Fantast is an exact replica of her mother in everything. The following conversation proves how devoid of depth these "twins" are:

L.Fan. Come, my sweet Daughter, consider what I have said. Thou art in thy maturity of blooming Age; I have bred thee to the very Achme and Perfection of Bury Breeding, which is inferiour to none in this our Island; Dancing, Singing, Ghittar, French Master: And I'll say that for thee, my Jewel, thou hast Sacrific'd all thy Endeavours to attain thy Education; which, corroborated by thy Acuteness of Parts, have render'd thee exactly accomplish'd, and together with the excellence of thy Beauty, justly admir'd by the Amorous Males, and envy'd by the malicious Females.

Mrs. Fan. To all that, which the world calls Wit and Breeding, I have always had a natural tendency, a penchen, deriv'd, as the Learned say, Ex traduce, from your Ladyship: Besides the great Prevalence of your Ladyship's most

shining Example, has perpetually Stimulated me, to the Sacrificing all my Endeavours towards the attaining of those inestimable Jewels; than which, nothing in the Universe can be so much a mon gre, as the French say. And for Beauty, Madam, the Stock I am enrich'd with, comes by emanation from your Ladyship; who has been long held a Paragon of Perfection: most Charmant most Tuant.¹⁶

So many amusing things compete for the reader's attention. Perhaps the most colorful thread running through the exchange is the breeding theme. It is as though Lady Fantast has bred a splendid thoroughbred racehorse--"I have bred thee to the very Achme and Perfection of Bury Breeding"--and her daughter takes great pride in behaving like one--"the Stock I am enrich'd with." The two women also seem to be engaged in a verbal contest in which each is required to produce an encomium of the most pompous, flowery nature.

Their Francophilia is apparent too. Both women feel that the highest "achievement" they can aspire to is marrying a Frenchman, for in their eyes, such a personage is the most exquisite distillate of true culture. Englishmen are so very brutish. How can any civilized lady of delicate sensibility tolerate her crude country-men? This misconception the Fantast clones have about the French, that they are the sole repositories of culture, earns them exactly what they deserve when Mrs. Fantast weds a barber whom both women mistook for a French count. This more than

anything else sends the message that mother and daughter feel no need to look beyond outward show, and they are punished for it. The other characters, who have endured enough nonsense from them, are only too happy to witness their mortification, and justifiably so. Perhaps Gertrude, the total opposite of the Fantast ladies, is most elated:

L. Fan. 'Tis true; this damn'd count is a Barber! The Barber in Cook-Row knows him, and has seen him often at London.
Mrs. Fan. I am undone for ever! Lost! Wretched! Miserable! Oh me! I will hide my Head within some Hole, and ne'r be seen again.
Gert. How? what, this man of Quality and Breeding, a Barber!
L. Fan. What's that to you, Minx?
Gert. Cou'd you mistake in Quality, and Breeding!
Mrs. Fan. Oh, Impertinante!
1 La. What, marry'd to a Barber!
Gert. How? Marry'd!
2 La. What pity 'tis?¹⁷

Gertrude, who is considerably amused with this situation, displays various shadings of tone: sarcasm, flippancy, and mock-innocence. She attacks the Fantast women with the ideas most important to them--"quality" and "breeding"--a sweet revenge indeed. Gertrude lets them know that what they thought they were experts on, they in truth know nothing about. And how revealing that the Fantast ladies, in their abject humiliation, have misplaced their haughty speech patterns--impostors to class all along, and this conveyed to the reader with one event: a marriage. The marriage was not forced. Mrs. Fantast entered into it with full volition, but with eyes, mind, and heart closed to the factors that are requisite in order to constitute a real

marriage. This situation is a damning commentary on Lady Fantast and Mrs. Fantast.

The verdict on Lady Fantast? We have no sympathy for her; her creator does not intend that we do. She and her daughter are demoted to what they always were--mere trinkets--and Shadwell imparts this to the reader when they realize that they have duped themselves. Lady Fantast is a standard issue Restoration older woman, but due to Shadwell's brilliantly humorous depiction, she stands apart.

There is a relevant issue that relates to the punishment the Fantast women receive as Bury-Fair terminates. Punishment presupposes immorality of some sort. Lady Fantast and her daughter have been immoral in the sense that they disregard the feelings of others, while attending only to their own desires, desires permeated by selfishness and shallowness. The retribution they are forced to endure in the shape of an unwanted marriage for Mrs. Fantast is a payback for their immorality. When we think of immorality in conjunction with Restoration drama, we usually associate it with sexual debauchery--but here, this is not the case, and the immorality of the Fantast women is, in an alarming way, worse than sexual debauchery. Shadwell, responding to the immoral thoughts and deeds of his older woman and her daughter, chastens them with a moral lesson. There are some critics who propose that the moral lesson figures prominently in Shadwell's work, that it constitutes the crux

of his plays. One such critic is John Harrington Smith, who discussed this idea, among others, in his article "The Ladies and The Change in Comedy" (Modern Philology, 46, 1948).

Robert D. Hume responded to Smith's theories in his article "'The Change in Comedy': Cynical Versus Exemplary Comedy on the London Stage, 1678-1693" in Essays in Theatre (1983), reconsidering Smith's ideas within the context of his reassessment of Restoration drama. One could say that Hume's article is a synopsis of his book The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (1976), a microcosm of the macrocosm. The focus of the Smith article, as related by Hume, is the concept that sex comedy flourished in the 1670's, and that this type of comedy provoked retaliation by Shadwell, who invented the exemplary method designed to remedy the immorality that he believed characterized the plays of the 1670's. Smith claims that another contingent--the ladies--objected to the debauchery in the plays of this decade; they were so scandalized by what they saw that they felt it their duty to "campaign" for a change which would result in moral comedies. Hence, the drama proceeded smoothly from the Wycherleyan phase to Sentimental comedy, exemplified by such plays as Colley Cibber's Love's Last Shift (1696), which was so saccharine that Sir John Vanbrugh attacked it in his satirical The Relapse; or, Virtue in Danger (1696), Cibber's The Careless

Husband (1704), and Sir Richard Steele's The Conscious Lovers (1722). Smith attempted to trace the progress from 1670's sex comedy to the exemplary/sentimental comedy of the 1690's, and in the process, according to Hume, Smith oversimplified a literary period of richness, complexity, and seeming contradictions. Hume states that exemplary comedy did not magically appear in the 1690's; traces of it can be detected much earlier. The comedy of the 1690's, Hume declares:

...should be seen as a return to longstanding generic norms, not as a reaction against the sex comedies of the 1670s...He (Smith) saw the "change" as the result of a protest against the "Restoration spirit" a protest that enforced adoption of a new method embodying exemplary principles...Smith's model of the change is based on a false dichotomy. Libertine comedy (alias cynical comedy, or sex or cuckolding comedy) was important and highly visible in the seventies and to a lesser degree in the eighties--but at no time was it genuinely dominant ...As early as the 1660s writers with a strong didactic bent (particularly Shadwell) started to import into comedy the exemplary method characteristic of many "Fletcherian" tragicomedies...Apparently, "the Ladies" clamored against sex but did not champion exemplary comedy.¹⁸

Since, as Hume asserts, other playwrights employed the "exemplary method," Shadwell should not be credited with its creation. Yes, Shadwell had a moral or "strong didactic bent," but he is also risque at times, and this may impact on his moral messages, diminishing their power.

Nonetheless, I am convinced that a crucial component of Bury-Fair is the moral lesson doled out to the Fantast women. I do not contend that Shadwell is being puritanical here; the Fantast ladies are so disagreeable that one cannot

sympathize with their plight. Shadwell may not have invented exemplary comedy, but he certainly utilized its messages in some of his plays.

For a moment, I would like to explore the other three plays discussed in this chapter, all of which were written in the 1670's, in connection to the Hume theory. The Plain-Dealer can be called "cynical." The term would reflect Wycherley's sourness and cynicism concerning his disgust with the superficial codes of his society. But the play cannot, no matter the theoretical acrobatics which might be used, be called a "sex comedy." The Plain-Dealer is but one example that fails to comply with the sex comedy theory of the 1670's advanced by Smith. Friendship in Fashion is also cynical, because Otway felt profound aversion for the manner in which people treated each other in a society beset with hypocrisy and disdain for decency. The play can be termed a sex comedy--it is certainly risqué--but the abhorrence Otway evinces for Lady Squeamish and other characters does have a mitigating effect on the ribald aspect of Friendship in Fashion. In my estimation, cynical comedy and sex comedy are two distinct categories, though they may share elements in common. If Smith considered the above plays to be representative of cynical comedy, I would agree, but if he thought of them as sex comedies, I would disagree. At any rate, the fact that exceptions exist, as Hume notes, discredits Smith's theory to a rather large

extent. This shows that trying to squeeze plays--or any other literary genre--into categories according to decades fails to take into account the exceptions that emasculate categorical conjecture; and such a stance by its very nature misrepresents literary periods by disregarding the beauty of variety. Sir Patient Fancy, in contrast to the previous plays, is, I feel, a sex comedy. It is replete with sexual escapades of the most bawdy nature. For those not of a puritanical bent, this aspect of the play is what makes it so humorous. Calling Sir Patient Fancy cynical is not an accurate description, however. Perhaps Behn is cynical about the ways of the world in evidence when Lucretia and Isabella attack forced marriage, and when Lady Fancy bemoans her marriage to Sir Patient, but the main thrust of the play is humorous and this softens any cynicism present. In turning to Lady Knowell, she may reflect some cynicism on the part of her creator for a world which denies learning to women--yet, Lady Knowell is a funny character, consequently I believe that she and the comedy as a whole belie cynicism.

Lady Knowell, though a ridiculous woman, is certainly not an unpleasant one. Behn probably does not intend her name to be satiric; Lady Knowell truly does "know well." This older woman has learning--there is no ruse here. In the Argument, Behn describes her as "the pedantic Lady Knowell."¹⁹ This description fits her well, because the word "pedantic" refers to an ostentatious display of

knowledge which is Lady Knowell's dominant characteristic. It is this trait that forms the basis of my approach to Lady Knowell. She flaunts her knowledge to anyone who enters her proximity, spouting names of great authors, the books they wrote, and Greek and Latin words and phrases. I contend that Behn objected to this showing off, and considered Lady Knowell ridiculous because of it--not for her learning. Behn's treatment of Lady Knowell suggests that parading one's learning is foolish, while maintaining a sedate dignity about it is desirable. When Lady Knowell bombards Leander, the young man in whom she is romantically interested, with an interminable speech loaded with her knowledge, the reader can only sympathize with him. There are barely concealed hints at a possible love affair with him too, when she speaks of the affairs between fictional lovers:

L. Kno. Ay, Mr. Fancy, in Consultation with the Antients.--Oh the delight of Books! When I was of their age, I always imploy'd my looser Hours in reading--if serious, 'twas Tacitus, Seneca, Plutarch's Morals, or some such useful Author; if in an Humour gay, I was for the Poetry, Virgil, Homer or Tasso. Oh that Love between Renaldo and Armida, Mr. Fancy! Ah the Caresses that fair Corcereis gave, and received from the young Warrior, ah how soft, delicate and tender! Upon my Honour I cannot read them in the Excellence of their Original Language, without I know not what Emotions.

Lean. Methinks 'tis very well in our Mother Tongue, Madam.

L. Kno. O, faugh, Mr. Fancy, what have you said, Mother Tongue! Can any thing that's great or moving be express'd in filthy English?--I'll give you an Energetical proof, Mr. Fancy; observe by divine Homer in the Grecian Language--Ton d'

apamibominous prosipne podas ochus Achilleus!
Ah how it sounds! which English't dwindles into
the most grating stuff:--Then the swift-foot
Achilles made reply: oh, faugh.
Lucr. So now my Mother's in her right Sphere.²⁰

It is to be expected that a learned woman would arouse animosity, primarily in the male characters, and Lady Knowell's passion for making a spectacle of her learning serves to create more rancor. Sir Patient is most distressed by Lady Knowell. He cannot abide her--she is like an itch which refuses to depart. Like the vast majority of men at the time, he believes that knowledge is forbidden to the female gender, and that even if women were to be permitted access to it, they could not possibly grasp any subject of import--after all, women do not possess the requisite mental faculties. Lady Knowell has not only trodden on the male preserve of learning, but she has had the gall to usurp Greek and Latin, the subjects constituting the keys to an exclusive knowledge only men had the "right" to enjoy. What is unendurable to Sir Patient is that Lady Knowell has the temerity to proudly display her prowess in these subjects; the fact that this usurper is "unladylike" enough to do this in the company of men, to whom she is required to defer, is quite unconscionable. Sir Patient may speak for some of the other characters when he calls Lady Knowell "that walking Library of Profane Books," and "that Lady of eternal Noise and hard words."²¹ It is difficult to take him seriously, because he is an ineffectual old man

who poses no danger to Lady Knowell, or for that matter, the other characters. Significantly, he does not speak for Behn, who sees her learned older woman as a positive force because of her learning. The petty grudges of the cranky Sir Patient have no power to harm Lady Knowell--Behn allows her to triumph at the end with her pride intact. Katharine M. Rogers is right: "It is not the female intellectual who is humiliated at the end of the play, but her anti-feminist adversary."²² Perhaps we can perceive a reflection of Behn in the portrait of Lady Knowell: though Behn was denied a classical education, as all women were, she respected learning, and was aware of the opportunities it afforded, opportunities hoarded by ignorant, frightened men.

Lady Knowell's learning is not restricted to Greek and Latin. She, obviously believing in a "well-rounded education," possesses knowledge of various subjects; two are medicine and things Arabic. When Sir Patient, a fierce hypochondriac, has one of his episodes, she assures Lady Fancy that her husband has let his imagination run riot, a not uncommon occurrence with the old man. After Lady Knowell laments Lady Fancy's situation, she proceeds with her singular diagnosis:

L. Kno. A Slave, a very Household Drudge.--Oh, faugh, come never grieve;--for, Madam, his Disease is nothing but imagination, a Melancholy which arises from the Livers, Spleen, and Membrane call'd Mesenterium; the Arabians name the Distemper Myrathial, and we have here in England, Hypochondriacal Melancholy; I cou'd

prescribe a most potent Remedy, but that I am loth to Stir the Envy of the College.²³

For all her learning Lady Knowell still finds time for romance. She is not at all like the Widow Blackacre, who feels that romance is an empty pursuit. Lady Knowell's interest in a younger man is a trait she shares with most older women, and she comports herself as foolishly as they do. But this fault is almost trifling, for she is not consumed by love, and there is no desire for vengeance, as we saw with Lady Squeamish. Lady Knowell ultimately understands that the young man to whom she is attracted, Leander, is much better suited to her daughter, Lucretia. Otway's Lady Squeamish was unable to think in these terms, that young people belong together--if they love one another. Of course, the fact that her daughter is involved plays no small part in helping Lady Knowell to relinquish Leander. Lady Knowell surrenders him to Lucretia with surprising haste, as though she is not serious. It looks as if she is attempting to avoid appearing ridiculous for falling in love with an unsuitable man, not as though she cares about her daughter. She might simply be anxious to save face. Jean Elisabeth Gagen avers: "She hands Leander over to Lucretia with the unconvincing explanation that she merely wanted to test their love for each other."²⁴ Katharine M. Rogers says much the same thing, but she implies that Behn did not want the reader or the audience to view Lady Knowell in a negative manner: "But, having set her up as an amorous old

woman, Behn softens the picture by letting her graciously hand over Leander to Lucretia, saying she was only testing his love for her daughter."²⁵ Lady Knowell's folly in chasing a man young enough to be her son does lend itself to dispute, and it is difficult to explain away--maybe, however, there is no reason to do so. The older woman's feelings for Leander do make her a ridiculous figure, in tandem with her overt tendency to parade her knowledge, and I think Behn wanted to get these ideas across to us. But I concur with Rogers that Behn did try to "soften the picture" of Lady Knowell by allowing her to act "graciously" in setting Leander free. First, I have no doubt that despite Lady Knowell's somewhat annoying characteristics, Behn liked and approved of her. Second, Behn may have depicted Lady Knowell as attracted to a younger man because that was a literary convention to which most dramatists adhered when portraying the older woman. When Behn realized that the audience might jeer at Lady Knowell for her amorous inclinations, perhaps she hastily decided to "mend fences" to deflect this. Of course, Lady Knowell would have been laughed at in any case--she is a humorous character. In further defense of Lady Knowell's admittedly ridiculous passion for Leander, at least she is able to love; this capacity for love makes her more human, more complete, and hence more sympathetic to Behn and the audience. There are those who might feel that being independent and

knowledgeable precludes love, such are the silly ideas people have. This is not so, for the love Lady Knowell experiences contributes to her complexity--and the ability to get involved in the various aspects of life renders Behn's female scholar admirable and appealing.

The previous exploration of Lady Knowell, primarily the textual evidence, brings this discussion to a most important issue. Sir Patient Fancy, one of Behn's most derivative plays, prods the reader to question whether Lady Knowell is appreciably different from Molière's learned ladies in his Les Femmes Savantes (1672). Jean Elisabeth Gagen and Katharine M. Rogers unequivocally state that Lady Knowell is very different. Gagen comments:

Interestingly enough, the first learned lady to enter Restoration comedy appears in a play written by Aphra Behn. She is the pompous Lady Knowell in Sir Patient Fancy (1678). Though a minor character, she has an important role in the development of the plot. She may have been suggested by the amorous Belise in Molière's Les Femmes Savantes, but Aphra Behn's treatment of her shows an important variation. Whereas Molière had aimed to show his female scholars the presumption of their ways, Aphra Behn allows Lady Knowell to triumph over her traducers and eventually to win our sympathy, and liking.²⁶

Rogers comments:

Lady Knowell is treated with significantly more sympathy than the stock learned lady of seventeenth century drama. Unlike Molière's Femmes Savantes and their innumerable English imitations, she is genuinely learned and genuinely enthusiastic about learning: it would be a real treat for her to laugh over Martial's epigrams with Leander.²⁷

Not only am I in complete agreement with Gagen and Rogers, but as I have demonstrated with examples from the text, Lady

Knowell is truly learned. Her knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages is impressively extensive, and she has read--and absorbed--the great authors. She also has a working knowledge of the medical practices of her age, and an understanding of esoteric subjects with which most men were not familiar, such as some Arabic medical works. Lady Knowell is described as learned by other characters--for them it is a *donnée*--and by Behn herself. It is impossible to claim that Lady Knowell is not learned, that she is perpetrating a fraud, given all the evidence. Let us suppose, to pay our respects to the opposing viewpoint, that Lady Knowell's incessant talk about the great writers, their books, and the Greek and Latin terms, etc., was gleaned from memorization: Lady Knowell perused the contents of a man's study, committed important material to memory, then spews it forth like a trained parrot. Even if this were so, the astonishing depth and breadth of her learning would definitely give one pause--this is not undigested knowledge. I merely quoted a few passages from the play; there are many more which demonstrate her learning. Molière's women, as Donald M. Frame says, "regularly deceive themselves, constructing a verbal world and taking it to be real."²⁸ Lady Knowell, while chattering over-much, still comprehends that words only have value when related to events in the real world; we saw this when she used knowledgeable words to diagnose Sir Patient Fancy. Lady Knowell does bear some

resemblance to the "learned" ladies of Molière, and this similarity consists in her being ridiculous in some ways. But her passion for Leander and her display of her learning are not serious defects. And while Molière's treatment of his women is sexist--they are shown "the presumption of their ways" in Gagen's words--Behn's treatment of Lady Knowell is the opposite. Behn neither attempts nor wants to "correct" Lady Knowell's conduct. She heartily approves of her older woman's learning and believes that women are entitled to the same.

Even though Lady Knowell gives in to folly when she flaunts her knowledge, there are quite likely mitigating circumstances. All avenues of scholastic interchange were closed to her. Being a woman, she could not exchange ideas with academics, for instance, because they were men participating in a male domain. The other characters in the play cannot match her level of learning, which probably induces frustration in her. Prohibited from engaging in serious conversation with those who have learning--men--and far surpassing her fellow characters in intellect, she has no satisfying outlet for her knowledge. Consequently, everyone within earshot is treated to her pedantry. Yet, despite all of this, it seems as if she is secure within herself, and has come to terms with the world as it stands. One critical factor sets Lady Knowell apart from other older women--she truly does "know well."

In summation, a brief look back at the other older women will be beneficial. Wycherley's Widow Blackacre is so wrapped up in the law that she is almost incapable of interest in anything else, including love; a genuine love relationship is simply not on her agenda. Otway's Lady Squeamish, consumed by an unhealthy passion for Valentine, and the desire for revenge, takes time off from these "interests" only to indulge herself with claims of false virtue. Shadwell's Lady Fantast has no conception of the nature of real love and does not even care; she is in love with appearance, never bothering to delve beneath the surface of anything. These characters have neither the sympathy of their creators nor the sympathy of the reader. While Behn's Lady Knowell is susceptible to folly, Behn enables her to maintain her dignity through her love of learning and her feelings for others. She is a human character--this is the triumph of Lady Knowell and Aphra Behn.

ENDNOTES

1. Jean Elisabeth Gagen, The New Woman: Her Emergence in English Drama, 1660-1730, (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1954), 23. This valuable study is a must for those interested in how the learned woman has traditionally been presented. More fascinating perhaps, is that Gagen provides examples of female intellectuals who depart from the norm.

2. Arthur E. Case and George H. Nettleton, British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan, George Winchester Stone, Jr., revised, (1939; reprint Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 230.

3. Rogers, William Wycherley, 90.

4. Wycherley, The Plain-Dealer, Act I, sc. i, in Complete Plays, 370-1.

5. Rogers, William Wycherley, 91.

6. Wycherley, The Plain-Dealer, in Complete Plays, 505-7 (Act V, sc. i).

7. Ibid., 507 (Act V, sc. i).

8. Ibid., 406 (Act II, sc. i).

9. Ibid., 507-9 (Act V, sc. i).

10. Otway, Friendship in Fashion, I, 348 (Act I).

11. Ibid., Act I, I, 347.

12. Ibid., Act III, I, 374.

13. Ibid., 382.

14. Ibid., 378.

15. Ibid., Act IV, I, 393.

16. Shadwell, Bury-Fair, in The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, IV, 313 (Act II, sc. i).

17. Ibid., 365, Act V, sc. i.
18. Robert D. Hume, "'The Change in Comedy': Cynical Versus Exemplary Comedy on the London Stage, 1678-1693," Essays in Theatre, I, (May, 1983), 102, 104, 113-4, 115, 116.
19. Behn, Sir Patient Fancy, in Works, IV, 3 (Argument).
20. Ibid., Act I, sc. i, IV, 13-4.
21. Ibid., Act II, sc. i, IV, 31-2.
22. Rogers, Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England, 100. This book, by a pioneer in feminist studies, is essential for those who wish to know how women writers have been oppressed and how many transcended that oppression. Rogers has been instrumental in bringing forgotten or neglected female authors to the attention of the academic world. She instructs the reader to understand that the women discussed in her book were not feminists in the modern sense of the word--for their time, however, they were remarkably radical.
23. Behn, Sir Patient Fancy, in Works, IV, 45 (Act III, sc. i).
24. Gagen, 45.
25. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in Dictionary of Literary Biography, 7.
26. Gagen, 44.
27. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in DLB, 80, 7.
28. Donald M. Frame, Molière: The Misanthrope and Other Plays, (New York: New American Library, 1968), 360.

Chapter Six

The Female Warrior

The aim of this chapter is to spotlight a character that is present in many Restoration plays: the cross-dressing female. Of course, donning pants does not inevitably lead these women to fight; two examples are Mrs. Margery Pinchwife from William Wycherley's The Country Wife (1675), and Fidelia from his The Plain-Dealer (1676).

Putting a female character in male attire is one thing--having her engage in swordplay is quite another, for a fight scene involving women presents problems for a dramatist writing a comedy. Fights are not appropriate to the genre because they are a serious matter. The playwright cannot "kill off" any character about whom the audience cares. Hence, when an author includes a fight scene in a comedy, he/she attempts to dilute the gravity by making the scene comical, as I will show. But not all playwrights present comic fight scenes, and this will also be demonstrated.

