

# **A DEDICATED FOLLOWER OF FASHION:**

THE AHISTORIC RAKE IN RESTORATION LITERATURE

If I am right about nature's options, history is like surrounding oneself with mirrors, like living in a bordello.

—Joseph Brodsky, "Letter to Horace"

Zoe Hope Gibbons

May 1, 2009

Presented to the Department of English at Mount Holyoke College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Eugene Hill is my thesis adviser, but to praise him only in that capacity would be to do him injustice. In February of 2006, I entered his Milton class uncertain whether I should major in English; after a week or two, any other course seemed laughable. For the past three years, he has been an academic role model and, more importantly, a constant force for good.

I am also indebted to my other two readers, Bill Quillian and Paula Debnar. Since my first week of college, Professor Quillian has made my life calmer and saner by his mere presence. Professor Debnar introduced me to Lucretius, polished my Latin grammar, and reassured me that one never finishes a thesis, but merely abandons it.

During my time at Mount Holyoke, I have had the privilege of working with several other exceptional mentors. If not for Frank Brownlow's Shakespeare Adapted and Interpreted seminar, I might never have discovered the farce and folly of Restoration drama. Joseph Ellis expanded my historical horizons and reminded me that a good academic is more than the sum of her papers. Finally, Stan Rachootin pointed me in the direction of Leslie Stephen, whose biography of Pope sparked my interest in the Restoration. He also supplied me with at least two dozen puns on the word "rake"; I suspect my thesis is the poorer for their absence.

Last year at Oxford, Noam Reisner supervised my study of early-modern literature, reined in my Barthesian excesses, and reminded me to keep a healthy skepticism about academia. Ann Pasternak Slater worked with me on revenge tragedy, and Freya Johnston on Fielding and Richardson. But my greatest debt is to Laurence Williams, a doctoral candidate who kindly agreed to tutor me in Restoration drama. Much of the work I produced in that tutorial found its way into my thesis, and our dramatic reading of Sir Fopling's first scene remains one of my fondest Oxford memories.

My incomparable friends, at Mount Holyoke and elsewhere, provided more solace and wisdom than they know. I am especially grateful to Mallory Cohn, Anne Derrig, Hannah Duff, Ariel Franklin-Hudson, Caitlin Healey, Noa Lee Holtzman, Rebecca Mason, Becca Schaffner, and Marija Tesla. Thank you for everything—including your inexplicable desire to read my final draft. (Don't worry, I won't hold you to it.)

My analysis of the rake-aesthete would be incomplete without the example—say rather, the case study—of Amaru Villanueva Rance.

I owe many thanks to my family for their love and support. My father, Elliot Gibbons, deserves special mention; for as long as I can remember, he has done everything in his power to nurture my moral and intellectual development.

This thesis is dedicated to Svein Arber, my AP English teacher at Lowell High School in San Francisco. He taught me how to think and write about literature; there is no higher praise than that.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>21</b>	
“The Painted Sign of a Man”: <i>The Gentile Sinner</i>	
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>44</b>	
“The Modern Way of Writing”: <i>The Comical Revenge</i>	
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
<b>68</b>	
“Going a Rambling”: <i>The Mulberry Garden</i>	
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
<b>86</b>	
“Ridiculously Wild and Apish”: <i>The Man of Mode</i>	
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
<b>105</b>	
“Now I Can Blaze No Longer”: <i>The Aging Rake</i>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
<b>131</b>	
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
<b>138</b>	
<b>WORKS CITED</b>	
<b>159</b>	

## INTRODUCTION

In 1660, the newly acceded Charles II of England issued an “Act of Free and General Pardon Indempnity and Oblivion,” ordering that most crimes committed against the Crown between 1637 and 1660 “be Pardoned Released Indempnified Discharged and put in utter Oblivion.” In his preamble to the act, Charles declared his intention to “bury all Seeds of future Discords and remembrance of the former as well in His owne Breast as in the Breasts of His Subjects one towards another”—a generous sentiment, undoubtedly welcome after two decades of civil strife. Granted, Charles introduced several exceptions to the act, refusing to pardon the officials of Oliver Cromwell’s regime, or, for that matter, the deceased Cromwell himself. But he continued in a conciliatory vein until midway through the edict, when he announced that the new government would fine anyone guilty of “using words tending to revive the Memory of the late Differences”:

And to the intent and purpose that all names and termes of distinction may likewise be putt into utter Oblivion Be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid That if any person or persons within the space of three yeares next ensueing shall presume maliciously to call or alledge of, or object against any other person or persons any name or names, or other words of reproach any way tending to revive the memory of the late Differences or the occasions thereof, That then every such person soe as aforesaid offending shall forfeit and pay unto the party grieved in case such party

offending shall be of the degree of a Gentleman or above ten pounds, and if under that degree the summe of forty shillings to be recovered by the party grieved . . .<sup>1</sup>

It was a precarious moment in the history of the English monarchy. In 1642, Parliament had rebelled against Charles I, setting off a seven-year civil war. Sixteen-year-old Prince Charles and his mother, Henrietta Maria of France, fled to the French court in 1646. Early in 1649, Cromwell's forces executed the King and established a Puritan republic that endured for nine years, until Cromwell's death in 1658. His son Richard proved an ineffective leader, and the protectorate crumbled in the spring of 1659. Over the next year, the royalist interest gained the upper hand, and on May 29, 1660, Charles II returned from Paris to London. The English Restoration had begun.

Though welcomed enthusiastically to England, the new King "had few illusions about the depth of the support for the monarchy."<sup>2</sup> Aware that "the civil war had left political, religious, and partisan divisions . . . that would be impossible to resolve to the satisfaction of all parties,"<sup>3</sup> Charles sought to turn public attention from the fractious past to the unblemished future. His Act of Indemnity and Oblivion represents an attempt to legislate the collective memory. Pardons and reimbursements cannot erase a national trauma, but words can soften the horrors they describe. Teaching by example, Charles uses the euphemistic

"Differences" for a conflict in which England lost almost four percent of its

<sup>1</sup> Charles II, "An Act of Free and Generall Pardon Indempnity and Oblivion" (1660), in John Raithby, ed., *Statutes of the Realm: volume 5: 1628-80* (1819), 226-234. British History Online: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47259>, accessed 19 April 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Seaward, "Charles II (1630-1685), king of England, Scotland, and Ireland," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Online edition: <http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/5144>, accessed 19 April 2008.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

population, Scotland six percent, and Ireland 41 percent.<sup>4</sup> There is something dystopian in Charles's manipulation of language. In 1661, Edmund Waller would write a panegyric on St. James's Park, populating the Thames with nymphs and cupids. Given Charles's desire for "utter Oblivion," Waller might have done better to compare the river to Lethe.

A three-year moratorium on any topic of conversation is unenforceable, and many of Charles's subjects continued to speak of the Civil War with impunity. "Critics of the Carolean establishment," writes Paulina Kewes, ". . . did not shrink from marshaling the most abusive and impertinent parallels to stigmatize what they saw as the corruption of the newly restored monarchy."<sup>5</sup> But a king so obsessed with the politics of memory could not have failed to influence the writers of his court. Many dramatists of the Restoration belonged to Charles's inner circle, accompanying him to the tavern and the theater. They, not their social inferiors, were forced to watch their step when discussing history. Susan Staves reminds us that "the government took the political implications of plays seriously enough to censor and to prohibit quite a number of them."<sup>6</sup> In 1662, for instance, Charles passed the Licensing Act, which noted that "by the general licentiousnes of the late times many evil disposed persons have been encouraged

---

<sup>4</sup> Charles Carlton, *Going to the Wars: The Experience of the British Civil Wars, 1638-1651* (Routledge, 1994), 214.

<sup>5</sup> Paulina Kewes, ed., *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2006), 18.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Staves, *Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration* (Lincoln and London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 50.

to print and sell heretical schismatical blasphemous seditious and treasonable Bookes Pamphlets and Papers.” Accordingly, Charles banned all works

wherein any Doctrine or Opinion shall be asserted or maintained which is contrary to Christian Faith or the Doctrine or Discipline of the Church of England or which shall or may tend or be to the scandall of Religion or the Church or the Government or Governors of the Church State or Common wealth.<sup>7</sup>

This act, which expired in 1679 but was renewed in 1685, drove Charles’s critics to subterfuge. Prose writers often drew parallels between the Restoration and earlier ages;<sup>8</sup> comic playwrights took a different approach. If courtiers wanted to toy with their monarch’s historical views, they had to cloak their allusions in bawdy badinage. The tension between the despair of the past and the enforced optimism of the present helped to produce one of the great stock characters of English literature.

Perhaps no literary era is more closely associated with a character type than the Restoration with the flamboyant, self-important seducer. From 1660 through the early eighteenth century, the rake fired the popular imagination, starring in comedy and tragedy, poetry and prose. Indifferent to history and politics, he pursued private pleasure in favor of public influence. He desired power, but contented himself with the conquest of individual minds, earning the love of women and the admiration of men. He sought singularity, reluctant to imitate and

---

<sup>7</sup> Charles II, “An Act for preventing the frequent Abuses in printing seditious treasonable and unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets and for regulating of Printing and Printing Presses” (1662), in Raithby, *Statutes of the Realm: volume 5: 1628-80* (1819), 226-234. British History Online: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47336>, accessed 20 April 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Kewes, *The Uses of History*, 19. According to Kewes, “historical parallels were ubiquitous in late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century prose. They served government apologists to discredit the alleged fomenters of sedition and enabled the regime’s enemies to make suggestive if teasingly ambivalent allusions to domestic and international affairs.”

scorning his imitators. And while he had earlier avatars, he did not become a coherent figure until the early Restoration. In the following chapters, I will argue that the rake's emergence immediately after the Civil War was no coincidence. In text after text, he thwarts Charles II's quest for oblivion, allowing both religious and secular writers to elide, alter, and recreate the recent past.

Though the rake came to stand for a specific historical moment, he did not, in Harold Weber's words, spring "full-grown and furiously erect from the head of John Dryden or James Howard or Sir George Etherege." However, very few critics have speculated about the origins of the Restoration rake. Virginia Ogden Birdsall argues that the rake is an "archetypal comic hero," embodying the presumably Freudian "play-function" in the Restoration as the "vice-figure" embodied it in the Middle Ages and Falstaff in the Renaissance.<sup>9</sup> Weber discards Birdsall's ludic analysis, but follows her in claiming that the rake-hero evolved from "the traditions of the medieval Vice and the Jacobean trickster-hero."<sup>10</sup> Both theories have value, but they ignore the sinister, even tragic, aspect of the rakish character. My own theory has been anticipated only once—and only in part—by John Kerrigan, who links Samuel Richardson's Lovelace with the revenger of Jacobean tragedy.<sup>11</sup> Kerrigan carries the hypothesis farther into the eighteenth century, but I would argue that Lovelace is a very late exemplar of the rake-

---

<sup>9</sup> Virginia Ogden Birdsall, *Wild Civility: The English Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 13-18.

<sup>10</sup> Harold Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations of Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 13.

<sup>11</sup> John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford, 1996), 219-225. Richardson's mammoth novel *Clarissa* appeared in 1748.

revenger. In fact, the revenge theme appears in the very title of Etherege's first play, and reappears throughout the course of Restoration comedy. Studying the rake's links to the revenger will illuminate aspects of his relationship with history.

The Renaissance revenger is a man dogged and defined by the past.

Typically, he is a young peer, even a prince, returning from abroad to avenge a wrong done to a relative or mistress. He remains aloof from the court in which he finds himself, often trampling on accepted manners and mores. Rarely does morality give him pause: he exists to perpetuate a cycle of vengeance, and he will have no peace until he has done his part. Even after he slays his enemies, the structure of the plot suggests that the violence will continue. Compare the revenger to the typical Restoration rake, a young aristocrat returning to London from a Continental tour. Free of the intricate social networks that enmesh the other characters, the rake has few friends and no relatives. In company he is both spectator and participant, obeying social rules only when he does not care to transgress them. The process of erotic conquest gives him more satisfaction than the act of possession. Occasionally he reforms at the end of the play, but his conversion is almost never convincing. The revenger's career ends in death, the rake's in marriage; it is an open question which man is happier when the curtain falls.

