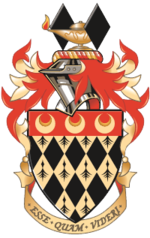
The Cavalier Libertine: 1660-1677

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88, 884 words

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I Robin Riley hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Robin Riley

Date: 15. 7. 2019

ABSTRACT

The conduct of the Restoration libertine is not just an issue of dramatic convention, comic craft or gendered conflict; it is also a crucial part of state politics. In this thesis, I contend that there are libertine comedies produced between 1660 and 1677 which clearly transgress the ideological foundations upon which the Restoration Court functioned, but the majority of dramatists illustrate the need for the rake to reform. Some allow their Cavalier delinquents to resist conformity but their deviant behaviour never represents a serious challenge to dynastic authority. The influence and notoriety of Court’s so-called libertinism has been frequently overestimated in scholarly criticism. Whitehall’s socio-political mechanism was not – as many critics suggest – an instrument of Charles’s personal authority; rather, it was a gendered institution of power regulated by the elite ladies of the Court who ushered in the new tradition of French manners and oversaw the cultivation of a new breed of gallants. Marginalised objectors to this *mission civilatrice*, the libertine Wits and their theatrical equivalents mounted dirty protests in the Town where they deliberately vaunted their failed gentlemanliness in small-scale acts of violent display. The majority of dramatists treat these excesses as childish and futile, their protagonist’s sexual predations and violent misdemeanours more of an irritant than a serious challenge to the new polite society. It is for this reason that the libertine is frequently given a politically purposive function, serving State and Crown by systematically ruining Court Party objectors and imposters. In an increasingly unstable social environment, the majority of dramatists direct the rake’s destructive energies against the enemies of the State, palliating Court Party fears of its political rivals and offering a reassuring map of dynastic power. In contemporary eighteenth-century scholarship, these aspects of libertinism have not been analysed fully. Crucially, the Court’s official mode of gallant masculinity and the social instrument of female regulatory power informing it have been underestimated and underexplored. In order to substantiate the above claims, this thesis will analyse all libertine comedies performed between 1660 and 1677.

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| INTRODUCTION  The behaviour of the libertine is not just an issue of dramatic convention, comic craft or the rhetoric of sexual politics; it is also a crucial part of State politics. And although there is no direct verbal evidence demonstrably linking the Restoration State and Court with each other, the structure of the theatre directly supported the nerve-centre at Whitehall and freighted its hegemonic interests. In August 1660, Charles gave his approval for theatrical patents to be granted to two senior courtiers, Sir William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, bestowing on them the ‘power to establish theatres, censor plays and silence any actors who refused to submit to their authority’.[[1]](#footnote-1) These two Royalist appointees held exclusive power over the London stage and in naming the two companies The King’s and the Duke’s Men, they acknowledged their political place in what was a dynastic hierarchy. The two companies performed serious plays, some of which can be classified as political tragicomedies for their tendency to foreground the perils of usurpation and the revivifying effects of restoring true kings.  Heroic dramas were also staged, particularly in the 1660s, drawing upon the French heroic plays of Corneille and French heroic romance. Celebrating kingship in allegorical but accessible terms, heroic drama lauded the political verities, inherent merits and grand aspirations of the resettled monarchy. The political capital of this genre was endorsed and enriched by Charles who ‘suggested what dramatists should write, lent costumes and attended performances’.[[2]](#footnote-2) Comedies – or more specifically libertine comedies – were also political. This claim may seem counter-intuitive, since the widely held view of the libertine figure is his dangerous and cynical opposition to moral, social and political normativities. However, one of the main contentions of this thesis is that, in spite of the remarkable variance in the dramatic typology, few transgress the dynastic authority of the Crown. On the contrary, many are represented as either official or unofficial protectors of the State. The first crop of libertine comedies picture the dying days of the Interregnum from a Royalist perspective with abundant political references to oppressive Puritanism and the Protectorate. Abraham Cowley’s *The Cutter of Coleman Street* (1661) and Robert Howard’s *The Committee* (1662) both ‘right the wrongs’ of Interregnum rule by showcasing Cavalier rake soldiers who battle manfully against the oppressive yoke of Cromwellian rule. Their commitment to the exiled Crown is vaunted in rhetoric that sanctions plunder, sedition, dead-eyed deception, slaughter and the sexual exploitation of the Puritan foe, systematically satirised as money-grubbing, licentious hypocrites. Notably, the theme of reform is writ large in *The Committee* with Howard’s plot mechanism illustrating his protagonist’s painful and faltering attempt to shift from brutish rake soldier to socially integrated gallant. The ‘early’ rakes are political exiles, but in *The Comical Revenge* (1664),[[3]](#footnote-3) George Etherege’s Restoration libertine, Sir Frederick Frollick, preserves the soldierly masculinity of his wartime forbears. An unreconstructed Cavalier soldier, Frollick is a raucous recidivist who spurns elite ladies in favour of the company of adoring women who occupy the social underbelly of tavern and brothel. Etherege pictures Frollick’s sexual magnetism as so improbably intense – and so intensely improbable – that it sanctions his every action, no matter how vicious, boorish or callous. Bedfellows new and old are smitten with him as is Mrs Rich, a Widow who dedicates herself to transforming him into a socially viable consort, an official role he strenuously resists. This libertine protest against conformity is the central theme of the couple’s ‘courtship’ and the pith and marrow of the comedy plot mechanism. Frollick refuses to wait on her or accompany her to the Town’s modish destinations and inverts the courtship rituals of *bonne grace –* the new code of feminized French manners – by accusing the Widow of sexual licentiousness. He finally agrees to an advantageous marriage settlement, but only after he has rescinded the conventions of the proposal ritual by making the Widow propose to him. Frollick’s resistance to conformity also finds expression in acts of coordinated and uncoordinated violence. He fights in a duel and flouts the civic obligations incumbent on Cavalier soldiers by brawling, smashing windows, blaspheming and abusing women passers-by in the street. Nevertheless, he is a rake who proves extremely effective in policing the underclass of thieves, bawds and Cromwellian imposters who strive to either exploit or contaminate the new orthodoxy of power. He swoops on these enemies of the Crown and resettles Cavalier authority in and around the squalid slums and brothels of the Town. Etherege, then, is not simply pro-libertine; he is also a Royalist rhetorician who uses his Crown libertine to illustrate the need for effective State governance.  In stark contrast, John Bulteel’s critically overlooked comedy *The Amorous Gallant* [[4]](#footnote-4) *–* performed in the same theatrical season as *The Comical Revenge* – is an anti-libertine, pro-Court play that showcases Orontus, a rake schooled in *bonne grace*, the new manners. Like Frollick, he is cynical, opportunistic and predatory but, unlike him, he is genteel, polite and socially accommodating. In hot pursuit of two young gentlewomen, Dorothy and her rival, Lucia, he makes vacuous promises of undying love to both, but after a period of intriguing, the girls confront him, accusing him of duplicity. Unfazed, Orontus tells them he loves them both, claiming that their beauty demands his worship. Dorothea accuses him of inconstancy, telling him ‘you swear to everyone’, but Orontus protests that his conduct is perfectly courtly: ‘it is’, he says ‘the Mode’ (V, p. 58). In due course, the play’s patriarch figure resolves this *impasse* of devotional love and opportunistic hedonism when he commands Orontus to wed Dorothea, his daughter: Orontus reluctantly complies. Unlike Etherege, Bulteel’s principal concern is the need for rake reform: the feminised libertine is as an enemy within, a seditious Cavalier rogue with no legitimate role to fulfil in the management of State power. Opposed to the toxic strain of dominative, martial masculinity *bonne grace* was devised to eradicate, Bulteel problematizes the issue of Cavalier rehabilitation by devising Orontus as a leading man who wilfully exploits the new manners, enchaining the very women the gendered rituals of *bonne grace* were designed to serve and protect. He even has a ‘Rule’ that he applies to his potential victims:   |  | | --- | | To every She, the complaisance pay;  Swear Love by rote, not minding what you say;  Court out of custom, for diversion’s sake;  Your Face (the index) much of Love must show;  But what you promise, let your Breast not know.  (IV.1, p. 39) |   Orontus’s ‘Rule’ identifies the ‘custom’[s] laid down by the new Court. However, his deliberate objectification and abuse of ‘complaisance’ – a term that signifies the practice of friendly, modest accommodation and of devotional subservience – does not constitute a normative code of action, nor does it indicate a self-identical style of being. Taking the process of seduction as a ‘game’ or a competition to be won through the production and manipulation of prescribed ceremonial behaviour, Orontus’s socio-sexual activities appear to be grounded in brutal misogyny: ‘Pay the whole Sex your adoration/ In gross, but singly, slight them one by one (IV.1, p. 39). To say that libertines were misogynists is a commonplace, but such a declaration is of special relevance to this thesis because one of the main contentions I wish to make is that libertines were vehemently opposed to the female-led social orthodoxy of the restored Court. These women were the fashionable ‘cunts’[[5]](#footnote-5) against whom the community of young aristocratic Wits aimed their angry protests. It was, I argue, this sense of discomfiture and dislocation that determined the anti-civil values and practices of the libertine faction at Court and the dramatic rhetoric that either opposed or supported it.   |  | | --- | | An air so noble, Garb full of state;  So gay a Humour, ne’er importunate.  His voice so charming, his Converse so rare,  Speaking so well, yet Writing better far.  His glory all to his own Virtue owes;  Knows his great worth, not proud of what he knows.  (II.3, pp. 16-17) |   Whether the new breed of Cavaliers liked it or not, Caroline ‘custom’ insisted on commitment to a new, more refined tradition of behaviour and the moral improvements such a resettlement of masculine values and practices entailed. The new conduct was embodied by the *beaux garçons* or the *bonne grace* gallants of the new Cavalier order of feminized gallants whose social behaviour Orontus so ably reproduces. Adoringly, Dorothea describes his Cavalier accomplishments:    There is something monstrous about this figure, a man whose ‘air’, ‘garb’, ‘charm’ and ‘voice’ correspond so well with the new Court’s masculine ideal, but whose traditional, dominative ethos remains so dangerously unmodified. His repertoire of aesthetic merits – endorsed by Dorothea herself – render him a dangerously seductive figure, a rake whose social behaviour is indistinguishable from the conduct of the virtuous community of *beaux garçons* he appears to represent. Ultimately Orontus submits to convention as he agrees to wed Dorothea, pressed into the contract by Argante, her menacing father who commands him to sweep aside his amorous shenanigans and dutifully serve the interests of social cohesion and patrilineal succession.  Clearly, these two libertines – put to use by two dramatists during the same theatrical season – are poles apart. However, their conflicting masculinities both pertain to *bonne grace,* the Court’s new tradition of normative behaviour which, as I will argue, underpins and determines the entire landscape of libertinism in all its typological complexity. *Bonne grace* was the historically specific, socio-political foundation determining the behaviour of all libertines – both dramatic and actual. It shaped the anti-social conduct of the Wit fraternity at Whitehall, it structured the parameters of the libertine debate and it occasioned the production of a variegated and nuanced terrain of rake typology.  **Literature review**  Frequently associated with lewdness and sensuality, Charles II has been vilified by critics and commentators old and new as the new Court’s libertine *par excellence* In his *History of His Own Time*, (1800) Bishop Burnet vilifies the regent’s libertine morality and cites his predilection for pleasure as a carnal vice responsible for the ‘ruin of his reign’.[[6]](#footnote-6) Lord Macaulay’s *History of England* (1849) set the parameters for the Victorian view of Charles and a Court society constructed in the image of an immorally libidinous Prince who, to his shame, had had a shocking number of sexual partners. He was ‘addicted beyond all measure to sensual indulgence, fond of sauntering and frivolous amusements, incapable of self-denial.’[[7]](#footnote-7) He and his Court were dissolute, their amorous exploits associated with sexual excess. Queen Victoria herself came to take a very dim view of her forbear and reports emerged that ‘the Queen does not care for Charles II’.[[8]](#footnote-8) The Restoration Court was taken to be a nest of lewdness and moral degradation, soon to be swept away by the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9, the Protestant morality of William and Mary and a backlash against the perceived immorality of the stage. Residual Whiggishness, which constructed the Caroline period as a last gasp in the inevitable decline of the *ancient regime*, also flavoured early twentieth-century scholarship of Restoration libertinism. In his popular history *The Lives of the Rakes* (1924), E.B. Chancellor renders Charles as the prototypical ‘rake’, defining the king and the Court’s conduct as socially and morally normative. In *Old Rowley*, the first volume of the edition, Chancellor condemns the new king’s ‘sordid existence as the Old Rowley of a mixed seraglio’.[[9]](#footnote-9) For him, libertine comedies and the antics of the Court posed a putative threat to audiences; they were shocking and pernicious. As the ‘manners’ critic Harold Weber put it in *The Restoration Rake Hero*, ‘part of the problem in dealing with Restoration comedy has been the belief that the rake’s rhetoric of sexual liberation would necessarily manifest itself in society with the same promiscuity celebrated on stage’.[[10]](#footnote-10)  The first serious challenge to this moralist hegemony was John Palmer’s *The Comedy of Manners* (1913), which recognized the wit of libertine comedy and argued that it ought to be enjoyed as rhetoric produced by poets from a particular moment in history. In his introduction, he ventriloquises Lord Macaulay’s view of the Wit poets: ‘these men have literary merit, but it is more important to observe that they are wicked’. To this statement he adds his own inquiring rejoinder: ‘Let us agree that these men are, according to the standard of our time, wicked. But what is their position in English literature?’[[11]](#footnote-11) Palmer and other ‘manners’ critics including Bonamy Dobree, Kathleen Lynch and J.W. Krutch argued that the comedies were, primarily, brilliant aesthetic objects, the relative merits and de-merits of which needed to be acknowledged in spite of the moral decrepitude of the Restoration world itself. As J.W. Krutch points out, ‘the perversity of their tone must be charged to the spirit of the age’, a position which recapitulates the moral assumption that the dominant set of ideals and beliefs of the Court and the Town were libertine in ethos and action: Libertinism was the *zeitgeist*: ‘the atmosphere of the plays corresponded very closely with the atmosphere of a portion of society, that their heroes were drawn from the characters of such persons as Sedley, Rochester, and Charles himself’.[[12]](#footnote-12) Krutch imagines a top-down male social hierarchy – Rochester and Sedley were both courtiers and Libertine ‘Wits’ – which multiplied the debaucheries of the King and modelled the ‘shocking incidents and speeches’[[13]](#footnote-13) of the comedies.  In *The Court Wits of the Restoration* (1948), J. H. Wilson plays down the Wits’ so-called excesses, characterising them as ‘gay dogs with an itch for trouble’. In this landmark piece of scholarship, he claims that the Wits inhabited the ‘streets of Sodom’. Attempting to define the rake community at Whitehall as men of letters subsumed by social decay and dissolution, he argues they were ‘no more dissipated than other courtiers… in a raking age’. Misrepresented by skewed criticism and commentary, they have been ‘isolated from the referential frame of Restoration morals’ and ‘the peccadillos of the Wits have been magnified into crimes’.[[14]](#footnote-14) Wilson pictures Whitehall as a ‘splendid brothel’, a moral/aesthetic epithet that captures the direction of the libertine debate. Universalising the immorality of the Court, he asserts that ‘many unattached ladies would gladly have traded places with the Duchess of Portsmouth’, the King’s first official mistress. The most empowered women – ‘the beauties of the Court’ – he judges as opportunistic, morally lax and overtly sensual. They ‘cultivated plump bosoms and languorous airs’; their seductive glances indicating they were ‘ever ready to meet a handsome Wit at least halfway’. Lord Rochester, a senior Wit, was certainly prepared to meet the ladies halfway, but Wilson is keen to disentangle him from Court gossip, countering the unreliable stories distributed by ‘numerous romancers who asserted he was the Casanova of the Restoration’. Rochester and the Wits are simply ‘raffish’ young noblemen subject to innumerable temptations. Wilson’s forgiving representation of Rochester *et al* is matched by a complementary critique of an aesthetic contribution which put them at the cutting edge of Restoration *zeitgeist*: skill at jest, repartee, wit, poetry, letters, libels, lampoons, high fashion and, of course, playwriting. United by a credo of cynical opportunism inculcated by ‘the society in which they moved’, they wrote and lived ‘to amuse themselves’ and please the King, their master whose indulgence guaranteed their ‘freedom from social and moral restraint’.[[15]](#footnote-15)  To a certain extent, Wilson and the ‘manners’ critics decompressed the shock value of libertinism by returning to its cultural origins and explicating the intellectual and social issues of the late Caroline period. For example, Dale Underwood’s *Etherege and the Seventeenth-century Comedy of Manners* (1957)[[16]](#footnote-16) delves into the philosophical backdrop of libertinism, linking it to Epicureanism, Cynicism, Scepticism and Paganism. The distinction of ‘high’ philosophical connections from the more sensual ethos of corporeal excess was first outlined in René Pintard's *Le Libertinage Erudit* [[17]](#footnote-17) (1943), where he uses the term ‘*libertin erudite’* to refer to a 16th and 17th century – mainly French – ‘high’ cultural, philosophical movement establishing reason and nature as the criteria of morality, politics, and law, thus questioning transcendental sources of truth and authority. Conversely, he uses the term *libertine de moeurs* to apply to a lifestyle or ethos. Underwood fully acknowledges the *libertin de moeurs* categorisation, taking Stuart libertinism as a social practice and enriches its dimensions by moving beyond the widely held belief that libertinism was little more than an uncomplicated signifier of ‘witty cynicism and sexual promiscuity’.[[18]](#footnote-18) Acknowledging Underwood’s research, Harold Weber would dedicate a chapter to ‘the philosophical libertine’ in *The Restoration Rake Hero* (1986) building on Underwood’s typology of the Hobbesian rake. Weber incorporates the ‘naturalism of Machiavelli and Hobbes – a tradition concerned with self-interest, aggression and conquest’ and the primitivist’s ‘belief in the individual’s natural affinity for freedom, indulgence and pleasure’.[[19]](#footnote-19) Making explicit reference to Caroline social conduct, Weber mentions that Wycherley encodes the anti-*precieuse* attitudes so ‘prevalent at the Court of Charles II during the 1660s and 1670s’,[[20]](#footnote-20) but he does not source this claim nor does he explore how this socio-political aspect of rake definition might be crucial to providing a more historically informed understanding of libertine non-conformism. The emphasis on rendering the libertine accessible to a modern audience found further expression in Norman Holland’s *The First Modern Comedies* (1959) which argues that the superficial smuttiness of libertine comedy has too often been confused with the real meaning of the plays: their intellectual value. By superficial, he refers to ‘the manners of upper class life’, which, he argues, are incidental to the ‘larger substance of the plays’. The real value of the comedies ‘is the conflict between manners and anti-social ‘natural’ desires, or inner intentions and outward appearance’. In defining appearance, he does not mean the prescriptions and coordinates of social behaviour but ‘what we perceive by our sense or, that part of ourselves we let the world see’. The notion that a historically specific system of socially defining and differentiating behaviour conditioned the production and reception of the plays is of no purpose to the aesthetics of his criticism. His mission is to universalize Etherege and Wycherley’s predominantly rake comedies, to offer a synthesis of the dialectic of appearance and nature rather than capture the ‘mores of a particular period’.[[21]](#footnote-21) Thomas Fujimura also attempts to contextualise libertinism by paying close attention to the socio-sexual customs that shape Wycherley’s rake rendition in *The Country Wife* (1675). He explains how Harry Horner, the rake figure therein, has a far more complex role than that of sexual predator.[[22]](#footnote-22) He is ‘a *deus ex machina* for the author’s satiric exploitation of unworthy characters’. His desire to ridicule jealous husbands and expose hypocritical wives intent on receiving his sexual favours ‘transcend[s] mere libertinism’[[23]](#footnote-23)and becomes instead a critique of the Town’s aristocratic social index. The predations of Wycherley’s rake are morally defensible rather than wantonly and perversely destructive. For Fujimura, a critic sensitive to Wycherley’s troping of the social *minutiae* of patrician life, the object of Horner’s satiric practice is affectation; those who make a shambolic pretence to honour, fidelity and fashion.  This generation of critics identified the ‘modern’ relevance of Restoration drama but, concentrating on the formal and structural approaches to literature, did not recognize the need to acknowledge the fundamental historical difference between the late seventeenth-century and the late twentieth: otherness was not taken as problematic. But the evident disjunction of the two periods has, since the 1970s, come under critical scrutiny from feminist and post-structuralist critics who self-consciously acknowledge how constructions of the past are made in our own contemporary image. For recent critics, this image tends to be political with an emphasis on power relations, frequently in the fields of gender, class and race.[[24]](#footnote-24) Susan Owen’s *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (1996) admits there is no such thing as an impartial narrative of events, but qualifies this by adding that ‘it is possible to try to avoid ‘partial’ history in the sense of an account of events which excludes factors which are inconvenient for a particular theory’.[[25]](#footnote-25) Her argument is a highly inclusive and detailed analysis of the plays of the Exclusion Crisis and the profound impact the politics of the period had on both the form and the content of Restoration drama. She suggests that proto-Tories, or the Court Party, depicted rakishness as a positive theme of class superiority or offered friendly teasing of rakes rather than ‘hostile satires’,[[26]](#footnote-26) while the proto-Whig Country party portrayed libertines as vicious, egocentric womanisers and murderous delinquents in dire need of reform.  In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains how male institutions of power are frequently homosocial, coining ‘a word which describes social bonds between persons of the same sex’; ‘it is’, she adds, ‘a neologism obviously formed by analogy with homosexual and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from ‘homosexual’ and applied to such activities as ‘male bonding’ which may, as in our society, be characterised by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality’.[[27]](#footnote-27) Sedgwick identifies and explores how historically sensitive male bonding activities comprise patriarchal systems of power by applying synchronic and diachronic methodologies to the theme of gendered power relations in canonical literature. Homosociality is, she argues, ‘a strategy for making generalisations about, and marking historical differences in, a structure of men’s relations with other men’.[[28]](#footnote-28) Without doubt, the Restoration corpus of Court libertines was a homosocial society. The Wits or ‘Merry Gang’[[29]](#footnote-29) formed an all-male, three-tier community that flourished from around 1665 to 1680. Its leaders were George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham; John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester and Charles Sackville, the Earl of Middlesex. The second tier was comprised of Sir Charles Sedley, Lord Buckhurst, George Etherege, John Sheffield (the Earl of Mulgrave), Henry Savile, Sir Carr Scroope and (about 1671) William Wycherley. The lesser members of the circle, John, Lord Vaughan, Henry Jermyn, Henry Killigrew, Henry Guy, Henry Bulkeley and Fleetwood Shepherd, also drifted into the group during the years 1665 to 1670.[[30]](#footnote-30) The socially generated bonds between the Wits were fundamental. As Elaine McGirr notes in *Eighteenth-Century Characters* (2006), ‘homosocial standing is far more important to the rake than any other relationship, he can lie and cheat to his social ‘inferiors’, women and even God, but his must keep faith with his friends’.[[31]](#footnote-31)  The structure that groups together all the bonds through which ‘males enhance the status of males’[[32]](#footnote-32) is patriarchal: ‘a system of society or government in which a ruling father or men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it’.[[33]](#footnote-33) Heidi Hartmann picks up on this defining element of female exclusion in ‘The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism’ (1981), which explains how ‘patriarchies establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women’.[[34]](#footnote-34) Sedgwick goes on to extrapolate how patriarchal systems do not require homophobia and homophobic activity in order to function successfully. Men loving men and men enhancing the status of other men can operate together without disturbing the patriarchal *status quo*. In *Homosexuality and Greek Myth,*[[35]](#footnote-35) Bernard Sergent notes that the Greek patriarchal system made no distinction between ‘homo’ and ‘hetero’ in sexual attraction or behaviour. As Kenneth Dover’s *Greek Homosexuality*[[36]](#footnote-36) stresses, homosexuality was a normative practice among the aristocratic elite with the pursuit of the adolescent boy by the older man identified by stereotypical behaviour including conquest, submission and tests of love resembling romantic heterosexual love. During the Restoration period, however, sodomy was not normative. It was, as Michael McKeon explains in ‘Historicizing Patriarchy’ (1995), ‘condemned as evil behaviour indulged by a variety of men’.[[37]](#footnote-37) Characteristically, Lord Rochester takes full advantage of sodomy’s immoral associations in his farce *Sodom or The Quintessence of Debauchery* (1684)in whichKing Boloxinon, Prince Prickett, and Borastus the Buggermaster General vaunt the superiority of ‘buggery’ and encourage experiments with its variations before divine intervention restores the orthodoxy of different-sex behaviour in the final act. Similarly, in the poem ‘The Disabl’d Debauchee’, Rochester celebrates sex with adolescent men. In a set of reflections dedicated to his current female lover, Chloris, the poet/narrator says:  Nor shall our love-fits, Chloris, be forgot,  When each the well-looked linkboy strove t’ enjoy,  And the best kiss was the deciding lot  Whether the boy fucked you, or I the boy.[[38]](#footnote-38)  In its fluid attitude to sexual relations in the pursuit of carnal pleasure, ‘The Disabl’d Debauchee’ values sex with the linkboy as much as it does with Chloris, his female lover. Glorifying the lewd excesses of his past, the ruined and impotent libertine poet/narrator enlarges and vaunts a schema of libertine manliness that celebrates free-wheeling carnality and sexual virility in a manner which deliberately scorns convention. For Rochester’s disabled rake, sodomy is an ‘important mischief’, part of a litany of anti-social behaviour that advertises ‘departed vice’ and serves to ‘inspire’ the next generation of rake apprentices into lewdness and ‘the pleasing billows of debauch’.[[39]](#footnote-39) Crucially, sodomy was not associated with effeminacy; it was reviled as a pattern of behaviour but not as a form of masculine diminution. As McKeon explains, sodomy ‘was not regarded as ‘incompatible with masculine identity’.[[40]](#footnote-40) Rochester’s poet/narrator offers homosexual ‘council’,[[41]](#footnote-41) and, by applying the classical practice of mentorship where the older male ‘improved’ the mind and character of young men,[[42]](#footnote-42) proselytises for the ‘handsome ills’ of sexual transgression and public delinquency as expressions of rake manliness. ‘The Disabl’d Debauchee’ might suggest that – for Rochester – the company and friendship of women is equal to that of men. But in ‘Song’, he clearly articulates a predilection for a purely homosocial world in which women, ‘the silliest part of God’s creation’, play no meaningful part. Socially inferior, women can only provide ‘insipid passion’ and are only fit to participate in the menial work of producing children:  Let the porter and the groom,  Things designed for dirty slaves,  Dredge in fair Aurelia's womb  To get supplies for age and graves.[[43]](#footnote-43)  For Rochester, ‘fair Aurelia’ occupies the same social strata as ‘the porter and groom’, all of whom must labour for their superior, creating the material base for the leisure and pleasure of their master who enjoys the benefits of same-sex company with his ‘lewd, well natured friend’. Both men drink together to ‘engender wit’.[[44]](#footnote-44) Spending time with lewd friends also prompted the sharing of rake exploits, which, like Wit poetry, functions both as a bonding activity and as a form of self-commendation, made to reinforce or improve rake standing within the group.  Another strand of libertine homosociality was the ruthless domination and cynical sexual exploitation of women. Sir Charles Sedley, a second-tier Wit, enlarges on the comparative merits of this anti-civil ‘method’ of sexual conquest in his poem ‘The Advice’, which scorns romantic idealisations and the devoted submissions of conventional courtship, where the gallant behaves with ‘down cast eyes, and mournful Air/ To move to Pity, the Relentless Fair’. For Sedley, this strategy is to be avoided. It is a waste of time, it is too ‘formal’ and too prone to failure. Instead, he praises the man who:  … boldly rifles all her Charms,  Kisses and ravishes her in his Arms,  Seizes the favour, stays not for a Grant,  Alarms her blood, and makes her sigh and pant;  Gives her no time to speak, or think’t a Crime,  Enjoys his wish, and well imploys his time.[[45]](#footnote-45)  These couplets read like a rapist’s charter: the libertine ‘rifles’, ‘ravishes’, seizes’, ‘alarms’ and guiltlessly ambushes his prey, enjoying the predations of a sexually abusive opportunism, which feeds in to and nourishes the rake’s ideal of absolute authority over women.  It is worth noting at this juncture that of all the libertine comedies in this study, the dramatists who give the most emphasis to the aforementioned male bonding activities are George Etherege and William Wycherley. Both poets were granted membership to the Wit faction by holding up a flattering mirror to its members – Etherege with Sir Frederick Frollick in *The Comical Revenge* (1664) and Wycherley with Ranger, his rake in *Love in a Wood* (1671). In *Between Men*, Sedgwick devotes a chapter to Wycherley’s third play *The Country Wife* (1676)which, she argues, uses cuckoldry to re-inscribe and re-calibrate homosocial relations between men. Drawing on the model of the erotic triangle extrapolated by René Girard in *Desire, Deceit and the Novel* (1961) – where the two love rivals occupy the two corners and the woman, the apex – Sedgwick argues that the rivalry between the men who vie for power does not cause a breakdown in homosocial relations but does the opposite, bringing them to a special affinity.[[46]](#footnote-46) Horner, the leading man and accomplished rake, has the rumour circulated that he is impotent to gain access to the company of Lady Fidget whom he plans to seduce. Her husband, as much enmeshed in the battle for male supremacy as Horner, mocks the ‘failed’ rake, unaware that he has inadvertently invited a sexual predator into his domestic world. Horner successfully seduces Lady Fidget and moves promptly on to his next conquest, Margery Pinchwife, whose husband is a reformed libertine now living in the shires. Again, Horner succeeds and establishes superiority over both rivals: he is, as Sedgwick explains, ‘the active participant’ in the erotic triangle, ‘clearly in ascendancy’,[[47]](#footnote-47) while Jasper Fidget and Jack Pinchwife are Horner’s passive victims. The homosocial bonds between the male rivals appears to be broken, but the power and knowledge Horner enjoys over his rival does not, she argues, exceed the bounds of bonding. ‘Horner ‘has actually elevated it to a new transcendental status. If he abandons ‘the friendship and admiration of other men, it only in order to come into a more intimate and secret relation to them – a relation where cognitive mastery is so complete that they will not even know that such a bond exists’.[[48]](#footnote-48) Sedgwick also notes that the inclusion of women in the erotic triangle might also be construed as a departure from the norms of libertine homosociality. Horner gains satisfaction from deceiving the wives he seduces, but Lady Fidget and Margery Pinchwife are no more than instruments, ‘conduits’ for Horner’s ‘homosocial destination of desire’.[[49]](#footnote-49) I will enlarge upon Sedgwick’s model of libertine homosociality in *The Country Wife* in chapter IV.  Homosocial relations also played a key role in the continuation of socio-political power. All gallants – including the Merry Gang – differentiated themselves from their social ‘inferiors’ via their clothes, their equipage and their ceremonial manners. This Crown affiliation is writ large in Etherege’s *The Man of Mode*,[[50]](#footnote-50) a libertine comedy of reform that not only extends what Sedgwick describes as ‘the politics of homosociality’[[51]](#footnote-51) but also elaborates one of the key rituals exclusive to the Court Party elite: the dressing ceremony. Etherege dramatizes the dressing ceremony or *levée* to participate in the elite Royalist community’s monologue of self-praise andelaborate the status relations within his fictional rake’s social community. Etherege dedicates the entirety of act one to represent the ceremony and uses its homosocial rites to magnify and legitimate the personal authority of Dorimant, his rake hero. As Anna Keay argues in *The Magnificent Monarch* (2006), status relations between the regent and his servitors were shaped by highly formalised social rituals, the rites of which were designed to heighten, on a daily basis, the allure of royal affiliation and indicate the exact degree of social power granted to each of its all-male participants.[[52]](#footnote-52) Practised daily at Whitehall, the dressing ceremony had been formalised by Louis XIV at the French court at Versailles and recycled by Charles at Whitehall.[[53]](#footnote-53) This institutionally prescribed and highly visible ritual was also practised by elite Cavaliers beyond the bounds of the Court in the Town, cementing the ‘superiority’ of the new gallantry, irrespective of whether they were libertines or not. It is important, therefore, to note that while the Wits were a homosocial community who sought to define themselves as the bearers of legitimate masculinity, they were also politicised members of a social class united in their opposition to their social ‘inferiors’ and their political rivals. Dorimant is pictured as a womaniser and devious manipulator of *bonne grace’s* moral dimension, but – as the *levée* ceremony illustrates – he is also imagined as a member of the Crown’s cultural community.  Etherege uses the ritual as a means of extending the Court party’s ‘superiority’ but he also uses the dressing ceremony’s homosocial dimensions to legitimate rake entitlement, rake status and rake glamour. As he is being dressed by his valet, Dorimant receives a number of visitors who all serve their ‘master’ in acts of ritual subservience. A shoemaker, an orange-woman/procuress followed by his friend, Medley, who treats Dorimant with admiration, deference and respect, helping him organise his next sexual conquest and making himself available to perform the duties of a go-between and informer. A second-in-command, Medley gathers gossip, organises assignations and keeps careful watch over Dorimant’s social operations, protecting his friend’s interests and making sure no unwanted intruders enter their circle. Such a role enhances Dorimant’s status and guarantees the pair’s interdependence. The final visitor is Young Bellair, a well-mannered and virtuous errand-boy whose service is advantageous to Dorimant and himself. Naïve and awe-struck by Dorimant’s elegant physical presence, his wit and his sartorial style, Young Bellair recommends Dorimant’s company to *arriviste* gentlewomen who are unaware that his pleasing manners are the currency for sexual exploitation. At the same time, Dorimant mentors his young charge and warns him against the perils of marriage. Etherege privileges libertine solidarity and legitimacy by including a fop character, the eponymous Sir Fopling Flutter, who seeks but is denied entry to the coterie. This regulatory dimension to homosociality ‘enhances the status’[[54]](#footnote-54) of those within the group by publicly deriding aspirants who crave but are refused gang membership.  The charge levelled at Sir Fopling by the rakes is – as his trait name ‘flutter’ suggests – effeminacy, a term explored by Thomas Lacqueur in *Making Sex* (1990).[[55]](#footnote-55) In the seventeenth century, he argues, effeminacy had two discrete significations. Firstly, it could pertain to men who were sexually obsessed with women and emasculated by the attachments of love. Secondly, it could signify those men who enjoyed the company of women too much, leading to the reproduction of female manners. *The Art of* *Complaisance*, for example, disparages courtiers for their ‘aery’ manners, describing them as ‘conversable fops’ whose primary function is to ‘delight women’.[[56]](#footnote-56) Lacqueur posits a ‘one sex/one flesh’ pre-Enlightenment understanding of the body. There was, he suggests, no biological division between men and women. Difference was a matter of degree not type. By the eighteenth century, views concerning sex and gender shifted towards the ‘two-sex/two flesh’[[57]](#footnote-57) model with a biological ontology for sexuality confirmed by immutable, inarguable bodily differences between the sexes but in the one-sex model, ‘the vagina is imagined an interior penis, the labia as foreskin, the uterus as scrotum and the ovaries as testicles’. Women are inverted, and therefore inferior to men. ‘They have exactly the same organs but in exactly the wrong places’. This understanding was rooted in metaphysical assumptions asserting that man was closer to perfection within a social model whose axis was vertically organised, not classified by two distinct types: there was only one sex to choose from ‘and it had to be shared by everyone’.[[58]](#footnote-58) Because there was no essential biological differentiation of male from female, notions pertaining to the ‘real’ sex of a person depended upon and produced what Lacqueur describes as a ‘condition of instability’,[[59]](#footnote-59) manifest in contending visions of masculinity and femininity, which can be applied to the Royalist community at Restoration Whitehall and in the fashionable zones of the Town. It is because of this condition of instability that Sir Fopling is so viciously derided by the wits in *The Man of Mode*. With no biological basis of sexual differentiation and only a heterosexist schema on which to base gendered classifications, the allegations of effeminacy levelled at him are measured against and derived solely from cultural characteristics. And because Fopling spends an excessive amount of his time with women, he is classified as effeminate, a charge which, in chiming with Lacqueur’s model, denotes the degeneration of male ‘superiority’ into female ‘inferiority’. Sir Fopling is a parody of the *bonne grace* gallants who follow the social ordinances of female power and consign themselves to what the Merry Gang considered as an aberrant and female version of a superior male identity.  For Etherege and the Wits, genuine manliness was homosocially defined and could not – as was the case with *bonne grace* manliness – be the product of the sustained influence and control of women. As I argue throughout this thesis, the Wits’ masculinist vision has been adopted and transformed into a commonplace narrative shared by a wide range of historians and literary critics – mentioned in this introduction – who suggest that Whitehall was dominated by libertinism. However, in *Fashioning Masculinities* (1996), Michele Cohen explains how mainstream polite society marginalised libertine masculinity because it was crude, dominative and socially unintegrated. Analysing the impact of French manners on English behaviour during the long eighteenth century, Cohen explains how *bonne grace* was first elaborated in the fashionable *salons* of Paris in the mid-seventeenth century where the elite women were ‘arbiters of taste’ who influenced the manners of aristocratic men.[[60]](#footnote-60) Unlike libertinism, *bonne grace* boasted a spiritual foundation, rooting its system of social behaviour in the principle of divine beneficence. As Roslyn Brogue Henning explains, ‘grace’ is a term rooted in Christian theology and Epicurean ethics. ‘The most comprehensive term for God’s beneficence to man is grace: Latin *gratia* or Greek *charis’*. Henning extends the term’s etymology: ‘as a noun grace can express either the active feeling of one person towards another: favor, goodwill, esteem, love; or the corresponding passive feeling: pleasure and gratitude. Or it can mean that which is pleasing or estimable, to give or receive; finally, it can simply mean a gift’.[[61]](#footnote-61) *Bonne grace* was an elaboration of the code of *grazia* practised in the courts of sixteenth-century Italy codified by Baldassarre Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier.*[[62]](#footnote-62)For Castiglione, practising *grazia* is fundamental to the art of winning and securing status and political place at Court.French seventeenth-century manuals, which reiterate the Italian courtly pleasing, do the same. For example, Nicholas Faret’s *The Art of Pleasing at Court* argues that the surest way of gaining esteem is ‘to prejudice the opinion of those by whom we desire to be belov’d’. To achieve this end, a gallant must represent himself as a ‘graceful person’. *Bonne grace,* he declaims, is the ‘crown of gentlemanliness’: it is a quality that ‘ravishes the eyes and hearts of all men’.[[63]](#footnote-63) Similarly, Antoine de Courtin’s *Rules of Civility* (1671) notes how those who have adopted *bonne grace*’s ‘neat and becoming air’ have a way of ‘pleasing in what ever they do, and displeasing no body’.[[64]](#footnote-64) In *The Gendering of Men* (2004), Thomas King explains how these ‘imitative practices’ such as ‘techniques of elocution, gesture, dress’ enabled courtiers to give the impression of spontaneity and ease, which maintained the political centrality of the elite body by providing a model of aristocratic conduct for ‘inferiors’ to emulate and the means for securing the grace and favour of the prince.[[65]](#footnote-65) These glowing commendations are shared by the English conduct writer Nathaniel Waker, whose manual *The Refin’d Courtier* (1663) instructs would-be courtiers to:  study to be graceful in all your actions and postures, in eating and drinking, walking and standing still, in your miene and in your garb, when you talk and when you hold your peace, when you are busy and when you are at leisure’.[[66]](#footnote-66)  Cohen argues that women were seen as the natural means to the achievement of this goal, because a ‘refined and delicate’ masculinity could only be attained via the prolonged exposure to ‘women’s company and women’s influence’.[[67]](#footnote-67) In her *Memoir of the English Court*, the Countess de Dunoisgives a very clear indication of the value elite Royalist culture placed upon the ceremonial skills of female self-representation. Dunois measures personal value via feminine accomplishments and capacities which, if performed with grace, guaranteed popularity and status within the *beau monde*. The Duchess of Richmond is eminent because she is ‘extremely beautiful, and of a mien and presence very noble and majestic’. Similarly, the Duchess of Mazarine possesses ‘charms that render her the most agreeable of her sex which made her house the rendezvous of all the men of wit and quality and the scene of all the news of the Town’.[[68]](#footnote-68) As her *Memoir* proceeds, the component parts of ideal Royalist femininity takes shape with the natural or inherited ‘qualifications’ of birth, riches and beauty combining with those ‘acquired by art’, principally, the accomplishments of wit, grace and poise.[[69]](#footnote-69)  These entitlements also function as instruments of gendered power. Charting the social manoeuvrings of the gallants and the ladies of the Court, Dunois gives a detailed account of how Emilia, a lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Richmond, applies the intricacies of *bonne grace* to the Duke of Monmouth who courts her. Notable in the power dynamics of their early encounters is the degree of regulatory control Emilia – a lady-in-waiting – exerts over Monmouth, a courtier with a high-ranking political place at Whitehall and ‘an air that charmed all that saw him’.[[70]](#footnote-70) However, in spite of his wealth, his beauty, his youth and his enviable social connections, Emilia retains the upper-hand in their romantic exchange.[[71]](#footnote-71) Taken separately, there is a gulf in station and status between the gentleman and the gentlewoman but, within the pattern of ceremonial procedures that punctuated every heterosexual social encounter, Emilia holds all the levers of authority and control. She grants him permission to converse with her and he pursues her with the appropriate degree of ‘assiduity’ and ‘tenderness’.[[72]](#footnote-72) However, she rebuffs him, refusing to consent to his ‘indiscreet desire’.[[73]](#footnote-73) When he presses, suggesting that she conceals a hidden affection for another suitor, Emilia jilts him:  That is what I never design to do and I have no desire to engage your inclinations more than they are, your fickleness would but ill agree with my temper, should I be so weak as to give you any preference; and I must declare to you that you do not touch my heart enough to make me capable of deceiving you.[[74]](#footnote-74)  Exceeding the bounds of politeness, Monmouth has no choice but to put on a ‘complaisant and smiling air’ and humbly ask her pardon. Finally, to put the encounter into perspective, Dunois reports overhearing Monmouth acknowledge how ‘the fair sex has a right of doing injustice and ours have not even the liberty to complain’.[[75]](#footnote-75) This comment captures the gendered power dynamics of *bonne grace* and illustrates how its dispensations of status and power favour the woman who can, without recourse to explanation, refuse or reject the attentions of any gentleman and remain secure within the bounds of *politesse.*  Emilia’s ceremonial reserve is also characteristic of Lady Dorothy Osborne, whose letters to William Temple, composed during the Interregnum, illustrate the schematics of feminine sociality conducted during the first Caroline regime. Endearing terms are almost entirely absent in her letters and, in spite of the attentions of her erstwhile suitor, lately returned from France, her composed restraint is remarkable. She treats Temple with regulation formality, referring to him as ‘Sir’[[76]](#footnote-76) in all her correspondences. When Temple does refer to her prior confession of love – a passion she still secretly holds – she withdraws herself almost entirely and makes a request for ‘friendship’, a manoeuvre set down in the rules of preciosity,[[77]](#footnote-77) the code of elite behaviour practiced and overseen by all of the Cavalier women of the first Caroline Order. Never must the gentlewoman ‘let passion carry her into an act of imprudence’[[78]](#footnote-78) Rapid advances were to be treated with sobriety and suspicion; those who had the impertinence to forgo the behaviour of the duteous and submissive gentleman are described as ‘vain’, ‘impertinent’ and ‘conceited’ and were cast out of the woman’s company. The ability to defer future happiness through highly wrought ceremonials is key to the conduct of the elite female mode, the ordinances of preciosityproviding protection and entraining a degree of distance from which the woman could view her suitors’ intentions, unburdened by any sense of accountability for her actions.  Female control was embedded in the new code of *bonne grace,* but not all women followed the new ceremonials of heterosexual society with the assiduity expected of them. Yielding to passion equalled a loss of power and status reputation; women who slipped such as Anne Blunt or Lady Isabella Thynne ‘forfeited all title to respect’,[[79]](#footnote-79) their public deviations from official manners occasioning their social exclusion. Another forfeiture was performative inadequacy. *The Conway Letters* give clear indication of the critical attention and appraisal with which courtiers viewed fellow aristocrats. Visiting the Court at Whitehall, the Duchesse of Modena is described as ‘a proper handsome Lady, she hath very good eyes, very good features, and a very good complexion, but she wants the aire which should set all this off, and having been bred in a monastery, knows not how to set one foot in front of the other with any gracefulness’.[[80]](#footnote-80) The *Letters of Dorothy Sidney* also enlarge on the difficulties of adopting and practicing the new French manners. On returning from France, Dorothy remembers the ill-effects of her social education there:  I was so altered, from a cheerful humour that was always alike, never over merry but always pleased, I was grown heavy and sullen, froward and discomposed; and that country which usually gives people a jolliness and gaiety… had wrought in me so contrary effects that I was at new a thing to them as my clothes. [[81]](#footnote-81)  Here, the pursuit of *politesse* has signally failed with the prescriptions of ‘jolliness and gaiety’ collapsing into truculence and ‘discomposure’. Some women clearly found the new manners irksome, but, as Cohen points out, women not only responded to the code of politeness more effectively than men but they also schooled men in the art of social sophistication, transmitting, monitoring and refining men’s conduct in keeping with the *salon* mode of courtly behaviour.[[82]](#footnote-82) All members of the gallant cohort at Whitehall – including the libertine faction – were encouraged to acquire and practice the new ‘conduct of body and tongue’[[83]](#footnote-83) under the guidance of the female elite, which oriented themselves to producing their ideal man. In accordance with this model, the new gallant would be urbane, sociable and polite; he would be able to please as part of the aesthetics of the social self and he would be agreeable to both men and women, accommodating everyone’s faults and follies and suffering in silence if offended.[[84]](#footnote-84) Like the code of preciosity that preceded it*, bonne grace* handed regulatory social power to the elite gentlewomen of the Courtandensured that the gallant had little choice but to follow the formalised ordinances of a code which forbad spontaneity, personal imposition or carnal directness. Thus, the ethos of homosociality ensured the Merry Gang occupied a merely marginal position at Court because political place and social advancement demanded compliance with the new *politesse*, requiring gallants to pursue heterosexual company and perform the coded actions of ceremonial deference and respect.  To compete for and win female approval, gallants participated in the Court’s ritual pastimes, the means through which they might display their wit, their equipage, their dancing and singing skills or their conversational prowess for the purpose of pleasing the powerful ladies of the Court. Gallants were expected to behave modestly, politely and sincerely lest the women they courted and mixed with banish them to the social margins and turned opinion against them. What was more, they were expected to assimilate and practice the ‘negligent manner’, the new regime’s official mode of action**,** also referred to as the ‘easy’ manner, the ‘languishing air’, the ‘bel air’ or the ‘the becoming air’.[[85]](#footnote-85) The negligent manner was a feline style of being or, as Foucault refers to it, a ‘technique of life’ that defined the new gallant and differentiated him from his social ‘inferiors’.[[86]](#footnote-86) Many historians and commentators, such as Jeremy Lamb and Kevin Sharpe, have attributed the negligent manner to the King, interpreting his ‘easy informality’, his ‘fundamentally indolent, languid, graceful’ demeanour as both self-identical and erotic, his ‘sheer easiness’[[87]](#footnote-87) expressive of an unusually appetitive and unapologetic promiscuity. However, it appears that he simply followed the customary requirements of the new manners, behaving correctly – which is to say effeminately – in mixed company, his easy style complying with the rules of pleasing set down in the *salons* of Paris and the Palace of Versailles where he spent time in exile. Charles was certainly a womanizer, but as his compliance with the new *politesse* suggests, he was not a libertine. He had numerous love-affairs but he was neither a duellist nor a drunk; he did not spend virtually all his time in the company of men; he was not a brawler nor was he a blasphemer, a wilful law-breaker, a maker of obscene public speeches or a public abuser of women. It was the Merry Gang, not Charles, who vociferated against the Court’s prospectus of *bonne grace* masculinity, its female regulatory governance and its effeminate corporeal style.  Gallants who met the new performative criteria were treated with respect by elite women. Of Mr. Smith’s courtship of Lady Sunderland, Lady Russell is openly admiring: ‘with what reverence he approached her, and how like a gracious princess she receives him, that they say ’tis worth one’s going twenty miles to see it’.[[88]](#footnote-88) Many gallants, however, found the acquisition of the new manners beyond their social compass, falling short of the new standards of gentlemanliness. Jolliness, gaiety and deference certainly appear to have eluded Lord Arundel. According to Lady Russell, a modish Royalist and frequent visitor to Whitehall, his pursuit of Lady Rochester’s grand-child was notably incorrect. Following her carriage on horseback, Arundel ‘watched her coming abroad to take the air, rode up to her coach’ and ‘thrust aside’ her escort, one Mr Warton who ‘was on horse by the coach side’. Arundel looked into the coach and uttered ‘no man durst say he valued her at the rate he did’. Mr Warton, ‘like a good Christian, turned the other cheek’ and was invited into the house, Arundel, unsurprisingly, was not.[[89]](#footnote-89) Russell treats Arundel’s misconduct with a mixture of pity and contempt, his delinquent behaviour compounding the difficulties young Cavaliers had with behaving with ceremonial propriety. Being ‘extremely in love’[[90]](#footnote-90) with a gentlewoman was one thing, but approaching her without ceremony or preface was quite another. As the Dunois memoir makes explicitly clear, all gallants were expected to cede their power to the opposite sex, not make emotive declarations that deviated from the regulation practice of subservience. Arundel, however, treats his love as a unique privilege which, in spite of his rashness and his rudeness, demands a special return.In another letter to the Reverend John Howe, Lady Russell returns to the issue of the ‘imperfect state’ of men, stressing the need to inculcate the qualities of ‘great honour, truth, courage and great good nature’, attributes which complement female ‘virtue and prudence’[[91]](#footnote-91) and would, if adopted, contribute to a more socially integrated Royalist community.    The Merry Gang’s contestation of regime politeness is noted in Anna Bryson’s *From Courtesy to Civility* (1998), a text which does not address the sexual politics of institutional social power at Whitehall but does evince acts of protest and defiance as part of libertine ‘manners’. Her main contention is that the Wits derived their sense of selfhood through acts of ‘anti civility’[[92]](#footnote-92) manifested in acts of lawlessness in the Town where, unmonitored, they could behave as irreverently as they chose, brawling, drinking to excess, whoring, blaspheming and, in some cases, duelling. Libertinism, she argues, was not a normative code of behaviour so much as defiant protest for homosocial self-definition and dominative masculinity made in opposition to *bonne grace* and female regulatory power. For Bryson, these delinquencies function as acts of self-conscious display, produced to arouse outrage and give the perpetrators an increased sense of personal presence. Such homosocial displays militated against mixed-sex relations and did not, as Philip Carter argues in *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* (2001), foster a smooth transition from the brutality and inhumanity of traditional models of maleness: mainstream gallants attempted to temper their ‘naturally aggressive and indelicate temperament’[[93]](#footnote-93) to appeal to polite women; libertines, during the Restoration era, did not.  In *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates* (2009), Erin Mackie expands upon this relatively unexplored aspect of the libertine debate. Reiterating Cohen’s position, she clarifies the impact of French manners and the shaping process of the *bonne grace* gallant. She suggests that ‘this period witnessed the emerging dominance of a new code of civility that invalidated much of the conduct that previously had defined the prestigious aristocratic male’.[[94]](#footnote-94) In her reading of this re-settlement of normative behaviour she measures the extravagant anti-civility of the rake against the norms of masculine conduct, taking the practice of duelling as its exemplar. For libertines, duelling was anti-civility *par excellence.* A hyper-masculine tradition abhorred by the Court, coordinated violence vaunted the externalization of ‘natural’ male aggression and secured prestige among men opposed to the genteel and even-tempered *bonne grace* Cavalier. For Lord Rochester, swordplay was a ‘handsome ill’[[95]](#footnote-95) that upended *bonne grace* and celebrated ritual blood-letting. Enjoying a revival among the new breed of gallants as soon as the exiled regime was restored, duelling was, Mackie argues, ‘part of a politics of nostalgia’, a self-reflexive practice that reminded participants more of the chivalric heroes of the past than of their marginal, antisocial place in the present. Duelling represented an absolute chivalric authority, its savagery, vainglory and romance devolving the sociability of *bonne grace* into the ‘sovereignty of the individual’, with violent dispute settlement providing a reassuring map of masculinity for disaffected Cavalier soldiers and impetuous young aristocrats eager to build a martial reputation among like-minded peers.[[96]](#footnote-96) A number of comedies trope swordplay, particularly during the first decade when the traumatic memories of the Interregnum and the Civil Wars were still fresh. Unsurprisingly, it held a special allure for the Wits who were drawn to its hyper-aggressive flouting of *politesse* and its traditional rites of ceremonial display. For Mackie, this sense of self-dramatising spectacle is the most compelling determinant of libertine selfhood. ‘The rake’s prestige’, she suggests, ‘resides in the culturally confirmed success of his social performance rather than in fixed qualities of some internal self’.[[97]](#footnote-97)  The performance of dissent by extremely violent means also forms part of Donna Andrew’s analysis of elite immorality in *Aristocratic Vice* (2013). Together with adultery, suicide and gambling, she cites duelling as an archetypal, elite immorality. By exploring swordplay’s deviation from the new models of polite behaviour, she builds a detailed picture of *bonne grace* schematics, the official matrix of gallantry at loggerheads with ritualized forms of status-linked behaviour enacted by the libertine. Like Cohen and Mackie before her, Andrew locates the new pattern of gentlemanliness within ‘women’s *mission civilatrice’,* stressing how errant gallants and military men ‘needed to become polite members of the new refined social order’. Brutishness could be ameliorated through rearing but ‘even more central to the creation of a polished, gentleman of honour was his interaction, the smoothing of his rough edges, by genteel yet delicate, well-educated though modest women’. This mission did not suggest the abdication of violent impulse, but it privileged sociability as the means through which aggression could be mastered. After all, soldierly fight was indissoluble from the necessities of State protection. To clarify the predilections of the new Court, she emphasises that ‘male honour was interpreted to mean more than brute courage, but to imply qualities of resoluteness and self-command’.[[98]](#footnote-98) Following Cohen, Andrew centralizes the essential role elite women performed in the production of high-functioning, well-adjusted gentlemen: ‘It was they and they alone who could discountenance rakes and banish male sexual predators from fashionable assemblies, making them pariahs rather than favoured guests’.[[99]](#footnote-99) However, she also notes how the importance of the woman’s *mission civilatrice* imposed its own limitations on the very women it empowered:  It made it only more imperative that…they guard their femininity which consisted of both chastity and modesty. For if they approached the masculine, whether in temper, dress or vice, they lost their influence, their ability to improve.[[100]](#footnote-100)  Elite Royalist women trained their men but this did not mean, as Cohen is at pains to point out, that they were proto-feminists: ‘we should not allow the importance of the role to obscure its nature: it was oriented not to the women’s production of her self, but to the production of the self-perfecting man’.[[101]](#footnote-101)  There have been modern scholarly criticisms of the study of politeness[[102]](#footnote-102) but, as Linda Pollock puts it, it is a discipline that ‘continues to be studied overwhelmingly as discourse, its practice linked to manners, repression and seeking to please others’.[[103]](#footnote-103) Nevertheless, the view that the Restoration Court was a ‘splendid brothel’ still prevails. Prior to Cohen’s *Fashioning Masculinities*, readings of the social machinery of the Court were typified by Jeremy Lamb’s biography of Lord Rochester, *So Idle a Rogue,* which claims that Charles had ‘more influence over manners, taste and fashion than any other British monarch with the possible exception of Queen Victoria’.[[104]](#footnote-104) In light of subsequent research, this now seems more of an assertion than a claim, yet it is a view that has proven extremely hard to dislodge. In *Masculinity in Restoration Drama* (2001), Laura J. Rosenthal discusses the context of personal rule and the libertinism of the Court, making the point that: ‘Charles II and the courtculture influenced the kinds of masculinities displayed on stage…Courtiers imitated their king, and the plays themselves frequently featured plots around male rakishness’.[[105]](#footnote-105) Her contention that Restoration comedy frequently featured rake figures is accurate, as is claiming that Charles II and the Court culture influenced the kinds of masculinity displayed on stage. However, positing that courtiers imitated the King and that their behaviour was then represented in rakish plots on the stage strongly suggests a thoroughgoing libertine culture untouched and unimpeded by Whitehall’s social and moral normativities. As I argue, the Court was not, nor could not have been, what E. B. Chancellor describes as a ‘mixed seraglio’, since the Wits were but a marginal and unfashionable presence at Whitehall and only transgressed the new social orthodoxy of gendered power in the Town beyond the polite social environment of the Court.  In *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London* (2002), James Grantham Turner breathed fresh life into this long-standing perception that Charles was a libertine king presiding over a libertine Court. Strikingly partial, he treats the Court society with the same sense of outrage as Bishop Burnet, the Victorian moralist. To substantiate his critical condemnation of the Court Society, Turner marshals an extensive and impressive range of source material. Charles, he argues, was a ‘riot prince’ and the Court was a ‘great bawdy house’. The new aristocracy was ‘lewd and riotous’ with Charles’s entourage enjoying ‘connoisseurship over a corrupt court’ in a ‘culture of priapism’. The King was seen as a ‘bastard-maker’[[106]](#footnote-106) and the satirical libels and sexual excesses of his Wit followers did not tarnish the image of the Court so much as define it. The claim that Whitehall was a great bawdy house or a splendid brothel has pervaded more contemporary, critically popular readings of the Court society. *A Gambling Man* (2009), Jenny Uglow’s biography of Charles II begins by acknowledging the manners the exiled prince learned at Versailles and the *salons* of Paris but goes on to vaunt his unique mode of action: ‘it was clear to all who watched him that his personal style was something quite new’. Rather than an elite practitioner of modish manners, Charles was a *sui generis* ruler whose innate authority and discreet style, she claims, shaped the new Court into ‘a seat of glamour, fashion, gossip and scandal’. She also reads the Court as a ‘libertine culture’ and renders the female cohort as powerless prey, ‘ogled as soon as they arrived by gallants who virtually laid bets on who would bed them first’.[[107]](#footnote-107) This tendentious position, which sees the Court represented in the image of the King’s sexual appetite, resurfaces in Kevin Sharpe’s *Rebranding Rule* (2013)[[108]](#footnote-108) which also argues that the image of personal rule lay in ‘the individual style and personality’ of Charles whose Court was a ‘hotbed of sexual promiscuity and libertinism’.[[109]](#footnote-109) Significantly, of the twenty libertine comedies produced during 1660 and 1677, thirteen treat the theme of libertine reform, a clear indication of the need for gallants to adopt the effeminated *politesse* extrapolated by Michele Cohen, Erin Mackie and Donna Andrew. Their research has helped move the historical libertine from the throne room at the so-called ‘bawdy house’ of Whitehall and relocate him at the margins of a Court committed to civility and the re-settlement of deviant, outdated and martial modes of maleness.  The majority of dramatists treat libertine excesses as childish and futile. And it is for this reason that the libertine is frequently given a politically purposive function, serving State and Crown by systematically ruining Court Party objectors and imposters. Libertines were, after all, members of the elite community of the Town, certainly peripheral to the mainstream orthodoxy of socio-political power but still part of the Royalist political project. In *English Dramatic Form,* Laura Brown picks up on this aspect of libertine typology in her reading of William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* in which the rake, Harry Horner, directs the full force of his destructive energy against married women who represent the Country aristocracy and the emerging City community, the political oligarchies which had, by the 1670s, begun to reify monarchic power at a parliamentary level. Brown centralizes Horner’s libertinism as the key feature of a satirical play which, she argues, is ‘fundamentally conservative in its allegiance to traditional values and to the *status quo’*.[[110]](#footnote-110) Zoning in on the role of political power and its rhetorical manifestations in Restoration comedy, Douglas Canfield applies the Foucauldian hypothesis that ‘peace’ is merely a form of unspoken ‘war’, suggesting that political comedies encoded a pattern of sexual exploitation, employed to destroy the ‘cultural, traditional and religious integrity’ of regime objectors. It was, he argues, a key part of the State influence wrought by Royalism on its political rivals.[[111]](#footnote-111) Significantly, nine of the twenty libertine comedies produced between 1660 and 1677 foreground the theme of State safeguarding, a statistic that underlines the importance of a largely unexplored dimension of rake typology.  Too often, then, readings of the rake are ring-fenced by sexual interpretations giving normative value to contrarian acts of sexual display, ruthless opportunism and cynical misogyny. Without doubt, these are important dimensions of the character’s typology, but libertine rhetoric clearly served a more complex and politically embedded purpose than the kind of glamorous and appetitive nihilism to which the character is so often attached. Clearly, the need to revise these partial and popular perceptions of the Restoration Court society is still pressing.  **Extent of this topic**  Now I have outlined the main contentions of this thesis and reviewed the critical terrain of libertine literature, some explanation of its time frame is necessary. Because of a lack of modern studies of ritual behaviour at Whitehall during the Restoration, I have spent a lot of time trying to uncover the precise coordinates of the new *politesse*, an undertaking which I feel is necessary to the provision of an ‘accurate’ picture of official *bonne grace* masculinity and the ideational vision which structured it. Taking this research method into consideration, it needs to be stressed that this thesis aspires to be a historical inquiry, not cultural anthropology or sociology. A relatively rigorous and empirical approach into establishing the body and tongue of this discreet style of being has produced a template against which the various forms of rhetorical interpretation could be tested. It is also important to note that it is not the purpose of this work to universalize masculinity, since one of the main points I hope to stress is the fluidity and historical specificity of gendered constructions of selfhood. If it were possible to draw grand, over-arching conclusions about deviant masculinities, such claims would exceed the parameters of this study. The timeframe of this thesis –1660-1677 – is historically determined. There are some references to royal exile, the Civil Wars and the Interregnum which have come out of the exploration of early libertine comedies, but I have chosen 1660 as a starting point principally because this year marks the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. My research would doubtless have benefitted from broadening the scope of the thesis to include a detailed study of French *salon* behaviour, but part of the importance of *bonne grace* rests in the suddenness of its establishment. The new *politesse* had roots in the code of preciosity practised during the first Caroline period but the performative dimensions of *bonne grace* had been adopted by the exiled Court in France and for many of its contemporary critics and commentators it was a novelty – a spectacularly alien mode of action.  The close of the period occurs shortly before the political turmoil of the Exclusion Crisis beginning in 1678 and ending in 1681. The Crisis itself is beyond the ambit of this thesis, but as Susan Owen argues, comedy was not apolitical before it.[[112]](#footnote-112) Popery was certainly not new. Titus Oates’ allegations of a Roman Catholic conspiracy to assassinate Charles and the revelation that the king was accepting bribes from the Catholic French – made at a time when Protestant parliamentarians were recommending the pursuit of an anti-French foreign policy – were events that heightened a sectarianism identifiable from the very beginning of the period. The old animosities between Puritans and Cavaliers – tenaciously troped by pro-Court playwrights in the sixties – simply intensified as the new Country Party (proto-Whigs) and the Court Party (proto-Tories) revived their old political grudges. All the plays analysed in this thesis illustrate, to a greater or lesser extent, the stresses and strains of this long-standing and unstable political climateand the urge for regime stability, a hankering which prompted many dramatists illustrate the need for the rake to reform. Many also give the libertine a politically purposive function, serving State and Crown by systematically ruining Court party objectors and imposters. In an increasingly unstable social environment, Royalist playwrights direct the rake’s destructive energies against the enemies of the State, palliating Court party fears of its political rivals and offering a reassuring map of dynastic power.  **Summary of chapters**  In the first chapter, I argue that the ‘natural’ and personal rule narrative represents long-standing critical assumptions that fail to account for the actuality of lived experience at Whitehall. Courtly behaviour was not defined and determined by the king. Women established the performative parameters of the new mode of masculinity and presided over the Court’s process of preferment, judging the vocational accomplishments of the gallants who were taught how to effeminate their manners; or, render their social behaviour in a way which was perceived as refined by the women. This easy, negligent mode of action, was not, as many critics argue, expressive of the king’s personal sexual energy but the institutional practice of a effeminised culture that scorned sexually transgressive behaviour and insisted upon gallant subordination to tender rules of social engagement. Contrary to popular narrative, the Court was not a bawdy house presided over by lewd and licentious rakes. In fact, the Wits occupied a marginal position at Whitehall. A largely unattractive group of underperforming courtiers, they fell short of the new standards of obligatory gentlemanliness regulated by the ladies. In the second part of the chapter, I show how the pro-court dramatist Robert Howard, an elite courtier and co-founder of the King’s Theatre, celebrates feminised authority and masculine reform in his political comedy *The Committee* (1662).Set during the last days of the Interregnum, it elaborates the manifold inadequacies of libertine soldiers, roguish Cavaliers who, in spite of their laudable alliance to the exiled monarchy, were, on their return to polite Restoration society, expected to cultivate the nuances of official behaviour. Radically different from the devastatingly attractive ‘type’ of popular myth, Howard’s libertine, Colonel Careless, is a social undesirable, a rake who must reform at the behest of Ruth, the Cavalier heroine with whom he is in love. She tests his love, regulates his conduct and oversees his reform. Using the conflicting values and practices of the libertine and the Caroline gentlewoman to drive the plot mechanism, Howard privileges feminised power and elaborates a coherent argument justifying support for the new Court’s prospectus of social integration.  In the second chapter, I argue that John Dryden dramatises the civilising influence of women at Court and illustrates its opposition to swordplay. To measure the impact the new *politesse* had on ritual violence, I begin with an analysis of the duel between Henry Jermyn – a libertine courtier – and Thomas Howard – a courtier soldier – fought for the favours of Lady Shrewsbury in the summer of 1662. Both men craved entry to her coterie, putting themselves forward as suitors, but Lady Shrewsbury, operating within the bounds of *bonne grace*, refused to grant Jermyn the special privileges he considered his due. Forbidden to contest her authority, he provoked a quarrel with Howard, her principal suitor. Howard sent a challenge, Jermyn accepted. Seconds were enlisted, the date fixed, a doctor summoned and a location – St James’s Fields – chosen. The duel itself was a travesty of gentlemanliness and the so-called honorific warrior code it was supposed to incarnate. Jermyn and his second, Giles Rawlings, were ambushed, Rawlings slaughtered on the spot and Jermyn left badly wounded. Held responsible by historians and commentators (all of them male) for this blood bath, Lady Shrewsbury has been defined as an evil influence and a *femme fatale* rather than a courtier applying the gendered entitlements of coterie power. This ‘duel’, prompted by Jermyn’s aberrant reaction to female authority, epitomised an age of indiscipline among the new breed of Cavaliers, whose frequently lawless behaviour undermined the restored regime’s need for a well-disciplined gallantry dedicated to maintaining social order.  John Dryden dramatizes these concerns in his libertine comedy, *The Wild Gallant* (1663). A proponent of *bonne grace* masculinity, Dryden’s representations of swordplay deal directly with libertinism and the honour code it actualised. Capturing the behaviour of young Cavalier libertines who were anxious to define themselves as warriors, Dryden illustrates the new Court’s mission to tame the traditional model of martial masculinity and socialise the new breed of gallants into mainstream Court Party culture. Like Colonel Careless in *The Committee,* his protagonist, Jack Loveby, is made to reform by Lady Constance Nonsuch, who rescues him from financial ruin, tests his worthiness and manages his social transformation from libertine wastrel to *bonne grace* gallant attuned to the need for the protection of civic order. Dryden returns to the pressing theme of libertine reform in *Secret Love* (1667) in which a returning rake, Celadon, pursues the comic heroine, Florimel. Recycling the test of love trope, Dryden has her test the limits of his devotion, tasking her wayward suitor to perform acts of self-sacrificing loyalty and pay her all the services of a *bonne grace* lover. He contests her demands but she consistently outwits, out-manoeuvers and even out-performs her preening suitor, disguising herself as a young gallant and defeating him in a public game of wit. Celadon, who professes to live by the honour code, is manipulated into joining an insurrection against his Queen. It fails and Celadon, fortunate to escape execution, learns that judgement, discretion and self-restraint are qualities and accomplishments which come before physical courage. Reinscribing his commitment to the Court’s civilising mission, Dryden argues for sociability and against libertinism, representing Celadon as a posturing, vainglorious fool whose determination to prove himself through violent means endangers the interests of the Crown.  *Bonne grace* brought wild gallants under cultivation, but for its detractors it effeminated the new breed of Cavaliers. The new manners were enervating, enfeebling gallants through the daily rituals that engendered compliance at a time when the new regime needed to be seen to be battling vigorously against sedition, infiltration and altercation. In chapter III, I argue that the libertine faction at Court took violent exception to the socially integrated practices of *bonne grace* gallantry, expressing their discontent in high-profile acts of anti-social behaviour. Casual violence had reached a disproportionate level in Restoration London, where drunk and disorderly soldiers would gather in its taverns and brothels. Gentlemen revellers and their hangers-on would drink to excess, forcibly remove clientele, rush out into the street, blaspheme, pick fights with the Watch, assault bystanders, smash windows and abuse women. Called ‘scouring’, this loosely coordinated, anti-social practice encouraged aristocratic young men to define themselves through their ‘natural’, core aggression. Wits were keen practitioners, attracted to the spectacle of its vulgarity and the aggression it incarnated. Charles Sackville and Charles Sedley both played key parts in the notorious incident at the Cock Tavern in June 1663 where, encouraged by drink and the urge to raise drunken excess to a new level of outrageousness, Sedley took to the balcony, stripped naked and before the crowd assembled below ‘washed his prick in a glass of wine’, toasted the King and then delivered a ‘mountebank sermon’, berating the church and the fashionable ‘cunts’ of the Town.[[113]](#footnote-113) Scouring was also dramatically represented. Patronised by Sackville, George Etherege concocts his own configuration of the ritual in *The Comical Revenge* (1664), celebrating their dirty protests via his libertine soldier, Sir Frederick Frollick. Portrayed as a ‘merry maker’, Frollick is a perpetrator of and an active participant in wanton acts of casual brutality. A keen scourer, he gets drunk, fights, curses, damages property and abuses women. For mainstream society, libertine scouring was a petulant and impotent display, but Etherege tropes it as the ‘true’ mark of the aristocratic man, the essential attribute of maleness, which dominates and subdues, commands and suborns. Creating a fantasy of libertine authority, Etherege – who was keen to please his patron and join the ‘Merry Gang’ of Wits at Whitehall – vaunts drunken unreasonableness, lewd excess and casual violence as an antidote to and protest against the new conventions of social acceptability.  In chapter IV, I argue that, from Abraham Cowley’s *The Cutter of* *Coleman Street* (1662)to William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675), a significant number of rake comedies elaborate sectarian activities that transcend the personal and manifest a tangible, ideological programme of social control. Court party rhetoricians enlist the help of the rake’s frequently savage, seductive and anti-social character to maintain the *status quo* at the expense of adversaries old and new. The long-standing enmity between the proto-Tory Court party and the proto-Whig Country party was emphasised in early libertine comedies such as *The Cutter of Coleman Street* and *The Committee*, plays which righted the wrongs of the Interregnum and used the rake soldier to expose the Protectorate as a degenerate regime peopled by moneygrubbing, licentious fraudsters. This antagonism continued throughout the sixteen sixties and seventies as dramatists exploited the typology of libertine Wit, deviousness, aggression and sexual seductiveness to sustain a state of unofficial war against Court party protestors. The idea of rake conformism might appear an oxymoron, but there is a clear and constant theme of social control running through the rhetorical debate on the libertine figure and the political uses to which such a ‘gentleman’ might be put. William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* is one such example. He includes two libertines who both sabotage outsiders but do so in very different ways. Horner, Wycherley’s alpha rake, sexually abuses enemy women while Harcourt, a reforming rake, successfully morphs into a sociable Cavalier peacekeeper, a model Cavalier who serves as a glowing advertisement for progressive Royalism. However, Harcourt’s meaning and value have been woefully overlooked by the vast majority of Wycherley scholars. Criticism invariably focuses on Horner, whose rake activities encapsulate a society steeped in elegant corruption and hypocrisy. I contest this majority view by showing how Harcourt’s heartfelt desire for a virtuous and genteel life – manifest in his determination to serve Alethea and the State – is surely Wycherley’s unequivocal demonstration of the positive impact of the Court’s *mission civilatrice*. Critics ranging from J. H. Wilson, Norman Holland, Rose Zimbardo, Laura Brown, Harold Love, Robert Markley, D.M. Young and John O’Brien treat *The Country Wife* as a one-plot drama that visualises the Town through Horner’s hate-fuelled perception of it. Consequently they picture the Restoration *beau monde* as universally depraved, corrupt and hypocritical, a skewed vision which overlooks Wycherley’s support for the Court’s prospectus for a socially integrated and morally energetic gallantry.  In the concluding chapter, I explore libertine typology, as visualized by Thomas Shadwell’s *The Libertine* and Aphra Behn’s *The Rover.* Shadwell was a committed proto-Whig who, to serve his political masters, reimagines the Don Juan storyline to attack the Wits at Whitehall and use them as an emblem for a corrupt and dysfunctional regime. In what would prove to be a remarkably successfully political comedy, *The Libertine* (1675) revives the old pre-Restoration schematics of the wicked and lewd libertine soldier. Using the Don Juan narrative to illustrate the visceral and long-standing contempt the Country party held for the Court, Shadwell’s play figures his rake as pre-Restoration libertine soldiers, terrible heathens, rapists and murderers whose dramatic representation was designed to re-ignite the old furies and sectarian hatred generated by Roundhead propaganda during the Civil Wars and the Interregnum. Shadwell’s principal rake, Don John, commits one act of atrocity after another in an orgy of atheistic and tyrannous excess. Notably, he remains unrepentant for his wrong doings and behaves viciously to the last when he and his cronies are sent to hell for their terrible crimes. Shadwell uses this old rake figure to typify the Wits and define the 1670s as a ‘wild and extravagant’[[114]](#footnote-114) libertine age. In response to Shadwell’s Whiggish condemnation of the rake, Aphra Behn uses *The Rover* (1677) to advocate rake reform. A Royalist, Behn revives the rake, arguing that the pre-Restoration libertine was a not a boisterous egomaniac but a serviceable figure who must give up his sexual predations and his taste for armed combat if he is to become a valuable and responsible member of the Stuart community. Behn also emphasises the importance of female agency in the process of rake reform. She invests her dramatic heroine, Hellena, with the self-direction, ingenuity and determination required to manage the sexual aggression and inconstancy of her libertine suitor. In the final part of this chapter, I explore the afterlife of the rake, contesting the critical position that he became a ‘changed man’ after the Glorious revolution of 1689. In this section, I articulate a broader diachronic account of British masculinities ending in 1745, the year of the Jacobite Rebellion and the bid by James Francis Edward Stuart to regain the British throne. | |  |
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| CHAPTER I  The early courtier libertine and Robert Howard’s *The Committee* (1662)  In *Rebranding Rule* (2013), a historical study of the importance of public image in the Tudor and Stuart monarchies, Kevin Sharpe argues that the restored Stuart dynasty was a personal monarchy and that the representation of rule lay in the individual style and personality of the ruler, Charles II:  It was, as Oliver Cromwell had discerned, a regal style of government that people hungered after and, as Restoration loomed, it was Charles’ behaviour that distinguished him from the republican regime of the Interregnum and publicised England once again as a hereditary monarchy.[[115]](#footnote-115)  Sharpe claims that Charles revived ‘the old forms and customs’ of entertainment practised under the old Carolean order, adding that conduct was characterised by the personal taste and temperament of the regent whose ‘easy informality’[[116]](#footnote-116) Sharpe takes as an indicator of the king’s virulent sexual self; his urbanity, poise and feline graces transmitting a personal ethos of unapologetic promiscuity.[[117]](#footnote-117) Sharpe, who posits that the Court was constructed in the image of the king’s substantive behaviour, describes the Restoration dynasty, ‘most known and most remembered for sex’, as a hotbed of sexual promiscuity and libertinism.[[118]](#footnote-118) | |  |