The cross-dressing female is involved in what is termed the "breeches role," sometimes called the "breeches part." Both the character and the role are common enough to be defined as stock. Consequently, the female warrior is

usually depicted in a rather pedestrian manner--dressed in male raiment while sometimes taking part in a half-hearted swordplay that reveals Restoration stereotypes regarding the "nature" of women. Fighting is the traditional domain of men, so when women do battle, they are incapable of fighting like men--with aggression and the real desire to kill. Occasionally, the fighting woman is portrayed in a more original way, as we shall see in two Behn plays. Ben Ross Schneider, Jr. supplies an instructive overview of the woman in the "breeches role," and avers that some of these characters were more courageous than the men:

We usually explain the large number of "breeches" parts for women in Restoration comedy as excuses, in an age of long dresses, for actresses to show their legs. But in a context that gives such emphasis to manly virtues and attacks effeminacy in fops, a woman strutting about in breeches gives playwrights an opportunity, which they seldom miss, to suggest that some women can be better men than some men. When the heroine puts on breeches, she also wears a sword, and it is almost inevitable that her creator will invent a situation in which she will be required to use it. The comic possibilities seem to be too great to resist. At the same time the young lady always surprises us by being less timorous when challenged than her sex has conditioned us to expect, so that dramatists are severely taxed to find devices that will prevent her from being killed by her experienced opponent.¹

I do not know which playwrights Schneider has in mind when he asserts that they wished to show women as more manly than men and "less timorous" than we anticipate. Two plays to be analyzed here, one by Dryden, the other by D'Urfey, provide an alternative view from Schneider's.

The cross-dressing female, whether or not she fights, is an old, familiar theme in literature. She has been utilized by many writers in many ages. Two such authors are Ludovico Ariosto and Edmund Spenser. Though not dramatists, both depicted women who are the quintessence of the fighting female. Ariosto's female knight, Bradamante, in Orlando Furioso (1516), is in love with Ruggiero, and she initiates a quest to locate him. Bradamante is not merely a woman for Ariosto, but an ideal, an abstract reflecting perfect love.² Spenser's female knight, Britomartis, in The Faerie Queene (1596), perhaps patterned after Bradamante, also enters into a search for her lover, Arthegall. She too is an ideal, as all Spenser's characters are. The Faerie Queene, being an allegory, presents Britomartis as a symbol, a signification, of perfect love, chastity, and for the purposes of The Faerie Queene, Britain's military puissance.³ In contrast, the female warriors of the Restoration did not stagger under the weight of abstraction, for in an age that did not consider allegory nearly as important as it was in the sixteenth century, symbolic representation of sublime ideals was not on the agenda of Restoration dramatists. Some readers might view the Widow Ranter, for instance, as a symbol of Behn's "feminism," her fervent wish that the feelings of women should be recognized, and I would not be inclined to argue strenuously with this perception. But the Widow is a far

cry from allegorical characterization--and she is so vitally alive that she almost belies symbolism.

I will concentrate on the following female warriors: Honoria and Angellina in John Dryden's The Rival Ladies (1664), the title character in Thomas D'Urfey's Madam Fickle; or, The Witty False One (1676), Mrs. Gripe in Thomas Shadwell's The Woman-Captain (1679), Cleomena in Aphra Behn's The Young King; or, The Mistake (1679), and the title character in Behn's The Widow Ranter; or, The History of Bacon in Virginia (1690-posthumously produced). I have selected these particular characters because they represent a wide personality spectrum. Dryden's and D'Urfey's female warriors are entirely stereotypical. Shadwell's creation supplies a contrast to the former, in that she is not stereotypical--and it is important to discuss at least one male playwright's female warrior who diverges from the norm. In actuality, Shadwell is the only male Restoration dramatist I could discover who offers a different type of female fighter. Behn's Cleomena is an extremely complex character, possibly reflecting her creator's early confusion as the first professional woman writer. The Widow Ranter is, in my view, the ultimate embodiment of Behn's desire for equality between the sexes--not in the contemporary sense, of course, but radical for the Restoration. In The Widow Ranter, Behn portrays a male character, Daring, the Widow's romantic interest, who is not threatened by her actions and

knowledge of herself. All of these characters are similar in at least one way--they are involved in some type of fight scene. As demonstrated below, Dryden's Honoria and Angellina "do battle" as stereotypical women.

In The Rival Ladies, Dryden features fighting women who, though they have a charming little fight scene, are characters with little or no social relevance. When they fight, Honoria and Angellina still act like women--an astute observer would notice that although the women are garbed as men, they cannot be mistaken for men. Indeed, the reason that Honoria and Angellina engage in combat is offensively sexist in the eyes of feminist scholars. As I am taking a feminist position in my approach to Behn and her male colleagues, I most definitely concur. These two women fight only because they are both intent on obtaining the love of Gonsalvo, embodying the age-old idea that women are always rivals for the attention of a man. The title of the play gets this across quite clearly. Dryden's "warriors" have no comprehension that women are subjugated by a male-dominated society, and the reason for their fight serves to reinforce this idea. Each is determined to eliminate her rival to Gonsalvo's affections. But Honoria and Angellina are frightened of getting within too close proximity of one another. The potential for bloodshed has a sobering effect on them, thus prohibiting the two ladies from undertaking a real fight. In consequence of their fears, their "war" is

conducted more on a verbal plane than a physical one, conveying that they are more content with insults than injuries. Of course, this is admirable in a way--Honorina and Angellina do not really want to hurt each other, but in the context of this chapter, this fact is of peripheral significance. Dryden's wit is evident in the following fight scene between Honorina, disguised as Hippolito, and Angellina, disguised as Amideo:

- Hip. I'll bit out hungry Morsels from those plump Cheeks, but I will make 'um thinner.
Amid. I'd beat thee to the Blackness of a Moor, but that the features of thy Face are Such; Such Damnable, invincible good Features, that as an Ethiop thou wouldst't still be lov'd.
Hip. I'll quite unbend that black Bow o'r thine Eyes; I'll Murther thee, and Julia shall have him, rather than thou.
Amid. I'll Kill both thee and her rather than any one but I shall have him.
Hip. Come on, thou Witch.
Amid. Have at thy Heart, thou Syren. [They draw, and Fight awkwardly, not coming near one another].⁴

It is ironic that while hurling insults, Angellina/Amideo compliments Honorina/Hippolito. Honorina is more earnest in her hatred of Angellina; she is far more single-minded in her attack. She does not vacillate, while her opponent seems not quite certain of the position she should take. The language employed by the foes, apart from Angellina's compliment, suggests that they truly wish to destroy each other. Dryden's stage directions at the end, however, contradict this idea. It seems obvious that Dryden meant the reader and the audience to understand that his female warriors are not serious about a genuine fight where either

or both could be injured or killed. Since Honoria and Angellina are major characters, both of whom the reader is supposed to care for, their creator would have been a fool to expose them to actual danger, and the possibility of death--this is a comedy. Perhaps this is the reason why Dryden wrote the scene as he did; any serious intent to kill on the part of his female warriors would have undermined the comedic imperative, so it was necessary to create a fight scene wherein the characters indulge in slander rather than death blows. Nevertheless, this does not erase the sexism for the feminist reader. Honoria and Angellina are preoccupied with appearance, slinging jibes about physiological attributes, something the so-called catty female is famous for in the opinion of those who see women as trifling, superficial creatures. Their fight scene is a confirmation of the way many men apparently think women fight. Whether Dryden intended to denigrate women with the scene is debatable, but the indication is there. The next female warrior is similar in personality to Honoria and Angellina.

Madam Fickle is D'Urfey's second play and first comedy. The title character, not an admirable woman, seeks vengeance on her husband, Friendlove, for the wrongs he has committed against her. He has been unfaithful to her, and for this, she does have a right to retaliate, but the manner in which she does so is just as reprehensible as her

husband's actions. She takes various lovers, with Bellamore and Manley leading the pack. Both men do not realize until the end that they have been sharing Madam Fickle, so cleverly deceitful has she been. Manley exclaims when the truth comes to light: "'Tis plain now that she has entertain'd us all with equal caresses, and by taking a several name has thus long kept us ignorant."⁵ Friendlove assumes a disguise in order to spy on his wife; he becomes the servant, Dorrel, and watches her with her lovers. What is truly unbelievable is that he forgives her infidelities--probably because he has done the same--and the play features a reconciliation scene between husband and wife at the end when Dorrel reveals himself as Friendlove. He says to Madam Fickle: "I swear I have been cruel to thy virtue, but my whole life shall sue to make amends."⁶

Madam Fickle does have weaknesses--one being the reconciliation scene, which strains the reader's capacity to suspend her/his disbelief. After all, how many spouses would forgive or forget infidelity, most especially after witnessing it! However, in D'Urfey's defense, this is a comedy and so requires a happy ending. Another weakness of the play is Madam Fickle's "fight scene," in which she does not fight, but merely boasts of her passion for battle. At least, Honoria and Angellina fight, albeit hesitantly. Madam Fickle's false bravado is humorous, but entirely gratuitous. Jack Vaughn comments:

Madam Fickle's disguise in the fifth act also is poorly motivated and serves no purpose other than to afford the actress a "breeches" scene in which she can strut and swagger about the stage in imitation of a town bully. This scene, with its flamboyant speech at lines 149-62, is a tour de force for the actress and was probably received with much applause from the audience. The fact remains, however, that the disguise is unmotivated.⁷

The entire fight scene appears below. Vaughn is correct in claiming that any actress playing the role of Madam Fickle would garner much applause, for the scene is remarkable both for her braggadocio and excessive emphasis on blood and gore:

Harry. Hark ye, dare you fight, Sir?

Fickle. Yes, Sir, with you if you dare, Sir! fight! Blood of the heroes, d'ee question it? There's my glove. I'll fight you all three; appoint your place and time.

Manley. The soul of a gyant by Heav'n, a very Devil in decimo sexto.

Fickle. I scorn to win a lady of her perfections, with the loss but of a single drop of blood. A river full I say, my veins drawn dry, and on the active gore fierce atoms darting to win my love through streams of death and horror. I'll bathe my lips in gore, kiss bleeding wounds, cleave helmets, stand a breach, and dare a cannon, divide a heart in two, hah! Hah!--'Tis done, Soul of Felona, I'll exhaust a flood, turn Earth to chaos, oceans into blood. Consume your timorous cringing amorists, that would possess their Heav'n, but dare not bleed for't. Blood is my province; therefore with you all am I resolv'd to fight. A single man's too poor for my revenge. All, all I say, and all at once; 'tis base else.⁸

A fascinating juxtaposition exists between the inherent gravity of Madam Fickle's blank verse and her true character--if someone "called her bluff" by trying to fight with her, she would hastily surrender her sword. D'Urfey may have intended this contrast between the seriousness of

the blank verse and her true timidity. Blank verse, designed to reflect the stature of august characters, throws this silly woman's personality into stunning relief. Also, Madam Fickle's mere posturing mirrors D'Urfey's lack of interest in social commentary. His aim was to craft a light, innocuous play, so Madam Fickle can hardly stand as a symbol of female independence. This play was his premier effort at comedy, hence it is unlikely that he would jeopardize its success by sending a mixed message. And since the "fight scene" was probably written just to amuse the audience, its humor could relate to the fact that Madam Fickle is not intended to be killed--even though she is an unsavory character, displaying callousness toward the other characters, she is the title character and cannot die.

The fact that Vaughn utilizes the term "breeches scene" is important. In many plays including cross-dressing women, the disguise is employed for either much of the play, as with Shakespeare's Rosalind in As You Like It (1599), or in several scenes, as with Behn's Cleomena. There are, of course, numerous examples. Quite naturally then, the standard term is "breeches role," signifying a lengthy disguise. Conversely, we have the single, gratuitous transvestite fight scene in Madam Fickle, hence the reason why Vaughn uses the uncommon term "breeches scene."

In Shadwell's The Woman-Captain, there is a far more substantial female warrior, Mrs. Gripe, alias the Woman

Captain. The play is a farce, a delightful fantasy, in Robert D. Hume's words, "low, farcical, and good-humored."⁹ Mrs. Gripe is completely aware of the suffering of her gender in a society created by men for men, and she is not at all reticent about expressing her outrage--this is a serious aspect of the play, in my estimation, but it does not detract from its comic nature. Mrs. Gripe is married to the overbearing and jealous Mr. Gripe, a man she did not choose; this is the familiar and believable situation of forced marriage. She complains: "My mother betray'd me in my Youth to the Slavery of thy Age."¹⁰ Mrs. Gripe bucks against the restraints placed on her by her unhappy union and speaks in the language of liberation to declare her predicament, to wage war against her repressive husband, and in effect to extend that war to all men who refuse to acknowledge the humanity of their spouses:

Mrs. Gripe. Will this Tyrannie never be at an end?
 Must I be always thus abridg'd of
 Liberty?...I will have the liberty of a
 She-Subject of England...I'll make all
 Husbands have a care, how by Injuries
 they sower their Wive's love into
 revenge, or their meekness into rage."¹¹

This is the vocabulary of rebellion--"Tyrannie," "abridg'd of Liberty," and the demand "I will have the liberty of a She-Subject of England." Yet there is something strange here. How can Mrs. Gripe expect liberty from a world bent on preventing her from obtaining it? She speaks as though liberty is a reality. This is but one way in which Shadwell

ridicules her--the folly of a woman actually believing that she and women in general have the right to freedom, and it reveals much about Shadwell's attitudes toward women.

For Mrs. Gripe there is one recourse; she must escape from the oppressive Mr. Gripe. She has a twin brother who is an officer, a propitious situation indeed. This will serve to facilitate her flight, so she impersonates him. Mrs. Gripe has now transformed herself into the Woman Captain, and, in accordance with this new persona as a man, she embarks on a male adventure: macho strutting, drinking, and even courting the fawning females. In consequence, she becomes rather abrasive. This also makes her ridiculous; the absurd extremity of her Amazonian disguise makes her most amusing to her creator. We too are meant to view the situation in this way. However preposterous Mrs. Gripe is in her male attire, there is the suggestion that Shadwell felt intimidated by the very idea of a woman daring to do what men do. One can argue that this applies to most male Restoration playwrights. Shadwell may be sending a message to the female members of his audience: if they are unnatural enough to forsake their womanly role, there are male dramatists who will remind them of that role by depicting female characters as ludicrous because they insist on their "liberty."

Shadwell is a playwright who cannot be credited with positive portrayals of women. He assaults the reader with

an assemblage of distasteful females; to call him a misogynist is not hyperbole. Yet we have Mrs. Gripe/the Woman Captain, who is permitted to express her conviction that women are denied the rights that men take for granted. This suggests that Shadwell was not completely devoid of insight into the plight of women in a rigidly structured society. As Mrs. Gripe says so poignantly: "To be dead, is to be insensible; but to have senses and deny 'em all, is worse."¹² It is also relevant that Shadwell gives the final word to his female warrior, not her tyrannical husband, and here there is no mistaking the dire warning extended to all overly domineering husbands:

Mrs. Gripe. Now all ye Husbands, let me warn ye!
 If you'd preserve your Honours, of your
 Lives;
 Ne'r dare be tyrants o're your Lawful
 Wives.¹³

I believe that Shadwell was of two minds regarding Mrs. Gripe. Jacqueline Pearson comments on this duality when she states: "The main plot presents the need for a woman to take control over her own life: the subplot shows the dangers to men and to male order when women are allowed to take control."¹⁴ On one hand, there is approval for Mrs. Gripe in letting her speak her mind about male-dominated society, and disapproval on the other hand by showing her to be ridiculous in her male disguise and manly adventures. In her behavior, the Woman Captain bears an uncanny resemblance to the profligate rake-hero. Given the

fact that her creator was an avid devotee of Jonsonian Humours Comedy, it is not surprising that this female warrior is endowed with unusual personality traits. In short, the Woman Captain exists as a caveat to men of what they can expect when a woman takes charge. And though she is allowed to attack her forced marriage, Shadwell is not proposing a solution to her predicament or the predicaments of women in forced marriages. Shadwell fears the solution, for it would liberate women--he has shown society the threat Mrs. Gripe represents, so imagine the sheer menace of an army of renegade Woman Captains. Yes, The Woman-Captain is a humorous play, but there is a strong undercurrent of sexism. The next female warrior may also reflect duality on the part of her creator.

Behn's The Young King is a problematic play. It is an early effort--1679--a romantic tragi-comedy taken from La Calprenède's Cléopâtre, a romance, and not the wisest choice Behn could have made. In a sense, she was trapped by her source: she could not write The Young King otherwise and confine herself to the genre she had chosen. Behn was a "fledgling" playwright at this date, so she was still learning her craft; it is inevitable that she would make mistakes. Frederick M. Link states that romantic tragi-comedy was passé in 1679, reinforcing the idea that Cléopâtre was an uncongenial choice both for Behn and her time: "The Young King was an anachronism in 1679. It

belongs to the school of romantic tragicomedy she had by then abandoned except for such themes as the happiness of the pastoral life and the evil of forced marriages."¹⁵ Why did Behn persist in writing a play she may have known would not be well received? Perhaps her fancy was so captured by her source romance, that she felt compelled to write The Young King. Montague Summers offers information that may shed some light on the situation. He claims that Behn began writing The Young King in Surinam. If this is so, then the origins of the play go back to a time when romantic tragicomedy was not out of fashion, and this would indicate that Behn was not mistaken in her choice at first. The same cannot be said later on. A word of caution is in order concerning Summers. He is not only out of date for some critics, but also not always careful about citing his sources in detail. Nevertheless, Summers is hardly generally unreliable. He has an astonishing knowledge of the theatre and seventeenth-century plays. In reading his criticism of Behn, one comes away with the feeling that he is biased in her favor, but considering the era in which he wrote, this is refreshing--not a feminist critic in the modern sense, but unusually open-minded about Behn and her work. Given these considerations, it is appropriate to quote Summers:

The earliest sketch of The Young King; or, The Mistake was written by Mrs. Behn whilst she was still a young girl in Surinam. Upon her return to England the rhyming play had made its appearance, and soon heroic tragedy

was carrying all before it on the London stage. Influenced no doubt by this tremendous vogue, she turned to her early MS. and proceeded to put her work, founded on one of the most famous of the heroic romances, into the fashionable couplets. Traces of this may be found in the scene between Cleomena and Urania, i, II; in Orsames' speech, iv, III, and elsewhere. Whilst she was busy, however, The Rehearsal was produced at the King's Theatre, 8 December, 1671, and for the moment gave a severe blow to the drama it parodied. Accordingly, Mrs. Behn with no little acumen put her tragi-comedy on one side until the first irresistible influence of Buckingham's burlesque had waned ever so slightly, and then, when her dramatic reputation was firmly established by the triumphant success of The Rover, the applause that had been given to Sir Patient Fancy and half a dozen more of her plays, she bethought of her earlier efforts, and after subjecting The Young King to a thorough revision, in which, however, it retained marked traces of its original characteristics, she had it produced at the Duke's Theatre in the spring of 1679. Mr. Gosse goes so far as to say that she had previously offered it to the theatres and publishers, but could find neither manager nor printer who would accept it. This, which he deduces from her dedication to Philaster, seems to me unwarrantable, and is not borne out by the play itself, which, baroque as it may appear to us, is certainly equal to, and indeed far better, than the rank and file of Restoration tragicomedy.¹⁶

The best manner in which to deal with the above material is to address the issues involved. Again, let us assume that the young Behn had in her possession a rudimentary form of The Young King, an implication that she was impressed with Cléopâtre. Reinforcing this speculation is the fact that she started to restructure the play on her return to England--the main reason being the advent of heroic tragedy, but I believe that La Calprenède's story continued to fascinate Behn. Then George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, was able to temporarily halt heroic tragedy with his scathing The Rehearsal, begun in 1663, and finally

produced in 1671; The Rehearsal was a mocking response to Dryden's The Conquest of Granada (1670), the exemplar of heroic tragedy. Behn, an astute woman, must surely have been aware that an attempt to produce The Young King in such a literary climate would be imprudent, so she rightly set her manuscript aside and bided her time. So far, Behn is making advantageous decisions--she is certainly not yet so famous that she can afford to make decisions which might have a devastating effect on her budding career. Let us not forget that her first play, The Forc'd Marriage, appeared in the same year as The Rehearsal, 1671, so Behn is not a "household name." Time passed. In the following years, Behn enjoyed success, primarily with The Rover in 1677, and Sir Patient Fancy in 1678. Now she is well-known; perhaps she felt that the popularity resulting from the above plays would act as a shield to protect her from any critical fallout that would ensue from The Young King. But the main point is this: a manager did decide to take a gamble and produce The Young King. Also, Buckingham's play did not obliterate heroic tragedy. Arthur E. Case and George H. Nettleton comment:

The intensity of the controversy over heroic drama is evidence of its vitality: the mockery of Buckingham could not laugh the genre from the stage. The values and the manner of heroic drama were too well rooted in the expectations of the audience to allow it to fade until sentimental comedy appropriated the didactic role, and until domestic tragedy emerged as the new form to appeal to audience emotions.¹⁷

Although The Young King was produced in 1679, Gosse asserts that Behn initially experienced resistance from theatre managers and publishers, indicating that they knew the play would not be profitable, because its genre was not thriving. Summers disputes this claim, but the support he supplies is weak--simply because he feels the play is better than most tragi-comedies is not evidence. Summers is a bit stronger when he thus argues:

There is no record of its performance, and it never kept the boards. But although we have no direct evidence of its success, on the other hand it would be rash to suggest it was in any sense a failure. Indeed, since two editions were published we may safely assert its popularity.¹⁸

Of course, publication is not absolute proof of theatrical acclaim, but it does infer some success. However this may be, I believe that Summers, brilliant though he is, is permitting his favorable opinion of Behn and her works to cloud his scholastic judgment. I am not arguing that The Young King is a poor play--I simply think Summers is rather too subjective. Given this, I am more inclined to agree with Gosse, because his assertions are valid in relation to the unfavorable way in which heroic tragedy was viewed by some people at the time. Conversely, Angeline Goreau says: "Most of them (Behn's plays) were at least moderately successful--with the exception of the old-fashioned tragicomedy The Young King."¹⁹ Goreau, though far more up-to-date than Summers, knows far less about the theatre than he does, so it would be unwise to place total confidence in

her. At any rate, however much opposition Behn encountered, she was determined to persevere and equally determined to see The Young King produced--and she won.

Sixteen hundred and seventy-nine, the date The Young King was introduced to the Restoration audience, is crucial to this discussion. Behn was at the mid-point of her theatrical career: she had a decade left to her, her death coming in 1689. Although she had gained experience by this time, she was still a "fledgling" in her unfortunate choice of source and genre. But since she had become a successful dramatist by 1679, we must assume that she was rapidly acquiring the lessons of her craft--the Restoration audience was demanding, and it had no qualms about making its likes and dislikes known. In spite of this, the evolving Behn, I contend, erred in persisting with The Young King. In one sense, this has no import--writers sometimes make the wrong decisions. but in another sense, a consequential one, Behn committed herself to a play which left her vulnerable due to its outdated genre. My conclusion is that at the start--if indeed she had an earlier version of the play--Behn was right in her choice, but later, she should have abandoned it, for the play had become an unfelicitous choice. Perhaps Behn should have realized the futility of continuing with The Young King. It is fortunate for us, though, that she did not, because Cleomena, the female warrior, is a most

intriguing character--and this may be justification enough for the existence of The Young King.

Feminist scholars, in reading the play, might feel that Cleomena does not breach the limits of the usual Restoration cross-dressing woman. There are reasons that support such an assertion. For the feminist reader, Cleomena, on the evidence of her words, is undeniably presented in a conventionally sexist manner. Her one dominant goal is to possess the man she loves, Thersander. Katharine M. Rogers states that Cleomena "prefers love to all else."²⁰ Let me be clear that I am not condemning love--it is the way the concept of love regarding Cleomena is presented, and the ramifications for women, with which I take issue.