This is not to say that the rake evolved directly from the revenger. The myth of the dashing Cavalier had its influence, as did the seventeenth-century vogue for

the philosophies of Epicurus, Lucretius, and Thomas Hobbes.<sup>12</sup> Nor are Birdsall and Weber misguided in identifying the rake with the trickster of Jacobean city comedy. (In fact, the aging Etherege compared himself to the aging Falstaff, though it seems that Birdsall is referring to Falstaff in his heyday.) But the revenger—as I shall discuss at greater length—interacts with history in a way that the Cavalier and the trickster-hero do not. He strives to erase past evils, but his actions merely perpetuate them. After the massacre at the end of *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606), Duke Antonio orders its perpetrators—including the eponymous revenger—executed, though they helped him rise to power. Standing in a sea of corpses, Antonio speaks the play's richly ironic closing lines:

How subtly was that murder clos'd! Bear up  
Those tragic bodies; 'tis a heavy season.  
Pray heaven their blood may wash away all treason! (V.iii.126-128)

Likewise, the rake turns his back on history, but fails to escape the influence of the past.

My narrative begins with a little-known treatise published in 1660: Clement Ellis's *The gentile sinner, or, England's brave gentleman characterized in a letter to a friend both as he is and as he should be*. Most modern scholars treat the rake as a literary construct, and not as a historical phenomenon; but in Ellis's book, written in the turmoil just before the Restoration, the rake represents a grave social problem. In a lament unusual in the royalist camp, Ellis traces the Civil War not to the Puritans, but to the apathetic English nobility. Though

---

<sup>12</sup> For a more thorough discussion of skepticism and empiricism in Restoration comedy, see Thomas H. Fujimura, *The Restoration Comedy of Wit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 40.

“*Conspicuous* to the eye of the world,” the “gentile sinner” turns his back on church and country, pursuing pleasure to the peril of his soul. His identity rests on his iconoclasm, his sense of singularity; he loathes nothing more than his own humanity, “as if the only *shame* he fear’d were the retaining of that *Form* which *God* and *Nature* gave him.” However, there is a paradox inherent in the rake’s self-construction. Ellis is describing not one man, but a generation of gallants, all bent on achieving uniqueness in the same way. The more the rake scorns society, the more he conforms to the type of the nonconformist. Having pointed out this flaw in the rakish worldview, Ellis exhorts his noble readers to do their duty and heal England’s diseased “*Body Politick*.” By flattering wellborn gallants into a sense of their own importance, Ellis aims to turn their vanity to the good of their nation.

Next, I discuss two tragicomedies produced in the first decade of the Restoration: George Etherege’s *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub* (1664), and Sir Charles Sedley’s *The Mulberry Garden* (1668). Each play takes place in the last days of the interregnum, and each is divided into two parts: a historically focused “high plot” in verse, and a witty, ahistoric “low plot” in prose. The hero of *The Comical Revenge*, Sir Frederick Frollick, is often described as English drama’s first true rake. While his friends spout couplets and fight for the Crown, Sir Frederick guzzles wine, smashes windows, pursues a wealthy widow, and dupes a country knight into marrying a whore. Though he moves in royalist circles, he expresses no political opinions; in fact, he has spent most of the

interregnum studying manners in Paris. To all appearances, Sir Frederick embodies Etherege's "modern way/Of writing"—and so, by default, the modern social order of Charles II's court. But Sir Frederick's plans come to naught: the widow takes a fitting revenge on him, and the language of the play suggests that history has gained the upper hand.

Like *The Comical Revenge*, and unlike *The Gentile Sinner*, *The Mulberry Garden* draws a sharp distinction between the pleasures of private life and the operations of history—or, in this case, between *eros* and *amor patriae*. The play revolves around the households of Sir John Everyyoung, a foppish royalist, and his brother Sir Samuel Forecast, a priggish Puritan. Each widower has two young daughters, and the four women suffer when their Cavalier lovers place honor before romance. However, Sedley creates a *locus amoenus* that walls out the forces of history. The *Mulberry Garden* allows Everyyoung's daughters to flirt with the fops and rakes of the town, including Jack Wildish, an old friend of the family. Outside the garden, Wildish reveals his political acumen, predicting the return of the King; inside it, he forgets politics, turning instead to wine and women. The end of the play unites love and politics in a patriotic *tour de force* that would hardly have brought the Licensing Act upon Sedley's head. But the setting of *The Mulberry Garden* indicates that Charles's first edict had failed: London audiences were still hungry for tales of the "Differences."

Both of these plays depart from *The Gentile Sinner* in portraying history as History, remote and marmoreal. In fact, Sedley links the Restoration to the

pastoral Golden Age, suggesting that peace will bring an end to history itself. But in *The Man of Mode*, premiered eight years later, historical narrative grows more intimate. Dorimant, Etherege's indomitable rake-aesthete, alludes constantly to history; but he strips his own allusions of meaning, constructing an alternative historiography with himself at the center. His identity survives so long as his persona goes unimitated. However, a fop does his utmost to ape Dorimant's antics, and a young heiress weakens Dorimant's sense of uniqueness even as she wins his heart. Like Sir Frederick and Jack Wildish, Dorimant cannot escape history without endangering himself.

My final chapter analyzes the trope of the aging rake, or *senex amans*, just after the Restoration. Authors in the Restoration portrayed the rake as young and carefree, immune to political and historical pressures. But as public morality shifted, so did the image of the libertine. The decrepit rake, vanquished by the mere passage of time, became a common literary motif. However, it was more than literary: Etherege lived into his late fifties and Wycherley into his mid-seventies, and both men wrote letters recalling the debauches of their youth and lamenting the vicissitudes of age. Augustan periodical literature sustained the theme, pushing Restoration mores into obsolescence by embodying them in pathetic old men. In the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele returned to Ellis's view of history, concerning themselves with the "History of the Passing Day" (*Tatler* 15). The shift from large- to small-scale history spelled the doom of the ahistoric rake. He could no longer react against history, for it now

encompassed everything he held dear, including love, wit, and gossip. The *Tatler* and *Spectator* did not obliterate the rake, who revived periodically throughout the eighteenth century, notably in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748). But the character would never be as blithely immoral as in the early Restoration. When he reformed now, he reformed for good.

Several scholars of the Restoration have considered the rake figure, though their studies focus largely on his moral, not historical, significance. In 1952, Thomas H. Fujimura argued that the free-living rake exemplified seventeenth-century naturalism, "a point of view which excludes the supernatural and accepts the empirical method"—and which, filtered through the writings of philosophers like Hobbes, appealed to the skeptical wits of Charles II's court.<sup>13</sup> Writing in 1970, Birdsall accepted Fujimura's naturalist hypothesis, but added a Freudian gloss on the aforementioned "play-function." So far as I know, Birdsall is also the first critic to have mentioned the rake's view of history:

In seeking never to lose the "sense of growth," the comic protagonist rejects the oppressive past—symbolized in Restoration comedies by traditional institutions, by the country, and by age—and maintains a state of precarious balance in the present, always knowing that that balance may be at any moment upset and a new center of equilibrium required. . . . He does not yearn for a past or an unattainable ideal, but accepts the raw stuff of humanity for what it is and makes the most of it.<sup>14</sup>

Birdsall's chief weakness is her assumption that every rake is essentially—even quintessentially—comic. From here, it is a short step to an equally flawed conclusion: that every rake deals with history in the same way. As I shall

---

<sup>13</sup> Fujimura, *The Restoration Comedy of Wit*, 40.

<sup>14</sup> Birdsall, *Wild Civility*, 35.

demonstrate, rakes are historical creatures, but their relationships with history differ significantly. Though Sir Frederick “rejects the oppressive past,” Wildish displays keen political savvy, while Dorimant exploits history to his own advantage.

In 1971, a year after the appearance of Birdsall’s *Wild Civility*, Ben Ross Schneider published *The Ethos of Restoration Comedy*, which maintained that the genre demanded an unorthodox “ethical approach.” Writing in the early days of computers, he found “the ethical common denominators” in 83 plays by counting “the frequency of occurrence of a fixed set of characteristics in the 1,127 characters.” Schneider’s descriptions of his research methods verge occasionally on farce:

I more often wanted to know how many characters with both X and Y had Z; for example, not only how many *tradesmen* were *mercenary* but how many *young* tradesmen were mercenary. This meant counting the cards in about a million different assortments, but the computer did this easily and printed out the results in a tabular form that enabled me to find any particular count in less than a minute (for instance, how many female lawyers lived in the country).<sup>15</sup>

These technological ventures, despite their clumsiness, lead Schneider to a valuable conclusion: that Restoration drama espouses morality, but not the morality we might expect. In the plays, he maintains, liberality is championed over avarice, courage over cowardice, plain-dealing over double-dealing. His error—and it is a significant error—lies in his willingness to lump five decades of drama into a single genre with a single ethical code. He does admit that it is “difficult to determine a date for the dissolution of what we would call

---

<sup>15</sup> Ben Ross Schneider, *The Ethos of Restoration Comedy* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: The University of Illinois Press, 1971), 18.

Restoration comedy,”<sup>16</sup> but continues to feed his 83 plays into the computer, to the detriment of his endeavor. It is foolhardy at best to compare the “ethos” of *The Wild Gallant* (1663) with that of *The Fair Quaker of Deal* (1710), and to conclude that the two comedies champion generosity in “almost exactly” the same way.<sup>17</sup> Such an approach excludes all historical, political, and stylistic considerations; worse, it assumes that something as subjective as morality can be analyzed with something as objective as a machine.

The next two decades saw four significant studies in Restoration drama: Susan Staves’s *Players’ Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration* (1979), Robert D. Hume’s *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1600-1800* (1983), Harold D. Weber’s *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England* (1986), and Robert Markley’s *Two-Edg’d Weapons: Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve* (1988). Staves, perhaps the most important critic for my project, proposes that Restoration plays “are often intensely political and that much of their interest lies in their concern with political authority and obligation.”<sup>18</sup> Though Staves concentrates on “heroic drama and tragedy”<sup>19</sup> and overlooks the historical significance of the rake, I follow her assertion that Restoration drama allows us to “trace the gradual assimilation of the political experience of the Civil War.”<sup>20</sup> Hume also investigates the rake, but through a

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Staves, *Players’ Scepters*, 47.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

lens very different from Staves's. In his essay "The Myth of the Rake in 'Restoration Comedy,'" he argues that "libertine ideas are present in the comedies . . . but no one has shown that the values of the plays are predominantly libertine, nor does such a demonstration seem possible."<sup>21</sup> In fact, he concludes, the "vicious rake is largely a post-Carolean phenomenon, a reaction against the Court Wit outlook."<sup>22</sup> Though his claim warrants further study, it is not directly relevant to my project. In fact, it serves to illustrate how most critics frame the rakish discourse in moral, not historical, terms. Markley's study focuses on language and style in Restoration comedy, and mentions the rake only obliquely, arguing that "Etherege's success in reviving the wit-hero after the Restoration lies in his evoking those traditional values which his hero comically subverts and which had been under attack during the 1640s and 1650s."<sup>23</sup> Markley's analysis of Etherege's linguistics influenced my second chapter; but like Birdsall, Markley views the rake as a purely comic character, ignoring the tragic elements of his personality.

Though many critics have addressed the rake figure, Harold Weber is the only one to have given him a book. In *The Restoration Rake-Hero*, Weber argues that modern scholars ignore or downplay the rake's "central quality": namely, the sexuality that "generates the manifold complexities of his personality" (24).

---

<sup>21</sup> Robert D. Hume, "The Myth of the Rake in 'Restoration Comedy,'" in Hume, ed., *The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1660-1800* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 144.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Markley, *Two-Edg'd Weapons: Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege Wycherley and Congreve* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 107.

Weber traces the development of the rake from the Renaissance preoccupation with “demonic sexuality”—witches, incubi, and other creatures of the night—through the somber philosophies of Hobbes and the seventeenth-century vogue for Epicurus and Lucretius. By “weakening the link between the sexual and the demonic,” the rake helped to dispel premodern notions of sexuality as “a demonic Other” (20). Thus, he “represents something quite new not only in literature but in society’s apprehension of human sexuality as well” (19). Plausible enough—except that Restoration comedy *did* retain the “demonic vocabulary” of Jacobean drama. To find the language of sin and hell, one need read no further than *The Man of Mode*, in which Dorimant is compared constantly to Satan.

Moreover, Weber sometimes let his thesis go on hiatus, as when he admits that the rake’s lust for power often trumps his love for women. Dorimant “remains a figure for whom sexual pleasure means very little” (81), while Thomas Otway’s Goodvile “betrays his utter insensitivity to erotic pleasure” (86). These are compelling claims, but they undermine Weber’s claim that the rake is defined by his sexuality. Granted, sexual pleasure is only one aspect of sexuality; Dorimant’s “cold-blooded fascination” with women may be as erotic as Horner’s sensual “raptures” (89). But Weber declares explicitly that Dorimant “subordinates his sexuality . . . to his aggression” (82). For this argument to work, Weber would have to prove that Restoration dramatists anticipated modern writers in linking power dynamics with sexual relations. This he never attempts to do, though he does invoke the “degraded sadomasochism” of Otway’s *Venice*

*Preserv'd* (30). As if to explain away such contradictions, Weber takes refuge in the “ambiguity” of seventeenth-century sexual discourse—a valid point, but too convenient.