In the first part of this chapter, I argue that the popular narrative of ‘natural’ and personal rule is a myth. Politically, the country was a personal monarchy, but the representation of rule did not rest in the personal style of the king. Easy informality, described by Sharpe as the hallmark of regal charisma and seductive allure, was not a self-identical source of generative power but a prescriptive code of official behaviour modelled and regulated by the gentlewomen of the Court. These women were Whitehall’s arbiters of taste and attractiveness. They established the new performative style, they modelled it and they judged which gallants effectively and appealingly embodied it. All members of the Court society – including the libertine Wits – were expected to follow the prescriptions of the new manners, behaving with ceremonial deference and respect to fellow-members of the royal cohort. The Wits professed themselves a homosocial community, but at Whitehall their misognyistically fuelled solidarity was over-powered by the social ordinances of female social power. Elite women conferred appeal onto the gallants who pleased them, ratifying their appeal and giving *arrivistes* the opportunity to improve their political place at Court. Conduits of power to the Court’s inner coterie, these Ladies of Honour had considerable influence and, consequently, gallants competed for their attentions and their support in the hope of securing an *entrée* into Charles’ company. Women such as Charles’ wife Catherine of Braganza, Lady Castlemaine, the Duchess of York, the Duchess of Richmond, Lady Dorset, Lady Penn and Lady Elizabeth Bodvile were all modish bearers of this social power and influence. As Michele Cohen argues in *Fashioning Masculinities*, her analysis of the impact of French manners on English behaviour during the long eighteenth century, the company of elite women enabled gallants to acquire and develop the appropriate conduct of body and tongue, the easy sociability central to the new manners.[[119]](#footnote-119)

In the second part of this chapter, I show how the pro-Court dramatist Robert Howard celebrates feminised authority in his political comedy *The Committee.*[[120]](#footnote-120)Set during the last days of the Interregnum, it elaborates the manifold inadequacies of libertine soldiers, ‘arrant cavaliers’ (IV. 1, p. 91) who, in spite of their laudable alliance to the exiled monarchy, were, on their return to polite Restoration society, expected to bind themselves to the nuances of the new regime’s ceremonial behaviour. Colonel Careless – the first libertine to grace the Restoration stage – bares scant resemblance to the wildly alluring, devastatingly attractive ‘type’ of popular myth. In fact, his behaviour is so undesirable that Ruth, the Cavalier heroine with whom he is in love, must attend to his deficiencies and oversee his reform. Using the conflicting values and practices of the libertine and the gentlewoman to drive the plot mechanism, Howard privileges his heroine’s socialising power and elaborates a coherent argument justifying support for the new Court’s feminised prospectus of social integration.

According to Dale Underwood in *Etherege and the Seventeenth Century Comedy of Manners*, libertinism’s supreme prerogatives were ‘freedom’ and ‘pleasure’.[[121]](#footnote-121) Identifying Epicureanism, scepticism and primitivism as the doctrines that informed it, Underwood notes that Restoration libertines considered sensual pleasure an end in itself and, consequently, revolted against marriage and the more conventional Puritan attitudes towards love that preceded it.[[122]](#footnote-122) Allied to the Court Party, and echoing the sensibility of their king, libertines, or ‘Epicures’, held to the view that man, in his natural state, was appetitive and passionate and that these innate drives should be given free expression, satisfying the senses in accordance with ‘natural’ impulses and desires’.[[123]](#footnote-123) Love between the sexes was merely one of those appetites, while freedom, inconstancy and change were part of the laws of nature. By the Restoration, the term libertine was regarded as synonymous with the ‘rake’, a term which was not, however, purely sexual in definition. Initially associated with lawlessness and vice, the term’s sexual typology, according to Anna Bryson, only crystallised with libertinism after the Restoration, when Charles and the Court Wits became ‘regarded as prototypes of the rake or libertine’.[[124]](#footnote-124) Critics tend to treat the terms libertine and rake interchangeably but frequently to emphasise sexuality in pejorative terms. For example, Edwin Beresford Chancellor’s *The Lives of the Rakes* treats Charles as the model ‘rake’, a classification that defines the king in terms of his carnality. In *Old Rowley*, the first volume of the edition, Chancellor rails against the new king’s ‘sordid existence as the Old Rowley of a mixed seraglio’[[125]](#footnote-125) and uses the new king’s nickname, Old Rowley – a racing stallion at Newmarket with a reputation for breeding – to underline and clarify sexual immorality as the principal determiner of Charles’ character and the depravities of the Restoration Court. Other critics prefer the term libertine: in his *History of His Own Time*, Bishop Burnet uses it to indicate the king’s unconstrained sexual preferences, vilifying Charles’ ‘libertine’ morality and claiming his predilection for ‘carnal vice’ was central to the ‘ruin of his reign’.[[126]](#footnote-126)

Unlike E.B. Chancellor and Bishop Burnet– tub-thumping critics who treat Charles’ sexual adventurousness with moralistic scorn – Kevin Sharpe takes a more generous position to the king’s unapologetic promiscuity, arguing that it formed the basis of a seductive allure naturally expressed in his easy informality. The idea that Charles’ behaviour was innate and self-identical is both popular and pervasive. For example, Jeremy Lamb’s biography of Lord Rochester, *So Idle a Rogue,* pinpoints Charles’ ‘sheer *easiness’* [his italics][[127]](#footnote-127) as the defining imprimatur of sovereign social power. Commenting on his natural charisma, Lamb claims Charles had ‘more influence over manners, taste and fashion than any other British monarch with the possible exception of Queen Victoria’.[[128]](#footnote-128) Like Sharpe, he readily associates easiness with sexuality, arguing that the king’s behaviour – ‘fundamentally indolent, languid, graceful and sensual’[[129]](#footnote-129) – was unique. Critics frequently approach the theatrical libertine’s allure in the same way: his attractiveness is intrinsic, his is an innate subjectivity or operating power guaranteed to draw the attention to itself. Contemporary critics certainly posit ways in which this appeal is put to interpretative use: Peter Cryle and Lisa O’Connell, for example, note in *Libertine Enlightenment* how the character ‘served a political purpose – his emphatically phallic masculinity contributed to his popular aura’.[[130]](#footnote-130)Michael Mangan’s *Staging Masculinities* argues that the character ‘acts as a compensatory image of masculinity in a culture which feels that its traditional models of masculinity no longer work’.[[131]](#footnote-131) However, lionising the Court party, mocking vanquished Puritanism or re-butting anti-Court claims of effeminacy do not – as part of the discourse of libertinage – account for or explain why the above critics take the Wits as socially, politically and sexually powerful young noblemen who presided over Court life when, in actuality, the Wits’ homosocial cabal occupied only a marginal, oppositional position to mainstream authority at Whitehall. The Merry Gang’s libertine masculinity was, as David Turner acknowledges, a means by which ‘a man could actually enhance his reputation among his peers’.[[132]](#footnote-132) But the Wits’ behaviour was not socially and morally normative, their homosocial transgressions protesting against the refinements and modest gentilities of *bonne grace* masculinity, the official, legitimate code of conduct practised by the new order of gallants at Whitehall and in the Town.

***Bonne grace***

The king’s easiness, his languid, so-called sensual behaviour, did not indicate libertinism; rather, it illustrated *bonne grace*,[[133]](#footnote-133) the prescriptive code of baroque manners practised at the new Court at Whitehall and learned by the exiled king and his travelling court at Versailles and Paris during the Interregnum. *Bonne grace* differentiated the courtier class from the entirety of Restoration society, striking out against the stifling and ‘stiff formality’[[134]](#footnote-134) of Interregnum Protestantism and announcing Charles’s allegiance to his cousin Louis, the king of France and the leader of Europe’s new super-power. Stately and sumptuous, the so-called ‘postures of state’[[135]](#footnote-135) incorporated the five ballet positions of the fashionable *danse noble .*[[136]](#footnote-136) These demonstrated a style of being through which the ruling elite could identify its own bodily difference and lay claim, via the domain of aesthetics, to the proprietorship of cultural standards.[[137]](#footnote-137) Celebrated as the ‘natural’ expression of innate superiority, *bonne grace* required a courtier to perform his or her place within the hierarchy through bodily and linguistic conformity to its ceremonial rules.

The easiness which Sharpe and Lamb take as a self-identical aspect of Charles’ sexual charisma was also prescriptive. Referred to as the negligent manner or the ‘languishing air’,[[138]](#footnote-138) ‘the bel air’,[[139]](#footnote-139) or ‘the becoming air’,[[140]](#footnote-140) it was the hallmark of Court party conduct.[[141]](#footnote-141) Nicholas Faret’s *The Art of Pleasing at Court* describes negligence as ‘the source of genteel behaviour’, noting how it first became popular among elements of the Court Party elite in the late 1620s as a mode of verbal address.[[142]](#footnote-142) Delicate and languorous, the negligent manner had to be performed with pleasing effortlessness, but since it could only be attained through effort,[[143]](#footnote-143) gallants were compelled to monitor their own performance and the performance of others. As Norbert Elias suggests in *The Court Society* (1983), they scrutinised those whose corporeal ease exceeded their own with an almost voyeuristic degree of intensity. In his analysis of the Versailles court society – the system replicated by the Restoration Court – he argues that observation of self and other was the principal manifestation of the elite social paradigm.[[144]](#footnote-144)

Frances Stewart, Duchess of Richmond, is a prime example of the Court’s social principles of observation and self-representation. The Restoration courtier, Anthony Hamilton, notes that when the news of her (unconsummated) affair with Charles spread throughout the Court, her apartments at Whitehall filled with ‘young architects who endeavored to imitate her’. Notably, he adds that it was Miss Sarah Jennings’ ‘unaffected and easy style’ which ‘elevated her position at Court’.[[145]](#footnote-145) This process of self-monitoring and self-modification extended to the minutiae of bodily affects and produced a sense of corporeal consistency among the cohort with gallants responding to the guidance of the women who offered them guidance in the process of self-perfection.[[146]](#footnote-146)

The development, production and maintenance of *bonne grace* depended on women.[[147]](#footnote-147) In Paris, women reigned over modish *salon* culture where beautiful manners could not be achieved without exemplification.[[148]](#footnote-148) The qualities of deference and respect could only be improved by prolonged exposure to female society, perceived as the indispensable means through which men reached a higher degree of refined conduct. To account for the influence and impact women had on regulating and modifying masculine behaviour, Philip Carter identifies two principal mechanisms which later seventeenth and eighteenth-century commentators understood as the reasons for women’s influence over male self-improvement. Firstly, women, either through nature or upbringing, were considered to be more sensitive and less argumentative than men, a condition which demanded that men temper their behaviour to avoid performances that would offend in mixed, polite society. Secondly, time spent in female company was valued for refining and embellishing what many regarded as an otherwise defective masculine personality.[[149]](#footnote-149) Thus, gentlemen, particularly returning Caroline soldiers brutalised by years of deprivation, exile and strife, were advised to curb what was identified as their naturally aggressive,[[150]](#footnote-150) indelicate temperament and, under the guidance of women, behave with modest restraint and deference.

Pleasing powerful ladies such as Lady Castlemaine – the king’s mistress – was vital. During the first years of Charles’ reign, Lady Castlemaine enjoyed an intimate and highly influential proximity to the king and had it within her power to fast-track aspiring gallants who pleased her. Those seeking her backing would seek a *quid pro quo* relationship in which she would use her influence on behalf of her dependents and use them to simultaneously extend her own power.[[151]](#footnote-151) Royal favour – a capricious and elusive entitlement – ensured the Court was, in its operation, a ‘scene of ceaseless competition’.[[152]](#footnote-152) Almost all transactions, inside and outside Whitehall were negotiated by means of patronage and intermediaries, frequently provided by the gentlewomanly elite.

To seek female approval, gallants participated in the Court’s ceremonial pastimes, the activities through which they might display themselves in their best possible lights. Hamilton, describing the personal advantages of his sibling, iterates these schematic touchstones. The elder Hamilton:

dressed best; he was well made in person and possessed those happy talents which lead to fortune, and procure success in love: he was a most assiduous courtier, had the most lively wit, the most polished manners, and the most punctual attention to his master imaginable: no person danced better, nor was any one a more general lover: a merit of some account in a court devoted entirely to love and gallantry. It is not surprising that he succeeded… in the king’s favour.[[153]](#footnote-153)

This description is suspiciously effusive, but what is evident is how ‘happy talents’ increase the chances of ‘fortune’[[154]](#footnote-154) and earn the favour of the women upon whom ‘success in love’ depended. Devotional duties such as assiduous service and punctual attention are cited as important indices of courtly masculinity, but the primary principle here is the desire to accord with and satisfy the taste and judgement of the women: the better a gallant’s physique, the more desirable he is; the better he dances, the more desirable he is; the livelier his wit, the more desirable he is; the more negligent his manner, the more desirable he is; the grander his equipage, the more desirable he is. Lord Talbot, for example, dressed impeccably; the Earl of Arran ‘played well on the guitar’; Thomas Howard was notably ‘gentle’ and ‘pacific’. Seeking increased prestige and female patronage, ambitious gallants cultivated their pleasing accomplishments or their ‘brilliant marks’[[155]](#footnote-155) to impress the powerful women of the Court, ratifying their authority through the display of gracious manners while seeking tutelage in return.

Kowtowing to the Ladies was anathema to the Wits, but this did not stop Lord Rochester from cynically exploiting the ordinances of *bonne grace* masculinity. The gentlewomen regarded Lord Rochester – first received at Court in 1664[[156]](#footnote-156) aged seventeen – as particularly pleasing. According to E.B. Chancellor, Rochester’s ‘graceful manners, his wit, and… a certain modesty of bearing and ingenuousness of manner, gave him ready access’[[157]](#footnote-157) at Whitehall, an observation ratified by Miss Hobart, one of the beauties of the Court who mentions that his ‘applauds and submissions were always made with all due propriety and respect’.[[158]](#footnote-158) Rochester’s received reputation was dismal; vicious libels and excoriating satires were a central part of his literary outputbut, understanding the workings of a social code which required the production of deferential and respectful conduct at all times, he was careful enough to ensure that his social behaviour did not exceed the bounds of Court Party convention. Responding to Rochester’s poisoned-pen assaults, Miss Hobart describes him a ‘horrid’, ‘malicious’ and ‘debauched wretch’, ‘devoid even of the least tincture of honour’,[[159]](#footnote-159) but in company, he observed and diligently practised the subservient and attractive graces essential to his progress at Court.

Delighted with Rochester’s attributes, the king rewarded him with the privileged ceremonial position of Gentleman of the Bedchamber and Comptroller of Woodstock Park and invited him to intimate ‘entertainments which were held at the king’s own apartments or in those of his various mistresses’.[[160]](#footnote-160) Bishop Burnet comments on Rochester’s demeanour, but rather than crediting his ability to effectively reproduce the new choreography of social behaviour, he uses the language of interiority to account for Rochester’s allure. The young Wilmot, he says, was a ‘naturally modest’, exceptional young man lit up by ‘a peculiar brightness’ before the Court corrupted him’.[[161]](#footnote-161) This figuring is instructive, not because it takes objection to the Court but because it fails to acknowledge that modesty was a rule- generated aspect of courtly identity that relied on the consistent and repeated invocation of the rules of *bonne grace.* For Burnet, modesty is of the essence, an innate quality unmediated by the conditions and regulations of culturally intelligible practices and institutional bodily affects. In spite of the generative qualities Burnet ascribes, Rochester’s initial success was not built on metaphysical brightness; rather, he ascended because he was able to coordinate his substantive behaviour with the effeminated prescriptions of social action. Modesty was an integral aspect of *bonne grace* and Rochester received the plaudits of the ladies and the king because of his performative skill not for the inevitable expression of what Sharpe describes as royal innateness.

Sharpe’s thesis, which posits a promiscuous Court multiplying the behaviour of a self-identical king, suggests that many gallants were sexual libertines but, in fact, they were a minority sub-culture at Whitehall.[[162]](#footnote-162) The Wits were sexually promiscuous to varying degrees but, crucially, their social behaviour at Whitehall did not deviate from the rules of Court Party prescription ordaining that all courtiers must present a pleasing persona for the gentlewomen. Sharpe claims that the Wits imitated Charles’ unapologetic promiscuity,[[163]](#footnote-163) up-dating the long-standing perception of the Court variously described as ‘a mixed seraglio’, ‘a splendid brothel’ or a ‘great bawdy house’.[[164]](#footnote-164) But what he and his critical predecessors fail to mention is that sexually aggressive behaviour was not tolerated. If any gallant failed to orient himself properly to the women, he was held liable and could be punished. In *Grammont,* Hamiltongives an instructive account of Lord Talbot’s pursuit of Miss Hamilton, a young woman of ‘numberless graces’ who treated her suitor’s addresses with indifference. Stung, Talbot foolishly scorned the Court’s rules of gallantry[[165]](#footnote-165) and offended Miss Hamilton. For his haughtiness and insolence, he was sent to the Tower[[166]](#footnote-166) and not released until he had made all the ‘necessary submissions’.[[167]](#footnote-167) A gallant might be a father and devoted husband, a chamberlain, soldier, a member of the inner circle or a libertine, but he was still expected to produce socially correct behaviour in the company of women, always ensuring that his manners were deferential and his demeanour gentle.

For the ladies of the Court, effemination was a positive undertaking, but for some it was a threat to their sense of masculine identification: the adoption of *bonne grace* masculinity was tantamount to servility. Its languid style made gallants prone to accusations of French foppishness,[[168]](#footnote-168) or enervation, particularly from the military branch of the restored regime which, like the Wits, took exception to the new mode and its female stewardship. A homosocial institution, the military’s officer class defined themselves through the honorific code of masculinity, which emphasised the martial function of the aristocracy. Cavalier officers, battle-hardened from the troubles of the first Caroline regime and the oppressions of the Interregnum, often failed to adjust to the rules of sociability in matters of dispute settlement and, to make matters worse for the Court, many appeared to openly crave violent confrontation. Roger Manning notes that in 1673, ‘thirty bailiffs’ in London ‘were attacked by over 100 gentlemen armed with swords. Twenty-one of the bailiffs were wounded and at least one of them died. Much violence was perpetrated by soldiers spoiling for a good fight who entered the tumult on both sides’.[[169]](#footnote-169) For these men, sociability was an alien or contemptible concept and spending prolonged periods of time with elite women in fashionable salons was diametrically opposed to their vision of dominative, homosocial masculinity. Etherege clarifies the extent of this division in *The Comical Revenge* (1664), as his soldier rake offers advice to fellow Cavaliers who find themselves threatened with the effects of romantic attachments:

If she be not kind as fair,

But peevish and unhandy,

Leave her, she’s only worth the care

Of some spruce Jack-a Dandy [[170]](#footnote-170)

A ‘spruce Jack-a Dandy’ is a derogatory term for mainstream gallants who, as far as Wits and soldiers were concerned, sacrificed their martial manhood for a suit of expensive French clothes, worn to please their mistresses at Whitehall and the Town. But not all felt their masculinity was challenged by representing themselves languidly and peaceably, not least James, Duke of Monmouth, the first of Charles’ illegitimate sons, whose accomplishments and physicality epitomised the new Cavalier masculinity. According to Hamilton:

his figure and the exterior graces of his person were such that nature had not formed anything so complete…he had a genius for every sort of exercise, an engaging aspect and air of grandeur. In a word, he possessed of every personal advantage.[[171]](#footnote-171)

Celebrating Monmouth as a natural exemplar, Hamilton’s rhetoric vaunts the metaphysical superiority of the Cavalier tribe.[[172]](#footnote-172) Here, Hamilton extends the Court Party’s monologue of self-praise but, notably, uses a man not a woman to do it. Innate merit has no place in his accounts of Miss Jennings, Frances Steward or Anna Hyde. Their courtliness is merely the outcome of self-conscious study and careful adaptation. But Monmouth, who also learned and practised the prescriptions of feminised behaviour, is somehow ontologically superior to the women who were responsible for modelling and innovating the very behaviour Monmouth is supposed to encapsulate.

Monmouth’s ‘external graces’ were ‘naturally advantageous’, but many gallants were physically unattractive and awkward, displaying bodily failings and performative incapacities that reducedtheir appeal to women and dented the image of a culture that vaunted the beautiful display of highly-wrought ceremonial manners. Sir George Berkeley, for example, ‘had nothing very remarkable in his person’, while Lord Chesterfield had ‘an indifferent shape and a worse air.’[[173]](#footnote-173) Strikingly, many of the Wits were physically and performatively lacking. Popular myth has it that these men were irresistible to women, but this is far from actuality. Henry Savile was ‘fat’,[[174]](#footnote-174) George Villiers was dissipated and ‘lacked splendour’[[175]](#footnote-175) while Charles Sedley – because of his slight stature – was known as ‘Little Sid’.[[176]](#footnote-176) Least distinguished of all was ‘Little’ Henry Jermyn who:

had neither brilliant actions nor distinguished rank to set him off…as for his figure, there was nothing advantageous in it. He was little: his head was large and his legs small.[[177]](#footnote-177)

Not only was Jermyn regarded as ugly and badly proportioned, his posture was defective and his manners foppish,[[178]](#footnote-178) shortfalls which, together with his physical incapacities, failed to measure up to the standards of personal appeal one might expect from a libertine. Clearly, not all the Court Wits were accomplished enough to earn the blessing of elite gentlewomen.[[179]](#footnote-179) Libertine rhetoric has certainly shored up the aesthetic distance between sub-standard physical appearance and irresistible sexual allure. Comedies written by the Wits themselves have certainly fostered the charismatic image of the rake. William Wycherley and George Etherege both advertise their rhetorical rakes as extremely appealing young Cavaliers. This image has been secured by a large body of commentary and criticism, which has done much to elevate the character’s power and allure to mythical proportions. The list of critics and commentators who hold with this view is a long one. Ranging from Bishop Burnet and Lord Macaulay in the nineteenth century, E.B Chancellor, J.H. Wilson, Bonamy Dobree, Kathleen Lynch, J.W. Krutch and Harold Weber in the twentieth and James Grantham Turner, Jenny Uglow and Kevin Sharpe in the twenty-first century, these critics all take libertine sex appeal as given and espouse their dominance over the values and practices of the Court. For Jenny Uglow, Charles was a *sui generis* ruler who shaped Whitehall into a ‘libertine culture’ where the ladies were sexual victims unable to resist the physical presence and devastating charms of the Whitehall rakes. The ladies were ‘ogled as soon as they arrived by gallants who virtually laid bets on who would bed them first’.[[180]](#footnote-180) Representing the Court in the image of the King’s sexual appetite and visualising it as a ‘hotbed of sexual promiscuity and libertinism’,[[181]](#footnote-181) this line of criticism and commentary either overlooks, underexplores or obscures the social actuality of the Court’s social regime and its binding code of social behaviour, the style of being was regulated by women. As Michele Cohen points out, the elite women were the ‘arbiters of taste’ who influenced the manners of the gallants who strove to please them by producing a ‘refined and delicate’ masculinity. All the gallants at Whitehall – including the libertine faction – were encouraged to practise this ‘conduct of body and tongue’.[[182]](#footnote-182) A gallant’s appeal was based upon sociability and politeness; he was respectful and deferential, a servant well-versed in the art of pleasing, not a socially demanding predator with defective manners.

**Robert Howard’s *The Committee* (1662)**

The struggle to refine the behaviour of the new gallantry was reproduced in the auditoriums of the Restoration playhouses where the gentlemen and gentlewomen of the Court would gather. Charles attended frequently – sometimes with the Duke and Duchess of York – and often accompanied by other high-ranking gallants and Ladies of Honour. Lady Castlemaine, Lady Dorset, Lady Penn, Lady Elizabeth Bodvile, Mlle Le Blanc, Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia and other ladies of fashion would fill the boxes.[[183]](#footnote-183) Many would also join the gallants to discourse sportively in the pit from where they could enjoy close and exclusive proximity to the stage. Recording a visit to see a translation of *Heraclitus* at the Duke’s, Pepys captures the mood and manners of elite society. It was, he says:

an excellent play, to my extraordinary content; the more from the house being full, and great company; among others, Mrs. Steward, very fine, with her locks done up with puffes, [artificial rolls of hair] as my wife calls them; and several other great ladies had their hair so… Here I saw my Lord Rochester and his Lady Mrs. Mallet…it was pleasant to see how everybody rose when my Lord Jo. Butler, the Duke of Ormond’s son, came into the pit toward the end of the play, who was a servant to Mrs. Mallet, and how he smiled upon her as she on him.[[184]](#footnote-184)

Here the ‘great ladies’ of the Court dominate the social *melee,* their authority and appeal confirmed by their conspicuous modishness and the prescriptions of complement and respect paid to them by their gallant ‘servant[s]’. The elite cohort rises when one of their number enter the pit – in this case the Lord Butler – but the status arrangements are transparently clear: the men conspicuously serve the women. Butler serves Mrs Mallet and, at her prompting, returns her smiles, multiplying the good behaviour modelled by the ladies.[[185]](#footnote-185) The positive effect of the rituals of courtly refinement led Thomas Killigrew to boast that the theatre had all but eradicated bad behaviour: ‘now all things civil, no rudeness anywhere’.[[186]](#footnote-186) With a vested interest in protecting the theatre’s reputation, [[187]](#footnote-187) Killigrew might well be exaggerating the extent of elite integration, but his comments certainly elaborate the socialising energy of the new elite cohort and its commitment to the provision of safe and refined social spaces relatively free from irritating outbursts of gallant delinquency. Like the ladies of the Court, Killigrew is clearly working towards the implementation of the new model of socialisation. There were some deviations from the new dream of elite cohesion where gallants disrupted this highly visible social domain, but Killigrew aligns the culture of the theatre to the Court’s civilising mission, his theatre functioning as a flag-bearer for the good manners and cultural authority of the nation’s *crème-de-la-crème.*

A co-founder of the King’s Company, Robert Howard engages directly with these contemporary issues of gendered power, institutional behaviour and masculine socialisation in his third play, *The Committee.* In it, he figures a morally and sexually incontinent Cavalier rake who strives to reform but who falls woefully short of the Caroline standards of gallant appeal. Howard had been a military hero of the Caroline regime. The son of Thomas Howard, Earl of Berkshire and Privy Counsellor to Charles I, he had been involved in some of the earliest battles of the Civil War. In 1642 he was arrested and sent to the Tower and his estates were confiscated.[[188]](#footnote-188) Knighted for bravery in the field of action in 1644,[[189]](#footnote-189) he was imprisoned in Windsor Castle in 1658, due to his connection with noted Royalists. On his release he offered his staunch support to the exiled Prince and the Court Party cause.[[190]](#footnote-190) Howard’s willingness to perform these duties suggests a consciousness captivated by righting the perceived wrongs of Cromwellian authority, but his first staged drama, *The Surprizal* (1662),[[191]](#footnote-191) does not deal directly with England’s recent troubles; instead, it shifts the audience’s gaze to the historically remote, aristocratic social terrain of classical Italy. Representing the conflict of filial honour and romantic love among the power-broking families of the aristocracy, *The Surprizal* allegorises the restored Crown’s ideology of social and political control.

The main plot concerns two pairs of aristocratic young lovers’ pre-marital problems. Samira, the drama’s romantic heroine, is in love with Cialto, a fierce warrior suitor, but is duty bound to honour a marriage settlement with Brancadoro, a rich senator’s son. Samira’s friend Emilia is in love with Samira’s brother Miranzo and, like her friend, must follow the wishes of her father and marry Miranzo’s uncle, Castrucchio. Viloretto, a vicious and vengeful servant to Brancadoro, plots the downfall of his old employee Cialto, who has recently cashiered him.The plot lines converge when Samira and Emilia, overwhelmed by the pressures of duty and the emotional hardships of forbidden love, abandon their filial obligations and flee to a nunnery, only to be intercepted by Viloretto who takes them captive. While Cialto and Miranzo embark on a frenzied search for the two young gentlewomen, Viloretto manhandles, threatens and insults the two young women, telling them that ‘I mean to make my self as fortunate as man can be in his full-crowned wishes; I will enjoy you both’. (IV. 3, p. 76). To prolong their ordeal, he leaves them to ponder the thought of either compliant sex or rape. Fortuitously, Cialto finds them just as they are preparing to commit suicide and puts Viloretto to the sword. Mareno and Castrucchio – the two patriarch figures – enter and consent to the marriages of the young lovers and admit the ‘brave’ (II. 1, p. 32) General Cialto into their dynastic order.

To emphasise the need for the perpetuation of elite familial power and political retrenchment, Howard ensures Samira and Miranda choose two lovers who are already members of the aristocratic power elite. Emilia weds Miranzo, a choice that binds the two branches of the family dynasty, and Samira marries the General Cialto, thereby incorporating Sienna’s military enforcer into her family. Notably, when the two maidens are freed from the clutches of Viloretto, the ‘monster’ (V. 3, p. 85) rapist, transgression of the bonds of filial devotion appears to weigh more heavily upon them than the torments of the ordeal from which they have only just been rescued. Emilia pleads for forgiveness: ‘O, my dear father, are you still ready to forgive me as you were wont? (V. 2, p. 95). Samira meekly follows suit: ‘One pardon more, Sir, for me, that in no other thing will ever disobey you’. (V. 2, p. 95). Moreno and Castrucchio are gratified by Samira and Emilia’s safe return, but the young women’s supplications signal a dramatic resolution that resettles the tradition of patriarchal power.

In the conflicts, challenges and eventual restitution of order, the two women’s actions do not extend beyond the generalised, generic typology of the romance heroine. For French feminist critic Julia Kristeva, the traditional notion of the empowered heroine in courtly romance is ‘a deficient prop that totalizes the male imagination’.[[192]](#footnote-192) Howard’s socially eminent women are virtuous, particularly Samira, who would sooner kill herself than endure being raped, but beyond the power to self-obliterate, they both function as little more than pretexts for male action. When they do take dramatic precedence, they are obvious and rather flat signifiers of chivalric feminine virtue who find the machinations and conflicts of power, duty and love so overpowering that they retreat from patriarchal society altogether.[[193]](#footnote-193)

Ring-fenced by the strategies of the courtly romance narrative, *The Surprizal* does not attempt to incorporate the new elite’s arrangements of gendered power. Women are represented as little more than male property, butin *The Committee,* Howard deals directly with the scar tissue of England’s recent history. Forging a range of Cavaliers and Puritans, he brings historically intelligible characters drawn from and shaped by his personal experience of Interregnum strife and Protectorate power. Mapping the moral and social reform of a libertine soldier laid low by hardship and oppression, Howard turns his attention from political re-settlement to the principles and practices of Royalist social cohesion. And, in keeping with the social milieu at Whitehall, he privileges the role elite women played in steering the behaviour of wayward Cavaliers towards the feminised norms of pleasing. So much so, in fact, that the scope of female power and influence exceeds the distribution of good Caroline manners: Howard imagines his heroine, Ruth, as a leader, a *generalissima* figure who vitalises, organises and guides the returning band of soldiers through the perilous obstacles and snares set by their Cromwellian oppressors. With superior moral, strategic and social judgment, Ruth drives the plot mechanism and debunks the long-standing notion that the dispensation of power was an exclusively male domain. She takes responsibility for her libertine suitor’s financial future, resettles his estate, secures his release from prison and successfully sets her errant suitor on the path to re-assimilation and reform.

Set in London during the twilight of the Interregnum, the plot centralizes the greed and hypocrisy of the Protectorate, typified by Mr and Mrs Day, the corrupt chairman of the puritanical committee of sequestrations and his wife,[[194]](#footnote-194) a mercantile and scheming social climber. She and her husband use the legal instruments of state power to gain hold of the deeds to Cavalier property. The action begins by introducing Mrs Day, who has just returned from Reading with Arbella, an orphan and rich Royalist heiress whom Mrs Day – acting as the young woman’s ward – intends to force into a marriage settlement with her feeble-minded son, Abel, in a bid to take control of Arbella’s family estate. The Days also have designs on the estate of their adopted daughter, Ruth, also the scion of a wealthy Royalist family. Arbella and Ruth’s plight of disenfranchisement is shared by Colonel Careless and Colonel Blunt, Cavaliers who, having returned from exile in Ireland, aim to regain control of their confiscated estates. Arbella, Blunt and Careless are informed that the reclamation of their property depends on their immediate conversion to Puritanism, a requirement all three Royalists reject without compunction.[[195]](#footnote-195) This decision leaves them powerless to intercede in the public seizure of their capital in the sequestration ritual that follows.

**The sequestration hearing**

Re-imagined through the lens of political satire, the sequestration hearing is figured as a coercive instrument of State authority, a pre-determined, unyielding practice designed to redistribute authority to the men of the committee and degrade the Cavalier cohort spatially, bodily and linguistically. These determinants reiterate and elevate judicial authority and its disciplinary efficacy, re-articulating, at the level of the body, a discrete and systematized microphysics of power.[[196]](#footnote-196) Howard does not provide a detailed *mise en scene* for the ritual but there is ‘*a table set out’* and a clerk who busies himself ‘*ordering books and papers’.* This visual information points towards a municipal atmosphere transmitted by depersonalised committeemen who sit at a table while the Cavaliers are brought in and must stand in account before them(II, 4. p. 67). Mr Day, the chairman, and two nameless committeemen manage proceedings while a doorkeeper stands guard at the door of chambers, completing the bodily arrangements of a ceremonial mechanism that imposes silent compliance, disavows peaceful protest, forbids argument and subsumes the enemies of the State under the divinely ordained minutiae of Puritan law.

Summoning Arbella first, the committee swiftly ratifies Abel’s – or rather his parents’ – claim to her property and consigns her estate to Mr Day, reminding her that she ‘may be thankful, mistress, for such good fortune’ (II, 4, p. 70). Fully aware that her power as a claimant is set at zero and that the ceremonial procedure a sham, she challenges the committee to produce evidence of her commitment to the Court Party cause. However, this request is taken as an act of ‘delinquency’, a ‘sinful’ protest which – as one of the committeemen assures her – can only ‘make you your own enemy’ (II, 4, p. 76). Here, the use of the noun ‘delinquent’ refers to the ‘name applied by the Parliamentary party to those who assisted Charles I or Charles II, by arms money or personal service, in levying war, 1642-1660’. The anonymously written ballad *The Mad Wolf* in the *Rump I* of 1662, illustrates this conflict, transforming the Cavalier enemy into a sectarian Other: ‘A monster now Delinquent term’d/ He is declared to be/ And that his lands, as well as goods/ Sequestered ought to be’.[[197]](#footnote-197) Refusing to be characterised as a sinner, Arbella questions the committee’s wisdom:

ARB: My own enemy?

RUTH: [*Aside*] Prithee, peace. ’Tis no purpose to wrangle here; we must use other ways.

(II, 4, p. 70)

Before Arbella’s frustration shifts into confrontation, Ruth intercedes and urges her Royalist ally not to ‘wrangle’. Instead, she advises a peaceable, more politic approach to confrontation and crisis.

But this is not to say that Howard treats vigorous self-assertion as transgressive or vulgar. Not for a moment does he denigrate the Cavaliers of the embattled first regime. On the contrary, he imagines assertion as a vitalizing and desirable source of attraction. During the hearing, Blunt applauds Arbella’s refusal to bow to state, calling her a ‘brave noble creature’ and, in turn, Arbella marvels at Blunt’s implacable contempt for Puritan law, describing him as a ‘brave gentleman’ (II. 4, p. 72).

There is certainly an element of hyperbole in the Cavaliers’ fearsome support of each other, but the newly installed Court was politically sensitive.[[198]](#footnote-198) All forms of drama were closely monitored. In December 1661, eight months after Charles’ coronation and less than a year before the first production of *The Committee*, Abraham Cowley’s returning Cavalier comedy *The Cutter of Coleman Street* had been so badly received by some members of the Court that the dramatist’s dedication to the Royalist cause was cast into doubt.

Cowley was a long-standing Royalist employed as secretary to the King and Queen in exile who had served it ‘twenty years during all the time of their misfortunes and afflictions’.[[199]](#footnote-199) He dedicates himself to the Crown in *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, a political comedy that glorifies the Cavaliers of the old Stuart order and ridicules the Protectorate, picturing its puritanical members as money-grubbing hypocrites. Also set in the last days of the Interregnum, the drama’s hero, Colonel Jolly, masters the Puritan foe and rights the wrongs of Cromwellian rule. But while Jolly proves himself a worthy steward of revived Stuart order, he is not without fault. He wilfully deceives his own niece in order to retrieve his estate and marries the widow of a rich Puritan soap-boiler for her money. Cowley’s representation of an imperfect Royalist soldier prepared to pursue the Puritan shilling provoked ‘jeers and hisses’[[200]](#footnote-200) on the opening night and, accused of writing a ‘satyre against the Court Party’,[[201]](#footnote-201) his career as a Court poet was effectively ruined.

Doubtless aware that fictional Cavaliers must be depicted as uncompromising devotees of Stuart absolutism, Howard figures his Cavaliers as men of unimpeachable integrity, loyal soldiers who would rather die than submit to or collaborate with their sectarian foe. But once this lodestone is in place, he goes on to nuance his typology of soldierly masculinity by representing and criticising the brutish, hot-headedness of soldiers who have lost touch with Caroline gentility. When the committee announces that Blunt’s property will be seized, he is ready to lash out at his tormentors:

BLUNT: [Aside] Oh, damn vultures!

COL C: [Aside] Peace, man.

(II, 4, p. 70)

Here, Careless’ intervention mirrors Ruth’s covert plea to Arbella. Like her, Blunt reacts to the seizure of his capital with rage but, in stark contrast, Careless adopts an attitude of amused detachment. More than equal to the bureaucratic pressures exerted by the committee, he does not, at any point, lapse into unseemly displays of emotion. Instead, he treats his oppressors with elegant contempt. Making merry as his estate is discharged, his gaiety and unshakable composure render him impenetrable to the accusations of his Puritan enemy:

MRS DAY: It is well you are so merry.

COL C: Oh, ever whilst you live, clear souls make light hearts.

(II, 4, p. 72)

Seemingly indifferent to his imminent financial undoing, he aims degrading jibes at the committee. When asked if he will take the covenant, he refuses, asserting that ‘we will be as rotten first, as their hearts that invented it’ (II, 4, p. 72). He distances himself from the ‘rotten’ Puritans who extort in the name of religious sanctity and dismisses the seizure of his property as a mere irritation founded on the unshakable belief that the Court Party will, sooner or later, prevail.[[202]](#footnote-202) With a final flourish, he ridicules the committeemen, scandalizing their pieties,[[203]](#footnote-203) by salaciously applauding Ruth whom he presumes is a Puritan daughter:

COL C: For you pretty one, I hope your fortune will be enlarged by our misfortune. Remember your benefactors.

RUTH: If I had all your estates, I could afford you as a good a thing.

COL C: Without taking the covenant?

RUTH: Yes but I would invent another oath.

COL C: Upon your lips?

RUTH: Nay, I am not bound to discover.

(II. 4, p. 72)

Ruth parries his sexual innuendoes, but Careless, who strenuously resists his opponents’ attempts to reduce him to abjection, emerges as a gentleman whose self-command sets him apart as an irrepressible Cavalier leader preyed upon by bloodless, petty-minded bureaucrats.

The poised disgust of Colonel Careless and, to a lesser extent, the implacable brutishness of Colonel Blunt, suggest the unfolding of a pro-Court comedy of Cavalier restitution driven by these two Royalist warriors. They certainly strike a chord of alarm among the Puritan community. In possession of a mysterious generative power, they are, as one committeeman notes, ‘men of dangerous spirits’ (II, 4, p. 71). Mrs Day goes even further, claiming that they are ‘spirits never to be reconciled; they walk according to nature, and are full of darkness’ (II, 4, p. 74), identifying a special, metaphysical power in the two Cavaliers that can neither adapt nor change. The Cavalier girls also pick up on this hardness: observing the two soldiers closely during the sequestration ritual, Ruth whispers to Arbella that ‘there are not two such again to be had for love nor money’ (II, 4, p. 72)., The two Colonels win the approval of the young Cavalier women for their commitment to the Crown, their courage and the fear they strike in their common enemy.

Howard is keen to please his political masters by portraying Careless and Blunt as fiercely loyal to the Crown but he does not represent them as exemplary. In fact, he pictures Colonel Careless as an insufficient suitor and seditionist. As the Cavalier leader, he is imagined as more astute and composed than the worthy but recalcitrant Colonel Blunt. But as the drama unfolds, Careless’ style of action proves wholly unequal to the various chances, conflicts and obstacles that confront him. So much so, in fact, that Ruth must intercede and guide her errant Cavalier towards moral and social restitution while simultaneously out-smarting their Puritan oppressors.

Careless hatches a plot to retrieve their seized estates by negotiating a settlement with Mrs Day, whom he recognizes as a former kitchen maid employed by his father. Intending to use the threat of social exposure as a bargaining counter, he sends his ‘blockhead’ (III, 1, p. 75) manservant, Teague, to politely deliver a verbal message requesting the Colonel’s introduction to Mrs. Day but his judgement of Teague’s capabilities proves misguided. Teague presents himself to Mrs Day, insults her, threatens Abel and makes pointed hints at her lowly past. Infuriated, Mrs Day sends Abel on a mission to seize Teague and have the bailiffs arrest him. Determined to help Teague and keep Careless’ scheme afloat, Ruth diverts Mrs. Day’s attention, informing her that Arbella is secretly in love with Abel:

When you sent Abel after the Irishman, Mrs Arbella’s colour came and went in her face; and at last, not able to stay, she slunk away after him, for fear the Irishman should hurt him. She stole away, and blushed the prettiest.

(III, 2, p. 80)

Recognising the intensity of Mrs Day’s greed, Ruth’s improvised romantic diversion draws Mrs Day’s attention towards the prospect of a lucrative marriage settlement between her idiotic son and Arbella who, like Ruth, is a Cavalier daughter with handsome estate. Alarmed that Abel ‘may be hurt’ (III. 2, p. 80), Mrs Day makes to go after Arbella, but Ruth, warming to the fiction she has created, persuades her otherwise.

Ruth, then, displays a talent for outmanoeuvring her enemy. Thereafter, and purely by chance, Careless stumbles into Mrs Day and assuming his manservant has safely prepared the ground for an ‘innocent’ introduction, he is flabbergasted by her anger and her unwillingness to negotiate a settlement for the Cavaliers’ estates. Again, Ruth has to intercede as Careless responds to Mrs Day’s cries of panic by manhandling her. This time, however, the limits of her social skills are tested not just by Mrs Day’s ravings but also by the sudden appearance of Careless in Mrs Day’s house:

’Tis he! What shall I do! Now invention be equal to my love. – Why, your ladyship will spoil all. I sent for this gentleman, and enjoined him secrecy, even to yourself, till I had made his way. Oh, fie upon’t, I am to blame. But in truth I did not think he would have come these two hours.

(III, 4, p. 84)

Ruth represents herself effectively enough to placate Mrs Day with a mixture of disingenuousness (‘I sent for this gentleman’) and self-recrimination (fie on’t. I am to blame’), crowning the deception by tempting Mrs Day with the promise of a lucrative marriage contract. But first she pre-empts Mrs Day’s fears that Careless has broken into her house:

’Twas upon a message of his to me, and please your honour, to make his desires known to your ladyship, that he had considered on’t, and as resolved to take the covenant, and give you five hundred pounds to make his peace, and bring the business about again, that he may be admitted in his first condition.

(III. 4, p. 84)

Satisfied by Ruth’s proposal, Mrs Day agrees to this mutually beneficial proposal and exits, leaving Ruth alone with Careless to hammer out the details of their business. Placating Mrs Day, protecting Careless’ interests and hatching a plausible means for securing his property, Ruth succeeds where Careless has signally failed.

**Colonel Careless’ sexual aggression**

But no sooner has Ruth dealt with Careless’ ineptitude and Mrs Day’s animosity than is assailed by the Colonel who is ‘certain’ she is a Puritan who has formed an amorous plan to be ‘left alone’ (III, 4, p. 85) with him. Already acquainted with his sexual suggestiveness, Ruth now finds herself in the solitary company of a leery soldier who, in the name of allegiance to the Crown, seduces Puritan girls, making them into ‘whores’ who ‘beget’ (III. 4, p. 86) illegitimate Royalist children. [[204]](#footnote-204) As he makes his sexual advance, she says: ‘I am sorry, sir that your love for me should make you thus rash’. (III. 4, p. 85).[[205]](#footnote-205) In spite of this genteel refusal, Careless continues to press. Without ceremony or preface he asks:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| COL C: Come, which way? | |
| RUTH: Whither? | |
| COL C: To your chamber, or closet. | |

(III, 4, p. 85)

Here, Howard adds dramatic capital to the encounter by presenting Ruth with a dangerous conundrum. On the one hand, she does not want to reveal her Cavalier identity because she wants Careless to prove his devotion. If he truly loves her then her political affiliations should not present a meaningful obstacle; he could simply take the covenant and convert to Puritanism. On the other, not declaring herself could prove disastrous should she fail to control him. [[206]](#footnote-206) In spite of the potential risk he poses to her personal safety, she decides to remind him of the moral standards a Caroline gentleman must follow in the presence of a lady.[[207]](#footnote-207) Ruth appeals for masculine restraint by following the code of preciosity, the performative mode of gendered conduct practised by the gentlewomen and gentlemen of the first Stuart regime.[[208]](#footnote-208)

**Preciosity**

A precursor of *bonne grace,* preciosity was a feminized mode of social exchange that authorised female power over the performative machinery of elite interaction. Women ensured that gendered relations ran smoothly, making sure men performed in a manner that was, according to Robert Wilshire, ‘gay and obliging in company without being immodest’.[[209]](#footnote-209)Disseminated by Henrietta Maria, Charles I’s Catholic wife, the cult of preciosity was a chaste ideal of courtship and marriage, a Platonic orientation that forbad – or rather sublimated – desire into the detached intimacies of ‘friendship’. An early pattern of female *salon* sociability, this spiritualized code of complementary courtly love determined the conduct of royal servitors in coterie conditions or relatively informal group arrangements.[[210]](#footnote-210) Gentlemen were required to follow a chaste choreography of manners,[[211]](#footnote-211) adjusting to the sensibility of the company of women and participating in the creation of an atmosphere of familiar equality among its practitioners.[[212]](#footnote-212) In his *History of the Great Rebellion*, Edward Hyde captures some of the code’s characteristics as he describes Lord Kensington as ‘a very handsome man, of a lovely and winning presence and gentle conversation’.[[213]](#footnote-213) The queen promoted Kensington to master of the King’s Guards for skill in the joust and dancing during Court masques, a favourite pastime in which Henrietta assumed the role of the heroine who inspires but harnesses male amorousness.[[214]](#footnote-214)

Honouring a style that confirmed Court Party membership and conferred moral and social entitlements upon its female practitioners, Howard imports and amplifies preciosity’s delicate but disarming power, investing Ruth with the linguistic and corporeal authority to subdue Careless’ sexual effrontery. This allows her to ‘test his love’.[[215]](#footnote-215) Ruth outlines and, by degrees, imposes the coordinates of a code which disavowed spontaneous displays of desire. Immediately after she has refused his sexual proposal, she tells him, with formal discretion, to take his leave:

There lies your way sir. However, I will own so much kindness for you that I repent not the civility I have done, to free you from the trouble you were like to fall into. Make a leg, if you please and cry Thank you. And so, the gentlewoman that desired to be left alone with you, desires to be left alone with herself, she being taught a right understanding of you.