Cleomena's upbringing has been very unusual. Her mother, the Queen of Dacia, wants her daughter to ascend the throne eventually, and in consequence has raised Cleomena as an Amazon. There is also a prophecy predicting doom if Cleomena's brother, Orsames, comes to the throne; he will inflict cruelties on his subjects. Cleomena has been given a "manly" education, and she can fight as well as, perhaps better, than any man. In keeping with her unconventional upbringing, she considers her own sex ineffectual, so when she falls in love with Thersander, the enemy king of the Scythians, she naturally sees herself as weak. She is angry with herself for falling prey to passion; after all, she

always believed that she could conquer any adversity. Up until she meets her lover, she has sustained control. It is a shocking revelation to realize that love can be the most formidable and terrifying adversary of all:

Cleo. All! lovely! all surprizing; Oh, my Heart, How thou betray'st the weakness of our Sex!...An Object quite unknown, unfam'd, unheard of, Informs my Soul; how easily 'tis conquer'd! Till now, with much disdain I have beheld the rest of all his Sex.²¹

Though the language Cleomena uses is sexist, she is not a frivolous, flirtatious woman. Her understanding that love evokes frightening changes in her, and leaves her vulnerable to emotions never before experienced, testifies to personality depth and an ability to examine her innermost feelings. Here are her ruminations when she comes to the realization that her life as a "man" has left her ill-equipped to confront her feelings as a woman: "I have a Heart all soft as thine, all Woman./Apt to melt down at every tender Object./--Oh, Semiris! there's a strange change within me."²² In short, Cleomena is a "man" only until she meets Thersander--then she becomes a woman, what she always was but could not yield to until love acts as a catalyst to permit her to assume her rightful gender. The implication is unmistakable. Cleomena becomes weak when she sheds her male clothing to don the "dress of love." In fact, throughout the play, Behn utilizes masculine apparel to symbolize strength, and the shedding of it to symbolize enervation. Cleomena's male garb lends her male strength;

when she removes her "costume," she is an enfeebled woman--emasculated, so to speak. She is much like Samson when Dalila relieved him of the repository of his manhood: his flowing hair. Witness the striking dichotomy of this shift in male/female identity:

Cleo. to Sem. Forget all thy words, all Language,
 but Revenge. Let me not see so much
 of Woman in thee to shed one Tear,
 but dress thy Eyes with
 fierceness.²³

Cleo. To Ther. Thou art murder'd, that's the Word, 'tis
 that creates me Man, and Valiant too, and
 all incensed Love can prompt me too.²⁴

The message that Behn conveys is distressing; simply put, men are strong and women weak. Perhaps it goes even further. When women fall in love, they surrender their vitality. That would be an indictment of love itself, and I have considerable difficulty applying this concept to Behn--her treatment of love in the plays strongly suggests that love is ennobling, not degrading. I think it is very likely that Behn is demonstrating that for Cleomena, who has had a singular upbringing, there is no other way in which she can react to love; till now, she has always been capable of checking her emotions because it would not be appropriate for an Amazon to lose control. So when she finds herself facing a situation where she suffers loss of control, she feels disgraced. Cleomena's total surrender to Thersander is painfully similar to Behn's obsession with John Hoyle. Behn sacrificed her dignity in pursuit of Hoyle, becoming weak in the throes of passion. As Cleomena is shorn of her

strength in loving Thersander, so also is her creator.²⁵ There may be something yet more complicated in the portrayal of Cleomena than a parallel with Behn's love life.

Is Cleomena representative of the tension Behn felt in her professional life? And tension there must have been, because being the first woman to earn her living through writing surely imposed a horrible strain. Since I am operating within the realm of conjecture, I emphasize that I am not proposing what follows as an absolute--there are other factors at work here, mainly having to do with the problematic nature of The Young King, which will be discussed later. The reader may well ask why speculation is necessary, and the answer is more than reasonable. If a scholar is to obtain a better comprehension of an author's life and work, some speculation is required, and it can lead to knowledge previously unknown. At times all we have to work with is theory, and it is an obligation to proceed from there. When Behn's female warrior dresses as a man, she takes on masculine characteristics, because she believes that fighting is a male province. When Behn writes, she puts on the male mantle, along with the rights and privileges accruing to it. It is not sufficient to say that Cleomena is absolutely indicative of a conventionally sexist outlook, though this is one element of her characterization. In claiming Cleomena to be so one-dimensional, we misunderstand her and her creator. Behn's confusion as a

female writer, something her male competitors were fortunate not to experience, instructs us to understand that Cleomena cannot be dismissed so simplistically. Because The Young King is a relatively early effort, the product of a dramatist still engaged in the learning process, it would not be surprising if Behn experienced confusion at this time--and that Cleomena reflected any tension Behn endured. But if this is true, then it could be equally true that Behn "outgrew" her confusion. The other view is that she may not be confused at all about her participation in a profession reserved only for men; the out-moded genre and uncongenial source might be responsible for Cleomena's "sexist" conduct. Behn was limited, almost imprisoned, by the story she chose, and since she had to remain faithful to it to some extent, why should anyone be surprised that Cleomena is not a more positive character? Menalippa, the model for Behn's female warrior, no doubt had similar traits. I believe that we should not take as gospel the Behn/Cleomena confusion theory; this would undermine a great playwright and cheat her and her readers of the assumption that an author has the capacity to mature, to change her mind about what she wrote earlier, and to finally disagree with some models previously utilized. The ending of The Young King adds fuel to the idea that Behn failed to make a judicious choice.

Though the play is a tragi-comedy, the reader can expect that Cleomena and Thersander will be united, but

since tragi-comedy allows for tribulations, the lovers are subjected to many before they can be together. Also, because this is tragi-comedy, there are more complications than in comedy. Of course, no one reading or watching The Young King could actually believe that the battling Cleomena is at risk of being killed--yes, this is not comedy, but Cleomena is a major character, so Behn cannot depict her death. The only difference is that while the male authors draw humorous fight scenes, Behn is serious when she shows her woman warrior fighting--indoctrinated in the Amazonian tradition, there is no valid reason to portray her as a fool when she fights. Fighting, an important component of the play, figures prominently in the resolution--conflict becomes a character. Although the fight scenes are serious, they cannot make the ending plausible. Even though the world of the play and the real world do not constitute an equation, many plays do reflect reality. The ending of The Young King is imbued with fantasy, mainly with the inclusion of a Druid priest working his magic to cure Thersander's friend, Amintas, of his injuries. Due to the incredible detail, it is no small task to describe the closing events. Throughout much of the play, Thersander is in the disguise of the friendly Clemanthis in order to safely woo the Dacian Cleomena. There is a battle between the two rival camps, and the Scythians win because of Thersander's help. The Dacians challenge him to fight, but he is in their camp as

Clemanthis, so he is in danger of fighting with himself! He dresses Amintas as Clemanthis and plans to triumph. Two suitors to Cleomena plot Thersander's murder, but the killers they hire mistake Amintas for Thersander because Amintas is dressed as Clemanthis. Amintas is wounded, and while helpless, Cleomena comes along; he says "Thersander" to her, so she thinks Thersander has murdered Clemanthis. She then dresses as Clemanthis and goes to fight. Cleomena is injured and her gender is discovered--Thersander is devastated. She recovers, disguises herself as a shepherd, takes a letter to Thersander, then stabs him. In the meantime, Amintas is cured. The happy union is about to commence--Cleomena visits Thersander; he tells her about his disguise as Clemanthis, and the lovers are joined.

The last play to be discussed may very well be Behn's last word, what she wanted her audience to remember. The female warrior is much more positive, and perhaps represents for Behn a "feminist" ideal. She is the Widow Ranter from the play of the same name, a vibrantly colorful creation and a sheer joy to read about. The reader gets the distinct impression that Behn had a wonderful time depicting this exuberant character. We realize immediately the delight the Widow experiences in living her life. Part of this joy may derive from the fact that she was forcibly transported from England to Virginia, then sold as an indentured servant to a man whose eventual demise released

her--and she celebrates her freedom with a vengeance. The Widow has plenty of money to enjoy because Ranter did marry her. If she had remained an indentured servant, little better than a slave, there would be no celebrations. The Widow enters the play ebulliently, almost like a rake when she says: "Here, Jeffrey, ye drunken Dog, set your Coach and Horses up, I'll not go till the cool of the Evening."²⁶ She lets us know that she exults in the pleasures life offers, and she is unafraid to indulge in "masculine" pleasures: "I must smoak and drink in a Morning, or I am maukish all day."²⁷ Katharine M. Rogers declares: "Behn's Widow Ranter is likeable and attractive even though she unabashedly smokes, drinks, speaks without restraint, and wins her man through a bold assault."²⁸ A telling reason why the Widow can behave in so free a manner is provided by the setting, Jamestown, Virginia, a society in an embryonic stage of development, far removed from the constraints of formalized Mother England. The flexible mores of the infant colony furnish this energetic woman with all the excuse she needs to act in a way that would be called into question in England. As Nancy Cotton states: "Because the play is set in colonial America, the widow Ranter has full scope for her unconventionality."²⁹ The English audience must have enjoyed watching the barbaric Americans! Behn's female warrior, unlike Shadwell's Mrs. Gripe, can behave in an "unwomanly" fashion even while attired as a woman. Mrs.

Gripe must array herself as a man before she dares to conduct herself freely. The Widow does not have to conceal her femaleness with male raiment; she lives as a woman, not caring what others think.

She does, however, have an interesting "breeches role." She loves Daring, who is in love with Chrisante, Colonel Downright's daughter, while Chrisante is in love with Friendly. In order to win Daring's love, the Widow follows him into battle dressed as a man. She is disguised as a man from act IV, scene ii, until act V, scene v, allowing her an extensive "breeches part." Although the Widow loves Daring entirely, she refuses to sacrifice her dignity, for therein lies her independence and identity as a well-integrated personality. She is determined to secure Daring on her own terms, not as a suppliant made weak by passion, as Cleomena was. For Cleomena, love saps vitality; for the Widow, love enhances it. She does not lose by loving, and maybe for Behn, this was the ideal relationship for women and men. The Widow will not shame herself:

Ran. Pox on't, no; why should I sigh and Whine, and
 make my Self an Ass, and him conceited? no,
 instead of snivelling I am resolved...as much in
 love as I am, I do not intend to die its
 Martyr.³⁰

Her refusal to play the coquette reveals insight into the personality of the man she has chosen. The Widow understands that Daring is not the sort to respond to shallow heroine/rake love-games. He is a soldier, so he has

no time for frivolity, and he is confident enough in his masculinity that he does not require the Widow to bolster his identity as a man by assuming the role of submissive female. The Widow and Daring fight together in companionship. The stage directions read: "Ranter fighting like a Fury by his side, he putting her back in vain, they fight out."³¹ Not content with tame intrigues to capture Daring's love, she risks her life to prove her worth to him. Daring has faith in her ability to fend for herself, without the protection of a man; he feels that they truly belong together:

Ran. Faith, General, you left me but scurvily in
Battle.
Dar. That was to see how well you cou'd shift for
your Self; now I find you can bear the brunt of
a Campaign, you are a fit Wife for a Soldier.³²

In this exchange, we see Behn's sincere proposition that women and men can and must join together on equal terms, that if they desire a healthy partnership, neither one can attempt to subjugate the other. The message I derive from their relationship is that men have nothing to apprehend when women are emotionally robust: if men are confident in their manhood, they will realize that strong women compliment, not diminish them. I firmly believe that Behn admires the Widow--a courageous woman who does as she pleases, but is liked by the other characters and the reader. In her presentation of Daring, a fully integrated male character rarely seen in Restoration plays, Behn offers

an exemplar of genuine masculinity. This does not at all detract from any "feminism" in the play, as Nancy Cotton asserts: "Behn's woman warrior may have been a colonial conception; she may also have been a feminist conception."³³ In my estimation, Behn's portrayal of the Widow reflects her yearning for a character who could conduct herself with confidence and a love for freedom, an extension of her concern for the needs of women.

The reader cannot be certain if the marriage of the Widow and Daring will be a happy one, but the indication exists that it will be. One could argue that she is tamed when matched with the right man, as is Shakespeare's Kate in The Taming of the Shrew (1593), but this is not an analogy on which I would insist. Though the Widow is silent during the resolution, this does not mean that she will permit Daring to take charge of her life. The Widow is certainly not the model wife the Restoration expected, in the real world and in literature. And Behn's treatment of Daring suggests that he would have no use for a conventional wife. The other marriages in The Widow Ranter are more difficult to speculate about. Friendly and Chrisante are united, as are Hazard and Madam Surelove. Both unions may be successful, but the indications of happy marriage present with the Widow and Daring are not very apparent with the others. But the reader is supposed to believe that all will turn out well with every couple.

There is another couple in the play, and events go against their love. The relationship between Bacon, the English general, and Semernia, the virtuous Indian queen, is doomed from the start, and here we clearly see the tragedy element. The tragic plot takes place within a historical, context. Behn based this aspect of her play on Bacon's Rebellion, which occurred during 1675 to 1676 in Virginia.³⁴ In the play, Bacon kills himself after accidentally slaying Semernia--he dies just at the point where his troops win. In reality, Bacon died in Virginia; Behn could not tamper too much with history. Both the nature of tragi-comedy and history conspire to kill Bacon. The Widow, of course, is protected--despite all the fighting she does, she is never in real danger of death. Behn cannot destroy such a likeable character, and in any case, the Widow is fictional, unlike Bacon. Behn has used comedy and tragedy well, telling different stories which do not interfere with one another: the Widow is comedic while Bacon is tragic.

It is not only the way in which Behn deals with the play's genre that is fascinating. The date of The Widow Ranter is significant in that it may contain a message for the reader, a "last word" from its author. Behn died in 1689, and The Widow Ranter was posthumously produced in 1690. Although The Younger Brother (1696) is Behn's last play and features Olivia disguised as a page, both the play

and its cross-dressing female do not, for me, constitute the apex of Behn's belief system--equality of the sexes. If Behn's life is at all reflected in her work, it is The Widow Ranter that transmits a vital message about what Behn held dear. Indeed, if Behn had any intention of having a final say, it would not be found in an earlier play. The Young King, for instance, conveys tension and confusion, therefore it is highly unlikely that Behn meant an idea of great importance to reside therein. She would have chosen a play written in her maturity, and what could be more effective than a posthumous last word? Though she did not know that she would die shortly after writing The Widow Ranter, she was ill, and may have felt that her time was limited. It is my belief that the relationship between the Widow and Daring was the ideal Behn was striving for during her career. In many of her plays, she presents women who reach for freedom, and Behn succeeded in getting her ideas across in the full characterizations she created. But only in The Widow Ranter do we witness a match where both partners are equal--in Restoration terms, of course. And it is Daring who makes this possible, because he transcends the typical male common in Restoration drama. Behn was not able to achieve this type of romantic relationship in her own life, but I think she must have coveted it. She is telling us that this is what she desired but never had, and instructing us that this is the way it should be for the sexes. Considering the age,

the message is eminently feminist. Though we are in a literary realm here, and so cannot be sure what will really occur with the Widow and Daring, Behn has offered the signs--perhaps she feels it is up to her readers to follow where they lead.

In conclusion, Behn's two female warriors are very different. Cleomena is representative of the traditional relationship between the sexes. Jacqueline Pearson says it well: "To a certain extent the play accepts conventional sex roles: love reveals the real femaleness of the masculine woman."³⁵ The Widow Ranter, completely divergent from Cleomena, is representative of female freedom, and equal interchange between women and men. Some might say that it is strange indeed that Behn would portray one woman so firmly entrenched in Restoration restrictions, and another woman who leaps ahead to a future where both genders remain undiminished by love--a woman almost modern in her thoughts and deeds. Strange? I think not. For Behn herself had one foot imprisoned in the native soil of her age, and the other, as the adventurous pilgrim she was, exploring that of a foreign land.

ENDNOTES

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5. D'Urfey, Madam Fickle, Act V, sc. iii, in Two Comedies by Thomas D'Urfey: Madam Fickle; or, The Witty False One and A Fond Husband; or, The Plotting Sisters, 127.
6. Ibid., 131 (Act V, sc. iii).
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8. D'Urfey, Madam Fickle, in Two Comedies, 129 (Act V, sc. iii).
9. Robert D. Hume, "'The Change in Comedy': Cynical Versus Exemplary Comedy on the London Stage, 1678-1693," Essays in Theatre, 109.
10. Shadwell, The Woman-Captain, in The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, IV, 37 (Act II).
11. Ibid., 27, 28, 54 (Act I and Act III).
12. Ibid., 54 (Act III).
13. Ibid., 85 (Act V).
14. Pearson, 108.
15. Link, 60.

16. Montague Summers, The Young King; or, The Mistake, in The Works of Aphra Behn, II, 103-4 (Theatrical History).

17. Stone, 39.

18. Summers, Theatrical History, in Behn, Works, II, 104.

19. Goreau, 216.

20. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in DLB, 80, 8.

21. Behn, The Young King, in Works, 117, 118 (Act I, sc. ii).

22. Ibid., 115.

23. Ibid., 161 (Act III, sc. v).

24. Ibid., 162 (Act IV, sc. i).

25. Behn's destructive relationship with John Hoyle will be discussed at further length in the concluding chapter.

26. Behn, The Widow Ranter, in Works, IV, 239 (Act I, sc. iii).

27. Ibid., 240.

28. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in DLB, 80, 14.

29. Nancy Cotton, Women Playwrights in England, 1363-1750, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1980), 69.

30. Behn, The Widow Ranter, in Works, 288 (Act IV, sc. ii).

31. Ibid., 295 (Act V, sc. i).

32. Ibid., 307 (Act V, sc. v).

33. Cotton, 70.

34. Behn, The Widow Ranter, in Works, 218, Source.

35. Pearson, 159.

Chapter Seven

Forced Marriage in the Plays of Aphra Behn

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate my firm conviction that Behn was more concerned about forced marriage and its dire consequences for women--and men--than were the male Restoration dramatists. The two subdivisions of this chapter, the first a survey of critical opinion, and the second a presentation of examples from various plays will, I hope, provide evidence that Behn was constant in her attack on forced marriage and that she utilized aggressive language to convey her extreme disgust with this institution. Her male contemporaries, in contrast, do not attack forced marriage with the consistency and strong language which are so characteristic of Behn. I am not referring to arranged marriage, for it is distinguishable from forced marriage, even though some critics use "arranged" and "forced" interchangeably. Arranged is not forced unless the young woman objected, which at times she did not. Also, an arranged marriage that was agreeable to all parties offered the dramatist no scope for conflict--since conflict drives the plot, without it, there is no

plot. Behn did not title her first play The Arranged Marriage, but The Forc'd Marriage (1671), and this fact, along with the play's non-derivative nature, is most significant.

The subject of forced marriage in Behn's plays is fraught with controversy. Some critics insist that she was more seriously troubled by it than her male colleagues and never missed an opportunity to express this concern, while others claim that she was merely following the literary convention which demanded that playwrights incorporate into their plays the ceaseless struggle between parents, who tried to force their children to marry those they did not love, and children who tried to escape the parental dictate by choosing for themselves. In my research regarding scholarly response to Behn's ideas about forced marriage, I have discovered that more critics believe she took a stronger position than the male dramatists; the consensus among these critics, which I will show, is that, for Behn, forced marriage and its attendant misery were a central concern. I agree with this position, and, in consequence, I will attempt to confirm the basis of my views by presenting quotations from the plays, rather than by extended arguments with individual scholars. Textual examples provide valid testimony to the beliefs of writers, and will assist me in my assessment of the ideas of Behn and the men with whom she competed. The voices of the playwrights have predominance

over critical evaluation, because this is the best way to ascertain what was important to them. Too, comparatively little specific criticism has treated the subject of forced marriage in the plays to be discussed. In the final analysis, what I will offer is only another opinion of what mattered to Behn.

In the second section, examples from the plays of the male playwrights will first be presented. They are: John Dryden's The Wild Gallant (1663), Marriage-A-la-Mode (1673), and The Assignment; or, Love in a Nunnery (1673), William Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master (1673), Sir George Etherege's The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter (1676), And Thomas Otway's The Cheats of Scapin (1677). I have chosen these plays for two reasons. Firstly, they present a reasonably good sampling of the range of views expressed by Behn's male competitors regarding forced marriage. Secondly, many of the men do not include this subject as an issue of serious concern in their plays; hence, there is not a very large menu from which to choose examples. I will supply textual evidence from the following plays by Behn: The Forc'd Marriage (1671), The Amorous Prince (1671), The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers (1677), The Town Fop; or, Sir Timothy Tawdrey (1677), Sir Patient Fancy (1678), The Lucky Chance; or, The Alderman's Bargain (1687), The Emperor of the Moon (1687), and The Younger Brother; or, The Amorous Jilt (1696-posthumously produced).

There are many Behn plays from which to choose. She wrote seventeen plays, and in no fewer than eleven forced marriage is in evidence as an important issue--a clear majority.¹ Forced marriage, so central to Behn's social philosophy, also appears in her epistolary novel, Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister (1684-87).² Although no scholar can deduce beyond doubt how far Behn was prepared to challenge patriarchal supremacy, the very fact that she dealt with forced marriage was in itself a considerable challenge. Behn was a Royalist, and to that extent she was not prepared to attempt alteration of the status quo. Forced marriage, an issue of women's rights, conflicts with the status quo, however, this does not mean that Behn could not support both. The two spheres are seemingly incompatible, but it is my conviction that Behn, a complex, intelligent woman, was genuinely troubled about the position of women in society. The number of plays that she wrote involving forced marriage reflects, for me, her commitment to denouncing this institution, which was so great that she could hardly bring up the subject without protesting it. The unapologetically potent language Behn employs leaves very little room for doubt that she despised "the marriage of convenience" and assailed it with dogged determination.

Behn, however, did not propose a socially viable alternative when she castigated forced marriage. After all, she was writing plays, and in the real world equality in

love and free choice of love objects do not guarantee that love and/or marriage will endure. In the real world, women get pregnant--in the face of that, the glories of free choice in love can evaporate. When the full weight of Behn's restrictive society descended on a pregnant single woman, what permanence or value could "free love" contain? Given this, Behn may have been arguing a libertine ideal that could never be embraced by all sectors of society; it would only be practical on a small scale for a privileged few members of society. One such privileged person was Rochester, who not only practiced libertinism but embodied it. For him, libertinism was a way of life, a philosophy. Rochester's wealthy family would certainly have covered up his many escapades and provided for the possible results--illegitimate offspring. But considering that the vast majority of wealthy, powerful people most likely felt no compassion or obligation to bastards, there is little reason to believe that these unfortunate children would be supported. Wycherley could afford to engage in some libertine activity, such as drinking and a bit of gambling, but he could not afford to indulge himself with middle and upper-class women, because he did not have the finances to support any children who might result from these liaisons--that is, if he were so inclined. His only option was sex with prostitutes. Behn, a woman, was in a far more difficult position. We know she had more than one affair,

and it is entirely possible that she became pregnant--we simply do not know. If she escaped such a hazardous situation, it was only by sheer luck. Indeed, since her profession did not ensure financial stability, pregnancy would most likely force her to jettison her career to cater to the needs of her child. But here she faces another problem, for she would have to obtain another means of support, and who would hire an unmarried woman with a bastard in tow? The "career" possibilities open to a woman, governess and companion, would be closed to Behn--she is not respectable. It is unlikely that a man of means would marry her, for the same reason. One choice remains: prostitution. Hence, Behn was not proposing solutions which would entail freedom for all women--it is probable that she was protesting the interference of society with the libertinism of a chosen few. Libertinism was a major preoccupation of Restoration authors, and a "fashion" that succeeding generations of scholars, theatre-goers, and readers associate with the period. Dale Underwood illuminates the concept of Restoration libertinism for us:

The term "libertine" as indicating merely a person of loose morals has had a commonplace application to Restoration comedy...As the Restoration characteristically used the word, it meant something a good deal more specific. Though its usage looked more toward predilections of temper and behavior than an intellectual system, it tended to reflect a rather persistent body of thought. And its doctrines were sufficiently familiar and widespread to be of concern to virtually every field of the period's literature...A casual inspection of these works will indicate not only that the libertinism with which they deal involves a

common set of ideas but that the ideas had become sufficiently commonplace to be formulated into clichés...We have suggested that this concern was less than a systematic body of thought than with attitudes and modes of behavior: Libertinism, in fact, could scarcely by its nature have become a philosophic system. One might rather call it, though perhaps with misleading gravity, a "way of life."³

Given the fact that the concept of libertinism permeated Restoration literature so prominently, Behn could not avoid its influence. But this hardly explains why she so persistently and vehemently pointed to the problem of forced marriage. And as a playwright, it was not her duty to propose solutions. She risked enough with her outspoken stance. Even if she had been able to pose remedies, it would not have been advantageous to do so.