These objections aside, Weber has influenced my project in one significant way. “Etherege’s complaints about his life as a diplomat in Ratisbon,” he writes, “perfectly display the rake’s indifference to the great affairs of the world. . . . Etherege takes little pleasure in frequenting the corridors of power, suggesting that the rake’s obsessive pursuit of sexual satisfaction stems at least in part from the conviction that people normally invest their energies in unworthy, if serious, concerns” (49). The rake’s political apathy is not Weber’s purview, and he does not return to this point. But it is my purview, and my thesis asks *why* the rake should feel—or, at least, seem—indifferent to “the great affairs of the world.” In the following chapters, I hope to go some way toward providing an answer.

## CHAPTER ONE

**“The Painted Sign of a Man”: *The Gentile Sinner***

In 1833, Carlyle observed that the history of the universe is an infinite sacred book that all men write and read and try to understand, and in which they are also written.

—Jorge Luis Borges, “Partial Magic in the *Quixote*”

In the year of the Restoration, the young clergyman Clement Ellis published a treatise that implicated every English citizen in the construction of national history.<sup>24</sup> At first glance, *The Gentile Sinner, or, England’s brave gentleman characterized in a letter to a friend, both as he is, and as he should be* (1660) is a straightforward call for the reformation of the gentry, whom Ellis, though a royalist, blames for the hardships of the interregnum. Drawing on contemporary Theophrastan models, Ellis compares the gallant, a lewd, atheistic aesthete, with the “True Gentleman,” a paragon of morality, charity, and loyalty to the state. However, *The Gentile Sinner* is also notable for its Juvenalian influences, as well as for its psychological and semiotic analysis of the gallant. In *The Gentile Sinner*, the gallant is shaped by his fears. He founds his identity on his uniqueness, seeing his defeat in his imitators. By exposing this weakness, Ellis mimics the gallant’s satiric mode, deconstructing his character in order to build him—and England—anew. Though ignored by modern critics, Ellis is a pivotal

---

<sup>24</sup> Clement Ellis, *The gentile sinner, or, Englands brave gentleman characterized in a letter to a friend, both as he is, and as he should be* (Oxford: printed by Henry Hall for John and Edward Forrest, 1660). Early English Books Online (ProQuest LLC, 2008). <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>, accessed 2 Nov. 2008. As pagination begins after the prefatory materials, I shall cite these by EEBO image number. In all other cases, I shall use Ellis’s pagination.

figure, anticipating Restoration dramatists in his analysis of the rakish psyche and Augustan moralists in his depiction of publicly created history.

Ellis had strong reasons for desiring the return of the old order. Born in Carlisle around 1633, he came of age in a royalist milieu. His father, steward to the bishop of Carlisle, was imprisoned after defending the episcopal palace from parliamentary forces. Despite his family's sudden poverty, Ellis entered Queen's College, Oxford, in 1650, taking his B.A. in 1654 and his M.A. two years later. After being "secretly ordained," writes Ian Green, "Ellis was elected a fellow of Queen's, and until the Restoration he preached regularly in Oxford and Abingdon."<sup>25</sup> In 1661, Ellis received a parish in Nottinghamshire, where he lived and worked until his death in 1700. Enjoying a reputation as a "conscientious, courteous, hard-working, abstemious parish priest,"<sup>26</sup> he produced such best-selling, accessible books as *The Vanity of Scoffing* (1674), *Christianity in Short, or, The Way to be a Good Christian* (1682), and *The Lambs of Christ Fed with the Sincere Milk of the Word* (1692). According to Green, Ellis was known for his "extraordinary labour in preaching, catechizing, holding monthly communions, visiting the sick, charitable works, teaching local gentlemen's sons, and encouraging young divines."<sup>27</sup>

At Oxford, "a hard drinking university,"<sup>28</sup> Ellis's piety and scholarship seem to have alienated him from his wealthier, more dissipated peers. "For my own

<sup>25</sup> Green, "Ellis, Clement (1633-1700)."

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Frank H. Ellis, "John Wilmot, second earl of Rochester (1647-1680)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. <http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/29623>, accessed 30 Nov. 2008.

part,” he reflects in *The Gentile Sinner*, “it hath very rarely been my Fortune to meet with a *Club of Gentlemen*, but as often as I have, I have been *frighted* out of it again, or have had good Cause to *repent* me afterwards; that I was *not* so, by that *wild* kind of *behaviour*, and *loosenesse* of *talk* I *heard* or *saw* amongst them” (194). Ellis had earned his M.A. only a few years before writing these lines, and he may well be recalling his unease in student society. We cannot assume that Cromwell’s Puritan government made the whole nation sober. Undergraduate dissipation is hard to suppress. After all, this was the same university that debauched the adolescent Earl of Rochester from 1660 to 1661. It is tempting to imagine the earl and the clergyman crossing paths in the vast quadrangle of the new Bodleian, completed just four decades previous. A glance at Rochester and his drunken cronies would have reminded Ellis of his own, more trying, undergraduate years.

Oxford had opened its gates to noble and plebeian alike, but a university education provided only so much social mobility. Rochester was a fellow-commoner, entitled to “a different gown from the other undergraduates,” as well as a place at the high table and in “the fellows’ common room.”<sup>29</sup> After only 20 months at Oxford, he received his M.A. “in scarlet robes belonging to doctors,” an honor based less on his academic prowess than on the accident of his birth. The unlucky Ellis was a servitor, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “one of a class of undergraduate members . . . who received their lodging and most of

---

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

their board free, and were excused lecture fees.”<sup>30</sup> A student in this role found it hard to forget his place in the college hierarchy: “Originally the servitors acted as servants to the fellows, and although the requirement of menial services from them gradually fell into disuse, they continued to be regarded as socially the inferiors of the commoners.”<sup>31</sup> Ellis did advance to the level of *taberdar*, a position unique to Queen’s,<sup>32</sup> but hints of his former treatment linger in *The Gentile Sinner*.

Though Ellis can hardly be termed a sedate writer, his description of the gallant’s “Education and Breeding” is more than typically sarcastic: “But the *Hopefull Youth* must be a *Gentleman*, and in all hast he must be sent to see the *Vniversity* or *Innes of Court*; and that before he well knowes what it is to goe to *School*. Whither he comes, not to get *Learning* or *Religion*, but for *breeding*, that is, to enable himselfe hereafter to *talke* of the *Customes* and *Fashions* of the Place” (21-22). Like Evelyn Waugh’s bibulous aesthetes, this rake squanders his Oxford years in drinking and lawbreaking. Despite its didactic intent, *The Gentile Sinner* belongs to a long tradition of Oxford literature—*Zuleika Dobson*, *Brideshead Revisited*, *The Line of Beauty*, to name some of the most recent—in which students accrue experience unfit for a curriculum vitae. Ellis’s account of the young gallant evokes modern criticism of college students:

In this time he will, in all probability have *learn’d* how to make choise of his *boon Companions*, how to *raile* at the *Statutes* and break all good *Orders*; How to weare a

<sup>30</sup> “Servitor,” def. 4, *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). <http://dictionary.oed.com>, accessed 16 Nov. 2008.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> “Taberdar,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed 16 Nov. 2008.

*Gaudy Suite* and a *Torne Gowne*; To curse his *Tutor* by the name of *Baal's Priest*, and to *sell* more books in halfe an *Houre* then he had *bought* him in a *yeare*; To *forget* the *second* yeare what perhaps for want of *acquaintance* with the *Vices* of the *place* he was forced for a *Passe-time* to *learne* in the *first*; and then he thinks he has *learning* enough for *him* and his *heirs* for ever. (26-27)<sup>33</sup>

Despite the personal nature of this passage, its import is national. For Ellis, the gallant's principal flaw is his political apathy. Though obliged to his ancestors for his high birth, he still commits crimes that "reflect upon his *Progenitors* or his *Family* with *shame* and *disparagement*" (234). Ellis's frank appeal to the rake's class pride does not stop here. He damns through flattery, observing, "Every *sin* in him is like an *Eclipse* in the *Sun*, whereby not onely his *own* lustre and brightness is obscured and hid, but his rayes are withheld from the *world* below, and a *Malignant Influence* scatter'd abroad upon *Inferior Bodies*" (233). For precisely this reason, Ellis argues, England has sunk into decadence and atheism. Instead of maligning the Puritans, he traces the sorry state of England to the court of Charles I: "Heretofore when this shatter'd *Nation* was a well cemented *Kingdome*, and enjoy'd those (*then* slighted, but *now* much desir'd) blessings of *peace* and *plenty*, how by a *study'd* abuse of those great mercies did the *Gentleman* even *Dare* Allmighty God to punish *him* or his *nation!*" (86-87). But instead of repenting and reforming, the rake has "draw[n] up, as it were, his *Remonstrances* against his *God*, and wages an open *warre* with

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, the *Guardian's* recent piece on a Jewish-themed Oxford rugby party: "The captain of the under-21 team . . . said he 'didn't see what the problem was'. He said Jewish girls had accepted invites to the party. 'I can understand why it might have offended some people, but it would have been an awesome social.'" Jessica Shepherd, "Oxford students in 'bring a fit Jew' party row," *The Guardian*, 14 Nov. 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/14/oxford-students-bring-a-jew-party>, accessed 16 Nov. 2008.

*Heaven*, endeavouring to *force* the *Almighty* unto a *Composition* [compromise] and that upon the most *unacceptable* termes in the world” (87). Thus, the violence of the interregnum is not merely a struggle between Cavaliers and Puritans; the stakes are higher than a throne and a form of government. In Ellis’s view, the Civil War pitted God against sinners, no matter their political affiliation. As Adam and Eve discovered long before 1660, God always wins. It is another matter to make his enemies know they have lost.

To accomplish this task, Ellis uses a genre that fell out of fashion after the eighteenth century, but remained popular throughout the seventeenth.<sup>34</sup> Modeled on the *Characters* of Theophrastus (371-c. 287 BC), character books presented a variety of contemporary social types, often indicating which models the reader should scorn or emulate.<sup>35</sup> In the Restoration, the gallant appeared in many character books, under a myriad of names: “rakehell,” “town-gallant,” “town-huff,” and any number of variations on “rogue.” In *Enigmaticall Characters* (1658), for instance, Richard Flecknoe describes “a horrible wicked and deboished person” whose “mind is a room all hung with *Aritin[e’s]* Pictures . . . he laughs at *Heaven*, and imagines *Hell* only, a pretty winter Parlour, thinks *godlinesse* and *Religion* but *folly* and *hypocrisie*; and finally for the narrow way to *Paradise*, knows no other, but the common road to *Maiden-head*.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See the hundreds of texts indexed in Chester Noyes Greenough and J. Milton French, *A Bibliography of Theophrastan Character in English* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947).

<sup>35</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Richard Flecknoe, *Enigmaticall characters, all taken to the life from severall persons, humours, & dispositions* (London: self-published, 1658), 63. Flecknoe puns on the name of

Flecknoe's description of the gallant occupies only a paragraph—after all, he had 67 other characters to attend to—but it provides a neat synopsis of the concerns that Ellis would address in his first book.

The Gentile Sinner is more attuned to the nuances of personality than are other character books of the time. In fact, Ellis himself admits the limits of the Theophrastan model, noting that “all the particulars of the *Gentleman's vanity* and *madnesse* . . . are so *inseparably*, for the most part, *interwoven* with each other, that I feare I may already seeme too *absurd*, by *dividing* them into so many *Sects* or *Species*” (83). Here Ellis seems to recognize the central paradox of the genre: that attributing a given sin to a given type, with “all [its] particulars,” implies that the man who lacks the particulars also lacks the sin. On the contrary, “*Vice* . . . [is] the *common-soule* which *informes* and *actuates* the whole *body* of *Gallantry* . . . it is *wholly* in the *whole*, and *wholy* [sic] in every part of the *whole*” (84). By altering the model, Ellis anticipates secular modifications of character type. There is little to choose between Ellis's “*wholly* in the *whole*” and a couplet from John Dryden's epilogue to George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676):

Yet none Sir *Fopling* him, or him can call;  
He's Knight o'th' Shire, and represents ye all.  
From each he meets, he culls what e're he can,  
Legion's his name, a people in a Man.<sup>37</sup>

---

Maidenhead, a coach stop between London and Bath. Pietro Aretino (1492-1556), a prominent erotic poet, appears also in Rochester's “A Ramble in St. James's Park”: “Each imitative branch does twine/In some lov'd fold of *Aretine*” (ll. 21-22). Flecknoe is, of course, the hack-hero of Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*.