(III, 4, p. 85)

Having indicated that she holds him in high enough esteem to rescue him from financial ruin, she asks him to ‘make a leg’ or bow, reminding him of how a gentleman parts company from a woman belonging to his own cultural community. In *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton describes these ritual social performances as ‘incorporating practices’ where repetitious performance of prescriptive behaviour, such as bowing, reveal a memory that has been ‘sedimented’ into the body. [[216]](#footnote-216) He adds that:

ceremonies of the body remind performers of their system of honour and hereditary transmission as the organizing principle of social classification. The ceremonial display establishes a relationship between the organisation of courtly space and the stratification of social relations.[[217]](#footnote-217)

An everyday component of official behaviour, the leave-taking bow not only signalled the termination of a social encounter, it also required the man to remove his hat and with a low, sweeping motion of the arm, in an unequivocal display of respect. Ruth’s strategy of reminding Careless how he ought to behave works, but at the possible expense of credibility. After all, her Cavalier identity is undisclosed and by having a young woman who might well be a Puritan daughter tell a Cavalier rake how to dispose himself in private would probably not nullify the possibility of physical abuse.

Howard’s argument suggests that female courage prevents sexual violation. Caroline gentlewomen were a morally driven elite that would not accommodate any deviation from the norms of preciosity. Moreover, they shared the view that ceremonial behaviour served to magnify a person’s inner qualities and the accomplished production of these prescribed bodily practices confirmed rectitude and restraint.[[218]](#footnote-218) Ruth exemplifies these virtues and applies them to her libertine suitor, addressing the discrepancy between the man he is and the honest man she would have him be. As she says: ‘love virtue’ and be ‘constant to your fair principles. You have but here and there a patch of it; y’are ragged still’ (III, 4, p. 86). She instructs him to exchange his ‘idle looseness for firm virtue’,[[219]](#footnote-219) but what Ruth does not say, yet certainly implies, is that Careless’ behaviour – because it falls short of the Court’s ‘fair principles’ – is unmanly. As Anna Bryson explains, ‘techniques of personal sociability were given increasing emphasis as part of the currency of personal esteem and status at Court, a possible reaction to the threat of their loss posed by the Civil War and the Interregnum’.[[220]](#footnote-220) By mainstream standards, his libertine condition indicates self-dereliction; a ‘careless’[[221]](#footnote-221) and brutish disregard for the very values and practices he is supposed to protect. Howard privileges the need for sociability by troping Ruth’s management and correction of her libertine’s manners as a *fait accompli:* Careless confesses his love for Ruth, a young woman who might be a Puritan[[222]](#footnote-222) but against whom he has ‘no defence’ (III. 4, p. 86).

But this is not to say that Ruth is above criticism. Blunt has already described her as ‘a woman with enough wit to jeer a man to death’ (I, 1, p. 54) and in her dealings with Careless her self -assurance could easily be construed as authoritarian and even overpowering. If this is a fault in her character, then the social and moral standards on which she insists make her, at times, self-righteous rather than virtuous. She tirelessly corrects Careless’ faults but gives little attention to her own imperfections. Nor does she restrict herself to Careless’ deficiencies; she is also on hand to elicit Blunt’s declaration of love to Arbella:

RUTH: If you please sir, when you are ready to start, I’ll cry one, two, three, and away.

COL B: Be pleased to forbear, good smart gentlewoman. You have leave to jeer when I am gone and I am just going.

(IV, I, p. 90)

Asking him to ‘perform your promise’ and represent himself in a courteous manner, Ruth is – at the very least – brisk with Arbella’s tortured suitor who blurts out his confession to Arbella and promptly exits in a state of shame:

COL B: Now my misfortune that I promised to discover is, that I love you above all my sense and reason. So farewell and laugh. Come Careless.

[*Exeunt*] (IV, I, p. 90)

Ruth can be harsh and abrupt and perversely, she sometimes resembles a young Puritan animated by a missionary zeal to reform the weak. When the Cavalier girls discuss the soldiers’ limitations, she acknowledges Careless’ faults and in spite of the bantering tone of their exchange, she does not doubt her power to transform him:

ARB: As I live, his confession shows nobly.

RUTH: It shows madly, I am sure. An ill-bred fellow, not to endure a woman to laugh at him.

ARB: He’s honest I dare swear.

RUTH: That’s more than I dare swear for my colonel.

ARB: Out upon him.

RUTH: Nay, ‘tis but for want of a good example; I’ll make him so.

(IV, 1, p. 90)

Here, Howard recapitulates the argument for Cavalier rehabilitation as Ruth reasserts her conviction that immoral men can change provided they have the suitable stimuli. Rewarded with respect, Howard’s returning Cavaliers are given the opportunity to refine their behaviour in a genteel environment. Ruth’s advice to Arbella typifies the kindness and support the Cavalier girls offer the struggling soldiers: ‘compose yourself and help him nobly’ (III, 4, p. 87). Disavowing self-indulgence, Ruth sues for a ‘noble’ style of instruction which, extending the code of preciosity, suggests sensitivity and compassion as well as high-handed authoritarianism.

**Ruth as *generalissima***

Ruth has flaws but not enough to dislodge her from the role of Cavalier ‘commander-in-chief’ (III. 4, p. 85), a traditionally masculine, martial role.[[223]](#footnote-223) Careless makes this satirical comment as Ruth foils his initial attempt to seduce her, but she emerges through the conflicts and changes of the action as an effective strategist. Ably supported by Arbella, Ruth hatches a plan to release Blunt, who has failed to evade the bailiffs, from prison. Arbella coerces Abel into paying the bail for Blunt’s release (telling him the Colonel is a trustee of her estate and that she cannot make a marriage settlement if he is in prison), then she and Ruth seize incriminating letters from Mr Day’s study containing ‘the whole index of his rogueries’ (IV. 3, p. 100). But again, Careless mars the progress of her designs, interfering with Ruth’s efforts to reclaim their sequestered property when he gets wildly drunk and is arrested. Permitted to visit him in prison and mindful of the confusion a Cavalier soldier would feel in loving a young Puritan woman with Stuart manners, Ruth delicately broaches the vexed question of her political identity:

RUTH: Oh Sir, does the name of Mr Day’s daughter trouble you? You love the gentlewoman, but hate his daughter.

COL. C: Yes, I do love that gentlewoman you speak of most exceedingly.

RUTH: And the gentlewoman loves you. But what luck this is, that Day’s daughter should be ever with her, to spoil all!

In response to her circumspection, Careless presses her again for sex:

COL C: Not a whit, one way; I have a pretty room within, dark and convenient.

RUTH: For what?

COL C: For you and I to give counter-security for our kindness to one another.

(V. 2, p. 107)

Unable, even in the most inappropriate of circumstances, to master his sexual appetite, Careless, who treats sexual congress as a ‘security’ to be bought, sold and insured, expects Ruth to abandon her commitment to virtue for the sake of satisfying his sensual craving. Stung by this objectification, she censures him:

RUTH: You care not who you are wicked with; methinks a prison should tame you.

COL C: Why d’ye think a prison takes away blood and fight?

(V. 2, p. 107)

At this juncture, Howard focuses the two distinguishing features of his libertine typology: ‘fight’, which denotes physical prowess and death-dealing aggression, and ‘blood’, which signified the affective power of the libido. Blood was ‘the supposed seat of emotion’, the vitalising, core determinant of passion, temper, mettle, anger’.[[224]](#footnote-224) Regarded as the source of animal or sensual appetites, blood was central to the doctrine of libertinism and ‘the fleshy nature of man’.[[225]](#footnote-225) For its proponents, blood vitality, and the sensual expressiveness that confirmed it, were essential to libertine self-definition. So much so, in fact, that the noun ‘blood’ was also a nominal term and synonym used to define libertines. A ‘blood’ was ‘a rake or roisterer, an aristocratic rowdy’.[[226]](#footnote-226) Clearly, Careless is envisioned as a blood, his sense of personal manliness depending as much on the uninterrupted drive of his libido as his proficiency with a rapier.

**Ruth’s victory over libertinism**

Sustaining the personal tension between the two suitors and the thematic struggle between impulsive sensuality and social restraint, Howard has his hero and his heroine retrench their respective positions. Although Careless has professed his willingness to change at the close of his first encounter with Ruth, he retains the engrained habits of sexual opportunism and lasciviousness while Ruth renews her commitment to chaste preciosity. Unsure if his devotion can outlast his sexual desire – ‘you will be burnt out at last, burnt to a coal, black as dishonest love’ (V. 2 p. 108) – Ruth imposes a new test of love, insisting on the sublimation of the sex urge into the stringently ring-fenced terrain of platonic devotion: ‘If you know how to love me virtuously, I’ll free you from prison, and run all your fortunes with you’ (V. 2, p. 108). As good as her word, Ruth – assisted by Arbella and Blunt – organises Careless’ escape from prison. At last, he acknowledges her superior merits, admitting that: ‘I shall never deserve thee’ (V. 5, p. 112) and offering his sincere acknowledgement of her authority: ‘Oh this pretty she Captain-General...The thought of her musters every thought I have’. (V. 4, p. 111).

Acceding to the coordinates of preciosity, Careless’ declaration of deference and devotion acknowledges Ruth’s right to govern the Cavalier faction. Aware that the Days have raised the alarm and descended upon them with an armed unit of redcoats, she rouses the Cavalier faction with a spirited call to arms:

Come be cheerful. I’ll defend you against all the assaults of Captain Day, and Major General Day, his new drawn up wife. Give me my ammunition [to Arbella] the papers, woman. So, if I do not rout ’em, fall on; lets all die together and make no more graves but one.

(V. 7, p. 114).

Categorically different in behaviour from the meekness and docility of Samira and Emilia in *The Surprizal*, Ruth is assertive and dauntless. The tone is warlike and the pledge of unyielding allegiance heroic but, significantly, the events that follow are peaceful. Ruth rounds on Mr Day, promises to expose his adulterous past if he fails to release the Cavalier estates and threatens to expose Mrs Day’s scandalous marriage-jobbing, her counterfeit social identity and other sundry crimes and misdemeanours. Humiliated, the Days agree to Ruth’s offer of five hundred pounds (for the deeds to the seized Cavalier estates) and call off the militia. The Cavaliers retrieve their estates and the two women agree to marry their suitors. Prevailing over their enemy, they dance to celebrate their victory and offer their allegiance to their exiled monarch:

|  |
| --- |
| If you will have good luck in everything  Turn Cavalier, and cry, God bless the King.  (V. 7, p. 117) |

The Cavaliers salute the exiled Prince, but Howard makes it abundantly clear that the maintenance of that support is managed and directed by Ruth who earns the right to rule over Careless and his troop of Cavaliers. Using his heroine as a theatrical ratification for the new social order at Whitehall, Howard measures feminised authority against libertine masculinity and, in so doing, exposes the limitations of the latter, elaborating soldierly behaviour that is as conceited and misguided as it is brutal and licentious.

But this is not to say that Careless, a man of ‘blood and fight’, is an unserviceable character: Howard certainly does not oppose ‘fight’. On the contrary, he celebrates the indomitability of returning Cavaliers who refused to compromise their allegiance to the Crown in spite of the miseries and hardships of Interregnum subjection that awaited them. Unlike Abraham Cowley, whose Cavalier hero marries a Puritan for her money **–** the dramatic resolution the Court perceived as politically treacherous – Howard ensures that Cavalier devotion survives the arduous tests imposed by Protectorate oppression. Unlike Colonel Jolly, the Cavalier hero in *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, Careless is prepared to uphold Royalist ideology in the teeth of personal and financial ruin.

Interestingly, Howard does not see fit to test physical courage as an essential Cavalier quality: neither Careless nor Blunt are required to take up arms against the Puritans, even though skill with the sword was central to the effectiveness of a professional or semi-professional fighting force. This is probably not an oversight; Careless and Blunt are portrayed as battle-hardened warriors, but Howard, for the sake of thematic emphasis, chooses to steer his audience away from ideologically driven acts of savagery towards the everyday benefits of socialisation. Thus, Careless is careful to ensure the impulse to violence is held in check. This attribute of self-restraint, enlarged in the sequestration scene, guarantees the integrity of the proud and devoted Cavalier whose composure confirms his sense of manliness and, at the same time, undermines the authority of his oppressors. Howard argues that poise in social situations is far more important than impulsive aggression. Fight might well serve the Cavalier when battling against his sectarian foe, but displays of anger, bitterness or frustration run contrary to the code of gentility and the gracious interactions of everyday Royalist life. Careless is portrayed as a naturally aggressive warrior, a ‘dangerous spirit never to be reconciled’ (II. 4, p. 71) but for Howard, and for the Caroline schema *The Committee* represents, physical courage is not the dominant constituent of genuine manliness. *The Committee* gives legitimacy to *bonne grace* masculinity, embracing the possibilities and potentialities of undesirable but socially serviceable Cavalier soldiers and extrapolates how long-term exposure to female company casts the process of reform in a positive rather than a negative light.

However, while Howard vaunts the new Court’s zest for masculine reform, *The Committee* does raise questions that problematize the re-allocation of gendered power. It could be argued that Ruth’s interest in Careless is self-reflexive: she is attracted to him *because* he is uncivilised. Ruth names him ‘my wild Colonel’ (V. 2, p. 106) and her desire to reform his glaring imperfections presents the opportunity for the imposition of power to be enjoyed as an end in itself. Thus, Ruth depends on Careless’ defects because, without them, influence and ownership would not be possible. More in love with her own power than with the official prospectus of masculine reintegration, she takes pleasure in subduing [[227]](#footnote-227) a gallant she would have no interest in if he were a perfect gentleman. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Howard sets *The Committee* during a period of systematic Cavalier oppression with Colonel Careless and Ruth imagined as hard-pressed seditionists battling against the harsh infractions of Protectorate rule. It is unlikely therefore, that Ruth would want to overhaul each and every dimension of Careless’ behaviour. Striving to eradicate his ‘fight’ would be counter-productive to his value as an experienced soldier whose savagery would be of service to the disenfranchised Royalist community.

In this chapter I have argued that the ‘natural’ and personal rule narrative proposed by Kevin Sharpe represents long-standing critical assumptions that fail to account for the actuality of lived experience at Whitehall. Courtly behaviour was not defined and determined by the king. Women established the performative parameters of the new mode of masculinity and presided over the Court’s process of preferment, regulating the gallants’ vocational accomplishments and encouraging their production of *bonne grace* masculinity,the restored Court’s legitimate style of Cavalier action. The negligent manner was not, as Sharpe argues, expressive of the king’s libertine promiscuity; rather, it was the institutional practice of a feminised culture that scorned sexually transgressive behaviour and insisted upon gallant subordination to tender rules of social engagement. The ladies of the Court determined who was desirable and, contrary to the common narrative of the self-identical, overwhelmingly appealing libertine up-dated by Kevin Sharpe, the Court was not unapologetically promiscuous and the majority of the Wits were, in actuality, a largely unattractive group of under-performing courtiers.

Extrapolating the Caroline Court’s principles of gallant desirability, Howard denigrates the unrestrained sexual amorousness, moral incontinence and social incapacities of returning Cavalier libertines. He approves of ‘fight’ but clearly disapproves of libertine appetitiveness, treating Careless’ unbridled sexual aggression as a transgression of the normative standards of Caroline gentlemanliness. Howard reminds his audience that unrestrained amorousness was vulgar and only gentlemen who represented institutional behaviour could be legitimately judged as attractive. In this respect, the training Ruth gives Careless figures the new Court’s modifying imperative: to inculcate the social sensitivities of polite behaviour. Under-performing, brutish Cavaliers must be taken into female supervision, even if the women train them are domineering and egocentric.

In the next chapter, I look at how John Dryden extends anti-libertine typology in his comedy *The Wild Gallant*, first performed just three months after *The Committee* in 1663. In it, Dryden – like Howard before him – argues for rake rehabilitation, focussing on the socially destructive, homicidal swordplay, the practice which exemplified the dominative masculinity of the martial Cavalier elite and young libertines anxious to define themselves as warriors. Dryden illustrates how feminised authority aimed to tame the savageries of traditional masculinity and socialise the new breed of gallants into mainstream Court Party culture.

CHAPTER II

John Dryden’s libertine swordsmen

In this chapter, I look closely at how John Dryden’s libertine dramas, *The Wild Gallant* and *Secret Love,* exemplify the role of women at the feminised Court. A proponent of the new masculinity and the Court’s civilising mission, Dryden’s representations of Cavalier swordplay deal directly with libertinism and the honour code which, actualised in a martial mode of gallant masculinity, continued to bedevil the progress of the new Court’s drive towards polite gendered integration*.* Violence became increasingly prevalent as young courtiers and their followers responded to the effeminising norms of the new masculinity with increasing levels of uncoordinated aggression.[[228]](#footnote-228) Armed combat was, as Rochester puts it, a ‘handsome ill’[[229]](#footnote-229) that inverted the principles and practice of normative behaviour, upending *bonne grace* and puncturing the Court’s image of unitary power.

Recent feminist criticism has drawn out the conflict between these two opposing traditions of behaviour, the one socially progressive; the other violently regressive. In *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates,* Erin Mackie argues that duelling was an inevitable symptom of elite competitiveness, the atavistic mode that became ‘the new Court’s inheritance’.[[230]](#footnote-230) Similarly, Donna T. Andrew argues in *Aristocratic Vice* that gallant swordplay was a persistent problem, a volatile, savage aspect of eighteenth-century elite selfhood that the feminised regime systematically attempted to tame.[[231]](#footnote-231) To measure the impact gentlewomen had on libertine swordplay, I will begin with a close analysis of Henry Jermyn’s duel with Thomas Howard, fought, in the summer of 1662, for the affections and favours of Lady Shrewsbury. Thereafter, I will argue that *The Wild Gallant*, first produced in 1663, and *Secret Love*, first staged in 1667, illustrate the didactics of gallant reform. Meriting the coordinates of *bonne grace* masculinity and de-meriting the honorific behaviour practised by Cavalier soldiers and libertines, Drydenconfirms polite society’s opposition to violent behaviour.

**The honour code**

Honorific masculinity was rooted in and supported by the revived chivalric code [[232]](#footnote-232) which invested a powerful sense of identity among the new breed of Restoration Cavaliers.Although in origin it owed something to the chivalric tradition, the revived honour code became a secular pattern of practices that emphasised the martial function of the aristocracy and its image of itself as a race of all-conquering warrior heroes. In *Manhood and the Duel* (2003), Jennifer Low notes that the chivalric revival allowed the new gallantry to reconceive themselves in romantic terms. Honorific behaviour, especially in the duel, ‘demonstrated an awareness of the effects that chivalric performance could achieve’.[[233]](#footnote-233)The older chivalric concept of honour emphasised that a gentleman be courtly to women, display valour and possess skills in swordsmanship, equitation and hunting but, above all, it held that he must be a man of his word and guard his honour with his life. Tending to resolve disputes violently,[[234]](#footnote-234) the chivalric knight dispensed personal justice and – armed with the sword that determined and illustrated his elite social station – he was prepared, on the instant, to defend his reputation should anyone dispute it.[[235]](#footnote-235) Closer to myth than actuality,[[236]](#footnote-236) this model of knightly independence allowed the gallants and soldiers of the remilitarised regime to imagine themselves as warrior heroes whose destiny it was to rule by the rapier instead of the broadsword. As Low points out, duellists seem to have ‘internalized the ideology of chivalry’.[[237]](#footnote-237) For the honour community, this fantasy was a glamorous entitlement that brought legitimacy to homicidal behaviour and prompted soldiers and libertines to assert their version of manliness [[238]](#footnote-238) in opposition to the genteel, socially acclimatised masculinity of the mainstream.

Swordplay extended this fantasy of dominative power. All Cavaliers carried a rapier and its effective use in violent confrontations was central to military training and soldierly practice.[[239]](#footnote-239) But ironically, the romance of the sword was undercut by the disintegration of the honorific procedures the revival sought to glamorise. The Masters of Defence, fencing’s regulatory body, had disappeared during the Interregnum [[240]](#footnote-240) and consequently the old ceremonial constraints of duelling were lost on the new breed of gallants. According to Low, ‘individual agency, spurred by the humanist ideas of the Renaissance, instilled a positive view of self-determination and self-shaping among young gentlemen duelists which ran contrary to the imperatives of royal and legal authority’.[[241]](#footnote-241) Animated by a chivalric practice that brought a sense of romantic personal entitlement, these young Cavaliers engaged in lethal acts of largely uncoordinated, vainglorious swordplay.

**Attitudes to duelling**

In August 1660, Charles issued *A proclamation against fighting of duel*, in which he announced that: ‘it has become too frequent, especially in Persons of quality, under a vain pretence of Honour, to tale upon them to be the Revengers of their private quarrels, by Duel and single Combat’.[[242]](#footnote-242) Charles identifies honour as a masquerade for egotistical self-enlargement, but in spite of this unequivocal condemnation of elite predilection for swordplay, he did not move to stamp out the practice forbidden under Cromwellian rule.[[243]](#footnote-243) On the contrary, the new king always pardoned gallant offenders[[244]](#footnote-244) and, in so doing, kept the outmoded model of soldierly masculinity alive.[[245]](#footnote-245)

Duelling was more popular during the Restoration than it ever had been during the strife and bitter struggles of the Civil Wars.[[246]](#footnote-246) Religious objections to duelling punctuated the Restoration period, but in spite of proclamations that true honour could only be a matter of divinely ordained principle, many aristocratic young men put personal agency before the rulings of Christianity. The lure of extreme martial competitiveness – supported by individual notions of honorific justice and a buccaneering[[247]](#footnote-247) image a duellist could acquire through acts of violence – had far more influence over restless young men eager to display their masculine prowess and enjoy the exponential amount of public interest[[248]](#footnote-248) that tended to accompany armed combat.

Conduct literature from the period abounds with moral prescriptions for duelling. Nathaniel Waker, who vaunts the new manners in *The Refin’d Courtier* (1663), is quick to abandon the possibilities of peaceful integrative behaviour. In unresolved financial disputes or if he was not given ‘that respect… which of right belonged to him’, he was entitled to settle matters with ‘the sword’.[[249]](#footnote-249) In its discussion of insults, *The Art of Complaisance* (1673)[[250]](#footnote-250) recommends resort to the sword, while the Earl of Carberry, urging the importance of retaining one’s ‘virgin reputation’, goes even further, insisting that the mere suspicion of insult was a justifiable cause for confrontation.[[251]](#footnote-251)

However, not all pro-sword texts backed the hair-trigger hankering for homicidal violence.[[252]](#footnote-252) In *The Courtier’s Calling,* Jacques de Callières claims that ‘reason’ should prompt gentlemen ‘to preserve our honour’*.*[[253]](#footnote-253) Clear-sightedness and perspicacity should govern dispute resolution, not over-sensitivity to suspicion, insult or innuendo, tendencies that prompted a rapid escalation into violent swordplay in taverns, coffee houses and the street. For Callières, loss of self-control was ungentlemanly and spontaneous violence avoidable if raillery was distinguished from insult. But, at the same time, he sees honour protection as vital to gallant self-definition: ‘it is a virtue so absolutely requisite for a gentleman, that without it he cannot boast any good quality’.[[254]](#footnote-254) Skirmishing and brawling were delinquent, but coordinated duelling, which entailed self-control and the channelling of anger via a system of honorific rites, was not.

In *Sociable Letters*, Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle,[[255]](#footnote-255) shares this understanding of gentlemanly definition; condoning violence provided it was accompanied by ceremonial self-discipline. Cavendish was an outspoken critic of the ceremonial manners of the restored Court. In a leering tone she censures the new gentlemanliness. Men must:

entertain and accompany women in visiting… they must sit within a respectful distance, with their hats off, and begin a discourse… also they must not interrupt them in their talk, but let them speak as much, or as long as they will, or rather can… neither must men contradict women although they should talk nonsense, which oftentimes they do, but must seem to applaud and approve, with gentle nods and bows all they say; also they must view their faces with admiring eyes, although they were ill-favour’d, but those that are beautiful, their eyes must be fix’d on them, or else seem to be dazzled; likewise they must seem to start at their calls, an run with an afflrighted hast, to obey their commands. Such, and many the like ceremonies and fooleries there are of this kind from men to women.[[256]](#footnote-256)

Having railed against the effeminated manners of new gentlemen who ‘must appear ‘dazled’ and ‘run with affrighted hast’ to please the ladies of the Court, she provides her own corrective exemplar; a warrior figure that encapsulated the revived principles of chivalric individualism.

Cavendish was steeped in the military ethos. Her husband had been ‘a General of an Army of 3,000 men’ and ‘the best Horseman and Swordsman in the World’. Two of her three brothers had been soldiers and her father had been temporarily banished for ‘Killing a Gentleman in a Duel of Honour’.[[257]](#footnote-257) Scorning effeminated men who are ‘fitter to Dance with a Lady than Fight with an Enemy’, Cavendish eulogises the traditional martial practices of the ‘Heroik’ man. Self-directed [[258]](#footnote-258) and fearless, the Heroik man has been trained to hunt, fence and ride, accomplishments which ready him for ‘conquer[ing] a nation’ rather than mastering the steps of the latest dance’.[[259]](#footnote-259) A leader of vitality, he is also a man of the sword for whom:

Valour is the Sword of Justice, to Cut off Offenders, and the Sword of Valour is a sharp metal’d Blade that Gallant Gentlemen should always wear about them, and have the Skill to Manage it, and Judgment and Discretion to know When and on whom to Use it.[[260]](#footnote-260)

In this moral calculus, violence is legitimated as the instrument of ‘justice’, but it is not the only determiner of masculine selfhood: the sword is the Heroik gentleman’s sanction, his inalienable right, his means of command and his emblem of elite authority. That said, ‘Judgement and Discretion’ are equally cherished attributes. Predisposed by ‘light and truth’[[261]](#footnote-261) to behave with fair-mindedness, generosity and self-restraint,[[262]](#footnote-262) a gentleman safeguards his reputation and adheres to ceremonial propriety when required to settle a dispute savagely.

Attitudes to duelling, then, were widely divided. As far as polite society was concerned, it was antipathetic to the progressive refinements of *bonne grace* endorsed by the new monolithic regime. Louis XIV had successfully forbidden ritual combat in France,[[263]](#footnote-263) but at Whitehall the ‘licentious’ practice continued, even though ‘the queen endeavoured to raise up the serious part of the nation, the politicians and devotees, as enemies against it’.[[264]](#footnote-264) Responding to the new Royalist gentilities in displays of lawlessness and savagery, duelling flouted the index of social authority on which regal authority depended.[[265]](#footnote-265) For the courtier John Evelyn, duelling had no place whatsoever in a civilised society: ‘so many horrid murders and duels were committed about this time as were never before heard of in England, which gave much cause for complaint’.[[266]](#footnote-266) Honorific conduct was, he baldly states, ‘horrid murder’. Outraged, Evelyn figures the honour community as a contrary sub-culture of wrong-headed young men who placed the protection of honorific values above the interests of the Crown and its socialising imperatives.

**Henry Jermyn’s duel with Colonel Thomas Howard (1662)**

The new Court detested duelling,[[267]](#footnote-267) but for its supporters, men who placed themselves in violent opposition to the emasculating code of *bonne grace,* it was as an enormously distinguished and glamorous sport. Duelling entitled competitors to settle disputes and establish seniority via the display[[268]](#footnote-268) of valour, endurance, prowess and self-discipline. Two such advocates were ‘little’ Henry or ‘Harry’ Jermyn (a libertine) and Thomas Howard (a soldier) who fought a ‘duel of honour’[[269]](#footnote-269) in the summer of 1662 for the favours of the Court beauty Lady Shrewsbury. Formerly Anna Maria Brudenell, she had married Francis Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1659.[[270]](#footnote-270) Having established herself at Court, she became the focal point of much competition among gallants who were anxious to improve their rank.

As has been seen, increased prestige was the motive force animating integrative behaviour; courtiers were compelled to compete with each other to gain the support and guidance of the new Court’s influential gentlewomen, ‘beauties’ who each managed their own cabal or coterie.[[271]](#footnote-271) These women were protected and empowered by the gendered proprieties of *bonne grace*, its ordinations ensuring that gendered interactions were performed with ceremonial correctness.

To gain access to one of these cliques, a gallant was compelled to adopt the role of supplicant. If the lady was sufficiently satisfied with his applauds and submissions, she was free to treat him preferentially, but if she was not, she could – if she saw fit – refuse to grant him entry to her company. Invested with the power to govern the course of her social relationships with men and determine their reputation among the wider cohort, she was fully entitled to exercise regulatory power without compunction, explanation or apology.[[272]](#footnote-272) If, in her judgement, he lacked merit or charm, she was free to repel his advances, and if he was haughty or insolent, he could be sent to the Tower.[[273]](#footnote-273) This form of regulatory power ensured that gallants remained within the bounds of prescriptive conduct and guaranteed they did not revert to the aggressive intemperance that characterised the traditional, martial mode of masculinity.

The pressure to gain coterie access was fierce. Gallant aspirers gathered round the ladies, attempting to please them in the midst of polite but frequently envious and hostile competitors. Competition was aggravated by the need to know every rival’s exact position within the ranking system at any given moment in time. A knowledge gap could amount to the production of inappropriate behaviour resulting in a diminution of the offender’s overall status at Court. These pressures were considerable and sufficient in themselves to increase anxiety among young men who were supposed to treat each other, at all times, with deference and respect.

Nor were the Court ‘beauties’, each with their own infrastructure of followers, free from the hatred and envy that often accompanied social competition. Barbara Villiers, Lady Castlemaine, ran a powerful coterie. The royal mistress in the early years of the reign, her personal proximity to the royal person brought influence and power. But the position was problematic. ‘Royal mistress’ was not an official role, and her standing at Whitehall was remarkably insecure.[[274]](#footnote-274) Villiers received royal preference and privilege, but for her critics she was simply the King’s whore.[[275]](#footnote-275) To secure a power base which extended beyond her ability to influence and control the King,[[276]](#footnote-276) she chose to embrace the Court faction best equipped to do the most harm: the Court Wits.[[277]](#footnote-277) Through this association, Henry Jermyn, the gallant blighted by physical ugliness and the awkward manners of a fop, became a member of her clique.[[278]](#footnote-278) Extending Castlemaine’s social authority and improving Jermyn’s standing,[[279]](#footnote-279) it was a mutually beneficial arrangement and, crucially, one that did not prevent Jermyn from pursuing his own interests, the most important of which was the conquest of Lady Shrewsbury, who like Lady Castlemaine and Frances Stewart, was a Court beauty, social arbitress and gatekeeper of Royalist power.

Anthony Hamilton describes her as capricious,[[280]](#footnote-280) but Lady Shrewsbury seems to have practised the rules of gendered power with acuity, the gentlemen in her coterie soon discovering that her favours could only be won temporarily. Making use of a style of governance more reminiscent of the arbitrary power dispensed by a regent than a servitor,[[281]](#footnote-281) Shrewsbury guided her cohort with a tactical approach that, by dint of irregularity and unpredictability, heightened competition for her favours. At first, she responded favourably to Jermyn’s advances, but suddenly withdrew her interest, refusing to grant him any of the privileges he assumed were due to a gentleman affiliated to the Castlemaine set.[[282]](#footnote-282) By granting him a status no higher than any other gentleman in her society, she obliged him to compete for her affections alongside Colonel Howard and her other lovers, a manoeuvre which Jermyn, seething at his sudden loss of seniority, determined to rectify by forcibly removing his rivals from her company.[[283]](#footnote-283)

Informed that she was to attend a party hosted by Howard in the Spring Garden,[[284]](#footnote-284) he gained access, mocked the entertainment, poked fun at the music, railed against Colonel Howard and continued to aggravate him by trying to monopolise Lady Shrewsbury’s attentions.[[285]](#footnote-285) Hamilton explains how Howard, in spite of these sleights to his honour, retained his composure and, following ritual protocol, waited until the following morning before sending a formal challenge to duel[[286]](#footnote-286) which Jermyn accepted without hesitation.

If female arbitration was possible before the duel, once Howard’s challenge had been accepted, it was not. An entirely homosocial arrangement, duelling was designed to measure worthiness in terms of either courage or cowardice and – for men of honour – armed combat was the only permissible solution to a dispute. Both competitors and their seconds became immersed within a framework of procedures that precluded female intercession. The seconds, functioning as protective intermediaries, negotiated the date, place and time of the combat in secret. They ensured a doctor would be present and, most importantly, they guaranteed that the two principals had no contact with each other prior to the combat, a measure that separated the duellists from the persuasive reach of arbitration and the influence of women who might, through an appeal to genteel resolution, interfere with the seemingly inexorable teleology of ritual violence.

While the preamble to the challenge was an unsettling and aggressive transgression of Court propriety and the period of preparation ring-fenced by male exclusivity, the fight,[[287]](#footnote-287) that took place at St James’ Fields – a week after the challenge had been offered – was little more than a brawl. All pretentions to the old ordinances of fair play evaporated as soon as Howard and Dillon encountered Jermyn and Rawlings. According to William Denton, the doctor present at the combat, Howard and Dillon drew on the other pair before a door coming from the tennis-court [[288]](#footnote-288) and, without ceremony or preface, Howard, a gallant with a spotless reputation for gentleness,[[289]](#footnote-289) appears to have ambushed his opponents, killing Jermyn’s second, Giles Rawlings, on the spot. He then engaged with Jermyn, whom he wounded three times, although not fatally. Denton reports that when the fight was over, Howard turned to Dillon and said: ‘Now we have done justice, let’s be gone’.[[290]](#footnote-290) For critics of swordplay, this confrontation would have been seen as a devious, homicidal assault but conceived honorifically, Howard’s slaughter of Rawlings and the wounding of Jermyn would have been just, since ritual bloodletting vindicated the ‘winner’ even though victory was probably secured through foul play.[[291]](#footnote-291) The extra-legal, extra-moral latitude given to homicidal behaviour meant that Howard, who had fled to France, and Jermyn, who had needed a month to recover from his wounds, were allowed to return to Court.[[292]](#footnote-292) However, the king’s tolerance of armed combat did not extend to Jermyn sharing his mistress’ bed and shortly after his return, Jermyn was banished for six months for his liaison with Lady Castlemaine, his chances of a meaningful political place at Charles’ Court in ruins.[[293]](#footnote-293) Lady Shrewsbury, however, appears to have retained her status, embarking on a love affair with, George Villiers,[[294]](#footnote-294) another libertine, in 1668.

Could the duel have been avoided? In one sense, the public insult could be construed as a point of no return. Once a fellow gallant had been publicly abused, he was expected to protect his reputation by demanding an apology or, failing that, challenging his opponent.[[295]](#footnote-295) Prone to accusations of cowardice and compelled to face the prospect of social death if he did not accept the challenge, a gallant had little choice but to prove his mettle and fight his aggressor on the mutually agreed terrain of the private battlefield.[[296]](#footnote-296) Since the acceptance of a challenge was – to all intents and purposes – irrevocable,[[297]](#footnote-297) a successful intercession from Lady Shrewsbury would have to have been made at the party before the challenge was offered.

However, in spite of Jermyn’s plan to remove his rivals by deliberately antagonising Colonel Howard, male readings of the dispute tend to blame Lady Shrewsbury for the bloodbath that followed. Anthony Hamilton and Phillip Sergeant – whose account depends heavily on the former – pay scant attention to Lady Shrewsbury’s part in this social disturbance.[[298]](#footnote-298) Both tend towards a gender specific overview of mixed-sex power relations at Whitehall and, in spite of the Court’s social structure, neither account records her responses nor explains how the Court esteemed her thereafter.[[299]](#footnote-299) Consequently, this skews the credibility of the primary and secondary source material, mitigates the authority of women over socio-sexual entanglements and gives primacy to the anti-civil schematics of martial assertiveness, physical courage and homicidal behaviour. Hamilton describes Jermyn’s conduct as ‘ill advised’,[[300]](#footnote-300) but in his discourse she plays no part whatsoever in the drift towards an armed conflict that appears to have been conceived as inevitable. However, it is Lady Shrewsbury who is blamed for causing the duel. According to Hamilton, she ‘was far less famous for her conquests than the misfortunes she occasioned’,[[301]](#footnote-301) a judgement that holds her directly responsible for the duel and its dire consequences. Sergeant, who is more vociferous in his condemnation, claims that she exerted an ‘evil influence’[[302]](#footnote-302) on her lovers and Jordan & Walsh, while acknowledging that the beauties of the Court ‘were viewed by their male chroniclers very much as secondary characters in a play’,[[303]](#footnote-303) account for her behaviour through the pernicious, stereotypical typology of the *femme fatale*.[[304]](#footnote-304) Updating the evaluations of their male predecessors, they gloss her as a sensual and malign perpetrator of male destruction and death.

If the Jermyn/Howard duel epitomised a new age of indiscipline among the new breed of Cavaliers, then in the minds of many, the new military regime appeared to incite chaos rather than establish order. The remilitarisation of the army and the need for a well-disciplined corpus of gallants and soldiers presenting themselves as well governed, sober young men dedicated to maintaining social harmony was of paramount importance for the politically insecure, newly restored regime and its rhetoricians. In a conversation between Pepys and one Mr Blackburne, the diarist’s friend observed that the old Cavalier soldiers were ‘generally, the most substantial sort of people, and the soberest’ but as for the new breed of Cavaliers, ‘they go with their belts and swords, cursing and stealing – running into people’s houses, by force oftentimes, to carry away something’.[[305]](#footnote-305) The new generation appear to have been lacking the self-restraint of the old which, in accordance with honorific precedence, would not deign to draw their swords and engage with a social inferior, let alone terrorise the public with vulgar acts of armed aggression.[[306]](#footnote-306)

The emphasis Margaret Cavendish lays on self-restraint relates explicitly to the misuse of the sword by the new, unruly breed of Cavalier soldiers. While she sanctions the gentlemanly resort to violence, she devalues ‘vainglorious’ gallants who abuse or misapply the sword in ‘foolish Quarrels, and rash Duels’.[[307]](#footnote-307) Mad and Drunken’, these young men have no ‘Wit or Judgment, Understanding or Knowledge’.[[308]](#footnote-308) Elite squabbles were often settled in public spaces,[[309]](#footnote-309) waged in the confidence that the Crown would not punish the participants. Disconnected from the proprieties practised by the old Caroline soldiery but alert to the notion of romantic forms of self-realisation,[[310]](#footnote-310) these intemperate young men fought impulsively in taverns, coffee house and on the street, their spontaneous acts of swordplay bearing no relation to the honorific procedures practised by the old Cavalier order. Abandoning the honorific precedent of fighting in a secluded and publicly undisclosed settings, murderous aristocratic brawlers damaged belief in the new military’s capacity to maintain social order.

**John Dryden’s *The Wild Gallant*** **(1663)**

Afraid of a return to the lawlessness that accompanied the destruction of the old Carolean regime,[[311]](#footnote-311) the pro-Court dramatist John Dryden dramatises these concerns in *The Wild Gallant,*[[312]](#footnote-312) first produced on the 5th of February 1663,[[313]](#footnote-313) some six months after the Jermyn/Howard duel. Referred to as ‘Squab’ by his friends for his diminutive and rotund stature, Dryden was the eldest of fourteen children from a land-owning Puritan family in Northamptonshire. After Trinity College, Cambridge, he worked for the Commonwealth civil service where he befriended Sir Robert Howard,[[314]](#footnote-314) the writer of *The Committee.* Seeking an *entrée* into the theatre-loving elite, he courted the support of Lady Castlemaine and paying his compliments to her in an epistle that thanks her for ‘encouraging his first play’, he represents her as a classical muse: ‘You sit above, and see the vain men below / Contend for what you only can bestow’.[[315]](#footnote-315) Although the poem is heroic and therefore hyperbolic, this couplet captures the social dynamics of coterie power and the longing for the support of a well-connected courtier, without whom an aspiring dramatist, could not hope to succeed. This gendered power relation also resonates in the structural and thematic arrangements of *The Wild Gallant,* a comedy that opposes libertinism[[316]](#footnote-316) and iterates the *mission civilatrice* via a dramatic heroine gentlewoman who bestows the gifts[[317]](#footnote-317) of support, guidance and entitlement or her reforming rake suitor.

*The Wild Gallant’s* main plot concerns the rehabilitation of the Cavalier soldier Jack Loveby, a confirmed libertine who falls in love with Lady Constance Nonsuch, daughter of the drama’s patriarch Lord Nonsuch who is arranging her marriage to the hapless knight Sir Timorous, Loveby’s rival. In love with Loveby, Constance rescues him from financial misery, tests his worthiness and after establishing his merit as a conventional gallant*,* agrees to marry him in a secret ceremony. The sub-plot concerns the duping of Sir Timorous by Mr Failer and Mr Burr, two criminals who swindle him on the premise that they can persuade Constance to marry him. The attempt fails and the petty crooks are exposed after Loveby and Burr skirmish with their swords. Order is quickly restored, Sir Timorous is disabused and Lord Nonsuch gives his grudging approval to the two newlyweds.

In the exposition, Loveby comes into focus as a young Cavalier firmly entrenched in the Epicure habitus. On the bottom rung of the Royalist hierarchy, he operates on the fringes of the fashionable Town, too poor to pay for his lodgings and, although his is unwilling to admit it, much in need of the support of a sponsor whose protection and guidance will secure his progress into high society. He lives on his wits (he has inherited a decimated estate) but in spite of financial disarray, he dresses –when he can afford it – with ‘gold’ laced extravagance (I, 1, p. 5). He is negligent in ethos and appetitive. He eats too much ‘beef’ and claims to ‘drink’ to excess (I. 1, p. 5). He disavows marriage, describing wives ‘lawful manslayers’ (I, 1, p. 5) and enjoys the company of prostitutes, gamblers and the procuress, Lady Du Lake. But while he is well acquainted with the seamier side of the Town, its brothels and its taverns, most of the nastier aspects of the libertine lifestyle[[318]](#footnote-318) are outside his moral compass. Consequently, the character is more appealing to genteel tastes and more likely to respond to rehabilitation than a malignant woman hater, an enraged house wrecker or a sword-wielding madman.[[319]](#footnote-319)

**Honorific masculinity and feminised power**

Dryden’s incorporation of a central female character invested with the power to model masculine behaviourhints at Ovid’s ‘Pygmalion and the Statue’, a poem which he would translate in 1669.[[320]](#footnote-320) In Ovid, Pygmalion is a male sculptor who creates a maid ‘so fair, as nature could not with his art compare’[[321]](#footnote-321) but, as Dryden was fully aware, women modelled behaviour at Court not men. Thus, the roles of sculptor/creator and sculpted/creation are reversed in a social scenario that might well have inclined Dryden to conceive of Lady Constance’s relations with Jack Loveby in the same way; the modish courtier heroine shaping and forming her suitor’s conduct just as the ‘beauties’ of the Court modelled gallant behaviour. In this respect, Constance can be envisioned as the drama’s Pygmalion figure, extending the meaning and value of *bonne grace* as she is tasked with re-fashioning the rough-hewn materials of masculine identity into a polished politically correct shape.

To initiate the process of reconstruction she has two hundred and fifty pounds secretly placed in Loveby’s lodgings, a gift made to rescue him from ‘poverty’ (I, 1, p. 6) and the dubious company of gamblers, tricksters and harlots. However, it transpires that Constance has borrowed the money from her father, Lord Nonsuch and when he realises his money is missing, he explains to Constance that he had set it aside to pay a debt that must be settled within twenty-four hours.[[322]](#footnote-322) She takes this as an opportunity to test her suitor’s commitment by asking him to give her a Locket of Diamonds costing three hundred pounds and in spite of her devising ‘something for him to do he could not possibly perform’ (III. 1, p. 18), Loveby spends every penny she has given him on ‘a very fair jewel’ (III. 1, p. 18). But when she challenges him, ‘without circumstances and preambles’ (III. 1, p. 19) to reveal the source of his income, he tries to dupe her into believing he has his own money; a claim which Constance knows is a lie.

Clearly, the gendered status arrangements of *bonne grace* are at work here: Loveby must strive to please Constance by attempting to perform the duties of a gallant ‘servant’ (I, 1, p. 6) while she, under no obligation to suborn herself to him, assumes a position of sovereignty. This privilege allows her to investigate his integrity, determine whether to continue to grant him her favours or, should she so wish, withdraw them altogether. Aware of the tenuousness of his position and afraid she will jilt him if she finds out that his estate is in ruins, he begs her to concoct another trial for him, a request that Constance is happy to oblige: ‘because you tell me you can have Money, what, and when you please; bring me an hundred pounds e’r night’ (III. 1, p. 19). She tightens her grip over him by adding a rider: he must commit his promise to paper and obtain the money lawfully and peaceably. ‘If you fail’, she says, ‘I’ll have your hand to show against you’ (III. 1, p. 19). Loveby agrees, and in so doing, commits himself to obtaining the money lawfully. If he is to reform, there is to be no lying, no coercion and certainly no violence.

But no sooner has Loveby signed their agreement than he breaches their contract by quarrelling with Burr, the sub-plot swindler, who, secretly in love with Constance, tries to pass himself off as gallant. Burr and Sir Timorous watch Loveby signing the contract, their presence discomposing Loveby who turns on his innocuous rival:

*Lov.* Have you no more manners than overlook a man when he’s a Writing? ––––––– Oh, Is’t you Sir Timorous? You may stand still; now I think on’t you cannot read Written hand.

*Burr.* You are very familiar with Sir Timorous.

*Lov.* So I am with his companions, Sir.

Burr. The there’s hopes you and I may be better acquainted: I am one of his Companions.

*Lov.* ‘By what title? As you are an Ass, Sir?

*Const*. No more Loveby –––––

(III. 1, p. 20)

In this exchange Dryden captures the volatile mechanism of aggression, pride and impulsiveness that typified the violent conduct of the new breed of gallants who refused to tow the party line and kept alive the savageries of honorific masculinity. But most notable is Constance’s involvement. Dryden invests her with the power to override the honorific schema, supplanting its violent directives and prohibiting its subversive infractions. In a triumph of *bonne grace* over brutishness, Constance interrupts a pattern of behaviour that, in Hamilton’s account of Jermyn’s dispute with Thomas Howard, is beyond the compass of female control.

She tries to steer him away from physical violence but Loveby continues to insult Burr in the hope of re-igniting the quarrel:

this fellow is only the solicitor of a quarrel, till he has brought it to a head, and will leave the fighting part to the Courteous pledger. Do not I know these fellows? You shall as soon perswade a Mastiff to fasten on a Lyon, as one of these to ingage with a Courage above their own.

(III. 1, p. 20)

Here, Dryden’s argument expands on how the honour code induces its subject to perceive of himself in socially unmanageable terms.[[323]](#footnote-323) Burr is a swindler and an imposter but Loveby’s ability to manage his anger in the company of a gentlewoman falls woefully short of the new Court’s standards of social composure. In theatrical equivalence, Dryden reinforces the need for civic responsibility and behavioural merit by imagining a society where armed disputes are immoral and illegal, meriting restraint and demeriting acts of violent provocation, whether verbal or physical. Following a set of antique rules with no place within the social operations of legality and propriety, Loveby is pictured as delinquent and offensive.

Loveby’s craving for violence is supercharged by the assumption that men of quality possessed more courage than their ‘inferiors’. Thus, when he describes Burr as a man without ‘courage above’ his ‘own’, his judgement is founded on the aristocratic assumption that an individual’s position in the social chain was inherited and the differentiating characteristics of master/ superior and servant/inferior were fixed. The markers of elite membership were supported by the notion of noble ‘blood’ ratified by title, livery and blazon, signifiers of *aristos* which no commoner could hope to equal irrespective of his physical courage or skill with the rapier.[[324]](#footnote-324)Because Burr is not figured as an aristocrat but an imposter posing as one, it follows that he cannot hope to match the ferocity and prowess of the elite warrior who has inherited the martial characteristics of his forefathers. He can ‘incite a quarrel’ but could never win a fight against a man of honour.

Loveby, therefore, is compelled to prove to his ‘superiority’, a pledge that, for a man of honour, can only be resolved via the sword. As he points out to Constance, he is a ‘courteous pledger’, a man of his word who, unlike the upstart Burr, will not provoke a quarrel only to extricate himself from its potentially fatal consequences. This distinction encourages Loveby to imagine himself as a ‘Lyon’ and Burr as a ‘Mastiff’, a form of self-classification that underlines the aggrandising imperatives of hegemonic power which, if challenged, spark the impulse to ‘justly’ and violently re-impose aristocratic control.

Dryden pictures Loveby as a myopic hothead programmed to resort to extreme acts of violence under the slightest provocation. And, in so doing, elaborates the destabilising influence of the honour code on young men who could not resist placing their own interests above the law. By flagging up the Cavalier swordsmen’sobsession with repute and physical presence, Dryden reveals the fault lines of a *modus operatum* that is brittle and, in socio-political terms, naive. Extremely sensitive and prone to lose control, Loveby is almost undone by Burr who, already familiar with Loveby’s lack of self-restraint, plots to set him at odds with Lord Nonsuch. He tells Nonsuch that it was Loveby who stole the two hundred and fifty pounds; an accusation that he hopes will prompt the patriarch to confront Loveby and provoke a quarrel. The strategy is crude but it almost works: when Nonsuch finds his man and orders his bailiffs to ‘arrest him’ and ‘search him for my gold’ (III. 1, p. 26) Loveby – who does not have Constance to protect him – can barely contain his rage and utters the ominous words: ‘Old Man, if it were not for thy daughter’ (III. 1, p. 26). Here, the martial ethos that will brook no criticism from any man, regardless of his rank, merit or political influence, re-surfaces via a veiled threat aimed at an old man[[325]](#footnote-325) who, in spite of the frailties of age, has the power to ruin Loveby’s prospects of joining the *beau monde*. This reckless broadside typifies the mistrust and alarm surrounding the ethos and conduct of soldiers who, animated by individualistic notions of justice, were prone to rash transgressions of State and Crown, the institutions that Cavaliers were supposed to protect and serve.

By Act V Loveby has raised the money without breaching the terms of their contract but Constance, both cautious and vigilant, is not convinced that he is suitably changed. Taking into consideration his regressive disputes with Burr and her father, she decides to test Loveby’s moral seriousness by disguising herself as Fortune to probe into her suitor’s views on marriage. Accordingly, he declares that ‘in the way of Matrimony… I tell you ‘tis an Ordinance; and must be not enter’d into without mature deliberation’ (V, p. 43). Convinced by his solemn allegiance to a conventional practice his former libertine self had vigorously opposed, Constance takes him in earnest. She reveals herself as his secret benefactress, agrees to marry him and in a demonstration of gendered autonomy, flouts the tradition of an arranged marriage, preferring instead to call upon the parson to marry them in a secret night-time ceremony.

But no sooner has the couple taken their vows than Burr enters and, under cover of the night, manhandles the terrified Parson. Loveby, already at odds with Burr, sees him and accuses him of ‘beating my Reverend Clergy’ (V. 1 p. 44). Without ceremonial preamble, he draws his sword on Burr who does likewise and the two men, unimpeded by Constance’s cries of ‘Murder’ come together with clashing blades. Nonsuch appears and his servants disarm the two men (V.1, p. 44). Making sure that the quarrel has none of the ritual dignities of the so-called duel of honour, Dryden gives his audience a brawl, a strategy that disavows the myth of the rechivilrised knight dispensing justice in feats of death-defying ritualised combat.[[326]](#footnote-326) Vicious, illicit and uncoordinated, their skirmish is quickly broken up but this time there is no attempt at intervention made by Constance. She merely observes, leading cries of ‘murder, murder’ (V. 1, p. 44) in a vain attempt to stop the violence.

**Justifiable violence and the reconstructed Cavalier**

But if Loveby has been successfully shaped into a *bonne grace* gallant, why does Dryden have his protagonist engage in the very practice he so vehemently opposes? The central concern with the transition from libertine to conventional Cavalier was that the process reduced the effectiveness of the Cavalier soldier, depleted his courage and damaged his sense of martial self-definition. The etymology of the verb ‘to tame’ is ambiguous enough to suggest that the process might take away the fierceness on which the efficacy of the soldier depended: ‘To render ‘submissive, meek or servile’; ‘to overcome the wildness, fierceness of a man or animal; to subdue, make tractable, docile or pliant’ suggest the loss of natural aggression and hint at the kind of transformation that would not serve a soldier’s interests any more than it would those whom he had been trained to protect. Similarly, ‘subdued, meek, poor spirited, lacking animation or effectiveness, insipid or dull’,[[327]](#footnote-327) also point towards a depletion of selfhood too extreme for the purposes of soldierly duties, even if such a loss brought him into accord with the demands of gendered integration. Such a reductive processing of regressive masculinity would have not have suited the politically sensitive Court any more than the Cavalier military.

Conversely, ‘to tame’ can also mean ‘to bring under cultivation, to improve’; ‘brought under the care of’ or ‘to grow gentle’.[[328]](#footnote-328) These signifiers suggest the addition of tamed forms of behaviour that add dimension to the self rather than indicating a process of depletion. Natural aggression is not taken away so much as absorbed into a model of selfhood founded on accretion, where behaviour is added to refine what is already there. In this instance, courage is subordinated to the quality of self-control and the ability to supress, re-direct or sublimate the impulse to violence. Taking both perspectives into consideration, Dryden clearly argues for the latter, using Constance as the means to modify, cultivate and refine her suitor’s character rather than deconstruct him, a process that would destroy his natural aggression, rendering him docile, meek and next to useless as a protector of the state. Thus, effemination is viewed as a movement towards a more superior model of masculinity, signifying cultivation, gentleness and refinement. As such, Dryden portrays it as an altogether superior to the honorific model the restored Court battled to discredit.

It is imperative, then, to show that, in this instance, taming is represented as constructive and generative. Loveby’s savagery is controlled not eviscerated by civilising practices. However, it is startling how Dryden’s swordfight occurs immediately after the marriage rather than before it. The drama’s moral coordinates forbid sword fighting but the circumstances of the combat do, to some extent, license homicidal aggression. First and foremost, Loveby draws his sword to rescue a defenceless parson, a prompt that reveals the intention to serve the interests of civic responsibility and moral propriety, forms of conformity that the Wits despised. Thus, when Loveby risks his life to defeat his assailant, he invests swordplay with a moral dimension that is absent from the self-aggrandising lawlessness of libertinism. Secondly, Loveby fights with a slanderous imposter whose only purpose is to exploit his ‘betters’. Thirdly, the fight itself is broken up and the two men disarmed, an eventuality that forecloses the potentially grave consequences that the combat might entail. The swordfight set piece is also a useful means for moral recalibration: after the two men are disarmed, Burr is exposed as a petty criminal who is prepared to fight to evade discovery.

These circumstances and considerations go some distance in justifying Loveby fighting immediately after his marriage to Constance, but, perversely, it is the marriage settlement itself that sanctions Loveby’s homicidal behaviour. The first time the two men confront each other Constance is on hand to move peaceably between them and keep them apart. But following her marriage to Loveby she makes no effort come between her husband and his adversary when they draw swords and fight. Her passivity at such a crucial stage in the drama might be seem to oppose the prospectus of feminised power but her non-intervention accords perfectly with the marriage vows in the *Book of Common Prayer* where the man, called upon first, pledges himself by answering the following questions:

Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded husband, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife. Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her, in sickness and in health, and in forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, as long as ye both shall live? [[329]](#footnote-329)

The woman’s vows correspond almost entirely with the man’s but with the one significant departure, namely that she must love, cherish and ‘obey’ her husband once the rites have been completed. In ‘Advice to a Daughter’, George Savile, the First Marquess of Halifax takes exception to this aspect of the marriage vows, remarking that ‘*Obey’* is an ‘ungenteel’ word but stresses that you are ‘to make your best of what is *settled* by *Law* and *Custom*, and not vainly to imagine, that it will be changed for your sake’.[[330]](#footnote-330) Clearly, Restoration women had more power during courtship than after marriage.

In *The Wild Gallant*, the gendered injunction to ‘obey’ has an overmastering impact on the gendered dynamics of the two leading characters: it functions as a preventative incursion on Constance and source of entitlement for Loveby. The marriage settlement clears aside the moral and legal obstacles that might shroud the fight in moral/legal/social ambiguity and prevents Constance, the drama’s agent of male cultivation, from retaining any meaningful juridical grip on her husband’s new-found authority. Bound by the law, she must honour and ‘obey’ his determinations, however rash or ill-conceived they might be. Perversely, societal apparatus lends legitimacy to savage behaviour from married men but not from single men it identifies as delinquent. Under the auspices of the law, Dryden’s married protagonist is free to display the fierceness of the soldier without impinging upon the normative criteria of effeminised manliness, the very pattern of behaviour Dryden is so determined to uphold.

***Secret Love* (1667)**

Dryden returns to the theme of libertine reform in *Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen,* first performed by the King’s Company in February 1667. In it he reimagines the dangers of libertinism and the threat posed by intemperate young gallants who degraded the image of the Crown by fighting publicly in homicidal displays of lawless brutality. Just as female authority over masculine waywardness resonates in the structural and thematic patterning of *The Wild Gallant*, so *Secret Love* images libertine wrong-doing and charts a teleology of masculine re-settlement and reform. Set in Sicily, the main plot renders the theme of dynastic continuity and the challenges posed by the threat of rebellion. The head of State is the eponymous maiden Queen who is in love with her favourite courtier and ministerial adviser Philocles and cannot, therefore, commit herself to a political marriage. Ageing, lovelorn and vulnerable, her hold on power is threatened by her son, Lysimantes, who plans a rebellion and seeks, unsuccessfully, to enlist Philocles’ support. He does, however, persuade Celadon, a libertine and royal favourite, to join him in taking up arms against the Queen. The rebellion fails and when the treacherous prince is exposed and the plot quashed, the Queen forgives Celadon and re-settles the political and personal imbalances of State power.

The comedy sub plot showcases the courtship of Celadon and Florimel, the Queen’s ward, a ‘wild’ beauty with ‘a vast fortune’ (I. 1, p. 2). Celadon has just returned to Court, and, unaware that the Queen intends to marry him to Florimel, enjoys his perceived freedom and special status by pursuing as many of the Court beauties as time and inclination will permit. When he encounters Sabina and Olinda, two courtier ingénues, he breaches *bonne grace* by making sexual advances on both. Opposed todevotional courtship and ‘musty’ (I. 1, p. 1) marriage, he makes no attempt to conceal his predations, telling Melissa, the girls’ mother that ‘marriage is poor folks’ pleasure’ and ‘cannot go to the cost of variety’ (I. 1, p. 2).

Reckless, cynical and amorous, Celadon’s *risqué* indifference to normative behaviourcaptivates Sabina and Olinda but Florimel, who encounters him shortly thereafter, proves far less impressionable. After a brief preamble, he professes to love Florimel ‘so horribly much, that contrary to my own Maxims, I think in my conscience I could marry you’. (I. 3, p. 120). Florimel treats his declarations of love with acute scepticism and, to find out if he is genuinely devoted to her, she makes him a proposition: ‘I will give you a whole year of probation to love me in; to grow reserv’d, discreet, sober and faithful, and to pay me all the services of a Lover (II. 3, p. 13). Here, Dryden returns to the ‘test of love trope’ articulated in *The Wild Gallant,* using the gendered status arrangements of *bonne grace* to teach libertines how to behave correctly.

This traditional romance device guarantees a lively and witty conflict of interests between the two lovers, but it does present a problem of gendered emphasis. In *The Wild Gallant*, Loveby’s character develops as the plot traces his ability to meet the difficulties of the test but there is a danger that Constance – because she sets the task and does not perform it – is not an equal participant in the dramatic process of conflict and change. Rather, she occupies a psychologically fixed position from where she dispenses influence but functions primarily as an instrument of masculine self-improvement.[[331]](#footnote-331) Of course, Dryden is making the point that Constance does not need to change, Loveby does, but the teacher/ learner trope can, at times, offer only a partial exploration of elite femininity.