The Critical Response

According to Angeline Goreau, "the hypocrisy of arranged marriage was a standard theme in Restoration drama, but the violence of Aphra Behn's systematic and persistent attack on the institution was special."⁴ Goreau correctly states that the conventional situation of forced marriage was quite frequently employed by the Restoration playwrights, but that Behn added a new dimension by protesting it, responding to the theme in an adversarial manner. In reading Behn's plays, we are struck by the number of times she utilizes the literary situation of forced marriage, and the verbal barrage she uses to assault the institution. This is the essential question: did Behn merely take advantage of the familiar theme as a stock

device or did she wield it as a weapon against a society conditioned to ignoring even the idea that women should have rights? Textual analysis will help to answer these questions in the second part.

Maureen Duffy says that, "Aphra Behn wasn't unique among Restoration playwrights in her exploitation of the subject of forced and unhappy marriages for money but she brings more compassion and depth to her variations on an accepted theme," and that Behn "was little inclined to support herself by what she regarded as the legalized prostitution of arranged marriage."⁵ Duffy has answered the above queries--Behn did use the theme, but she went further with it than other Restoration dramatists.

Frederick M. Link, a critic who takes a "feminist" view of Behn and her work, as do Goreau and Duffy, asserts that freedom of choice in love is the crux for Behn, not societally sanctioned "prostitution" in marriage:

Among her social views none is more central than her belief that love should be free, governed neither by social convention nor by parental command. The attempt of a parent or guardian to force his child into an unwanted marriage is one of her most common themes: the result of such pressure is always either tragedy or the complete discomfiture of the parent. When the chosen bride or groom is old, or where the match is made for money, Mrs. Behn reacts even more strongly...This attack on the common practice of the day is no mere pose. It produces some of her finest passages, and furnishes the basic situation in many of her plays and novels. It is based on an intelligent and articulate conception of what a love relationship between man and woman ought to be, a conception embodied in such lovers as Wittmore and Lady Fancy, Don Carlos and Julia, and Oroonoko and Imoinda. Mrs. Behn is often accused of immorality because she does not inevitably associate sex with love

or love with marriage; Lady Fancy, Julia, and Imoinda, for example, are already married. Such a view overlooks her insistence that marriage is merely a legalized convention made moral or immoral by the circumstances surrounding it. To Mrs. Behn, it is precisely the moral issue which is important; to many of her critics it has apparently been the legal one. If the lovers are free to choose, and honest with each other, and are genuinely in love, then their relationship is moral whether it leads to marriage or not. If the marriage is forced on one or both parties, whether by a parent or by economic necessity, then it is not only a meaningless formality but a moral and social evil which ought to be remedied. This is the case in Sir Patient Fancy, The False Count, and Oroonoko.⁶

Link has focused our attention on the concerns most critical to Behn, and he has done so with insight and without equivocation. He emphasizes that her attack on forced marriage was "no mere pose," and that what is really crucial in a relationship is the free exchange of mutual vows, unencumbered by "meaningless formality." Marriage is marriage only when the partners have chosen each other. Only this constitutes true marriage, and, as Link points out, it is very moral indeed--whereas legal marriage devoid of love is immoral. Marriage for Behn does not entail the machinations of selfish parents nor the church ceremony, but what Shakespeare called the "marriage of true minds." As Susan Staves says about late seventeenth-century plays: "Marriage is only tolerable as the union of like-minded persons."⁷ This comment applies to Behn more than any other Restoration playwright. Women are not the only victims of this cruel institution; men too suffer from its consequences--Link uses the word "child" which can denote

both genders. Of course, women were the primary victims because of institutionalized sexism. Behn's The Town Fop will be used to demonstrate that men also endured the agony of forced marriage.

Robert L. Root has ideas similar to Link and Goreau, but he extends his comments to include other Restoration dramatists:

The marriage of convenience---arranged or "enforced" marriage--was widespread enough for the playwrights to see it as a common ill. Although for some it became merely a necessary plot device, several playwrights--notably Shadwell, Wycherley, Otway, and Behn--treated it as a serious evil. Most playwrights, these included, were content to satirize the results of such marriages through intrigues involving wanton wives and horned husbands; their most positive assertion was to suggest that matches for love were preferable to arranged marriages. Among these early playwrights, only Aphra Behn suggested a deeper concern for the distress and anguish of the women trapped in such marriages.⁸

Although Root suggests that Behn adhered to a literary convention, he clearly realizes that her attack on forced marriage was more aggressive than was usual. Otway was concerned about the problem of forced marriage, more than Shadwell and Wycherley, as we will see. Root does not mention Dryden, who writes strong language, as does Otway, when dealing with the theme--stronger than other male dramatists, but not nearly so strong as Behn.

At this time, it is expedient to examine why Behn's phraseology was more forceful than that of her male contemporaries. I believe the main factor relating to this question was her gender--as a female, and one who claimed a

right to authorship, she must surely have been acutely aware that women suffered much more than men did in a male-dominated, hence male-oriented world. It is no wonder, then, that Behn would assail forced marriage in the most vigorous terms; her vocabulary resembles the "dogma" of a feminist polemic. Although Behn lived and wrote three centuries before the advent of feminist ideology, her robust attack on forced marriage sounds remarkably contemporary, as I will demonstrate. As a woman, Behn had a special insight into the misery that forced marriage engendered in women. Goreau infers below that the male dramatists did not see the "world" of enforced marriage in the same way:

Neither Rochester nor Buckingham nor Etherege nor Wycherley nor Buckhurst was forced by parents to marry as he did; they were all at their own disposal. Their objections to marriage might be seen, then, in the most unfavorable light, as reluctance to be tied to any woman who could not be as easily discarded as a whore or a mistress and who might even believe that he had some responsibility to her. Aphra Behn's attack on marriage and the property-marriage system, on the other hand, was part of a much more comprehensive philosophical stance. She was, in principle, opposed to the intrusion of "interest" into intimacy of whatever sort between men and women--whether it be marriage of love, whether that interest be property, title, money, ambition, or other. This was her definition of "free-love."⁹

The fact that the whore and the mistress could expect no loyalty, either romantic or financial, is confirmation of the general male attitude--and, I suspect that too many women felt the same way--that these types of women were disposable simply because they were considered handy receptacles of male sexual gratification, and when that

function had been exhausted, they had also exhausted the full extent of their usefulness. Behn's prostitutes, Angelica Bianca and La Nuche, illustrate this dilemma, though they retain dignity.

That the men Goreau names were against marriage because they could not discard their wives as freely as their mistresses is a claim that is not susceptible to absolute proof. But Wycherley and Etherege include the concept of forced marriage in very few of their plays. Perhaps this is due to the fact that they were not nearly as prolific as Behn. Wycherley wrote four plays and Etherege wrote three; Behn not only wrote seventeen plays, but also poetry, novels, and translations. So it is possible that Wycherley and Etherege did not use the forced marriage theme extensively because they did not have many plays in which to include it, as did Behn. One can legitimately suspect, though, that these two dramatists considered forced marriage merely as a convenient literary convention, lacking serious social overtones, especially etherege. One thing is certain: Behn stood in the midst of a phalanx of male competitors smugly confident of the support of centuries of male-created codes, a formidable alliance indeed. Behn, however, was neither content to accept these codes, nor to acquiesce to them, and so she declared war on the entrenched "marriage of convenience," perhaps the most visible and the most pernicious manifestation of her male-dominated society.

But Behn had an "uphill battle," because even the very idea of libertinism militated against her and her sex. Harold Weber has provided invaluable insight into libertinism, and the way its double standard negatively affected women:

Such attitudes, with their emphasis on the arbitrary nature of social restrictions and the naturalness of the passions that people shared with beasts, might seem as applicable to women as men. Yet the men who fashioned such doctrines reveal a hostility and ambivalence towards women that appears little different from the misogyny of society at large. Even though libertine attitudes depended on assumptions that would seem to promise acceptance of female sexuality, women remained unable to enjoy the sexual liberties taken for granted by men. Women after the Restoration, even among the most debauched section of the population, occupy strict sexual limitations. This same sense of contradiction characterizes not only the treatment of women in plays written after the Restoration, but the theatrical world of Restoration London itself. The emergence of actresses and female playwrights after the reopening of the theatres in 1660 provides two clear examples of the greater freedom enjoyed by women after the Restoration...The career of Aphra Behn, for example, reveals a woman's ability to enter, and succeed in, a sphere that had previously been considered solely masculine...The public ridicule she suffered reveals the very high price she had to pay for her success...In attempting to move outside of the restrictive roles ordinarily occupied by women, Behn became a convenient target for those who refused to accept the participation of women in the larger social world...Behn refused to remain anonymous: in doing so, in opening herself up to public scrutiny, she placed herself in a position where both her morality and her femininity could be questioned. The attacks on Behn's licentiousness that Goreau documents reveal male contempt for a woman who chose to assume a public, and therefore, a masculine role...the freedom women gained to play themselves on stage was to a large extent the freedom to play the whore under a different, more polite, guise. Acting was not a particular remunerative profession, and the sexual availability of actresses was taken for granted. Actresses were convenient sexual prey for Charles's courtiers, while the king himself seems to have frequented the theatre as much for sexual as for aesthetic satisfaction.¹⁰

Yes, "Behn refused to remain anonymous." Not only did she thrust herself into the public arena by writing plays, but by challenging societal codes that were expected to remain unchallenged. Lawrence Stone actually credits Behn with initiating the assault on forced marriage:

For over half a century, from the 1680s to the 1740s, the arranged marriage exclusively for interest, as practised by the aristocracy, also came under growing assault from the fashionable playwrights and artists of the day. Aphra Behn launched the attack in the 1680s with extreme statements of the new system of values: 'As love is the most noble and divine passion of the soul, so it is that to which we may justly attribute all the real satisfaction of life; and without it man is unfinished and unhappy.' 'O how fatal are forced marriages!' lamented Lady Fullbank in The Lucky Chance of 1686, 'How many ruins one such match pulls on.'"¹¹

Stone is incorrect on two counts. Though a great social historian, Stone is not a literary historian, but since literature has a large impact on social trends, how could he have failed to realize that Behn started her attack on forced marriage in 1671 with The Forc'd Marriage, and that she did not begin a campaign against the institution? Preceding playwrights did attack forced marriage, and the one play dealing with the subject that almost everyone is aware of is Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (1594-96), and this play is but a single example. Behn is unequivocally vocal on the subject, but it did not originate with her. We can say that Behn emphasized forced marriage; she focused on forced marriage; indeed, she was quite obsessed with forced marriage. We cannot say that she invented the theme, or brought it to the stage.

Although Stone is unfactual about Behn's role regarding forced marriage, there is the tacit implication that she and her ideas were of importance. I agree with Stone on this point, and with Goreau, Link, Duffy, and Root. These critics do not discuss the possibility that Behn focused on freedom for a select few, or her "failure" to cite alternatives and solutions. Perhaps for them, these are not defects on Behn's part--they are most certainly not on mine. All of them recognize Behn's achievement--the courage to condemn an institution held dear by an oppressive society. Of course Behn took advantage of the stock plot of forced marriage, for it supplied the perfect plot, and it pleased the audience. Behn could hardly afford to offend that audience, because she made a living with her plays. In consequence, she tempered a serious social message with humor, which softened her strident protestation of forced marriage. Katharine M. Rogers asserts: "She was, of course, writing to support rather than to express herself; and if she had radically challenged contemporary assumptions and literary conventions, she would hardly have succeeded in the theater."¹² Behn did have to bow to convention to a certain extent, and her primary reason for writing plays was to garner financial support. A key word in Rogers' quotation is "radically." It tells us that Behn was prevented by sheer necessity from flouting social mores and literary conventions too brazenly; nevertheless, she did

venture far beyond what was considered proper for a female author. Merely having the audacity to pen plays for a living was shocking in her day. "Contemporary assumptions and literary conventions" were factors which gave Behn all the excuse she required to write plays lacking in social commentary--safe plays. Yet Behn did not take her comfort in this way. Instead, she exposed herself to ridicule by attacking one of the most formidable social icons of her age: forced marriage. Because she was a woman, naturally her gender served as a further prod to her detractors. In Behn's refusal to "keep quiet," she was expressing herself. In Behn's stubborn and aggressive derision of forced marriage, she was expressing herself. Her plays were not only a means to a living, but a message that society had to change--literature serving as a vehicle to throw into relief what is wrong and how it can be rectified. It is true that Behn did not formulate concrete remedies to counter the horrors of forced marriage; but if the strong suggestion that something is very wrong is not present, nothing will change. By illustrating the dangers of forced marriage so emphatically, Behn notified the public that there was a serious problem which required attention. This, certainly, does not signify mere adherence to literary convention.

Rogers is one critic who does not feel that Behn was more concerned about enforced marriage than were the male

playwrights. She claims that Behn, like the men, was only composing the conventional plot:

It has been argued that Behn's repeated and eloquent protests against forced loveless marriages are distinctly feminist. But in fact they are equally characteristic of her male contemporaries; her treatment of the theme is neither more serious nor more perceptive than theirs. Restoration comedy--like comedy in most ages--consistently pits young people against repressive elders and argues that the young should choose each other for love, regardless of money or family interest.¹³

No one disputes the fact that Behn followed literary convention in construing the customary plot, but this does not mean that she was not serious about forced marriage and the ills it produced--one does not preclude the other. Behn was severe in her attack; she might have been even more strident if she had dared, but it would have been disastrous for a woman to indulge in unrestrained expression, most especially one who depended on her work to eat. Let us not forget that some of the men--Etherege, for instance--did not have to write for bread, and by virtue of their gender, they enjoyed more freedom of expression. Behn walked the tightrope between speaking her mind and yielding to social and literary convention that few of the men experienced or understood. She was placed in the uneasy position of getting her point across in a repressive era. I reiterate what I previously said: what smoother way to accomplish this than to ease a serious message into a medium designed to invite laughter and provoke a minimum of threat--comedy. The laughter hardly buries the message; it simply moderates

gravity with humor. Ironically, it is convention which enables Behn to offer her readers and her audience a new way to view a familiar institution. It is convention which provides a secure and opportune ruse. As a woman, and therefore in a position to understand the inferior status of women in a social structure bound together by enforced marriage, I feel it would be rather peculiar if Behn failed to react differently from her male colleagues.

In view of my beliefs concerning Behn's treatment of forced marriage, I am in some disagreement with James Sutherland, who expresses an opinion similar to that of Rogers:

...writing as she was for a living, she could never allow herself to forget that 'the stage but echoes back the public voice', and any criticism she had to offer tended to become obscured by her compliance with those situations and attitudes which were then thought essential for a successful comedy.¹⁴

To respond to Sutherland, I will say that it was and is obvious that Behn never forgot that it was incumbent upon her to answer to the preferences of her audience. I agree with him here, for he states what no one can deny. But I disagree that "any criticism" Behn displayed in her work "tended to become obscured" by compliance with literary standards. Behn's loathing of forced marriage, and I assume this is at least one of the issues Sutherland has in mind, could be no clearer than it is. Behn's words will, I believe, refute Sutherland.

Robert D. Hume's claims about Behn's attitude towards forced marriage are problematic for me. He states that her attacks on the institution are "seldom central to the play, or at all profound."¹⁵ It is true that the theme of enforced marriage is not always integral to Behn's plays, but the word "seldom" is, in my estimation, too much of an understatement. There are many Behn plays from which the plot of forced marriage simply cannot be removed. The theme is "central" to The Forc'd Marriage, The Dutch Lover, The Town Fop, Sir Patient Fancy, The False Count, The Lucky Chance, and The Younger Brother; this is not the entire list. In the above plays, the forced marriage plot is essential to drive the resolution. As far as the second half of Hume's assertion goes, if he means "profound" in the Latin sense of "very deep," "unfathomable," then he is right--the word "profound" does not apply to Behn's plays. But there are other shadings of the term. It can also mean "intense" and/or "thorough," and in this case, the word can be applied to Behn's treatment of forced marriage, for intense she was, and if she had been more thorough, she would not have seen her plays produced. Perhaps all of this points up the fact that we are in the interpretive realm--and that is exactly why I intend to rely the most on the texts.

To prepare the reader for themes which will be discussed in the next section, it is profitable to quote

Dale Underwood's summary of the factors comprising Restoration libertinism, because Behn deals with them in the plays I will analyze. Her male contemporaries include the same ideas in their plays, but not to the extent that she does, and certainly not with her consistency and "fire:"

All these characteristics--...the opposition of nature and custom; the revolt against the latter in the name of nature, freedom, pleasure; the naturalistic concept of love, with here an especial emphasis upon freedom; the particular and consequent revolt against marriage and the more conventional attitudes toward love in general--these constitute basic aspects of a form of libertinism reflected not only in the Restoration comedy of manners but in literature of the Restoration and Seventeenth century at large.¹⁶

The Voices of the Playwrights

Although the male Restoration playwrights assailed the institution of forced marriage, the deeper concern of the despair generated and perpetrated by a one-sided society is conspicuously wanting in their plays. Societal inequities in relation to women failed to permeate the consciousness of so many male dramatists. This one-sided world benefitted them, and invariably, those who benefit cringe at the suggestion of any alteration which would change their situation for the worse. This attitude is only natural--people cannot be expected to surrender the power and privilege they possess, and we can well ask, why should they? We have only to examine the panorama of history to notice that the oppressed become the oppressors, and that once the shift in dominion has occurred, the new elite

refuses to yield the hegemony appropriated from its previous owners. It is not surprising, then, that most male playwrights were not advocates of change; that would upset the world upon which they depended to assist them in maintaining and enjoying the fruits of the double standard. But Behn was not a recipient of the rights and privileges of this social construct. She, the one oppressed, and to universalize, her entire gender, did comprehend that women suffered under a male-dominated society, and that forced marriage was among the customs/institutions most culpable.

Etherege attacked forced marriage in a single play, The Man of Mode. Wycherley, though a social satirist, also attacked the institution in one play, The Gentleman Dancing-Master. At least he is vehement in his assault, through his heroine, Hippolita. Otway rails against the common practice in The Cheats of Scapin; he is virulent in his attack, and I believe him to be second only to Behn in his hatred of the entrenched institution. Otway also devotes attention and sympathy to men trapped in unwanted unions, as do Behn and Dryden. Dryden presents more plays featuring forced marriage than his male colleagues, indicating that it was an issue of some consequence to this prolific dramatist.

As far as marriage goes, it was literary convention that demanded that Restoration playwrights poke fun at it--so the majority did so. A distinction must be made, however, between marriage in general and forced marriage in

particular. Much of the time, the first four acts of most Restoration plays convey that the playwrights and the characters they created feel the very idea of matrimony was hopelessly passé. Hence, the Restoration playwrights used matrimony as a vehicle for the younger generation to chide the older generation and its "archaic" values. Young characters in comedies are dedicated to a good time--the concept of wedlock is absurd to them. That is, until the close of the comedies, when all the young scoffers wed--and not a few of the other characters as well! The first four acts establish the notion that marriage is a subject only to be lampooned. The fifth and final act obliterates this notion most effectively by featuring multiple marriages, and presumably happy unions. It is amusing to witness the reformation of the character who most epitomizes pure pleasure--the rake-hero--by seeing him noosed at the end. When the young characters express their opposition to the married state, their language is harmless. The audience laughs because the whole situation is exquisitely funny. We also understand that the playwrights have no real antipathy towards marriage, for they are simply obeying convention when they satirize it. Forced marriage is quite another matter. The language employed in conjunction with this theme can be bitter, depending on the dramatist. There is a darkness to the phraseology, befitting this cruel social institution, in contrast to the lightness, the airiness, of

the language used by the young characters to describe their resistance to marriage. There is nothing free-wheeling about the vocabulary expressing the callousness of forced marriage. In Restoration comedy, marriage in the abstract provokes laughter, while forced marriage, though at times providing humorous fodder, provokes contemplation of a sober issue. Even though the characters are sometimes frivolous when they speak about enforced marriage, they are more often caustic. Behn, in her candid language and her numerous protestations, is undeniably troubled by forced marriage. Dryden, Wycherley, and Otway also utilize serious language, but the depth with which Behn denounces the hated "custom" is comparatively more striking. Where she truly diverges from the male playwrights is in the incredible volume of her offensive, which she repeatedly launches.

In turning to Dryden's The Wild Gallant, we note that his treatment of forced marriage is not excessively sober. This approach is apropos to the purpose of this hilarious--and ribald--play; The Wild Gallant is a light-hearted, pleasant comedy, bawdy though it is. The authoritarian father, Lord Nonsuch, lacks the metaphorical fangs of a father to be examined later: Otway's Gripe. When Lord Nonsuch attempts to marry his daughter, Constance, the heroine, to the farcical Sir Timorous, the reader experiences no alarm for her future well-being. After all,

this vibrant heroine knows exactly what she wants, and she is equipped to obtain it; Constance possesses the emotional and financial wherewithal to ensure a fortunate life for herself. Of course, we must ask how it is that she has such independence. Her father controls her life, does he not? But perhaps his control is merely on the surface, for his strong-willed daughter can very easily persuade him to act in her best interests. Lord Nonsuch and her would-be suitor, poor opponents for her, present no peril. Constance is entirely cognizant of how shabbily women are treated, and she is not in the least reticent about expressing her opinions on the topic, as discussed in Chapter Two. Another factor ensuring her liberty is the self-defeating behavior of Sir Timorous. He plays around with other women, and when Lord Nonsuch discovers his prospective son-in-law's indiscretions, he severs the intended match. He is, at heart, a decent man, and he genuinely loves his daughter. The following banter involving Lord Nonsuch and Sir Timorous is confirmation of the witty, non-threatening phrasing characteristic of the play:

Non. Daughter, here's a person of Quality; and one that loves and honours you exceedingly.

Tim. Nay, good my Lord! you discover all at first dash.

Non. Let me alone, Sir; Have not I the dominion over my own Daughter? Constance, here's a Knight in love with you, Childe.¹⁷

The word "dominion" might be dangerous if spoken by a different sort of father--it just depends on the personality

of the parent using the term. In the mouth of Lord Nonsuch, it is relatively innocent. The reader is aware that he would not harm Constance by coercing her into accepting a union not of her liking. It seems as if he utters the word because it is the thing to say; society expects this from him, for there are certain modes of parental expression and conduct. One gets the distinct feeling that there is no real "bite" behind his usage of "dominion." In the next play, by contrast, the father is not harmless.

Marriage-A-La-Mode is a striking counterpoint to The Wild Gallant, in large part because of Dryden's serious treatment of forced marriage. In his language the reader sees that he was aware of the damage it caused. Polydamas, usurper of the Sicilian throne, is venomous in his arrogant and callous demands that his son, Leonidas, marry Amalthea only because the fathers of the two young people were friends. Most would probably concur that this is an extremely tenuous reason to arrange the marriage of a child--clearly, for Polydamas, loyalty to a friend has pre-eminence over loyalty to a son. Since Polydamas sits upon the throne, he also feels that he has the inherent right to control other lives. Palmyra is one of his victims, the woman Leonidas loves. This tyrannical ruler tries to coerce her to wed Argaleon for the flimsy reason that the latter is the favorite of the usurper. Palmyra is to be bestowed on a man she does not love only because the "king" wishes to

reward his favorite with a suitable gift; her feelings mean less than nothing to Polydamas--she is a commodity to be given away as he sees fit. His attitude is a reflection of a male-oriented world, and the problem is compounded because Polydamas' regal status grants him more power to oppress. However, he finally comes around and permits Leonidas and Palmyra to marry. Till that time, Polydamas indulges in the abuse of power so common to all tyrants:

Leon. Yes, Sir, I shall obey, in what I can.
Poly. In what you can, Leonidas? Consider, He's both your King and Father, who commands you. Besides, what is there hard in my injunction?
Leon. 'Tis hard to have my inclination forc'd. I would not marry, Sir; and when I do, I hope you'll give me freedom in my choice.
Poly. Leonidas, you owe me more than to oppose your liking to my pleasure.
Leon. I owe you all things, Sir; but something too I owe myself.
Poly. You shall dispute no more; I am a King, And I will be obeyed.
Leon. You are a King, Sir; but you are no God; or if you were, you could not force my will.¹⁸

Leonidas, decent and honorable, realizes that he does owe his father the obedience due from a child to a parent, but he also understands that the parent/child dynamic should be somewhat reciprocal. Leonidas, with his eloquent and truthful wording, conveys to us that what his father commands is false obedience. Polydamas is the king, so it is for that reason he demands submission. His kingship blinds him to the duties of a truly good father; he has failed his son by insisting on his "pleasure" when what he should concern himself with is his son's "liking." The

words used, all reflective of the young person's inherent human right to choose, are similar to the language Behn uses when her characters speak against forced marriage:

"inclination," "freedom in my choice," "something too I owe myself," and "you could not force my will." Like Behn and Otway, Dryden shows the distress of men constrained to marry against their will.