<sup>37</sup> George Etherege, *The Man of Mode, or, Sr. Fopling Flutter* (London: printed by J. Maccock for Henry Herringman, 1676). Early English Books Online, accessed 5 Dec. 2008.

Dryden may even be alluding to Ellis, who reflects that if we would give the gallant his proper name, “we must borrow it from *Sathan* himself, and call him *Legion*” (16). (Sir Fopling, the eponymous man of mode, is not a gallant but a fop; however, Etherege conflates him consciously with Dorimant, whose lapses into foppery undermine his rakish persona.) In other words, both Dryden and Ellis find in society a kind of diffused gallantry, which renders all equal by making all equally ridiculous. Writing in 1841, Thomas Babington Macaulay criticized Restoration comedy for this ethos: “We find ourselves in a world, in which the ladies are like very profligate, impudent, and unfeeling men, and in which the men are too bad for any place but Pandæmonium or Norfolk Island. We are surrounded by foreheads of bronze, hearts like the nether millstone, and tongues set on fire of hell.”<sup>38</sup> It is odd to reflect that Ellis used the same satiric method for reformative ends. Though he does not declare that all men and women are profligate and impudent, he calls his readers’ attention to their own flaws, lest they laugh too smugly at the gallant’s follies. After all, Ellis means to alert the gentry to their own complicity in their woes. “[F]or indeed,” he laments, “we have all along *sported* our selves in our own *Miseries*” (88).

Despite the failings of the Theophrastan model, it does allow Ellis to reveal the gallant’s chief weakness: The more he scorns society, the more he conforms to the type of the nonconformist. After all, he must master social mores in order to flout them, and he is dashing enough to attract emulators. When Dorimant must

---

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Leigh Hunt,” *Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review by Lord Macaulay*, vol. III (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), 151.

hide his identity from a prim noblewoman, he assumes the role of “Mr. Courtage,” complaining that “Forms and Ceremonies, the only things that uphold Quality and greatness, are now shamefully laid aside and neglected” (III.iv). Dorimant’s success in this part reveals his mastery of the very forms and ceremonies he would satirize. Like Dorimant, Ellis’s rakes are well-born; in mocking their breeding, they acknowledge its influence. By composing a character book, Ellis imprisons the gallant in his own species, reminding his readers that they, too, might find themselves trapped in a type.

*The Gentile Sinner* begins combatively, as Ellis dares sinful readers to find “their Names and Characters in the former part of the following Letter” (EEBO image 4). Using language appropriate to an affair of honor, Ellis declares that “I value as little thy *Censure*, as I have reason to envy thy *Conversation*; I dread as much thine *Applause* as I *scorne* thy *Derision*” (image 4). This tone, “Blunt and Flat” [image 6], situates Ellis in the ranks of the Restoration satirists. “I confesse I am often apt,” he writes, “. . . to inveigh somewhat *Satyrically* against such as this *wanton Age* of the World loves to *miscall* by so *good* a name [as ‘gentleman’]” (2). Ellis’s narrative persona recalls such secular antiheroes as Manly, the embittered cynic of William Wycherley’s *The Plain-Dealer* (1676; printed 1677), who scorns the “little Tricks, which you the Spaniels of the World, do daily over and over, for, and to one another; not out of love or duty, but your servile fear” (I.i).<sup>39</sup> Nor is Manly unequivocally sinless: Macaulay thought him

---

<sup>39</sup> William Wycherley, *The Plain-Dealer* (London: printed by T. N. for James Magnes and Rich Bentley, 1677). Early English Books Online.

“the greatest rascal that is to be found, even in [Wycherley’s] own writings.”<sup>40</sup>

Clearly, the railing satiric voice could generate moral ambiguity as well as moral reform.

This voice lends Ellis’s writing a rakish—even gallant—note. However, his imitation helps him undermine a figure who wants nothing more than to remain unimitated. The gallant may be ahistoric, his knowledge of the past limited to “a few broaken *Ends* and *Chippings* of History” (195), but he is not atemporal. In fact, he seeks nothing more fervently than novelty. “As his *Condition of life* seems now to be *New*,” Ellis observes, “so does he endeavour that *all* should appear *New* about him except his *vices* and his *Religion*” (28). So desperate is he to stay *sui generis* that he shrinks from anything that would reveal his own humanity. Scorning wisdom, he uses his learning to “show us how much he is a better *Speaker* than a *man*” (24). Not content with alienating his spirit, he alters his physique, taking “as much care and pains to *new-mold* his *Bodie* at the *Dancing-School*, as if the onely *shame* he fear’d were the retaining of that *Form* which *God* and *Nature* gave him” (24). Most significantly, “[h]e acts so little for the *Publick Good*, as if he were afraid he should be thought a *Member* of *Mankind*” (19). Far from wishing to halt the passage of time, the rake strives to hasten it, taking “an especiall care that nothing may ever appeare *old* about him” (20). If time stood still, fashion too would stop shifting, and he would never have the pleasure of being too modish, too dashing, or too risqué for his times.

---

<sup>40</sup> Macaulay, “Leigh Hunt,” 182.

How can a man so preoccupied with “his *variety of Fashions*” (29) ignore history and politics, the very forces that change the world’s modes and mores? The answer lies in the gallant’s solipsistic approach to time. By definition, an iconoclast loses his identity when he has no icons left to shatter. He may be radical, but his sense of self depends on the reactionary views of his acquaintances. He can sustain his role so long as society remains mired in outmoded morality. In the rake’s ideal world, time would pass only for him, leaving the old idols intact, the old opinions unchallenged; he would be the sole assassin of gods, the sole debunker of ideas. Thus, the discourse of fashion—the undergraduate’s “*Gaudy Suite*” (27), the flâneur’s “*Labyrinth of his own cloath*” (29)—is the discourse of doomed iconoclasm. For Ellis, pursuing fashion is tantamount to denying history. History builds on the past; fashion renders the past irrelevant. In the historical narrative, all things change together; in the modish narrative, all things stay static but the man of mode. Unfortunately for the rake, fashion must consume itself: every innovator has his imitators, and imitation is the iconoclast’s downfall.

In his attack, then, Ellis must both imitate the gallant’s methods and turn them to moral ends. The gallant is destructive, even deconstructive; to defeat him, Ellis deconstructs him. The gallant is satiric, applauding every “*Pamphlet, Libell or Pasquill*, wherein some *honest name* is a sufferer” (193); to triumph, Ellis recruits satire to the cause of virtue. “The *Gentleman’s* vertues are as much *above* my reach,” Ellis admits, “as the *Gallants* braveries *below* his imitation”

(97). But the true gentleman has a loftier cause than satire: “his *Countrie’s peace* and *safety*” (159). It falls to Ellis, though “*immured* up within the *narrow* compasse of a *Darke Study*” (4), to attack the gallant on his own terms.

*The Gentile Sinner’s* resemblance to later literature like *The Plain-Dealer* runs deeper than character type. “Wycherley’s last two plays show the direct influence of Roman satire, particularly that of Juvenal,” observes Rose A. Zimbardo, concluding that “*The Plain Dealer* is a perfect rendition of formal satire in the dramatic mode.”<sup>41</sup> Given the link between *The Gentile Sinner* and satiric dramas like *The Plain-Dealer*, Zimbardo’s argument alone might induce us to examine Ellis’s use of Roman models. However, there is a more pressing reason. *The Gentile Sinner* begins with three lines from Juvenal’s eighth satire:

. . . sanctus haberi  
iustitiaeque tenax factis dictisque mereris?  
agnosco procerem. (ll. 24-26)

[By your words and deeds, do you merit being considered a tenacious supporter of justice? Then I acknowledge [you] a nobleman.]<sup>42</sup>

The sentiment informs not only *The Gentile Sinner*, but also the whole of Satire VIII, which begins by inquiring, “*Stemmata quid faciunt?*” or “What does your lineage avail you?” Juvenal supplies an answer almost immediately, reminding his satiric victim, Rubellius Blandus, that “*nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus*” (20): “virtue is the sole and unique nobility.” Likewise, Ellis laments that “[i]t has, alas, been but too true in all Ages, that to be *Great*, and to be *Good*, are two”

<sup>41</sup> Rose A. Zimbardo, “The Satiric Design in *The Plain Dealer*,” in *Studies in English Literature*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Summer 1961), 2.

<sup>42</sup> All translations mine, unless otherwise noted.

(86). But the true gentleman, too scarce in interregnum England, “[e]nters upon his *Honour*, not as upon his *estate*, by the *will* and *title* of his *Ancestors*, but by the *claime* of his *merits*” (105). Indeed, the “*True Gentleman* is one . . . who is allwaies so farre from being an *hypocrite*, that he had rather appeare in the eyes of *others* just *nothing*, then not be *every thing* which is indeed truly *vertuous* and *noble*. . . . He is one to whom all *honour* seems *cheap*, which is not the reward of *virtue*, and he had much rather *want* a name then not *deserve* it” (100-101).

Unluckily for England, these are not the men who predominate. Instead, the typical peer, though boasting “the *Common Gifts* of the most *Bountifull Nature*,” refuses to “resigne himselfe wholly up with all his *pleasures* and *Interests*, to the *Care* of his *Soul*” and the good of his country (259). Meanwhile, poor men with the will and capacity for great deeds linger in obscurity. “Alas,” writes Ellis, “how many *brave* and *Generous* dispositions are *flatted* and *lost*, how many *Ingenious* spirits are *dull’d* and *besotted*, how many *keen* wits are *blunted* and lose their *Edg* . . . by the *Tyranny* of *Poverty* and an *Adverse Fortune*” (223). This passage anticipates Thomas Gray’s “Elegy in a Country Churchyard” (“Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,/Some Cromwell guilty of his country’s blood”); more to our point, it evokes Juvenal’s praise of the poor and capable. “[T]amen ima plebe Quiritem/facundum invenies,” warns Juvenal, “solet hic defendere causas/nobilis indocti” (47-49): “But in the lowest rabble, you’ll come across a Roman who is eloquent, who will take on defense cases for

the uneducated nobleman.”<sup>43</sup> The passages differ slightly: in Juvenal’s narrative, the eloquent plebeian, far from starving in oblivion, argues cases in public. However, both Ellis and Juvenal stress that virtue, not pedigree, makes the gentleman. The only difference between Rubellius Blandus and a statue of Hermes, scoffs Juvenal, is that “ille marmoreum caput est, tua vivit imago”: “he has [*lit. is*] a marble head; your image lives.”

The word “imago” should give us pause. In Latin, it can mean “statue” or “bust,” a sense that plays on Juvenal’s mention of marble.<sup>44</sup> It can also signify “an ancestral image,” or “[an ancestor] of distinction”: appropriate, given Juvenal’s contempt for empty pedigrees. But in some authors, particularly Lucretius (who regained popularity in the seventeenth century), it means “an empty form, image, semblance, appearance, shadow.” Take, for instance, Lucretius’ discussion of the atomic images emitted from objects: “nunc age, quam tenui natura constet imago/percipe”: “Come now, and perceive how thin by nature is this image.”<sup>45</sup>

Empty forms, shadows, thin images: *The Gentile Sinner* deals with all these specters. In his prefatory address, Ellis promises that, though young and untraveled, he will “tell you what I thinke both of the [true gentleman] and his *shadow*” (4). The word “shadow” appears eleven times in *The Gentile Sinner*,

<sup>43</sup> Due to the esoteric allusion in these two lines, I have used the Loeb Classical Library translation: Susanna Morton Braund, trans., *Juvenal and Persius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 324-5.

<sup>44</sup> All definitions from C. T. Lewis, *Elementary Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

<sup>45</sup> Titus Lucretius Carus (William Ellery Leonard and Stanley Barney Smith, eds.), *De Rerum Natura* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), IV.110-11.

nine times in direct reference to the gallant. He “performes all the offices of a *Gentleman*, as his *shadow* in the *Glasse*, only by *reflection*” (74); he leaves “his *Lovers* and *Admirers* . . . embracing a *shadow* for a *substance*” (212). In short, “you may looke upon him as upon the *painted signe* of a *Man hung* up in the *Ayre*, onely to be *toss’d* to and fro, with every wind of *Temptation* and *Vanity*. Such a vain *shadow* or *Picture* is he, that were there no more but himselfe I should take the boldnesse to Affirme there were no such *Creature* as a *Man* in the world (54).”<sup>46</sup> Lacking virtue, sound learning, and religious conviction, the gallant personifies “the *Old Chaos* . . . *Before* the Omnipotent *Wisdom*e of the Great God had created any such thing here below as *Method* or *Beuty*” (9).