In what might be an attempt to improve upon his somewhat static and predictable representation of Constance, Dryden balances his representation of Celadon with a more complex and intricate portrayal of Florimel. Part of this complexity is an internal conflict: Florimel despises Celadon’s inconstancy but is drawn to his roguishness. When she discovers he has blithely continued his pursuit of Olinda and Sabina – ‘teaching the one a tune, he was kissing the other’s hand’ – (III. 1, p. 24) she is wounded but, at the same time, articulates a hankering for troublesome and flamboyant young men: ‘I would not marry one of those solemn Fops; they are good for nothing but to make Cuckolds: Give me a Servant that is an high Flier at all Games; that is bounteous of himself to many Women (II. 1, p. 24). She spurns the easily attained possibility of marriage to a ‘solemn fop’ preferring instead a ‘servant’ of energy and action, a man who excels at the more lively Court accomplishments. An attraction to gallants who perform well at ‘all Games’ is unambiguous. As has been seen, all gallants were expected to cultivate and please the ladies with their courtly merits but to be drawn to men who are ‘bounteous of themselves to many women’ is problematic. Of course, regulation Court masculinity encoded expansive deference and respect to women, but Florimel disparages these submissive prescriptions, associating them with the ‘ordinary whining lover’ (I. 3, p. 13), a disqualification which strongly suggests she prefers men who are not afraid to flout convention: in other words, men of blood and fight. Yes, she tells Celadon to ‘grow reserved’ but, at the same time, she is drawn to his irreverence and his vivacity, freely admitting that she loves ‘the Rogue in spight of all his infidelities’ (V. 1. p. 49).

Obviously, this does not mean Florimel loves him *because* of his infidelities. On the contrary, she determines to punish and humiliate Celadon for breaking their ‘contract’. By disguising herself as a young Spark, ‘*Monsieur Florimel’* (V. 1, p. 49) she plans compete with Celadon for the attentions of Sabina and Olinda to ‘get both his Mistresses from him; then I shall revenge myself on all three and save my own stake into the bargain (V.1, p. 49). In her preparation for the ‘anything-you-can-do-I-can do-better’ contest, she rehearses the motions and attitudes of gallant modishness, running through a check-list of the role’s most significant requirements: ‘I can manage the little Comb…set my Hat, shake my Garniture, toss about my empty Noddle, walk with a courant slurr and at every step peck down my Head (IV. 1, p. 40). In due course, the four characters meet and Celadon, unaware the young spark is Florimel, continues his pursuit of Sabina and Olinda.

In the contest, *Monsieur Florimel* wins the approval of Sabina and Olinda, who grow indifferent to Celadon who commits the elite crime of losing his composure. He is intimidated by this ‘stranger’s’ superior appeal and breaches the rules of social engagement by drawing his sword on Florimel who reproaches him for his delinquency. Afraid of losing the admiration of Sabina and Olinda, he agrees to settle the dispute peacefully in a dancing contest at which *Monsieur Florimel* also excels. So much so, in fact, that Olinda is moved to describe her/him as ‘the rarest Gentleman’. Celadon dances badly: ‘Lord how he sweats!’ remarks Sabina (V. 1, p. 41) as he signally fails to impress them. Outperformed and ridiculed, he becomes increasingly irate, insulting Melissa, the girls’ mother, and then – egged on by *Monsieur Florimel* – he kisses Melissa. Outraged by his delinquency Melissa tells her daughters to ‘Come away, this is past enduring’ (V.1, p. 41). Celadon is bested, his courtly merits devalued and his erotic capital degraded.

In this scene, Florimel does not simply instruct Celadon; she substantiates the role of the *bonne grace* gallant for him. *Monsieur Florimel* speaks wittily; he dances well; he makes modest compliments and respectful submissions to Sabina and Olinda; his demeanour is genteel and he is self-possessed enough to remain un-moved by threats of violent confrontation. All these features are participatory, exemplary and didactic. And, unlike Constance in *The Wild Gallant*, who can only look on while Loveby’s fracas with Burr escalates into a homicidal quarrel, Florimel actively reproduces and models the pacific/feminised behaviour Celadon seems incapable of assimilating. On one level, this is merely a playful inversion of gendered roles but on another, it is a serious critique of libertine delinquency with the accomplished *Monsieur Florimel* calmly deriding violence: ‘Out upon fighting’, he says, reminding Celadon that it has ‘grown so common a fashion, that a Modish man condemns it’ (V. 1, p. 41).

This declaration might be construed as a jibe or dramatic flourish but it is not. Swordplay had ‘grown common’ and was no longer an exclusive marker of patrician masculinity. It was now practised by the lower orders in public exhibitions, shorn of the aristocratic ceremony which had once characterised martial combat. Degraded of skill and competence, exhibitions were fought for prizes in public venues where students of arms fought for stakes put up by themselves or backers or enthusiasts paying an entrance fee to witness armed combats. Pre-Restoration prizes were stringent tests of skill in which students sported with blunted weapons but the new prizes were, as J. D. Aylward points out in *The English Masters of Arms,* ‘exhibitions of valour and endurance performed by men armed with sharp swords’ which ‘revived the Pre-Restoration prize but reduced the old style of combat to the level of a gladiatorial show’.[[332]](#footnote-332)

Pepys was fascinated by these gruesome combats and attended prize-fights at the New Theatre and the Bear garden on Bankside, where, afraid for himself among the ‘rabble’ composed mainly of a riotous crowd of sailors ‘striving by force to try to get in’, he entered with his ‘cloak about his face’ and witnessed a ‘shoemaker’ cut so badly that he could fight no longer with his opponent, a ‘butcher’.[[333]](#footnote-333) Swordplay was now a socially extensive mode of masculine identification and practised by the ‘rude rabble’, it was a widely disseminated blood sport stripped of its former aristocratic capital.

For an advocate of *bonne grace* masculinity like Dryden, the condemnation of violence was an essential component of elite distinction and any deviation from genteel forms of gallant display were an indication of ‘common’ brutishness and anarchic mob behaviour. Thus, his representation of Celadon’s delinquency is heightened by the extreme inappropriateness of drawing a sword on a woman. Of course, Celadon is unaware of Florimel’s disguise but Dryden makes the point that men of the sword live in a constant state of heightened sensitivity towards insult, so much so that they are unskilled in the navigation of social scenarios which are entirely peaceable and for which resort to the sword indicates an unseemly descent into chaos. In light of these concerns, it is not surprising that Dryden ensures Celadon is confronted with his own shortcomings when Florimel drops her disguise. He is immodest, oversensitive, his wit is mediocre, his dancing poor and he is prone to petulant outbursts of anti-social behaviour. Sabina and Olinda jilt him and Melissa, whom he has also abused, dismisses him: ‘Away Sir, a sweet young Man as you are to abuse the gifts of Nature so’ (V. 1, p. 41). Florimel, who has systematically exposed Celadon’s failings, tells him that she will refuse to serve as a functionary of masculine self- refinement and ‘casts aside all possibility of [his] recovery’ (V. 1, p. 41).

However, this ritual *exposé* is not sufficient to prompt his reform. On the contrary, he clings tenaciously to his man of the sword image and falls in with the treacherous Lysimantes who draws him into the plot to overthrow the Queen, clouding Celadon’s judgment with the promise of martial glory. Only when Celadon is threatened with the possibility of banishment or execution after the uprising has been quashed does he abandon his libertinism. He throws himself at the mercy of the Queen whose trust he has betrayed. She commands him to ‘consent’ (V.1, p. 52) to marry Florimel, rescind his former excesses and promise to loyally serve the Crown.

Dryden, then, figures Celadon’s libertinism as both serious and non-serious: serious enough to warrant inclusion in the drama as an emblem of elite, high-profile wrongdoing but inasmuch as these acts of lawlessness are interpreted as infantile, non-serious. Nevertheless, Dryden regards libertinism as significant and persistent enough a pattern of social transgression to warrant the re-writing of his ‘Prologue’ to *The Wild Gallant,*[[334]](#footnote-334)published in 1695, twenty eight years after *Secret Love* was first performed. In his updated version, the ‘Prologue to *The Wild Gallant Reviv’d’,* Drydensatirises the libertine faction in mock-heroic couplets, offering a brief teleology of an aristocratic ‘sinner’ who begins his journey as a raw Squire who:

|  |
| --- |
| …comes at length to Town’ |
| Where enter’d by some School-fellow or Friend. |
| He grows to break Glas-Windows in the end: |
| His valour too, which with the Watch began, |
| Proceeds to duell, and kills his Man’.[[335]](#footnote-335) |

Arriving in the Town, the innocent aristocratic youth is ‘Enter’d by some School-fellow or friend’ and inducted into libertine pursuits that give a sense of selfhood and belonging. He ‘grows’ into his new role as a scourer,[[336]](#footnote-336) smashing windows and fighting with the Watch and ‘proceeds to duel and ‘kills his man’. Led ‘by degrees’ into infamous acts of public display, he craves attention and glories in rumour; ‘he thought himself monstrous lewd (I’ll lay my life) / Because suspected with his Landlord’s Wife’.[[337]](#footnote-337) Dryden pictures libertine behaviour as a pattern of social wrongdoings he is expected to perform, attainments designed to fulfil the primary aim of image cultivation.

The second section of the Prologue deals with libertine extravagance as a pathology of inadequacy. The wild gallant is not a natural savage but a posturing young aristocrat desperate to create and sustain a violent reputation because he is a character who is ‘much asham’d of what he was before’. This pressing sense of discomfort is assuaged in a perpetual cycle of misdemeanours, themselves the manifest ‘frailties’[[338]](#footnote-338) that belie an inner sense of shame. Dryden correlates the extremity of the offence with the degree of inadequacy that drives it. Homicidal swordplay, where the libertine ‘kills his man’, inflects, for all to see, are the performative compensations for acute personal inadequacy. That he broadcasts his frailties and takes pleasure in his misdeeds makes him still more pitiful and, in terms of the mismatch between his vision of himself and the perception of those polite citizens who observe him, he is a farcical figure animated by insecurities and bent on self-promotion.

The emphasis Dryden places on libertine reform in the revised Prologue might also be attributable to the influence of Nell Gwyn. Originally cast as Florimel, she received wide acclaim for her characterisation[[339]](#footnote-339) and, in particular, for her impersonation of a modish young courtier.[[340]](#footnote-340) Gwyn was a commoner and according to her biographer Roy McGregor-Hastie, ‘probably the most professional whore of her day’.[[341]](#footnote-341) Only seventeen when she played Florimel, she had considerable comic skills and, as Charles Beauclerk’s *Nell Gwyn* (2005) puts it, ‘acted with such panache and assurance’ that the public pleasure she brought to the King ‘meant instant stardom’.[[342]](#footnote-342) Crowds flocked to the theatre to see Nell’s personation of a young Spark and patronised by the Court[[343]](#footnote-343)and her theatrical role as a gallant reformer became a social actuality with young patrician men using her theatrical gentlemanliness as their benchmark and guiding vision for their social behaviour. Highly serendipitous, this state of affairs multiplied the civilising work of the gentlewomen of the Court and extended the official modus of *bonne grace* masculinity from Whitehall to the theatre.

Gwynne re-enacted the role as instructress with a didactic *finesse* which, as Graham Hopkins argues, ‘exploited Nell’s powers of mimicry, neatly combining it with the irony of a woman playing a man on the stage’[[344]](#footnote-344) Of particular interest, here, is the way gallants freely imitated a woman imitating a man and reproduced her mode of courtly action without reserve or compunction. In this rests the implicit assumption that the acquisition of masculine correctness was indeed was a matter of performative transmission not of innateness, or blood or the belief in natural superiority. To take a woman imitating a man in the fictional realm of the stage as foundation for self-acquisition and self-representation appears to have been entirely unproblematic to the scores of young men who sought access to the Court and required an exemplar to show them how and how not to behave on the social stage.[[345]](#footnote-345)

**Aggression in perspective**

Libertines like Jermyn and Buckingham regarded their angry protests against normative behaviour as the expression of an innate male ferociousness but Dryden, representing the interests of the Court, divests his libertine figures of the glamorous, dangerous image they craved. Of course, fighting the Watch, skirmishing in Taverns and duelling in public posed little threat to the fabr­ic of the Royalist order even though they might have tarnished the regime’s image. Dryden does not oppose physical courage *per se.* In fact, he argues against the provision of a caucus of feminised gallants who are insipid, dull and cowardly. Such a breed of men would be useless component of State power and social protection. However, he is deeply concerned about the glamorisation and misapplication of martial manliness and – particularly in *Secret Love –* warns how the propensity to violence to which impressionable gallants were prone, might prove disastrous to the continuity of dynastic rule.

But while it is important to recognise physical courage as an aspect of the new manliness, its value can only be understood as part of a wider index of behaviour which, according to Donna Andrew, was of greater importance: ‘courage was not the highest virtue nor was it the easiest merit to acquire’.[[346]](#footnote-346) The Court aimed for a much more integrated model of masculinity which demoted the old honorific model. Enlarging the new Court’s ideational imperatives, Andrew goes on to explain that the new gentleman was required to be in control of his impulses: ‘the ability to remain calm when challenged or insulted, this mental and psychological steadfastness came to be seen as at least as important as physical bravery’.[[347]](#footnote-347) This aspect of *bonne grace*, derived from the easy negligence a gallant learned from his exposure to women, would be accompanied by intrepidity, resoluteness, generosity and a ‘well developed though modest eloquence’.[[348]](#footnote-348) Such capacities are all central in Dryden’s figuring of the reformed libertine. In his desire to please Constance, Loveby is committed, patient and persevering; in his attitude to the ordinances of marriage, he begins to embody dignity and sobriety; in his courtship he learns to be honest and tender in his social graces. And, throughout the course of the drama, he displays the intrepidity of a man prepared to place himself at hazard in pursuit of legitimate goals.

As for Celadon, the acquisition of courtly attributes lies ahead of him. Tested and punished by Florimel for his intemperance, he is a figure whose adherence to dominative masculinity leads him – in spite of Florimel’s advice – into the murky domain of treachery. Like the new breed of hot-headed young Cavaliers, Celadon lacks the desirable qualities of judgment and discretion, aspects of masculine selfhood which were essential aspects of the new Cavalier courtier. Like the infantile libertine figure inflected in Dryden’s Prologue to *The Wild Gallant,* his libertinism is a by-word for posturing vainglory. Spared the punishments of a traitor, Celadon is forced – first by Florimel and then by his Queen – to reform and to acknowledge swordplay as a ‘weak endeavour’,[[349]](#footnote-349) a form of masculinity which ran contrary to the feminised code of new gentlemanliness and the political interests of the regime.

Without doubt, Dryden’s anti-libertine teleology celebrates the power and influence of his heroines, Constance and Florimel, figures which exemplify the female regulatory power practised at Court. However, as Michele Cohen is quick to point out, their influence on elite male behaviour, should ‘not allow the importance of the role to obscure its nature: it was oriented not to the women’s production of her self, but to the production of the self-perfecting man’.[[350]](#footnote-350) This much is evident in *The Wild Gallant* and *Secret Love*. Both women hold sway over their respective suitors in different ways but both characters are held, for the most part, in relation to the men they determine to re-habilitate. That said, both comedies amply illustrate the institutional importance of *bonne grace* and regulatory power of elite Cavalier women who encouraged the new gallantry to cast off the shackles of martial, honorific masculinity and practise a civilised pattern of social behaviour. In the next chapter, I will argue that the ‘Wits’, protested against the new caucus of female power at Whitehall in wilfully anti-social acts of misogynistic display, behaviour codified and glamorised in *The Comical Revenge* by the would-be ‘Wit’, George Etherege.

CHAPTER III

Libertine violence: scouring and George Etherege’s *The Comical Revenge* (1664)

As has been seen, Dryden’s teleology of libertine reform exemplifies the power of the feminised Court and its mission to re-model delinquent Cavalier behaviour. Disseminating the morally integrated and socially refined corpus of modish French masculinity, the new social regime began to nullify the inhuman, narrow and outmoded directives of honorific manliness. Swordplay was, as Dryden argues, a destabilising influence on young men who could not resist placing their own interests above the law. *Bonne grace* brought wild gallants under cultivation but for Court Party detractors, the new Cavalier elite was effeminate. A poor advertisement for authoritative leadership, their soft and unmanly delicacies threatened to undermine the image of the restored Court Party at a time when military strength and its ability to protect the nation from possible threats of subversion were paramount.[[351]](#footnote-351) Charles recognised the need to have an effective fighting force at his disposal, a reliable, professional army able to minimise unrest and quash insurrectionists should the need arise but the aggressive ethos and brutish image of the Cavalier military ran contrary to the Court’s *mission civilatrice* which proposed that all Cavalier soldiers modify their professional aggression and often anti-social behaviour and adopt the easy refinements of the new feminine aesthetic. But if Cavaliers were expected to reproduce feminine manners, how was it possible for gallants to make such a transition, retain a reputation for courage and present an image of martial power? In *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, Philip Carter argues that the absorption of *bonne grace* was unproblematic: ‘the equation between female company and effeminacy’ did not, he claims, ‘result in a dilution but a redefinition of courage which saw the brutality and inhumanity of traditional models refined as men tempered their behaviour to appeal to polite women’.[[352]](#footnote-352)

In this chapter I will contest Carter’s notion of a smooth transition from the old model of self-definition to the new. I argue that the dereliction of traditional martial masculinity was so demeaning that many aristocratic young men compensated for their sense of enervation by asserting themselves through violently anti-social means.[[353]](#footnote-353) All of the ‘notorious’ libertine faction, including John Wilmot, George Villiers, Charles Sedley, Henry Jermyn and Charles Sackville indulged in disgraceful forms of behaviour. Not at Court, where such conduct would have been unthinkable, but in the mixed social milieu of the Town and in the sub-cultural world of Cavalier soldiers who bridled at the gendered niceties of *bonne grace*.[[354]](#footnote-354) Here, they responded to the call for genteel social integration with codified displays of radical incivility and acts of high profile violence usually visited upon social inferiors. An aspect of aristocratic differentiation and definition, these outbursts concretised inadequacy and debility but for George Etherege, a dramatist who aspired to membership of the Wit faction, casual violence is celebrated as indispensable component of authentic masculinity in *The Comical Revenge.*

Etherege’s handling of brawling, window-smashing, drunken rioting blaspheming and female abuse – subsumed under the banner of ‘scouring’ or ‘skirmishing’ – gives a positive elaboration to radically anti-social behaviour. For its elite supporters, scouring was a tradition of behaviour, a codified practice denoting a clearly delineated and well-established system of rites. During the Restoration, scouring grew in popularity as bored and restless young aristocrats responded to the oppressive norms of the new masculinity with increasing levels of rowdiness[[355]](#footnote-355) which, diametrically opposed to the genteel directives of *bonne grace*, were condemned by new Court as unmanly, cowardly and anti-social.

**The new masculinity**

At Whitehall a Cavalier’s graces were a source of praise and preferment but.as Robert Shoemaker notes in ‘Reforming Male Manners’, courtiers who attended the gendered environment of the coffee houses which had sprung up immediately after the Restoration were lampooned for being emasculated by female company. [[356]](#footnote-356) Conduct literature of the day hones in on the perceived lack of substance of gallant behaviour. For Nathaniel Waker, ‘bone-grace [sic] is merely ‘pitifull pieces of pageantry’;[[357]](#footnote-357) Obadiah Walker takes exception to the Court Party’s ‘particular ceremonies and fashions’ including its ‘clothes, gesture, mien, speech’[[358]](#footnote-358) and *The Art of Complaisance* is categorical in its dismissal of the new masculinity, describing courtiers as ‘conversable fops’ who only serve to ‘delight women’.[[359]](#footnote-359) Their ‘extravagant’ clothes, ‘rich beyond the mode’ are worn in ‘folly’ by men who appear to be ‘of another country and age yet living among those persons who have seen their birth’.[[360]](#footnote-360) ‘Aery’ when they should be ‘sober’, ‘gossipy’ when they should be ‘prudent’; these gentlemen have ‘no solidity within’.[[361]](#footnote-361) Such iterations smack of sectarianism but criticism of the new courtier class was not just a manifestation of old political animosities. The devoted Royalist John Evelyn broke ranks to openly lament the dereliction of traditional masculinity. *Bonne grace,* he said, was unbecoming to the ‘viriler sex’.[[362]](#footnote-362)

**James Howard’s *The English Mounsieur* (1663)**

In response to these accusations of unmanliness, James Howard’s pro-Court drama, *The English Mounsieur,*[[363]](#footnote-363)first produced eight months after *The Committee,* acknowledges the loss of Cavalier power by displacing this traffic of criticism upon two feeble and incompetent social ‘inferiors’. In his *dramatis personae*, Howard includes Mr Frenchlove and Mr Vaine, two Court Party imposters whose badly imitated French manners highlight the authentic graces of the drama’s hero, the appositely named Cavalier, Mr Wellbred. Mr Frenchlove – the eponymous English Mounsieur – and Mr Vaine, are every bit as haughty, incompetent and feeble as Wellbred is heroic, modest and elegant. Wellbred, a model gallant equivalent of the new Court, pays close observance to the rules of deference and respect, manfully suffering five refusals from his amour, the recently widowed Lady Wealthy, whofinally accepts his suit. Frenchlove, on the other hand, impudently gives the modish Lady Wealthy lessons in how to dance in ‘the French way of play’, (II.1.p. 20) a breach of principles of deference and respect which leads her to suspect that he is a sham gallant. To determine his authenticity, she encourages him to dance a ‘corant’ (II.11. p.20) but Frenchlove refuses and his reluctance – uncharacteristic considering the Cavalier predilection for self-display – leads the perceptive Lady Wealthy to conclude that he is not the accomplished gallant he claims to be but ‘a fool’ (II.1. p.20). His companion, Mr Vaine, also reveals the tell-tale signs of the imposter. He pretends to be an amorous *debauchee* but his professed appeal to women proves to be a ruse when it emerges that his footboy, Arch, is protecting his master’s secret innocence by blackmailing him mercilessly. Too ineffectual to govern a humble manservant, he is also too giddy to realise that Mrs Crafty, an opportunistic Wench who poses as a gentlewoman, is tricking him into marriage, a fate which also befalls Frenchlove who is simultaneously duped by Crafty’s sister.

Frenchlove and Vaine’s lack of *finesse* re-asserts the illusion that grace was a quality exclusive to the courtier class. Both characters’ inadequacies are almost instantly recognisable to the ‘genuine’ Cavaliers of the drama, failings which, in Howard’s pro-Court poetics of the body, indicate their moral, social and metaphysical inferiority. When Wellbred first notices Mr Vaine he confidently announces: ‘of substance he has none’. (I.1. p. 2). This snap judgement directly associates substantive behaviour with inner depth. If behaviour conforms to Court Party norms then substance is confirmed but if it does not – as is the case with Frenchlove and Vaine – then they are unmanly. Only Royalist aristocrats possess this elusive core ‘substance’ while hangers-on and imposters can only simulate the graces intrinsic to the Royalist elite. To validate this lack, Howard places Mr Vaine in a scenario which tests his mettle. Mr Vaine is confronted by Hector,[[364]](#footnote-364) an ex-soldier who prowls the streets, demanding money from passers-by and assaulting them if they refuse. Noticing Hector from a safe distance, Mr Vaine gives five pounds to Arch, his footboy, instructing him to pay him off his potential tormentor. Hector takes the money but insists on double-payment whereupon Vaine, paralysed by the fear of a cudgeling’, (II.2.p. 24) hurriedly submits. Humiliated, he is offered some free advice from Hector: ‘Now Sir, though this won’t teach you Courage, yet it will teach you against another time not to be a Coward before you need’ (II.2.p. 24). What is notable in this exchange is the moral lesson it encodes. Via the ogreish caricature of the ex-soldier, Howard shows how extortion, intimidation and acts of savagery are reprehensible but cowardice is unserviceable.

**The Cavalier Soldier**

If the effects of the appalling ructions of the civil wars had created a hard, violent and anti-social military class, the restored Court society assumed that the transition from the traditional model of masculinity to its effeminised replacement could rid the officer class of their inhumane behaviour.[[365]](#footnote-365) All were expected to learn and reproduce the code of *bonne grace*, a practice which – it was supposed – would introduce them to a world of elevated behaviour, the refinements of which curb their natural aggression and bring them into line with the new standards of effeminised masculinity.[[366]](#footnote-366) The push for compliance is clearly outlined in *The Art of Complaisance,* which extends its objections to the new Court by offering a stereotypical image of the Cavalier soldier:

Frequenting of the company of Ladies acquire us, that air of the world and that politeness, which no Counsel nor lecture can give us; a warrior, who is simply a man of War, who hath never sweeten’d his manners in the entertainment of Ladies, would rather make people afraid, then give them any desire to seek his conversation, his head is onely full or Armies and Assaults, he speaks of nothing but Sieges or of Battles, and how terrible soever his discourse is, I do not know whether it be not less then the savageness of his visage. If this Brave, a little too dreadful, had enter’d into a Ladies Chamber, when he was not obliged to remain in the Camp, he had soon ceased to be a man of fire and sword, to become sociable, he would neither have spoken of Arms nor Combates, and his modesty which would have shut his mouth on his own valour, would have opened a thousand others in his commendation.[[367]](#footnote-367)

While *The Art of Complaisance* is critical of all Court Party members, ridiculing well-schooled courtiers as much as the untutored members of the military, it does has value as an indicator of the pressures placed upon the military man to his refine his manners in the company of Ladies. Pictured as a defective outsider at odds with the genteel world of the Court and its polished baroque manners, the Cavalier soldier is a man of ‘fire and sword’, a deeply uncivilised party affiliate whose ‘savageness’ is magnified by the refinements of the feminised Court society. Ascribing inferiority to the Cavalier warrior’s ‘savagery’, *The Art of Complaisance* recommends the soldier to leave ‘the Camp’ and embrace the polite world of the Court where exposure to female company will ‘sweeten’ him. Like Dryden’s rake in *The Wild Gallant*, *The Art of Complaisance* advocates the effemination of soldierly behaviour. According to Donna Andrewthis prognosis was symptomatic of a wider and systematic attempt to socialise the Royalist warrior fraternity into official Court Party culture.[[368]](#footnote-368) Men, it was universally acknowledged, were naturally aggressive and uncivil and only women, by the preservation of their own innate delicacy and sensitivity could improve them if they were to function within the highly polished, genteel world of the Court. Soldiers were expected to practise self-control and self-direction, the two most desirable attributes of the new masculinity. Brute courage belonged on the battlefield and was not esteemed as highly as self-possession,[[369]](#footnote-369) the quality which, among others, was considered to be the most important characteristic of the gentleman soldier.

Controlling soldierly aggression, however, was not a straightforward matter [[370]](#footnote-370) and although all the gentlemen of the Court were expected to treat their fellow-courtiers with deference and respect, even the most polished social practitioners could err. Lord Rochester, who had courageously served the navy as a volunteer in the Dutch War [[371]](#footnote-371) and returned to Court a war-hero in the autumn of 1666, became involved in an ugly and spiteful clash with Thomas Killigrew during one of the Court’s regular excursions to the theatre. Rochester’s manners with the ladies were invariably correct but according to Samuel Pepys, the Wit was seen to box Killigrew’s ear in the presence of the king, a highly offensive transgression of *bonne grace*. For his lapse into brutishness, Rochester was banished from Whitehall and ordered by Charles to leave the country immediately and take exile in Paris until the scandal abated.[[372]](#footnote-372) Rochester commanded respect for his courage in battle – even from those men who disliked him – but this did not exempt him in any way from the punishment due to a courtier who peevishly struck a fellow party member in public.

Transgressing the rules of *bonne grace* by punching or slapping a social equal was akin to brawling, a form of uncontrolled savagery which was entirely unacceptable to polite society. But according to Roger Manning, aristocratic soldiers were frequently the perpetrators of casually violent acts which reached a disproportionate level, particularly in the mixed social milieu of the Town.[[373]](#footnote-373) A confluence point for drunk and disorderly soldiers on leave or returned from military expeditions, the peace was frequently disturbed in riotous behaviour which terrified unfortunate civilians who either witnessed or were caught up in these *melees*.[[374]](#footnote-374) By the 1660s these seemingly disparate and uncoordinated forms of anti-civility had, by dint of identification, emulation and repetition, acquired a ritual shape and a name: ‘scouring’.[[375]](#footnote-375) Gathering in taverns or brothels, gentlemen revellers and their hangers-on would drink to excess, forcibly remove the other patrons, rush out into the street, blaspheme, pick fights with the Watch, assault bystanders, smash windows and abuse women. Elevated by its supporters into an inviolable set of rites, scouring encouraged its practitioners to define themselves through their ‘natural’, core aggression.

In derivation, the verb to ‘scour’ is a military slang term meaning ‘to roam about at night uproariously, breaking windows, beating the watch and molesting wayfarers’. The savagery of the practice is supported and enhanced by further definitions which include ‘mauling’ and also ‘thrusting (a sword, knife) into a person’s body’ and ‘to sweep a place, a position or body with gunshot.[[376]](#footnote-376) Together with these examples of codified soldierly aggression are further definitions that hint at acute barbarousness: ‘to cleanse’; ‘to clear out by removing dirt’; ‘to purge, to clear or refresh by purging’. These definitions, easily associated with an inhumane schematics of physical force, denote an orientation to external reality but scouring also pertains to internal bodily process: ‘to become clean by purging’; ‘to purge an animal, a person, the body; to evacuate the stomach or bowels’; ‘to discharge, evacuate, purge away (a humour, disease, excrement)’. [[377]](#footnote-377) Thus, the scourer violently clears or cleanses that which is deemed undesirable or purges either a bodily contaminant or contaminating object of consciousness.

Aspects of scouring were adopted by the Wits: the ritual’s excessive physical exertions and highly visible anti-social behaviour compensated for the dilation of natural aggression induced by the Court Party’s insistence on self-regulation and dignified self-control. *The Character of a Town Gallant*, an anonymously published pamphlet ridiculing the libertine faction, describes the daily routine of the rake who:

with good cheer and *burgundy* and after a long dinner proceeds to the *play-house,* where he advances into the middle of the *pit,* struts about a while to render his goodparts conspicuous, pulls out his *comb, careens* his *wigg.* Then he goes to a ‘*bawdy-house* to meet a ‘squadron of fellow-*gallants* and having heightened their spirits with jollity and wine, they are fit for anything but *civility…*In these *heroic* humours hath many a watchman had his horns batter’d about his ears; and the trembling *constable*…forced to measure his length upon the ground. …The first man they meet they swear to kill, and set the women on their heads; and so the proceed til the rattling of broken glass *windows*, the shrieks of distressed *damsels*, and the thunder of their *oaths*, and execrations, fills all the *neighbour-hood* with horror, and makes them verily conclude, that the *devil* and all his life guard are going a *processioning*.[[378]](#footnote-378)

With militant irony*, The Character of a Town Gallant* illustrates how the drunk and disorderly scourer makes death threats, destroys property, abuses women, blasphemes and horrifies his neighbours. However, none of his execrations are spontaneous. On the contrary, he is a highly self-conscious performer, a gallant who ‘having drest himself, and paid half an hour’s adoration to his own sweet *image* in the *looking-glass…*trailsalong the street *observing* who *observe* him’.[[379]](#footnote-379) The account is embroidered for comic effect but it does address the issues of ritual aggression and self-aggrandisement, of creating a spectacle and of wanting to be seen.

Samuel Pepys also relates a scouring incident which included Etherege’s libertine patron, Charles Sackville who befriended the dramatist one year before the initial staging of *The Comical Revenge*. On the 16th June 1663, Sackville, Sir Charles Sedley and Sir Thomas Ogle assembled at the Cock Tavern in Covent Garden for dinner. They toasted and re-toasted each other many times and had six dishes of meat brought in by six naked women.[[380]](#footnote-380)After dinner, the three courtiers, proceeded to the balcony where, according to Pepys, Sedley:

showed his nakedness on the balcony – acting all the postures of lust and buggery that could be imagined, and abusing of scripture, and, as it were, from thence preaching a mountebank sermon from that pulpit, saying that there he hath to sell such a powder as should make all the cunts in town run after him – a thousand people standing underneath to see and hear him. And that being done, he took a glass of wine and washed his prick in it and then drank it off; and then took another and drank the King’s health.[[381]](#footnote-381)

According to Brice Harris, this spectacle of aristocratic vulgarity and aggression, given from a prominent balcony in a modish and highly visible setting, was a ‘celebration’[[382]](#footnote-382) of the completion of Sackville’s new drama, *Pompey* but in its stages of drink-fuelled blasphemy, lewdness, bottle throwing, misogynistic abuse and ritual self-display, it bears many of the hallmarks of scouring. Pepys makes no reference to scouring or scourers but, alert to the theatricality of the proceedings, he ironically tropes the balcony as a ‘pulpit’ and the performance a ‘mountebank sermon’, suggesting an awareness of the perpetrator’s sense of display and their desire to scandalise Church and State. [[383]](#footnote-383) In its dramatic organisation, the sermon pays special attention to elite gentlewomen: the fashionable ‘cunts’ of the Town.[[384]](#footnote-384) Like the transgressions that precede it, the invective of this last rite takes careful aim at the *mission* *civilatrice* and the ladies who regulate the manners of the Court gallants. By publicly ridding himself of his allegiance to *bonne grace* Sedley performs an act of misogynistic purgation, scouring the gentlewomen of new Court in an act of symbolic defecation that treats elite women as contaminants that must be debased and obscenely expunged. Crucially, Sedley’s mountebank sermon did not occur at Court. There, such transgressive behaviour would not have been countenanced by the elite, polite society. The Wits invariably performed their delinquencies in the Town, exploiting their social ‘inferiors’ is social settings beyond the governance of the ladies of the Court, where the ‘cunts’ they abhor are – in spite of the Wits vociferations – never actually challenged.

Contrary to Carter’s claim of a smooth and unproblematic shift from the old inhumane model of Cavalier masculinity to its new ‘improved’ replacement, the behaviour of these three gentlemen – two of whom were members of Parliament – pinpoints the Wits’ sense of dramatic occasion. As Savile, Sackville and Ogle filed away from the balcony, one solemnly announced: ‘Come, let us goe in and make laws for the nation’,[[385]](#footnote-385) a declaration which, in keeping with the other elements of the ‘sermon’, appears to use outrage not as an end in itself but as a weapon deployed to reinforce libertine fraternity and superiority.

In *Etherege and Wycherley*, Barbara Kachur claims that the desire for infamy was the motive force driving this skirmish.[[386]](#footnote-386) This reading hints at the degree of underlying resentment that informed these outbursts of licenced aggression. In fact, synonymous with infamy is the noun ‘disgrace’, which suggests a wilful inversion of the very code of behaviour all courtiers were supposed to be practicing in all public domains. The Wits depended on provoking an audience whose horror or indignation appeared to strengthen their resolve. As Brice notes, Savile continued his monologue even as the mood turned ugly and the assembled crowd became violent.[[387]](#footnote-387) Anna Bryson’s *From Courtesy to Civility* (1998)makes the point that the libertines’ objective was to shock their audience and suggests that the primary aim was to use the negative response of the audience as a reminder of the protagonists’ freedom from convention.[[388]](#footnote-388) But of course, they were not free from the values and practices against which they rebelled. Part time non-conformists, compelled to follow the strictures of *bonne grace* at the centre of power, libertines gave vent to their sense of masculine diminution in social milieu of the tavern and the brothel, territories which were neither frequented nor popularised by the women of the Court.[[389]](#footnote-389)

Dependency upon values and practices the libertines professed to flout can also be found in Rochester’s correspondence with Savile. In a letter dated 1673-4 he uses sobriety as the means for asserting the merits of drunken revelling, a trope which gleefully inverts the ‘pious principles’ of conventional distinction and celebrates incontinent behaviour.[[390]](#footnote-390) Rochester encourages Savile to debase the ‘pernicious resolutions of discretion and wisdom!’ in favour of drunkenness – ‘the highest point of sacred friendship’ – and ‘lewdness’,[[391]](#footnote-391) an unequivocal indicator of their antipathy towards the restrictions of *bonne grace* and the elite women who policed the official boundaries of acceptable social conduct*.*

The palliative power of violence is confirmed in Rochester’s autobiographical poem ‘The Disabl’d Debauchee’ (1675)[[392]](#footnote-392) in which the poet imagines himself as a washed-up libertine whose only ‘present glory’ (l. 8) is the ineffectual wisdom of a physically incapacitated bystander. Written just three years before he died of old age at thirty-three, it is shot through with the poignancy of loss and the distant recollections of his courageous days in the navy. Here, his riotous scouring accrues an extra lustre when viewed from the present moment, figured as the ‘dull shore of lazy temperance’ (l.16). But although he sentimentalises his ‘past delight’, (l.8) scouring stands out as a high water mark of libertine accomplishment. Defining his former self as a soldier and man of action bearing ‘honourable scars which my too forward valour did procure’, (l. 21) Rochester’s elaboration of his departed vice is related in a tone of overwrought self-enlargement built on ‘bold night alarms’ (l. 30) and of:

|  |
| --- |
| …whores attack’d, their lords at home, |
| Bawds’ quarters beaten up, and fortress won |
| Windows demolish’d, watches overcome, |
| And handsome ills by my contrivance done. |
| (l.32-36) |

Poisonously homosocial, Rochester uses the term ‘whore’ to devalue elite ladies who abuse the patriarchal order. Of the six main verbs in this quatrain, five enlarge upon on the theme of violent destructiveness, execrations which would ‘attack’ women with the same glee reserved for demolishing the Watch or wrecking a bawd’s lodgings. Such remembered acts of mischief are, for Rochester, are a source of pride, a display of ‘handsome ills’ (l. 36) and a perverse rallying cry. In the penultimate stanza, he promises to inspire mischief and finally, to ‘valiantly advise’ young men,[[393]](#footnote-393) tutoring them just as the ladies of the Court taught the new gallants. Like a ‘statesman’ (l. 44), he serves as a historical transmitter and arbiter for a form of ritual violence designed for young men, those gallants who might proudly express their aggression without restraint or compunction.

A form of violence which upends *politesse* and attacks its female ministers, scouring’s repudiation of social and moral normativities suggests, at the very least, the wilful animosity or impotent rage of a powerless splinter group protesting against the monolithic force of a power upon which its opposition depends. However, less than a year after the incident at the Cock Tavern, Etherege would salve his infamous patron and the libertine coterie to which he belonged by sanctifying and re-enshrining the brutality and inhumanity of the traditional Cavalier ethos in his first play, *The Comical Revenge*.

**Scouring and *The Comical Revenge* (1664)**

As has been seen, libertine typology was a highly sensitive and problematic issue for early pro-Court dramatists.[[394]](#footnote-394) In *The Committee,* Robert Howard ensures that Colonel Careless does not scour. Careless is no stranger to tavern culture but he is far too concerned with evading his Roundhead enemies to participate in casual acts of violent delinquency. In *The Wild Gallant,* Loveby is a dedicated sensualist who inhabits the seamier side of London life before he meets Lady Constance. Modish and sexually promiscuous, he passes his time in London’s Taverns and brothels in the company of whores, gamblers and tricksters but scouring plays no part in his libertinism. The same can be said for Wellbred, James Howard’s libertine hero in *The English Mounsieur.* He too is an appetitive figure but like Loveby, there is a sense that he is a ‘new’ man in-the-making, a would-be *bonne grace* gallant who has yet to ‘find himself’.

Like Loveby – who is trained by Lady Constance – Wellbred is instructed by Lady Wealthy for whom he gives up ‘all his youthful gaming tricks’ and morphs into a peaceable young gallant. Far from indulging in riotous acts of violent abuse, he conforms to the principles of *bonne grace* and its integrated social niceties. Lady Wealthy tests his substance by rejecting him six times before she finally accepts his suit and accepts his commitment to the social and moral merits of the new masculinity. Conversely, in *The Comical Revenge*, George Etherege figures his rake, Sir Frederick Frollick, as an independent, wealthy and well-connected courtier who scorns female tutelage and pleases himself by initiating and participating in bouts of drunken riotousness. An unapologetic scourer, he drinks to excess, blasphemes, brawls, humiliates social ‘inferiors’ and casually abuses women, high-ranked and low.[[395]](#footnote-395) The representation of such a litany of bad behaviour might corroborate Rochester’s ‘glories of excess’ but the degree of anti-civil spite and self-congratulation encoded in such acts of riotousness were, it seems, too offensive for Etherege to tackle head on. In *The Comical Revenge*, he retreats from a direct representation of scouring. Brawling, window-smashing and drunken blaspheming all occur off-stage and are reconfigured in a ‘humorous’ a morning-after-the-night-before scenario which cushions the perverse and vainglorious excesses of the ritual.

In all probability, this distancing effect was a strategic compromise employed to flatter the sensibilities of Sackville – Etherege’s patron – and the rest of the Wits while guarding against potential reproaches from the socio-political mainstream. As has been seen, scouring was no more than a ‘dirty protest’ aimed at offending the refined sensibilities of the feminised Court but the possible association of wilfully delinquent behaviour with sedition almost certainly prompted Etherege to clarify the dimensions of his libertine typology. Clearly, the image of a Royalist soldier gleefully abusing the very citizens he has pledged to protect is suggestive of satire against the Party. Depicting a libertine as a scourer was one thing, but representing him as a servant of the Crown who deliberately subverts the regime he was employed to protect was quite another.

But this does not mean that Etherege regards scouring as obscene: in fact, he actively encourages the audience to view Frollick’s actions sympathetically. Conceiving a character whose name for the Restoration audience denoted ‘an outburst of fun, gaiety, or mirth, merriment’, Etherege invites his libertine to be interpreted as a ‘merry-maker’, a gentleman ‘full of sportive mirth’ who – far from perpetrating wanton acts of brutality – indulges in essentially harmless and ‘merry pranks’.[[396]](#footnote-396) This re-configuring of violence as sport gives scouring an elevated status which glamorises the violent acts it legitimates. Aggravated by drink, such outbursts are not classified by Etherege as unwanted acts of intimidation and aggression but as instances of irrepressible natural vitality.[[397]](#footnote-397) In the opening scene of the drama, while he languishes in his bedchamber, Dufoy, Frollick’s French valet, is complaining to one of Lord Beaufort’s servants about the beating received from his master the night before:

dis Bedlame, Mad-Cape, diable de matre, vas drunk de llast night, and vor no reason, but dat me did advise him to go to bed, beggar he did strike, breake my head.

(I.1, p. 9)

Hung-over, Frollick enters in his nightgown and is abruptly reminded by Dufoy that he must pay his ‘Coachmen and Link-boys’ [and] ‘the Fidlers for broken heads and instruments’ (I. 2, p. 11-12). Having taken the rebukes of his abused valet in good heart, Frollick is confronted by the first visitor to his lodgings, Jenny, his current mistress’ maid and ex-lover who recounts the events of the night before, a litany of unbridled aggression aggravated by drink and punctuated by blaspheming, female abuse and bloodshed. Jenny reminds him of how he knocked on his new lover’s door ‘at two a clock in the morning…as if it were upon life and death’, and ‘because we would not let you in at that unreasonable hour, you and your companions hoop’d and hollow’d like Mad-men, and roar’d out in the streets, *A whore, a whore, a whore’* (I. 2, p. 13). She then recounts how he gave the Constable a beating and then how he smashed all the windows (I. 2, p. 14). This chain of events re-traces the steps of the scouring ritual: the drink-fuelled, post-tavern riotousness, the fighting with the Watch, the window-smashing, the intimidating insults and hostile taunts aimed at women typify the staging-posts of this unsavoury itinerary. There are none of the physical infractions upon women which characterise later representations of the practice, none of the bodily infringements of Shadwell’s *The Woman Captain* or *The Character of a Town Gallant* but the denigration and abuse of the female characters is central to Etherege’s handling of ‘merry-making’.

When Jenny chastises Frollick for deviating from the acceptable dignities and delicacies of *bonne grace* –‘we always took you for a civil Gentleman’ – Frollick breezily replies, ‘So I am I think’ (I. 2, p. 12). This riposte is certainly not the lame protest of the humbled wrongdoer; rather, it is the confident rejoinder of a character whose sense of gentlemanliness would be incomplete without the viscera of savagery. Encoded in this blunt declaration is the implicit assumption that aggression, anger and savagery are innate mechanisms of elite male definition which ought not to be interfered with. Not unreasonably, she tells him that ‘you have made such an uproar amongst the neighbours, we must be forc’d to change our Lodging’ (I. 2, p. 12). For the mistress and her maid, the consequences of scouring are destructive and humiliating. They must change their living arrangements but the perpetrator, whose execrations are sanctioned by a custom which treats violent behaviour as mere playfulness and jest, goes unpunished.[[398]](#footnote-398) Jenny berates scouring; ‘there’s nothing to be got from your leud doings; you are but scandals to civil Women’ (I. 2, p. 13) but rather than atone for his breach of the peace, Frollick, indifferent to her plight, attempts to seduce her and even accuses her of coyness when she refuses.[[399]](#footnote-399)

The victims of scouring tended to be commoners. [[400]](#footnote-400) But in *The Comical Revenge*, Etherege extends the boundaries of so called merry-making to infringe upon the modish Widow Rich, Frollick’s social equal. In actuality, such a manoeuvre would – since the widow is a represented as a member of the *beau monde* – be highly improbable. The new rules of civility were operative in the polite zones of the Town where gentlemen were expected to practise the niceties of street conduct, characterised as a technique of orientation and display of self-control.[[401]](#footnote-401) Thus, Etherege curtails the more savage aspects of scouring and uses the courtly serenade as the mainstay of and *entrée* for the action. Frollick arrives at the Widow’s lodgings in Covent Garden, with ‘*fidlers before him and six to eight Link-boys*, *dancing and singing’* (III, 2. p. 38).In the initial exchange Etherege gives the Widow a position on the balcony, a relatively safe distance from the Frollick equipage singing on the street below. Singing was one of the Court’s official practices and could earn a courtier extra status in the eyes of the ladies, but the music, dancing and gaiety in this scene is tinged with hostility. The scene does not contain any homo-social violence, blaspheming or window-smashing but Frollick is drunk and, in keeping with the image of the off-duty soldier, he serenades the Widow at ‘an unseasonable hour’ (III. 2, p. 39), making a din which ‘frighten’[s] the Widow who comes to the balcony and demands to know ‘whose insolence is this, that dares affront me thus?’ (III, 2, p. 39) Her outrage conveys the degree of transgression committed by Frollick but rather than modify his delinquent behaviour in the manner of Wellbred in *The English Mounsieur,* Frollick’s anti-civility is rendered as an amusing form of priapic adventurousness supported by Etherege’s stage directions which instruct *‘The Chamber-maid’* to come *‘to the Window unlac’d, holding her petticoats in her hand’* (II. 2, p. 39). In the brief but bawdy banter between Frollick and the maid that follows, sexualised aggression is privileged and superimposed on the laws of social correctness as Frollick offers to ‘rock’ the maid ‘into a sweeter sleep’ (II. 2, p. 39). Then, in anticipation of the Widow’s appearance on the balcony, he calls the musicians to ‘sound a fresh Alarm; the enemy’s at hand’ (II. 2. p. 39).

Of note is the language of military attack Etherege uses to orient his Cavalier hero towards the Widow. The Widow – whose conduct encodes the new horizon of improved gender relations – is ‘the enemy’. During their first courtship scene in Lord Bevill’s garden, Frollick asks her if she can blame him ‘for standing upon my guard?’ And then, when he remonstrates with her for her stand-offishness, he asks ‘what guard would you chuse to be at should the Trumpet sound a charge to this dreadful foe?’ (II. 1, p. 24) Thus, when the Widow ‘comes to the Window in her Night Gown’, (III.1, p. 39) the audience – or more specifically Etherege’s patron, the theatre-loving scourer, Charles Sackville and the coterie of Wits –[[402]](#footnote-402) is invited to envision the gentlewoman as a dangerous adversary and Frollick as a desirable martial avenger, a Cavalier ‘blade’ charged with righting the wrongs exacted on traditional soldierly masculinity by the new Court.

This fantasy of libertine power reaches its apogee when Frollick, with condescending impudence, asks the Widow how ‘can you be angry, Lady? Have not your Quarters been beaten up before now?’ (III. 2, p. 40). Here, the destructive rage of the discomfited members of the restored gallantry underpins Etherege’s gloss of humour, giving the impression the Widow is fortunate to have escaped unscathed by the dangerous and routine aggression of ‘real’ men whose strength is too daunting to overcome and too appealing to resist. This certainly applies to the Widow, a character which Etherege portrays as an adversary who succumbs to the superior power of her foe. Frollick’s savagery – troped as the source of his desirability – is not treated as a shortcoming in dire need of modification, but as an attribute, an essential characteristic of maleness which commands respect and submission.

Scouring not only excluded women,[[403]](#footnote-403) it also denigrated them through the ritual aggression disguised as merry-making. Etherege disassociates the Cavalier soldier from the languorous, feminine delicacies and sensitivities of the new courtliness and defines ‘real’ gentlemanliness in terms of drunken hostility, intimidation, boorishness and violence. Scouring, however, was a minority pursuit, the libertines who adorned these vicious activities with a ritual status, a marginal ‘angry brigade’ who rewarded each other’s excesses with an increased status bought at the expense of the servant classes and women whose abuse has been reserved as the last rite of the scouring ritual.

As *The Character of a Town Gallant* notes, behaving badly in public was an extravagance through which a blade ‘does signalize himself above common mortals’.[[404]](#footnote-404) But while scouring was supposed to be an assertion of superiority, the ritual inducements which frame, define and sustain identity were not generative or vitalising, rather; they were perceived by polite society as the elaboration of a brittle and cowardly masculinity.[[405]](#footnote-405) If savagery had its place, it was on the battlefield and since it was predicated on the loss of self-control, it was unacceptable to the Court.Anger – one of the keynotes of Frollick’s recreational behaviour – was regarded as the unruly passion.[[406]](#footnote-406) When a soldier or gentleman responded angrily to slurs on his reputation, he was deemed unmanly, so much so that the *beau monde* regarded it as an indicator of his impotence.[[407]](#footnote-407) Not for a moment could Etherege have considered his libertine hero a coward, but Frollick’s anti-social behaviour would, for Court Party affiliates have been construed as a preening display of inadequacy. Far from being received as dangerous and savagely dominative, the scourer is taken as a ‘painted butter-flye’,[[408]](#footnote-408) a fop whose aggression and lack of self-control are not markers of elite superiority but indictors of a malfunctioning or underdeveloped manliness.

CHAPTER IV

Regime protection and *The Country Wife* (1675)

In this chapter, I focus on William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675).[[409]](#footnote-409) In the first section, I explore Eve Sedgwick’s reading of the play which claims that Wycherley creates a set of homosocial coordinates to illustrate how male bonding activities maintain and transmit patriarchal power at the expense of women.[[410]](#footnote-410) I argue that the abusive behaviour of the play’s rake figure, Harry Horner, is politically motivated; his aggression directed equally against men and women who are the enemies of dynastic power. In the second part of the chapter, I will turn my attention to his fellow Wit, the reforming libertine Harcourt, and show how the character typifies the process of reform advocated by the *mission civilatrice*. Wycherley uses Harcourt to emblematise the gendered normativities of Royalist power and fulfil a far more important dramatic function than Horner: that of a rake who transitions into an exemplary *bonne grace* Cavalier, a socially and morally impeccable servant of the Crown.

The meaning and value of Wycherley’s unrepentant libertine has certainly dominated criticisms of the play. As Susan Owen points out: ‘judgments of Horner have ranged from champion of sexual freedom to monster’.[[411]](#footnote-411) For critics who favour a socio-political reading of Restoration drama, he is Wycherley’s tool for revealing society’s hypocrisy and depravity. J. H. Wilson argues that *The Country Wife* celebrates ‘the libidinous life’ and pokes fun at ‘anyone and anything which is opposed to the free and open playing of the venereal game’ and ‘everything, in short, which went then or now by the name of respectability’.[[412]](#footnote-412) Norman Holland claims that ‘Horner’s pretence that he is a eunuch is meaningful in that it satirizes the Town’.[[413]](#footnote-413) Rose Zimbardo, Laura Brown, Harold Love and Robert Markley each concur, as does D. M. Young, who suggests that ‘Wycherley paints this dark picture of the fashionable world’ and gives Horner a central role in ‘exposing the deceitful and self-serving intrigues of the *beau monde’*.[[414]](#footnote-414)Eve Sedgwick’s famous reading of *The Country Wife* in *Between Men* (1985) also takes Horner’s sexual activity as central to a meaningful understanding of the play.[[415]](#footnote-415) More recently, Susan Owen has suggested that ‘in the end, Wycherley is quite scathing (in a witty way) about his society’. ‘Horner’s energies’, she adds, ‘continue to be dissipated in casual sex’,[[416]](#footnote-416) while John O Brien argues that Wycherley renders Horner as a deliberately repulsive man of fashion whose ‘negative force’ encourages the audience to dis-identify with him. [[417]](#footnote-417)

However, Horner is not – as so many critics seem to suggest – Wycherley’s focalizing agent; he is but one of a host of characters within the *dramatis personae,* all of whom serve and illustrate the dramatic purposes of the playwright. Yes, he is the leading man and leading libertine figure, but he only represents one of *The Country Wife’s* rhetorical perspectives. Far less critically examined is Harcourt. Wycherley represents him as a complex, fine-grained character whose moral and social rehabilitation has received far less critical attention than Horner’s libertinism, even though his role in the drama is, I suggest, crucial to a balanced understanding of its meaning and value.

Horner and Harcourt occupy very different social and moral vicinities and implement Royalist power in very different ways. As Erin Mackie puts it in *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates*, hegemonic masculinity was not unitary; rather ‘both licit and illicit modes of masculinity served to consolidate the legitimacy of patriarchy’.[[418]](#footnote-418) Horner’s role is illicit, peripheral and unofficial. Portrayed as a rogue Cavalier, he commits acts of calculated sexual aggression against the Court Party’s political rivals, but Harcourt has a more important role. He operates as an official representative of mainstream Cavalier authority. In his courtship of Alethea,[[419]](#footnote-419) a gentlewoman of the Town, Harcourt does not simply embark on a sentimental romance with a woman of his social class; rather, he devotes himself to the gendered machinery of elite social power practised at Whitehall and in the elite precincts of the Town. Obsessive in his desire to ‘serve’ (III.2, 359) and ‘honour’ (V.4, 260) official masculine practices, he redefines himself as a mainstream gallant, a civilised Cavalier peacekeeper whose dramatic function runs contrary to the popular critical notion that the Restoration world Wycherley depicts in *The Country Wife* is entirely corrupt, depraved and cynical.

**Theatrical libertines and State safeguarding**

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault inverts the notion that war is just politics extended and argues that politics is extended war:

if political power installs the reign of peace in civil society, this by no means implies that it suspends the effects of war or neutralises the disequilibrium revealed in the final battle. The role of political power on this hypothesis is perpetually to re-inscribe this relation through a form of unspoken warfare, to re-inscribe it in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and every one of us.[[420]](#footnote-420)

There is, however, scant application of this notion of unspoken warfare in Restoration comedy. This is surprising since the comedies are now acknowledged as a political illustration of its totalizing imperatives and its sensitivities, manifest in a xenophobic hostility to imposters and social upstarts. Referring to the schismatic animosity of the comedies, Michael Neill argues that the social conduct portrayed is often ‘little better than a species of urbane civil war’.[[421]](#footnote-421) In *Perspectives on Restoration Drama,*[[422]](#footnote-422) Susan Owen also emphasizes their frequently blunt sectarian character, enlarging on what Tim Harris describes as the ‘continual fear that erstwhile supporters or clients of the old republican or Cromwellian regimes might rise in arms against it’.[[423]](#footnote-423) Elaborating the theatre’s ideological function, C. M. Taylor notes how ‘few Restoration comedies are without their interlopers’. The Royalist order had ‘an *émigré* mentality, fearful of being thrust once more from the sun’.[[424]](#footnote-424) More recently, Douglas Canfield has posited in *Tricksters and Estates* that ‘conflict in Restoration drama, as elsewhere in Restoration society, can be seen – at least in part – as an extension of the Civil War, a state of continuing aggression’ made manifest in ‘sexual exploitation’. This unofficial mission [[425]](#footnote-425) was, he argues, a key part of the State influence wrought by Royalism on its political rivals. In the following summary, I will establish the extent to which the comedies of the first and second decade relate to this claim and the part libertines played in the Royalist commitment to sexual exploitation and State protection.

The first dramatist to use the rake as a political altercationist was Abraham Cowley in *The Cutter of Coleman Street* (1661).[[426]](#footnote-426) A returning Cavalier comedy, it polemicises the political map, glorifying the Cavaliers of the old Stuart order and ridicules the Protectorate, picturing Puritans as greedy and salacious hypocrites. Set in the last days of the Interregnum, the drama’s libertine hero, Colonel Jolly, outwits the exiled Court’s foes and rights the wrongs of Cromwellian rule. Jolly proves himself a devoted and competent Cavalier who seduces a rich widow then marries her, seizing her estate in a symbolic re-settlement of power and property. However, some members of the Court did not consider Cowley’s representation of the Cavalier libertine as militant enough, a consideration that might well have influenced Robert Howard’s *The Committee* (1662) [[427]](#footnote-427) which – set during the last days of the Interregnum – features a rake protagonist, Colonel Careless. A committed sexual exploiter,he bluntly attests to seducing Puritan Maids and using his seed as the toxic means for destabilizing the patrilineal integrity of the Cromwellian enemy. Serving the exiled Court Party, he turns Puritan girls into ‘whores’ who beget ‘bastards’ (III. 4, p. 86). A valuable advertisement for hegemonic power, Careless is the first of many Restoration libertines whose illicit activities proselytize for dynastic power in its perpetual search for socio-political stability. Arguably the most vicious and certainly the most militant of libertine comedies, *The Committee* was revived on several occasions, the sectarian animosity of its message regularly punctuating the first decade and the first years of the second.[[428]](#footnote-428)

In *The Wild Gallant* of February 1663, John Dryden also recruits his libertine into the unofficial role of State protection.[[429]](#footnote-429) After he has wed Lady Constance, his reforming libertine, Loveby quarrels with Mr Burr, a social ‘inferior’ and troublemaker who provokes a quarrel that threatens to destabilize civic order. Loveby warns Burr ‘I will know your business’ (V.1, p. 44) but when denied, both men prepare to duel. The two men engage but are quickly drawn apart. As a consequence of their altercation, Burr’s criminality is exposed and civic order regained. However, *The Wild Gallant* is unequivocal in its opposition to duelling and, by taking up arms, Loveby transgresses the law even though he exposes Burr as a felon. Loveby serves civic polity but does so in an illicit manner. Here, Dryden illustrates the difficulties of masculine reform, where the libertine protagonist strives to redefine himself through the new official mode of sociability but, in moments of crisis, relapses, displaying the violent self-assertiveness of the traditional Cavalier warrior. Part orthodox gallant and part madman with a sword,[[430]](#footnote-430) Loveby emerges as a volatile but valuable State asset, a reforming libertine learning how, and how not, to command and govern.

James Howard also tropes the surveillance of imposters in *The English Mounsieur* of July 1663[[431]](#footnote-431) in which two hangers-on, Mr Frenchlove and Mr Vaine, are exposed as imposters whose badly imitated, foppish French manners are obvious to Mr Wellbred, a reforming libertine, and Lady Wealthy, his amour. Howard’s pro-Court poetics indicate the moral, social and metaphysical inferiority of would-be gallants who, in due course, are exposed as cowards or, as Wellbred describes them, men of no ‘substance’ (I.1, p. 2) who try, but signally fail to, convince their ‘betters’ that they are genuine members of the Cavalier class*.*

Produced the following year, in the 1664 season, George Etherege’s *The Comical Revenge* [[432]](#footnote-432) enlarges on the socio-political value of libertinism by imagining Sir Frederick Frollick as a heroic sovereign protector who polices the dangerous environs of the Town’s social underbelly. Keenly aware of the potential dangers posed by disgruntled Protestants and republicans, he monitors their movements and infiltrates their company. In the first act, he gives a fellow Cavalier an informed and incisive account of the Cromwellian seditionist, Sir Nicholas Cully:

a fellow as poor in experience as in parts, and one that has a vain-glorious humour to gain a reputation amongst the Gentry, by feigning good nature and an affection to the King and his Party

(I.2, p. 15).

The seriousness of Frollick’s Royalism becomes evident when he crushes Cully’s hapless attempt to infiltrate Court Party ranks. To pay off a gambling debt to two petty criminals, Cully tries to pass himself off as a gallant in the hope of seducing the Widow and acquiring her fortune. The ruse fails and Frollick, alerted to the scheme, pounces on the subplot villains, imposing social order in the dangerous zones of the Town and sending the chastened country knight back to the Shires.

Etherege’s second drama, *She Would if She Could* (1668), also showcases this theme of libertine commitment to Crown and State. Two libertine courtiers, Courtall and Freeman, trace the movements and win the trust of a suspicious party of Country aristocrats, led by Lord and Lady Cockwood, who are both determined to enjoy the freedoms of the Town. But while the husband is content to pay for sexual gratification, Lady Cockwood craves the privileges bestowed on the elite women of the *beau monde* by their gallants. This urge for increased status, fostered by the glamour of the Town, makes her susceptible to the ‘game’ of social manipulation. Lady Cockwood pursues Courtall, who toys with her, endlessly deferring her amorous advances while he and Freeman pursue Ariana and Gatty, nieces of Sir Joslin Jolly, a boorish Country gentleman and travelling companion of Lord Cockwood. Courtall and Freeman turn Lady Cockwood against her husband, allowing her to discover her husband’s intention to visit Madam Rampant’s brothel. The libertines’ control over their adversaries is completed when Courtall threatens to expose Lady Cockwood – ‘a ravenous kite’ (III.1, p. 35) – as a hypocrite. Plotting and counter-plotting, the two libertines stealthily splinter the two generations of the Cockwood party, shaming the elders and inducing a love of the *beau monde* in their bright and surprisingly courtly children, already disaffected with parents who prefer the shires to the excitements and pleasures of the Town.