There is also a forced marriage theme in the lower plot. It involves Palamede, a courtier, and Melantha, a superficial, affected woman. Of course, there are complications. Palamede is in love with Doralice, who is married to Count Rhodophil, but their marriage has soured. In keeping with the forced marriage plot, Palamede has been "sold" by a greedy, uncaring father, in a bargain made with Melantha's father, the same type of man:

"...In a few words, my old man has already marry'd me; for he has agreed with another old man, as rich and as covetous as himself; the Articles are drawn and I have given my consent, for fear of being dis-inherited; and yet know not what kind of woman I am to marry."¹⁹

When Palamede discovers that he is to be chained to Melantha, he is appalled. She is ridiculous to the hilt, a character featured in many Restoration comedies, being a woman obsessed by all things French. She is imprisoned by her Francophilia, for it is the sole thing that has importance to her. Melantha says to her servant, Philotis, about Count Rhodophil, with whom she is enamored: "Let me die but he's a fine man; he sings, and dances en Francois,

and writes the Billets doux to a miracle."²⁰ But Palamede deserves Melantha, because he is not very honorable. In the following passage, it is obvious that his reasons for deciding to go along with the impending match are not above reproach. And all this time, he has been trying to seduce Doralice, Rhodophil's spouse, while Rhodophil has attempted to have his way with Melantha:

Pala. (Aside) O Jupiter! what a blockhead was I not to find it out! my Wife that must be, is his Mistris. I did a little suspect it before; well I must marry her, because she's handsome, and because I hate to be disinherited by a younger Brother, which I am sure I shall be if I disobey; and yet I must keep in with Rhodophil, because I love his Wife.²¹

In order to rid himself of Melantha, Palamede transforms himself into a male version of her; he nearly drives her mad spouting the French she is so fond of. In a resolution having no basis in reality, their Frenchified sparring unites them:

Mel. Hold, hold: I am vanquish'd with your gayeté d'esprit. I am yours, and will be yours, sans nulle reserve, ny condition.

Pal. (Solus, fanning himself with his hat) I never thought before that wooing was so laborious an exercise; if she were worth a million, I have deserv'd her; and now, me-thinks too, with taking all this pains for her, I begin to like her.²²

All is well. Presumably, Palamede weds Melantha, and Rhodophil and Doralice reconcile. Because the integrity of the play is imperative, the audience agrees to believe that the two couples will lead happy lives.

In Marriage-A-La-Mode, Dryden presents two men who are being forced to marry against their inclinations. This is the similarity. It is the difference between the personalities of Leonidas and Palamede which is of interest. Leonidas is fundamentally good--he would not think of taking another man's wife as a mistress, and he would not resort to games to relieve himself of an unwanted union. Leonidas is forthright; he is utterly truthful with his father. Palamede is not a bad man, but his personality suits the stereotype of how many people view courtiers. Palamede is really the typical Restoration rake--pursuing women, using tricks, rather shallow, and succumbing to wedlock at the end. Dryden was quite evidently fascinated by the dilemmas faced by men in forced marriage. The predicament of Leonidas is treated with seriousness, sympathy, and strong language. The predicament of Palamede is treated with humor, lightness, and "fun" language. The situations of these men, and how each responds, are reflective of their individual personalities. Whether Dryden intended to contrast Leonidas and Palamede so effectively is uncertain, but whatever his purpose was, he succeeded in writing a superb play illustrating the reactions and motivations of two men constrained to endure the anxieties of an institution created by their gender. In the last Dryden play to be discussed, the theme of enforced marriage is presented in a fascinating manner. The way in which Dryden

deals with the common practice indicates that forced marriage, sinister in itself, can be even more sinister in macabre circumstances.

Laura and Violetta, the heroines of The Assignment, are the nieces of Mario, the governor of Rome. Their father's will stipulates that if they wed without their uncle's consent, they will be disinherited. Although this blackmail from the grave was legal in England, I can say with some certainty that a father who genuinely cared for his children would not do this. The sisters' situation is particularly repugnant to the modern reader, because their father, though deceased, is nonetheless able to restrict the liberty of his daughters through the stipulations in his will, and Mario's compliance with the terms of that document.

Laura and Violetta are in love with men who fail to meet with avuncular approval: Laura loves Benito and Violetta loves Camillo. While Don Mario vigorously opposes their choices, he relents at the play's termination. Camillo narrates the particulars of the heroines' situation: "These Sisters are great Beauties and vast Fortunes; but, by a Clause in their Father's Will, if they Marry without their Uncle's Consent, are to forfeit all."²³ Although there are not very many explicit passages about forced marriage, Dryden shows the anguish of the institution by allowing the father to supervise the lives of his daughters from his

grave. This indicates the unrelenting grip of the sexist society that women had to tolerate--that men, though dead, should still possess the terrible power to master and destroy the lives of female progeny. The incarceration of Laura and Violetta through the dictates of their father's will, signifies, for me, Dryden's discontent with forced marriage.

In turning to Wycherley, we will see that though he was ensconced within society, so could quite easily have ignored an institution which would never impinge upon his life, he instead saw fit to engage with it, as did Dryden. Wycherley condemned forced marriage through the ideas of his captivating, independent-minded heroine, Hippolita, in The Gentleman Dancing-Master. The angry, rebellious wording he writes for her surpasses in severity that of Etherege, who will be discussed next. Hippolita's father, Don Diego, the archetypal authoritarian father bent on compelling his daughter to wed a man she does not love, has made a completely unsuitable match for the spirited fourteen-year-old. The intended groom is the Francophile, Monsieur de Paris. But Hippolita loves Gerrard and will brook no interference in her life from either her father or the preposterous Monsieur. The passages below show that Don Diego and Hippolita have radically differing, and hence, conflicting agendas:

Don Diego.	My daughter shall go a maid to her husband's bed. I would fain see any

finical, cunning, insinuating monsieur of the age debauch or steal away my daughter. But well, has she seen my cousin? How long has he been in England?...I was contented he should see her, intending him for her husband.

Hippolita. Fathers seldom choose well and I will no more take my father's choice in a husband.²⁴

The blindness of Don Diego is comically apparent when he says he will not tolerate the advances of any "monsieur" on his daughter. The man he wants to attach her to is just such a character, but because he has chosen Monsieur de Paris, he is unable and unwilling to see any contradiction in his words. Even if Don Diego had the capacity to realize that Monsieur is the sort of man to whom he objects, doubtlessly he would disregard the revelation, for the stock authoritarian father is characterized by his penchant for neglecting the needs and desires of his children, while concentrating on his own. Although Wycherley spent little time on forced marriage, he was adamant in this play that it created trouble, diving families through the dictatorial insistence of parents that their offspring pay heed to name and property rather than free choice in a marriage partner.²⁵

Given that The Gentleman Dancing-Master is highly derivative, like so many Restoration plays, it is prudent to wonder whether it was the authors of the source plays or Wycherley who opposed forced marriage. The Gentleman Dancing-Master was influenced by two different plays written

by two different playwrights, as Katharine M. Rogers explains:

Wycherley took the central situation of his play from Calderón's El Maestro de Danzar, in which the heroine, entertaining her suitor in her father's house, passes him off as a dancing master when her father appears...Wycherley aimed primarily at wit and comic bustle, instead of the romantic atmosphere of the original...The device by which the imprisoned Hippolita manages to get a message to Gerrard through his rival, Monsieur, was adapted from Molière's School for Husbands, where Isabella communicates with Valère through S'ganarelle, the oppressive guardian who intends to marry her. Though both girls fear they may be criticized for boldness, the young lady of Restoration London shows more initiative and independence. Isabella merely responds to Valère's demonstration of love; but Hippolita, having no man to turn to, has to make the first overtures to Gerrard.²⁶

Even though The Gentleman Dancing-Master is derivative, that fact hardly pre-supposes that Wycherley made no changes, and since Hippolita is the heroine, it is only natural that he would concentrate on her. Hippolita does approach Gerrard first--he is almost timid by comparison. Anyone familiar with the personality of Wycherley's heroine knows how self-reliant she is; her own resources are quite sufficient, and she does not require the assistance of a man. She is an active force, grabbing what she desires without hesitation, fear, or the desperate hope that a man will rescue her from her own inability to act. Hippolita is the only symbol of true dominance in the play, for Don Diego, Monsieur de Paris, and even Gerrard are lacking in potency. The critical factors is that Hippolita attacks forced marriage. In this play at least, Wycherley is against forced marriage-

-if he were not, there is no probability that he would have permitted his heroine to strenuously attack the institution, and to serve as the commanding force which impels the plot to completion.

While Wycherley is serious about enforced marriage in one play, Etherege displays a light attitude towards the theme in the one play where it appears, The Man of Mode. Young Bellair is suffering the demands of his father, Old Bellair, that he marry Harriet, but he loves Emilia. The following selection discusses the hindrance Young Bellair must confront:

- Bell. My Father came to Town last night, and lodges i'the very House where Emilia lies.
Med. Does he know it is with her you are in love?
Bell. He knows I love, but knows not whom, without some officious Sot has betray'd me.
Dor. Your Aunt Townly is your Confidant, and favours the business.
Bell. I do not apprehend any ill office from her. I have receiv'd a Letter, in which I am Commanded by my Father to meet him at my Aunt's this Afternoon; he tells me farther he has made a match for me, and bids me resolve to be obedient to his Will, or expect to be disinherited.²⁷

Young Bellair speaks in a manner similar to most young people confronted by the unsettling prospect of a loveless marriage contemplated by selfish parents. He utilizes such key terms and phrases as, "commanded," "made a match," "obedient to his will," and "disinherited." This vocabulary acted as a kind of guidepost for the Restoration audience--no surprises here, for those watching the play expected the young characters to express themselves in this way. This

ubiquitous language instructed the audience about what to anticipate and from whom. Etherege's approach to forced marriage suggests that he did not intend a deep message; he does not seem at all intrigued by the idea of taking society to task for its injustices. I think that this is the basic reason why the theme appears only in The Man of Mode--and here it is quite innocuous. Etherege was representative of society. To be more accurate, he was society, for as a member of the upper class, it was men like himself who molded their particular world in their own image. In view of this, there is nothing odd about Etherege's refusal to challenge societal tenets. Another reason exists for his airy treatment of enforced marriage in the single play: Etherege specialized in unadulterated comedy, hence he saw no viable reason to sully his exquisitely graceful and refined play-world by introducing anything so vulgar as the torment of forced marriage. Otway had no such reservations.

In The Cheats of Scapin, largely lifted from Molière's The Mischievous Machinations of Scapin (first performed in 1671), Otway presents a scathing depiction of forced marriage, and like Behn, his close friend, he portrays men as victims of their fathers' selfish desires. An analysis of any similarities and differences between Molière and Otway will be discussed later. Otway was not the only playwright to depend upon a source. Molière relied on many sources to pen his play, as Donald M. Frame comments;

"Molière's use of his sources is, as usual, considerable and free. The plot mainly follows that of Terence's Phormio; minor borrowings are from Plautus, Cyrano de Bergerac, Rotrou, and (for the business of the sack) Tabarin or some other contemporary or earlier farce writer."²⁸

Octavian is in love with Clara, but his father, Thrifty, has other plans for him. Thrifty designs another woman to marry his son; he focuses on his own needs instead of Octavian's. Leander, the other young man in the play, loves Lucia, but his father, Gripe, also has other intentions for him. Kerstin P. Warner states: "The fathers are absurdly mercenary and conservative and the children are both rebellious and terrified of their fathers' fury."²⁹ The fathers are intransigent until the end, when all is happily resolved. Before that day, they cause much misery for their sons. Gripe, especially, is so dictatorial that it is difficult to imagine him softening later. He says to Thrifty: "For a Son to marry impudently without the Consent of his Father, is as great an Offence as can be imagin'd I take it."³⁰ These words symbolize the quintessential cruelty of the authoritarian father: rather than understanding that the real offense is pressuring his child to enter into a loveless match, he firmly believes that he is the one offended when his son has the temerity to choose for himself--this is "disobedience." Gripe threatens Leander with abandonment and speaks of honor--a false honor-

-as all these repressive parents do: "But look to't, if thou has done any thing to dishonour me, never think to come within my Doors, or see my Face more; but expect to be as miserable as thy folly and poverty can make thee."³¹ Otway has efficiently captured the shocking malevolence of the despotic parent; he, like Behn, denounces forced marriage with uncompromising language. Wycherley's Don Diego, though dictatorial, does not exhibit such rampant vengeance as Gripe. An essentially ridiculous man, Don Diego is rendered far more harmless than Gripe--he is not as menacing to his daughter as Gripe is to his son.

Otway also features the trials endured by young women when their fathers display the usual obstinacy about marriage. Lucia and Clara, the heroines of The Cheats of Scapin, rebel against the recalcitrance of the authoritarian parent, not in the least intimidated by parental or societal retribution. Both are determined to marry men they love, showing an engaging, adventurous spirit:

- Lucia. Was ever such a Trick play'd, for us to run away from our Governesses, where our careful Fathers had placed us, to follow a couple of young Gentlemen, only because they said they lov'd us! I think 'twas a very noble Enterprize! I am afraid the good Fortune we shall get by it, will very hardly recompence the reputation we have lost by it.
- Clara. Our greatest satisfaction is, that they are Men of fashion and credit, and for my part I long ago resolv'd not to Marry any other, nor such a one neither, till I had a perfect confirmation of his Love; and 'twas an assurance of Octavian's that brought me hither.

Lucia. I must confess, I had no less a sence of the
Faith and Honour of Leander.³²

Though Lucia talks about lost reputation, we get the feeling that she does not really care about such a prospect. The fun the women are experiencing belies concern about loss of reputation. Love matters to them, and this is clear when Clara states that she will only marry a man who promises to love her sincerely. While Lucia and Clara speak at times in a frivolous manner, they still realize what is truly important in marriage. They are very young, and so entitled to indulge themselves a little. Sober heroines would be quite unpalatable. When Lucia talks of honor, it is unlikely she is referring to the kind that society requires her to uphold to prevent her husband's from being tainted. This is the honor which results from free choice in marriage, and that Leander will give of his own volition. Not only does Otway vividly express the dangers of forced marriage through the callousness of the fathers, Gripe and Thrifty, but he furnishes a buoyant counter-point in the portrayals of the witty, independent-minded, and exuberant heroines, Lucia and Clara.

In Molière's The Mischievous Machinations of Scapin (Les Fourberies de Scapin), Argante is the father of Octavio and Zerbinetta, and Geronte is the father of Leander and Hiacintha. Perhaps Otway altered the heroines' names because he found them to be too odd, but a more valid reason is that he may have felt that his audience would be able to

remember and identify with simpler names. Given that the Restoration heroine was such an indispensable character, this is a logical idea. At any rate, the fathers are causing trouble for their children; for instance, Argante wants to marry his son, Octavio, to Geronte's daughter, Hiacintha. In actuality, Octavio loves Hiacintha--the crux of the problem is that he is unaware that she is Geronte's daughter, so he thinks he is being coerced into marrying a woman he does not love. Naturally, he will discover all of this at the end of the play. Leander loves Zerbinetta, who, in most of the play, has the identity of a Gypsy, having been kidnapped by them when she was four. She returns his love (he has ransomed her from the Gypsies), and later on, Leander is considerably surprised to discover that he is married to Argante's daughter, as is everyone else. It is chance, fate, or most likely, a convenient *deus ex machina* which resolves this complicated state of affairs--parental scheming was no match for the former.

The two fathers are immensely cruel; Otway retained this aspect of the play:

Arg. A Son to marry without his Father's consent?

Ger. ...marrying without a Father's consent is as bad as possible... (to Leander) Ah! Traitor if I find thou hast dishonour'd me I'll disown thee for my Son, and thou shalt for ever be banish'd from my sight.³³

Otway also retained the wording and connotations. To be honest, Otway's version of the above selection is simply rehashed Molière.

In Otway's interpretation, the young people are decent and sincere, and that too is a factor he kept intact, for Molière's young characters are much the same. When Hiacintha and Leander speak of their mutual love--and their apprehension that parental greed and indifference will harm them--there is no doubt about their sincerity:

Hia. I am willing to believe that you think what you say, nor do I doubt your Words being sincere; but I dread a Power which will oppose the tender Sentiments you might have for me. You depend upon a Father, who designs to marry you to another; and I'm sure I shall dye if that Misfortune happens to me.

Oct. No, fair Hiacintha, no Father can constrain me to break my word to you; and I resolve to quit my Country, nay even my Life, if need were, rather than quit you.³⁴

The crucial question to explore is this: was Molière as concerned about enforced marriage as was Otway? Or did Otway simply exploit presumed concern on Molière's part by the wholesale transfer of it to The Cheats of Scapin?--and this question is more critical than the first. In a general sense, I do not think Molière was as serious about forced marriage as Otway, and this answers the second question--Otway did not have to appropriate concerns he already felt. Nevertheless, the two plays are so similar as almost to defy contrast. Donald M. Frame asserts that The Mischievous Machinations of Scapin and its creator had "no concern with ideas."³⁵ We have no way of knowing if Frame was thinking of forced marriage here. But before forced marriage could become a custom, then an institution, it first had to

coalesce into an idea. It is also possible that the Roman Catholic France of Molière and the Protestant (protest) England of Otway had some influence on the outlook of each dramatist--religions formulate divergent concepts and ways of viewing life, and even when people repudiate organized religion, some are still influenced by it without intending to be. Besides, there is no existing requirement that declares two playwrights must have the same opinions simply because one based his play on the other's. I have read the plays of both men carefully, specifically the passages dealing with forced marriage; obviously, I could not cite every such passage from the plays. I have paid close attention to the tone, the "voice" of Molière and Otway. It is the whole of each play which has aided me in my decision. This method is perhaps unprofessional in some minds, for it depends in part on something as amorphous as feeling--but feeling does, in many spheres, even the academic, transform itself into utter conviction. My conviction is that Otway, though working with a comedic source play, was serious about forced marriage in The Cheats of Scapin, while Molière, in The Mischievous Machinations of Scapin, was mostly exploiting literary convention.

Before I proceed to Behn, an interlude bridging the completed discussion of the male playwrights, and the discussion to come on Behn is expedient. We have seen that Dryden features the subject of forced marriage seriously in

two plays, Marriage-A-La-Mode and The Assignment, while employing an almost playful tone in The Wild Gallant. Wycherley, the great social satirist, uses his gifts of wit and sarcasm against the theme by depicting Don Diego as a fool--a dangerous fool--and allowing Hippolita to triumph. Etherege, in contrast, is an easy-going social satirist; though there is some criticism of his world within his comedies, we are never permitted to forget that he was an upper-class dramatist who took pleasure in his society. On the other hand, we have Otway, who tells us that enforced marriage is a subject worth fighting with powerful words; he was possessed of a keen sense of the hypocrisies and indignities of his age, and he refused to let them pass without challenge. Then there is Behn. For me, she stands alone. It is true that she proposed no solutions to remedy the common practice of her day. Neither did her male competitors. It may be true that she was disturbed by the barrier forced marriage erected because it impeded the libertine "progress" of a select few. Her male colleagues were intensely more disturbed. It is true that her attacks against forced marriage were not profound in an unfathomable sense. Many of the men with whom she contended saw it only as a handy plot device. Behn was passionately committed--profoundly committed--to condemning forced marriage, implicating it as the social institution most destructive to the felicity of both sexes, in particular her own.

According to Jacqueline Pearson,

Behn's plays are full of women who reject conventional views of female behaviour and criticise male oppression. Most common of Behn's images of female oppression is, though, the forced marriage, the centre of her social criticism.³⁶

Pearson has detected the precious distillate of Behn's world-view--this is the very core of Behn's "feminist" philosophy. She forthrightly announces this philosophy in most of her plays. She fervently declares her deep concern for young people, primarily women, who are compelled to marry their parents' choices. The selections I have chosen from Behn's plays will more than suffice to bear witness to her beliefs. The language she utilizes is most often angry and sad--but it is always sincere. There are light moments too; when some of her heroines talk of disobedience to parents, they display a saucy, yet appealing impertinence that signifies the reckless joy of being young.

Behn's premier effort, The Forc'd Marriage; or, The Jealous Bridegroom, evokes the torment which transpires when children are forced to succumb to the desires of parents; Behn makes readily apparent how unacceptable the situation is. The play is a tragi-comedy, allowing Behn more latitude to interject a vocabulary of despair; genre governs tone. If this play were a comedy, Behn would have had to temper the severity of her tone. Orgulius, the despotic father of the unfortunate Erminia, is culpable for the despair of his

daughter when he stubbornly insists that she marry the unloved Alcippius:

- Er. Sir, does your fatal resolution hold?
Org. Away, away, you are a foolish Girl,
And look with too much pride upon your Beauty;
Which like a gaudy flower that springs too soon,
Withers e'er fully blown.
Your very Tears already have betray'd
Its weak inconstant nature;
Alcippius, should he look upon thee now,
Would swear thou wert not that fine thing he lov'd.
Er. Why should that blessing turn to my despair?
Curse on his Faith that told him I was fair.
Org. 'Tis strange to me you shou'd despise this Fortune.
I always thought you well inclin'd to love him,
I would not else have thus dispos'd of you.
Er. I humbly thank you, Sir, though't be too late,
And wish you yet would try to change my Fate;
What to Alcippius you did love believe,
Was such a Friendship as might well deceive;
'Twas what kind Sisters do to Brothers pay;
Alcippius I can love no other way.
--Sir, lay the Interest of a Father by,
And give me leave this Lover to deny.
Org. Erminia, thou art young, and canst not see
The advantage of the Fortune offer'd thee.³⁷

With frightening clarity, we understand that the daughter is the property of the father, a commodity to be "disposed" of in a prearranged union he wants because of "fortune," not love. His speech beginning "'Tis strange" signals a juxtaposition of concepts revealing the hypocrisy, blindness, and greed of the father who insists upon bartering his daughter in the marriage state. The ideas Orgulius exhibits in this speech clash so loudly that they demand and rivet the reader's attention. In the first line, Orgulius voices his astonishment that Erminia should spurn "this fortune," not even comprehending that she is not disinclined to wealth, but being forced to wed a man for

whom she has no deep feelings. In the second line, Orgulius abruptly switches strategy by introducing his belief that Erminia has romantic feelings for Alcippius--the stress rests on the words "I always thought," with a heavy emphasis on "I," reflecting his self-indulgence. The juxtaposition consists in the term "love him" in the second line, and the idea expressed in the entire third line, largely with the word "disposed." He is quite probably unaware of the jarring contrast produced by the opposing concepts of love and disposal of a child in matrimony; he likely intends no "wrong" at all. Because those reading and watching the play, however, understand his personality, hence understand what motivates him, the juxtaposition stands out, and is meant to. We are privy to a contradiction of which he is ignorant. Since Orgulius is preoccupied with "interest," his tenuous "argument" seems designed to divert Erminia from the real issue: freedom of choice in a marriage partner. He places the blame on his daughter instead of admitting that he is the one in the wrong. When Orgulius claims that he would not have "disposed" of her in this way if he had known she did not love Alcippius, he shirks responsibility for his decision--again, he may not even be aware of what he is doing. My contention is that this father either does not understand his own motivations, or simply refuses to acknowledge them--or both. In any case, it is ludicrous for Orgulius to argue love as a reason for the impending

marriage, when what he really has in mind is a propitious match.