A reflection without an object, a signifier without a signified, an embodiment of the void, Ellis’s gallant is a postmodernist’s dream. Indeed, *The Gentile Sinner* recalls Zimbardo’s discussion of “the semiotic, deconstructionist nature of Restoration satire.”<sup>47</sup> According to Zimbardo, the Restoration generated “a deconstructive discourse designed to dismantle medieval/Renaissance codes in order to reveal their artifactuality and the underlying emptiness they [were] no longer adequate to conceal.”<sup>48</sup> In Zimbardo’s notion of the Restoration, “[w]it’s deconstructive discourse discloses absence, the ‘great Negative,’ the abyss over which it plays and of which we get glimpses through wit’s *craquelure* designs.”<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Wycherley may have read *The Gentile Sinner* before writing of the false eunuch Horner, “a sign of a Man, you know, since he came out of *France*” (*The Country Wife*, I.i).

<sup>47</sup> Zimbardo, *At Zero Point: Discourse, Culture, and Satire in Restoration England* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 48.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. Zimbardo quotes Rochester’s “Upon Nothing.”

However, the period saw another linguistic movement: “the mimetic discourse of modernism,” whose proponents shunned “metaphor and wit” in favor of “institutional stability, social cohesion and nationalism.”<sup>50</sup> In *The Gentile Sinner*, Ellis stands poised between these two paradigms. In fact, he is a cautionary tale to those who, like Zimbardo, would draw a line between constructive and deconstructive language.

Though Ellis is unquestionably a satirist, his concept of satire departs from Zimbardo’s. Zimbardo encourages the academy to “abandon the notion that upholding a positive norm is the function of satire . . . [and] that satiric discourse is mimetic.”<sup>51</sup> She is not the only postmodernist critic to dismiss these ideas: Fredric V. Bogel maintains that satire’s “referentiality and factuality are essential conventions, products of certain rhetorical strategies.”<sup>52</sup> Bogel disapproves of the belief that satire presupposes “a historical world, ‘out there,’ elements of which are both solidly specifiable and distinct from the order of discourse in which they are specified.”<sup>53</sup> Such paradigms function so long as Bogel and Zimbardo focus on libertine satirists like Rochester, whose “Ramble in St. James’s Park” “abandons all pretense at orderly narrative or description.”<sup>54</sup> But no satiric scheme could be more remote from *The Gentile Sinner*, which criticizes the gallant precisely *for* his ahistoric stance. Ellis’s book is unquestionably satiric,

---

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>52</sup> Fredric V. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 11.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> Zimbardo, *At Zero Point*, 56.

but it is also mimetic, historic, and, ultimately, constructive. Situating it in a rarefied semiotic realm would strip it of all meaning.

Moreover, Ellis, like Zimbardo's mimetic moderns, scorns fanciful, inaccurate language. Devoting an entire subchapter to the gallant's "Language and Discourse," he mocks the modish taste for "*New-Coyne'd* words" (32). He spends another six pages on the gallant's misleading names, grieving that the word "gentleman" has come "to Denote a Person of a *Licentious* and an *unbridled* life" (10), just as the "once more *Honest* Names of *Tyrant* and *Sophister*" now imply "the greatest *disgrace* and *Infamy*" (10). Accordingly, the gallant should be termed "*Spark* or *Raunter*: and indeed the former Name carries so much of the *Fire* of Hell in the *Signification*, the other so much of the *Ghise* of Hell in the *Sound*, as may *almost* suit with the *Gentleman's* actions." But the gallant, like Satan, would "rather *deserve* than *wear* the Devils *Liverie*": ascribing undue value to empty words, he "thinks . . . that his eternal *Happinesse* . . . is entailed upon the *bare Name* alone, and by a little alteration of *that*, (when he pleases) translate his *Title* from *Hell* to *Heaven*" (15). Ellis keeps referring to the gallant as such, but now that he has exposed the folly of this title, its every appearance makes its bearer more ridiculous. And there is a deeper meaning here. A nation beguiled by wrong names can be duped by wrong deeds.

This is no mere question of semantics. In his discussion of the word "gentleman," Ellis argues that "*Sin*" lies "in giving *names* unto things *contrary* to their *Natures*" (10). To a reader unfamiliar with seventeenth-century semiotics,

this argument must sound hyperbolic. But in 1660, Ellis's allusion would not have gone unnoticed. Renaissance linguists searched obsessively for the *lingua Adamica*, the prelapsarian tongue in which word corresponded precisely to thing. In Eden, ran the theory, God and man spoke the same language; after the Tower of Babel, words grew corrupted, and God was obliged to translate his divine message into a myriad of crude human tongues. As Europe became "a multilingual civilization," writes Umberto Eco, some scholars "looked backwards, trying to rediscover the language spoken by Adam. Others looked ahead, aiming to fabricate a rational language possessing the perfection of the lost speech of Eden."<sup>55</sup>

Whether or not Ellis participated in these quests, he certainly recognized the spiritual peril inherent in postlapsarian language. As Stanley Fish argues in *Surprised by Sin*, language could not lead believers to God without reminding them of original sin. A reader loved words at his own risk: if he loved too deeply, he took word for thing, metaphor for reality. "As long as the reader identifies Edenic perfection with a word-thing vocabulary," explains Fish, "he must admit his distance from that perfection whenever he reads into the word more than is literally there, more than the thing."<sup>56</sup> In *Paradise Lost*, "[i]t is Satan who scoffs in ambiguous words, ringing ingenious but frivolous charges on the terms of cannonry."<sup>57</sup> Likewise, Ellis's sinner is misled, as he means to mislead others, by

<sup>55</sup> Umberto Eco (James Fentress, trans.), *The Search for the Perfect Language* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 18-19.

<sup>56</sup> Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: The University of California Press, 1967), 128.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

the empty grace of language. It is no coincidence that Ellis invokes Eden in a passage on idle flattery. It was Satan, he reminds the reader, who “indeed was the first *Master* of this *Ceremony*; when he *Complemented* our first *Parents* out of their *Innocence* and *Paradice* at once” (123). But the true gentleman’s “*Complements* are not . . . the wild extravagances of a *Luxuriant Language*, but the naturall breathings of a sincere kindnesse and respect” (123). And in declaring that “spark” and “raunter” carry their meaning in their “Signification” and “Sound,” Ellis, like his moral paragon, opposes prelapsarian linguistic accuracy to the gallant’s unholy reliance on names.

Yet Ellis’s constructive impulse does not place him in Zimbardo’s “new modernist discourse,” with its contempt for metaphor and wit. Despite his allusions to the *lingua adamica*, his figurative language is almost epic in its variety and detail. The rake, for instance, is “a piece of ordinary *clay* stuck round with *Bristol Diamonds*,<sup>58</sup> Pritty sparkling things, which for a time might make a *gay show* in a *foole’s cap*, or on a *Dunghill*, But in a *Lapidary’s shop* amongst *true* stones, have onely so much *lustre* left as will prove themselves to be but *Counterfeit*” (16). A proponent of Zimbardo’s theory might argue that Ellis decks the gallant with metaphor only to prove the vanity of his finery; but Ellis lavishes the same language on the true gentleman, comparing his religion to “a *Grave Matron* whose naturall *Beauty*, and *Constancy*, the Gray-hairs of *Prudence* and *Sobriety*, have ever judged to be truly *Venerable*, and most deserving of the

---

<sup>58</sup> “A kind of transparent rock-crystal found in the Clifton limestone near Bristol, resembling the diamond in brilliancy” (*OED*).

*Christian's embraces*" (175). For Zimbardo, the figurative language of the Restoration serves to "call all constructs, all laws, all values, all concepts . . . into doubt";<sup>59</sup> but Ellis uses tropes and metaphors to confirm, not deny, "the idea of *essential* eternity embodied in medieval and Renaissance cultural forms."<sup>60</sup>

It is sometimes easy to forget that the *The Gentile Sinner* is a religious text. But despite his concern for social concord, Ellis exhorts the reader to compare "this inferior *world* . . . to an *Inne* or *Diversory*; whereinto *Man*, whose life is a *journey* or *Pilgrimage*, onely turns in to take a night's *lodging*, that so he may fit and dresse himselfe against the *Morning* for a better *Country*" (244). As opposed to the gallant, who can think no farther than his next debauch, Ellis takes the long view of human history. This perspective gives new meaning to Bogel's assertion that "satirists identify in the world something or someone that is both unattractive and curiously or dangerously like them . . . something, then, that is *not alien enough*."<sup>61</sup> In Bogel's eyes, this paradox obstructs the satiric process: the satirist attempts "to make a difference by setting up a textual machine or mechanism for producing difference," but fails, unable to malign sin or bad taste without maligning himself. However, the religious bent of Ellis's satire allows him to reconcile the elements of this contradiction. Though written in the third-person singular, *The Gentile Sinner* boasts a first-person-plural ethos. In order to prove himself a worthy social critic, Ellis *must* implicate himself.

---

<sup>59</sup> Zimbardo, *At Zero Point*, 46.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, 41.

Granted, this is not immediately apparent. Following Bogel's scheme, Ellis protests repeatedly that he is not like the gallant, he cannot abide the gallant, he cannot even imitate the gallant: "I shall willingly forbear to *personate* him any farther . . . lest he should think me able (as I hope I shall never bee) to reach the *Frantick* strain of his loose and prophane *Railleryes*" (36). At the same time, though, he insists that the English noblemen, immured in hedonism, have refused to grow "*sensible* of their *errours*, or *forsake* their *wickednesse*" (92). By contrast, the true gentleman "looks upon his *Afflictions* with one eye, as *Corrections*, and so blames *himselfe* for the Occasion, but blesseth *God* for the *Charity*" (154). Therefore, anyone who wishes to become a true gentleman must admit his part in England's woes—must admit, that is, to a touch of gallantry. Moreover, Ellis's task as satirist involves imitating the gallant's rhetorical schemes. In other words, Ellis cannot become a true gentleman without revealing his own shortcomings, or write successful satire without mimicking the gallant.

Thus, Ellis flirts with deconstructive rhetoric for the same reason that he defies readers "to *Carp* at the *Book*, or *Revile* the *Author*": to prove that he understands the gallant's motivations and modes of thought. In *The Gentile Sinner*, satire is a means to an end, a process which, if successful, will obviate the need for satire. Put another way, the book is a satire on the very satiric methods that Zimbardo and Bogel identify with the Restoration. To conquer the deconstructors of society, Ellis must adapt their methods to his rhetorical scheme. He thinks himself into the gallant's psyche, but steps out of it when necessary:

that is, when he senses he is winning. For Ellis, satire in its purest form exists to ruin satire itself. In his ideal society, satirists would be out of a job. Satire is mimetic because it has something to accomplish in the real world.

And there is much to be accomplished before England can achieve peace and public virtue. Her most influential people, “those who would be thought the *Heads* of this *Headlesse Nation*” (238), have forgotten their duties as leaders of men and followers of God. Some gentlemen have too little energy to defend their church; others have too much energy to devote themselves to one true cause. The “stately gentleman” thinks worship unmanly; the “peaceable gentleman” thinks it tiresome; the “prudent gentleman,” dangerous; the “provident gentleman,” prohibitively expensive (48-83). The gallant, dedicated to the pursuit of fashion and the maintenance of his persona, indulges himself in “the *raveings* of a *wild* and *Atheisticall* brain” (36). Only the true gentleman, whose “*words . . . and Actions* are so many *Calls* to *vertue* and *Goodnesse*” (124), can heal the diseased “*Body Politick*” (159).

By flattering his readers into a sense of their own social stature, Ellis turns their vanity to the good of their country. His book is a mirror, the fetish object of the vain, in which the gallant “cannot chuse but behold himselfe in his own *shape*, at least in one so *like* it, that the very *sight* must of necessity bege[t] in him an *hatred* of the *old* object and a *love* to the New” (205). Here Ellis identifies the central paradox of rakehood. When the gallant admires his perfection in a mirror, he finds a simulacrum of himself: proof that his image, his very identity, can be

duplicated. Ellis has defeated the gallant by reproducing his persona and psyche; now the vanquished aesthete must trade fashion for history, “labour[ing] so to qualify his *soul*, that he may be disposed to doe a *service* to his *God*, in some proportion answerable to those severall *tokens of favour* and *Honour*, whereby he has so *blest* and grace’d him in the eye of the world” (258).