Joining the debate, Thomas Betterton’s pro-libertine sex comedy *The Amorous Widow* (1670) draws out the theme of class warfare, employing cuckoldry as its principal instrument of social regulation. Betterton mocks rich City merchants who crave entry to the upper reaches of the Royalist elite, by creating Mr Barnaby Brittle, a successful glasshouse owner who is a greedy and licentious hypocrite. The main plot concerns the love affair between Lovemore – an effeminated libertine – and Mrs Brittle, scion of the aristocratic Pride family, unhappily married to Brittle. Bored and restless, she bitterly regrets her marriage to the ‘old nasty Shop-keeper’ (II.1, p. 22) and agrees to a tryst with Lovemore, whom she takes for a *bonne grace* gallant. Resentful and suspicious, Brittle voices his concerns to his young wife’s parents, Sir Peter and Lady Pride, but they will brook no criticism of their daughter and bully Brittle relentlessly, even though he has rescued their cracked estate from insolvency. Lovemore and Mrs Brittle begin their affair and her husband, convinced he is being cuckolded, tries again to expose the couple to the Prides. The lovers are discovered but escape censure as Mrs. Brittle pretends to reject Lovemore and accuses him of trying to ‘stain her honour’ (IV. p. 46). She seizes her father’s cane and on the pretext of attacking Lovemore (who quickly retires) gives her husband a fearful and humiliating beating. Convinced of their daughter’s innocence, the Pride’s also round on Brittle, ordering him to apologise to their guiltless daughter. Wretched, Brittle begins to spy on the lovers and, learning the location of their most recent tryst, confronts them. She pretends to kill herself and, when her parents enter, she tells them a tale of a drunken and abusive husband who preys on her, an innocent victim. Forced to his knees by Sir Peter, he pleads for his wife’s pardon. Lovemore escapes censure and when his identity as a rake is exposed in the denouement, Mrs Brittle also finds she has been used and cheated by Lovemore.

Betterton is uncomplicated in his avowal of aggressive Royalism, but Thomas Shadwell in *Epsom-Wells* (1672) offers a counter-argument devaluing and debunking the politicised role of the Cavalier libertine. A proto-Whig, Shadwell is altogether hostile to the notion of libertinism and denies its function as a hegemonic practice, arguing that rakes are too irresponsible and too selfish to concern themselves with policing the margins of elite society. Shadwell’s libertines are brutal nihilists who seduce the wives of the aspiring merchants holidaying at Epsom. One of them, Mr Raines, is conducting an affair with Mrs Bisket, the wife of a London tradesman, a quiet and trusting cuckold who asks Raines to visit his lodgings to please his wife. Crucially, the three libertines have no sense of loyalty or fraternity. Self-directed pleasure-seekers, they are all too ready to forego their ideological allegiances and cuckold their fellow Cavaliers. All three seduce their social ‘inferiors’ but one, Bevil, breaks ranks by conducting an amorous intrigue with his fellow libertine’s wife, Mrs Woodly, while her husband and the other libertine, Raines, both pursue the modish Caroline, a lady of wit, beauty and fortune. This causes a disastrous rift among the Cavaliers, who resolve to settle the matter in a duel which is called off at the eleventh hour. Reflecting on their delinquent behaviour, the three rakes promise to refashion themselves: Woodly agrees to an amicable separation from his wife, while Bevil and Raines are put on probation – in lieu of marriage – Lady Caroline and her friend Lucia. In his Epilogue, Shadwell gives staunch advice to the modish Town community: ‘Gallants, leave your lewd whoring and take wives,/ Repent for shame your Covent-Garden lives’ (15-16). Notably, he is uncritical of these two modish ladies, perpetuating the image of elite Royalist gentlewomen as worthy bearers of social and moral nomativities.

Shadwell represents his merchant cuckold sympathetically but, in *The Modish Lovers* (1674), John Dover, a Royalist, does not. His libertine, Ned Lovechange, strives to re-acquaint himself with Mrs Easy, who has been forced into an arranged marriage with a City trader, an ‘old, impotent Letcher’ (I.1, p. 2)who keeps his wife in virtual isolation**.** Lovechange bids to liberate his ‘sweet mistress’ (I.1, p. 1) from the clutches of her greedy old ‘pimp’ of a husband who plans to marry his niece, Grace, to a Country gentleman – Sir Ralph Spatter –for a handsome financial reward. With the assistance of Mrs Easy’s maid, Peg, who acts as the lovers’ go-between, the couple plan a secret tryst, an arrangement that will punish and humiliate the cruel old City trader and bring together the oppressed wife and the reforming libertine. To multiply sympathy for his *bonne grace* gallant in the making, Dover includes an unrepentant libertine double, Mr Courtwell. An erstwhile friend but now sworn enemy of Lovechange, he tries to ‘lead off’ (II.2, p. 23) Mrs Easy by disguising himself as Lovechange. Convinced by his deception, Mrs Easy throws herself at him: ‘come, you must dispose of me, I can’t resist’ (II. 3, p. 27). Peg enters and disabuses Mrs Easy, who sends Courtall away, berating his rake ‘villainy’ (II.3, p. 28). This dramatic strategy ensures there is a significant moral gap differentiating Lovechange – whose pursuit of Mrs Easy can easily be construed as a rescue mission – and the remorselessly self-seeking Courtwell. United with her true love, she and Lovechange embrace and – at her request – retire without ‘ceremonious foppery’ (II. 3, p. 28) for sex. To sanction Mrs Easy’s adulterousness, Dover renders Mr Easy in the blackest and bleakest of terms. He sneaks into Peg’s bedchamber in pursuit of sexual favours but retreats in fear when Peg, brandishing a candlestick, threatens to maim him. In due course, Easy discovers that Grace is in love with her servant and decides to tie her to a chair and ‘let out’ some of her ‘hot blood’ (IV.1, p. 46). Unrepentant, Easy’s crimes make him a legitimate target for rough justice, occasioned by the discovery that he has been cuckolded by Lovechange. Humiliated, he accepts his social ‘inferiority’. Easy promises to reform and gives his blessing to Mrs Easy and Lovechange, an admission that re-inscribes the Royalist status quo.

As the summary shows, safeguarding is a prominent rhetorical feature in nine of the twenty libertine comedies, including *The Country Wife* (1675). Those that do not include State protection are John Bulteel’s *The Amorous Gallant* (1664-1665), in which the libertine hero, Orontus, is fixated by the art of seduction and, in pursuing women of his own social class, makes no service to the State whatsoever; John Dryden’s *Secret Love* (1667), in which Celadon disrupts dynastic rule by taking up arms against his queen before he is granted a pardon; James Howard’s *The Mad Couple* (1667) featuring Philidor, a rake far too burdensome and giddy a character to be of any service to the Crown; Wycherley’s *Love in a Wood* (1671) which showcases Ranger, a rake who confines his interests to pursuing two Royalist women of the Town before reforming; John Dryden’s *Marriage a la Mode* (1673), which features Rhodolphil and Palymede, two libertines who confine themselves to exploring the possibilities of free love and the limitations of matrimony; Joseph Arrowsmith’s *The Reformation* (1672), which, set in Venice, only renders the interests of a small coterie of rich Italian patricians. Shadwell’s *Epsom Wells* (1672) which features three rakes more concerned with cheating each other than protecting the State. Edward Ravenscroft’s *The Careless Lovers* (1673), which does not figure class war and confines itself to the machinations of libertine reform and the pursuit of a ‘free’ marriage contract. Shadwell’s political satire, *The Libertine* (1675) which represents the rake as a lawless and wicked tyrant. George Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* (1676) features a love affair between the libertine, Dorimant, and a country gentlewoman, Harriet which ends in Dorimant’s promise to marry and reform and Aphra Behn’s *The Rover: part I* (1677) is set in pre-Restoration Naples before the Restoration and treat the theme of exile rather than State safeguarding.

***The Country Wife***

First staged in January 1675*, The Country Wife* [[433]](#footnote-433) continues the pro-Court rhetoric of Robert Howard, John Dryden, James Howard, George Etherege, Thomas Betterton and John Dover, which trope the Court Party contempt for the City and the Country oligarchies. Of these two rival power blocs, the Country was the Crown’s principal political opponent. A loose coalition of a disaffected group of largely Protestant aristocrats from the shires, the Country nursed a long-standing distrust of Caroline control, objecting to political absolutism and the Royal imperative to prorogue parliamentary power. The Country Party sought to reify dynastic power by opposing standing armies, calling for more electoral power and bidding to fix authority in the hands of the landed gentry. Perceiving themselves as the genuine proprietors of the nation’s past and its present political interests, their principal desire was for the preservation of cultural continuity. As Perez Zagorin puts it, they had long since ‘conceived themselves defenders of an immemorial legal order of rights and liberties against which the king was transgressor’.[[434]](#footnote-434) Their anti-Court antagonisms resurfaced during the 1670s when, after plague, fire and soaring taxes in the late 1660s, Charles made a secret treaty with his cousin Louis XIV in 1672, agreeing to convert his country to Catholicism in exchange for French financial support. The treaty was kept hidden but, as Susan Owen points out, there were suspicions of a tightening of bonds between the two Princes.[[435]](#footnote-435) Louis’ influence appeared to transcend Parliament’s as he pressed Charles to participate in a third Dutch War.

Many parliamentarians were hostile to what appeared to be a blunt expression of the royal prerogative and, in opposition, supported an anti-French, pro-Protestant foreign policy. In 1672, the Declaration of Indulgence, which tolerated Catholics and Dissenters, also aroused criticism of Charles’ seemingly arbitrary power. To make matters worse, Charles’s brother James, the Duke of York, publicly acknowledged his Catholicism and wed the Catholic Mary of Modena in 1673. Fears of Popery and the desire among the gentry to stop Charles’s incursions of Parliamentary authority reminded some pamphleteers and anti-Court satirists of the 1640s, a time of political and social trauma. These machinations anticipated the sharp political divisions that would surface dramatically in the Exclusion Crisis of 1678.

In *Between Men*, Eve Sedgwick does not mention the socio-political structure of the Restoration regime, nor account for how Wycherley’s characters reflect the discords of the day. Wycherley’s choice of characters illustrates this turbulent political struggle and provides a reassuring resolution with his Royalist characters prevailing over their rivals from City and Country. The Royalist representatives include Alethea, a fashionable woman of the Town, her *fiancée* Sparkish*,* together with Horner, Harcourt and Dorilant, all of whom are rendered as Court Party Wits. Mr and Mrs Pinchwife symbolise the Country aristocracy and Sir Jasper Fidget, his wife Lady Fidget and their cohort – Mistress Dainty Fidget, Mistress Squeamish and Old Lady Squeamish – represent the community of titled traders based in the City. In her reading, Sedgwick does not take into account these determinants and, consequently, does not identify or indicate the socio-political distinctions within the cast of characters, some of whom represent the Crown, some the Country Party and some the City. Crucially, Wycherley was a Wit and a Court Party member. His ideological allegiance shapes and drives the plot mechanism and is central to a properly contextualised understanding of the play. As I argue in chapter five of this thesis, the Court and Country parties never laid their long-standing political differences to rest and Wycherley, loyally representing the Crown’s hegemonic interests, does not shrink from attacking, with ideological militancy, the revived Country Party represented by the Pinchwifes and the City pictured by the Fidgets.

In the main plot, Harry Horner physically and psychologically assaults these two enemy power groups by impregnating their women and torturing their men. To snare his potential victims, Horner’s quack doctor disseminates the ‘secret’ that a failed treatment for venereal disease has rendered him impotent. Horner’s ruse is compelling: he is considered ‘unfit for women’ (I.1, p. 194). Apparently posing no threat to husbands, he is free to mingle in female company, single out suitable targets for sexual contamination[[436]](#footnote-436) and, by seducing them, becomes – as his name denotes – a cuckold-maker [[437]](#footnote-437) *par excellence*. Horner beds the City wife, Lady Fidget, then the eponymous Country wife, Margery Pinchwife. Her *naïve* sincerity threatens to expose him, but his pattern of sexual exploitation continues undiluted after the quack doctor reappears in the final act to assure the cuckolded husbands – and the wives who know to the contrary – that Horner is sexually incapable. Unrepentant and unhindered, he continues his sexual exploits, extending the class war waged against the husbands and wives of the Country and City oligarchies.

The second, subordinate plotline concerns Alethea, Sparkish and Harcourt’s love triangle. Sparkish and Alethea are about to be wed, but when Harcourt encounters the couple, he courts her under Sparkish’s nose and begins to win her affections. In due course, Alethea admits to her maid that she loves Harcourt but determines not to rescind her matrimonial promise to Sparkish because she is a woman of honour. The solution to this moral dilemma is provided by Sparkish himself when he lets slip to Alethea that he has no faith in ‘matrimonial love’ (III. 2, p. 231), nor any obligation to value her ‘beauty and virtue’ (III. 2, p. 231) over and above any other woman. Wycherley brings their relationship to a crisis by using a mistaken identity trope: Pinchwife tells Sparkish that Alethea has been seen visiting Horner’s lodgings and that he, by implication, is her lover. In actuality, it is Margery disguised in Alethea’s clothes, but Sparkish believes Pinchwife and breaks off the match, leaving Harcourt unopposed and Alethea free to accept him as her ‘true’ husband-to-be. Sedgwick sees Alethea’s relationship with Harcourt as an anomaly because it does not reassert homosocial relations, but his reform into mainstream society is central to Wycherley’s advocacy of rake reform and the role played by women in attaining this transformation. The third plot stand showcases the ailing marriage of Jack and Margery Pinchwife. Bored with her over-protective, bullying husband, her affair with Horner ruins Pinchwife’s equilibrium. Duped into believing that Horner is indeed impotent, the cuckolded Country gentleman returns to the shires with his miserable wife.

**Horner’s impotence strategy**

Horner’s impotence strategy revisits the theme of ‘taming’ explored and extrapolated in Restoration libertine rhetoric. Joining the debate, Wycherley takes the notion of the woman’s man [[438]](#footnote-438) to its logical conclusion, making – in typical Court Wit fashion – the deliberately false and comical supposition that the only type of gallant acceptable to the ladies of the Court is one with no sex drive whatsoever. As has been seen, for the Wit fraternity, sexual freedom and hedonistic gratification were central components of masculine self-definition. Thus, the eunuch strategy gives Horner a double role. On the one hand, the ruse allows him to serve the political function of ruining as many enemy marriages as possible and, on the other, it serves as a perverse and liberating form of entitlement. Because his reputation as a rake has been destroyed by the ‘revelation’ of his impotence, he is recast as a socially degraded but temporarily empowered outsider, who gleefully mocks his social ‘superiors’.[[439]](#footnote-439) Horner, therefore, resembles a Lord of Misrule, a festive character who, during the winter festival celebration of the twelfth night, was allowed to govern, a practice that inverted the customary conduct of the social order. Drawing on this custom, Wycherley uses the eunuch ruse to grant Horner the temporary, ‘topsy-turvy’[[440]](#footnote-440) power to abuse and/or mock all recognizable forms of elite social power, including the effeminated gallants at Whitehall. According to Horner, the first wave of Restoration servitors are ‘like superannuated stallions…suffered to run, feed and whinny with the mares as long as they live, though they can do nothing else’ (I.1, p. 198). They are ‘shadows of men’ (I.1, p. 198), with no blood, no phallic power. Using the misrule trope to unleash the sexual virility of the socially subdued male, Wycherley pokes fun at the conventional coordinates of masculine desirability, making *bonne grace* appear feeble and libertine masculinity alluringly powerful.

Horner verbalizes his contempt for the mainstream gallant community, but he takes no active measures to either challenge or harm them; this much cannot be said of his palpable assault on the City community. When first introduced to Lady Fidget by her husband, he is ‘rude and saucy’ (I. 1, p.196): ‘I do know your wife, sir, she’s a woman, sir, and consequently a monster’ (I. 1, p. 196). However, when he suggests that she has used her visit as a pretext to see the ‘bawdy postures’(I. 1, p. 196), of his pornographic prints, she finds his lewdness sexually desirable – desirable enough to risk her marriage and her reputation by having an affair with a man who plainly holds her in contempt. This, of course, is standard pro-libertine rhetoric: Wycherley paints his rake hero as a hypersexual, misogynistic Cavalier whom women – courtly gentlewomen excluded – find disconcertingly, ruinously attractive. Consequently, Lady Fidget propositions Horner in the company of her husband and invites him ‘to do your worst, dear, dear, Sir’ (II.1, p. 220). Horner pointedly tells her husband (unaware he has been cuckolded) that a woman is no better than a dog: it ‘can fawn, lie down, suffer beating and fawn the more’ (II.1, p. 217). Fidget misses the allusion and, convinced Horner is lame, invites him into their company as her consort, a role Horner adopts with cruel relish. In a dramatic enlargement of sectarian contempt, Wycherley has Horner dupe the husband and abuse the fawning wife who is pictured as a feeble and supplicating beast. Bedding her, he taints her blood and undermines the legitimate transfer of property and name from one City generation to the next.

This exchange illustrates Sedgwick’s argument about sexual politics in *The Country Wife*. Identifying cuckoldry as ‘the central theme of the play’, she explores the gendered relations between Horner/Jasper Fidget and Lady Fidget. She reads the characters’ three-way power relation – with Horner and Fidget occupying two corners and Lady Fidget the apex – as an ‘erotic triangle’.[[441]](#footnote-441) Focusing primarily on Horner – who also becomes involved in an erotic triangle with Jack Pinchwife and his wife Margery – she suggests that ‘in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the links either of the rivals to the beloved’.[[442]](#footnote-442) She argues that the seduction of Lady Fidget gives Horner the leverage he needs to establish a special homosocial relation with her husband. Horner prevails over Fidget but his mastery does not interrupt or sever their intimate relation. As Sedgwick puts it, ‘Horner has actually elevated it to a newly transcendental status’. It is ‘a cognitive mastery so complete’ that Jasper Fidget ‘will not even know that such a bond exists’.[[443]](#footnote-443) As has been seen, Horner beds Lady Fidget and secretly abuses her to Jaspar Fidget who is unaware that his wife and Horner are lovers. Horner compares Lady Fidget to a dog, a comment that iterates this secret bond but it is worth noting that the so-called connection does not actually influence Fidget’s behaviour. In the introduction to *Between Men,* Sedgwick defines homosociality as ‘a word which describes social bonds between persons of the same sex’.[[444]](#footnote-444) But here, the emphasis is on Horner’s ‘cognitive mastery’ and his ‘secret relation’ to Jasper Fidget, not ‘the social bond’ between the two men. The social, interpersonal relation is set at a minimum since private, internalised knowledge – either hostile or amicable – does not constitute an actual material bond.

Sedgwick’s theory of homosocial bonding is much more applicable to Horner’s erotic triangulation with Jack Pinchwife and his wife Margery, whom Horner seduces as soon as he has bedded Lady Fidget. Figured as an *ingénue* country girl in awe of the *beau monde* and its conspicuous modes of cultural definition, she willingly succumbs to Horner, who shape-shifts into a mock *bonne grace* gallant, seducing her and satirising gallant behaviour at the same time. Sexually stimulated, she swoons at Horner’s cool wit and casual poise. And, in spite of dire warnings from her terrified husband, who looks on and describes Horner as a man who ‘would ruin you as he has done hundreds’ (II.1, p. 209), she succumbs and has ‘hot fit[s] (IV. 4. p. 259) for a gentleman who can inspire love but has absolutely no intention of reciprocating it.

Sedgwick makes the valid point that Pinchwife’s fear of being cuckolded is so intense and obsessional that his wife ‘learns both to want to cuckold him and how to go about doing so’.[[445]](#footnote-445) Pinchwife blames his unworldly wife for his fear of, or hidden desire for, humiliation at the hands of Horner, whose seductive powers he fears before Horner has even set eyes on his wife. The relation between the two men is – unlike Horner’s relationship with Jaspar Fidget – palpable. A ‘born again’ Country gentleman, he is made to suffer the humiliation of having to watch as his new wife rejects him for Horner. Alert to the mesmeric affect Horner has on Margery and mortified by the prospect of becoming a cuckold, Pinchwife takes the farcical measure of disguising his wife as her brother. Horner discovers him and, playing along with the charade, subjects his rival to a roster of cruelties. Horner kisses Margery, manhandles her, then hauls her away from Pinchwife who, uttering the words ‘Gone, gone, not to be found – quite gone’,[[446]](#footnote-446) (III. 2, p. 237) The born again country gentleman is reduced to a state of abjection. In due course, Margery and Horner return, but Margery carries ‘*an armful of oranges’* (III. 2, p. 237), the fruit symbolic of a sexual encounter. This presages their love affair and heaps more torments on this ‘rogue’ (I. 1, p. 203) from the shires. Humiliated by his rival, Pinchwife’s substantive behaviour demonstrates the homosocial hostility and mastery Horner exerts over him. In interpersonal terms, Pinchwife’s frailties define Horner’s manliness and Horner’s mastery guarantees Pinchwife’s unmanliness, a depletion of masculinity or an effemination that Sedgwick suggests, ‘is not detrimental to masculinity but definitive of it’.[[447]](#footnote-447) However, while Horner exerts homosocial control over Pinchwife, his power must be understood as part of a wider and deeply entrenched sectarianism that Wycherley is at pains to illustrate in a manner favourable to his political masters.

Homosocial abuse of women is clearly in evidence in *The Country Wife*. However, Horner seems to take as much pleasure in hurting Margery Pinchwife as he does in wounding her husband. After all, it is Margery whom Horner sexually contaminates, an act that would make her responsible for rupturing the system of marriage. As Aspasia Velissariou notes in her reading of *The Country Wife*: **‘**women’s position is crucial for the smooth operation of this system because of their mediating role in the generation and preservation of a legitimate line of heirs to the familial property and status’.[[448]](#footnote-448) Here, mediation is the operative word: it not only facilitates the practice of patrilineal succession but also serves as the means through which Horner can contaminate it. As he says to Dorilant: ‘I do hate ’em, and would hate ’em yet more, I’ll frequent ’em… I converse with ’em as you do with rich fools, to laugh at ’em, and use ’em ill’ (III. 2, p. 224). This kind of declaration highlights Horner politicised abuse of country and city wives, his militancy reminiscent of Colonel Careless, the returning libertine soldier in *The Committee,* a sexual despoiler of Protestant women who fathers bastard sons and daughters and wreaks havoc on the Puritan tradition of marriage and patrilineal succession.

Sedgwick’s model is useful for exploring the intricacies of the homosocial relation and the social machinery of the triangular relation but she does not classify *The Country Wife’s* cast of characters politically and tends to perceive Horner’s pursuit of homosocial dominance as the extension of the rake ethos, nothing more. However, all the *dramatis personae* have a discrete socio-political function to perform; they are there either to represent the hated members of the City or Country communities or they are there as Royalist representatives who serve and protect the regime. Sedgwick’s erotic triangle illustrates the intricacies of the gendered power but tends to underplay the discrete historical arrangements and social complexities that produce the homosocial scenarios she defines.

**Harcourt: a rake in reform**

It is easy to overlook the critical importance of Harcourt’s role in *The Country Wife,* probably because he is overshadowed by the venomous cruelty of Horner’s libertinism. But too often critics take Horner as the source of *The Country Wife’s* meaning. In spite of the emergence of Harcourt and Alethea as an exemplary Cavalier couple, Horner draws the limelight. As Harold Weber argues in *The Restoration Rake Hero,* ‘he remains at the center of the comic world, his sexual generosity and vitality undiminished at the play’s close’.[[449]](#footnote-449) But Weber pays almost no attention to Harcourt and, treating Horner as the key to the play’s meaning and value, reads *The Country Wife* as a satire. Similarly, Laura Brown suggests that *The Country Wife* is an *exposé* of ‘society’s materialism, immorality and hypocrisy’,[[450]](#footnote-450) an evaluation based on the enlargement of Horner’s destructive energies. These critics envisage Restoration society as dismally cynical, excessively sensual and wildly hypocritical and overlook the importance Wycherley puts on the merits of *bonne grace* masculinity.

Consequently, the theme of Cavalier reform is either pushed to the margins or, as is the case with the vast majority of criticism, overlooked. As I have been arguing in this thesis, gallant rehabilitation is a recurring theme for Restoration dramatists: *The Country Wife* is no exception. In it, Wycherley engages with the rhetorical debate about rogue Cavaliers and the possibilities and parameters of socialization, using Harcourt to argue that the re-settlement of rake masculinity is socially and morally advantageous for the Caroline regime. To achieve this end, he provides a characterization of Harcourt – every bit as textured and complex as Horner’s – that draws on two seemingly contradictory patterns of behaviour: *bonne grace* gallantry and rakish trickery.

In the first place, he has Harcourt enact devotional grace and conventional gallantry to win Alethea, a retraction of rake revolt that endorses female power. But rehabilitative behaviour is not sufficient in the achievement of this end. The plot mechanism and its triangulation of two love rivals and one woman requires Harcourt to deceive Sparkish, who attends Alethea whenever Harcourt encounters her. To overcome this obstacle, Harcourt uses a pattern of rakish deceptions to dupe, exploit and defeat his rival. This doubling strategy celebrates *politesse,* but it also flaunts libertinism as an effective supplementary power Harcourt enacts to disable Sparkish. Ultimately, his conduct is at odds with what Erin Mackie describes as ‘the extravagant transgressions’[[451]](#footnote-451) of the libertine, but transgression proves invaluable to Harcourt’s victory over his rival. Thus, in a carefully wrought incorporation of both the socially inclusive niceties of *bonne grace* and the cruel trickeries of rake wit, Wycherley’s courtship plot aims to please the mainstream cohort at Whitehall and its subordinate cohort, the libertine Wits. Perversely, libertinism becomes a function of reform. Harcourt freights the play’s theme of male rehabilitation, typifying the trend identified by Cohen that draws attention to the Court’s predilection for men who, through prolonged exposure to the company of elite women, learn to cultivate a ‘well developed though modest eloquence’.[[452]](#footnote-452) His trait name, with the second syllable emphasising ‘court’, announces the primary importance of this dramatic function.

Thus,the meaning of his romance with Alethea, and his investment in it, should not be seen merely as a love-at-first-sight or a true-love-will-prevail-in-spite-of-adversity plotline that settles the interests of two young and aristocratic kindred spirits, but as a ritualized courtship that celebrates *bonne grace*, the gendered instrument of socio-political authority. At the outset, Wycherley portrays Harcourt as one of the play’s libertine fraternity, a rake familiar with Town and Tavern, but one who refrains from or falls short of the anti-social excesses of Horner, who prides himself as much for his drunkenness[[453]](#footnote-453) as his sexual aggression. In this respect, Harcourt’s supporting role meets with the typology of ‘the rake’s friend’. He is, as Barbara Kachur argues in *Etherege and Wycherley,* a subordinate libertine character whose actions are a less extreme version of the excesses of his alpha superior. Harcourt, she says, ‘represents the typical libertine of manners comedy, though he exhibits none of the Hobbesian drive for power and supremacy over others, particularly women, that such characters as Horner or Dorimant display’.[[454]](#footnote-454) However, this reading is not entirely accurate since it is evident that Harcourt identifies more closely with conventional masculinity than with libertinism.

During Horner’s tirade against the mainstream gallant community, Harcourt qualifies his friend’s recidivism by arguing for ‘some of those pleasures you call effeminate too; they help to relish one another’ (I. 1, p. 198). Clearly drawn to *bonne grace,* he applauds female company and its refining influence. He also privileges the possibilities of a romantic attachment [[455]](#footnote-455) and, by implication, discounts the visceral sexual excesses championed by Horner. ‘Love’ as he says, ‘will always be uppermost’ (I. 1, p. 199). This declaration forecasts the seriousness with which Harcourt pursues Alethea, distinguishing him from the brutal rakishness embodied by Horner and presaging what will prove to be an honest commitment to the mainstream conventions of elite courtship.

**Sparkish and failed gentlemanliness**

Sparkish’s character and purpose in the play puts Cohen and Sedgwick into a dialogue. On the one hand, Sparkish serves a simple dramatic function: that of embodying failed gentlemanliness, his attitude to and his mistreatment of Alethea travestying the Court’s new model of feminized masculinity. On the other, Sparkish, who fancies himself a rake as well as a would-be *bonne grace* gallant, impinges on the homosocial community of the rakes, professing himself a Wit and trying his level best to join their company.[[456]](#footnote-456) With Sparkish, Wycherley extends the typology of the fop, figuring him as a pretentious fool who represents himself as a woman’s man and a libertine Wit at the same time.[[457]](#footnote-457) His character is, to a certain extent, prefigured in Wycherley’s second comedy, *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1672) in which the Monsieur de Paris character is represented as a stupid and inept Francophile, too assured of his own sophistication and attractiveness to suspect that his *fiancée* might actually be taken with another man. For Sparkish, the increase in status he would gain by joining the *salon* community at Whitehall is more important than his relationship with Alethea, the gentlewoman he uses to try to gain access to the upper echelons of social power. When she and her maid approach him at the New Exchange on the eve of their wedding, he makes his preferences perfectly clear:

SPARKISH: Oh hide me, there’s my mistress too.

*Sparkish hides himself behind Harcourt.*

HARCOURT She sees you.

SPARKISH: But I will not see her. ’Tis time to go to Whitehall, and I must not fail the drawing-room.

(III. 2, p. 227)

The singularity of his social ambitions, the ritual humiliation of his bride-to-be (who see him hiding from her) and his self-asserting braggadocio are an insult to Alethea and a travesty of the rules of male deference the *salon* prescribed and popularized. Sparkish does not represent a political threat to regime power, but he does abuse its mechanism of social authority embodied by Alethea, the play’s only virtuous woman. By winning Alethea from Sparkish, Harcourt protects and preserves the play’s socio-moral hierarchy, ensuring that Alethea remains an embodiment of and advertisement for *bonne grace.* A gallant with no understanding of the genteel milieu to which he aspires, Sparkish is an imposter or, as Harcourt describes him, a ‘monster’ of ‘affectation’ (I. 1, p. 200).

Harcourt’s judgement echoes the homosocial interests of the play’s Wit community. Horner and Dorilant’s antipathy captures the suspicion Restoration libertines directed towards hangers-on, social climbers and political imposters seeking a foothold in their society. Such characters are frequently weeded out by libertines in pro-Court comedies. Mr Wellbred in *The English Mounsieur* quickly identifies Mr Vaine and Mr Frenchlove as hangers-on, would-be rakes without the breeding readily associated with men and women of ‘quality’ and ‘substance’. In *The Comical Revenge*, the Cromwellian imposter Sir Nicholas Cully tries in vain to pose as a swaggering libertine Cavalier in the hope of seducing the Widow, Mrs Rich, but is undone by the rake, Sir Frederick Frollick, who instantly recognizes the fraudulent behaviour of the outsider. Like James Howard and George Etherege before him, Wycherley invests his rake with an acute awareness of the behavioural authenticity of others and the wherewithal to exclude them, or, if they are political rivals, humiliate and expel them from the Town.

Sparkish, then, serves as a useful dramatic tool, his social incapacities defining and authenticating Harcourt’s *politesse* and Horner’s libertinism. He strives to emulate Horner’s wit but, in spite of his good ‘opinion of himself’, ‘men laugh at him’ (I. 1, p. 199). Horner is always ready with a well- aimed and trenchant quip, but Sparkish never offers any clever or biting insights. In an early conversation with Horner, Dorilant and Harcourt, he says that:

I was discoursing and rallying with some ladies yesterday, and they happened to talk of the fine new signs in Town. Said I ‘I know where the best sign is’ ‘Where?’ says one of the ladies. ‘In Covent Garden’, I replied. Said another, ‘In what street?’ ‘In Russell Street’, answered I. ‘Lord’, says another, ‘I’m sure there was n’er a fine new sign there yesterday.’ ‘Yes, but there was,’ said I again, ‘and it came out of France, and has been there a fortnight.

(I.1, pp. 200-201)

This rambling and asinine monologue, with a punch line designed to flatter Horner,[[458]](#footnote-458) is more of an unwieldy comic set-piece than a spontaneous flash of wit, its slow-moving and repetitious build-up a pre-packaged homage which Dorilant, a genuine wit immediately squashes with a clever and terse construction: ‘the worst music, the greatest preparation’ (I. 1, p. 201). Determined to establish a place within the rake hierarchy, Sparkish finds himself excluded at every turn by every member of the Wit fraternity.

But Sparkish’s lack of wit is not his only defective feature. He also tries too hard to make his mark on every social encounter. As Horner puts it, ‘he’s one of those nauseous offerers at wit, who, like the worst fidlers, run themselves into all companies’ (I. 1, p. 199). Here, Wycherley’s use of the verb ‘run’ is apposite because of the Court Party assumption that physical effort or exertion was vulgar. In *The Rules of Civility*, de Courtin recommends his aspiring patricians to strip away all extraneous movements and emulate the distinctive easiness of the Cavalier class. Arduous motion signals social ‘inferiority’ and must be avoided at all costs: waving the hands, swaying the head and rolling the eyes were to be studiously avoided as was ‘moving the arms and legs as if they would like to sow.’[[459]](#footnote-459) Such characteristics produced a kind of body-babble, an unwanted frenzy of movements that – it was held – confirmed an inferior birth-right. Thus, Sparkish’s running hither and thither defines the Wit’s stillness. This corporeal contrast between Sparkish – the emulator – and Horner – the emulated – heightens the incongruity of a young gallant who appears less a Cavalier than a man-servant, his ‘inferior’ social demeanour entirely out of kilter with the Wits, all of whom exhibit the easy manner characteristic of the Cavalier class.

**Alethea and the Town**

Sparkish’s misuse of Alethea can be construed as an attempt to use Harcourt, who loves her, to gain ascendancy within the group of Wits in spite of their disinclinations. When he first introduces Harcourt to Alethea, he insults and humiliates her by insisting that Harcourt – whose position within the Wit community Sparkish is desperate to supplant – assess her erotic merits:‘Tell me, I say, Harcourt, how dost thou like her? (II.1, p. 209) Alethea is made to suffer further ignominy when Sparkish suggests that Harcourt take Alethea to a quiet corner and enjoy her company, recasting Sparkish in the role of a ‘pander’ (II. 1, p. 211) who pimps out the very woman he is engaged to marry. The crassness with which Sparkish commodifies Alethea might suggest that she is represented as a character with little social traction within polite society, but this is not the case. In fact, Wycherley figures Sparkish’s exploitation of Alethea as a breach of the orthodoxy of social power Harcourt tries to uphold.

In the main, Wycherley portrays Alethea as a woman of virtue [[460]](#footnote-460) and social merit*,* a fringe figure of Whitehall’s *salon* culture [[461]](#footnote-461) steeped in the manners of the Court and fully engaged with the cultural practices and locations where the Town’s elite gather. She participates in the pleasures of fashion, going to the playhouse and visiting the ‘Mulberry Garden’, ‘St. James’s Park’ and ‘the New Exchange’ (II. 1, p. 206), places where she mingles with the *beau monde*. She enjoys the ‘innocent liberties of the Town’ (II. 1, p. 207), where all the scenes in the play occur. Horner’s imaginary lodgings are in Russell St., adjacent to the Covent Garden piazza, the epicentre [[462]](#footnote-462) of the Town where Alethea and Sparkish break off their engagement. The characters also visit the New Exchange, an arcade of ‘shops and stalls’ (III. 2, p. 224) a few blocks from the Piazza where Harcourt pursues Alethea.[[463]](#footnote-463) The exact location of the Pinchwife’s lodgings is not disclosed, but morning visits from Sparkish, the Fidgets, Horner and Harcourt suggest it is part of the same geographical compass.

Wycherley’s reference to these settings might convey the impression that the Town was an exclusively aristocratic social milieu in which the boundaries of social definition were stable, fixed and uncontested, but this was not the case. Lisa Picard offers a graphic picture of the metropolis:

Young people up from the country to serve an apprenticeship or enter domestic service gaped at English grandees in velvet-lined coaches, and fine ladies in sedan chairs escorted by liveried servants and African slave boys. Street sellers and mountebanks rubbed shoulders with sailors and beggars. Foreign languages and Latin vied with the country accents of young gentlemen up from the provinces.[[464]](#footnote-464)

Characterized by flux and fluidity, the Town, which ‘stretched between the City and Whitehall,’[[465]](#footnote-465) was topographically, socially, politically, and functionally overlapping.[[466]](#footnote-466) According to Cynthia Wall, the Fire had violated both public and private spaces and generated a palliative need for clear social delineation and political supervision.[[467]](#footnote-467) As Tim Harris notes in *Restoration*, ‘the government was particularly worried about the threat of possible disorder in the capital – now a large, sprawling metropolis of some half a million people’.[[468]](#footnote-468) John Dryden’s Prologue to *Marriage a- la- mode* appears to respond to this urge in his representation of the Town:

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| --- |
| Lord, how reform'd and quiet we are grown,  Since all our Braves and all our Wits are gone:  Fop-corner now is free from Civil War:  White-Wig and Izard make no longer jar.  *France,* and the Fleet, have swept the Town so clear,  That we can Act in peace, and you can hear.[[469]](#footnote-469) |

On the basis of the elite ‘types’ Dryden includes, a visitor to the Town could be forgiven for thinking it was a socially exclusive set of locations populated only by the elite. But as Harold Love argues in ‘Who were the Restoration Audience?’ it was socially diverse. There were:

Persons in Offices’, ‘Persons in the Law’… the members of the aristocracy and gentry who chose not to be identified with the Court, military and some naval officers, students of the Inns of Court, and the wives, families and personal servants of all these. The term must also have embraced a certain section of the demi-monde, the whores and beaux, though not presumably the least reputable. There is no reason why it should not have embraced the “politer” element among the Westminster bourgeoisie and those citizens who… chose to identify themselves in dress and behaviour with a broader middle category than with the city party.[[470]](#footnote-470)

Love adds that a full appreciation of the Town’s social demography should not exclude the ‘humble shopkeeper, journeyman or apprentice’, people who ‘cannot be assumed to have any special sense of belonging to the city’.[[471]](#footnote-471) However, his account fails to embrace the extremities of the Town’s convoluted social picture. The two new Town playhouses, both of which were fashionable destinations for the Royalist elite, were built on the fringes of slums and underworld haunts. Bridges Street, just off Covent Garden, where the King’s Company established their new Theatre Royal in May 1663, was within spitting distance of the brothels of Drury Lane. The Duke’s Company, established in Lincoln’s Inn Fields since 1662, was fringed by town houses built in the first Caroline period and inhabited by aristocrats, merchants and artists, but the Fields themselves and the alley of Whetstone Park behind were well-known haunts of prostitutes and petty criminals.[[472]](#footnote-472) According to Picard, most of the streets were narrow, crowded and only paved in Drury Lane, Bloomsbury and the road north from St James’ Palace. Side streets, she reports, ‘were punctuated by narrow alleys barely wide enough for two pedestrians to pass.’[[473]](#footnote-473) Cramped ‘courts and alleys containing a tavern or an entrance to the mansion of some rich citizen’[[474]](#footnote-474) suggest a jarring and dangerous lack of social, geographical and political boundaries.

Wycherley, who lived for many years in Bow Street near Covent Garden Square,[[475]](#footnote-475) responds to this troubling sense of flux by rendering the elite locations of the Town as places of ‘innocent liberty’ (II. 1, p. 207) where young, aristocratic women – symbolised by Alethea – are free to roam and ramble, either with or without a consort. In *Travels,* Cosmo Medici – who visited England in the 1670s – touches on this modish pastime when he refers to:

the liberty enjoyed by ladies in London, who are not prohibited from walking in the streets by night as well as by day, without any attendance. By day they go on foot, or in their carriages, either *incog.* with masks, or without, as they think proper.[[476]](#footnote-476)

Unfortunately, Medici does not make reference to the locations where this night promenading took place and when he does elaborate geographical contexts, he refers to women moving by day in and around elite areas such as the New Exchange, the Mall or Hyde Park.[[477]](#footnote-477) But as Love points out, these were ‘divisively territorialized’[[478]](#footnote-478) settings where the *beau monde* was only one social group.

In his first comedy, *Love in a Wood*,[[479]](#footnote-479) Wycherley makes light of the problems of social delineation by setting some of the action in St James’s Park and imagining it as a miniature Arden, a Royalist paradise visited – even at night – by young aristocratic men and women seeking amusement, intrigue or sexual adventure. In actuality, St James’s Palace was a gated and guarded territory: only ladies and gentlemen were permitted to enter the grounds of the Palace. Medici notes in *Travels* that ‘at the gate, the guard were [sic] on parade’ and that the building was ‘enclosed on every side by a wall’.[[480]](#footnote-480) This military presence ensured that ‘undesirables’, namely footmen, attendants and other commoners, were not permitted to enter. But in spite of the elite freedoms Wycherley pictures, he does provide a slight – albeit manageable – *frisson* of social conflict in *Love in a Wood.* Prefiguring the sectarianism of *The Country Wife*, his cast of characters includes two mainstream Cavaliers, a libertine, a fop, two gentlewomen of the Town, and, on the other side of the socio-political divide, an Alderman described in the *dramatis personae* as a ‘covetous, lecherous, old usurer’, his sister, an ‘affected Widow’ and a ‘City bawd’. In due course, these ‘inferior’ opponents are driven away from the higher reaches of polite society. Nevertheless, Wycherley takes the stature of the City community seriously enough to condemn its grandees in his Prologue to the play. In it he damns the ‘bought privileges’ of ‘huge’ men of capital:

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| --- |
| who when they needs must fail,  Send the small brothers of their trade to jail;  Whilst they, by breaking, gentlemen are made.  Then, more than any, scorn poor men o’th’ trade’.[[481]](#footnote-481) |

Unsurprisingly, Wycherley sustains this antipathy throughout the play. The main thrust of the action differentiates, in completely safe public spaces, the merits of the Royalist elite at the expense of the socially inadequate but wealthy City characters. Lady Flippant, the widow, makes licentious advances on the gentlemen, including Ranger, a rake/scourer who plans to visit St James’ Park in pursuit of sexual adventure. He is discovered by his *fiancée*, Lydia, who – accompanied by Lady Flippant – is entirely at ease following him into the Park in the dead of night. Ranger pursues her only to become enamoured of Christina, who is faithfully awaiting the return to London of her *fiancé*, Valentine, an orthodox gallant. Ranger tries to seduce the virtuous Christina, who rebuffs him. Shocked by Lydia’s distressed response to his inconstancy, Ranger promises to reform.

*Love in a Wood* presents an extremely partial picture of Royalist social authority, vaunting the Park and Covent Garden as free environments, the only ripple of danger coming from Ranger, who becomes temporarily embroiled with Christina but quickly atones when he realises the intensity of his feelings for Lydia. For the denouement, Wycherley chooses the Mulberry Garden dining room from where the threat to and geographical impingements on Royalist order are effortlessly and effectively expelled. All the intrusive and unwanted City characters are policed and punished. Gripe, the City Alderman, is humiliated when he discovers that his daughter Martha is not only six months pregnant, but has also secretly married the fop, Dapperwit. His sister, the Widow, also suffers a bitter fate when she realises she has agreed to marry the empty-headed fortune hunter, Sir Simon Addleplot. The wealthy Gripe and his sister are sent packing from Wycherley’s Arden, stripped of their financial and moral assets for having the temerity to mix with their Royalist ‘betters’ in social precincts they do not belong.

Wycherley images a similar picture of elite social control in his second comedy, *The Gentleman-dancing Master*.[[482]](#footnote-482) On this occasion, he heightens the appeal of modish liberty by placing it tantalisingly out-of-bounds for the heroine, Hippolyta, who has had her passage into society blocked by a domineering father, Sir James Formal. A titled man of the City, he has denied her permission to ‘take a Ramble in the Park’, ‘eat a Sillybub in the New Spring Garden or the Mulberry-garden’ or even allow her to go ‘go to church’ (I. 1, p. 100). Forbidding a young lady access to church might seem excessive but, as Wall explains, Wycherley, among others, sees churches as potential rallying points for altercationists and Royalist objectors. These ‘dissenting meeting-houses’ were ‘systematically appropriated by the dominant political and religious structures’.[[483]](#footnote-483) Hippolyta, promised by her father to her nephew, craves to be free from her father’s strict impositions, particularly those that prevent her from meeting Town gallants, the most appealing of whom is Gerrard. Her solution is to have Gerrard pose as a dancing master offering her personal tuition. He declares his love but Hippolyta, afraid he may be a rake posing as a *bonne grace* gallant, tests his love; a difficult task since Gerrard must manage the ever-present threat that his disguise will be discovered by her father and her vigilant aunt, Mrs Caution. He must also deal with the anxiety of knowing she is about to be married off to the fop, Mounsieur de Paris, who is Sir James’s nephew. In due course, Gerrard outmanoeuvres his rival. The dancing master ruse is a success, Monsieur is snatched by the aggressive prostitute Mistress Flirt and Sir James finds that Gerrard, who has married Hippolyta without his consent, is ‘a brisk man of honour’ and a worthy inheritor ‘who shall have the most part of my estate in present, and the rest at my death’ (V. 1, p. 187).

Notably, Wycherley invests Hippolyta with far more intelligence and initiative than Gerrard. She concocts the dancing master ruse and increases her own gravitational pull on Gerrard by pretending to be afraid of absconding with him, an inducement that leads him to declare his feelings and redouble his efforts to ‘rescue’ her. She also feigns indifference – ‘there are other dancing masters to be had’ (IV. 1, p. 168) – regulating his behaviour even though he is laughably unaware that she is intensifying his passion. She skilfully dispatches Monsieur de Paris and even prepares the ground for her father’s reconciliation with Gerrard in the dénouement. As Michael Cordner puts it, ‘the women’ in *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* ‘may not be paragons but they are much more astute than the men’.[[484]](#footnote-484) Gerard proves he is not a libertine, but the difficult tests Hippolyta makes him undergo, the guidance she gives and the actions she compels him to perform are not disparaged or satirized by Wycherley; on the contrary, he vaunts her high-functioning intelligence and her regulatory influence over the conduct of her favourite suitor. Under the sanction of marriage and with a man of honour, Hippolyta can, at last, enjoy the pleasures of the Town forbidden her when she was a ‘City damsel’.[[485]](#footnote-485)

Social freedom features much more prominently in *The Country Wife,* with Wycherley picturing Alethea as a keen and self-directed rambler, visiting a variety of destinations and enjoying her political and civil liberties exempt from fear, threat, obligation or reproach. To emphasise the Town’s so-called freedoms, Wycherley juxtaposes Alethea’s customary rambling with Margery’s life of dependency in the Country. When the pair converse, Alethea assumes the role of knowledgeable advisor to her wide-eyed sister-in-law and, enlarging on the pleasures of the mode, wastes no time in expressing her distaste for the gentry and a style of living which, she insists, condemns women to a life of ‘drudgery’ (II. 1, p. 206). This preference illustrates a growing social trend that saw aristocrats either abandon the Country habitus altogether or spend an increasing amount of time in the metropolis. As Felicity Heal points out in *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, Country gentlemen would bring wives or, indeed, whole families to London for the ‘season’ which began inSeptember and ended in April.[[486]](#footnote-486) Its popularity ensured a steady influx of County aristocrats who, as Lord North notes in his Commonplace book, ‘have a great partiality to the equal conversations of Townes.’[[487]](#footnote-487) Contacts were increased and the expansion of sociable gentility was a powerful lure, particularly for young adults drawn to the glamour and excitement of modish, Royalist culture. Heal adds that ‘the increasing concentration of fashionable culture in the Town’ pressurised the Country mode of living and ‘offered powerful inducements to change.’[[488]](#footnote-488) Of course, such temptations were not simply geographical: they were also hegemonic, militating against the Country, depleting its human resources and de-meriting its cultural capital. Wycherley re-invigorates this social process, using Alethea, who has abandoned the Country and settled in the Town, to proselytise for the ‘superior’ values and practices of Royalism.

Nevertheless, the influx from Country to Town also drew dissenters, imposters and outsiders, increasing regime fears of social and political disorder. To accommodate this threat to regime power, Wycherley uses his Country gentleman character Jack Pinchwife to mount a critique of the Town. In a rather feeble counter-argument, Wycherley has Pinchwife challenge the seemingly universal civilities of the Town with intemperate accusations aimed at his modish sister, Alethea. Convinced she is a ‘scandalous’ influence on his wife, he rails at her and, interpreting her ‘freedom’ as a form of sexual license, calls her a ‘notorious town-woman’ (II. 1, p. 207), an accusation that affiliates her with the Town’s *demi-monde.* In response, she assures him that no ‘ill women visit’ [her] ‘lodgings’ and that she ‘keeps no company with women of scandalous reputation’ (II. 1, p. 207). Pinchwife’s assumption that a woman is corrupt if she cannot content herself to a life of domestic confinement is more revealing of the community he represents than the one he criticizes: hisdominative and controlling masculinity is opposed to his sister’s insistence on roaming and rambling wherever she likes.

Wycherley characterizes Pinchwife as a farce figure whose complaints are not applicable to the ‘superior’ arena of the Town but, perversely, his accusations do shed some light on some of the Town’s unpalatable realities. It was, after all, an extremely condensed social complex where the amusements of Covent Garden and Drury Lane overlapped with the slums and brothels of Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Whetstone Park, extremely dangerous and criminal locations where young aristocratic women rambling alone would be far from safe. But since Wycherley imagines Pinchwife as a detestable [[489]](#footnote-489) bully, a recidivist and an enemy of the Crown, his fierce objections to his sister’s freewheeling modishness have no traction. Wycherley glosses over the Town’s dangerously diverse character, but he does not debunk the elite society of Royalist women, typified by Alethea.

**Harcourt’s courtship of Alethea**

Wycherley’s treatment of the Harcourt and Alethea courtship exemplifies Michele Cohen’s claim that the gentlewomen of the Court engaged the gallant cohort in a systematic programme of self-improvement that disseminated *bonne grace* masculinity. Wycherley uses Alethea as his dramatic agent for rake rehabilitation to illustrate how the new code of manners was managed by elite women who encouraged men to reform and effeminate their behaviour in the quest for increased levels of social and moral refinement. She is his representative of thepolite Royalist elite, a gentlewoman whose sense of liberty is complimented by her moral energy. However, critics who view the Town through the lens of Horner’s libertinism often problematize Wycherley’s uncomplicated rendition of gentlewomanly virtue. For example, Barbara Kachur argues in *Etherege and Wycherley* that her virtuousness is implausible. She is an ‘anomaly’, an ‘unwieldy dramatic construct which dichotomizes virtue and vice’ but has ‘little relation to social actuality’.[[490]](#footnote-490) This reading rests on the totalising assumption that the behaviour practised in the aristocratic territories of the Town was base and hypocritical.’[[491]](#footnote-491) But as this thesis has been trying to show, this position is critically skewed, since it views the entire *beau monde* through the consciousness of a hate-fuelled libertine. To measure Alethea in these terms is to undervalue Wycherley’s pro-Court rhetoric and the civilizing mission it celebrates. She is not an ‘unwieldy’ and virtuous ‘anomaly’; on the contrary, her dramatic function is simple and direct: she illustrates the meaning and value of *bonne grace*, which, under the auspices of the women of the Court, functioned as the institutional means for improving behaviour among the gallant communities at Whitehall and in the elite territories of the Town.

Mindful of these benefits, Wycherley has his reforming libertine attempt to behave in the manner becoming of a *bonne grace* suitor. Harcourt first encounters Alethea at Pinchwife’s lodgings, a private drawing room setting where the couple can – in spite of Sparkish’s interventions – enjoy the secure of intimacies of a civilised domestic setting. He ‘*salutes*’ (II. 1, p. 209) her when they first meet each other and when pressed by Sparkish into declaring whether or not he likes her, he says ‘so infinitely well, that I wish I had a mistress too that differed from her in nothing’ (II.1, p. 209). His complements and applauds – central requirements of *bonne grace* – are managed via transcendental patterns of speech and corporeal deference. She is ‘the most estimable, most glorious creature in the world’ (III. 2, p. 229), a ‘heavenly form’ whom he claims to love with ‘the best and truest love in the world’ (III. 2, p. 231).

He vaunts her but, crucially, he submits himself to her, gladly giving her his power. He tells Sparkish who takes relish in his assumed power over Alethea – and by extension over Harcourt – that ‘I must be her servant’ (III.2, p. 233), a role which Sparkish either fails to understand or is unwilling to perform. This unequivocal declaration aligns Harcourt directly with the *beaux garçons* at Whitehall; the hub of the Royalist community where mainstream gallants performed the rites of subservience at the behest of their gentlewomen. Harcourt’s ‘correct’ behaviour advances his own claim to courtly authenticity and magnifies Sparkish’s grave incapacities. At the same time, by exposing his rival’s social failings, he satisfies the libertine urge to subvert and depose.

Like Horner, Harcourt exposes his rival’s frailties through tactical cunning, obfuscation and deception. As he says of love triangles, ‘when all’s done, a rival is the best cloak to steal a mistress under, without suspicion, and when we have once got to her as we desire, we throw him off like other cloaks’ (III. 2, p. 228). His principal mode of attack is double-speak: Sparkish always accompanies Alethea, so Harcourt must court her without alerting his rival’s suspicions. Thus, he begins to pursue Alethea by pretending to oppose her marriage to his ‘friend’ (III. 2, p. 228) whose company he will lose once Sparkish and Alethea are wed. Pointedly, Harcourt tells Alethea that ‘I was never an enemy to marriage until now’ and when she questions the value of their amity – ‘marriage is an enemy to you because it robs you of your friend?’ – Harcourt agrees but also infers that he would sooner have her for himself: ‘I wish it were in my power to break the match, by heavens I would’ (II. 1, p. 210).

Of course, the success of this double-speak strategy depends on Sparkish’s insensibility (II. 1, p. 210), but it also hinges on Alethea’s complicity. She is fully aware that Harcourt is abusing his ‘friend’ and even tells Sparkish: ‘I hate him because he is your enemy – and you ought to hate him too, for making love to me, if you love me’ (III. 2, p. 229). But even when she bluntly tells Sparkish that Harcourt ‘pursues me to marry me’ (III. 2, p. 230), he does not realise Harcourt deceives him. Reassured by his rival’s stupidity, Harcourt grows more opportunistic. As ‘Alethea walks carelessly to and fro’ he announces:

HARCOURT: I love you madam, so –

SPARKISH: How’s that? Nay now you begin to go too far indeed.

HARCOURT: So much, I confess, I say I love you, that I would not have you miserable, and cast yourself away on so unworthy and inconsiderable a thing as what you see here. (*Clapping his hand on his breast, points at Sparkish*).

(III.2, p. 230)

Critics tend to take Horner’s skills at deception for granted, but his impotence ruse lacks the subtlety and spontaneity of Harcourt’s management of Sparkish.[[492]](#footnote-492) Harcourt’s linguistic and visual doubling assuages Sparkish but also indicates to Alethea that it is Sparkish who is the ‘unworthy and inconsiderable thing’. There is, of course, a farcical strain to Harcourt’s toying with a gallant too self-regarding to grasp he is being duped. But the cruel humour freighted in this scene sustains the notion of rake dominance over other men, particularly those would-be rivals or upstarts who seek entry to their cohort. For the rake, homo-social status is of paramount importance to his sense of self-definition, as well as his repute within and without the rake fraternity.[[493]](#footnote-493) Harcourt’s power over Sparkish is unarguable but undiluted by his subservience to Alethea. He reforms, becomes more refined and more tightly bound to mainstream convention but, in the company of other men, his status, supported by his wit, reaffirms his ‘special’ standing as a man. Thus, Wycherley uses vaunts Harcourt as a *bonne grace* gallant and a rake, pleasing to polite society for his orthodox conduct and flattering the Wit faction at Whitehall with his effortless abuse of his foppish, upstart rival.

Harcourt’s shape-shifting opportunism and quick wit make Sparkish appear increasingly clownish, particularly when he marries Alethea without realising Harcourt has disguised himself as the parson. Alethea, however, is fully aware of the ruse and tells Harcourt ‘this dull trick will not serve your turn; though you delay our marriage, you shall not hinder it’ (IV. 1, p. 242). Undeterred, Harcourt presses on with his parson’s role, duping Sparkish and reminding Alethea of his own matrimonial intentions:

Far be it from me munificent patroness, to delay your marriage. I desire nothing more than marrying you presently, which I might do, if yourself would; for my noble, good-natured, and thrice generous patron here would not hinder it.

(IV.1, p. 242)

These libertine sleights of hand run rings round Sparkish, but Wycherley sees fit to humiliate him further by introducing a mistaken identity trope involving Alethea who, according to Pinchwife, has been seen visiting Horner’s lodgings. Pinchwife tells Sparkish. It transpires that it is Margery who has disguised herself in Alethea’s clothes and sought out Horner, but Sparkish, taking Pinchwife’s word as holy writ, is furious and decides to confront Alethea and ‘call her as many crocodiles, sirens, harpies, and other heathenish names’ (V. 3, p. 268).

For this final encounter, Wycherley sets the scene in the *‘*Piazza in Covent Garden’*,* a bustling public context. This choice might appear to suit Sparkish, since the confrontation he intends would be more likely to pass unnoticed in a public, socially diverse setting. But this is not so. Correct conduct was expected of gallants in all social situations, including public thoroughfares. It was, as de Courtin puts it, ‘essential to civility’. If a gallant failed to behave properly, in this, as in any social setting, he would be looked upon as ‘ill bred’. He must ‘complement modestly and gravely, without noise or obstreperousness’. It was his ‘civic obligation’ to be ‘chearful’.[[494]](#footnote-494) Sparkish transgresses all these prescriptions. He mocks Alethea – ‘Could you find out no Country fool to abuse?’ He insults her integrity – ‘Have you the confidence – I should call it something else, since I know your guilt – to stand my just reproaches?’ Finally, he berates her – ‘I never had any passion for you – till now, for now I hate you’ (V. 3, p. 269). The brutishness with which Sparkish severs their engagement indicates that Wycherley has imagined him as a social contaminant, unworthy of elite female company and unfit to serve as a proper member of the mainstream cohort.

Sparkish’s dereliction of ‘civic obligation’ signals the genteel role Harcourt must perform if he is to win Alethea. However, his transition from libertine to *bonne grace* gallant is not effortless. At times, his courtship style is notable for its lack of ‘consideration, respect, decency and restraint,’[[495]](#footnote-495) characteristics which, as Erin Mackie points out, were core features of *bonne grace.* Harcourt assures Alethea of his desire to serve, but the intensity of his passion exceeds the boundaries of Caroline correctness. In the following exchange, taken from the latter part of their first meeting, Harcourt behaves particularly ungraciously to Alethea’s refusal of his suit:

ALETHEA: The writings are drawn, sir, settlements made; ’tis too late, sir, and past all revocation.

HARCOURT: Then so is my death.

ALETHEA: I would not be unjust to him.

HARCOURT: Then why to me so?

ALETHEA: I have no obligation to you.

HARCOURT: My love.

ALETHEA: I had his before.

HARCOURT: You never had it; he wants, you see, jealousy, the only infallible sign of it.

(II.1, p. 211)

Emotionally inflamed, he talks of suicide, accuses Alethea of unfairness and then vociferates against Sparkish, utterances which all breach the prescriptions of genteel masculinity. Of course, it could be argued that his emotional intensity confirms his credibility as a suitor but, as Ronald Berman explains, ‘passion in both Restoration comedy and social life is conventionally understood as a failure of style. Nothing is more scorned than the obsessive power of feeling’.[[496]](#footnote-496) Clearly, Harcourt’s pursuit of Alethea is excessive. He escapes censure, but the intensity of his devotion warps his ability to comport himself with the ceremonial poise of an ideal Cavalier suitor.

Nor is Alethea an exemplary character. D. M. Young claims that she is spotless. She is ‘the reference point for the audience to judge the true from the false’. She is, he goes on to say, ‘the virtuous woman’ and ‘the single character who sets the standard by which we may judge others’.[[497]](#footnote-497) This suggestion that she is without fault or folly is challenged by Katherine Rogers who argues that:

Alethea’s motive for marriage to Sparkish suggests she is not driven wholly by the principles of affection and duty but the desire for a continuance – albeit within the customary limits of matrimony – of freedom and self-directedness.[[498]](#footnote-498)

Her favourable attitude to Sparkish springs from his unenquiring easiness, a suitable demeanour that would not curtail a woman of the Town her freedoms and pleasures. Rogers goes on to contrast the potential benefits of marriage to a fop to matrimony with a libertine. Marriage to a Wit, she suggests, was considered as a singularly bad choice since the union led him to ‘satire and captiousness, characteristics incompatible with good nature and simple affection’.[[499]](#footnote-499) In Rochester’s ‘A Letter from Artemesia in the Town to Cloe in the Country’,[[500]](#footnote-500) the urbane Artemesia explains why Wits make lousy husbands:

|  |
| --- |
| When I was married, fools were all a-mode;  The men of Wit were then incommode:  Slow of belief, and fickle in Desire,  Who, e’re they’l be perswaded, must enquire;  As if they came to spie, not to admire. |

‘Fickle’ desire notwithstanding, Wits are overtly inquisitive, restless and cynical. A far more suitable prospect is the Fop:

|  |
| --- |
| Vain of his proper Merit, He, with ease,  Believes we love him best, who best can please:  On him our gross, dull, common Flatteries pass;  Even most happy when most made an Ass:  Heavy to apprehend; though all Mankind  Perceive us false, the Fop, himself, is blind.  Who, doating on himself, –  Thinks every one that sees him of his mind. |

Here, Rochester’s and Wycherley’s vision coincide with both poets characterising the Fop as too self-regarding to recognize the censure of others and too stupid to have any knowledge of himself in relation to the world. Like Sparkish, Rochester’s Fop is relaxed and unreflective, making him a good candidate for a woman of the Town striving to preserve her modishness. Alethea admits as much to her maid, Lucy, telling her she would ‘marry a fool for fortune, liberty or title’ (V. 3, p. 270) rather than a domineering and distrustful Wit who, she fears might ‘send her into the country’ (V. 3, p. 270).