The other weapon that this grasping father brandishes is equally irrational, and also designed to exonerate himself at the expense of Erminia--she is too prideful of her beauty. Just what does this accusation mean? That she is obligated to settle for an unloved man because beauty fades while marriage supposedly lasts? This seems to be the idea with which Orgulius is bludgeoning Erminia. She should forget about her appearance and concentrate on the enduring facets of life. Meanwhile, beauty is far from her thoughts at a moment when she is to be sold in a loveless marriage.

Unfortunately, however, Erminia acquiesces to the parental command and weds Alcippius. Although she declines to consummate the union, she decides to remain faithful to her husband, and this fact indicates the confusion to which she has fallen prey. By refusing to consummate the marriage, she announces her feelings for the man she really loves: Philander. By swearing fidelity to this sham wedlock, Erminia upholds the honor of Alcippius, and by extension, the male-dominated world in which she resides and the male-created codes responsible for her predicament. perhaps the most vile component of any male-oriented culture is that the woman is expected to assume the duty of bolstering male honor, and so much not venture one millimeter beyond the boundaries of impeccable conduct,

while the man can, and is actually encouraged, to take a giant stride beyond the confines of decent behavior. Erminia has become the repository of male honor--first her father's, then her husband's. In essence, what we have here are two powerful dynamics colliding in an incessant war to achieve supremacy: the unforgiving strictures of society, manifested and fueled by notions such as honor, virtue, and valor, that stand as monolithic pillars against the battering ram of human instinct, with its insistence on gratifying individual desires such as love. Dale Underwood describes very similar ideas in his definition of the elements constituting Restoration libertinism (267-68). Erminia straddles the barricade separating the two concepts, suffering the dilemma of all women in such cultures. Even though she remains faithful to Alcippius, he, in his unfounded jealousy, believes she has been with Philander. His sense of male honor compromised, he tries to strangle her, for the code by which he lives demands that she must die. Fortunately she survives, and after much drama, the happy ending occurs. Erminia and Philander are finally joined. The Forc'd Marriage, with its uncompromising tragicomic language, and the presentation of the untenable position of women in a society that forces them to prop up male honor, resonates with Behn's utter disenchantment with forced marriage.

So many Restoration plays are derivative. Consequently, it is refreshing that The Forc'd Marriage is completely original. What is remarkable is that this is Behn's first play; there is testimony here to Behn's courage, because rather than relying on other dramatists to supply her with material, she relied on her own resources. Perhaps there is a more important aspect to consider than the fact that her dramatic debut consisted of an original play; of course, the originality of the play cannot be subtracted from the significance of a plot revolving around the theme of forced marriage. What is of monumental import is that she made the decision on her own to focus on forced marriage--from concerns within her mind, disdaining to pick the brains of other playwrights. If a dramatist cares nothing for the torment imposed by forced marriage, she either uses it only as a plot device or she avoids it altogether. Behn cared so passionately that she crystallized that passion in the title, an unmistakable declaration of her intentions. Behn could have entitled her play one of two other variations on the theme--The Marriage of Convenience or The Arranged Marriage. But these would neither serve her purposes nor reflect her commitment to denouncing forced marriage. An arranged match may be agreeable to the parties involved, and a marriage of convenience, most commonly used to designate a political alliance advantageous to royalty or aristocracy, where at

times the match was actually initiated by the prospective marriage partners, were concepts Behn did not have in mind. In fact, the phrase "marriage of convenience" has too many different meanings which prevent it from being pinned down--not only does it denote the alliance of warring nations through the marriage of heads of state, but it can be interchangeable with "arranged marriage." These "muddy" shadings of definition could never have supplied the clarification Behn was seeking to announce her purpose, which was to convey how troubled she was by forced marriage. The aggressiveness of "forced" allowed no debate, and served in her original first play as a proclamation that the serious subject therein would be the major component of her social critique.

In Behn's next play, The Amorous Prince, an "old-fashioned intrigue tragi-comedy," as Hume calls it, Behn also makes use of sober language--again, genre determines tone.³⁸ Behn obviously felt that the audience might experience some confusion about the type of play they were watching, because she says in the Prologue: "Damn me! you'll cry, this Play will be mine A-----/Not serious, nor yet comick, what is't then?"³⁹

However, there is no doubt in my mind that Behn was again vigorously attacking forced marriage. She shows that when young people are bidden to marry against their wishes, misery ensues. It is incumbent upon them to unleash

themselves from these unfortunate unions, for it is immoral to linger where there is no love. Behn did not feel that it was necessary or important to obtain the benediction of society--this did not confer love. Ismena and Alberto, lovers in The Amorous Prince, show how truly miserable young people become when prohibited from following their inclinations:

Ism. Was ever wretched Woman's Fate like mine,
Forc'd to obey the rigid Laws of Parents,
And marry with a Man I did not love?
Alb. But certain 'tis I ne'er shall love again,
And have resolv'd never to marry any,
Where Interest, and not Love, must join our
Hands.⁴⁰

It is not merely the tragi-comic genre which permits Behn to so strongly denounce the tragedy resulting from forced marriage, but her conviction that the institution was thoroughly wrong. The brevity of the above passages bestows power on the words, their compactness containing an almost explosive potency. Always we see the dichotomous relationship of interest and love in Behn. Interest, never satiated, impels parents to trade their children to the highest bidder. The sorrow of Ismena and Alberto, and the manner in which they express it, is an affirmation of Behn's hatred of forced marriage.

On a lighter note, The Rover, a comedy, features characters who do not sustain the torment of the beleaguered Erminia, Ismena, and Alberto. The heroines, Hellena and Florinda, speak with less pathos and more independence.

Although they are having fun, these women are serious when it comes to their right to select their own mates:

- Hell. That Blush betrays you--I am sure 'tis so--or is it Don Antonio the Vice-Roy's Son?--or perhaps the rich old Don Vincentio, whom my Father designs for your Husband? --Why do you blush again?
- Flor. With Indignation; and how near soever my Father thinks I am to marrying that hated Object, I shall let him see I understand better what's due to my Beauty, Birth, and Fortune, and more to my Soul, than to obey those unjust Commands.
- Hell. Now Hang me, if I don't love thee for that dear Disobedience. I love Mischief Strangely, as most of our Sex do, who are come to love nothing else.
- Flor. I Hate Vincentio, and I would not have a Man so dear to me as my Brother follow the ill Customs of our Country, and make a Slave of his Sister--And sir, my Father's Will, I'm sure, you may divert.⁴¹

Florinda has absolutely no intention of pleading with her father as Erminia does. She is secure and aware of her value--she knows she is worthy of picking the man who suits her: Belvile. The breezy quality of the women's speech should not deceive us into thinking that they are not entirely serious about choice in matrimony. The sadness attendant on Erminia's suppliant posture is not present in The Rover, but it would be a mistake to misinterpret Behn's message.

With The Town Fop, Behn gives us a shift in focus: the young person coerced to marry is a man instead of a woman. Behn is very explicit about real love versus forced marriage, and true honor versus false honor in relation to Bellmour's woes. Bellmour, who loves Celinda, is designed

by his domineering uncle, Lord Plotwell, to marry Diana. Lord Plotwell, acting in his own best interests, threatens to disinherit his nephew if he refuses obedience to the avuncular command. Bellmour, an honorable man, considers his vows to Celinda to be tantamount to marriage, but he feels that he cannot deny his uncle lawful obedience. He, like Erminia, is paralyzed by the conflicting codes of love/instinct versus honor/obedience. He complies with his uncle's orders and weds the unloved Diana; and like Erminia, he refuses to consummate the union. For Bellmour, there is no marriage because there is no love. There is, though, a critical difference in how he handles his sorrow, for he, a man, has an outlet for his rage and despair that was denied to Erminia and all middle and upper-class women. Bellmour dilutes his anger, thereby defusing it, by patronizing a brothel to spend himself in the dubious pleasure afforded by such a place. There he gambles and drinks to excess, immersing himself in the libertine "philosophy." A woman was not permitted to "let off steam" in this way--she was forced to stay with the man she loathed, unlike Bellmour, who can flee Diana. Behn makes a crucial statement here: I strongly believe that Bellmour's actions exemplify for her the hypocrisy of a society that allows men both to express and extinguish their pain through debauchery, while withholding this outlet from women in the same predicament. This hypocrisy was everywhere in Behn's age. She condemns

one form of it by illuminating the idea of true marriage rather than societally sanctioned marriage, which was and is oftentimes devoid of love:

Dia. Have you then given me Vows ye can repent of?
Bell. I given ye Vows! be witness, ye just Pow'ers,
How far I was from giving any Vows:
No, no, Diana, I had none to give.
Dia. No Vows to give!
What were they which unto the Holy Man
Thou didst repeat, when I was made all thine?
Bell. The Effects of low Submission, such as Slaves
Condemn'd to die, yield to the angry Judge.
Dia. Dost thou not love me then?
Bell. Love thee! No, by Heaven.⁴²

The word "vows," repeated four times, is extremely significant. Behn understood that only mutual vows characterized by free choice constitute genuine marriage. For Bellmour and Diana, this word has a widely divergent meaning, allowing us a knowledge of their very different personalities. Diana, the mirror of society, believes that vows are valid only in conjunction with the church ceremony--she uses the term "holy man." Bellmour, the symbol of true union, hence unconstrained choice in love, believes that the endorsement of society in the person of a priest or minister officiating at a wedding ceremony, holds no validity where love is absent. Because he and Celinda have freely exchanged vows to love one another and to honor their love with fidelity, they are already married. Notice Bellmour's reference to "powers." These are not the powers esteemed by the church; the "powers" which lovers summon are as divorced from traditional religion as love is from forced marriage.

They may be of pagan derivation, despised, and for all practical purposes, vanquished by established religion. These powers address the freedom and love by which lovers live; conversely, church-prescribed regulations crush genuine love, freely bestowed. The refusal to consummate a loveless marriage is concomitant to this: Bellmour and Erminia did not choose their spouses freely; therefore, they will not consummate freely. The couple joined by anything other than love cannot prosper, and since a couple is the basic unit upon which society sits, society itself is laid waste when matrimony is empty of love. The results are obvious and disastrous; human beings then feel it necessary to find love where they can, leaving themselves and their unloved mates to an insecure--for women--and bitter existence. All parties are hurt. How true are the words of Bellmour when confronting Lord Plotwell: "Sir, can you think a Blessing e'er can fall/Upon that Pair, whom Interest joins, not Love."⁴³ The Town Fop is a comedy. By its very nature, comedy is not supposed to carry serious messages, and if a playwright chances to place a grave idea within a comedy, it is usually almost smothered by humor. Tragi-comedy permits a dramatist certain liberties, such as allowing a forced marriage to take place--but The Town Fop, a comedy, does the same as The Forc'd Marriage, a tragi-comedy, in presenting accomplished forced marriages. Why? And why also does Behn, through her mouthpiece, Bellmour,

present concepts of such striking candor?--in a comedy.

Every word he speaks against forced marriage throws down the gauntlet to society and its component parts. Behn stepped outside of the constrictions of comedy here--and if this is not proof of her intense commitment to forced marriage, then no proof exists.

The brutal frankness which Behn utilizes concerning forced marriage in The Town Fop is also present in Sir Patient Fancy, but this time, she concentrates on women. The heroines, Lucretia and Isabella, are similar in temperament to Florinda and Hellena. They too are witty and independent-minded. The conversation they have regarding forced marriage is humorous, but contains serious ideas. The words their creator employs conjure in the reader's mind stark imagery of female imprisonment in a world created and enjoyed by men. These concepts are an abiding theme whenever Behn attacks forced marriage:

Lucr. Yet these are the precious things our grave
Parents still chuse out to make us happy with,
and all for a filthy Jointure, the undeniable
argument for our Slavery to Fools.

Isab. Custom is unkind to our Sex, not to allow us
Free Choice; but we above all Creatures must
be forced to endure the formal Recommendations
of a Parent, and the more insupportable
Addresses of an odious Fop; whilst the
Obedient Daughter stands--thus--with her hands
pinn'd before her, a set Look, a few Words,
and a Mein that cries--Come marry me: out
upon't.

Lucr. I perceive then whatever your Father designs,
you are resolv'd to love your own way.

Isab. Thou may'st lay the Maidenhead upon't, and be
sure of the Misfortune to win.⁴⁴

The vital conceptual thread running through Sir Patient Fancy in relation to forced marriage is expressed by "slavery," "custom is unkind to our sex," "free choice," "forced to endure," and "resolved to love your own way." These phrases represent ideas which appear in Behn plays that include the forced marriage theme--and most of them do. It is custom, societal naturally, and the servitude or "slavery" to use Behn's term, that custom generates which makes her women determined to exercise free choice. Such tenets, intertwined into an inviolable unity comprising the essential components of Behn's philosophy, form a singular vision of extraordinary impact. There is, quite honestly, nothing like this in the plays of her male competitors. Never mind that some of them use strong language--this is not equatable with the formulation of a vision. The prison metaphor is articulately represented by Isabella's words. The imagery is crystal clear: one so easily imagines the oppressive parent standing by while the daughter is bombarded by the attentions of a man she despises; and, to compound the distasteful situation, she is shackled by the societal dictates that she behave herself like a "lady," mutely and meekly enduring the onslaught of father and fop. I have not encountered a single male playwright who invented such a vividly damning image of the despair, hopelessness, and helplessness of women faced with the appalling prospect of forced marriage. Given the exchange between Isabella and

Lucretia, it is quite inconceivable that Behn was merely adhering to literary convention when she included such scenes of raw power in her plays. Blind attachment to convention--literary and/or social--does not obligate a dramatist to use such creative and powerful imagery. Conviction does. And Behn held the conviction that this "practice" was abhorrent.

For Behn, societal custom was the culprit, precluding any chance that women might have of obtaining what men thought to be their privilege--rights. The next passage, spoken by the feisty Isabella, also involves the central components of Behn's outlook about her gender in an oppressive world:

Isab. Nay, then, be gone, my poor submissive
 Prayers, and all that dull Obedience Custom
 has made us Slaves to.--Do sacrifice me, lead
 me, to the Alter, and see if all the holy
 mystick Words can conjure from me the
 consenting Syllable: No, I will not add one
 word to make the Charm complete, but stand as
 silent in the inchanting Circle, as if the
 Priests were raising Devils there.⁴⁵

Priests, and the churches they preside in, represent for Behn the power of society to coerce women to marry men for whom they feel nothing--the men their parents want them to marry. The ecclesiastical force allies itself not only with parents but with the more formidable temporal power of the state: co-conspirators in the oppression of women and free choice in matrimony. Since the church sanctions what the state decrees as lawful--forced marriage created by male

dominion which is the state--the church is another guilty party responsible for female suffering. In Behn's view, the church and its priests perpetuated and exacerbated loveless unions. What the church considered moral--legal marriage awarded the final stamp of approbation by the ritual of the sacrament of holy wedlock--Behn saw as outright immorality. From the evidence of her writings, she believed that the temporal/ecclesiastical support was a mere formality, having nothing whatsoever to do with the real issue: do the parties love each other? A ceremony in which a priest or minister says some words over a couple could not bestow love where no love existed; only free choice in a marriage partner could do this. Mutual vows given without constraint was genuine love whether there was marriage or not. True "holy wedlock" consisted in this. The words of the remarkable Isabella, Behn's proxy, are indeed compelling. When she talks about "sacrifice" in conjunction with being led to the "altar," the inference is unequivocally pagan. She is being sacrificed to loveless marriage, symbolized by the altar/church. The tone is imbued with sarcastic wit, but there is no mistaking the bitterness and anger. There too is dignified resistance, perhaps the most important emotion she is experiencing. This is reflected in the way she uses the last part of the passage, starting with "holy mystick words" and closing with "devils there." Isabella implies that the church ceremony of marriage is a magical

thing, a pagan thing, which has no legitimate force. All the magic in the world will never induce Isabella to speak the words that would make her a collaborator in her own subjugation and anguish. The power of a single woman who refuses to surrender her freedom in love is more formidable than the guilty little conspiracy of parents/state/church: society. Custom, the glue binding society together, is the foe with which to contend; the desired outcome is simple liberty.

The Lucky Chance also castigates the priests and their part in perpetuating forced marriage. Leticia has promised herself to Sir Feeble Fainwou'd for reasons of interest. She is without financial means, so she must marry, but she loves Bellmour. Sir Feeble, in a cruel attempt to hold her, informs her that Bellmour has died. Now Leticia has no excuse for avoiding marriage with the repulsive old man. When she discovers that her lover is actually alive, she rids herself of Sir Feeble:

Leticia. I will not fail, my love.
Old man, forgive me, thou the aggressor art,
Who rudely forced the hand without the heart.
She cannot from the paths of honour rove,
Whose guide's religion, and whose end is
love.⁴⁶

The word "religion" here can have different meanings. Considering how Behn felt about organized religion, it cannot refer to that. Perhaps it is a freedom of the heart, the true religion in Behn's philosophy. In view of Behn's beliefs about real honor, which she is using in this

context, and the association of love, it is most unlikely that Behn would do such a hasty about-face, and align herself on the side of organized religion. But the word could mean religious feeling with no association to organized religion. There is one conclusion: real honor equates with mutually bestowed vows of love, and there is no place for forced marriage here. The passages below not only convey these ideas but add another element equally central to Behn's philosophy. In The Lucky Chance, Leticia reverses the concepts of honor and marriage by using the term "adultery." Behn, through Leticia, redefines societal notions by appropriating them for her own purposes and utilizing them as she believes they should be defined--and it is that extra dimension supplied by the word "adultery" which is critical:

Bellmour. And want compelled thee to this wretched marriage...did it?
Leticia. 'Tis not a marriage, since my Bellmour lives; the consummation were adultery. I was thy wife before, would thou deny me?
Bellmour. No, by those powers that heard out mutual vows, those vows that tie us faster than dull Priests.⁴⁷

Bellmour calls on the same powers that the other Bellmour relied upon (The Town Fop). We also note that he has the same contempt for established religion ("dull Priests"), and the same devotion to "mutual vows." Behn was preoccupied with the culpability of the church, and the two Bellmours embody her extreme disgust with the collusion of religion and forced marriage.

The rules by which women of the Restoration were to live did not escape her convictions. Rules are required--only an anarchist or a complete fool would disagree. But when regulations inflict great harm on one segment of any given society, concerned writers dispute them. We know that Behn never failed to make known her objections, and she paid for it. The challenge that Behn revelled in is expressed with her usual candor in The Emperor of the Moon, where once again she attacks custom by contrasting it to freedom:

A Curse upon that faithless Maid,
Who first her Sex's Liberty betray'd;
Born free as Man to Love and Range,
Till nobler Nature did to Custom change,
Custom, that dull excuse for fools,
Who think all Virtue to consist in Rules.⁴⁸

Notice that Behn attributes an almost Edenic quality to conditions existing in some pre-society land, a place where women and their drive toward sex and love ("nobler Nature"), were virtuous. Behn indicts society and its "Rules" for perverting the true meaning of virtue. She is advocating free love, innocent sexuality, unimpeded by the "virtue" of society. Behn equated virtue with free choice; when a woman or man was constrained to marry according to parental dictate, the ensuing union was little more than prostitution, as in the last play.

In The Younger Brother, Olivia and George Marteen, sister and brother, are very blunt about the immorality of forced marriage. Olivia expresses her consternation in terms which leave no room for doubt where she stands:

Oliv. I never saw him yet; and to be sold unseen,
and unsigh'd for, in the Flower of my Youth
and Beauty, gives me a strange aversion to the
Match.

Geo. Oh! you'll like him when you see him.

Oliv. Like him--no, no, I never shall--What, come a
stranger to my Husband's Bed? 'Tis
Prostitution in the Leudest manner, without
the Satisfaction; the Pleasure of Variety, and
the Bait of Profit, may make a lame excuse for
Whores who change their Cullies, and quit
their nauseous Fools--No, no, my Brother, when
Parents grow arbitrary, 'tis time we look into
our Rights and Privileges; therefore, my dear
George, if e'er thou hope for Happiness in
Love, assist my Disobedience.⁴⁹

Prostitutes sell themselves; women become prostitutes by being sold to men they neither know nor love, and by being expected to consummate these spurious marriages. Women are blameless for this immoral state of affairs--the fault lies with society. Only choice in matrimony can erase this form of legalized prostitution. Olivia recognizes this when she rails against "arbitrary parents," and the "rights and privileges" of children. Her "disobedience" is justified as moral on these grounds, for where love in marriage does not exist, that union is mere pretense.

A close examination of the plays of Behn and her male contemporaries attests to the fact that she made use of the forced marriage plot far more than did they. There are those who will claim that this does not suggest serious involvement with the subject. After all, other Restoration dramatists took advantage of this convenient, familiar plot device. But numbers have significance. Dryden, extremely prolific, did not employ the theme as often as Behn.

Wycherley, Otway, and Dryden utilized strong language when dealing with forced marriage, but only in a small number of plays. But Behn made use of the plot in a systematic manner, creating a construct of female suffering--a vision--not in evidence in any of the male Restoration playwrights. Even when Behn mixes humorous dialogue with gravity, the reader cannot fail to notice the severity with which she denounces the institution. The dates of the Behn plays explored in this chapter range from her first play, The Forc'd Marriage (1671), in which she declares intentions that span her career, to her last play, The Younger Brother (1696). Throughout her entire career, Behn was obsessive about the subject. Why, if she was merely serving convention, does she turn to it again and again, criticizing it with such candor, creativity, and courage? Why does Behn repeatedly use the word "forced": rather than the other variations? Does convention command the playwright to treat a particular plot in the large majority of her plays? Unswerving and unquestioned loyalty to convention, whether literary or social, infers passivity. Aphra Behn was not a passive woman in either sense. How is it possible that a woman so adamant in the individual pursuit of life and work, a woman of great conviction, would do nothing differently, would not feel differently, would tag after convention like a lackey? The very fact that Behn was a woman making a living by writing plays in a male-dominated age that

reprimanded her at any convenient opportunity presupposes that she would fight back in defense of herself, her work, and her gender. This she did by staging an attack on the aspect of her society most culpable for persecuting women: forced marriage. Behn immersed herself in the subject--a very deep chord had been struck within her, and she responded accordingly. When Lady Fullbank, in The Lucky Chance, forced to marry for money, cries out her poignant indignation about the fatal nature of forced marriage and the ruin attending it, Behn laments with her.

ENDNOTES

1. Forced marriage is an issue of importance in the following plays by Aphra Behn; in many, it is central to the play. (1) The Forc'd Marriage (1671): Erminia, in love with Philander, is handed over by her father, Orgulius, to Alcippius, a man not of her choosing. (2) The Dutch Lover (1673): Euphemia, in love with Alonzo, is contracted to wed the fool, Haunce van Ezel. (3) The Town Fop (1677): Bellmour, in love with Celinda, is forced by his uncle, Lord Plotwell, to marry Diana, whom he does not love. Celinda is designed for the fop, Sir Timothy Tawdrey. (4) The Rover (1677): Florinda loves Belville, but is promised by her father to the elderly Don Vincentio, and promised by her brother, Don Pedro, to his friend, Antonio--two horrid matches to contend with! (5) Sir Patient Fancy (1678): Lucia, married to old Sir Patient due to straitened financial circumstances, still meets her previous lover, Wittmore. Lucretia, in love with Leander, is promised by her mother, Lady Knowell, to the fop, Sir Credulous Easy. (6) The Feign'd Curtezans (1679): Laura Lucretia loves Galliard, but is contracted to Julio. Marcella loves Fillamour, but is contracted to the hateful Octavio. (7) The Rover (Part II) (1681): Beaumont loves the prostitute, La Nuche, but is bound to Ariadne. (8) The False Count (1682): Julia is forcibly married to the old Francisco, but loves Don Carlos. Antonio, contracted to Isabella, is in love with Clara. (9) The Lucky Chance (1687): Lady Fullbank, in love with Gayman, is forced to wed old Sir Cautious Fullbank. Leticia loves Bellmour, but is constrained to marry Sir Feeble Fainwou'd because of poverty. (10) The Emperor of the Moon (1687): Elaria loves Don Cinthio, but is denied to him by her father, Don Baliardo. Bellemante, niece to the foolish doctor, is in love with Don Charmante, but the doctor stands in her way. (11) The Younger Brother (1696; posthumous): Teresia loves George Marteen, but is contracted to marry Sir Rowland. George returns Teresia's love, but is designed for the ancient Lady Youthley. Olivia has been promised by her father, Sir Rowland Marteen, to Welborn, whom she has never seen--when she meets him, she falls in love, without knowing who he is. Welborn also falls in love with Olivia.