This is not to dismiss Bogel and Zimbardo entirely, but to qualify their semiotic analyses by demonstrating the historic, mimetic nature of at least one Restoration satirist. Ellis was not a postmodern writer; he may not even have been a modern one. I do not think it occurred to him that satire could describe anything but reality, or that it had any purpose but social reform. The Restoration may have been “a period of radical epistemological break” marked by “the simultaneous operation of its *deconstructive* and *constructive* thrusts,”<sup>62</sup> but *The Gentile Sinner* suggests that these two discourses were not radically opposed. Better, it portrays a nation, and a young clergyman, in the process of moral and political discovery.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “The Modern Way of Writing”: *The Comical Revenge*

History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.  
—James Joyce, *Ulysses*

---

<sup>62</sup> Zimbardo, *At Zero Point*, 2.

In the early spring of 1664, four years after the appearance of *The Gentile Sinner*, the actors of the Duke's Company performed a curious tragicomedy. *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub* was the maiden effort of George Etherege (1636-1691?), former law clerk and renowned man-about-town. Its high plot, a Cavalier romance, looked back to antebellum heroic and revenge tragedies; its low plot, a picaresque tale of pimps, sharpers, and their dupes, recalled Jacobean city comedy. But the play introduced a new dramatic character—a wellborn rake, apathetic to history and politics—and the prologue promised a “modern way/Of writing,” challenging the audience to abandon old canons of taste. Even as *The Comical Revenge* narrated the last days of the interregnum, it distracted spectators from the operations of history, encouraging them to look with favor on the ahistoric gallant whom Clement Ellis had maligned. In the world of the play, history reflects art: the changing political zeitgeist models the development of “the modern way/Of writing.” But *The Comical Revenge* does not end unambiguously: though Sir Frederick Frollick undercuts the other characters' couplets with his laconic prose, he finds himself enclosed, like Ellis's gallant, in the linguistic and cultural assumptions of his milieu. By the end of the play, Sir Frederick has exposed the flaws in orthodox historical narrative, but he has not achieved independence from history itself.

Current scholarship tends to focus on *The Comical Revenge*'s success in “anticipat[ing] more precisely than any play before it the comedy found in the later and major works of the period.” True, Etherege was acutely aware of his

place in the dramatic avant-garde; but we can understand his awareness only by glancing at his first audience, the crowd assembled in the theater at Lincoln's Inn Fields that night in 1664. The new theaters had been open for a mere four years, and English drama had not developed significantly since Cromwell closed the playhouses in 1642. Susan Wiseman argues that "the critical construction of the Civil War as a dramatic lacuna is both inaccurate and serves specific accounts of cultural value"<sup>63</sup>; however, few of the interregnum plays she discusses have ever been reprinted, leaving their cultural value in doubt, and many were political dialogues appearing only in pamphlet form.<sup>64</sup> *Pace* Wiseman, it is safe to say that Etherege's audience had been deprived for two decades of a conventional theatergoing experience, and that few were prepared to forsake their old aesthetic standards. Far from severing the 1660s from the 1630s, the Civil War and its chaotic aftermath strengthened Restoration audiences' allegiance to earlier literary forms.

There was an even simpler reason why Londoners clung to what the prologue calls "the records of wit." Scholars who focus on "the Restoration and the eighteenth century" forget that, from the vantage point of 1664, "the Restoration and the sixteenth century" would be an equally accurate term. Temporally speaking, *The Comical Revenge* was closer to *The Faerie Queene* than to *Clarissa*. The year 1664 was almost equidistant from the death of Elizabeth I and the publication of *Moll Flanders*. It is possible that an elderly member of

---

<sup>63</sup> Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51 and *passim*.

Etherege's audience had seen Richard Burbage—or Shakespeare himself—act in the premiere of *Hamlet*. And when the actor speaking the prologue alluded to John Fletcher and Ben Jonson, he alluded to men in living memory. Given the early Restoration's proximity to the late Renaissance, it is no wonder that Etherege had to urge his audience to “forget . . . the records of wit.”

By all reports, it was a full house; given what we know of seventeenth-century audiences, it was a rowdy one, too. Over the murmur of the crowd, the actor declaimed the heroic couplets common to Restoration prologues:

Who could expect such crowding here today,  
 Merely on the report of a new play?  
 A man would think y've been so often bit  
 By us of late, you should have learned more wit,  
 And first have sent a forlorn hope to spy  
 The plot and language of our comedy,  
 Expecting till some desp'rate critics had  
 Resolved you whether it were good or bad;  
 But yet we hope you'll never grow so wise;  
 For if you should, we and our comedies  
 Must trip to Norwich, or for Ireland go,  
 And never fix, but, like a puppet-show,  
 Remove from town to town, from fair to fair,  
 Seeking fit chapmen to put off our ware.

This speech shimmers with triumph, despite its gentle mockery of the tastes of the town. In his first fourteen lines—the length of a sonnet—the speaker both flatters his audience and constructs his own political identity. Reveling in the new hunger for drama, he teases merely to praise: after twenty years of Puritan rule, Londoners crave stories, regardless of “plot and language,” and they deserve to be entertained. Clearly, the speaker also takes pleasure in the sheer volume of drama produced since the Restoration: though “often bit” by playwrights, the audience

returns tirelessly for more. Given the trauma of the past two decades, the speaker's wish that "you'll never grow so wise" is especially poignant: the Civil War has produced political cynicism but aesthetic naïveté.

The phrase "forlorn hope" strengthens this impression. In the seventeenth century, a "forlorn hope" was "a picked body of men, detached to the front to begin the attack." Figuratively, it signified "persons in a desperate condition" (hence "desp'rate critics"), or, more specifically, "reckless bravos."<sup>65</sup> The military associations of the term hint that the critics' desperation has its roots in the Civil War, and the second half of the prologue develops this idea:

For such our fortune is this barren age,  
That fashion now, not wit, supports the stage:  
Wit has, like painting, had her happy flights,  
And in peculiar ages reached her heights,  
Though now declined; yet should some able pen  
Match Fletcher's nature, or the art of Ben,  
The old and graver sort would not allow  
Those plays were good, because we writ them now.  
Our author therefore begs you would forget,  
Most rev'rend judges, the records of wit,  
And only think upon the modern way  
Of writing, whilst y'are censuring this play.  
And gallants, as for you, talk loud i'th'pit,  
Divert yourselves and friends with your own wit;  
Observe the ladies, and neglect the play,  
Or else 'tis feared we are undone today.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Online edition: [oed.com](http://oed.com), accessed 30 April 2009.

<sup>66</sup> George Etherege, *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*, in Michael Corder, ed., *The Plays of Sir George Etherege* (Cambridge, 1982). According to Corder, "The play's first recorded performance was on 27 April 1664 on which date John Evelyn noted that he had been to see 'a facecious comedy Cald Love in a Tub'. This is not likely to have been its premiere, which probably took place either in April or in March 1664" (p. 3). All references to Etherege come from this edition. Corder's version modernizes most of Etherege's spelling, but is the standard scholarly edition.

This section—a second sonnet, minus the concluding couplet—contains another conventional lament: that the playwrights of old excelled modern writers in “wit,” that indefinable *sine qua non*. The “desp’rate” case of the critics indicates that there are no canons of taste left to be flouted: the Civil War has created a hermeneutic vacuum in which all men can claim to be “rev’rend judges.” But instead of grieving for lost aesthetic ideals, the speaker “begs” the audience to “*forget . . . the records of wit.*” He subverts outmoded standards by mourning their death in outmoded phrases: “this barren age,” “though now declined.” The empty conventionality of the prologue undermines conventionality itself. If the spectators wish to enjoy the play, they must abandon old worldviews and “only think upon the modern way/Of writing.” Yet the prologue never defines the “modern” style, leaving us to hunt for it in the intricate plot of this “new play.”

The speaker’s last teasing insult also contains a double meaning. Presumably, his censure of the “gallants” seated “i’th’pit,” the most expensive section of the playhouse, was well-founded: well-born theatergoers were no less likely than plebeians to disrupt the peace. But why the sarcastic injunction to *continue* talking and ogling? One reason is clear: well into the eighteenth century, an audience could “damn” a play—that is, stop the performance entirely—by heckling the actors loudly enough. Thus, this deserving comedy will succeed only if the gallants, the least discerning members of the audience, manage to “neglect the play.” But there is a second, less obvious, reason. The play in

question introduces the rake figure, scornful of history and politics, self-absorbed to the point of solipsism. The last two lines equate the local gallants, indifferent to the action of the drama, with the rake, indifferent to the outside world. You may not care about our hero, the speaker implies; but no matter, for our hero could not care less about you.

Familiar with high, low, and professional life, old enough to remember Cromwell's regime and young enough to relish the "institutionalized hedonism"<sup>67</sup> of the Restoration court, Etherege was ideally positioned to create a Janus-faced comedy. Born near London in 1636, he was the first son of a well-off merchant family with connections at court.<sup>68</sup> Etherege served as a lawyer's apprentice from 1654 to 1659, when he entered Clement's Inn, one of the nine now-defunct Inns of Chancery, to study for the bar. He did not last long. "The stages in the transformation of Etherege from young lawyer to dramatist and court wit are not well recorded," writes John Barnard; but given the traditional pastime of seventeenth-century law students, the process is not hard to guess at. Young men at the Inns of Court and Chancery were notorious for neglecting their business to attend plays. (Etherege was not the only Restoration law clerk to turn to the stage: William Wycherley studied at the Inner Temple from 1659 to 1660.)

---

<sup>67</sup> Harold Love, "Sackville, Charles, sixth earl of Dorset and first earl of Middlesex (1643–1706)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edition, Jan 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24442>, accessed 13 Feb. 2009.

<sup>68</sup> All biographical details from John Barnard, "Etherege, Sir George (1636–1691/2)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edition, May 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8923>, accessed 13 Feb. 2009.

Twenty-four when Charles II returned to England, Etherege was quick to establish himself at the new court. In the early 1660s, he fell in with a circle of young rake-aristocrats, including Sir Charles Sedley (1639-1701), who would remain a lifelong friend, and Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst (1638-1706), to whom Etherege dedicated *The Comical Revenge*. By the time of its premiere, Etherege had abandoned the law: a good thing, perhaps, as he and his friends spent much of their time testing its limits. Twenty-five years later, plagued by diplomatic duties in Bavaria, Etherege would reflect on his youth with fondness. “How pleasanter it is to jolt about in poor hackney Coaches to find out the harmless lust of the Town,” he complained in a letter, “than to spend the time in a Roome of State in whispers to discover the ambitious designs of Princes.”<sup>69</sup> But in 1664, he was still “restless in London and still hurrying about to seek some fresh adventure”—an experience reflected in his first rake figure, the window-smashing seducer Sir Frederick Frollick.

Sir Frederick is a character much like Ellis’s “gentile sinner”: a high-spirited flâneur willing to ignore history in favor of personal pleasure. Unlike Ellis, however, Etherege withholds explicit censure from his ahistoric rake. By associating the Civil War with his stiff Cavalier characters, who speak in verse and express outdated desires, Etherege distances history from private life. A rake like Sir Frederick, writes Virginia Ogden Birdsall, “rejects the oppressive past—symbolized in Restoration comedies by traditional institutions, by the country,

---

<sup>69</sup> Frederick Bracher, ed., *Letters of George Etherege* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1974), 185.

and by age—and maintains a sense of precarious balance in the present, always knowing that that balance may be at any moment upset and a new center of equilibrium required.”<sup>70</sup> Though Sir Frederick’s intimacy with prominent royalists leads us to believe that he shares their sympathies, he spent the interregnum in France, and never once remarks on the shifting political zeitgeist. Here, then, is a new version of history: not a dynamic body politic in which every citizen has a part, but a cold construct to which the rake feels no responsibility. Sir Frederick does everything in his power to cheapen his Cavalier friends’ poetic bombast. When he strays into their company, it is as if Etherege has pasted a Vermeer figure, fully shaded and finely detailed, onto a medieval crowd scene.

The high plot of *The Comical Revenge* takes place in the last days of the interregnum, in and around the London household of Lord Bevill, father to Graciana, Aurelia, and Lovis. Graciana has pledged herself to Beaufort, “newly arrived from foreign courts, and fraught/With all those virtues which in courts are taught” (III.vi.92-93). But Graciana has another suitor: Lovis’s friend Colonel Bruce, a Cavalier imprisoned by the Puritans. Aurelia loves Bruce, but conceals her feelings, Griselda-like, in order to “breathe [his] love/Into [her] sister’s bosom” (I.iv.55-56). Chaos threatens when Bruce, “unexpectedly released/From his imprisonment” (III.vi.14-15), returns to London to claim Graciana’s hand. Stunned to find Graciana in love with another man, Bruce tells Lovis that she once “promis’d to endeavour the decrease/Of that in her which warred against my

---

<sup>70</sup> Virginia Ogden Birdsall, *Wild Civility: The English Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1970), 35.

peace” (III.vi.78-79). Lovis urges Bruce to kill Beaufort in front of Graciana; he demurs, but challenges his rival to a duel. Lovis, whose devotion to Bruce verges on the homoerotic, agrees to be his second; Beaufort chooses Sir Frederick.