This admission indicates that Alethea does not, as Young claims, reveal ‘the true ideal and meaning of honour’,[[501]](#footnote-501) since her motives are self-interested. In fact, she appears to have chosen Sparkish because she does not want marital parity at all. As John Vance puts it she is ‘shrewd, intelligent, humane, assertive, and egoistical and not above exercising what power she has over men’. Alert to the gendered handicaps of tradition and law, she is well aware that she would preserve a degree of freedom if she marries a man with an ‘unthreatening temperament.’[[502]](#footnote-502) But if libertine husbands were so undesirable, how would she benefit from marrying the rakish Harcourt?

Rochester’s argument may well be insightful, but Harcourt’s determination to reform before a marriage settlement strongly suggests that classifying him as a libertine is only partially applicable. Harcourt aims, primarily, at attaining legitimacy as a *bonne grace* gallant who follows courtly conventions of devotion and service, which, in action, exclude him from rake definition. Harcourt’s rake trickeries, feints and deceptions are all aimed at Sparkish, and even though he draws on his libertine past to secure his successful courtship of Alethea, his Wit cunning supports his belief that ‘love will be uppermost’ (I. 1, p. 199). Wycherley’s representation of Sparkish as a failed gentleman certainly suggests that, of the two men, Harcourt would make a better match. The singularity of his intention to perform the duties of a servant certainly accords with *bonne grace* and highlights the principal distinction between the two men: Sparkish disregards the gendered proprieties of the new Court, but Harcourt supports them. Sparkish’s social incapacities are inversely proportionate to Harcourt’s ardent – if somewhat overwrought – devotion. And devotion, or more specifically, the modest devotion of *bonne grace* definition, was a style of being diametrically opposed in ethos and action to libertinism.

To indicate his belief in libertine reform, Wycherley has Harcourt become a model representative of the Court’s new masculinity. As soon as Sparkish departs the dramatic equation, Harcourt displays a rare aptitude for gallant correctness, leaping to Alethea’s defence when she is falsely accused of sleeping with Horner, who refuses to vindicate her. Soon enough, Margery appears dressed in Alethea’s clothes, but not before Wycherley has stressed the value of the most fundamental rule of *bonne grace*, a responsibility the self-interested Sparkish is unwilling to meet: a gallant must honour and serve his lady at all costs, particularly a young, unmarried woman. As Merry Wiesner notes, ‘chastity and the reputation of chastity’ was vital for an *ingénue* gentlewoman.[[503]](#footnote-503) Keenly aware that it is his duty to protect her reputation, Harcourt tells Alethea:

Madam, have not trouble. You shall now see ’tis possible for me to love too without being jealous. I will not only believe your innocence myself, but make all the world believe it’

(V. 4, p. 277).

Harcourt’s active involvement in preserving Alethea’s reputation and making ‘all the world believe it’ contrasts vividly with Sparkish’s ‘easy’ self-regard and marks Harcourt out as a gallant who, as *The Art of Complaisance* puts it, would earn the praise of ‘a thousand others in his commendation.[[504]](#footnote-504) Growing into the role of brave and devoted protector, Harcourt then deals with Horner, who has refused to admit Alethea is not his lover. As he approaches Horner, his language shifts ominously into the vernacular of honorific satisfaction. Horner is clearly the offender, but notably, Harcourt does not strike nor directly challenge him. He is, after all, a fellow Cavalier, even if he no longer represents the values Harcourt once held dear. Instead, he offers Horner the opportunity of either verbally vindicating Alethea or by settling the matter with the sword:

HARCOURT: I must now be concerned for this lady’s honour.

HORNER: And I must be concerned for a lady’s honour too.

HARCOURT: This lady has her honour and I will protect it.

HORNER: My lady has not her honour, but has given it me to keep, and I will preserve it.

HARCOURT: I understand you not.

HORNER: I would not have you.

(V. 4, p. 277)

This brief exchange marks the distance Harcourt has travelled, socially and psychologically, from his old compatriot. Horner refuses to admit to the fact that Margery, not Alethea, is his lover, but his facetious evasions do not, to Harcourt’s mind, serve as sufficient provocation for a violent settlement. This circumspection echoes Jean Gailhard’s advocacy for peaceful dispute settlement in *The Compleat Gentleman,* which advises ‘honest and lawful means to get satisfaction’.[[505]](#footnote-505) Mindful of his surroundings and the genteel image a mainstream gallant was obliged to convey, he is not over-sensitive to Horner’s deceits,[[506]](#footnote-506) a lack of respect that frequently prompted a rapid escalation into violent swordplay which would have been unthinkable in a fashionable drawing room, the setting for Harcourt and Horner’s quarrel. Behaving with impeccable self-restraint, he ensures that decorum prevails over angry censure in a moment of crisis.

To celebrate Harcourt’s cool display, Wycherley has Pinchwife demonstrate how not to manage a crisis in a polite context. Overwhelmed by rage, he threatens to slay Horner for abusing his sister and prepares to draw his sword on Margery when she appears dressed in Alethea’s clothes. Harcourt intercedes, commanding Pinchwife to ‘Hold!’ (V. 4, p. 278). This intervention confirms Harcourt’s self-discipline: he is brave, but crucially he is ‘sober’ and ‘prudent’,[[507]](#footnote-507) merits which, as Donna Andrew argues, were ‘essential to the man of noble stature’.[[508]](#footnote-508) At the same time, the scenario also indicates Pinchwife’s unsuitability for the duties of civic protection. Lacking in the skills of sociability, Pinchwife – the Country gentleman – cannot keep the peace, but Harcourt – the Cavalier – can, his intervention making it abundantly clear that only Royalist gentlemen are fit for the role of social governance in turbulent and potentially violent times.

Harcourt’s conduct in this scene completes his transformation from libertine to *bonne grace* gallant. In it, he displays the core values and practices of the exemplary Cavalier. He serves Alethea by publicly defending her honour, an act of gallantry confirming he is more concerned with her reputation than his own safety. He gives Horner the opportunity to tell the truth rather than resort to violence and is generous enough to intercede when Pinchwife threatens to put Horner to the sword. A *tour de force* of conventional courtliness, Harcourt’s service is an unequivocal avowal of *bonne grace*: unswerving devotion, courage, consideration, respect, the mastery of violent impulse and the rejection of egocentricity. He serves the new orthodoxy, successfully defending his lady’s honour, refusing to become embroiled in a violent dispute and imposing himself on a weak political rival who, outrageously, threatens to slay his own wife and Horner, Harcourt’s fellow Cavalier.

Wycherley, then, pinpoints the value of reform, of personal duty and responsibility to civic protection rather than the pursuit of personal interests. This orientation is suggestive of the quality of *noblesse oblige* where leadership duties are performed ‘without recompense, except of recognition and esteem’[[509]](#footnote-509) within civil polity. Duty is also central to his courtship of Alethea, whose agreement to his suit is not merely the demonstration of her own personal approval but the acknowledgement that Harcourt is committed to serve: to obediently ‘render himself to his superior’.[[510]](#footnote-510) This condition, station or occupation compels him to channel his power into protecting Alethea’s reputation in an exemplary demonstration of the gendered duties of a worthy *bonne grace* gallant.

In relation to his dramatic forbears, Harcourt’s reform is the most complete, the most consummate. In *The Committee*, Robert Howard’s libertine, Colonel Careless, is only beginning to learn the social sensitivities of polite behaviour, struggling, albeit manfully, against a destructive libertine ethos. An ill-mannered Cavalier, he serves the Court Party but lacks the proper restraint of an orthodox gallant. Similarly, Loveby in John Dryden’s *Wild Gallant* is still partly a renegade warrior, too ready to resort to the sword as a means of conflict settlement, even when defending the law. Wellbred in James Howard’s *The English Mounsieur* proves himself a man of ‘substance’, but his attempts to serve Lady Wealthy are a litany of failures that mar his integration into polite Cavalier culture. In *Epsom Wells*, Thomas Shadwell’s three Cavaliers only realise their respective follies at the close of the action: they are penitent, but the trials of rehabilitation lie ahead of them. In each of the above plays, the acquisition of refined masculinity is rendered as a work in progress, but in *The Country Wife*, Harcourt is portrayed as the finished article – a libertine who, after a difficult, albeit short, period of transition becomes a high-functioning *bonne grace* gallant, subservient to women but dominant over men.

Clearly, this re-settlement of masculine values and practices, actualized in the union of reformed libertine and gentlewoman of the Town, indicates that Wycherley does not set out to indict Restoration society. He certainly satirizes elite members of the Country and City communities who participate in the so-called freedoms of the Town, but he does not, as D. M. Young suggests, ‘paint this dark picture of the fashionable world’.[[511]](#footnote-511) Harcourt and Alethea belong to that world, but Wycherley does not render them as morally bereft hypocrites. He captures their faults and follies, but he ensures that both characters vaunt the worth of the Court’s civilizing imperatives, its grand aspirations and its engagement with the need for the re-settlement of deviant masculinities. However, the vast majority of criticism overlooks the meaning and value of Harcourt and Alethea’s courtship and focuses instead on Horner. Douglas Canfield, a critic with a keen eye for Restoration socio-politics, claims that the central issue of the drama is the problematizing and re-figuration of Horner and Harcourt’s friendship. Horner, he argues, betrays Harcourt ‘despite all those early protestations that homosocial camaraderie is superior to heterosexual activity’.[[512]](#footnote-512) This reading, which applies Sedgwick’s model of masculine relations, gives primacy to Horner and Harcourt by suggesting that their relation is more significant than Harcourt’s with Alethea. This makes Alethea a mere adjunct – the means by which male friendship is tested and ultimately broken. Like the host of critics who precede and supersede him, Canfield privileges Horner’s libertine perspective and pays scant attention to the importance Wycherley invests in Alethea and Harcourt’s plotline. Their relationship is not a ‘strategy of homosocial desire’.[[513]](#footnote-513) Rather, it is a union that reinforces the need for masculine self-improvement and foregrounds the ways in which a remodelled man can preserve the social and moral normativities of Royalist power.

In this chapter, I have argued that Wycherley imagines Horner as a politicised renegade with a corrective function: a libertine who sexually exploits and abuses those social elements within the hierarchical order that try to attenuate Royalist power. He implements hostile homosocial power, but rather than abusing women for the ‘primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men’, [[514]](#footnote-514) Horner treats enemy women and men with the same degree of antipathy. In this unofficial capacity, he serves the Court society. In contradistinction, Harcourt succeeds in becoming a genteel servant and an admirable keeper of the peace. He makes the painful transition from rake to *bonne grace* gallant, but uses libertine cunning, wit and trickery to expunge Sparkish, who signally fails to treat Alethea with due gentlemanliness. Wycherley’s rhetoric also serves the interests of mainstream authority by representing the Town as a socially secure Royalist location and flatters the libertine faction at Whitehall with Horner’s relentless aggression and Harcourt’s cunning theft of Alethea. Crucially, he uses Harcourt to re-inscribe the need for a coherent and refined gallantry, duteous to its gentlewomen and effective in the governance and preservation of Royalist social power.

CONCLUSION

The ‘death’ of the rake?

Since almost all Restoration dramatists were Court Party supporters and sympathisers, it seems appropriate to begin this chapter by evaluating Thomas Shadwell’s *The Libertine* (1675).[[515]](#footnote-515) Shadwell was a Whig altercationist and a political outsider and his contribution to the rake debate is particularly valuable in that it transmits the acrimony levelled at the Court Party from the political side-lines during the latter part of the 1670s. In the first part of this chapter, I argue that *The Libertine* severs the rake from his hegemonic role and represents him as an evil tyrant who, impelled by the theatrics of arbitrary power, is entirely beyond redemption. In so doing, Shadwell participates in a widening conflict which can be understood as an extension of the Civil War, a state of on-going-sectarianism made manifest in homosocial violence and sexual exploitation. Shadwell’s rake typology gives special prominence to the lawlessness and wickedness of the pre-Restoration rake. This was a libertine remembered by republicans, Presbyterians and Puritans as a terrible heathen or bogey-man. Shadwell deploys this figure to re-ignite the old furies and sectarian hatred generated by Roundhead propaganda during the Civil Wars and the Interregnum. *The Libertine* is a mock ‘tragedy’ whichcharts the decline and death of the Spanish *hidalgo* Don John but isreally one story telling another: Shadwell retains the settings and characters of the original plot written by Tirso de Molina but does so as a pretext for an assault on contemporary rake culture which he envisions as the Court’s politically weak-link and a potent symbol for the failing experiment of Stuart absolutism.

Another shortfall in the libertine debate was the paucity of female contributors. The overwhelming majority of Restoration playwrights were men, writing about other men who were notorious misogynists. It is essential, therefore, to include Aphra Behn in the debate. Thus, in the second part of this chapter, I argue that *The Rover* (1677), a pro-Court, anti-libertine comedy, responds to Shadwell’s death sentence by advocating that the rake mend his ways*.* Behn brings the rake figure back to life, arguing that the pre-Restoration libertine is not a homicidal maniac but a serviceable figure whose delinquencies must be rescinded if he is to become a valuable and responsible member of Stuart society. A Court Party devotee, she diminishes the Whiggish image of the treacherous and murderous libertine. Crucially, she magnifies the importance of female agency, investing her dramatic heroine, Hellena, with sufficient self-direction to manage the sexual aggression and inconstancy of her libertine suitor while simultaneously rebelling against the patriarchal arrangements of Spanish law and jointure.[[516]](#footnote-516)

In the final part of this chapter, I will contest ‘the changed man’ argument, a critical position encapsulated by Richard Braverman who argues that after the demise of the Stuart regime, the libertine became a ‘changed man’ under the influence of Whiggish revisionists:[[517]](#footnote-517)the libertine morphed into a fine gentleman, his reform typified by Richard Steele’s *The Conscious Lovers* (1729). In order to challenge this claim, it will be necessary to take a diachronic approach to the rake and present a survey of the character’s ‘afterlife’. Of particular note is how rake retains a vital position in the novel, where his role is more a matter of social distinction than political affiliation: the emphasis shifts from party politics to class politics. In spite of this shift, it is appropriate to end the survey in 1745, the year of the Jacobite Rebellion and the publication of *Tom Jones*, Henry Fielding’s picaresque novel which indicts the post-Stuart rake figure and reflects Fielding’s opposition to the bid by James Francis Edward Stuart to regain the British throne.

***The Libertine***

*The Libertine* remodels Tirso de Molina’s *The Playboy of Seville: or A Supper with a Statue.*[[518]](#footnote-518) *The Playboy of Seville* charts the machinations of Don Juan, a handsome courtier, seducer and murderer. Forced into exile, he behaves despicably to everyone he encounters. He is finally brought to a point of spiritual reckoning in a church where a statue, erected to commemorate one of his victims, threatens vengeance. Hubristic and unrepentant, Don Juan jeers at the warning and, in due course, the statue seizes him and throws him down to hell. Also set in Seville, Shadwell’s *The Libertine* showcases the villainous exploits of three Spanish aristocrats, Don Lopez, Don Antonio and Don John, who commit ‘delicious sins’ and ‘scorn the law’ (I, 1, p. 176). They quit Seville to escape punishment for a litany of sins, including parricide, rape and murder. At a supper party, a ghost appears telling them to repent or face eternal hell-fire. They ignore the ghost’s dire warnings, and, in the denouement – set in a church – a talking statue summons the ghosts of all their victims, who enter and send the three Dons to hell.

The popular critical view of *The Libertine* is that its excess of violence is too remote from actuality to have any meaningful impact. For example, Aaron Jaffe has argued that it has more in common with a ‘slasher-film serial-killer’ than a Restoration rake comedy.[[519]](#footnote-519) However, these evaluations tend to decontextualise the play from its primary purpose: to rant at and degrade the Wits, the ‘fashionable Gentlemen of the Age’ who ‘whore and revel’ and are ‘committed’ to ‘outrage’ (I. 1, p. 177).

Shadwell’s intolerance of the Wits was driven by militant objections to the Court Party.Born in 1642, he was a Cambridge-educated commoner who left university without a degree and studied law at the Middle Temple in the City of London. He formalized his political commitment in 1678 when he joined the Green Ribbon Club. Founded in 1675 at the King’s Head in Chancery Lane, its frequenters were members of the Country Party. The ‘Green Ribbon’ was the Leveller’s badge in the Civil Wars, in which many of the members, including Lord Falconbridge, Henry Ireton and John Claypole, had fought. Other attendees included the Duke of Monmouth, George Villiers and Lord Shaftesbury. The Club was the headquarters of opposition to the Court, its members active seditionists who made measures for the Exclusion Bill, gathered news, concocted petitions and organised Pope-burning processions. William Cavendish – also a Club member – was Shadwell’s political *pater familias*. An outspoken critic of the growing remoteness of the Caroline monarchy, he had been Shadwell’s patron since 1668.[[520]](#footnote-520) His patronage ofShadwell spanned eight years, with the poet dedicating *The Sullen Lover* (1668), *Epsom Wells* (1673), *The Virtuoso* (1676) and *The Libertine* (1676) to his ‘protector’ against the ‘bloody hands of the Critics’.[[521]](#footnote-521) Shadwell continued to propound Whig Party views, most notably in his *The Lancashire Witches* of 1681, a brutal satire of Popery. After the Glorious Revolution, Dryden was deposed as laureate and the post was given to Shadwell. The opium he took to alleviate gout proved to be his undoing: he died from an overdose in November 1692.

***The Libertine* and the anti-Cromwellian rake**

Shadwell’s pro-Court rivals had consistently advocated rake reform, but *The Libertine* argues that the rake is an unserviceable character, evil and beyond repair. To authenticate the idea that the rake was a lost cause, Shadwell has his three Dons resemble the stereotypical Cavalier soldier concocted by Roundhead propagandists. In *The Politics of Rape*, Jennifer Airey argues that during Civil War and Interregnum, Roundhead propaganda would frequently define the Cavalier class through the lens of atrocity: Cavaliers were rapists, cannibals and vampires. They were blasphemous, lustful and violent, committing acts of savagery against innocent Cromwellians and paying homage to their own perverse desires.[[522]](#footnote-522) Deana Rankin argues that this highly improbable construction was sustained by the written word: with the onset of the Civil Wars, ‘the English art of war moved from the study of the battlefield, as Parliament sought increasing levels of literacy to turn inexperienced soldiers with little formal education into a well-drilled army of soldier citizens’.[[523]](#footnote-523) This sectarian construction of the Caroline libertine soldier has a close relation to Shadwell’s three ‘Spanish’ Cavaliers, who treat each new port of call as a war-zone, persistently over-ride the letter of the law and, in homosocial fashion and privilege the rule of the sword as their principal form of self-definition. Vampirism aside, Shadwell’s rakes invoke the nightmare vision of the Civil War soldier and revitalise the Royalist-hating schemata of Roundhead ideology.

On the basis of these misdeeds, Shadwell begins to shape a new narrative of the rake. For the first time in Restoration rake typology, he creates a libertine who wilfully deceives, abuses and murders elite gentlewomen. In *Epsom Wells* (1672), he portrays three Cavalier protagonists as delinquent pleasure-seekers who deviously pursue the same women and try to cuckold each other. They spurn *bonne grace*, get drunk, smash windows and pick fights. However, although their behaviour is brutal, it is not unserviceable. Under the auspices of his two modish heroines, who insist that they must ‘repent for shame [their] Covent-Garden lives’, they promise to shift from roguishness to gentility.[[524]](#footnote-524) *Epsom Wells* sues for rake rehabilitation, but as the squabble between the proto-Whigs and the Court Party intensified and Shadwell’s rake becomes much more vicious. Many rake comedies pinpoint libertine abuse of *bonne grace,* but Shadwell uses the trope to initiate a teleology of female ruin. He has Don John win female trust by representing the knee-bending submissions, the hand-kissing and the ardent vows of loyal love, which all body forth the rites of gallant deference and respect.[[525]](#footnote-525) Leonora, his principal victim, recounts how he was: ‘oft on his knees… kissing my hand with such an amorous heat, and with such ardor, breathing fervent vows of loyal love, and venting sad complaints of extreme sufferings’ (I. 1, pp. 180-181). Clearly, Shadwell was aware that the code of *politesse* was prone to abuse from the very gallants who refused to follow its moral and social imperatives.[[526]](#footnote-526)

The exploitation of *bonne grace* by gentlemen cynical enough to adopt its social graces while ignoring its moral gentilities exposes a flaw in Michele Cohen’s argument, which pre-supposes that an increasing degree of moral rectitude accompanies the process of socialisation. She extrapolates how the easy sociability central to the new manners could not be achieved without women’s exemplification, but there is no mention of the disassociation of virtue from this guided acquisition of social correctness.[[527]](#footnote-527) Keenly aware of this dichotomy, Shadwell suggests that it is the Wits who were the main offenders and usurpers of the Court’s bid to create a more harmonious and genteel ruling class. Rochester certainly problematizes *bonne grace* by behaving impeccably in mixed company, paying lip service to good manners while circulating a stream of misogynistic libels around the Court, his scurrility earning him the reputation of a ‘debauched wretch’.[[528]](#footnote-528) As Jaffe puts it, the rake’s urge to ‘assault and molest’[[529]](#footnote-529) remains unmodified by the moral clarity such social rites were expected to transmit.

With this fault line in mind, Shadwell uses Don John to illustrate the point that *bonne grace* did not guarantee women protection from the predations of the rake. Don John disarms Leonora with ardent and submissive gallantries to seize her ‘virgin treasure’. He then mocks her for loving him, accusing her of ‘sweet frailty’ (II. 1, p. 192). When he encounters her again after his escape from Seville, he disdains her ‘Spaniel love; the worse you use her, the more loving she is. Pox on her, I must be rid of her’ (III. 3, p. 222). Shadwell’s vitriolic allegory of rake excess ushers in a new representation of the rake. He is a murderous seducer and a rapist who places himself above the law and takes no responsibility for State protection. Shadwell condemns the rake to death and then, in the Epilogue he censures his political target, the Wits whom he describes as ‘bloody men’ incapable of ‘remorse’. Triumphantly, he tells the Wits to retreat ‘backstage’, exiling them from the social world they have exploited.[[530]](#footnote-530)

**Aphra Behn’s *The Rover***

In a political riposte to Shadwell’s Whiggish critique of the Wits, Aphra Behn offered her own solution to the problem of the rake in *The Rover, or The Banished Cavaliers* (1677) by making him susceptible to authority figures.[[531]](#footnote-531) This was a dramatic and politically symbolic orientation that strove to puncture the Whiggish image of the rake as a tyrant figure whose ‘insurrection against civil order aims at the usurpation of absolute authority’.[[532]](#footnote-532) Behn’s treatment of rake reform brings the critical positions of Michele Cohen and Eve Sedgwick into play. On the other hand, it illustrates the influence of the *mission civilatrice* as the guiding force of gendered relations in the long eighteenth century. On the other, it elaborates a form of homosocial behaviour that Eve Sedgwick defines as an irresistible instrument of patriarchal power. Behn makes her rake, Willmore, the target of her satire, but her characterisation rejects Whig accusations of rake tyranny and ensures that the more vicious aspects of libertine masculinity – the sexual aggression and homicidal violence – are properly managed and controlled. *The Rover* revokes the death-sentence passed by Shadwell and advocates the rake’s reintegration into mainstream Stuart society. [[533]](#footnote-533)

Behn was unusual in that she was a proto-Tory dramatist but not a member of the patrician classes. Unlike the Wits, who were proud amateurs, Behn was a professional female writer and was, as Faramerz Dabhoiwala argues, a ‘pioneer in the exploration of female sexual sensibility’.[[534]](#footnote-534) Her origins are unclear, but it is thought that she was born in Kent in 1640 and that her father was a barber and her mother a wet nurse. In 1663, she travelled to Surinam and returned in 1664, when she married and separated shortly thereafter.[[535]](#footnote-535) In 1664, she met Sir Thomas Killigrew who employed her to find the dissident William Scott, whom she had met in Surinam in 1663. According to Mary Ann O’Donnell, she was given vague orders by Killigrew to find Scott, who was living in Flanders and persuade him to work for the British. When she arrived, she found herself adrift with little professional or financial support and, shocked by the cost of living in Antwerp, she returned to England in 1666 unpaid.[[536]](#footnote-536) Consequently, she had to pawn her rings to avoid debtors’ prison.[[537]](#footnote-537) Killigrew,[[538]](#footnote-538) patentee of the King’s Theatre company and Groom of the Royal Bedchamber to Charles at Whitehall, employed Behn as a scribe and adapter of old plays at the King’s from 1668 to 1670.[[539]](#footnote-539)

A firm believer in dynastic authority and class hierarchy, Behn opposed the parliamentary ‘liberties’ proposed by the proto-Whigs and refuted their renunciation of the royal prerogative. After the success of *The Rover* (1677), her commitment to the cause continued with *The City Heiress* (1682) which lampoons the Whig grandee Lord Shaftesbury, his political cohort and the perceived hypocrisies of Puritan reform.During the first year of Exclusion, the only comedy produced was Behn’s *The Fein’d Curtizans* (1682), a politically barbed critique of the Whigs designed to bolster the Royalist cause. Rallying vociferously around the flag would remain the key feature of Behn’s work. So much so, in fact, that in August 1682 a warrant was issued for her arrest after she has written an epilogue to the anonymous play *Romulus and Hersilia.* In it, she rails at Charles's bastard son, the Duke of Monmouth, accusing him of betraying Royalism and allying himself with the Whig party, founded in 1678. As Susan Owen puts it, ‘Charles was not ready for such assiduity’.[[540]](#footnote-540) After the collapse of the King’s Company in 1682 and the shrinking demand for new plays, her dramatic output fell, but even when she was ill, poor and close to death, she refused to acknowledge William of Orange, crowned king after James II – the last Stuart king – had been deposed after the so-called Glorious Revolution in 1688.

*The Rover* revives the theme of rake reform and, like *The Libertine*, looks back to the Interregnum. Behn re-worked Sir Thomas Killigrew’s *Thomaso* (1654), a play that charts the amorous excesses and rehabilitation of a Cavalier rake living in exile in Madrid. In Killigrew’s two- part, ten-act drama about a group of exiles, the eponymous rake, Thomaso, has a number of affairs. As Jones De Ritter puts it, he spends ‘eight acts brawling in the streets and sleeping with a number of courtesans and then for two acts he reforms and marries’.[[541]](#footnote-541) Killigrew chooses Madrid as his theatrical backdrop, but Behn shifts the action in *The Rover* to Naples where, as Taylor Corse points out, ‘a carnival setting was associated with Roman Saturnalian revels as well as with opposition to the restrictions of the Christian tradition’s Lent’. This ‘included a ban on sexual intercourse’.[[542]](#footnote-542) Naples was a Spanish possession and a cosmopolitan centre with erotic and economic attractions of which the Cavaliers Willmore, Belvile and Frederick gladly participate.[[543]](#footnote-543) Here, they are free to happily pursue their fortunes, court wealthy heiresses and, making no secret of their Stuart affiliations, behave like privileged members of an elite community wherever they rove.

But even though the setting is remote, English politics are never far away. Behn revives old Royalist grudges with the inclusion of Blunt, a buffoonish Country gentleman who is abused by Lucetta and Phillipo, characters drawn from the Neapolitan underclass, who strip him of his clothes, his gold watch and his purse, throw him into a sewer and then make an inventory of their plunder: ‘A rich coat, sword and hat… a gold watch… at least two hundred pistoles, a bunch of diamond rings and one with the family arms’ (III. 3, p. 42).[[544]](#footnote-544) Behn magnifies Blunt’s foolishness as the scene closes with Phillipo announcing his superiority over the Country gentleman: ‘This is the fleece which fools do bear/ Designed for witty men to shear’ (III. 3, p. 42). This sub-plot pattern of punishment and humiliation reimagines the old political animosities of Court and Country, using Blunt as a comic butt to lend an extra gloss of wit, wherewithal and glamour to the Cavaliers. Thus, the disturbing memory of regicide and Cromwellian rule is softened with Blunt providing comic relief for a group of soldiers who, in reality, were, at this point, the disenfranchised and penniless exiles of a defeated political regime.

Behn’s specific representation of the marriage market also confirms her proto-Toryism. By using the geographically remote setting of Naples, she ensures that it is the Spanish who are held responsible for the powers of patriarchal coercion, not the exiled Court Party Cavaliers. The leading female characters, Florinda and Hellena, are empowered by the carnival’s tradition of play, mask and temporary entitlement. The erotic opportunities and personal freedoms carnival offers are heightened by the absence of their father who has organised a marriage compact for Florinda to the elderly, wealthy Don Vincentio and ordained that Hellena must become a nun. Paternal absence indicates a short-term period of relative freedom and courtship power for the women to enjoy before marriage and its prescriptions for gendered obedience. However, it emerges that patriarchal rules have not actually been suspended but transferred to the girls’ brother, [Don Pedro](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-rover/characters/don-pedro). He presses Florinda to marry his friend [Don Antonio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-rover/characters/don-antonio), the Viceroy’s son, and does not interfere with his father’s decision to send Hellena to a monastery. The constrictions imposed on the girls by this Spanish patriarchal regime are deliberately severe. ‘Behn’, as Corse puts it, ‘fosters the stereotype, popular throughout the seventeenth century, of Spanish aristocrats as oppressive tyrants’.[[545]](#footnote-545) However, she also uses this brutal Neapolitan scenario to implicitly criticise the influence of English patriarchal authority over female agency.

According to Robert Markley, elite unmarried Restoration women were objectified and commodified by patriarchal authority; they had no real power to affect their futures since they were manacled to a marriage system designed to disavow female agency.[[546]](#footnote-546) Restoration marriage vows required women to obey their husbands, an ordination which stymied female independence and reduced the wife to a secondary role in the matrimonial compact. In ‘Advice to a Daughter’, the Marquis of Halifax – seemingly at odds with the gendered power divide – takes exception to the term ‘obey’ and adds, somewhat balefully, that you are ‘to make your best of what is settled by Law and Custom, and not vainly to imagine, that it will be changed for your sake’.[[547]](#footnote-547) In *The Rover*, Behn uses Florinda and Hellena to freight her criticisms of ‘Spanish’ patriarchy and, by proxy, gives voice to her disapproval of the gendered bias of the matrimonial system pinpointed by Halifax.

Florinda insists on ‘what is due to my beauty, birth and fortune’ (I. 1, p. 5) and, because of her elite status, will not tolerate what Susan Staves describes as the ‘immorality of forced marriages’. Nor will she nor succumb to being forced to marry a rich old man, a scenario which for Staves is ‘no better than rape’.[[548]](#footnote-548) Commenting on legal and economic systems of patriarchal/patrilineal power, Elin Diamond notes that all of Behn’s plays feature women backed by dowries who are pressed by the fathers into marriages in exchange for jointure, an agreed-upon income to be settled on the wife should she be widowed.[[549]](#footnote-549) Diamond adds that ‘before the virgins are rewarded with the husbands they desire, they will traverse this whore’s marketplace’.[[550]](#footnote-550) Like Markley, Diamond visualises the virgin maiden as a would-be victim trapped in a cycle of material exchange that encourages women to internalise and reproduce behaviour determined by legal and economic forms of patriarchy. Thus, Hellena and Florinda are no more than ‘graceful and becoming ornaments’ in a drama that ‘thematises the marketing of women in marriage and prostitution’.[[551]](#footnote-551) As objects of exchange, they are merely ‘wealthy virgins’ who suffer the same abuse as Angellica, the courtesan seduced by Willmore. Wealthy virgin daughters, they are fetishized and, as Margaret Cavendish puts it, ‘are to be accounted as but as Moveable Goods or Furniture that wears out’.[[552]](#footnote-552)

The marriage system disadvantaged women, but it also shaped the behaviour of aristocratic young men excluded from property by the rule of primogeniture, which gave the right of succession to the firstborn son. Younger sons or heirs who had inherited broken estates were especially tempted to look to marriage with a woman of fortune as the only way to secure a capital sum large enough to maintain a gentleman’s *otium*.[[553]](#footnote-553) Marriage brought power and security to opportunistic younger sons seeking sex and a marriage settlement considerable enough to maintain the social rank of their birth family. The Etheregian rake, for example, tends to be extremely grasping and cunning in the pursuit of marriage settlements – both Frollick in *The Comical Revenge* and Dorimant in *The Man of Mode* have broken estates and are ruthless in their quest for money as well as sensual excess.[[554]](#footnote-554) Notably, Behn’s counters the cynicism of such a mercantile arrangement in *The Rover*, ensuring Willmore has no knowledge of Hellena’s wealth prior to their engagement, a feature of her rake that may suggest a degree of virtue or generous indifference, which had evident political resonances. Proto-bourgeois city traders privileged thrift and prudence and were repeatedly stereotyped by pro-Court dramatists for their money-grubbing meanness and their mercantile selfishness.[[555]](#footnote-555) Betterton’s *The Amorous Widow* (1670), Wycherley’s *Love in a Wood* (1671) and *The Country Wife* (1675), and John Dover’s *The Modish Lovers* (1674) all contain rich tradesmen who are old and greedy. Behn does not deal directly with the City community in *The Rover,* but she does vehemently oppose forced marriages to wealthy old men, using Florinda to ventriloquize her contempt for Don Vincentio, ‘that hated object’ (I. 1, p. 5).

Behn’s critique of patriarchy features prominently in both of *The Rover’s* marriage plots. Behn has Florinda refuse point blank to endure a forced marriage to Don Vincentio and gives her the power to choose her partner and command the behaviour of Belvile – her desired suitor – via the ceremonial provenances of *bonne grace.* Behn was too ‘low-born’ to practise the code legitimately, yet she acknowledges its socio-political value. Melinda Zook argues that Behn’s *oeuvre* celebrates the chivalric element of gendered conduct encoded in the elite courtship style and propagandised for its refinements and sophistications.[[556]](#footnote-556) Drawing on the tropes of chivalric romance, Behn sets in motion a damsel-in-distress strategy when Florinda sends Belvile a letter requesting him to ‘deliver her from the threatening violence of her brother’ (I. 2, p. 16). Belvile, who has already proved his moral stamp during the siege of Pamplona by acting as her brave protector, is her equivalent knight-in-shining-armour, prepared to endure any hardship to rescue her from the miseries of familial oppression. Carnival offers the possibility of breaching her father’s ‘unjust commands’ (I. 1, p. 5) and the popular masking ritual presents her with the opportunity for testing Belvile’s devotion, a stock trope of romance high plots. Florinda disguises herself as another woman and tempts him with jewels, but Belvile tells her he has already made a ‘vow’ (III. 1, p. 38) to another woman (Florinda) and refuses the gift. This plot strand concludes with Florinda agreeing to accept Belvile’s marriage proposal after her brother, Pedro, discovers that Antonio – the suitor he has chosen – cares more for Angelica, the courtesan, than his sister Florinda and blesses their engagement. Thus, Behn uses Florinda and Belvile’s romance to support the proto-Tory paradigm of elite courtship.

Behn also ensures that Hellena establishes a credible union with Willmore. Hellena deviates wildly from the ceremonial coordinates of heteronormative Stuart ritual. However, her actions illustrate Michele Cohen’s thesis of the Court’s civilising mission and its programme of female-led gallant reform. Contrary to Markley’s claim that Behn’s women must tolerate suitors incapable of constancy and endure the trap of marriage, Hellena craves matrimonial union. She must find a suitor before her father returns (and sends her to a nunnery) and, in pursuit of this objective, she proves to be an extremely energetic and self-assertive heroine:

Prithee, tell me what dost thou see about me that is unfit for love? Have I not a world of youth? A humour gay? A beauty passable? A vigour desirable? Well-shaped? Clean-limbed? Sweet-breathed? And sense enough to know how all these ought to be employed to the best advantage? Yes I do and will.

(I. 1, p. 6)

These rhetorical declarations are a far cry from the behaviour of a conventional comic heroine. Hellena disengages with ceremonial courtship, including the conventional intricacies of genteel compliments where ‘wit is admired’ and ‘beauty praised’ with ‘little soft nonsensical billets’ (III. 1, p. 33). Florinda chooses Belvile on the basis of his ‘merit, not the surprising person’ (III. 1, p. 33), but Hellena does not, her opposition to *politesse* bringing her in tune with Willmore, whose libertine ‘manners’ also reject the gentilities of conventional Cavalier courtship. This ethos is reminiscent of Florinda in Dryden’s *Secret Love*, a ‘wild’ young aristocrat who fails to conform to the delicate and relatively passive role of elite maiden. As has been seen, rake reform typology often casts the heroine in a supporting role to her errant suitor. She sets tests of love, denies him her favours and monitors his rehabilitation but, as Cohenputs it, she is not oriented to her own self-production but to the ‘production of the self-perfecting man’.[[557]](#footnote-557) This is not the case with Hellena.

Behn offers her own prescriptions for dealing with the rake, using Hellena to body forth an extremely proactive approach to libertine taming. Hellena is as forthright as any libertine about desire, another deviation from the Stuart prescriptions of female modesty, virtue and restraint. As she says, ‘I am resolved to provide myself this Carnival, if there be e’er a handsome proper fellow of my humour above the ground’ (I. 1, pp. 5-6), a declaration which would not be out of place if it were uttered by Willmore. In fact, Susan Staves argues that ‘the ideology to which Behn was most attracted was that of libertinism’.[[558]](#footnote-558) She notes Behn’s emphasis on the possibilities of sexual desire freed from social opprobrium or injunction in her poem ‘The Golden Age’, where women and men should ‘Not be kept in fear of Gods, no fond Religious cause/ Nor in obedience to the duller Laws’.[[559]](#footnote-559) But although she embraces libertinism’s ethos of freedom to enjoy sexual pleasure, the organisation of Hellena’s love-relation to Willmore does not include the practice of free love. When Willmore offers her this prospect, Hellena replies: ‘What shall I get? A cradle full of noise and mischief, with a pack of repentance on my back? (V. 1, p. 82). Jessica Munns points out that Willmore’s suggestion captures the ‘double standard in love that sexual libertinism could never resolve – or, indeed, often cared to resolve’.[[560]](#footnote-560) Libertinism was a masculinist ideology with no interest whatsoever in the issues of reproduction, pregnancy or the protection of children. As DeRitter states, ‘Hellena is not a rake because she does insist on marriage’.[[561]](#footnote-561) Thus, Behn uses libertine motifs not because she is an advocate of free love; rather, she uses Hellena’s departure from conventional manners to argue that the only meaningful way to tame a rake is by adopting a fight-fire-with-fire strategy. Hellena does not shy away from exploiting the rake toolkit, using subterfuge, disguise, surveillance and ‘dirty’ tricks to gain Willmore’s submission.

Hellena uses the carnival’s rituals of disguise to gain access to his company, monitor his movements and test his devotion. In their first encounter, she and Florinda are ‘dressed like gypsies’,a disguise which gives her the pretext for gaining the attention of potential suitors and reading their fortunes. Then, when Willmore pleads with her to go to ‘thy lodging sweetheart, thy lodging, or I’m a dead man!’ (I. 2, p. 15), she feigns disinterest, and mocks the libertine motif that death will be inevitable if desire is not satiated by sexual congress. She censures his sexual ‘impudence’ (I. 2, p. 13), his ‘inconstant English heart’ (I. 2, p. 13) and his ‘horrible loving eyes’ (I. 2, p. 14) but is clearly excited by his light-hearted and unbuttoned attraction to her. He is charismatic, young, aristocratic, dangerous and, judging from her excited responses, handsome.

Hellena chastises his sexual directness but encourages him because she does not have time for a nuanced and protracted courtship. But this does not mean she is foolish enough to relinquish her power to a Cavalier who is clearly a rake: far from it. On parting, she agrees to see him again but ‘only if you swear to keep your heart and not bestow it between this and that’ (I. 2, p. 16). When he breaks his promise by seducing the courtesan Angellica, Hellena masks herself again and, from a distance, listens cunningly to Willmore while he boasts about bedding Angellica. She chooses this moment to confront him, commanding him to kneel and swear never to see her again. To make sure he keeps his promise, she disguises herself again, this time posing as a young gallant. She continues to stalk him and when she discovers him with Angellica, she/he tells ‘her rival he/she has been dispatched to warn Angellica of Willmore’s inconstancy. The subterfuge is a success. Angellica berates Willmore and, having successfully engineered the rift between them, Hellena assures Willmore she will ‘plague him everywhere’ (IV. 3, p. 64) until he succumbs to her. Excessively watchful and vigilant, she even warns him after their promise to wed that she will ‘find out all your haunts, to rail at you to all that love you, till I have made you love only me’ (V. 1, p. 81).

Behn, then, gives an object lesson in how to snare a rake: be patient, seditious, cunning, watchful, deceptive and aggressive. The power of Hellena’s calculating consciousness is probably equal in guile and intensity to any stage libertine. Like Horner in *The Country Wife* and Dorimant in *The Man of Mode,* she fastens on her target and simply refuses to let go till her quarry complies. Such a departure from heteronormative behaviour might suggest that Hellena is no more than a vicious bully, a young harpy or devious avenger were it not for the granular detail Behn brings to the portrayal. In the first place, Hellena admits to being attracted to Willmore because he craves sexual freedom. As she says, his ‘unconstant humour makes me love him!’ (IV. 2, p. 57). This suggests that she is stimulated by dangerous, aristocratic young men with the power to destroy. She is also troubled by fears of abandonment and prone to dwelling on her perceived inadequacies. When she first sees Willmore with Angellica, she describes herself a ‘fool’ (III. 1, p. 34) for loving a ‘mad Captain’ (IV. 2, p. 56) and perceives herself as a ‘wicked creature’ (III. 1, p. 38) for trying to subdue him. However, the admission of frailty and foible give her character moral complexity and more appeal.

Oddly enough, her behaviour echoes the conduct of the *bonne grace* gallant. Behn reverses the coordinates of the *bonne grace* romance and has Hellena bravely pursue Willmore, suffering setbacks, which, in spite of the self-doubt and pain it causes, do not arrest her attempts to win him over. Rather like an inverted test of love, Hellena must prove her commitment to Willmore and his reform. It is a high-risk strategy and not one for the faint-hearted. *Bonne grace* allows the woman the privilege of regulatory power, but Hellena is unprotected by the gendered rules of elite courtship and must countenance the potential humiliation springing from the strategy of chasing a man. This scenario is similar to the predicament the Widow Rich faces in *The Comical Revenge*. She pursues Sir Frederick Frollick and, in her attempts to shut down his womanising, exposes her vulnerabilities to a rake, the very character who would not think twice about ruining the women who adore him. The resolution of this circuitry of doubt and desire appears to be central for Behn in relation to the taming of the rake: a young lady must possess the courage, wit and energy required to pursue and reform her rake in spite of doubt, self-recrimination and the dread of rejection. Willmore himself acknowledges these attributes when he tells Hellena that ‘thou art a brave girl and I admire thy love and courage’ (V. 1, p. 85) when the couple agree to wed.

Of particular note, then, is the way Behn ‘masculinises’ Hellena to tame Wilmore, deploying libertine wit, guile and deception to snare her quarry. Hellena invades and appropriates conventional and unconventional modes of manliness and turns them against Willmore, but in so doing, transgresses the bounds of elite Stuart femininity. According to Cohen, elite men were taught refinement and delicacy by female counterparts who invariably behaved with customary grace, wit and poise, conduct that guaranteed popularity and status within the *beau monde*. [[562]](#footnote-562) In her *Memoir of the English Court*, the Countess de Dunois provides a clear signal of the value elite Royalist culture placed upon women who are ‘extremely beautiful’, and have a ‘mien and presence very noble and majestic’. Such ‘charms’ render a woman ‘most agreeable [among] her sex’ and ‘all the men of wit and quality’.[[563]](#footnote-563) Clearly, Hellena does not conform to this schema of elite gentlewomanliness. Hellena does not behave like a Stuart gentlewoman. However, if she was not cunning, relentless and severe, she would not suborn Willmore. *Politesse,* the mark of the elite gentlewoman and the official tool designed to regulate masculine behaviour, would not appear to be strategically viable when it comes to subsuming libertines.

This suggests that there is a contradiction between Behn’s sexual and political attitudes: the woman, socially inferior to the male within a patriarchal system, must use whatever means at her disposal to achieve her social objectives even if this means flouting the rules of political affiliation. However, the resolution of *The Rover* does not confirm this position. On the contrary, it retrenches Stuart socio-politics. Florinda and Belvile marry after her brother, Don Pedro, has given the couple his blessing, thereby avowing the Court’s official practice of elite ceremonial courtship and *bonne grace* masculinity. After Willmore has abandoned Angellica (and she has threatened him with a pistol but shown her contempt by letting him live), Hellena wins Willmore’s promise to marry. Notably, Hellena makes a plea for the resumption of hetero-normative relations when she says to Willmore: ‘Now Captain, show your Love and Courage, stand to your Arms, and defend me bravely, or I am lost for Ever.’ (5. 1, p. 83). This signals the end of the play, but it also intimates the end of Hellena’s strategically ‘festive’ behaviour in favour of the resumption of customary Stuart manners.

*The Rover* celebrates the influence of Hellena, a heroine who, through the teleology of the play, wrests control over Willmore, ensuring his compliance with the moral and social constraints of matrimony. But the triumph of *politesse,* extrapolated by Cohen, is not the only tranche of Royalist power called upon to tame the libertine. Behn also advocates the influence of military homosociality, representing Belvile not just as a senior officer and *bonne grace* gallant but also a fraternal surrogate figure who admonishes, encourages, teaches and forgives Willmore’s violent wrongdoings.Wilmore’s reference to himself as a ‘puppy’ (IV. 2, p. 54) in Belvile’s company indicates the man/boy nature of their relationship and the soldierly protection Belvile provides.

Swordplay is a powerful instance of military homosociality in *The Rover*. The play contains three armed skirmishes and one duel, more than in any other libertine comedy of the period. One possible explanation for this is that Behn uses confrontation tropes to drive the plot mechanism, creating a sense of breathlessness in keeping with the ‘topsy-turvy’[[564]](#footnote-564) atmosphere of the carnival. However, the play’s holiday humour, sustained primarily through persistent high-spirited masking, disguise and revelry does not mean that Behn sanctioned swordplay.

Behn represents Belvile, the commanding officer of the travelling Cavaliers, as the principal source of homosocial authority and order. The three Cavaliers refer to each other informally, but their hierarchical relations emerge when Willmore, a ship’s captain, first joins the action and greets Belvile and Frederick:

WILLMORE: Ha! Dear Belvile! Noble colonel! BELVILE: Willmore, welcome ashore, my dear rover! What happy wind blew on this good fortune? WILLMORE: Let me salute my dear Fred and then command me.

(I. 2, p. 11)

Behn gives Belvile the power of command and has him actively encourage peaceable relations. He tells Willmore that ‘Spaniards [are] a sort of people who know how to revenge an affront’ (II. 1, p. 26) but then becomes embroiled in a duel, which suggests military disorderliness. Yet notably, he duels with Don Pedro to prove his commitment to Florinda. The end, therefore, (marriage) is made to justify the means (the duel), but this does not prevent Behn from producing a textured interpretation of soldierly masculinity. Her treatment of male violence is complex, but it would appear that she opposes both coordinated and uncoordinated violence, treating duelling as an inadequate and brutal form of dispute settlement yet rating impulsive acts of blood-letting as totally unacceptable. On the one hand, Behn is critical of Belvile’s allegiance to the honour code and duelling, but on the other, the play treats the militarily governance he represents as a viable means for harnessing libertinism. Thus, homosociality, figured by Sedgwick as a source of suspect patterns of male exclusivity, actually serves rather than precludes rake rehabilitation.

Belvile’s duel with Don Pedro typifies the regulatory power of elite women and illustrates Cohen’s thesis of the civilising mission. Belvile stands in for Don Antonio, who has imprisoned him and given him the chance of uniting with Florinda if he fights in the Spaniard’s place. The duel itself is managed in keeping with honorific homosociality with challenges made, the identity of the duellists withheld from public access and the venue agreed upon by both parties. The duel gets underway but, crucially, Behn has Florinda call a halt to the blood-letting when she *runs in [between the two men]* and commands them to ‘hold’ (IV. 2, p. 52). This intercession remembers Dryden’s *Wild Gallant,* where Constance prevents bloodshed between Loveby, her reforming rake and the upstart Burr. Like Dryden, who was a devoted supporter of the *mission civilatrice* and vehement opponent of gallant swordplay, Behn invests her heroine with the authority to hold sway over the honorific schema and call a halt to death-dealing violence. To foreground her antipathy, Behn adds a ceremonial gesture of her own: Belvile *lay*s *his sword at her feet*, a symbol of masculine supplication to women invested with the power to implement the Court’s code of gendered integration and gallant improvement. Reworking Dryden’s pro-Court anti-rake stance, Behn uses Florinda as an allegorical embodiment of peace who draws Belvile away from blood-letting and, in keeping with Cohen’s argument, vaunts his image as a *bonne grace* Cavalier who participates in the civilising mission. The same cannot be said of Wilmore, who draws his sword out of intemperance, martial competitiveness and vainglory.

Wilmore is Behn’s principal exponent of lethal, un-permissible behaviour and a typification of martial homosociality.As a second-in-command, his function is to implement the orders of Belvile – his senior officer – but by engaging impulsively in combats with Don Antonio and Don Pedro, he subverts the machinery of military authority and the ethos of honorific masculinity. A brawler or skirmisher rather than a duellist, his spontaneous acts of uncoordinated aggression earn him the label of ‘mad rogue’ (III. 6, p. 47) from Belvile, whose attitude towards Willmore is surprisingly supportive. Rather than punish his subaltern, Belvile strives to preserve his bond of friendship with Willmore, whose fighting he describes, rather euphemistically, as ‘unlucky adventure’ (III. 6, p. 47). Thus, the man/boy dyad extrapolated by Sedgwick as a highly suspect and exclusive male tradition is treated as a means for rake rehabilitation, just as Hellena’s influence over Willmore meets with Cohen’s model of elite masculine improvement.

Of course, Willmore’s violent behaviour is not self-identical. Uncoordinated swordplay was extremely popular among the Cavalier elite, drawing on the old chivalric myth of knightly independence. As has been seen, Charles always pardoned gallant offenders.[[565]](#footnote-565) In so doing, he allowed gallants and soldiers of the remilitarised regime to imagine themselves as warrior heroes entitled to rule by the sword. In spite of the Court’s polite prescriptions, honour protection was for many an irreplaceable part of gallant self-definition. As Jacques de Callières puts it in *The Courtier’s Calling*, ‘it is a virtue so absolutely requisite for a gentleman, that without it he cannot boast any good quality’.[[566]](#footnote-566) Thus, when Don Antonio accuses Willmore of ‘rudeness’ (II. 1, p. 25) for taking a picture of Angellica, he assumes the right to protect his self-esteem and draws his sword on the spot. Contrastingly, Belvile, guided by *bonne grace*, is portrayed as a master of his impulses, the attribute which, as Donna Andrew explains, was considered as the most important aspect of progressive masculinity: ‘the ability to remain calm when challenged or insulted, this mental and psychological steadfastness came to be seen as at least as important as physical bravery’.[[567]](#footnote-567) Behn holds to these particular coordinates of *bonne grace* masculinity in her characterisation of Belvile, who diplomatically advocates peaceful coexistence and the ‘laying down of the sword’.

However, when Willmore is not monitored by Belvile, his lack of impulse control proves ruinous, most notably when he stumbles upon Florinda in her garden as she awaits Belvile. He commands Willmore not to visit the courtesan Angellica but Willmore disobeys him. Consequently, Willmore becomes embroiled with and ruins Angellica, his final rejection of her an act of brutal and casual indifference to a woman who has already promised to kill herself rather than live without the love he so extravagantly promised her. ‘Parlously afraid of being in love’ (V. 1, p. 81), he abandons Angellica as soon as the conquest has been consummated (or the threat neutralised).[[568]](#footnote-568) Willmore also jeopardises Florinda by mistaking her for a harlot and pursues her with comic vigour: ‘Ah, there she sails, she looks back as she were willing to be boarded’ (IV. 3, p. 64). Frightened, she is forced to take refuge in the Cavaliers’ lodgings where she is threatened with gang rape. Stupid, drunken and reckless, Willmore persistently misjudges people and events and has a habit – typical of a mal-plot agent – of presenting an ever-increasing danger to the very characters he is supposed to serve, particularly his senior officer, Belvile.

Willmore, then, is persistently insubordinate, he disrupts the progress of the two courtship plots, mauls Florinda, ruins Angellica and almost scuppers Belvile’s chances of winning Florinda when he ‘outs’ Belvile in front of Don Pedro during their duel, undermining the course of Belvile’s courtship. He assures Belvile ‘I will not fail you’ (I. 2, p. 18), but his promise proves to be mere *braggadocio*. Belvile, fully aware that he is indulging and protecting his wayward subaltern, asks himself: ‘has my humanity made me a criminal’ (III. 6, p. 48), but in spite of grave reservations about how to manage Willmore, he refuses – with remarkable forbearance – to punish him. Left to his own devices, Willmore is destructive,but when he is under Belvile’s tutelage, the homosocial dyad of man/boy is seen to function fruitfully, with Belvile ensuring that his wayward charge has the opportunity to reform**.**

Behn is extremely lenient on her rake, so much so in fact that she creates a discrepancy between producing favourable circumstances for his rehabilitation and her celebration of female agency. Belvile does not punish Willmore for manhandling Florinda, but when she breaks up the duel – an action that guarantees Belvile’s safety and his reputation – he does nothing to redress the insult to her honour. Yet Behn presents Florinda’s courtship to a ‘devoted’ *bonne grace* gallant as morally unproblematic, even though Florinda is not given the obligatory protection gallants provided for their ladies as a matter of course. There is, of course, a simple explanation that Sedgwick would offer for this apparent inconsistency: Belvile and Willmore are connected in a military form of brotherhood and the abuse of and indifference to Florinda’s plight serves to enforce the relations between the two men. Thus, the rake figure is given preferential treatment at the expense of one of the dramatic heroines.

This suggests that *The Rover* might be read as a play that tacitly approves of libertinage. Janet Todd argues that Willmore is a portrayal of Lord Rochester – the homosocial rake *par excellence* – who was on friendly terms with Behn who found ‘his continental knowledge, glamorous, alcoholic style and aristocratic insouciance very attractive.’[[569]](#footnote-569) But Behn’s representation of Willmore bears little resemblance to Rochester. Willmore is invested with continental knowledge and like Rochester, he drinks to excess. But, unlike Rochester, who was a highly astute courtier, Willmore is remarkably unperceptive. Not once does he see through Hellena’s disguises. Nor does he have sufficient aristocratic poise or wit to avoid the violent confrontations in which he so often involves himself. It is possible that Behn found Rochester amusing, a quality which she incorporated in her imaging of Willmore. However, if Rochester was entertaining, it probably sprang from his wit and not from the kind, impulsive idiocies that make Willmore the object of humour rather than its cause. It would appear that Behn is keen to give her rake typology a knockabout comic dimension, an undertaking devised to add a degree of sympathy to the portrayal of a character who is also homicidally violent and socially delinquent.

In the garden scene, where Willmore mistakes Florinda for a whore and drunkenly grabs her, the tone is clearly comic. Behn treats his physical infractions as a light-hearted ‘wrestle’ (III. 5, p. 45), a playful instance of mistaken identity. However, her inclusion of this comic ‘mishap’ reduces Florinda to the status of comic butt and renders libertinism at the expense of the high romance-heroine. Thus, Behn forges a character whose blatant deficiencies argue for his rehabilitation, even if it means that Florinda is abused in the process. If she is a sacrificial pawn or, as Sedgwick would argue, a motive force for Cavalier bonding, it is clear that the moral calculus of *The Rover* favours Belvile and Hellena. Belvile’s ability to resolve disputes is represented as more persuasive than Willmore’s near ‘fatal’ stupidity, just as Hellena’s proactive courtship style is an irresistible corrective to Willmore’s sexual impulsiveness.

‘How, then, did Behn get away with such criticism?’ Burke suggests the play is a ‘condemnation’[[570]](#footnote-570) of the rake, but this cannot be the case, since Behn’s considers Willmore – in spite of his insubordination and his drunken manhandling of Florinda – worth rescuing and rehabilitating. Shadwell revokes any connection between libertinism and normative behaviour. His three Dons are a homosocial force of evil, perpetually antagonistic to all the social networks they encounter in exile. Behn, on the other hand, contextualises rake deviancy, exploring its relation to the prescriptive systems of marriage and military power which, ultimately, recondition him.Behn’s ‘condemnation’ of rake violence and sexual manipulation overlaps with Shadwell’s rake typology, but hers is not entirely antagonistic to mainstream forms of institutional power.

In the context of the play,Belvile and Hellena have no real power and must negotiate with Don Pedro for his permission to wed. The marriages take place during the Interregnum, away from England and in the topsy-turvy circumstances of the carnival. This distancing of historical and geographical terrains, together with the carnival’s shifting patterns of social permissibility, do, to a certain extent, undercut Behn’s vision of Cavalier values and practices. Nevertheless, Behn’s retrospective revitalisation not only celebrates the irrepressible energy of oppressed, first regime Cavaliers, but also opens up a space from which to critique patriarchal values and Crown libertinism without transgressing the socio-political boundaries of Royalism. Her solution to the problem of the libertine suggests a gendered coalition of power-broking, with Belvile and Hellena serving as the symbolic representatives of the Crown’s ideological apparatus. They provide the moral and social ballast, the ‘humanity’ as Belvile puts it, to initiate the rake’s transformation into a gentleman soldier, a *bonne grace* gallant who marries and embodies Royalism’s normative values and practices thereafter.

By characterising Willmore as a Cavalier unfit to protect the interests of the Crown in exile, Behn places her rake in a discrete position within the dramatic landscape of pro-Court, anti-rake, pro-reform typology. Critics frequently cite Killigrew’s *Tomaso* but tend to overlook a number of other, historically pertinent rake comedies that pre-date *The Rover* and resolve the problem of the rake by having him pressed into reform by authoritative men, as well as by a female suitor. Philidor, the rake in James Howard’s *The Mad Couple* (1667), is a pertinent forbear. Feeble-minded, he is too hapless to serve the interests of the Crown and is dependent on the guidance and protection of his King. Like Philidor, Willmore is a mal-plot engine, a blunderer who, incapable of meaningful self-reflection, creates problems he cannot solve without the intervention of his social and moral superiors. To a lesser degree, Willmore also echoes John Bulteel’s *The Amorous Gallant* (1664), in which Orontus – fixated by the art of seduction – also disturbs the *mission civilatrice* before agreeing to reform. A seditious Cavalier rogue with no legitimate role to fulfil in the management of State power, he is commanded to marry Dorothea by her father. The point made by Bulteel, Howard and Behn is that the rake can be rehabilitated but only through direct intervention, managed via the combination of female guidance – the civilising mission elaborated by Cohen – and homosocial governance – the male-bonding process extrapolated by Sedgwick. Both systems of social order work in tandem as orthodox tranches of Stuart hegemony.

**Exclusion and after**

The Exclusion Crisis (1679-1681) began in the aftermath of [Titus Oates](https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/history/british-and-irish-history-biographies/titus-oates)'s revelations in the summer of 1678 of a popish plot to murder Charles II and massacre English Protestants. Oates's revelations provoked anxieties about rule under James, Charles’ brother, a Roman Catholic. Three Exclusion bills sought to exclude him from the thrones of [England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_England), Scotland and Ireland: none became law. Protestants associated Catholic rule with religious persecution and tyrannical government. Sensitive to the criticisms levelled at the Court Party and the need to bolster its image, Behn wrote *The Fein’d Curtizans* (1678), which uses the rake, Gaillard*,* as a politically committed figure, very much in keeping with the dramatic tradition of libertines who protect the interests of the Crown.[[571]](#footnote-571) The moral and social improvements Behn made to her rake typology continued in *Rover Part II* (1681). ‘Performed at the darkest moment (from the Royalist perspective) of the Exclusion Crisis’,[[572]](#footnote-572) she represents Willmore again but this time as a character who supports the Crown rather than one who vexes its social and political interests.