2. Behn's brilliant epistolary novel, Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister, (Ed. Maureen Duffy. London: Virago Press, 1987), first published in 1684-87, contains many angry attacks on custom, and its cruelest manifestation, forced

marriage. The novel is based on a very sensitive, real-life scandal involving Forde, Lord Grey of Werke, who eloped with his sister-in-law, Lady Henrietta Berkeley, in 1682. Behn substitutes the names Philander and Sylvia. It is not just adultery we see here, but adultery between family members, albeit not blood-related. Yet Behn, in her tone, defends the lovers against the strictures of society--for all intents and purposes she condones adultery through her sympathy for the lovers. The lovers represent free love, real love, not the forced marriage she so despised--it is societal custom from which the two are escaping. It is said that everyone loves a scandal, and this novel proves that statement true--sixteen editions of Love Letters were published by the close of the eighteenth century. The subsequent passages illustrate Behn's uncompromising position, and include many of the themes discussed in the body of this chapter: "What kin, my charming Sylvia, are you to me? No ties of blood forbid my passion; and what's a ceremony imposed on man by custom? What is it to my divine Sylvia, that the priest took my hand and gave it to your sister? What alliance can that create? Why should a trick devised by the wary old, only to make provision for posterity, tie me to an eternal slavery?" (4). "...and are those treasures for the dull conjugal lover to rifle? Was the beauty of divine shape created for the cold matrimonial embrace? And shall the eternal joys that Sylvia can dispense, be returned by the clumsy husband's careless, forced, insipid duties?" (8). "Let the dull, hot-brained, jealous fool upbraid me with cold patience: let the fond coxcomb, whose honour depends on the frail marriage-vow, reproach me, or tell me that my reputation depends on the feeble constancy of a wife, persuade me it is honour to fight for an irretrievable and unvalued prize, and that because my rival has taken leave to cuckold me, I shall give him leave to kill me too; unreasonable nonsense grown to custom. No, by heaven! I had rather languish for the happy occasion; the sin is the same, only the act is more generous: believe me, my Sylvia, we have all false notions of virtue and honour, and surely this was taken up by some despairing husband in love with a fair jilting wife, and then I pardon him; I should have done as much: for only she that has my soul can engage my sword; she that I love, and myself, only commands and keeps my stock of honour." (10). "...thus indisputably free from all obligations to Myrtilia as a husband, I may be permitted to lay claim to Sylvia, as a lover, and marry myself more effectually by my everlasting vows, than a priest by his common method could do to any other woman less beloved." (11). "Oh thou charming object of my eternal wishes, why wert thou thus dispos'd? Oh save my life, and tell me what indifferent impulse obliged thee to these nuptials: had Myrtilia been recommended or forc'd by the tyranny of a father into thy arms, or for base lucre thou hadst chosen her, this had excus'd thy youth and crime; obedience or vanity I could have pardon'd, --but oh--'twas love; love, my Philander! thy raving love, and that which has undone thee was a rape rather than a marriage." (44-5). Behn erects her

philosophy upon the foundation of actual events, and the particulars of this situation provided the ideal podium from which she could attack custom.

3. Dale Underwood, Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners, (1957; reprint Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1969), 10, 11, 12.

4. Goreau, 228.

5. Duffy, 33-4.

6. Link, 155-56.

7. Susan Staves, Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 188.

8. Robert L. Root, Thomas Southerne, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1981), 23.

9. Goreau, 229.

10. Weber, 146, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152.

11. Stone, 277.

12. Rogers, "Aphra Behn," in DLB, 8.

13. Ibid., 80, 13.

14. Sutherland, 137.

15. Hume, The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth-Century, 146.

16. Underwood, 14.

17. Dryden, The Wild Gallant, in The Works of John Dryden, Vol. VIII, 20, (Act II, sc. ii).

18. Dryden, Marriage A-la-Mode, in The Works of John Dryden, Vol. XI, 251-2 (Act II, sc. i).

19. Ibid., 231 (Act I, sc. i).

20. Ibid., 242 (Act II, sc. i).

21. Ibid., 247.

22. Ibid., 303 (Act V, sc. i).

23. Dryden, The Assignment, in The Works of John Dryden, Vol XI, 330 (Act I, sc. i.)

24. Wycherley, The Gentleman Dancing-Master, in The Complete Plays of William Wycherley, 145, 122 (Act II, sc. i and Act I, sc. i).

25. In Wycherley's The Country Wife, Alithea, the sister of the absurd Pinchwife, is the victim of a match made by him; Sparkish, in return for agreeing to marry Alithea, will receive five thousand pounds as a settlement. Alithea, a decent, honest woman, feels honor-bound to proceed with the match. Of course, she has no choice but to yield to the wishes of her brother. When a man more to her liking evinces interest in her--Harcourt--she too shows interest. Presumably, Alithea and Harcourt marry at the end.

26. Rogers, William Wycherley, 52-3.

27. Etherege, The Man of Mode, in The Dramatic Works of Sir George Etherege, II, 203 (Act I, sc. i).

28. Frame, 297.

29. Kerstin P. Warner, Thomas Otway, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1982), 76.

30. Thomas Otway, The Cheats of Scapin, in The Works of Thomas Otway: Plays, Poems, and Love Letters, I, 301 (Act II, sc. i).

31. Ibid., 302.

32. Ibid., 316 (Act III, sc. i).

33. mole, The Mischievous Machinations of Scapin, in The Works of Mr. de mole, 6 vols. (1714; reprint New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1967), V, 11-12, 17, 18 (Act I, sc. iv, and Act II, sc. ii).

34. Ibid., 8-9 (Act I, sc. iii).

35. Frame, 297.

36. Pearson, 159-60.

37. Behn, The Forc'd Marriage, in Works, III, 301 (Act I, sc. iii).

38. Hume, The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth-Century, 286.

39. Behn, The Amorous Prince, in Works, IV, 121-22 (Prologue).
40. Ibid., 200 (Act V, sc. ii).
41. Behn, The Rover, I, 121 (Act I, sc. i).
42. Behn, The Town Fop, III, 47-8 (Act III, sc. ii).
43. Ibid., 33 (Act II, sc. iv).
44. Behn, Sir Patient Fancy, in Works, IV, 11 (Act I, sc. i).
45. Ibid., 90-1 (Act V, sc. i).
46. Behn, The Lucky Chance, in Works, III, 30-1 (Act III, sc. ii).
47. Ibid., 21 (Act II, sc. ii).
48. Behn, The Emperor of the Moon, III, 396 (Act I, sc. i).
49. Behn, The Younger Brother, IV, 323 (Act I, sc. i).

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

A Woman's Place

At a time when vibrant, larger-than-life personalities abounded, both in life and in art, Aphra Behn carved out a radical niche for herself by appropriating the freedoms and privileges heretofore reserved exclusively for men. There is a fundamental difference between picturesque men such as Rochester, Buckingham, and Etherege, for instance, and Behn--they were male and she was female. This single difference gave them carte blanche to behave as they wished and to be what they liked, while Behn was restricted in her behavior and prevented from realizing her full potential as a human being, simply because of her gender. Since Behn suffered the repercussions of a gender handicap, an impediment to freedom that the male participants in this new world given shape and definition by the colorful Restoration monarch, Charles II, and his cavalier court, did not experience, Behn's position was neither comfortable nor safe. This world was confident, even arrogant, in its ethic of relaxed morality and studied indolence, but ruthless in its conviction that women had a place, a place which had

been dictated from the misty beginning of time--a place that would and should always be. Behn said "no." In her refusal to pay obeisance to the societal restraints of her age, she had the audacity to stride right out of that place. Quite naturally, the response she received was hostile, but Behn defended herself and her work with impressive power, wit--and anger. She answered her detractors in many of the prefaces and epilogues of her plays. The last section of this study consists of Behn's statements: they show that she was attacked, that she fought back, and confirm her difficult situation as a woman writer. Behn's own words provide a more direct voice than evidence from her plays, because her play-voice was moderated by the demands of literary standards, audience expectations, and the overseer of both, the restrictions of the Restoration, while the direct voice of her prefaces and epilogues was not hampered by these "filters."

It was difficult indeed to define her own terms for her life and her art in seventeenth-century English society, a society which stated that a woman was first the property of her father, then of her husband, and that she dare not attempt to be anything else. Virginia Woolf, in A Room of One's Own (1929), explains a situation stretching back hundreds of years:

I went, therefore, to the shelf where the histories stand and took down one of the latest, Professor Trevelyan's History of England. Once more I looked up Women, found "position of," and turned to the pages

indicated. "Wife beating," I read, "was a recognized right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low... "Similarly," the historian goes on, 'the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parent's choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the 'chivalrous' upper classes... Betrothal often took place while one or both parties was in the cradle, and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurses' charge." That was about 1479, soon after Chaucer's time. The next reference to the position of women is some two hundred years later, in the time of the Stuarts. "It was still the exception for women of the upper and middle class to choose their own husbands, and when the husband had been assigned, he was lord and master, so far at least as law and custom could make him. Yet, even so," Prof. Trevelyan concludes, "neither Shakespeare's women nor those of authentic seventeenth-century memoirs, like the Verneys and the Hutchinsons, seem wanting in personality and character."¹

Since the rules for women did not change appreciably in Behn's time, as the above quotation affirms ("the position of women"... "in the time of the Stuarts"), Behn was pitting herself against a most formidable adversary--a male-dominated society that demanded a homage she scorned to bestow. During the Restoration, when a woman surrendered to her father's choice of marriage partner, she could not petition the law for succor if her husband was abusive in word and/or deed, for the law stood rooted behind the man who administered her life. A woman was even more oppressed under her husband's dominion than she was under her father's (see Chapter One, pages 9-10, for a discussion of the chilling consequences of matrimony for a woman). In the most basic sense, the right to personal liberty--despite the fact that Restoration society held no belief that women had

rights--and all the aspects thereof, the quality of a married woman's life was severely curtailed. In essence, she had no life. When a woman married, she became like a stream flowing into a river, her identity effectively subsumed, hence obliterated, within the relentless juggernaut of the larger and more powerful entity. Behn abnegated this centuries-old oppression of her sex by furiously attacking its most visible manifestation: forced marriage and the societal custom that allowed it to function and flourish with such cruel efficiency. Of course, this is not to say that all marriages were forced, and Behn was aware of this fact. She reserved her rage for forced marriage, which by its very nature, presupposed coercion and precluded love.

But how was Behn able to transcend the boundaries erected by her world? She expressed herself both as a woman and a writer, in ways which were, to say the least, not usual. It is true that not all women were on the same level, in the Restoration, and in other ages, in spite of general oppression. Some women stand out as exceptions.² Obvious examples of women who were able to neglect the idea of woman's place are Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria. The irony is that the latter monarch did uphold Victorian values while at the same time abrogating them, by virtue of what she was. The age in which Behn lived and wrote permitted her a certain degree of freedom to speak out about

her concerns. The looser moral atmosphere created by the Restoration of Charles II relaxed some of the strictures that had previously bound women; they could now act and write, though they were considered not much better than whores for doing so. Because Behn knew how to read and write, unlike women of the lower class, the option of being a playwright was open to her. Her class may have been an important factor in her rebellion. Behn was a member of what today would be called the middle class, but not so fully integrated into it as to preclude any divergent opinion from the norm. Perhaps the truly critical reason why Behn was able to ignore her "place" came from within--the realization that women were mistreated and the conviction that she should write about this oppression. That would be in keeping with her courage. Society, however, would have preferred that Behn follow the proprieties outlined for women by keeping silent. If this statement were not true, then why was Behn attacked with such venom?³

The Tension Behn Felt as the First Professional Female Writer

In opposing the customs of her day, especially forced marriage, an institution made almost inviolable by the precedent of centuries, and by living her life as she saw fit, Behn also set a precedent. And to be a precedent

in any era must naturally leave the "rebel" vulnerable to confusion, for it is inconceivable that a person proposing controversial, therefore unpopular ideas to a world fettered by restrictive mores should feel completely secure. Because Behn had the rectitude to air her concerns, she drew fire from opponents. So it is no wonder that her singular--and lonely--position as the first woman to earn a living by her pen inflicted upon her a tension between advocating her beliefs freely, and falling prey to the double standard she attempted to resist, a duality which perhaps shadowed her life. When Behn writes, she assumes the male prerogative: "All I ask, is the Privilege for my Masculine Part, the Poet in me."⁴ Robert Adams Day insightfully comments: "Her first plays, The Forc'd Marriage and The Amorous Prince, appeared with only passing reference--the pronoun "she"--to the author's sex, but in her third, The Dutch Lover (1673), an epistle to the reader reveals it with wry humility in a discourse where irritation clearly struggles with caution."⁵ Authorship was just another territory within the male superstructure; this fact may explain why Behn demurred with the phrase "my Masculine Part, the Poet in me." Yet how ironic it is that Behn did tread on a male domain when she wrote for a living! It is perhaps even more ironic that everyone was aware of her gender, yet she still was unable to completely declare it. In her belief that writing was a male province, she divided her being, bowing

to an established convention of authorship while living her life freely, in a manner directly opposing accepted custom for female conduct. On one hand she conforms; on the other she resists. While some modern radical feminist scholars might find this compromise unsatisfactory, most, notably the moderate ones, probably recognize that some degree of compromise is inevitable. In actuality, Behn's compromise between convention and rebellion is a realistic response to her position as the first professional female writer. It is not probable that Behn would think and behave differently, for she was not a feminist in the contemporary sense.

The play that best exemplifies Behn's doubleness is The Young King (1679). Since this play is relatively early, it does not contain her final word, but for the purposes of this discussion, it is significant. When Cleomena dresses as a man, she automatically assumes the characteristics associated with a man, such as military prowess and valor. When she sheds her male accouterments, the way is made smooth for romance; Cleomena is "disrobed" and revealed as a woman. When Behn lifts her pen, she becomes a "man." There is another parallel between Cleomena and her creator. When Cleomena falls in love with Thersander, she not only loses her male attire, but also forsakes male fortitude. That attribute is relinquished to its "proper owner"--her lover, Thersander. Only when Behn writes, can she take on male strength; in discarding her pen, she is vulnerable as a

woman, and therefore subject to the vicissitudes of her sex. Behn's love life informs us that this may be so. Here was a woman who championed the idea that women should have rights, a woman who believed that women had the inherent right to be happy in life and in love. But in a notable instance, Behn was incapable of enforcing these principles in her personal life--and this is hardly an attack on Behn, for theory and practice rarely coincide. I refer to John Hoyle, with whom it is said that she had an unfortunate relationship.

Although we are not quite certain of the true situation regarding Behn and Hoyle, the subject is worth exploring.

Behn's love letters to Hoyle represent a problematic area, for there is no certainty that they are hers, or if they are, that they were private letters written to Hoyle. First, assuming that Behn did compose these love letters to Hoyle, a mere perusal of them causes the reader to wince in excruciating embarrassment for her, all the more so when one couples her suppliant posture with her thirst for independence. Ensnared within his spell, she was seized by what she felt women should steadfastly avoid: the dominion of the man over the woman. Referred to as "Amyntas," among other names in her poems, where he is transmogrified into the idealized pastoral lover, it is evident that he had a profound impact on her life. If he had been a decent sort, she might not have suffered as she did at his hands, but he was a reprobate, the quintessential rake-hero. In the

uncompromising words of Bulstrode Whitelocke, a chaplain to Cromwell, Hoyle was an "atheist, a sodomite professed, a corrupter of youth, and a blasphemer of Christ."⁶ Though Whitelocke was very likely squirming within the confines of his Puritan bias, especially in his reference to Hoyle as a "sodomite"--Hoyle was bisexual--there is little doubt that Whitelocke is telling the truth. Hoyle was not an admirable man. It is not the fact that he did not return Behn's love which calls his character into question, for he could hardly be expected to pretend love for her. It is that he treated her with contempt, and was systematically unfaithful to her. From the following supposed love letter, it is all too apparent how besotted Behn was:

...But oh! you went to Joys, and left me to Torments!
You went to love alone, and left me Love and Rage,
Fevers and Calentures, even Madness it self! Indeed,
indeed, my Soul! I know not to what degree I love you;
let it suffice I do most passionately, and can have no
Thoughts of any other Man, whilst I have Life. No!
reproach me, defame me, lampoon me, curse me, and kill
me, when I do, and let Heaven do so too. Farewel--I
love you more and more every Moment of my Life. Know
it, and Goodnight. Come to-morrow, being Wednesday, to,
my Adorable Lycidas, your ASTREA.⁷

It is not surprising that Behn sacrificed so much of her dignity in loving Hoyle so excessively, for love never did bow to reason, yet she could still see what he was. Goreau says that "she disapproves of him, but is fascinated nevertheless."⁸ But knowledge of Hoyle's negative personality traits did not dissuade Behn from pursuing him.

Since this part of the "love letters" examination proceeds on the assumption that Behn wrote them to Hoyle, permit me to presume that his ill-treatment of her is mirrored in her play Abdelazer; or, The Moor's Revenge (1677), though it is an adaptation of the anonymous Lust's Dominion; or The Lascivious Queen (1657). The subsequent exchange between Queen Isabella of Spain and the title character has almost the exact tone of pain and outrage on the part of the proud monarch, but she seems more dignified in her handling of the Moor than her creator does with Hoyle. Of course, a queen must be dignified in all circumstances. Perhaps Behn wished she could have dealt with Hoyle in this way, but the conversation between the characters takes place in the world of the play, not real life, so idealization is required for dramatic purposes:

Qu. How dare you, Sir, upbraid me with my love?
Abd. I will neither answer thee, nor hear thee speak.
Qu. Not hear me speak;--Yes, and in thunder too;
 Since all my Passion, all my soft Intreaties
 Can do no good upon thee,
 I'll see (since thou hast banish'd all thy Love,
 That Love, to which I've sacrificed my Honour)
 If thou hast any sense of Gratitude,
 For all the mighty Graces I have done thee.
Abd. Do;--and in thy Story too, do not leave out
 How dear those mighty Graces I have purchas'd;
 My blooming Youth, my healthful vigorous Youth,
 Which Nature gave me more noble Actions
 Than to lie fawning at a woman's Feet,
 And pass my Hours in Idleness and Love--
 If I cou'd blush, I shou'd thro all this Cloud
 Send forth my Sense of Shame into my Cheeks.⁹

There is more than a "lovers' quarrel" taking place here. Not only is Abdelazer abusing Queen Isabella's love, but he

is defying a monarch--she must be seen in this dual role. "I will not answer thee, nor hear thee speak" is an extraordinary--and dangerous--statement to make to a monarch, especially in an age when the monarchy was both feared and respected. But because the queen is his lover, Abdelazer feels he can loose the bonds which restrict, which positively forbid, plain-speaking to a queen. The role he plays as her lover has relaxed his tongue, and he is confident that no perilous consequences will ensue if he addresses her in so arrogant a manner. Abdelazer is guilty of a most distasteful sexism--in the modern sense--when he avers that he was made for better things than to spend his time loving a woman. Men and women are very different in "nature," a standard view in ages past, but still prevalent among many people. The "nature" of a man is to live an important life by attending to the duties the world demands of him. It is unmanly for Abdelazer merely to love, for "noble actions" await him. Queen Isabella, though stung by his callousness, retains both her womanly and regal dignity, and in this, she triumphs.

There is another way in which Behn's work may reflect her life, and that is in her presentation of the rake-hero. We can speculate that perhaps Behn experienced some ambivalence in her attitude to this charming character.

Behn is able to acknowledge that Hoyle and her love for him constitute a direct contradiction to what she believes

signifies happiness for women. No matter that she is consumed with love for him; he is frankly not an honorable man. Behn's rakes demonstrate a similar contradiction. They are immensely attractive as sexual beings, but negligible as human beings. Behn fluctuates, unable to decide whether her rakes should be portrayed as positive because of their attractiveness or as negative because of their horrendous treatment of women. Out of this confusion emerges the most fatally charismatic of her rakes, Willmore of The Rover, the embodiment of his creator's vacillation: he is both irresistible and morally repugnant. It is not really surprising that Behn's attitudes toward Cleomena and her rakes were expressed through this duality--since Behn may have viewed herself as a woman and a writer with the same duality, it is reasonable to expect that some of her characters would reflect this uncertainty. For me, there is uncertainty about the "love letters" that Behn reputedly wrote to Hoyle.

The key player in the controversy of the "love letters" is Charles Gildon, who is credited with publishing a memoir of Behn, a most unsatisfactory one at that. Montague Summers provides an overview of the situation and asserts his disbelief in the veracity of the letters:

In the old History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn (1696; and with additions 1698, and etc.), ushered into the world by Charles Gildon, a romance full as amorous and sensational as any novel of the day, has been woven about her sojourn at Antwerp...It would seem that all this pure fiction, the sweepings of Aphra's desk, was

intended by her to have been worked up into a novel; both letters and narration are too good to be the unaided composition of Gildon himself, but possibly Mrs. Behn in her after life may have elaborated and told him these erotic episodes to conceal the squalor and misery of the real facts of her early Dutch mission...Mrs. Behn has given us poetic pseudonyms for many of her lovers, Lycidas, Lysander, Philaster, Amintas, Alexis, and the rest, but these extended over many years, and attempts at identification, however interesting, are fruitless.¹⁰

It is not only the authenticity of the letters which has been challenged, but the authorship of the Life and Memoirs.

Robert Adams Day explains:

We may conclude that Charles Gildon cannot be proved to have had anything to do with its composition...Nearly all of the "Life and Memoirs" consists of novels and fragments of novels, very probably by Mrs. Behn, and some of her letters. Most of its specific statements which are not part of these fictions are derived from her published works, and perhaps (in one or two cases) from her own lips. Aphra Behn's first biographer was the incomparable Astrea herself."

There are additional possibilities. Prof. Judith Milhous suggests that the "love letters" could be drafts toward a novella, that they are not letters written by Behn to Hoyle. I agree that this could be the case. Another possibility is that the letters were meant as drafts toward the preparation of an epistolary novel. Although the "Behn love letters" are not as high-flown as what we read in Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister, they somewhat resemble the tone and flavor of the type of epistles that Behn fashioned for her epistolary novel. Anyone comparing the so-called love letters to Hoyle with the letters written by the characters in the above novel would immediately discern

the unsophisticated nature of the former, in contrast with the polished tone of the latter. But this is what a draft is all about. The component kept completely intact is the fiercely passionate love expressed.

After examining the particulars of the "love letters" situation, I conclude that they are not genuine. Consequently, I disagree with Maureen Duffy: "To me they have the ring of authenticity especially since they often repeat, or reflect, happenings in the poems."¹² Perhaps I am biased in Behn's favor, but I find it difficult to believe that she was so servile in her attitude to Hoyle. In any case, I see no valid reason to credit the love letters with authenticity, and I do not view them as an accurate reflection of Behn's life.

I do, however, endorse the idea that the solid character portrayal of the Widow Ranter could be a reflection of Behn's commitment to living her life as she chose. The Widow does not exhibit the perplexed doubleness so evident in Cleomena. The depiction of this remarkable character shows us that she pursues independence and contentment, and finds the ideal mate in Daring. The Widow and Daring represent for Behn what a love relationship should be: equality, sharing, and respect, none of which she enjoyed with Hoyle. By the time Behn had written The Widow Ranter, she had been able to ease the tension she

felt. There are sides to Behn which show that tension did not consume her.