As Bruce and Lovis wait for their opponents on the dueling ground, they are set upon by a gang of malevolent Puritans. Luckily, Beaufort and Sir Frederick arrive just in time to drive them off. After Beaufort’s feat of heroism, Bruce no longer wants to fight, but Beaufort insists: “Think on the beauteous Graciana’s eyes;/’Tis I have robbed thee of that glorious prize” (IV.iv.73-74). Bruce’s response vies with the worst specimens of Restoration verse:

There are such charms in Graciana’s name,  
*Strips hastily.*  
 My scrup’lous honour must obey my flame:  
 My lazy courage I with shame condemn:  
 No thoughts have power streams of blood to stem (75-78).

They fight, and Beaufort disarms Bruce without drawing his blood. By the code of honor, both men have achieved satisfaction, but Bruce cannot accept this as the end: “No, no, Graciana’s loss I’ll ne’er survive;/I pay too dear for this unsought reprieve” (102-3). So saying, he “falls on his sword, and is desperately wounded.” Seeing his friend fall, Lovis tries to impale himself. This orgy of courtesy ends only when Sir Frederick restrains Lovis and, in refreshing prose, suggests that Bruce be carried “to the next house, till we can procure a chair to convey him to my Lord Bevill’s, the best place for accommodation” (123-5).

As Bruce lies near death, a grieving Graciana lashes out at Beaufort, claiming that she never truly cared for him: “My love has but dissembled been to thee,/To

try my generous lover's constancy" (IV.v.). Meanwhile, Aurelia confesses her love to Bruce, whose affections shift with a swiftness possible only in early-modern drama: "When so much beauty does with love conspire,/No mortal can resist that double fire" (V.i. ). Alas for Bruce, Graciana announces her own change of heart, and Bruce's praise of Beaufort cannot change her mind. If Bruce dies, Graciana declares, she will "mourn with vow'd virginity"; if he lives, Beaufort "must resign his weaker claim" on her. Left alone, however, Graciana realizes that Beaufort's "absence is [her] greatest misery," and a scene in a bower sets all to rights. Bruce recovers to marry Aurelia; Sir Frederick presides over the double wedding, and it is he, "master of the revels,"<sup>71</sup> who utters the last couplet of the play.

What are we to make of the high plot's florid heroics? Among critics, two views prevail. Some scholars follow J. Douglas Canfield in arguing that Restoration tragicomedies "affirm a hierarchical social order, bonded together by the virtues of loyalty, constancy, fidelity, trust, and ultimately validated by a divine providence." By this logic, the melodramatic verse is "an attempt to reinscribe across the pages of a disintegrating cultural scripture the chivalric code that had sustained it for centuries."<sup>72</sup> Others maintain, with Robert Markley, that "[t]he self-parodying verse of *The Comical Revenge* represents an ideological dislocation, a de-centring of the values of nobility and honour on which

---

<sup>71</sup> *Wild Civility*, 42.

<sup>72</sup> J. Douglas Canfield, "The Ideology of Restoration Tragicomedy," in *ELH*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Autumn 1984), 448.

aristocratic conceptions of order and identity are based.”<sup>73</sup> Either Etherege shared our dim view of purple verse and employed it satirically, or he believed he was writing good verse and employed it in earnest. We smile when “excess of love” makes Aurelia “reveal/Those flames my tortured breast did long conceal” (V.i.24-25). What we do not know, and will never know, is whether Etherege’s audience smiled, too. They may well have wept when Beaufort, reconciled with Graciana, declared, “My joys, like waters swelled into a flood,/Bear down whate’er their usual streams withstood” (V.iii.67-68). Steeped in our modern—or postmodern—worldview, we cannot avoid an anachronistic reading of any seventeenth-century play.

We can, however, study contemporary reactions to heroic drama: reactions like the Duke of Buckingham’s *The Rehearsal* (1671), a satire on Dryden’s heroic plays. The action takes place at the rehearsal of a tragicomedy by the hack dramatist Bayes, whose name quickly became a byword for poetasters. Bayes’s hero, Prince Prettyman, emotes in couplets that should sound familiar to readers of *The Comical Revenge*:

How strange a captive am I grown of late!  
Shall I accuse my love, or blame my fate?  
My love I cannot; that is too divine:  
And against fate what mortal dares repine? (I.iii)

But Prettyman cannot go on: “his spirits exhale with the heat of his passion,” and he falls asleep at his mistress’s feet.

---

<sup>73</sup> Robert Markley, *Two-Edg’d Weapons: Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 105-106.

*The Rehearsal* suggests that, no matter the taste of the town, the Restoration literati were not above snickering at heroic romance. Perhaps the greatest crime a modern critic can commit is not to imagine that early-modern audiences were as cynical as current ones, but to assume that they were impossibly naïve. In fact, it seems unlikely that Etherege meant his high characters to escape without a laugh. In this I agree with Markley, who contends that “Etherege does not directly attack love and honour so much as he subverts their claims to unquestioned moral authority and dramatizes the dilemmas which those values create.”<sup>74</sup> There is no question that Etherege presents Lord Bevill and his coterie as sympathetic characters, and that the play’s comic elements—the slapstick pratfalls, the bawdy insinuations, even the genuine wit—belong to Sir Frederick and the low plot. But as I shall demonstrate, the structure, action, and language of the play all work to sabotage the historical narrative embodied in Bruce and Lovis. Couching outdated desires in anachronistic language, these Cavaliers might as well have stepped out of a Jacobean tragedy. Sir Frederick also evokes an earlier character type, the revenger; but his words and deeds transform this figure into a modern comic hero. Throughout the play, Sir Frederick works to undermine historical narrative; whether he succeeds is another matter.

The very structure of the low plot sustains the anti-historical scheme. The action centers on Sir Frederick’s courtship of Lord Bevill’s sister, aptly named Mrs. Rich; the mishaps of Dufoy, Sir Frederick’s clap-ridden French valet; and the exploits of Sir Nicholas Cully, a blundering country knight. While two

<sup>74</sup> *Two-Edg’d Weapons*, 105-106.

sharpers named Wheadle and Palmer make off with Sir Nicholas's money and scheme to marry him to a whore, Mrs. Rich's chambermaids and coachman drug Dufoy with opium and imprison him in a barrel (hence the play's subtitle). So far, so frivolous; but the low characters mirror, and so undermine, their social superiors. The mirroring motif appears in the very names of the *dramatis personae*: the virginal Graciana finds her warped reflection in Mrs. Grace, "a wench kept by Wheadle," while Letitia, Graciana's lovesick maid, reminds us of Lettice, Mrs. Rich's chambermaid, who traps Dufoy in a barrel. Restoration comedy is notable for its descriptive nomenclature (Sir Frederick Frolick is guaranteed not to be a Puritan divine), but *The Comical Revenge* exposes the essential flimsiness of names. "I mistrust your mistress's divinity," Sir Frederick tells Beaufort; "you'll find her attributes but mortal; women, like jugglers' tricks, appear miracles to the ignorant; but in themselves th'are mere cheats" (I.ii.196-199). There is little difference, Etherege implies, between an earthy Grace and an ethereal Graciana.

The second clue to Etherege's view of history lies in his treatment of Bruce and Lovis. From beginning to end, he associates them with history in the grand sense: history as coherent, externally generated narrative. Canfield believes that "Restoration tragicomedy even in its most divided form seems to me generally to reflect and reaffirm an aristocratic ideology"<sup>75</sup>—an attractive conclusion, given the power vacuum in the world of the play and the hermeneutic vacuum in the world of the prologue. After all, many early Restoration plays are haunted by

<sup>75</sup> Canfield, "The Ideology of Restoration Tragicomedy," 460.

“the threat of anarchy during the interregnum.”<sup>76</sup> But while Etherege acknowledges this threat (especially in his prologue), he seems to revel in the absence of received moral and aesthetic standards. Indeed, he sets multiple linguistic—and physical—traps for his Cavaliers, exposing the untenability of their worldview.

Critics tend to view the cast of the high plot as so many couplet-spouting heads, indistinguishable but by name, on a Restoration Gorgon. However, only Lovis and Bruce seem conscious of their role in the formation of English history. Take, for instance, their behavior at the duel. Several generations of scholars, beginning with George F. Berkeley, have linked the high plot of *The Comical Revenge* to the Anglo-French tradition of *préciosité*,

a form of ceremonious social intercourse which derived its attitudes, postures, and special vocabulary from the belief that beautiful and virtuous ladies have a semi-divine status, to which their male satellites (and, on occasion, inferior females) can be drawn by due worship of these ladies and the cultivation of refinement, honor, virtue, superficial learning, and a certain stereotyped wit.<sup>77</sup>

In other words, *préciosité* is concerned with private honor, not public virtue.

Beaufort seems a perfect *précieuse*: ascribing “semi-divine status” to Graciana, he participates willingly in the duel, the apex of seventeenth-century honor culture.

But Markley goes too far in claiming that “Beaufort’s, Graciana’s, Lovis’s, and Aurelia’s verse parodies the excesses of *précieuse* sentiment.”<sup>78</sup> In fact, Lovis displays nothing but scorn for *précieuse* convention, symbolized here by the duel

---

<sup>76</sup> Staves, *Players’ Scepters*, 6.

<sup>77</sup> George F. Berkeley, “*Préciosité* and the Restoration Comedy of Manners,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Feb. 1955), 110.

<sup>78</sup> *Two-Edg’d Weapons*, 105.

for a faultless virgin. Nor does Bruce fight Beaufort without reservations. After Beaufort and Sir Frederick scatter the Puritans, Bruce refuses “[t]o draw my sword against that life which gave/Mine, but e’en now, protection from the grave” (59-60). But Beaufort sets more store in honor than in history, and urges Bruce to do the same: “Think on the beauteous Graciana’s eyes” (73). Bruce acquiesces, forsaking the public good for a private grudge.

Lovis, however, refuses to change his view of history. When Bruce falls, Lovis compares his own plight to that of England:

Ah, dearest Bruce, can you thus careless be  
Of our great friendship, and our loyalty!  
Look on your friend; your drooping country view;  
And think how much they both expect from you.  
You for a mistress waste that precious blood  
Which should be spent but for our master’s good. (116-121)

Lovis’s sentiment tallies precisely with the thesis of *The Gentile Sinner*: that “the *Gentleman* stands upon the top of an *Hil*, and being advanced to that considerable a height, is thereby made *Conspicuous* to the eye of the world” (232).<sup>79</sup> In this spirit, Ellis condemns dueling as “the necessary *vindication* of that *Honour*, which is so *tender*, that every thing except it have in it the unworthy *softnesse* of the most *servile compliance* with his owne unconstant *Humour*, *rends*, *spots*, or *grieves* it: and which nothing can *wash clean*, or make *whole* again: but the *Heart-blood* of him who durst give the *Affront*” (82). Far from proving the gallant’s courage, dueling merely demonstrates that he would rather defend his honor than his nation or church. Lovis may have agreed to be Bruce’s second, but

---

<sup>79</sup> Ellis alludes to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

he clearly believes, with Ellis, that honor culture is incompatible with loyalty to comrade and country. As Bruce lies near death, Lovis accuses him of having become a gallant, an ahistoric rake, a gentile sinner.

Lovis may view dueling as selfish, but he displays another variety of selfishness in his speech to Bruce: he identifies himself with England, suggesting that disloyalty to one means betrayal of both. In fact, he places “our great friendship” before “our loyalty,” and “your friend” before “your drooping country.” As I have shown, this outburst is not Lovis’s only homosocial remark; but it is notable for the parallel that it draws between history and male homoeroticism. Bray traces the “image of the male friend” to the Renaissance; I would trace it even farther, to the military ideals of Greco-Roman poetry. “Those Civil War years held a certain nobility, a quality of old Rome that was to be lost in the succeeding reign,” notes Graham Greene in his biography of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester.<sup>80</sup> Etherege models this shift in sensibility, but does not invite the audience to lament it. Instead, he identifies the old martial mode with Lovis, a man notable for his unfashionable desires and figures of speech. In general, seventeenth-century writers personified nations and virtues as women: even Graciana declares, paraphrasing Lovelace, that Bruce “has a mistress more renowned than me,/Whom he does court, his dearer loyalty” (II.ii.70-71). Lovis, however, identifies Bruce’s loyalty with the figure of Charles II, “our master.” Blurring the line between heroism and homoerotics, Lovis recasts the female

---

<sup>80</sup> Graham Greene, *Lord Rochester’s Monkey: Being the Life of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 17.