Again she returns to the past, using the Interregnum trials and tribulations of the Cavalier as an allegory for the current threats posed by the Whigs. Explicitly pro-Court, it makes the connection between the Cavalier ‘wanderer’ and the exiled Princes. In the dedication, she directly addresses the Duke of York, who had opted to go into voluntary exile to salve and solve the problems of Exclusion. His travails are fused with those of Charles I, the ‘Royal Martyr’, as she tells James that her fictional Interregnum soldier was ‘driven from his Native Country with You, Forc’d as You were to fight for his Bread in a strange Land and suffer’d with You all the Ills of Poverty, War and Banishment’.[[573]](#footnote-573) In keeping with the picture of the hard-pressed but noble aristocrat in exile, Behn improves Willmore’s character. The insubordinate ‘puppy’ is replaced by a more mature Cavalier incarnation: he is now a Noble Captain (I. 1, p. 233) and a credit to the image of the exiled Court. ‘Saint’ (I. 1, p. 234) Hellena has died and Willmore is once again a penniless, roving Cavalier but this time all the *dramatis personae* adore him. Even his love rival, Beaumont, admires him: he is ‘brave, handsom, gay and all that Women doat on’ (II. 1, p. 252). Nevertheless, he is jilted by his lover La Nuche, a courtesan who has been paired with a senile old man by mercenary suitors. Willmore’s pursuit of La Nuche in the teeth of adversity and committed competition from Beaumont is eventually a success, as she acknowledges him as a man of honour. Notably, Behn provides a failed romance high plot including a rich virgin character who pursues Willmore, but Behn has La Nuche prevail.[[574]](#footnote-574) Consequently, Willmore remains a peripheral figure with no equivalent place in mainstream Royalist society. Notably, Cohen’s model cannot fully account for him. His transformation into a worthy Cavalier soldier chimes with the requirements of the self-perfecting male, but his marriage to La Nuche, a prostitute, means that he cannot join polite Royalist society. He becomes a well-governed Cavalier but refuses to involve himself in a conventional courtship and does not set in motion the social procedures of *bonne grace*.

Nor can Willmore be fully accommodated by Sedgwick’s triangular homosocial model. As an army officer, he is part of an exclusively male community, but he is not represented as a character whose interests are determined by the culture of military bonding. Willmore participates in a fierce competition with his love-rival, Beaumont, but there is no sense of a special man-to-man relation transcending his attraction to La Nuche. Nor is there any masculine interest gained from female manipulation/exploitation. His relation with Beaumont, anti-pathetic and highly competitive, is resolved by La Nuche who chooses Willmore, the soldier, over Beaumont, the English Viceroy’s son. In his final incarnation, he is a loyal but liminal figure, devoted to the Royalist cause but a wanderer, a rover who, very much like Behn herself, occupies a precarious position in society.

**The rake and the ‘changed man’ argument**

According to Richard Braverman, rake comedy ‘suffered a marked decline in the 1680s, when few works appeared in an unfavourable climate for the theatre in general’. After the demise of the Stuart regime, the rake, he argues, became a ‘changed man’.[[575]](#footnote-575) Michael McKeon shares this point of view, claiming that a unidirectional and progressive change banished Stuart libertines from the post-Exclusion cultural and political landscape. The rake, he suggests, ‘engages in a theatrics of arbitrary power in his social relations that is at once reminiscent of the experiments in personal rule by Charles II and James II and contradictory to the post-revolutionary values that supplanted them’.[[576]](#footnote-576) In ‘Heroic Heads and Tails’, Michael Neill also claims that the post-Stuart political climate had no place for the rake because he was ‘a tyrant figure, his revolt against insurrection against civil order aiming at the usurpation of absolute authority’.[[577]](#footnote-577) Braverman, Neill and McKeon each characterise the Stuart stage rake as either a character who has not ‘mended his ways’ or as ‘tyrant figure’ who wields ‘arbitrary power’ and does not serve the interests of the Caroline regime.

But as this thesis has shown, the Stuart rake frequently reforms and serves the Crown. In the first place, these critics do not consider the dramatic tradition of rake rehabilitation represented by pro-Court, anti-rake dramatists under the sanction of Whitehall**.** From 1662 to 1682, the majority of libertine plays feature rake rehabilitation: Abraham Cowley’s *The Cutter of Coleman Street* (1661), Robert Howard’s *The Committee* (1662), John Dryden’s *The Wild Gallant* (1663), James Howard’s *The English Mounsieur* (1663), John Bulteel’s *The Amorous Gallant* (1664), Dryden’s *Secret Love* (1667), James Howard’s *The Mad Couple* (1667), William Wycherley’s *Love in a Wood* (1671), Thomas Shadwell’s *Epsom Wells* (1672), Edward Ravenscroft’s *The Careless Lovers* (1672), Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675), George Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* (1676) and Aphra Behn’s *The Rover* (1676). Of the twenty rake comedies produced during the Restoration, thirteen represent reform.

Nor, in the second place, is the Stuart rake a tyrant figure. Restoration rakes did not aim at the ‘usurpation of absolute authority’. On the contrary, nine of the twenty dramatic rakes rendered between 1660 and 1677 protect the interests of the Court Party. *The Cutter of Coleman Street, The Committee, The Wild Gallant, The English Mounsieur*, Etherege’s *The Comical Revenge* and *She Would If She Could* (1668), Thomas Betterton’s *The Amorous Widow* (1670), John Dover’s *The Modish Lovers* (1674) and *The Country Wife* all involve their rakes in safeguarding by waging war against the enemies to the Crown. The only Stuart rake comedy which deliberately breaks with these two dimensions of rake typology is *The Libertine*, a Whig satire that renders its three rogue Cavaliers as enemies to all forms of socio-political order; they do not mend their ways via a marriage union, nor do they serve and protect dynastic power.

Michael McKeon goes on to argue that the Stuart libertine was ‘banished’ after the Exclusion Crisis but, in fact, the rake reappeared as a useful instrument for defining the cultural and political landscape under Williamite and Georgian rule.[[578]](#footnote-578) After Exclusion, *The Libertine* was performed under the new title, *The Libertine Destroyed,* a clear indication of the increasing power and confidence of the Whigs and their worsening relations with Stuart power. It was revived for the season of 1696-7 and performed by Rich’s Company at Drury Lane, but its popularity began to soar after the Glorious Revolution and the termination of Stuart dynasty. From 1700 to 1736, it was staged on numerous occasions, frequently playing twice a year.[[579]](#footnote-579) The sheer number of revivals suggests that the Shadwellian rake was not forgotten so much as constantly remembered.

At this point it is necessary to include a survey that will examine rake typology first produced after the Glorious Revolution of 1689. The rake’s presence on the post-Stuart literary terrain certainly influenced Nicolas Rowe’s rake typology in *The Fair Penitent* (1703). The son of a barrister, Rowe studied at the Middle Temple and, on the accession of George I, succeeded Nahum Tate as poet laureate. A middle-class Whig, Rowe takes the rake and, to heighten the threat he poses to Whiggish society, relocates him in a different genre: tragedy. In so doing, he transforms him from a comedic figure into a fatally dangerous one whose sexual exploits and boisterous egotism ruins the play’s heroine. Rowe’s rake, Lothario, is a harbinger of tragedy, a wicked aristocrat who is at war with members of his own social class, a man for whom reform and marriage have no place on his social and moral spectrum.

Set in Genoa, *The Fair Penitent* begins with Altamont, an aristocrat warrior preparing to marry the virgin Calista who, unbeknownst to him, has been seduced by Lothario who plots her seduction in order to shame the Altamonts.[[580]](#footnote-580) The blank verse occasions a vivid description of Lothario’s abuse of Calista, contrasting his rabid predations with her lovesick fragility. She is a guileless victim and he is cold-hearted seducer who uses the ‘courtly art of changing’ (II. 1, p. 16) to deceive her, bed her and destroy her. After she has given him ‘perfect happiness’ (I. 1, p. 7), she becomes frantic and begs him to either marry her or elope to avoid the shame of adultery but he refuses the ‘Marriage Chain’ (I. 1, p. 7). His only offer is the promise of retaining her as his mistress. This proposal – which would transform Calista into the role of willing adulteress or whore – horrifies her. She rails at him, calling him ‘Villain! Monster! Base! Betrayer!’ (I. 1, p. 8). In due course, Altamont discovers Calista has been seduced by Lothario and mortally wounds his adversary in a duel. As Lothario dies, he boasts of the pattern of ruin he has set in motion: *‘*That sweet revenge comes smiling to my Thoughts, / Adorns my fall, and chears my Heart in dying’ (V. 1, p. 48). Aware of the social death awaiting her, Calista stabs herself and utters her final words:

Oh! Gentle Altamont,

Had I but known thy wond’rous worth,

Thou excellent young Man,

We had been happier both

(V. 1, p. 60)

A victim of the double standard, she is nevertheless noble in death, blaming herself for the wrongs committed against her by the villainous Lothario.

Lothario, then, is a reincarnation of the Shadwellian rake – a relentless predator and wicked resenter who uses seduction to dismantle and destroy the lives of those who broach his endless egotism. He proudly describes himself as an ‘evil Genius’, (II. 2, p. 23) – a megalomaniac claim that substantiates Whiggish accusations of absolute authority levelled at the defeated Stuart regime. Of course, evil geniuses have no interest in the process of self-betterment and Lothario’s fate, very much like Don John’s in *The Libertine*, enacts a morally retributive scenario where the punishment meted out perfectly suits the seriousness of his crimes: the rake either burns in hell or is put to the sword, his death serving as a stark reminder of and warning against the perils of unbridled power and the high-handed abuse of Law, State and religion. Relocated to the genre of tragedy, the rake becomes a tyrannous evil-doer, eclipsing the Restoration rake’s misdeeds which, under the conditions of comedy, were either mended by marriage or curtailed by duteous service to the Crown. Reimagined as a wildly destructive seducer figure, his new function as a harbinger of ruin brought a fresh synonym to libertine typology.[[581]](#footnote-581) ‘Lothario’ became a trait name and byword for a creaturely figure who bears a closer resemblance to an evil tyrant than he does to a pleasure-seeking second son, a misogynistic drunk or a sword wielding soldier.

Rowe uses Lothario’s wickedness to add extra heat to *The Fair Penitent’s* social and moral instruction. The Epilogue recaps the moral teleology of the play: ‘If you would e’er bring Constancy in Fashion,/ You Men must first begin the Reformation’.[[582]](#footnote-582) Here, he grandiloquently sues for rake reform as if it were the first time the idea had arisen. Turning a blind eye to what was already a thoroughly explored theme, Rowe – very much in the manner of a Protestant tub-thumper – censures the ‘sauntering squire who loves to roam’.[[583]](#footnote-583) Here, his deployment of the epithet ‘sauntering squire’ identifies and disparages libertinism but, crucially, it also extends the ambit of its censure to baroque manners themselves, the poetics of highly self-conscious, negligent display practised by the gentlemen and gentlewomen of the Restoration *beau monde*.

For the Tory gentility of the Restoration, the outward expression of emotion was a dire failure of style, an injunction against the cool, detached demeanour around which the ceremonial accoutrements of power were assembled. For the new Whiggish polite society, however, ostentatious social self-display was no longer perceived as the legitimate means through which a polite man or woman was to be measured. According to Mackie, ‘this new social group was made up largely, but not solely, of people in those mid-level economic and social positions we now group under the rubric the middle class’.[[584]](#footnote-584) Unlike Stuart manners, which were prescribed and regulated by women, the new code of politeness was overseen by men including Lord Shaftesbury, whose *Characteristics* (1711) aimed at ‘shifting the guardianship of culture from the Tories to his own party, with its Country, Puritan and radical associations’.[[585]](#footnote-585)

Joseph Addison and Richard Steel continued Shaftesbury’s work in *The Tatler* (1709) and *The Spectator* (1711), periodicals that ‘expanded the social parameters of politeness, virtue and moral leadership’[[586]](#footnote-586) into the middle class public domain. Via their commentator, Mr Spectator, Addison and Steele promoted new standards of taste and style, embodied in a utilitarian mode of politeness that disavowed the Tory ideology of elitist public display and privilegedthe Whiggish notion of personal and private enjoyment. According to Thomas King, ‘happiness was located in the family and a gendered domesticity emerged as the carrier of the new personal and political privacy’.[[587]](#footnote-587) Within this domestic domain, the ‘real man’ and his counterpart, the ‘domestic woman’, pursue authentic, internal virtue.[[588]](#footnote-588) As part of their own civilising mission, Addison and Steele try to sell an ideal which, as Mackie puts it, ‘is both specifically bourgeois and specifically masculine.[[589]](#footnote-589) To help secure this end, Steele uses the rake and other social characters such as the Epicene Man, the Pretty Fellow and the Man of Pleasure to define and legitimate his vision.

In 1750, Lord Chesterfield would offer an informative distinction between the man of pleasure and the rake in a letter to his son:

young people too frequently, and often fatally, are apt to mistake that character for that of a man of pleasure, whereas, there are not in the world two characters more different. A rake is a composition of all the lowest, most ignoble, degrading and shameful vices… the man of pleasure, though not as scrupulous as he should be, and as one day he will wish he had been, refines at least his pleasures by taste, accompanies them with decency, and enjoys them with dignity. Few men can be a man of pleasure, every man may be a rake.[[590]](#footnote-590)

Clearly, the man of pleasure is an acceptable aristocratic figure but, as Chesterfield makes abundantly clear, there is a fine line between dignified and decent enjoyment and rakish excess. The emphasis here is on the process of becoming, of casting off the kind of bad behaviour that might haunt the decent, upstanding gentleman in later life. Notably, his picture of the rake banishes the prospect of personal renewal.

Governed by this sense of moral teleology, the changed man emerges via *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* as rather a mild-mannered and muted individual: a civic-minded, sober, modest and plainly dressed gentleman, easily discernible from the rake whose persona Steele elaborates in his typology of the ‘woman’s man’ in *The Spectator*:

His Air and Behaviour is quite different from the rest of our species. His garb is more loose and more negligent, his manner more soft and indolent; that is to say, in both these cases there is an apparent Endeavour to appear unconcerned and careless.[[591]](#footnote-591)

This character sketch indicates how the behavioural modus of the Stuart elite has been perpetuated. The effeminate style of the Caroline elite and its ‘negligent’ manner are carried from one generation to the next, differentiating the Tory rake from his socio-political competitors. Notably, Steele’s description of the ‘woman’s man’ conveniently ignores the fact that the character’s social behaviour was universal among the Cavalier class and not just characteristic of the Wits. As has been seen, negligence did not entail libertinism; rather, it was a prescriptive component of official behaviour. But here, Steele gives the negligent manner a rake specific, overtly sexual interpretation, the womaniser’s ‘soft and indolent’ style encapsulating Stuart manners. Warming to his task, he passes quickly from description to politicised evaluation. These men are ‘ruiners of ladies; these are the choicest spirits which our Age produces’. They have ‘that sort of good Breeding which is exclusive of all Morality, and consists only in being publickly decent, privately dissolute’. Following Shadwell’s rake critique in *The Libertine*, Steele argues that the acquisition of correct socially integrating behaviour does not guarantee moral improvement. Shamming goodness in his social behaviour, the rake pleases women to deceive, seduce and ruin them, an ethos which prompts Steele to define the rake – ironically – as ‘the most agreeable of all bad characters’.[[592]](#footnote-592)

The column inches dedicated to the rake were not limited to *The Spectator*. Steele had already set about denigrating the character in *The Tatler –* announcing in the manner of a disappointed *pater familias* – that ‘a rake is a man to be pitied’ because his ‘faults proceed not from choice or inclination’ but from ‘strong passions and appetites which are in youth too violent for the curb of reason, good sense, good manners, and good nature’. He might want to change, but he cannot. He ‘sins on, against heaven, himself, his friends, and his country, who all call for a better use of his talents’.[[593]](#footnote-593) These sententious criticisms subtract the sense of danger ascribed to the rake by Whiggish rhetoric of Shadwell and Rowe: Steele is reluctant to glamorise the rake’s seductive capacities by representing him as a terrible and unmanageable threat to society but, at the same time, he rejects the possibility of rake rehabilitation. As he says, the rake is ‘exclusive of all morality’.[[594]](#footnote-594)

Steele pokes fun at the rake but, at the same time, he urges his readers to practise discrimination when encountering him lest they confuse the social counterfeit with the real thing. In *The Tatler* the would-be rake character Nobilitas sets out to appear to be a more vicious man than he actually is by imitating the manners, demeanour and conduct of a *bona fide* rake. Evident in the paper is the notion that Nobilitas has not made himself a rake; rather he has merely counterfeited characteristics that belong to an internal subjectivity unattainable through imitation.[[595]](#footnote-595) Rakes such as Don John and Lothario are taken seriously because they are intrinsically wicked, but Nobilitas, and the men who try to assume the manners of the dangerous woman’s man in the social sphere, are not. Nobilitas, who overdresses to impress, updates the Restoration fop, the social imitator or imposter who unsuccessfully – and foolishly – initiates libertine manners but does not have his role model’s poisonous intentions. Yet this does not mean that gentlemen like Nobilitas should be disbarred from moral and social improvement. On the contrary, young men of an ‘artificial ill character’ who counterfeit libertine manners are redeemable. Unlike the wretched rake who is the slave to his severe passions and appetites, Nobilitas is a man who has temporarily strayed from his ‘good nature’. His misdemeanours are treated by Steele as the follies of youth, amendable by the application of ‘sober studies and applications’.[[596]](#footnote-596) Temporarily wayward gentlemen like Nobilitas can be rescued, but the rake cannot.

The rake did not just appear in middle-class periodicals: he was also represented in the realm of the novel. Steele’s Nobilitas typology reappears in Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), a novel that charts the relationship between a rakish squire and a lady’s maid and responds to the theme of masculine reform. The plot centralises the imprisonment of the heroine Pamela, who is superintended bya procuress, Mrs Jewkes, who tries to groom her for the master of the house, Squire B. She encourages him to rape Pamela, but since he is ‘not yet an abandoned profligate’,[[597]](#footnote-597) he refuses, and the sinister manicuring process proves to be a preamble for a happy marriage**.** Chiming with Steele’s ideology of personal authenticity, Richardson, a Protestant and former tradesman, images Squire B. as a gentleman of pleasure in the making, a character whose libertinism is a youthful and temporary deviation from and prelude to civic-minded middle-class masculinity. Like Steele’s Nobilitas, Squire B. is not a rake because he is ‘not vicious against his will’, but a young man who, ‘though not as scrupulous as he might be’, has sufficient self-control to metamorphose into a dignified and decent gentleman.[[598]](#footnote-598)

Using Pamela as an instrument for rake reform, Richardson reformulates the role of Ruth in *The Committee*, Constance in *The Wild Gallant*, Lady Wealthy in *The English Mounsieur*, Dorothea in *The Amorous Gallant*, Florimel in *Secret Love*, Lydia in *Love in a Wood*, Alethea in *The Country Wife,* and– indirectly – Hellena in *The Rover*. But unlike these aristocratic overseers of rake reform, Richardson uses a heroine from the lower classes to tame her aristocratic rake. The means by which she secures the Squire is via the virtuous application of modesty. Richardson pictures modesty as an intrinsic and invaluable determinant of personal behaviour, a virtue that, according to Ruth Yeazel, was regarded as a dynamic rather than yielding pattern of conduct.

Yeazel argues that for the eighteenth-century middle classes, modesty was a gendered variable: for men it was involved in the pursuit of mercantile self-interest, its use curtailing his aggression and assisting him in the improvement of his fortune; for women, it was an ‘agreeable fear in all she enters upon’. The modest woman ‘never puts herself forward, her modesty restraining and controlling the violence of masculine love’. Thus, Pamela can say yes to Squire B’s offer of marriage because she has said no to his attempts to seduce her.[[599]](#footnote-599) In *Pamela’s* moral calculus, virtue is rewarded just as vice is punished or, rather, corrected. Pamela’s modesty is active and vigilant, guaranteeing a successful courtship and a prudent and affectionate concord of husband and wife. Richardson equips Pamela with an in-built moral radar with which to steer her flawed suitor towards the middle-class masculine verities of mildness, prudence and restraint. In return, she is elevated into the gentry.

A year after the first publication of *Pamela,* Henry Fielding published *An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews* (1741), which rejects Richardson’s narrative of rake assimilation into middle-class society.[[600]](#footnote-600) Educated at Eton and with friends in high places, Fielding pokes fun at his socially ‘inferior’ opponent. With clever sleight of hand, he devalues Richardson’s claim to legitimate rake reform by reimagining Pamela as a licentious social climber and Squire B. as a Country gentleman, a Protestant fool with pretensions to libertinism which he is not man enough to attain. He transforms Mr B. into a Booby squire, a character who ‘lets down the standards both of his sex and his class’.[[601]](#footnote-601) Wittily, he draws on Restoration typology, which portrays the Country gentleman as a farcical bumpkin whose failings glamorise Stuart gallants and rakes. Sir Nicholas Cully, the Cromwellian country gentleman in Etherege’s *Comical Revenge* (1664), exemplifies the Booby squire.[[602]](#footnote-602) A comic butt, he impersonates the rake, Sir Frederick Frollick, and tries unsuccessfully to insinuate himself with Frollick’s lover, the Widow Rich, whom he hopes to marry for her money. He is incapable of hatching this scheme himself and enlists the support of two sharpers who cheat and rob him. When Frollick discovers Cully is a Royalist impersonator, he swoops and sends his terrified rival back to the shires.

Like Cully, Squire Booby – the master of Booby Hall – is a Country gentleman shamelessly manipulated by his social ‘inferiors’.[[603]](#footnote-603) Mrs Jervis, the housekeeper, is in league with Shamela, a maid who feigns modesty to gull Booby into marriage, share his wealth and elevate herself to the rank and station of a lady. Shamela – with the emphasis on sham – is a grasping hypocrite, a charge frequently levelled at Puritan women in Restoration comedy by Court Party poets. As the novel’s fictional editor notes, she is a ‘little hussy’ who has disrupted the social hierarchy in a manner that exceeds literary decorum.[[604]](#footnote-604) When Booby comes into her unlocked bedroom, he places himself between Shamela and Mrs Jervis, both of whom are ‘shamming a sleep’. Shamela relates how ‘he steals his Hand into my Bosom, which I, as if in my Sleep, press close to me with mine, and then pretend to awake’. She self-consciously swoons and when Mrs Jervis cries out ‘O sir, what have you done, you have murdered poor Pamela’, the Squire becomes completely discomposed, his behaviour remarkably distant from a genuine rake. As the delighted Shamela says, ‘the poor Booby, frightened out of his Wits, jumped out of Bed and, in His shirt, sat down by my Bed-Side, pale and trembling’.[[605]](#footnote-605)

Fielding lampoons Richardson’s courtship between a Squire and a ‘modest’ lower-middle class female[[606]](#footnote-606) but he does share the view that the Squire is governed by the sexual ethic. The Squire kisses Shamela and presses her for sex almost as soon as they meet. As she recalls:

Sir, I hope you don’t intend to be rude; no says he, my Dear, and then he kissed me, ‘till he took away my Breath – and I pretended to be Angry, and to get away, and then he kissed me again, and breather very short and looked very silly.[[607]](#footnote-607)

Clearly, this is not how a gentleman would comport himself in the company of a lady, but because she belongs to a lower social order, the rules of modesty, deference and restraint no longer apply. For Fielding, the idea that an aristocrat could be reformed, or rather converted to a contrary system of socio-political identification by a modest, socially ‘inferior’ woman, is a ludicrous fiction and a travesty of the elite arrangements of gendered behaviour.

In fact, the casual abuse of ‘inferior’ women by ‘superior’ men was widely regarded as a social norm. [[608]](#footnote-608) In his *Diary*, Pepys records witnessing the sexual abuse of a young girl:

This night late, coming in my coach coming up Ludgate Hill, I saw two gallants and their footmen taking a pretty wench which I have much eyed lately… They seemed to drag her by some force, but the wench went and I believe had her turn served; but God forgive me, what thoughts and wishes I had of being in their place.[[609]](#footnote-609)

Gallants with no control over their ‘strong passions and appetites would rape young women without compunction or consideration.[[610]](#footnote-610) Live-in servants were routinely abused in a culture of exploitation guised as elite entitlement. Masters could do as they pleased in their own homes, their sexual abuse of servants supercharged by the folkish belief that sex with a virgin was a cure for venereal disease.[[611]](#footnote-611) Fielding belonged to the master side of the dyad and inhabited a cultural world in which, as Yeazel points out, men would wonder why the Squire would marry a chambermaid if he could simply have her.[[612]](#footnote-612) Thus, Booby might well have been construed by his aristocratic peers as a man with no sense of his social superiority who marries Shamela because he is too feeble and foolish to indulge the passion of lust.

In what was probably a response to Fielding’s barbed attack on his social ‘inferior’, Richardson wrote *Clarissa* (1748), invoking anti-Stuart rake typology to besmirch Fielding’s *laissez faire* Toryism. Again, he uses a female ‘commoner’ to assert middle-class superiority over a morally defective, socially exploitative aristocrat. This time, however, he writes a full-blown tragedytelling the story of Clarissa Harlowe, a young, middle-class woman who is courted and raped by the libertine Robert Lovelace (i.e. Love-less). Lovelace is no Squire B. On the contrary, he is a homicidally dangerous rake formed in the image of Don John and Lothario. Alluding to Shadwell and Rowe, Richardson confers upon Lovelace a degree of moral turpitude that excludes him from moral redemption and perpetuates the image of rake as an egocentric and lawless evil-doer. Having persuaded Clarissa to abandon her family, he puts her in various lodgings, including a [brothel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brothel), where he can devote himself to her seduction. She refuses him and escapes but Lovelace hunts her down and tricks her into returning to the whorehouse. Then, with the assistance of the prostitutes at the brothel, he drugs and rapes her. Eventually, she manages to escape and finds sanctuary with a shopkeeper and his wife. Traumatised, she lives in constant fear of again being accosted by Lovelace. She is supported by John Belford, a rake who reforms for her sake but she is perpetually harassed by Lovelace. She becomes dangerously ill due to the mental duress she undergoes but dies in full consciousness of her virtue. Her cousin, Colonel Morden, discovers Lovelace, who has fled England, and kills him in a duel. Like Don John and Lothario, he dies violently.

For the first phase of his pursuit of Clarissa, Richardson reworks Don John and Lothario’s sexual deviousness by having Lovelace play the role of the tortured gallant, desperate to win his maiden’s approval. This strategy stages and devalues Tory courtship rituals, indicating – like Shadwell and Rowe before him – that ceremonials are vacuous and prone to exploitation by devious libertines. Thus, when Lovelace plays the subservient gallant, Clarissa treats him with cynical disdain. Her correct reading of his character is ratified by a glimpse into his hidden inclinations. He gloats on her virginal youth and slavers over ‘her skin so illustriously fair’. ‘She is’, he adds ‘all alive, all glowing, all charming flesh and blood yet so clear, that every meandering vein is to be seen in all the lovely parts of her which custom permits to be visible’.[[613]](#footnote-613) To ensure there is no possibility of mistaking Lovelace for Squire B., Richardson portrays his rake as a perverted, dangerous sadist. When Lovelace reflects on the potential damage of his relentless desire to ruin Clarissa, the trapped virgin, he perceives her as an insect and himself as a spider:

a self-circumscribed tyrant [which] winds round and round the poor insect, till he covers it with his bowel spun toils; and when so fully secured, that it can neither move leg nor wing, suspends it, as if for a spectacle to be exulted over.[[614]](#footnote-614)

His helpless captive, she is an ‘entangled girl’ or fly on whom he ‘gloats’ and on whose ‘vitals’ he ‘preys’ upon at his leisure.[[615]](#footnote-615) Clarissa however, proves astonishingly resistant to his seductive powers. As he says to his fellow libertine, John Belford, ‘she is a woman, no trials, no stratagems, no temptation could overpower’.[[616]](#footnote-616)

Lovelace’s relentlessness is matched by the now typical component of the anti-Stuart libertine: egomania. Lovelace places himself in the same company as ‘the great Caesar’, a man who was a ‘great rake to women’,[[617]](#footnote-617) perpetuating Don John and Lothario’s delusions of grandeur. Lovelace places his ‘imperial will’[[618]](#footnote-618) above all other considerations and would sooner die than compromise his own interests. Like his anti-Stuart forebears, Richardson resuscitates the anxieties of mercantile, god-fearing Protestant middle-classes who must battle against the same wicked and lawless libertinism that had tormented their Cromwellian predecessors during the Interregnum. Encoding an above-the-law-do-as-I-please sense of entitlement, together with a potent, Protestant-hating misogyny, Richardson tries to solidify the image of the anti-Stuart rake as a brutal and dangerous self-seeker, a violent sadist and wilful enemy of civic order. Richardson’s vision of the rake is hardened by his literary and socio-political altercation with Fielding. Rehabilitation is no longer an option. Clarissa determines to curb the impetuosity of Lovelace’s’ temper by demanding his ‘reformation’, the first step of which requires him ‘to subdue the gusts of passion, from which frequently the greatest evils arise, and learn to bear disappointments’.[[619]](#footnote-619) To ensure that rake reform is not an option, Richardson imports ‘those charming lines of Mr Rowe’, which iterate the challenges posed by rehabilitation:

Habitual evils change not on a sudden,

But many days must pass, and many sorrows

Before renewal can become second nature’.[[620]](#footnote-620)

Reform is a gruelling conversion and ‘habitual evils’ can only be shrugged off after a prolonged period of suffering. Of course, Lovelace does not want to reform – he simply pretends to follow the path of sorrows and anguish – but Richardson suggests that even if he did, the hardships he would have to endure would be too difficult to overcome. If the rake does not or cannot reform, then the zero tolerance approach to libertinism proposed by Rowe becomes fully justified and the rake must suffer the fate of a condemned man.

Like Dryden, who waged urbane war against Shadwell during the Restoration, Fielding explicitly repudiates Richardson after it.[[621]](#footnote-621) But in spite of his gentlemanly sense of entitlement and the pressures of acute cultural difference, he too was vehemently opposed to the ‘execrable vice[s]’ of the rake.[[622]](#footnote-622) Although he believed that it was inevitable that men would fornicate, he maintains it was immoral for them to bed virgins and laudable for them to remain monogamous.[[623]](#footnote-623) In *Tom Jones* (1749), his picaresque novel charting the hapless meanderings of a young foundling who turns out to be an aristocrat, his narrator mounts an attack on those who suppose that ‘there is no such thing as virtue or goodness really existing in human nature’.[[624]](#footnote-624) This comment censures those who, in keeping with libertine philosophy, ascribe all human actions – however generous-seeming – to self-interest. Tom has a variety of sexual relations with women – or more precisely, they have sexual relations with him – but this does not make him a libertine. As Tom confesses:

I have been guilty with women, I own it, but am not conscious that I have ever injured any – nor would I, to procure pleasure to myself, be knowingly the cause of misery to any human being. [[625]](#footnote-625)

Fielding represents Tom as an honest, would-be man of pleasure, but this does not mean that he shies away from imaging viciously exploitative, appetitive gallants from his own social class. Fielding’s rake figure, Lord Fellemar, ‘consciously injures’ women to ‘procure pleasure’ for himself and remains indifferent to the ‘misery’ he has caused. Fellemar tries to rape Sophie Western, Tom’s childhood friend and beloved, to force her to marry him. This inclusion of the rake as rapist loops back to Richardson’s Lovelace and, in spite of the writers’ antipathy, makes them literary bondsmen who share the same concerns regarding the treacherous sexual predations of the rake.[[626]](#footnote-626) With *Tom Jones*, Fielding takes pleasure in personal fault and folly, but his outlook is informed by a sense of intrinsic benevolence which merges with his sense of insouciant gentlemanliness. In a sense, this marries with Richardson’s moral essentialism, but Fielding’s style of being was markedly different from his middle-class rival. Fielding’s combination of good-naturedness and negligent urbanity invokes the memory of the *bonne grace* Cavalier, the elegant gentleman whose masculinity embodied ‘consideration, respect and decency.’[[627]](#footnote-627)

However, it is important to note that the bodily and linguistic poetics of this Tory tradition of behaviour were reliant upon the rake, at Court and in the rhetoric of Stuart dramatists. From a close look at Donna Andrew’s identification of the merits and attributes of the ‘good’ Cavalier – qualities such as self-control, steadfastness, generosity, modesty and deference – it is easy to see how they are defined by libertinism, the aberrant mode of being that vaunted impulsiveness, violence, cynical self-interest, self-aggrandisement, social intemperance and casual misogyny.[[628]](#footnote-628)

This reliance is also true of the changed man. As I have been trying to show, the ideational vision of the changed man relied on the libertine for his social and moral coordinates. The libertine’s uncontrollable passions and appetites guaranteed the pure gender identity of the Whiggish gentleman, who in Richardson’s *Pamela* would become a domesticated, mild-mannered man tutored into righteousness by a modest woman from the lower classes rather than an aristocratic lady with ceremonial manners. For Richard Steele, the aristocratic figure of the rake is an indispensable asset: Steele’s means for a moral calibration of the cast of undesirable social types occupying the fashionable zones of the eighteenth-century Town. As Mackie notes, *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* ‘define the (heterosexual) bourgeois male by invoking, in order to displace, pre-existent male types’.[[629]](#footnote-629) The fop, the would-be rake and men of an Epicene gender are defined as social undesirables, but only as characters within a hierarchy of transgression anchored by the rake himself, a man ‘vicious against his will’ who is ‘not so by study or application’ but intrinsically dangerous to himself and others.[[630]](#footnote-630)

But while the rake is reformed, used and abused by Whiggish social commentary, his physical presence, his dangerous reputation and his sex appeal made him a persistent threat to the new Whiggish community whose literary and journalistic representatives had worked to condemn. Much to Richardson’s irritation, even the most spotlessly virtuous women who read Clarissa found Lovelace alluring.[[631]](#footnote-631) The problem with the changed man was that he was far more effeminated than the rake he had been designed to displace.[[632]](#footnote-632)Promoted to men by men, he was not as popular as he might have been with the ladies. In *The Spectator,* one gentleman complained that ‘a modest sober Man was always looked upon by both sexes as a precise un-fashioned Fellow of no Life or Spirit’. The gentleman finds no women will offer him respect if they discover he is a virgin, ‘for no other fault in the world than that they really thought me as innocent as themselves’.[[633]](#footnote-633) This account infers that women want sexually experienced men who are very different from themselves. And, of course, difference and sexual experience were the specialisms of the rake. The post-Stuart rake, then, is a marginal figure, an exile, a social pariah, a maverick, a murderer or a rapist, but crucially, in eighteenth-century typology, he is a primary character without which the new classificatory scheme of the changed man could not have properly functioned.

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39. Love, pp. 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. McKeon, p. 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Lovepp. 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. According to Dover, p. 91, boys were apprenticed to the code of Athenian citizenship, including the power to command slaves and women. Gender and class subordination entrained freedom from labour from which aristocratic males –who treated manual work with contempt – were exempt. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
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45. *The Poetical Works of the Honourable Sir Charles Sedley Baronet, with Large Additions never before made Publick* (London, 1709), p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Sedgwick, p. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Sedgwick, p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
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50. George Etherege, *The Man of Mode* (London: A&C Black Publishers Ltd, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Sedgwick, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
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53. At Versailles, the ritual, or royal *levée,* was a solemn social performance, a precisely coordinated choreography of power that encoded the exact distribution of power at the Court. Those most favoured gentlemen performed the duties which came into contact with the royal body, the epicentre of the ceremony’s corporeal arrangements. To buckle the king’s shoes or hold a sleeve of his nightshirt confirmed the esteem of those courtiers called upon to perform the task and demonstrated, through the performance of the act, his status in relation to the king and the rest of the social community. Although the Stuart ceremony lacked the grandeur of the French model, the principal of differentiated informing it did not. The gestures and motions of subservience codified Charles’ power, whose inactivity in the midst of the supplicating activities of the male courtiers chosen to dress him, clarified his supreme social status. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
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55. Thomas Lacqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (London: Harvard University Press, 2009) [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Anon. *The Art of Complaisance,* (London: J. Starkey, 1673)p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Lacqueur, pp. 25-148. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Lacqueur, pp. 4, 26, 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Lacqueur, p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Michele Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinities* (London: Routeledge, 1996), intro; vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Roslyn Brogue Henning, ‘The Padeia of a Renaissance Gentleman: Castiglione’s Book of the Courtier’, in *Renaissance Men of Ideas*, ed. by R. Schwoebel (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1971), p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier,* trans. by Sir T. Hoby (London: Dent, 1928). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Nicholas Faret, *The Art of Pleasing at Court* (Birmingham: T. Aris, 1754), pp. 6. 9, 16, 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Antoine de Courtin, *The Rules of Civility* *or Certain Ways of Deportment Observed in France amongst Persons of Quality upon Several Occasions* (London: J. Martyn at the Bell in St Paul’s Church Yard, 1671), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Thomas A. King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750, Volume 1: The English Phallus* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Nathaniel Waker, *The Refin’d Courtier* (London: Royston, 1663), p. 236. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Cohen, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. *The Memoirs of the Countess de Dunois* (London: Bragg, 1707), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Dunois, pp. 3-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Dunois, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. The Duke of Monmouth was the first illegitimate son of the King, groomed at Whitehall and the *salons* of Covent Garden into an exemplary Cavalier courtier. According to Dunois, he has ‘all the accomplishments of a fine gentleman’. p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Dunois, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Dunois, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Dunois, pp. 11-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Dunois, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. G. C. Moore Smith, ed., *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. I extrapolate preciosity in my analysis of Robert Howard’s *The Committee* (1662), set during the Interregnum. See: Ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Moore, xxxvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Moore, xxxix. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Marjorie Hope Nicholson, ed., *The Conway Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 376. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. *The Letters of Dorothy Sidney, Countess Dowager of Sunderland* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Brown, 1819), p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Cohen, pp. 11-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Cohen, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Cohen, pp. 11-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Faret, p. 19 describes negligence as the ‘source of genteel behaviour’. Antoine, de Courtin, *The Rules of Civility or Certain Ways of Deportment Observed in France amongst Persons The Rules of Civility among Persons of Quality*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews & other writings of Michel Foucault 1977-1984,* ed. by L.D. Kritzman (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Jeremy Lamb, *So Idle a Rogue: The Life and Death of Lord Rochester* (London: Allison & Busby, 1993), p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Russell, p. 36 [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. *A Series of Letters from Lady Russell to her Husband, William Lord Russell* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1819), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Russell, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Russell, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen and Pirates* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2009), p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. *The Works of John Wilmot,* ed. by Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Mackie, pp. 11, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Mackie, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Donna Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Andrew, p. 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Andrew, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Cohen, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. See John Gillingham, ‘From Civilitas to Civility: Codes of Manners in Medieval and Early Modern England’, and John Tosh, ’English Politeness: Conduct, Social Rank and Moral Virtue, *c.* 1400-1900’, both in *Roy. Hist. Soc*., 6th ser., xii (2002); *Early Modern Civil Discourses*, ed. by Jennifer Richards (New York, Macmillan, 2003). Critical accounts question the so-called ‘development’ from civility to politeness, arguing that manners systems are not teleological. Both Gillingham and Tosh claim it is an academic field too reliant on prescriptive literatures. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Linda A. Pollock, ‘The Practice of Kindness in Early Modern Elite Society’, *Oxford University Press* on behalf of *The Past and Present Society,* no. 211 (May 2011), pp. 121-158 [pp. 133-134]. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Jeremy Lamb, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Laura J. Rosenthal, *Masculinity in Restoration Drama,* ed. by S. Owen (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. James Grantham Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. xiii, 165, 187, 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Jenny Uglow, *A Gambling Man; Charles II and the Restoration 1660-1670* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), pp. 64, 1, 271, 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Sharpe*,* pp. 170, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Laura Brown, *English Dramatic Form 1660-1710* (London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Douglas Canfield, *Tricksters and Estates: On the Ideology of Restoration Comedy* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Susan Owen, ‘Restoration Drama and Politics: An Overview’ in *A Companion to Restoration Drama,* ed. by S. Owen (London: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 126-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville, Sixth Earl of Dorset* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1940), p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Thomas Shadwell, ‘Prologue to The Libertine: a Tragedy in Five Acts’ in *The Theatre of Don Juan* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963) [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Kevin Sharpe*, Rebranding Rule* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Sharpe,p.168. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Sharpe, pp. 170-172. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Sharpe*,* pp. 170, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Cohen, pp. 1-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Robert Howard, *The Committee: Or, the Faithful Irishman* in University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Urbana: Illinois, 1921), pp. 48-118.According to *The London Stage* *Part 1: 1660-1700,* p. 58, *The Committee* was first performed at Court on November 27th, 1662, and thereafter at Vere Street. Unfortunately, there is no record of the original cast or details of the production: John Downes’ documentation of the dramas staged by the King’s Company mentions the play as ‘being principal of their stock’ but only as ‘one of divers others’, John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus* ed. by M. Summers (London: Fortune Press), p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Dale Underwood, *Etherege and the Seventeenth Century Comedy of Manners* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Underwood,p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Underwood*,* pp. 13-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 245. Unless otherwise stated, in this thesis, I will treat the term rake and libertine synonymously. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. E.B. Chancellor, ‘Old Rowley’, *The Lives of the Rakes,* 6 vols. (London: Allan, 1924), I, pp. 96-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time,* 2 vols.(London: R.H. Evans, 1800), I, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Jeremy Lamb, *So Idle a Rogue: The Life and Death of Lord Rochester* (London: Allison & Busby, 1993), p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Lamb, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Lamb, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. **‘**Sex, Liberty and Licence in the Eighteenth Century’ in *Libertine Enlightenment,* ed. by P. Cryle & L. O’Connell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 1-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Michael Mangan, *Staging Masculinities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. David Turner, ‘Nothing is so secret but shall be revealed: The Scandalous Life of Robert Foulkes’ in *English Masculinities* *1600-1800*, ed. by T. Hitchcock & M. Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Roslyn Brogue Henning, ‘The Padeia of a Renaissance Gentleman: Castiglione’s Book of the Courtier’, in *Renaissance Men of Ideas*, ed. by R. Schwoebel (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1971), p. 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Richard Ollard, *Charles I & Charles II* (London: Pimlico, 1979), p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentleman* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1975), p. 59, an early seventeenth-century Protestant tub-thumper, Brathwait was highly critical of the performative style of the Court Party. Lionising the aristocratic habitus of the old order of Protestant, anti-French aristocrats, he describes *salon* manners as ‘affected’ and ‘tainted by impiety’, p. 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. For an explication of the *danse noble* see: Jocelyn Powell, *Restoration Theatre Production* (London: Routledge, 1984), pp. 51-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Michael Moriarty, *Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 38, notes how the code ‘preserved social stratification’. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Anthony Hamilton, *The Memoirs of the Count de Grammont containing the History of the English Court under Charles II* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1901),Hamilton*,* pp.113, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Hamilton,p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Antoine de Courtin, *The Rules of Civility, or, Certain Ways of Deportment Observed in France amongst All Persons of Quality Upon Several Occasions*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Cohen, p. 18, stresses that communication between the sexes had to be free from constraint and above all, it had to please women. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Faret, p. 19. Brathwait, p. 340,