Behn had affairs with men other than Hoyle--she was a "female rake," conducting her life in the free and easy manner of this character. Harrison Gray Platt, Jr. tells us about her liaison with William Scot:

Much stronger evidence links Scot and Mrs. Behn in Surinam. During the Dutch war Scot and Mrs. Behn signed their dispatches and spoke of themselves as Celadon and Astrea...Therefore, we are justified in assuming that Mrs. Behn made her journey to Surinam not as the governor's daughter but as the mistress of William Scot.¹³

Goreau claims that Behn was also friends with many famous--or infamous--personages, with whom she shared the pleasures of Restoration life:

Aphra Behn may have been unappreciated by John Hoyle, but she was, at this point in her career, a success in society. She kept company with Court wits like Buckhurst (later the Earl of Dorset), Sedley, and most particularly Buckingham. She pleased Charles II and gained the patronage of his brother, James, Duke of York, as well as the friendship of his mistress, Nell Gwyn. She was respected and admired by her fellow playwrights and sought out by gallants, literati, fops, and hangers-on. The patron and friend she seems to have valued most, though, was the Earl of Rochester.¹⁴

What could be more adventurous than Behn's recruitment as spy by Lord Arlington and James Halsall, when she was sent to Antwerp on behalf of that greatest of all rakes, Charles II? In truth, Behn's life was far more unusual and eventful than that of any of the rakes she invented, or for that matter, perhaps any other Restoration dramatist. Behn

was, in every sense but her gender, a rake-hero. The tension she sometimes felt fails to detract from this.

More important for me than any ambivalence Behn experienced was that she never wavered in her opposition to forced marriage. If she wrote as a "man," she launched her steady offensive on the despair engendered by the institution as a woman, for as such, she could clearly perceive the suffering it imposed on her gender. But she also appreciated that men too endured the agonies of enforced marriage, as we saw with The Town Fop, when the luckless Bellmour has to marry Diana. For Behn, the prohibitions pervading the institution of forced marriage, and the place of women in society, prevented love and marriage from coming together as they should. For the time being, the two elements would remain separate. Even though Behn provided no solutions to ameliorate the problem, she surely realized that love in matrimony could exist when forced marriage ceased to exist. This is perhaps why she is so emphatic about the vows freely exchanged by women and men which constitute real marriage, not the societally endorsed travesty so entrenched in her age. I strongly believe that Behn's opposition to forced marriage in her plays is a function of her "feminism," so I disagree with Katharine M. Rogers:

"The poet in Behn" was indeed masculine: her consciousness of herself as a woman appears entirely in these explicit defenses of the woman author, which are in no way integrated into her creative works. These

show values and perceptions hardly distinguishable from those of the male writers with whom she competed.¹⁵

Just as Behn was unswerving in her assaults on forced marriage, so she was unrelenting in defense of her work and her right to produce it. Rogers is right about Behn's knowledge of herself as a female writer conveyed through her defenses, as we shall see. In these, Behn fought for her woman's right to express herself in whatever way she pleased.

Behn's Reaction to Her Detractors: Fighting Back

As the first woman to write in a professional capacity, Behn unwittingly invited attack from those who firmly believed that a woman must not write. I use "unwittingly" in the sense of "unintentional," not in the sense of "not knowing." Behn, exceptionally astute, surely suspected that she would become a target by daring to write. Because she possessed the raw courage and tenacity to define non-traditional frontiers for women, naturally there were some, objecting to her ideas, who attempted to bury her achievements. But not everybody felt this way about Behn; Robert Adams Day clarifies matters for us: "However, regardless of what critics might think of her, the public went assiduously to see her plays throughout the 1670s."¹⁶ Since the public confers financial power on a dramatist by flocking to her/his plays, there is a considerable amount of satisfaction in this--and Behn most likely realized that the

Restoration theatre-going public, which was not easily pleased, also granted her some literary approbation. Nevertheless, this cannot alter the fact that Behn did suffer at the hands of critics. She, not only incredibly prolific, but many times positively brilliant, has been virtually banished to a literary never-never land. The fact that Behn lived as she deemed proper for herself, not as society instructed, has been more than sufficient to consign her to a lingering state of opprobrium. Her detractors had many weapons in their arsenal of intolerance, and they launched every one against her. Behn has been accused of being too risque; of not having the learning "necessary" to write; of violating the "place" assigned to her as a woman by writing; and of writing plays of poor quality because she was female. Behn counter-attacked, responding to every attempt to denigrate her and her work with a wry wit that her enemies were quite incapable of duplicating. As the following example proves, her fortitude, endurance, and sharp retorts are in evidence early on.

When The Dutch Lover (1673), Behn's third play, was produced, it was not very well received. Behn felt that the production of the play had been "sabotaged." In "An Epistle To The Reader," which prefaces The Dutch Lover, she stridently comments about the circumstances:

Know then that this Play was hugely injur'd in the Acting, for 'twas done so imperfectly as never any was before, which did more harm to this than it could have done to any of another sort; the Plot being busie

(though I think not intricate) and so requiring a continual attention, which being interrupted by the intolerable negligence of some that acted in it, must needs much spoil the beauty on't. My Dutch Lover spoke but little of what I intended for him, but supplied it with such a great deal of idle stuff, which I was wholly unacquainted with until I had heard it first from him.¹⁷

The above passage may simply indicate Behn's discontent with the manner in which The Dutch Lover was transferred to the stage. Any play may be adapted to suit the special requirements of the stage; the print medium is quite different, and playwrights grudgingly expect that their efforts will not appear on the stage exactly as they were written. However, there is a limit to how many liberties should be taken with a writer's work--the intent (as far as it can be discerned) of the dramatist should remain intact, or the stage production will bear little resemblance to the printed original. Behn had the right to object to poor acting and the inability of the actor who played the title character to retain the written lines, and instead improvising language that Behn had not created. We could say that Behn was prejudiced in favor of her play--has there ever been a playwright who was not? But Behn was a perspicacious woman and playwright, one who was imbued with knowledge of the theatre. Consequently, I find it unlikely that any justified bias she may have felt would have clouded her judgment so completely as to preclude the formulation of sound criticism. In reference to this, because the play was

written by a woman, it is not impossible that there were some people who wished to harm it.

In point of fact, The Dutch Lover was assailed. It seems the attack took as its rallying cry the notion that women could not write as well as men because women lacked what men possessed--learning. Naturally, Behn responded in a witty, acid-tongued manner which conveys better than any other of her defenses the rage accumulating inside of her. She addresses major issues regarding the shabby way in which women were treated, and the hypocrisy of a double standard that denied them learning, while condemning them as ignorant. Behn boldly declares too that comedies are deigned for entertainment, not as sermons instructing people how to conduct their lives. The "Epistle" can be construed as the core of Behn's beliefs, and shows her at her best, sick to death of an all-pervasive double standard that threatened to swallow her:

I will have leave to say that in my Judgement the increasing number of our latter Plays have not done much more towards the amending of men's Morals, or their Wit, than hath the frequent Preaching, which this last age hath been pester'd with, (indeed without all controversie they have done less harm) nor can I once imagine what temptation anyone can have to expect it from them; for sure I am no Play was ever writ with that design...Indeed that day 'twas Acted first, there comes me into the Pit, a long, lithier, phlegmatic, white, ill-favour'd, wretched Fop, an Officer in masquerade newly transported with a Scarf & Feather out of France, a sorry Animal that has nought else to shield it from the uttermost contempt of all mankind, but that respect which we afford to Rats and Toads, which though we do not well allow to live, yet when considered as part of God's Creation, we make honourable mention of them. A thing, Reader--but no more of such a Smelt: This thing,

I tell ye, opening that which serves it for a mouth, out issued such a noise as this to those that sate about it, that they were to expect a woful Play, God damn him, for it was a woman's. Now how this came about I am not sure, but I suppose he brought it piping hot from some who had with him the reputation of villainous Wit...For waving the examination why women having equal education with men, were not as capable of knowledge, of whatsoever sort as well as they: I'll only say as I have touch'd before, that Plays have no great room for that which is men's great advantage over women, that is Learning; We all well know that the immortal Shakespeare's Plays (who was not guilty of much more of this than often falls to women's share) have better pleas'd the world than Johnson's works...I dare to say I know of none that write at such a formidable rate, but that a woman may well hope to reach their greatest heights. Then for their musty rules of Unity, and God knows what besides, if they meant anything, they are enough intelligible and as practible by a woman.¹⁸

By placing herself in the company of the venerable Bard, Behn effectively crushes her opponents. A master stroke indeed! If Shakespeare did not know Greek and Latin well, why should she? Shakespeare created wonders without benefit of the classical languages, while Jonson, who had a knowledge of both, cannot measure up.

Behn also states that women have the ability to write just as well as men--the lack of an education does not preclude writing skill. Women were not permitted to possess learning (meaning the Greek and Latin classics), so they had to rely on their native wit, a talent not acknowledged in the jealously guarded male preserve of learning. It is more than possible that a woman can write a finer play without learning than a man can write armed with it. When Behn refers to the unities, she is thinking of the three unities of the drama, time, place, and action, delineated by

Aristotle in his Poetics. The unities were particularly restrictive because there were many who thought they truly defined the perfect play; hence, if a play was without them, it failed miserably--in actuality, it was not a play. Behn refused to award credence to the stranglehold the unities imposed on creativity. She also disliked them because they represented the pontifical posturing of the learned denizens of the universities, who declared that anyone not adhering to classical definitions of what constituted the ideal play was hopelessly beyond redemption as a playwright. These men were as "musty" as their "rules." Behn further attacks classical commandments governing proper playwriting when she says that comedies do not serve a didactic purpose, but are intended to elicit laughter--surely learning is not a prerequisite for comedic writing, only wit. Look at the preachers, many of whom are learned men; have they not been the cause of much trouble? Given this fact, a comedy can do no harm--perhaps it can do more good. The idea that comedies should be vehicles of moral instruction, that their main thrust should be didactic, was inherited from Aristotle and trumpeted by almost every comedic playwright. Although Behn, like other dramatists, follows the literary convention by claiming that comedies "are secret Instructions to the People," it is my feeling that she was more inclined towards the entertainment function, so the "Epistle" prefacing The Dutch Lover probably expresses her view with more

accuracy.¹⁹ It must be remembered that Behn had a sharp sense of the comical--the passages previously quoted prove that, to say nothing of her plays. Much of the time, she blends the serious with the comic, and this is part of her appeal. When Behn wittily trounces her opponents in the "Epistle," her seriousness is rendered all the more caustic for her humor. The coup de grâce is Behn's reduction of the "wretched Fop" to a creature not human ("a Smelt"), and finally to nothing at all ("this thing" and "it").

In the Epilogue to Sir Patient Fancy (1678), Behn again adorns gravity with wit. But the most significant factor in Behn's attack on her critics here is that the Epilogue was performed, so everyone who saw the play also saw and heard the Epilogue. There is a crucial difference between a preface and an epilogue: the former might very well be ignored by readers, while viewers could only avoid the latter if they exited the theatre--and this is unlikely since most theatre-goers wished to enjoy the entire experience. Behn is proclaiming her feelings and beliefs by bringing the issues to the public. She has the advantage of the broadest forum, since so many people attended the theatre during the Restoration, lower class, middle class, and upper class. Perhaps there were viewers who sympathized with Behn's "cause," and as a result, she may have gained supporters. And because the Epilogue represented publicity for her concerns, its performance may have induced her

detractors to show themselves by responding to her. This might make her critics known to the public, and now there is a public debate where before none existed. We cannot say conclusively that a public debate resulted from the performance of the Epilogue, but given the propensity of humans to contend with each other on hearing controversial ideas, it is highly likely that some people, primarily of the middle and upper classes, spoke of what they had witnessed--and wrote about it too.

Theatre-goers were now aware that Behn was most combative when some fool insulted her with the prejudicial notion that she was incapable of crafting an intelligent play merely because she was a woman. Since we saw the same form of censure with The Dutch Lover, it is evident that Behn was often bombarded in this manner. Taunted with this absurd accusation, she constantly had to defend herself against the falsehood. She addresses this point with her usual flair for ascertaining the center of the issue in question--she was mistress of the blunt retort:

I here and there o'erheard a Coxcomb cry,
Ah, Rot it--'tis a Woman's comedy,
One, who because she lately chanc'd to please us,
With her damn'd Stuff, will never cease to teeze us.
What has poor Woman done, that she must be
Debar'd from Sense, and Sacred Poetry?
Why in this Age has Heaven allow'd you more,
And Women less of Wit than heretofore?
We once were fam'd in story, and could write
Equal to Men; cou'd govern, nay, cou'd fight...
We'll let you see, whate'er besides we do,
How artfully we copy some of you:
And if you're drawn to th' Life, pray tell me then,
Why Women should not write as well as men.²⁰

It is interesting that Behn credits women with intelligence and power that she insists they always had--a natural inheritance now frustrated by a male-dominated society stubbornly intent on enforcing the strictures of its own invention. Women were once engaged in the various activities which men have hoarded for themselves, governing and fighting. We know that Behn included fighting women in The Young King and The Widow Ranter. Governing, more important than fighting, because it imparts wider control, is exhibited in Cleomena, and if the Widow had chosen to govern, she would have had the capacity to do so. The above selection is humorous, but this aspect cannot detract from the serious challenge Behn extends to men by asking them to concoct one valid reasons why women should not be considered and treated as their equals. In throwing down the gauntlet, Behn demands that men recognize the natural attributes of women.

It is rather ironic that the bawdiness of Sir Patient Fancy was objected to by a woman, and for Behn, this was a sorry reward indeed to receive from the sex she sought to enlighten:

I Printed this Play with all the impatient haste one ought to do, who would be vindicated from the most unjust and silly aspersion, Woman could invent to cast on Woman; and which only my being a Woman has procured me; That it was Baudy, the least and the most Excusable fault in the Men writers, to whose Plays they all crowd, as if they came to no other end than to hear what they condemn in this: but from a woman it was unnaturall...The play had no other Misfortune but that of coming out for a Womans: had it been owned by a Man,

though the most Dull Unthinking Rascally Scribler in Town, it had been a most admirable Play.²¹

This must have cut deeply--that a woman would use against Behn the same unfair argument--if such tripe can be called "argument"--that male detractors employed: women are not allowed to write bawdy plays because they are women. Behn is so acutely and painfully aware that she is being traduced on gender grounds, that this is a "man's world" in which she has chosen to write. Further, what makes this slander sting all the more is the possibility that an unskilled male dramatist may have seen his pitiful effort lauded--on gender grounds. Thus we see that human beings cannot be enslaved without their express consent; they must acquiesce in their own bondage. There are those, as John Milton's Samson says, who "love Bondage more than Liberty,/Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty."²² The imprisonment of self-consenting bondage is most difficult from which to escape: with liberty comes responsibility, a necessary component of true freedom, and that is indeed too strenuous for some. As a good example shows, those leading the fight for women's suffrage were confronted with a disturbing complacency in the very people for whom they were advocating. The Suffragettes found it less exhausting and frustrating to convince potential male allies that women needed and deserved the vote than to convince the sex they were attempting to free. Too many upper-class women, made indolent by the pampering of the Victorian and Edwardian

ages, honestly believed that they were delicate angels not meant for the rigorous obligations of liberty. Brainwashed and conditioned by the men who held the reins of control--and oppression--over them, they inculcated the insidiously incapacitating concept that they were fragile creatures whose greatest exertion was to rise in the morning and get themselves to bed each night. Behn, an emissary for female aspiration, was at times abruptly halted in her progress too, by those women who embraced the fetters of their degraded condition. Given the servility of some women, it must have been disheartening to have to defend her work as viable when so many upper-class women would not stand beside her and protest their position. On the other hand, who could blame them when they had everything to lose in a world where no legitimate options existed for them? But the fact remains that Behn was deserted by members of her sex, so perhaps she could not expect sympathy, understanding, and most importantly, respect, from men. Nevertheless, Behn continued to protest the injustices committed against herself and her gender.

This is manifest in The Lucky Chance (1687).

Charged with indecency, and realizing that much of the onslaught centered on jealousy, Behn replied forcefully in the Preface. She was accustomed to attacks motivated by outright jealousy of her talent as a playwright:

The little Obligation I have to some of the witty Sparks and Poets of the town, has put me on a vindication of

this comedy from those Censures that Malice, and ill Nature have thrown upon it, tho in vain: the Poets I heartily excuse, since there is a sort of Self-Interest in their Malice, which I shou'd rather call a witty Way they have in this Age, of Railing at every thing they find with pain successful, and never to shew good nature and speak well of any thing...and when they can no other way prevail with the Town, they charge it with the old never failing Scandal--That 'tis not fit for the Ladys: As if (if it were as they falsly give out) the Ladys were obliged to hear Indecencys only from their Pens and Plays.²³

Behn demonstrates that some of her male colleagues and their supporters believed that only they had the right to shock the female audience with bawdy plays. When a woman had the gall to do the same, she was roundly insulted for it. Not only was Behn's work attacked, but her integrity and decency as a woman called into question. Behn's male competitors were reluctant to acknowledge that their suggestive dialogue might also leave their honor open to debate. The double standard was at work with a vengeance: while a man could write what he pleased, within legal and customary limits, a woman had to restrain her tongue and her pen, or risk the repercussions which would surely ensue. In the Preface to The Lucky Chance, Behn also serves notice to her chastisers that she wants only to write plays freely, as others do, and "if I must not, because of my sex, have this freedom, but that you will usurp all to yourselves, I lay down my quill, and you shall hear no more of me."²⁴ The production date of this play (1687) proves that Behn was all too used to defending herself and her plays--after all, her death came but two years later, in 1689. The war between Behn and her

foes was a lasting one. Because there were many who felt compelled to denigrate her, she had to become an old hand at defense and offense.

Yet there is another view in the attack on Behn. Maureen Duffy asserts that "it would have been wrong and indeed a form of contempt if [Behn] hadn't suffered the same abuse as the male poets of her party in lampoons and satires."²⁵ Behn was a Tory ("her party"), and attack from Whig critics must have made her feel like a true member of the Tory fraternity--an "us against them" solidarity. Given this, when she pondered the disapprobation she endured, perhaps she realized that at least she was attracting attention, which indicated that she was worthy of notice. If Behn had been considered unthreatening, therefore insignificant, she would have been ignored. Even negative publicity has value, and to be neglected is far worse than to be attacked, particularly for an artist. It is to be hoped that Behn derived some satisfaction from the knowledge that she stirred a reaction, allowing her to understand that she was a writer to be reckoned with. Unfortunately, though, she was abused with considerably more vitriol by virtue of her gender, and this bitter insight must have tempered her gratification in being noticed. Behn's life was a difficult one, not all "fun and games" as some might claim, but she lived it with great dignity while bequeathing

to posterity her wonderful works. Montague Summers reminds us what she was and what she gave:

In truth, Aphra Behn's life was not one of mere pleasure, but a hard struggle against overwhelming adversity, a continual round of work. We cannot but admire the courage of this lonely woman, who, poor and friendless, was the first in England to turn to the pen for a livelihood, and not only won herself bread but no mean position in the world of her day and English literature of all time. For years her name to a new book, a comedy, a poem, an essay from the French, was a word to conjure with for the booksellers...Her popularity was enormous, and edition after edition of her plays and novels was called for...She is worthy to be ranked with the greatest dramatists of her day, with Vanbrugh and Etherege; not so strong as Wycherley, less polished than Congreve. Such faults as she has are obviously owing to the haste with which circumstances compelled her to write her scenes...there is happily every indication that--long neglected and traduced--she will speedily vindicate for herself, as she is already beginning to do, her rightful claim to a high and honourable place in our glorious literature.²⁶

Although Summers is exaggerating somewhat in attaching such power to Behn's name ("For years"..."booksellers"), and in claiming that "edition after edition" of her work was in demand (a more common occurrence after her death), he has still captured the essential truth of Behn's life and contribution.

Aphra Behn may sound too defensive to those who fail to comprehend her predicament. But her ideas invited a verbal barrage from envious detractors committed to the double standard, so it is fitting that such a brave and discerning woman would reciprocate. Behn was a woman and writer of monumental courage, daring to live the way she wished and daring to write what she felt, despite the

incessant criticism directed at her regarding both. The male Restoration playwrights were smugly secure in their certitude that their society was immutable--and must remain so. And why not? They were not its victims. But Behn saw and understood that there were some aspects of her world, predominantly forced marriage, that were immoral. The vigorous persistence with which Behn denounced forced marriage was born of enormous conviction. The reason that she never wavered in her attack, challenging the institution all of her professional life, is elegant in its moral simplicity. She knew it was wrong. Her conscience was not for sale. Behn also understood with impressive clarity that men too fell victim to this hateful "custom." What an eloquent testimony to Behn's humanity this is: that cruelly hampered by a male-dominated society as she was, she never grew so bitter and/or disenchanted as to believe that men had no rights and feelings, that they should experience the same distress at the hands of women, as women had at theirs. It is not an easy matter to sum up a woman of such complexity. But whatever else can be said about Aphra Behn, the truest words that can be applied to her are "iconoclast" and "pioneer." In the very real clarity, rightness, and truth of her convictions--her vision--she looked ahead, gazing across the centuries, and establishing a foundation, unshakable though it is not, solid enough for all female

authors to stand tall upon, to dream, and to salute her
"pilgrim soul."

ENDNOTES

1. Woolf, 44.

2. The Italian theatre world provides a fascinating example of a woman who was an exception to the idea of woman's place. Isabella Andreini, both a business woman and a poet, was an invaluable member of the Gelosi Commedia Dell'Arte troupe (Brockett, 155).

3. Scholars who assert that Behn was married might consider this another factor in her ability to transcend social codes governing women; the attachment to a man would allow her more liberties. In effect, the shield of matrimony would permit her to write things that she could not if she were single. But there is no conclusive evidence that Behn was ever married to the Dutch merchant. Those who are interested in the subject can consult almost any book or article dealing with Behn. What follows are some suggestions: Ernest Bernbaum's article "Mrs. Behn's Biography A Fiction," PMLA, 28, 1913, 452, where he says: "We do not even surely know that she was married to a Mr. Behn;" Montague Summers in his "In Memoir of Mrs. Behn" in The Works of Aphra Behn, Maureen Duffy in The Passionate Shepherdess; Frederick M. Link in Aphra Behn; and Angeline Goreau in Reconstructing Aphra.

4. Behn, The Lucky Chance, in Works, 187 (Preface).

5. Robert Adams Day, "Muses in the Mud: The Female Wits Anthropologically Considered," Women's Studies, 7 (1980), 65.

6. Bulstrode Whitelocke, Commonplace Book, as quoted by Montague Summers, in "In Memoir of Mrs. Behn," in The Works of Aphra Behn, I, 36.

7. Behn, All The Histories and Novels Written by the Late Ingenious Mrs. Behn, Intire in One Volume, (London: J. D. for M. Wellington, King's-Head, 1718) Letter 7, 47.

8. Goreau, 193.

9. Behn, Abdelazer, in Works, II, 11 (Act I, sc. i).

10. Summers, "In Memoir of Mrs. Behn," in Works, I, 21, 22, 28.
11. Robert Adams Day, "Aphra Behn's First Biography," Studies in Bibliography, 22, (1969), 240.
12. Duffy, 143.
13. Harrison Gray Platt, Jr., "Astrea and Celadon: An Untouched Portrait of Aphra Behn," PMLA, 49, (1934), 555-6.
14. Goreau, 211.
15. Rogers, Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England, 98.
16. Day, "Muses in the Mud," in Women's Studies, 7, 66.
17. Behn, The Dutch Lover, "An Epistle To The Reader," in Works, 224-5.
18. Ibid., 222-4.
19. Behn, The Lucky Chance, 183 (Preface).
20. Behn, Sir Patient Fancy, in Works, 115-6 (Epilogue).
21. Ibid., "To The Reader," 7.
22. John Milton, Samson Agonistes, in Paradise Regained, The Minor Poems and Samson Agonistes, Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., (Indianapolis: The Odyssey Press, 1937), 555.
23. Behn, The Lucky Chance, in Works, 185 (Preface).
24. Ibid., 187.
25. Behn, Introduction, in Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister, 6.
26. Summers, "In Memoir of Mrs. Behn," in Works, 57-8, 61.

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