     corroborates the new trend, disapprovingly stating that: ‘I have observed in some a kinde of *carelessnesse* in their forme of speaking in men of eminent rank’. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Paraphrasing Castiglione, Henning notes that bodily grace must be performed with ‘*sprezzatura* (literally, disdain or carelessness) so as to conceal art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort’. p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2006), p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Hamilton, p. 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Oliver Millar, *Sir Peter Lely: National Portrait Gallery* (London: Lund Humphreys, 1978) notes how Peter Lely’s pictorial representations of eminent courtiers and all the painter’s sitters ‘retain a strong sense of family resemblance’. ‘Unrelated gentlemen and gentlewomen’, he adds, ‘appear to be brother and sister’. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Michele Cohen, pp. 1-25, explains in her analysis of the impact of French manners on English elite behaviour during the long eighteenth century, that women’s company enabled men to acquire and develop the appropriate conduct of body and tongue, the easy sociability that was central to *bonne grace*. See also Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), who concurs, arguing that women were defined as ‘the principal agents of male improvement’. p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Of course, not all courtiers strove to rise through the ranks by devoting themselves to pleasing the influential women favoured by the king, but they were still required to behave modishly at all times. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Carter, pp. 68-69, notes that exposure to women’s compassion, sensitivity and eloquence would, it was hoped, stimulate admiring men to adopt equivalent characteristics. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Carter, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Richard Ollard, *The Image of the King, Charles I & Charles II* (London: Pimlico, 1979), pp. 131-136, explains how Villiers could, if she wished, endorse ambitious underlings, or ruin them. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Perez Zagorin, *The Court and the Country* (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 42, argues that courtiers strove for ‘the prizes obtainable for the favour of the king and those who possessed his confidence’. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Hamilton, p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Elias, pp.90-130 posits that competition was the principal motive force for servitors determined to secure proximity to the royal person. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Hamilton, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Graham Greene, *Lord Rochester’s Monkey* (London: Omega, 1974), p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. E.B. Chancellor, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Hamilton, p. 266-267. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Hamilton*,* p. 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. E.B. Chancellor, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Burnet cited in *The Restoration Rakes*, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. E. B. Chancellor, *Lives of the Rakes* 6 vols.(London: Allan, 1928), II, p. 225, lists the ‘notorious’ gallants: George Villiers, John Wilmot, George Etherege, Charles Sedley, Charles Sackville, William Wycherley, Henry Brouncker and Henry Jermyn. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Sharpe, p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. See Chancellor, *The Lives of the Rakes,* vol. 1, pp. 96-97, for the ‘mixed seraglio’ allusion. See J. H. Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 26, for his ‘splendid brothel’ comparison and James Grantham Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630-1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 165, for his description of the Court as ‘bawdy house’. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. According to Hamilton,p. 236, Talbot announced that such ‘conduct was base and unworthy for a man of his importance to submit to’. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. However, incarceration in the Tower for men of quality was not particularly harsh. As Cosimo Medici III notes in his *Travels* (London: J. Mawman, 1821), pp. 318-319, ‘the prisoners are not kept under confinement, but have liberty to take a walk over the [London] bridge, a promise being first exacted from them not to pass the limits, and to return to their post, which they generally observe’. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Hamilton, p. 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Anon. *The Art of Complaisance*, p. 134, images those gallants comfortable with *bonne grace* as ‘conversable fops’, gentlemen whose badly imitated French manners are entirely determined by the desire to ‘delight women’. p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Roger B. Manning, *Swordsmen: The Martial Ethos in the Three Kingdoms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 148-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. H.F.B. Brett-Smith, ed., George Etherege, ‘The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub’*, The Dramatic Works of George Etherege,* 2 vols. I (II, 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Hamilton, p. 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. The veracity of this description is probably tarnished by obsequiousness. Monmouth was a royal favourite whom Hamilton praises in order to improve the possibility of increasing his own status at Whitehall. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Hamilton,p. 117, 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Greene, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Hamilton*,* p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. John Harold Wilson, *The Court Wits* (London: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Hamilton,p. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. According to Hamilton, p. 120, his carriage and manners were ‘affected’. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. According to Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 103, this was an abiding problem since the negligent manner ‘was the consequence of self-conscious endeavour: a quality which must ultimately appear natural and easy although it was achieved and precarious’. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Jenny Uglow, *A Gambling Man; Charles II and the Restoration 1660-1670* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Sharpe*,* pp.170, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Cohen, pp. 13, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. W. Van Lennep et al., *The London Stage Part 1: 1660-1700* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960-1979), pp. clxiv-clxv. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys,* 10 vols., ed. by R.C. Latham & W. Matthews (London: Bell & Hyman, 1974), VIII, pp. 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. The received wisdom was that Restoration theatres were not genteel; rather, they were places of riot and fatal turbulence. For Lennep *et al.*, the maintenance of decorum was a problem at the playhouses, ‘the pit a noisy place of quarrel and disruption’. clxxi. The frequency of these incidents is difficult to establish, since only the most outlandish episodes were recorded. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Lennep *et al.* take exception to Killigrew’s comment to Pepys and, to substantiate their position, they refer the reader to Montague Summer’s *The Restoration Theatre* (London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1934), pp. 78-80, which claims that ‘brawls, which sometimes terminated fatally, were matters of frequent occurrence in the pit of a Restoration Theatre’. In contrast, Carl Thomas, *The Restoration Theatre Audience, a critical and historical evaluation of the London playgoers of the latter part of the seventeenth century* (The University of Southern California), dissertation, p. 411, concludes his study by suggesting that elite male conduct, ‘although not docile, was much better than has been generally stated’. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Killigrew and fellow courtier Robert Howard founded the King’s Company at the Theatre Royal in Vere St. in August 1661. According to H. J .Oliver, *Sir Robert Howard* *1626-1698* (Durham, North Carolina, 1963), p. 44, the two courtiers also supervised the building of the Bridges Street theatre, which opened for business in May 1663. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Oliver, pp. 3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. According to Oliver, p. 7, he mounted a successful rear-guard against an overwhelming number of parliament troops and rescued Lord Wilmot –John Wilmot’s father – who had been wounded. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. After the Restoration he was commissioned as a Colonel of the Hampshire militia and served the Crown as an administrator, specializing in the retrieval of Royalist property. The seizure of his family’s land probably induced him to represent the Interregnum sequestration committees as corrupt and viciously sectarian cabals of republican power in *The Committee*. Notably, he was given the royal appointment as financial administrator for the commission for the recovery of unjustly detained goods, jewels, money, property and forfeitures due to the Crown. See Oliver, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. *The Surprizal* was his second play. His first, *The Blind Lady* (1660), was printed but not acted. See *Some Account of the English Stage*, *1660-1830,* 10 vols. (London: H.E. Carrington, 1832), X, p. 135. *The Surprizal* was first performed at the Theatre Royal in Vere St. in the 3rd week of June and performed on at least ten occasions. The period of the run does not mean it was poorly regarded. According to *The London Stage*, Part 1, 1660-1700, clx ‘Runs of ten to fifteen [consecutive] performances between 1660 and 1670 represented unusually successful productions’. *The Surprizal* appears to have received little critical commendation beyond praise for John Lacy’s characterization of Brancadoro, one of the leading male suitors. See *The London Stage*, Part I, *1660-1700*, p. 50. This, however, may not be the first production: Henry Herbert, the court’s Master of the Revels, cites the 23rd of April 1662 in his records. See: J.Q. Adams ed., *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), p. 118. Howard followed *The Committee* with the celebrated heroic play, *The Indian Queen*, first performed in January 1664. Oliver argues that his literary success came with his third heroic play, *The Duke of `Lerma* in February 1668. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. See: Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love,* trans. L. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 296. See also: E. Jane Burns, ‘Courtly Love: who needs it?’ *Recent Feminist Work in the Medieval French Tradition* Vol. 27, No. 1 (The University of Chicago Press), pp. 23-57, which gives a fuller history of courtly love and also questions the genre’s heteronormative paradigm. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. This dramatic treatment echoes Walter Montague’s *The Shepherd’s Paradise*. A romance drama performed by the queen Henrietta and some of her female companions in 1633, it explores the limits of elite female power and the relationship between gender and authority in a pastoral setting, with the leading female characters escaping from the humiliations of royal matchmaking. However, *The Surprisal’s* representation of female retreatism has been treated favourably by Sarah Poynting. ‘The Rare and Excellent Partes of Mr. Walter Montague: Henrietta Maria and her Playwright’ in *Henrietta Maria,* ed. by Erin Griffey (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 77, suggests there is no loss of agency in the women’s self-imposed exile from patriarchal society. Poynting argues that the play encodes ‘an appropriation of power based on their control of the moral agenda: Samira dictates what it is to be regarded as virtuous action, and asserts the right for this to be seen as an exclusive feminine sphere, which, in this version of events, men may enter only as subordinates’. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. John Evelyn records his objections in his diary, where he describes *The Committee* as a ‘ridiculous’ play’. E.S de Beer ed, *The Diary of John Evelyn,* 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959) III, p. 345. Pepys did not much care for it either, calling the first production ‘an indifferent play’. See *The Diary of Samuel Pepys,* 12th June 1663. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Jennifer Airey, *The Politics of Rape: Sexual Atrocity, Propaganda Wars, and the Restoration Stage* (Plymouth: University of Delaware Press, 2012), p. 14, argues that anti-court tracts revelled in the notion of Roman Catholic contamination. Exploring the propagandist stereotyping of the Civil Wars, she explains that Catholicism was treated by anti-Royalist pamphleteers as ‘an insidious form of poison which affects the individual moral consciousness, destroys the Protestant family and threatens the body politic with chaos and tyranny’. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977), which offers an explication of the historical examination of society’s oppression of the individual. Foucault argues that political power came to be exerted over bodies less by direct coercion than by a diffuse, invisible ‘discipline’. Underlying this is his concept of the formation of ‘power knowledge’. Placing the inmate of a penitentiary under surveillance establishes this type of power relation, with the gaoler made the watcher, the holder of knowledge, and the prisoner, induced to enact the corresponding role of the watched. The impact on behaviour is direct, for in disciplining their activity in accordance with knowledge’s conception of them, individuals inscribe power on their own bodies, in effect, submitting to hegemonic authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. *Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition,* 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), IV, p. 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Jonathan Scott, *England’s Troubles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Darlene Gravett, *A Critical Edition of Abraham Cowley’s The Cutter of Coleman Street* (Garland: University of Southern Mississippi, 1979) (dissertation), Preface, p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Gravett, p. 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. According to Gravett, p. 31, Cowley had wanted to please his political masters: in his Preface to the 1663 edition of the drama, he protests that he had tried to satisfy the whole party with a devotedly Royalist drama. p. 31. Confounded by the attacks against him, the Epilogue of the 1663 text reaffirms his commitment to a dramaturgy that celebrates the honour and virtue of the Court Party including the Cavalier military. However, his primary allegiance would appear to have been to the comedy genre. In the Preface to the1663 edition he says that ‘the truth is, I did not intend the character of a Hero (one of exemplary virtue, and as Homer often terms such men, Unblamable) but an ordinary jovial gentleman, commonly called a good fellow’. p. 31. Unwilling to provide the Court with an implausibly heroic image of itself, he asserts his determination not to stop short at representing fault and folly of returning Cavaliers. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. The administrators of Protectorate power are imagined as ‘housekeepers' and the Royalist faction as ‘benefactors’ (II, 4, p. 72). [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. In part, Careless’ flamboyant sexual suggestiveness ridicules the image of Cavaliers drawn by Court Party objectors by Protestant tub-thumpers typified by Richard Brathwait who figures the character of the ‘fleshy libertine’, as an excessive man of the senses. He ‘stalks and struts in the streets: sense forth his eye to bring him in a booty of lust…or delight him with some vain shew. This is he, who sends forth his eare to convey unto him some choice melody to entraunce him; his taste, with some luscious viands to provoke him; his smell with some rare perfumes to cheere him’. p. 340. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Airey, pp. 5-26, explores the moral and social dimensions of this issue via stereotypical representations of Caroline Cavaliers. Roundhead propaganda figured the first-generation Cavalier soldier as a scheming and sensual libertine whose vices extended to cannibalism, a murder, rape and vampirism. Evil and evasive, he actively sought to subvert the Parliamentarians by sexually exploiting their innocent and vulnerable daughters. Such a typology is viciously sectarian and polemicized, but Howard’s pro-Court representation of Cavaliers who had waged war on the enemy by sexually coercing their daughters suggests that the stereotype was not entirely groundless. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. At the end of the scene – after Ruth has drawn his pledge of chaste devotion – he freely admits to deceiving, bedding and ruining the reputation of Puritan women. As he tells Ruth, ‘I would have ’em all bastards’ (III. 4, p. 86). But at the beginning of the scene, however, Ruth is placatory. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. On the issue of whether historical Cavaliers did commit rape, Howard is evasive, limiting the ideological imperatives of the soldier libertine to seduction and consensual sex. His rhetoric, which does not iterate rape, could easily be construed as an ideological obfuscation. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 144, argues that the test of love, first iterated in Provencal romances, created a gender reversal where the woman took full responsibility for ‘sustaining the moral standards of the community which were less obviously formulated through the misogyny of young men than by the women’s collective assertion of their own morality’. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Unlike the Epicurean element of the Restoration Court society, the first Stuart regime did not tolerate the Town-based delinquencies and sensual excesses practised by the Wits. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Robert Wilsher, *The Discontented Cavalier* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), p. 137. For a detailed account of the social system of the Court of Charles I, see: Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor’d: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603-42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Erin Griffey, ed. by *Henrietta Maria* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), intro. I-XIII, explains how Henrietta Maria’s female milieu forms part of recent research on the agency of women at early modern courts, and of ‘specifically female networks, such as the French salon’, p. III. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Bryson, p. 121, argues that genteel language and bodily affects were major preoccupations for male courtiers. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. According to Malcolm Smuts, ‘Religion, European Politics and Henrietta Maria’s Circle, 1625-41’ in *Henrietta Maria,* ed. by Erin Griffey, pp. 13-37 (p. 21), ‘the queen presided over an entourage of mostly younger women and men whose influence stemmed from their courtly skills. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. *State papers collected by Edward Earl of Clarendon, commencing from the year 1621, containing the materials from which his history of the Great Rebellion was composed, and the authorities on which the truth of his relation is founded*, ed. by R. Scrope, 3 vols. (Oxford: 1767-86), I, p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Smuts, pp. 21-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Muir, p. 133, argues that ‘in European culture there has long been a distinction between rape and romance, a difference carefully demonstrated through the rules of courtship. Fundamental to these rites was some kind of test of love by which the woman verified the man’s love by asking him to remain sexually abstinent’. He adds that ‘tests of love’ took many forms, giving ‘women the opportunity to determine the reliability of a potential partner’. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Connerton, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. According to Muir, preciosity demanded that gentlemen ‘demonstrate restraint in wooing women by delaying – often for years – sexual gratification and then only when the woman consented’. p. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. George Vigarello, ‘The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of Chivalry to Courtly Civility’, *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part Two,* ed. by Michel Feher (New York: Zone Books, 1989), p. 181, argues that the purpose of instruction, manifested in vocational practices such as dancing and fencing, discouraged spontaneous movement and gesture and instilled a capacity for constraint and control. Instruction, he argues, immobilized the male body and, by dint of repetition, reduced the propensity for restlessness and impatience, impulses which interfered with the courtly ideal of easiness first recorded by Baldesare Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*, in 1528, pp. 149-199. See: footnote 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Bryson, p. 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. The name Careless does suggest the same easy, negligent manner as the feminized Restoration courtier. However, while ‘carelessness’ was associated with the sexual excesses and unbuttoned sartorial style of the Caroline libertine soldier, it was a model of masculinity untouched by the balletic, ceremonial refinements practised at the restored Court. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. The royal coterie audience for which the first production of *The Committee* was written would have been fully aware that Puritan manners minimized ritual behaviour in social encounters. As Muir, p. 125, explains, they ‘refused to conform to Court Party conventions of deference or politeness. They would not use courteous models of address, used the insulting form of “thee” and “thou” with social superiors and disapproved of bowing, curtseying, and doffing hats’, social rituals which indicated the politicised distinctions of Royalism. In opposition, Puritans adopted a ‘decidedly egalitarian gesture of greeting and leave-taking: the handshake’, p. 125. Thus, in *The Committee*, Careless is understandably confused by Ruth’s insistence upon the practice of preciosity. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. See *Letters of Queen Henrietta Maria*, ed. by M.A.E. Green (London: 1857), p. 222. In a letter to her husband, describing the movement and command of Royalist armies during the Civil War, she describes how Harry Jermyn commands the forces that go with me, as colonels of my guards, and Gerard the horse, and Robin Legg the artillery, and her she majesty, generalissima’. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. *The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition*, II, p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. *The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition*, II, p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. *The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition*, II, p. 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. According to Muir, p. 122, ‘rough traditionalists saw this trend as unmanly, as a feminization of public life’. A notable objector to the strict pieties of Caroline sociability was the poet Sir John Suckling, a gallant associated with Tavern life in the Town who – according to John Aubrey – abhorred what he considered the stiff and starchy formalities that characterized first regime conduct. Unsurprisingly, the Wits celebrated Suckling’s libertinism. See John Aubrey, *Brief Lives, chiefly of contemporaries set down by John Aubrey between the years 1669 and 1692*, 2 vols. ed. by A. Clark (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), II, pp. 240-241. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. In 1675, Margaret Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899), p. 229, notes that by 1675 ‘duels are of daily occurrence’. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. *The Works of John Wilmot,* ed. by Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Mackie, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Andrew, pp. 15-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. For a full explication of the chivalric revival on Restoration duelling, see Roger B. Manning, *Swordsmen: The Martial Ethos in the Three Kingdoms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 59-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Jennifer Low, *Manhood and the Duel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. See Mervyn James, *Society, Politics and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 309, who writes that for the chivalric man of honour ‘the resort to violence was natural and justifiable’. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Manning, p. 61. See also James, pp. 309-325, who writes that the medieval knight – predisposed by blood and lineage – was accustomed to solving disputes by violent means. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 62, argues that the so-called components of the chivalric code of love and war were, ‘four parts in five an illusion’. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Low, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. See Robert Shoemaker, ‘The Taming of the Duel: Masculinity, Honour and Ritual Violence in London 1660-1800’, *The Historical Journal,* vol. 45, no. 3 (2002), pp. 525-545, for a detailed exploration of the demography of duelling, which, he argues, declined with the advent of the new *politesse* and the rise of the middle classes during the long eighteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Manning, pp. 210-211, extrapolates the position of the military community which claimed that they could not avoid duels, since they would lose the respect of their fellow-officers and those under their command if they did. Apart from the skills of self-defence, swordsmanship served as an *entrée* into the habitus of the military man, instructing the newly commissioned soldier into the nuances of the honour code without which he could not hope to establish himself. Moreover, practical swordsmanship was useful in small skirmishes, which occurred frequently in war. Consequently, impromptu duels were especially prominent in military camps, garrison towns, and in London, the focal point for Cavaliers and volunteer officers on leave. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. J.D. Aylward, *The English Masters of Arms* (London: Routledge, 1956), p. 116, writes that ‘there was no longer a governing body with a centuries-old experience of organisation, there were no trained aspirants to present themselves for examinations, and if there were, nobody had the power to confer degrees or official licenses’. ‘Heedless of anachronism, they refurbished the discarded weapons of their predecessors, and they posted bills of challenge. The Rules and Orders of the departed guild, to which bygone monarchs and Masters had paid tribute, were thought too inconvenient for adoption’. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Low, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. William Prynne, *Mr. Pryne’s letter and proposals to our gracious sovereign King Charles* (London: 1660), pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. According to Manning, p. 199, a primary reason for forbidding duelling was the problem monarchs encountered in trying to provide a legal remedy for injured honour: ‘that we be acceptable to both parties to a dispute’. He adds that the practice was too deeply engendered to remove. Considering the widespread leniency of judges and juries towards persons who had killed another in a duel… it is difficult to see how the Stuart’s could have enforced a more stringent prohibition against duelling’. p. 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. J. H. Wilson, *A Rake and his Times*, *George Villiers, 2ndDuke of Buckingham* (London: F. Muller, 1954), p. 97, explains that ‘the law stipulated that if a duellist was slain, all involved were guilty of homicide’ but gallant participants were never brought to trial. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. According to Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University `Press, 2003), pp. 206-207, more concrete measures to do away with duelling and severely punish practitioners were drawn up in 1666 by Sir Edward Thurlow. But in its second reading, life imprisonment was deemed too harsh a punishment by most MPs and the bill became buried in committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Peltonen, p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. According to Manning, pp. 217-244, duelling, fuelled by the rechivilrisation of aristocratic culture, produced contempt for nitpicking lawyers, courts and negotiated settlements. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. According to Peltonen, p. 205, ‘the public infatuation with duels thus helped account for their prevalence’. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Waker, pp. 152-3, 178-179. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Anon, *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 11-13, 22-31, 54-55, 76-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Richard Vaughan, Earl of Carberry, ‘Richard Earl of Carberry’s advice to his son’, 1651, ed. by Virgil B. Helzel, *The Huntington Library Bulletin*, no. 11 (1937), p. 93. A gallant, he points out should protect himself from ‘suspect’ and not from ‘actual insult alone’. He adds that, in relation to lost honour, ‘he is a miserable person in deede that survived a lost name’. p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. According to Ute Frevert, *Men of Honour: a social and cultural history of the duel* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 11, the honour code inculcated a ‘perpetual state of sensitivity towards insults and a permanent state of readiness to offend against the physical and moral integrity of the opponent’. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Jacques de Callières, *The Courtier’s Calling: showing the making of a fortune, and the art of living at court, according to the maxims of policy and morality*, trans. Anon. (London: R. Tonson, 1675), pp. 47-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Callières, pp. 48-49. See also, Jean Gailhard, *The Compleat Gentleman: or directions for the education of youth*, pp. 126-127, who concludes that ‘no rational man will condemn resentment, only will advise me to use honest and lawful means to get satisfaction’. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. James Fitzmaurice ed., Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters,* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977). Born Margaret Lucas, she was maid of honour to Queen Henrietta Maria, whom she followed into exile during the Interregnum. Married to William Cavendish, the Marquis of Newcastle, they returned to England at the Restoration, repairing their estates in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Cavendish was a devoted Royalist with close affiliations to the higher echelons of Whitehall society. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Cavendish, p. 98 [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Fitzmaurice, p.82. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Men’, she says, ‘must be Masters and Princes of themselves, for it is Unfit, nay Base for a man of Honour, a General, either to be Led like Slave, or to be Driven like Beast’. p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. In letter 48, p. 60, she mocks the gallant cohort: ‘Men, when visiting must sit at a respectful distance, with their Hats off… Neither must men Contradict Women, although they should Talk Nonsense, which oftentimes they do’. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Fitzmaurice, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Light and truth refer to vanished religious precepts that freed members of the honour community from moral sanction and injected elite violence with a grandeur of ceremonial significance, akin to Church rites. See Low, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Fitzmaurice, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Unlike Charles, Louis had deliberately imposed constraints on the old warrior class and by inflicting severe punishments on a few transgressors, he held the practice in check. See Peltolnen, p. 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Hamilton, p. 339. He then explains how Catherine ‘was at the Head of those who exclaim’d so public and so scandalous a crime, and against the impunity of such a wicked act’. p. 338. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Thomas Comber, *A Discourse to Duels* (London: R. Clavel, 1687), p. 18, states that duelling is an ‘insufferable Affront to the King’, but adds that it ‘injures the Government under which we live, and the Society wherefore we are Members’. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Austin Dobson, ed., John Evelyn, *The Diaries of John Evelyn*, 3 vols. (London, 1906), III, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Andrew, p. 43, captures the new Court’s opposition by describing it as ‘a well demarcated conflict for a potentially endless state of war which placed personal interest above the welfare of the Court and state’. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Duels were fought in private, but the combatants’ seconds ensured that the details of contests became common knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. The term ‘honour’ in this context is very misleading. A duel of honour, a sometimes fatal, armed confrontation between aristocratic men armed at this time with rapiers, pertains to the violent aspect of the honour code and had little or no relation to honour in the sense of ‘a fine sense of and a strict allegiance to what is right’ or to ‘moral principles which are imperative in one’s position or to some conventional standard of conduct’. *The Oxford English Dictionary,* Second Edition*,* 20 vols. VII, p. 357-358. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Her husband would, in 1668, fight a duel with George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, with whom she was having an affair. The duel took place on the common at Barn Elms, across the Thames from the estates of the Bishop of London at Fulham Palace. The fight was an intense and bloody matter. Shrewsbury and Buckingham were both attended by two seconds who joined in. On Buckingham’s side, a second called Jenkins was killed, while one of Shrewsbury’s seconds, Sir John Talbot, was badly injured. Buckingham caught Shrewsbury on the right breast with his sword, thrusting so hard his blade penetrated upwards through the shoulder’. Grievously wounded, Shrewsbury died one month later on March 18th. That afternoon, Buckingham was seen by Pepys enjoying himself with Etherege and Lord Buckhurst in the pit of the Duke’s Theatre at the premier performance of *She Would if She Could,* Etherege’s second drama. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. *The Oxford English Dictionary* Second Edition, 20 vols. III, p. 995, defines a coterie as a ‘a circle of persons associated together and distinguished from ‘outsiders’; a select or exclusive circle in society; the select set who have *entrée* into some house’. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. The Countess of Dunois, *Memoirs of the English Court in the Reign of King Charles II*. p. 10, on the Duke of Monmouth’s pursuit of one the Maids of Honour to the Duchess of York, reports that the Duke said ‘the fair sex has a right of doing injustice and ours has not the liberty to complain’. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Lord Talbot was sent to the Tower for courting Miss Hamilton with immoderate self-importance. See Chapter II, pp. 65-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Villiers’ close proximity to the King did not preclude his pursuit of Frances Stewart, The Duchess of Richmond, with whom he grew increasingly obsessed. See D. Jordan & M. Walsh, *The King’s Bed: Sex, Power and the Court of Charles II* (London: Little, Brown, 2015), pp. 129-133. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Jordan & Walsh, p. 85, write that her critics frequently referred to her pejoratively. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Her power over Charles in the early years of their affair was remarkable. When pregnant with his second child in 1662, she sued for and won the right to give birth to the child at Hampton Court Palace to reinforce her eminence over the King’s new wife Catherine of Braganza. She also persuaded Charles to make her mistress of the bedchamber and lifted her to the top of the elite pecking order, giving her husband an Irish earldom, a title that automatically gave her the title of Countess of Castlemaine. However, the title did not bring any meaningful security or official protection beyond Irish shores. In fact, the gift was a political compromise designed to legitimise her unofficial rank at Court while assuaging the grievances of her opponents in Parliament, who would not reward a royal paramour with a meaningful political place. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Jordan & Walsh, p. 110, note how Castlemaine organised *soirées* in King Street, where she regularly entertained the libertine faction. ‘Barbara saw the Wits as suitable allies in her exulted yet precarious station in life. She ensured the house at King Street was their headquarters. Here they would gather in the evenings after spending the afternoon at nearby Whitehall or in other social pursuits in the fashionable houses in the area, or perhaps head back to after attending a performance at the theatres of Covent Garden, only a short coach ride away. At the theatre they might meet up with the King and his brother’. Often they would return to the Duchess’ house and amuse themselves with ‘music, gambling and more intimate pursuits’. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Charles was aware that Jermyn had been taken into Castlemaine’s confidence and perhaps her bed. According to Hamilton, p. 134, he appeared not to have raised any objections to ‘the commerce she held with Jermyn’ since the King was at this time pursuing Frances Stewart, the Duchess of Richmond, with undisguised ardour. Anthony Adolph, *Full of Soup and Gold: The Life of Henry Jermyn* (London: P. Speigl & Co., 2006), p. 190, is of the opinion that Jermyn and Castlemaine were lovers: ‘it emerged that Barbara was having an illicit affair with Harry Jermyn. Her influence with the King suffered a major setback’. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. As has been seen, physical beauty and grace were cherished attributes at Court and could be advantageous sources of merit and display. For a description of Jermyn’s demeanour, see Chapter I, pp. 68-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Hamilton, p. 137, uses the term ‘capricious’ to criticize her and takes it as an essential aspect of character rather than the a tactical deployment of the Court’s code of social interaction. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. See Elias, *The Court Society*, p. 89, whose analysis of how Louis XIV dispensed power through the code of *bonne grace* is applicable to the way Lady Shrewsbury used the code as an instrument of social power. ‘Etiquette is not a ghostly perpetual motion machine controlled by no one; from the King’s standpoint, it serves a clear purpose. He does not merely adhere to the traditional order of rank. Etiquette everywhere allows latitude that he uses as he thinks fit to determine even in small ways the reputations of people at court… he uses the competition for prestige to vary, by the exact degree of favour shown to them, the rank and standing of people at court, to suit his purposes as a ruler, shifting the balance of tensions within the society as his need dictates’. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. According to Hamilton, p. 136, she returned ‘his first ogles’ but then cooled: ‘as no person could boast of being the only one in her favour, so no person could complain of having been ill received’. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Hamilton, p. 136, explains Jermyn’s treacherous scheme but does not refrain from shifting the responsibility for the duel onto Lady Shrewsbury. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. The Spring Garden was an enclosed space that opened into the walks of St James’. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Philip Sergeant, *Rogues and Scoundrels* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924), p. 23, gives a detailed account of the confrontation, claiming he ‘forced’ his way into the company.Hamiltongives a more nuanced account, suggesting that Jermyn could not join the party without Lady Shrewsbury’s permission. pp. 136-137. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. As Low points out, p. 11, ‘a duel of honour consists of the following elements: a challenge, oral or written; a challenger; a defendant; and a combat’. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. The duel was fought on the 11th of August at 11 a.m., 1662. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. *The Verney Papers:* Doctor William Denton to Sir Ralph Verney, August 21st, 1662 cited in Sergeant, *Rogues and Scoundrels* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924), p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. According to Hamilton, p. 137, ‘there was not a braver, nor a more genteel man in England’. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Sergeant, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. According to Manning, p. 62, this was the rationalization used by duelists ‘long after honour had become an empty shell’. See also Low, p. 17, who explains that the idea that the sword could settle any dispute, however complex or trifling, was supported by the assumption among the honour community that victory was metaphysically pre-destined. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Although Charles pardoned the offenders, it is not clear if the duel had a significant bearing on the two principals’ prospects. Howard married Mary, Duchess of Richmond, daughter of George Villiers, and died in 1678. On return from exile, Jermyn fought in the Dutch War but thereafter entered politics as a moderate and, being a Roman Catholic, had an influence on James II, who gave him the title of Baron Dover in 1685. He continued to lead a dissipated life, married Judith Poley and died in 1708 leaving no children. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Adolph, p. 190, notes that after his banishment, Castlemaine did not try to lobby for Jermyn and his ‘promotion was not mentioned again’. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. D. Jordan & M. Walsh, p. 176, explain that even though ‘Charles had let it be known that duelling should stop, Lord Shrewsbury felt his reputation was so publicly on the line that he had little option but to challenge Villiers. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Michele Cohen, *Social History,* vol. 30, no. 2 (May 2005), p. 256, notes how death was not the desired outcome of the duel. In fact the rules stipulated that it was not to kill the opponent but for both to demonstrate their allegiance to the code itself, even if they ran the risk of death. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. As has been seen, cowardice among Cavaliers was unserviceable and as Lamb, p. 118, notes: ‘its declaration would have caused a stunned silence resulting in unanimous contempt. The honour accorded to any man depended upon his readiness to defend that honour’. See also V.G. Kiernan, *The Duel in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 56, who explains that shirking a duel rendered the aristocrat no longer worthy of membership of his class’. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. The customary resort to violence meant that duels were often fought on extremely trifling causes. Roger Manners, the Earl of Rutland, comments on a fatal duel of 1670 occasioned by a quarrel over whether Nell Gwynne ‘was the handsomer now at Windsor’. Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Rutland,* II, p. 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Ironically, both Sergeant and Hamilton’s discourses steer the reader’s attention away from Lady Shrewsbury in very much the same way violent, honorific behaviour focuses and privileges homosocial power relations. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Sergeant, p. 21, is particularly heterosexist in his appraisal of her character. Extending the popular myth of the Court as a world of subterranean licentiousness, he describes ‘the young and beautiful’ Lady Shrewsbury as the ‘lightest of swimmers amid the scum’. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Hamilton, p. 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Hamilton pp.137-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Sergeant, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Jordan & Walsh, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Jordan & Walsh, p. 176, add that ‘she was among the wildest women of the court’ but fail to mention whom, precisely, these supposedly death-dealing women were. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Pepys, IV, pp. 373-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Low, p. 106, explains how, before the Restoration, swordplay was ‘restricted to the hereditary nobility’. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Fitzmaurice, p. 19, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Fitzmaurice, p. 70, p. 35. Cavendish goes on to attack the ‘Manner or Fashion of fighting’ and its impropriety: ‘in this Age in most Nations they fight Private Duels, somewhat in the Manner of a Publick Battel, as three against three, or at least two against two, also they Fight with Pistols and Swords, with their Doublets on which serves instead of an Armour, and for the most part on horseback’. p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. See Robert Shoemaker, ‘The Taming of the Duel: Masculinity, Honour and Ritual Violence in London 1600-1800’, pp. 25-537, for a commentary on the large quantity of duels fought in public spaces during the early Restoration period and the absence of meaningful punishments duelists received. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Low, p. 15, notes that duelists ‘seem to have internalized the ideology of chivalry’. p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. See David Hopkins, ed., *John Dryden* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 11, who argues that Dryden’s conservative Royalism ‘was always closely bound up with a horror of a return to the chaos of the Civil War’. In *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), he uses Achitophel’s malevolent counsel to illustrate the dangers of rebellion and the need for stern judicial punishment against rebels who threatened sovereign and state. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. John Dryden, *The Wild Gallant* (London: Tonson, 1695). All textual references refer to this edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. *The London Stage* *Part 1: 1660-1700*, pp. 54-76, cast unknown. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. According to Uglow, p. 105, the two men shared a house and in December 1663, Howard’s sister Elizabeth accepted a marriage proposal from Dryden, thus forging a link to the Court. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. *The Poetical Works of John Dryden* (London: Routledge and Sons Ltd, 1893), pp. 244-246. Dryden had already publicized his allegiance to the party with the publication of two panegyrics: *To his Sacred Majesty: a Panegyric on his Coronation* (1662) and *To my Lord Chancellor* (1662). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Matthew Jenkinson, *Culture and Politics at the Court of Charles II 1660-1685* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), p. 167, writes that his relationship with the Wits, particularly Rochester and Buckhurst, ‘was tense’. He famously clashed with Buckingham in 1667. ‘The Duke attacked the Laureate in his adaptation of James Fletcher’s *The Chances*; Dryden responded in 1668 in his Prologue to the revival of Thomas Tomkis’ *Albumazar’*. p. 168. The spat escalated and Dryden was assaulted in 1679. While the perpetrators’ identities are unclear, Rochester, Lady Castlemaine and Lord Buckhurst have each been accused of the mugging. p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. One of the definitions of *bonne grace* is the noun ‘gift’. See Henning, Ch. I, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. I dedicate the next chapter to these anti-social acts which included the abuse of women and brawling. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Jeremy Lamb, *So Idle a Rogue* (London: Allison & Busby, 1993), p. 116, claims that Philip Stanhope, the Second Lord Chesterfield, was ‘a veritable lunatic with a sword’. Stanhope had been involved in two swordfights during the last days of the Interregnum. The first, with Captain John Walley, a Royalist, earned him a period of incarceration in the Tower for transgressing republican law. The second, in 1659, was with Francis Wolley, an attendant of the Earl of Berkshire whose body, discovered two days later, betrayed the tell-tale signs of death by the sword. Philip Sergeant’s *Rogues and Scoundrels* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924), p. 76, a biographical collection of seventeenth century aristocrat rebels, writes that Wolley ‘had received two wounds, one tearing the sinews of his left hand, and the other piecing the body quite through, near the right breast’. Stanhope fled to France but received a royal pardon from Charles who advised the young firebrand to ‘pull up your spirits…and be assured I will be alwayes very kinde to you’. Sergeant, p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. *The Poetical Works of John Dryden,* 4 vols (London: Law & Gilbert, 1811),III, pp. 465- 470. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. ‘Pygmalion and the Statue’*,* p. 465. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Setting a twenty-four four hour debt-settling deadline at the beginning of the comedy is the strategy which drives the plot and accounts for its breathless atmosphere. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. The honorific prerogative meant that violent quarrels often broke out among intimate friends. For Margaret Verney, these ‘sudden quarrels’ were the ‘most startling’ of all armed disputes. She includes content in her memoirs from the letters of Dr. William Denton who explains how Sir William Kingmill’s cousin, Mr. Hazelwood, ‘came of a visit to see him, they fell out, & it ended in the death of Mr. Hazelwood, nobody was by but only them two; tis to be hoped that his sister being at Court may help to save his life’. pp. 229-230. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. *Aristos* is the Greek word meaning ‘best’ or the qualities which defined a nobleman or noblewoman. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. This spite directed towards an elder of the elite cohort chimes with Rochester’s quarrel with Thomas Killigrew, an old man whom Wilmot assaulted, a transgression for which he was temporarily banished. See Chapter III, p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. According to Frevert, p. 11, contemporary texts began ‘juxtaposing ‘brawls’, ‘scraps’, ‘punch-ups’ and ‘duels’ without differentiating them. ‘Duellists’ ‘brawlers’ and ‘scrappers’ were mentioned in the same breath’. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. *Oxford English Dictionary* Second Edition 20 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 19), XVIII, p. 599. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. *Oxford English Dictionary* Second Edition,p. 599. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. *The Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford: Wright and Gill, 1772), p. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Walter Raleigh, ed., *The Complete Works of George Savile, First Marquess of Halifax* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Dryden broadcasts the notion of feminine constancy by trait-naming his heroine Constance. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Aylward, p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. According to Pepys, ‘the former had the better all along till by and by the latter dropped his sword out of his hand, and the butcher, whether not seeing his sword dropped I know not, but did give him a cut over the wrist, so as he was disabled to fight any longer. But Lord! to see in a minute the whole stage was full of watermen to revenge the foul play, and the butchers to defend their fellow, though most blaming him, and there they fell to it knocking down and cutting many on either side. It was pleasant to see, but that I stood in the pit, and feared the tumult that I might get some hurt. At last the rabble broke up, and I away to White-Hall. (September 9th, 1667) Vol. 8, p. 430. In an earlier entry, (June 1st 1663), pp. 167-8, he mentions an exhibition at the New Theatre: ‘And here I come and saw the first prize I ever saw in my life, and it was between Matthews, who did beat at all weapons, and one Westwicke, who was soundly cut several times in the head and legs that he was all over blood; and other deadly blows they did give and take in very good earnest, till Westwicke was in a most sad pickle…Strange to see what a deal of money is flung to them both upon the stage between every bout. But a woeful rude rabble there was, and such noises’. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. John Dryden, *The Wild Gallant* (London: J. Tonson, 1695), The Prologue to the original play as it was performed contains a dialogue between two astrologers and whether or not the ‘stars’ will look favorably on the play. The ‘Prologue to *The Wild Gallant Reviv’d’* was first published by Thomas Newcomb for the bookseller Henry Herringman in 1669. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Dryden, Prologue. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. See: chapter III which elaborates the delinquent cultural practice of ‘scouring’. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Dryden, Prologue. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Dryden, Prologue. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Pepys eulogies Nell Gwynne’s performance as Florimel: ‘there is a comical part done by Nell, which is Florimell, that I never can hope ever to see the like done again, by man or woman. The King and Duke of York were at the play’. She first came to Pepys’ attention when she played Lady Wealthy, the widow figure in the revived King’s Company production of *The English Mounsieur* in December 1666. Pepys, in his diary notes that ‘the women do very well, but, above all, little Nelly, that I am mightily pleased with the play, and much with the House, more than ever I expected, the women doing better than ever I expected, and very fine women’. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys,* VIII, p. 401. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Pepys adds ‘But so great performance of a comical part was never, I believe in the world before as Nell do this, both as a mad girle, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant; and hath the notions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have’. In *Nell Gwyn*, Derek Parker (Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2000), p. 55, notes that Pepys, who clearly enjoyed seeing her in drag in Act V, notes that ‘men’, after years of putting up with boy actors dressed in women’s clothes, now so frequently seemed besotted with the idea of women dressed as men. About ninety of the three hundred and fifty or so Restoration plays feature women disguised as boys, many of whom at some point reveal that their masculinity is false by stripping open their jerkins or having a man feel their breasts’. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Roy McGregor-Hastie, *Nell Gwyn* (London: Robert Hale, 1987), p. 12. Hastie adds that she was a ‘girl from Coal Yard Alley who had whored herself onto the stage’ (p. 12) She was virtually illiterate… but by all accounts on of the great comic actresses of all time’ (p. 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Charles Beauclerk, *Nell Gwyn* (London: Macmillan, 2005), p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Beauclerk, p. 97, adds that after the initial theatrical run in March 1667, ‘Court performances followed (April 18th) with special costumes paid for by the king. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Graham Hopkins, *Nell Gwynne* (London: Robson Books, 2000), p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. Nor did her influence stop there. As Hopkins, p. 62, notes the impact of her ‘act’ that wearing men’s clothes became fashionable among high society. See also Beauclerk, p. 97, who adds that ‘Nell was kitted out in a man’s suit of embroidered purple cloth, a flannel waistcoat and Rhinegraves’ which were ‘petticoat breeches, chiefly worn by men of the Court’. p. 97. Popularised at Versailles, ‘they were like full-cut, knee-length shorts, but effeminate in appearance and worn loose at the hips. They would have flown up as Nell danced’ p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Andrew, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Andrew, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Andrew, pp. 33- 35 [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Dryden, Prologue. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Cohen, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles and his Kingdoms* **(**London: Penguin, 2009),pp. 50-67, notes that there were numerous reports of alleged plots against the monarchy by embittered radicals across the country in the early years of the Restoration. These fears outweighed the Prince’s antipathy towards standing armies engendered by the Civil War and republican experiments. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. See Jennifer Low, *Manhood and the Duel*, who argues that ritual violence during the Restoration period ‘was fundamental to the normative ideal of the courtier, so much so that the meaning of violence ‘helped to define the aristocracy of the period as a whole.’ p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. See Airey, *The Politics of Rape* who argues that during the civil wars and the period of the Interregnum that followed, Country party propaganda imaged the Cavalier class through the lens of atrocity. Cavaliers were seen as cannibals, vampires and rapists, perpetrators of heathen deeds and fearsome excesses: blasphemous, lustful and violent, ‘they were murderers who committed acts of savagery against innocent parliamentarians and worshipped their own perverse desires’. pp. 19-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. See Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004),p. 247, who writes that ‘drunken brawling during the period was worse than before; the gallant libertine was radically uncivil’. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. Robert Shoemaker, ‘Reforming Male Manners: Public Insult and the Decline of Violence in London’ in *English Masculinities* 1600-1800, ed. by T. Hitchcock & M. Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 133-150. Shoemaker posits that the rise in politeness coincided with the decline in violence and, discussing the objectionable behaviour, notes how Restoration gentlemen often pursued conflicts in a stereotypical manner with anger and brawling while women’s principal weapon was verbal. pp. 133-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Waker, pp. 149-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. Obadiah Walker, *Of Education* (Oxford: At the Theatre, (1673/1687)), pp. 222-223. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. *The Art of Complaisance*, p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 128-129. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 136-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. ### John Evelyn, *Tyrannus* *or the Mode* (London, G. Bedel & T. Collins; J. Crook, 1661), p. 24.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. R. Hume, ed., James Howard, *The English Mounsieur* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. See T. S. Graves, ‘Some Pre-Mohock Clansmen’, *Studies in Philology* Vol. 20, No 4, Oct (1923), pp. 395-421.This study of aristocratic violence in the early modern period explains how pseudo-gentlemanly demobilised soldiers, unwilling to adapt themselves to civilian culture, lived on their wits in taverns and established a London club called ‘The Hectors’. Pimping, swearing, gaming and drinking were the hall-marks of these aristocratic ‘Blades’ or ‘Bravadoes’ who would often provoke brawls or duels. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Edward M. Thompson, ed., *The Correspondences of the Family of Hatton*, 2 vols (London: Nicholas & Sons, 1878) which relates casual acts of violence perpetrated by young aristocratic men. See also, Margaret Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Famil*y, pp. 223-230, who relates a number of violent brawls and duels perpetrated by Cavalier soldiers. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. See Carter, pp. 68- 69, who argues it was a widely held belief that men were naturally aggressive. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 118-119. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Andrew, pp. 15-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. Andrew, p. 33, points out that these merits, essential to the man of noble stature, could only emerge through the practice of sociability. p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. George Villiers, *Commonplace Book* (London: Garland Publishing, 1985), p. 198, was sceptical of soldierly adaptability. Soldiers, the Court Wit says, are impervious creatures ‘arm’d defensive like shellfish, and offensive like a porcupine’. Either intractable or aggressive, their principal characteristics make them highly resistant to change. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. See Lamb, p. 67, who explains how Rochester excelled himself for bravery during the conflict. When, Edward Spragge, desperate to pass on a message to another ship, called for volunteers, he had difficulty finding anyone foolhardy enough to carry it out. Having put himself forward, Rochester was commended for taking a rowing boat through the hail of gunshot and cannon fire before running the same gauntlet on the return journey. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. See Lamb*,* p. 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. For a fuller explication of the Town’s social demography see chapter IV, pp. 194-204. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. Manning, pp. 146-50. Manning notes that in ‘January 1641, the noise caused by roistering courtiers in a tavern in Covent Garden set in motion a rumour that there was a Royalist plot to seize the City of London’. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Sometimes the spelling differs: to ‘scowr’ or ‘scowrer’ or ‘scowring’ was often used. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. *Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition*, 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), XIV, p. 695. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. *Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition*, 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), XIV, p. 695. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. Anon, *The Character of a Town Gallant* (London: Printed for W.L., 1675), p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. *The Character of a Town Gallant*, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. See Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville, Sixth Earl of Dorset* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1940), p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. Pepys, IV, p. 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. See Harris, p. 28. A forgiving biographer, Harris minimizes Sackville’s role in an incident which, so extreme its offensiveness that it almost provoked a riot. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. Pepys, p. 110, goes on to say that when Sedley was brought before the Lord Chief Justice Foster, he and the whole Bench ‘did all of them round give him a most high reproofe – my Lord Chief Justice saying that it was for him and such wicked wretches as he was that God’s anger and judgments hung over us’. Sedley confirmed that Sackville had been present at the incident but because ‘there was no law against him for it’ Sedley went unpunished. Lord Buckhurst also escaped with only a verbal chastisement, the Lord Chief Justice saying ‘it would have become him to have been at his prayers, begging God’s forgiveness, then now running into such courses again’. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. According to Harris, Sedley’s obscene toast to the king was a response to the vitriol of the gathering crowd and the ‘sermon’ actually concluded when Sedley offered for sale the ‘powder’ which would make all the fashionable ‘cunts’ pursue him. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. Harris, p. 28. In response to this boast, Harris notes how ‘they were showered with stones and the windows of the chamber were shattered’. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. Barbara Kachur, *Etherege & Wycherley* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 48, states that Sackville ‘earned a degree of infamy from [this] well-publicised brawl’. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Harris, p. 29, explains that by the time Sedley had completed his tirade, ‘the crowd had swollen to a thousand people and angry rumblings were starting…The mob, clamorous and infuriated, tried to force the tavern door as Buckhurst [Sackville] and his companions hurled the wine bottles at them’. In spite of his participation in this scouring, Harris insists that Sackville was a mere ‘spectator’. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. Bryson, pp. 214-215. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. See Bryson, p. 271 who stresses how group violence and drunkenness ‘were characteristics of rakes and largely unavailable to women. The exception was Lady Castlemaine who ‘took part in the drunken escapades of her lover [William Wycherley] and his friends’. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. See also Lord Rochester ‘Satyr against Mankind. Written by a Person of Honour’ in *Verse,* London: The British Library, General Reference Collection, 1673), pp. 1- 4, for the poet’s redefinition of the foundation for acceptable moral conduct in defence of the libertine lifestyle. In it he posits that libertine identification can be earned through drink-fuelled violence. Of all the poems couplets, perhaps the most telling indicator of libertine resentment to the new Court and the central role played by its women is this pair of couplets: And Wit was all his frivolous pretence, / Of pleasing others at his own expense / For Wits are treated just like common Whores; / First they’re enjoy’d, and then kick’d out of doors. p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. J. Treglown, ed., *The Letters of John Wilmot* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), pp. 91-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. Harold Love, ed., *The Works of John Wilmot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 44-45. According to Love there exists some debate over the attribution of this poem. Charles Sackville is cited as a possible author, but Love claims the poem is ‘securely attributed to Rochester’. p. 369. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. In the last stanza, (l. 46) Rochester promises to ‘urge you to blows’, a directive which suggests a perceived audience of young and perhaps impressionable young men. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. I refer here to Abraham Cowley’s *The Cutter of Coleman Street* (1662), which, as noted in chapter II, was taken by elite playgoers as a lampoon of the Court Party and resulted in the dramatist’s ostracism from Whitehall. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Thomas Shadwell’s *The Scowrers* **(**1691)was named after the practice. The comedy contains scenes of gallant violence organised by Sir William Rant whose behaviour represents drinking, fighting the Watch and window smashing. See also Shadwell’s *The Miser* **(**1672), Act IV and *The Woman Captain* (1680), Act II, where Sir Christopher Smash gives an in-depth account of the practice from breaking windows to the accompaniment of music, pulling down the door knockers on dwelling houses, painting out street signs, abusing all the men they encounter, fighting the watch and trying to kiss all the women, forcing them to fill the air with shrieks of distress. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, X, p. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. See Kachur, p. 48, who describes Frollick’s execrations as an ‘escapade’, a reading which perceives scouring in the euphemistic terms of the playwright rather than by the unequivocal bodily performances the ritual induced and maintained. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. See Bryson, p. 261 who points out that the king rarely punished libertines who erred from the code of *bonne grace*: ‘he did not prevent the intermingling of Court and riotous London life [and] protected his favourites from the legal consequences of some of their escapades’. Charles gave only minor reprimands and token punishments to the Wits, thereby sanctioning scouring as well as duelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. *The Comical Revenge*, I, 2, 97 In Act V Frollick extracts a promise from Sir Nicholas Cully, the disgraced imposter and country gentleman, that he will marry Jenny and take her back with him to the Shires. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. See *The Hatton Correspondence,* 2 vols I, p. 127. In a letter to his brother, (18th May, 1676) Charles Hatton reports how Lord Cornwallis and Lord Gerrard,‘being in drinke, abused the sentinels in St James Parke, and, after, Mr Gerrards meeting…with a footboy, upon what provocation is not known, struck him soe the boy fell down dead. The sentinel cryed out murder; whereupon they both fled’. Gerrard’s servants’ answered the charge, saying that ‘their master only hit the boy a box on the eare of which he dyed’. No charges were pressed. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. See Carter, p. 56 and Bryson, p. 96, who explains how ‘the ability to understand and use correct modes of self-presentation, vis-à-vis superiors, equals, inferiors, strangers, and familiars, is viewed overall as a mark of conformity to a standard of civility’. For a primary source account of prescriptive gallant behaviour and public spaces see: Antoine de Courtin, *The Rules of Civility* *or Certain Ways of Deportment Observed in France amongst Persons of Quality upon Several Occasions*, pp. 3, 11, 17, 28, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. Kachur, p. 48, relates how Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, befriended by Etherege one year before the initial staging of *The Comical Revenge*, ‘had earned a degree of infamy from a well-publicised brawl at the Cock Tavern’. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. See Bryson, p. 271 who argues that elite women rarely ventured into this arena of libertine debauchery. She cites Barbara Villiers, mistress of the Earl of Chesterfield ‘who took part in the drunken escapades of her lover and friends’, but adds that ‘group drunkenness and violence were largely unavailable to women’. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. *The Character of a Town Gallant*, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. Andrew, p. 155 [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. Elizabeth Foyster, ‘Boys will be boys? Manhood and Aggression’, 1600-1800 in *English Masculinities*, ed., T. Hitchcock and Michelle Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 151-166. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. Andrew, p. 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. *The Character of a Town Gallant*, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. Michael Cordner, ed., William Wycherley, *The Country Wife and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). All further references will use this text. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. Sedgwick, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. Susan Owen, in *Perspectives on Restoration Drama* (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 46. For pro-libertine critics who psychologise Horner see: T. Fujimura, *Restoration Comedy of Wit* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), G. Weales, ed., T*he Complete Plays of William Wycherley* (New York: New York University Press, 1967) and V.O. Birdsall *Wild Civility: the English Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970). For these, Horner is an unsentimental hero, the exemplification of impulsive sexual assertion and sexual or psychological liberation. For anti-libertine critics who psychologise Horner, see: Bonamy Dobree, *Restoration Comedy: 1600-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 94, who compares him to Tartuffe. Both are ‘grim, nightmare figures, dominating the helpless, hopeless apes who call themselves civilized men’. Anthony Kaufman, ‘Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* and the Don Juan Character’, *Eighteenth Century Studies 9* (1975-76), pp. 216-31, describes him as mentally unstable, as does Gerald Marshall’s ‘Wycherley’s Great Stage of Fools’: Madness and Theatricality in *The Country Wife’*, *Studies in English Literature 29* (1982), 395-411. N. Holland, *The First Modern Comedies,* p. 75, claims that Horner is undeniably a bad man who does bad things, but he is not a villain in the sense that, say, Iago is, for he does not prey on innocents’. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. J. H. Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration*, p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. Norman Holland, *The First Modern Comedies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. D. M. Young, *The Feminist Voices in Restoration Comedy* (Oxford: University Press of America, 1997), p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. I return to Sedgwick’s theorisation of *The Country Wife* on page 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. Owen, *Perspectives on Restoration Drama* p. 61-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. John O’Brien, ‘Genre, Gender and Theater’ in *A Concise Companion to the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Cynthia Wall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. Mackie, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. The spelling of her name is inconsistent; she is often referred to as Alithea; however in the Oxford English Drama edition, the source I refer to throughout this chapter, she is nominalized as Alethea. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977,* ed. by Colin Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. Michael Neill, ‘Heroic Heads and Humble Tails’: *Sex and Politics in The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation,* vol. 24, no. 2 (Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1983), p.118. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. Susan Owen, *Perspectives on Restoration Drama*. See: esp. Chapter II, ‘Comedy I: William Wycherley’s The Country Wife’, which connects the political backdrop and Wycherley’s dramatic, pro-Court illustration. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. Tim Harris in *Restoration: Charles and his Kingdoms* **(**London: Penguin, 2009),p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. C.M. Taylor ed., *Sir George Etherege: She Would if She Could* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. xvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. Douglas Canfield, *Tricksters and Estates: On the Ideology of Restoration Comedy* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), p. 76, draws a corollary with the raping of Muslim women by Serbian soldiers in Bosnia, arguing that the organized and systematic attempt to destroy a society’s cultural, traditional and religious integrity was an aspect of warfare ‘embedded in Restoration comedy – and generally ignored in criticism’. p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. For a fuller analysis of *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, see chapter I, p. 79-80 [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. For a full analysis of *The Committee*, see chapter I, pp. 75-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. *The Committee* was first performed at Court by the King’s Company, 27th November 1662, and was revived July 12th 1663 at Drury Lane. It was revived for the 1666-1667 season: 13th May 1667 and August 1667 and again for the 1667-1668 season on November 28th and May 15th. For the season of 1670-1671 it played at the Inner Temple, February 11th 1671. [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. For a full analysis of *The Wild Gallant,* see chapter II, pp. 116-128. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Jennifer Low, *Manhood and the Duel*, p. 22, explains that individual agency, spurred by the humanist ideas of the Renaissance, instilled a renegade ethos that ran contrary to the imperatives of royal and legal authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. For a fuller analysis of *The English Mounsieur*, see chapter IIII, pp. 145-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. For an analysis of libertine behaviour in *The Comical Revenge,* see chapter III, pp. 157-165. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. *The Country Wife* was first performed in January 1675 at The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, by the King’s Company. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Perez Zagorin, *The Court and the Country* (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. Susan Owen, ‘Restoration Drama and Politics: An Overview’ in *A Companion*, p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. A catalogue of seductions is mentioned but only ideologically driven liaisons are enlarged upon in the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. The traditional motif for a cuckold was a pair of horns; thus the name ‘Horner’. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. In Horner’s closing monologue, he derides the ‘women’s men’ who ‘aim by women to be prized’ (V. 4, 423-424). [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. Wycherley may also be referencing the *eiron* comedy figure, a Socratic dissembler who deceives his enemies while cleverly cloaking his intentions through the skills of deception and simultaneously exposing the hypocrisies and frailties of his enemies. See: *A Dictionary of Literary Terms,* ed. by J.A. Cuddon (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2015), pp. 35-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. Sedgwick, pp. 49-50, pp. 21-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. Sedgwick, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. Sedgwick, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. Sedgwick, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. Sedgwick, p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. In due course, Pinchwife forces Margery to write a letter to Horner, dictated to her by her husband, calling off their amorous attachment. She switches the letter for one of her own, putting herself at Horner’s mercy. Unaware of the ruse, Pinchwife seals Margery’s love letter and delivers it to Horner (IV. 3, 287). [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. Sedgwick, p. 54, pp. 49-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. Aspasia Velissariou, ‘Patriarchal Tactics of Control and Female Desire in Wycherley’s The Gentleman Dancing-Master and The Country Wife’ in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language,* vol. 37, no. 2, Plotting and Policy, 1995, pp. 115-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. Harold Webber, *The Restoration Rake Hero* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. Laura Brown, *English Dramatic Form* *1660-1710* (London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. Mackie, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. Andrew, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. See Act I, 1, 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. Kachur, p. 170. Dorimant is Etherege’s rake hero in his final comedy, *The Man of Mode,* 1667. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
455. See: Act I, Scene 1, 194-293. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. Sparkish’s background is not mentioned in the play. His marriage to Alethea has been arranged and brokered by Pinchwife. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. First performed at the Dorset Garden by the Duke’s Company and running for six days only, it was, according to John Downes, ‘lik’d but indifferently’. p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. Horner has recently returned from France and lodges in Russell St. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. de Courtin, p. 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. Her trait name is taken from the Greek, signifying ‘truth’, her commitment to her ‘word’ and her ‘honour’ (IV.1, 30). [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. In conversation with Pinchwife, her brother-in-law, she reminds him that she attends ‘the drawing-room at Whitehall’ (II.1, 53). [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. Liza Picard, *Restoration London* (London: The Folio Society, 2012), Picard describes Covent Garden as ‘the heart of the Town’. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. The appeal of The New Exchange had been fading by the 1660’s, but it enjoyed a revival after the Great Fire in 1666. Picard, p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
464. Picard, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
465. Jenny Uglow, *A Gambling Man: Charles II and the Restoration 1660-1670* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
466. Cynthia Wall, *The Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
467. The Great Fire, which spanned the 2nd to the 5th of September 1666, appears to have only temporarily arrested the production of plays. According to *The London Stage: Part 1, 1660-1700*, pp. 92-100, in September there were no performances; in October there were three productions, each staged at Court, and in November, there were two, each performed at Court all staged by The King’s Company. By December, the King’s Company was up and running with a production of *The Maid’s Tragedy* given at Bridges Street, The Drury Lane Theatre. Court performances continued throughout December and the Duke’s began to perform again at Lincoln’s Inn Fields on the 26th of December. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
468. Harris, p. 65, [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
469. John Sutherland, ed. John Dryden, *Marriage à la Mode* (London: J.M. Dent, 1934). [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
470. Harold Love, ‘Who Were the Restoration Audience?’ in *The Yearbook of English Studies,* vol. 10, Literature and Its Audience, I, Special Number (1980), p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
471. Love, p. 32. Love’s research reveals (in a 1690 estimate) that less than half of the population of the metropolis, 222,400, resided in the city, 103, 000 in Westminster and 72, 000 in the parishes within the city walls. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
472. Uglow, p. 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
473. Picard, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
474. Picard, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
475. He lived opposite the Cock Tavern – the setting for Sir Charles Sedley’s mountebank sermon – at the Widow Hilton’s in Bow Street. Drury Lane was near the Square and the modish Rose Tavern was adjacent to it and Will’s Coffee House, a haunt of the Wits, was on the corner of Bow and Russell Street. See Katherine M. Rogers, *William Wycherley* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
476. Cosmo Medici, *Travels of Cosmo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, through England during the reign of Charles II* (London: J. Mawman, 1821), p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
477. Medici, p. 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
478. Love, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
479. Cordner, ed. *William Wycherley The Country Wife and Other Plays*. *Love in a Wood, or, St James’ Park* was first performed by the King’s Company at the Theatre Royal Bridges Street in March 1671. [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
480. Medici, pp. 163, 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
481. Cordner, Prologue*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
482. William Wycherley, *The Country Wife and Other Plays,* ed. by Michael Cordner *The Gentleman-dancing Master*, was first produced in February 1672 by the Duke’s Company. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
483. Wall, p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
484. Cordner, p, xii. [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
485. *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*; Epilogue. [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
486. Heal, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
487. Dudley, 3rd Lord North, *A Forest of Varieties* (London: 1645), p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
488. Heal, p. 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
489. In Act IV, scene 4, Pinchwife seizes the love letter Margery is writing to Horner, in which she describes how she is suffered to ‘lie in the arms of another man whom I loathe, nauseate and detest’. (Lines 21-23). [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
490. Kachur, p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
491. See: Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration*, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
492. See pages 166- 167: all the critics cited focus more on the outcome of Horner’s impotence ruse rather than the degree of skill required to implement it. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
493. Elaine McGirr, *Eighteenth-Century Characters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
494. de Courtin, p. 3, 11, 17, 28, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
495. Mackie, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
496. Ronald Berman, ‘Wycherley’s Unheroic Society’ in *ELH,* Vol. 51, No. 3, p. 467. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
497. Young, p. 119, p. 119-120. [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
498. Rogers, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
499. Rogers, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
500. *John Wilmot, Lord Rochester,* ed. by V. Pinto(London: Routledge, 1964), pp. 79-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
501. Young, p. 112. She is, he adds, ‘the playwright’s standard-bearer for truth in the play’. p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
502. John Vance, *William Wycherley and the Comedy of Fear* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), pp. 96-100. [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
503. Merry E Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
504. *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 118-119. [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
505. Jean Gailhard, *The Compleat Gentleman: or directions for the education of youth*, pp. 126-127. [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
506. Jacques de Callières, *The Courtier’s Calling: showing the making of a fortune, and the art of living at court, according to the maxims of policy and morality*, pp. 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
507. *The Art of Complaisance*, pp. 136-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
508. Andrew, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
509. Andrew, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
510. *Oxford English Dictionary: Second edition*, pp. 28-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
511. Young, p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
512. Canfield, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
513. Sedgwick, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
514. Sedgwick, p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
515. Oscar Mandel. ed., Thomas Shadwell, ‘The Libertine’ in *The Theatre of Don Juan 1630-1963* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963). The first published version of the play was titled *The Libertine: a tragedy*. (London: Henry Herringham, 1676). [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
516. Naples was at this time under Spanish possession. [↑](#footnote-ref-516)
517. Richard Braverman, ‘The Rake’s Progress Revisited’ in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Theater,* ed. by J. Canfield & D. Payne (London: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-517)
518. According to Mandal, Shadwell is accredited with ‘bringing Don Juan to England’ via France via Molière’s adaptation: *Dom Juan ou le Festin de Pierre* (1665), p. 110. Molière added episodes,’ but few’, Mandal adds, ‘are entirely his own invention’. p. 110. *The Libertine* was first produced by the Duke’s Company on the 16th June 1675. [↑](#footnote-ref-518)
519. Aaron Jaffe, ‘Seditious Appetites and Creeds: Shadwell’s Libertine and Hobbes’s Foole’ in *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1600-1700,* vol. 24, no. 2 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2000), p. 57. John Austen, *The Story of Don Juan* (London: Secker, 1939), pp. 176-186, describes the play as a pantomime;; Oscar Mandal, p. 165, suggests that the gap between rhetorical representation and lived experience marks *The Libertine* out as a puppet play and Helen Pellegrin, *Thomas Shadwell’s The Libertine* (London: Garland, 1987), xiv, describes it as a ‘Grand-Guignolesque melodrama’. [↑](#footnote-ref-519)
520. See: David Allen, ‘Political Clubs in London’ in *The Historical Journal,* vol. 19, no. 3 (Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 561-580. [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
521. Dedication to *The Sullen Lovers* (London: Henry Herringham, 1670). [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
522. Airey, pp. 19-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
523. Deana Rankin, *The Art of War: Military Writing in Ireland in the Mid Seventeenth-Century* (doctoral dissertation: The University of Oxford, 1999), pp. 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
524. J. Prieto-Pablos, M.J. Mora & M. Lara and R. Portillo eds., Thomas Shadwell, *Epsom-Wells* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2000), Prologue. [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
525. Aaron Jaffe claims that Don John is a character wholly without ‘charm’, but his seduction technique suggests the contrary. [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
526. John Bulteel was the first dramatist to treat the rake’s subversion of social and moral normativities in *The Amorous Gallant* (1664). As has been seen, Orontus, is portrayed as a maestro in the aesthetics of seduction, a rake who also tries to sexually manipulate two elite maidens, turning the rules of courtship against the very women *bonne grace* was designed to empower and protect. Unlike Don John, Orontus is forced to reform, but the guiding principle of their behaviour is the same: the deception, dominance and degradation of women. [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
527. Cohen, pp. 1-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
528. Hamilton,p. 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
529. Jaffe, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
530. *The Libertine*, Epilogue. [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
531. Jane Spenser, ed., Aphra Behn, *The Rover and other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. vii. Susan Owen argues that Behn’s comedy is a direct response to *The Libertine*. See: *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2001) pp. 78-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
532. Michael Neill, ‘Heroic Heads and Humble Tails: Sex, Politics, and the Restoration Comic Rake’, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
533. *The Rover,* Aphra Behn’s sixth drama, was first staged at the Dorset Garden in the spring of 1677. *The Forced Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince* were tragicomedies. *Ahdelazar* (1676) was a revenge tragedy. Her first comedy, *The Dutch Lover* (1673), was badly received. But the problem appears to have been performance-related. According to Behn’s Preface to the edition of 1673, this ‘play was hugely injur’d in the acting’. See *The London Stage Part 1,* p. 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
534. Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: a history of the first sexual revolution* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
535. Spenser, p. vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
536. Mary Ann O’Donnell, ‘The Documentary Record’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn,* p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
537. Jenny Uglow, pp. 324-325. [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
538. Jenny Uglow, pp. 324-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
539. O’Donnell, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
540. Owen, *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
541. Jones DeRitter, ‘The Gypsy, The Rover and the Wanderer; Aphra Behn’s Revision of Thomas Killigrew’ in *Restoration Studies in English Literary Culture*, *1600-1700*, vol. 10, no. 2 (College Park: University of Maryland, 1986), p. 82. De Ritter offers a detailed comparative analysis of *Thomaso* and *The Rover*. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
542. Taylor Corse, ‘Seventeenth-Century Naples and Aphra Behn’s The Rover’ in *Restoration Studies in English Literary Culture, 1600-1700*, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
543. Corse, pp. 42, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
544. Belvile, the leading Cavalier, makes mock of Blunt and the country habitus he represents. For Belvile, the only merit Blunt possesses is his meanness with money: he acts as banker for the group: ‘he has all our cash about him, and if he fail, we are all broke’ (I. 2, 290). [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
545. Corse, p. 47. See also: Susan Staves, ‘Behn, women and society’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, p. 18, who argues that ‘Behn is attracted to Spanish and Italian settings in part because the English supposed parents and guardians there were conspicuously coercive’. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
546. Robert Markley, ‘Behn and the unstable tradition of social comedy’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
547. Walter Raleigh ed., *The Complete Works of George Savile*, *First Marquess of Halifax*, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-547)
548. Susan Staves, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
549. Elin Diamond, ‘Gestus and Signature in Aphra Benh’s *The Rover*’, *ELH*, vol. 56, no. 3 (1989), p. 524. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
550. Diamond, p. 519. [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
551. Diamond, p. 519. [↑](#footnote-ref-551)
552. Margaret Cavendish cited in Diamond, p. 525. [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
553. Markey describes this condition as the ‘resentment of younger sons’. See: ‘Behn and the unstable conditions of social comedy’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, p. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
554. Frollick’s marriage to the Widow Rich is actually a mutually beneficial exchange: she gains the entitlement of aristocratic rank and he gains her financial portion. [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
555. This does not differ from aristocratic fortune-hunting. These accusations pointed at political opponents are a clear indicator of the fierce partisanship of the period. [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
556. Melinda Zook, ‘The political poetry of Aphra Behn’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn,* pp. 47-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
557. Cohen, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
558. Staves, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
559. Aphra Behn, ‘The Golden Age’ cited in S. Staves, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-559)
560. J. Munns, ‘Pastoral and Lyric: Astrea in Arcadia’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, pp. 211-212. [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
561. DeRitter, p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
562. *The Memoirs of the Countess de Dunois*, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
563. Dunois, pp. 3-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
564. Dagny Boebel, ‘In the Carnival World of Adam’s Garden: Roving and Rape in Behn’s Rover’ in *Broken Boundaries,* ed. by K. Quinsey (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), pp. 54-71, elaborates this reversing of roles as a central component in libertine typology. Behn makes use of this trope by usurping the libertine’s exploitation of convention by giving power to her heroine Hellena during her courtship with Willmore. [↑](#footnote-ref-564)
565. J. H. Wilson, *A Rake and his Times*, *George Villiers, 2ndDuke of Buckingham* (London: F. Muller, 1954), p. 97, explains that ‘the law stipulated that if a duellist was slain, all involved were guilty of homicide’ but gallant participants were never brought to trial. [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
566. Callières, *The Courtier’s Calling,* pp. 48-49. See also, Gailhard, *The Compleat Gentleman: or directions for the education of youth* (London: In the Savoy, 1678), pp. 126-127, who concludes that ‘no rational man will condemn resentment, only will advise me to use honest and lawful means to get satisfaction’. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
567. Andrew, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
568. The argument that the libertine acts in self-defence against female beauty and cruelty is elaborated and debunked in *The Libertine.* Don Antonio complains that his father ‘kept his sister from me, her eyes would have kill’d me if I had not enjoyed her which I could not do without killing him (I. 1, 178). Shadwell mocks the notion that the rake is an innocent who must protect himself from women who deliberately destabilise men and who are thus compelled to eradicate the imagined threat they pose by crushing them. [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
569. Janet Todd and Virginia Crompton, ‘Rebellion’s antidote: A New Attribution to Aphra Behn’, Notes and Queries n.s. 38 (June 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
570. Helen Burke, ‘Cavalier Myth in ‘*The Rover’* in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
571. According to Spenser, xxi, *The Feign’d Curtizans* was much less successful than *The Rover*. ‘There were probably several performances in 1679 and 1680, and the play may have been revived in the 1690s, but the only eighteenth-century revivals recorded were in 1716 and 1717’. [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
572. Burke, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
573. Janet Todd ed., *‘*The Second Part of the Rover’in *The Works of Aphra Behn Volume 6. The Plays, 1678-1672* (London: Pickering, 1996), Dedication. [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
574. Behn would extend her sympathy to prostitutes in her later work, but as Exclusion began to loom, she muted the notion of gendered autonomy at the expense of Royalist propaganda. In *The Roundheads*, first staged in 1681, directly after the defeat of Exclusion, she created Lady Desbro, a highly conventional Royalist heroine who refuses to commit adultery with her gallant because Royalist ideology insisted on loyalty from wives to their husbands, even if they are married to disgusting old parliamentarians. An overt ideological construction, Lady Desbro illustrates the sacrifice of personal interests in the pursuit and demonstration of impeccable Royalist credentials. She affirms the legal and judicial integrity of the Stuart regime and, in the post Exclusion atmosphere of political uncertainty, Behn uses the character to revivify the ‘Royalist camp infected by what Pacheco describes as ‘the cynicism generated by political conflict’, p. 697. In *The Feign’d Courtesan* (1679), Behn explicitly critiques the sexual double standard and sympathetically renders the plight of prostitutes – social outsiders who are victimised and devalued by meeting men’s needs. [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
575. Braverman, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
576. Michael McKeon, ‘The Secret History of Domesticity’ (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-576)
577. Michael Neill, ‘Heroic Heads and Humble Tails: Sex and Politics in the Eighteenth Century’in *Theory and Interpretation,* vol. 24, no. 2, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-577)
578. McKeon, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-578)
579. In the 1700-1 season it was performed once; 1703-4: performedthree times; 1704-5: performed twice; 1705-6: twice; 1706-7: once; 1707-8: 3 times; 1709-10: twice; 1710-11: 3 times; 1711-12: 4 times; 1712-13: once; 1713-14: twice; 1714-15: once; 1716-17: twice. In the seasons 1717- 1729, it was revived 30 times. Its popularity began to wane between 1729-1736, when it was staged ten times and only three times between 1736 and 1747. See *The London Stage* *Parts 1-4: 1660-1800*, the production dates are cited as follows: I: Vol 1. (1600-1700), pp. 233, 250, 309, 476; II: Vol. 1 (1700-1729), pp. 12, 47, 51, 66-7, 76, 87, 112, 132, 159, 173, 178, 182, 205, 226, 249-50, 252-254, 261, 266, 271, 281, 286, 303, 309, 315, 325, 449, 453; II: Vol. 2 (1700-1729), pp. 502, 542, 565, 570, 576, 586, 589, 596, 614, 632, 635, 672, 682, 692, 707, 727, 801, 802, 826, 838, 847, 874, 888, 903, 938, 953, 995, 1003, 1003, 1015, 1023; III: Vol. 1 (1729-47), pp. 28, 32, 46, 95, 146, 169, 260, 268, 408, 409; III: Vol. 2, pp. 820, 821, 830. [↑](#footnote-ref-579)
580. *The Fair Penitent* was not nearly as successful as *The Libertine,* but it did enjoy four revivals, the last of which was in April 1716. [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
581. See: Anon, *The Forsaken Fair. An epistle from Calista in her late illness at Bath to Lothario on his approaching nuptials* (London: Dickinson, 1736). Here, his misdeeds are given sharp magnification as they are perceived via the lens of Calista’s consciousness. In this couplet monologue, she is a hapless and fragile maiden who succumbs to his ‘smiles’ and is destroyed by his ‘inconstancy’. [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
582. *The Fair Penitent,* epilogue. [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
583. *The Fair Penitent,* epilogue. The term ‘sauntering’ was used by T. B. Macaulay in *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*, 5 vols. (London, 1849), I, p. 168, where he describes Charles II as ‘addicted beyond all measure to sensual indulgence, fond of sauntering and frivolous amusements, incapable of self-denial.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
584. Erin Mackie, *Market a la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in the Tatler and Spectator* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
585. Laurence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 8-9. Of course, Shaftesbury was, as Klein points out, dependent on *bonne grace*, the social code developed during the Restoration period by the Stuart elite. [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
586. Robert Markley, ‘Sentimentality as Performance: Shaftesbury, Sterne, and the Theatrics of Virtue’, *The New Eighteenth Century*, ed. by F. Nussbaum and Laura Brown (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
587. Thomas A King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600-175; The English Phallus* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
588. Mackie, p. 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
589. Mackie, pp. 190-191. [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
590. R.K. Root, ed., Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *Lord Chesterfield’s Letters to his Son and Others* ((New York: Everyman, 1929), p. 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
591. E. Mackie, ed., ‘No, 156 August 29, 1711 [Steele on the Woman’s Man]’, *The Commerce of Everyday Life: Selections from the Tatler and The Spectator* (Boston: Bedford St Martin’s, 1998), pp. 522-525. [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
592. Mackie, pp. 522-525. [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
593. Steele defines the rake as heterosexual when, as the poetry of Lord Rochester makes abundantly clear, the rake was bisexual. [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
594. George Aitken, ed., *The Tatler*, 4 vols. no. 27 (London: Duckworth, 1898), I, p. 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
595. Erin Mackie, *Market a la Mode: Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in The Tatler and The Spectator* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 158- 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
596. Aitken, p. 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
597. T. Keymer & A. Wakely, eds., Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
598. Aitken, p. 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
599. Ruth Yeazel, *Fictions of Modesty* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 7-8, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
600. The original title page contains the subsection that states: ‘In which, the many notorious Falsehoods of a Book called Pamela are exposed and refuted’. [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
601. Yeazel, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
602. John Dryden’s *The Wild Gallant* (1664) also mocks the Country knight Sir Timorous, a fool, a dupe, an illiterate and Loveby’s love rival for Lady Constance. Like Sir Nicholas Cully in *The Comical Revenge*, he is also duped by two chancers, who swindle him on the premise that they can persuade him to marry them. See also, William Wycherley’s *The Plain Dealer* (1676) for the Jerry Blackacre character. [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
603. Martin Battestin, ed., *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, Shamela,* and *Occasional Writings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), p.184. [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
604. Battestin, p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
605. Battestin, pp. 165, 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-605)
606. In *Shamela,* Fielding would parody Pamela’s perceived breach of social decorum by having her refer to politeness as ‘polluteness’. [↑](#footnote-ref-606)
607. *Shamela*, p. 166 [↑](#footnote-ref-607)
608. See: Dabhoiwala, pp. 160-169. [↑](#footnote-ref-608)
609. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 10 vols. ed. by R. Latham & W. Matthews, V, p. p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-609)
610. Aitken, p. 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-610)
611. Dabhoiwala, p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-611)
612. Yeazel, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-612)
613. Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 399. [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
614. *Clarissa,* p. 418. [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
615. *Clarissa,* p. 419. [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
616. *Clarissa*, p. 431. [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
617. *Clarissa,* p. 429. [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
618. *Clarissa,* p. 403. [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
619. *Clarissa*, pp. 270-271. [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
620. *Clarissa*, p. 445. Richardson cites Nicholas Rowe’s *Ulysses, A Tragedy* (1705), I.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
621. Neill, p.118. [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
622. Gerald Jensen, ed., Henry Fielding, *Covent Garden Journal* 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1915), I, pp. 69-74; II, pp. 326-331 [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
623. Dabhoiwala, p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
624. Doreen Roberts, ed., Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited), p. 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
625. Martin Battestin, ed., Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974). [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
626. Henry Fielding’s *Amelia* (1751), p. 41, enlarges on the issue of female exploitation and prejudicial stereotyping of women. He presents a portrait of one Miss Mathews, who appears to be a modish *femme fatale* figure and who leads the hero, Mr Booth, astray. Booth is in prison and when she bribes a guard and has Booth released, she tells him of how she was seduced by a libertine soldier who ensnared her and repeatedly jilted her for other women. Driven to distraction by false promises of marriage, she stabs him. Commenting on these events, she says ‘I do believe that from the damned inconstancy of your sex to ours proceeds half the miseries of mankind’. [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
627. Mackie, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
628. Andrew, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
629. In *Market à la Mode*, p. 168, Mackie notes that ‘the critique of effeminacy in men involves not only the condemnation of social decadence but also of an effeminacy that is starting to signal homosexuality’. [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
630. Aitken, p. 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
631. Dabhoiwala, p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
632. Mackie, p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
633. E. Mackie, ed., *The Spectator*, ‘No, 154’. [↑](#footnote-ref-633)