Britannia as a “drooping” phallus. This paradigm leaves no room for women, however beauteous.

In fact, the bond between Bruce and Lovis recalls the homoeroticism of Jacobean and Caroline tragedy. It would be rash—and anachronistic—to describe Lovis as a homosexual character, but his intimacy with Bruce does evoke the early-modern “image of the masculine friend . . . in stark contrast to the forbidden intimacy of homosexuality.”<sup>81</sup> Few Restoration plays contain this species of male friendship: indeed, Alan Bray observes that “the protecting conventions that ensured it was seen in an acceptable frame of reference were often absent by the end of the sixteenth century.”<sup>82</sup> But if male homoeroticism was morally questionable by 1664, neither Bruce nor Lovis seems to have noticed. Greeting Lovis for the first time since his imprisonment, Bruce equates his devotion to his friend with his love for his mistress: “Dear friend, my love does now exact its due;/Graciana must divide my heart with you” (III.vi.26-27). Lovis echoes Bruce’s language when he “offers to fall on his sword” at the duel: “He does his blood for a lost mistress spend,/And shall I not bleed for so brave a friend?” (IV.iv.106-7).

Lovis’s heterodox desires do not stop at Bruce. At times he seems the spiritual heir of Giovanni, the incestuous antihero of John Ford’s tragedy *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, published in 1633 and revived in 1661. Before we know the

---

<sup>81</sup> Alan Bray, “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England,” in Jonathan Goldberg, ed., *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 42.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

cause of his melancholy, Lovis's actions—and Graciana's reflections on them—seem to suggest a passion for his sister. When Beaufort greets him with a pleasant “Your servant, sir,” Lovis answers spitefully: “You are my sister's servant, sir; go fawn/Upon your mistress; fare-you-well” (II.ii.26-28). Baffled at this treatment, Beaufort asks Graciana “to dispel/These mists that round my troubled reason dwell” (44-45). Her explanation of Lovis's behavior sounds remarkably like double entendre:

It is a story I could wish you'd learn  
From one whom it does not so much concern;  
I am th'unhappy cause of what y've seen;  
My brother's passion does proceed from mine. (46-49)

Understandably, Beaufort exclaims, “This does confound me more!” (50). Only eleven lines later does Graciana admit that “[y]ou are a rival to his dearest friend” (61)—and even this could be an allusion to incestuous desire, as Graciana does not actually speak Bruce's name for another fifteen lines. The incest overtones fade after this scene, and Lovis's attachment to Bruce grows weaker as the action progresses; but it cannot be coincidence that of the fifteen major characters, Lovis is one of only two to end the play without a spouse or lover. (The other is the middle-aged Lord Bevill, presumably a widower.) The new social order rejects not only obsolete language, but also obsolete desires.

Like Bruce and Lovis, Sir Frederick recalls earlier dramatic forms; unlike the Cavaliers, he departs from Jacobean tragic models, proving himself triumphantly comic and unimpeachably heterosexual. Throughout the play, Sir Frederick's tricks mimic the wholehearted heroics of the high plot. This theme begins in the

very first act, when Jenny complains of Sir Frederick's drunken antics at her mistress's house the previous night, praying him to

tell the consequence, how you marched bravely at the rear of an army of linkboys; upon the sudden, how you gave defiance, and then waged a bloody war with the constable; and having vanquished that dreadful enemy, how you committed a general massacre on the glass-windows: are not these most honourable achievements, such as will be registered to your eternal fame, by the most learn'd historians of Hicks's Hall. (I.ii.134-142)<sup>83</sup>

Birdsall reads this speech—correctly, I believe—as “an indirect but heavily ironic commentary” on the high plot: “The comic vitality of Sir Frederick's war games, his defiance of traditional conceptions of law and order, and the picture drawn of him as an insistent anti-heroic mocker of Beaufort's love-and-honor world could hardly be more heavily underscored.”<sup>84</sup> To Markley, these “mock-heroic” escapades represent “a form of Cavalier ‘resistance’ to the hypocrisy and moral rigour of the Commonwealth,” but that interpretation seems misguided. Why should Etherege have constructed “a form of Cavalier ‘resistance’” that required inverted commas, when he had already created genuine Cavalier resistance in the characters of Bruce and Lovis? True, Sir Frederick scoffs at “moral rigour”; yet the moral rigor of the play lies not in the agents of the Commonwealth, who never appear in the flesh, but in the military patriotism of the Cavaliers. Turning his back on Roundhead and Cavalier alike, Sir Frederick, like later rakes, constructs a self-centered alternative history.

---

<sup>83</sup> Corder identifies Hicks's Hall as “the sessions-house of the Justices of the Peace of Middlesex” (fn., p. 13).

<sup>84</sup> *Wild Civility*, 47-48.

Nor do I subscribe to Birdsall's belief that Sir Frederick "is the original Restoration embodiment of the English comic rogue, the English comic spirit incarnate, and . . . that Etherege's play is actually thematically concerned with depicting this spirit in the very act of gaining acceptance and dominance in a new sphere."<sup>85</sup> Far from reincarnating earlier comic rogues, Etherege has modified a tragic figure—the revenger of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama—and turned him loose in a world still ruled by antebellum ideals. Like the revenger, Sir Frederick comes from abroad to upset the prevailing social order; like the revenger, he stands aloof from the passions and perversions of ordinary humanity, neither falling in love nor falling on his sword. (In fact, his "comic version of seventeenth-century misogyny"<sup>86</sup> recalls the erotic disillusionment of revenge drama. "Were't not for gold and women, there would be no damnation," muses Vindice of *The Revenger's Tragedy*.) Sir Frederick cares little for morals and ethics, so long as he accomplishes his ends; the triviality of his revenges undermines the grandeur of Bruce's and Lovis's exploits. Though he participates in the duel, for instance, he cheapens it in the very next act, feigning his death in order to gain Mrs. Rich's love. (The ruse falls to pieces when Dufoy, trapped in his tub, startles Sir Frederick into motion.)

Sir Frederick's view of love and fate strengthens his association with Jacobean revengers. In the play's closing couplet, Sir Frederick links the tawdry unions of the low characters with the concord at Lord Bevill's house: "On what

---

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>86</sup> *Two-Edg'd Weapons*, 110.

small accidents depends our fate,/Whilst chance, not prudence, makes us fortunate” (V.v.164-5). This is a strikingly nihilistic view of marriage, and one that Lord Bevill does not share: earlier in the scene, he rejoices “[t]hat gratitude has pow’r to conquer love,” assuring Bruce that “[i]t were, brave man, impiety in me/Not to approve that which the heav’ns decree” (16-18). For Lord Bevill, success springs from human honor and providential intervention; for Sir Frederick, all is happenstance.

In fact, the marriage episode recalls the bloodbaths at the end of most revenge plays. As the curtain falls on *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, seven characters lie dead on the stage, and two more are being dragged “to speedy execution”; *The Duchess of Malfi* is more restrained, disposing of only six people in the final act. By contrast, *The Comical Revenge* closes with two hymeneal scenes: Graciana and Aurelia have agreed to marry Beaufort and Bruce, while Sir Frederick has engaged Wheadle, Palmer, Dufoy, and Sir Nicholas Cully to whores, and himself to Mrs. Rich. But the aesthetic of excess stays the same. In the tragedy, few remain alive; in the comedy, few remain single. And given Restoration comedy’s dim view of marriage, one wonders whether the mass wedding of *The Comical Revenge* differs dramatically, at least in spirit, from the mass slaughter of *The Revenger’s Tragedy*. It is certain, at least, that the men of the low plot are disappointed in their fiancées; one can imagine Sir Nicholas a decade later, complaining, with Vanbrugh’s Sir John Brute, that “there’s a secret curse entailed upon the very name of wife.”<sup>87</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Sir John Vanbrugh, *The Provoked Wife* (1697), I.i.

Our next clue to Etherege's notion of history lies in the metamorphosis of Beaufort. Most critics associate Beaufort exclusively with the other denizens of the high plot; however, he turns out to have more in common with his cousin Sir Frederick than with Bruce. Like Sir Frederick, he spent the Civil War on the Continent; his French name sets off the pre-Norman brevity of Bruce's. His first lines, spoken during a morning visit to Sir Frederick, are in prose, not verse. On this morning, the knight's house swarms with unwelcome guests—in Dufoy's words, "de whole regiment army hackené coachman, de linke-boy, de fyddler, and de shamber-maydé" (I.ii.44-46)—and the most persistent is Jenny, Mrs. Grace's maid. After she leaves, having arranged a tryst with Sir Frederick, Beaufort says casually, "I have known this wench's mistress ever since I came from travel, but never was acquainted with the fellow who keeps her; prithee what is he?" (I.ii.169-71). For a worshipper of virtuous women, Beaufort seems remarkably cavalier about sinful ones. For that matter, he allows Sir Frederick to scoff at Graciana, the most virtuous woman in the play. The chivalric response, satirized several times in *Don Quixote*, would be a challenge to a duel; instead, Beaufort listens passively, replying only, "Well, well, cousin" (200). Later, in Lord Bevill's house, Beaufort will challenge Bruce; but here with Sir Frederick, he merely renews his dinner invitation. Beaufort is a protean figure, changing his mores with his company; it is to Sir Frederick's credit that he forgets his manners.

It is understandable that most readers should identify Beaufort with Lord Bevill's household: he speaks in florid verse, fights a duel with Bruce, and wins

Graciana's heart. If we follow Birdsall in taking the unromantic Sir Frederick as the personification of a new social order, then Beaufort seems to belong to the old guard. But as I have shown, Lovis and Bruce are not *précieux*; indeed, Aurelia reveals that in Lord Bevill's household, Beaufort's urbanity is not a virtue but a handicap. When Bruce marvels at Graciana's love for Beaufort, Aurelia describes his Continental airs, dismissing him as a mere rake-aesthete:

When you were forced to end, I did proceed,  
And with success the catching fire did feed;  
Till noble Beaufort, one unlucky day,  
A visit to our family did pay;  
Newly arrived from foreign courts, and fraught  
With all those virtues which in courts are taught:  
He with his am'rous tales so charmed her ear,  
That she of love from none but him would hear (III.vi.88-95)

Beaufort does not woo Graciana as crudely as Sir Frederick courts Mrs. Rich, but Aurelia disapproves of his suavity. In fact, it soon becomes clear that Beaufort and Graciana are the only true *précieux* in the play. Far from recalling outmoded literary tropes, they foreshadow the "sentimental couple" of later Restoration comedy: Young Bellair and Emilia of *The Man of Mode*, for instance, or *The Country Wife*'s Harcourt and Alithea. Like other sentimental heroes, Beaufort consorts with jaded rakes but keeps his idealism intact. *Préciosité*, the tradition that most scholars associate with the burden of history, actually helps Etherege to develop "the modern way/Of writing."

But it also undermines Sir Frederick's identity, for the rake has more to lose than does the sentimental hero. A character like Beaufort or Young Bellair is not an individualist but a mere type of a Petrarchan lover. His sense of self, unlike Sir

Frederick's or Dorimant's, does not rest on his uniqueness. He flits blithely from the rakish milieu to the world of *préciosité*, altering his manners and mores as he sees fit. But if the rake makes any concession to convention—to another worldview, another mode of existence or expression—he sabotages his own defiant iconoclasm. Sir Frederick distracts the audience from the operations of history, but his last couplet suggests that he has not escaped social conventions. As I have pointed out, the lines are aptly fatalistic, but their very fatalism highlights their form. As the comedy closes, the rake is forced to couch even blasphemy in verse, and Mrs. Rich's prologue completes his defeat: "Sir Fred'rick, now I am revenged on you;/For all your frolic wit, y'are cozened too." She reveals that she has "made over all [her] wealth" not to her new fiancé, but to Palmer and Wheadle. Weakened by the language of his milieu and the failure of his scheme, Sir Frederick loses even the last word.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### "Going a Rambling": *The Mulberry Garden*

"I am not really tired, which I almost wonder at; for we must have walked at least a mile in this wood. Do not you think we have?"

"Not half a mile," was his sturdy answer; for he was not yet so much in love as to measure distance, or reckon time, with feminine lawlessness.

—Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*

Had George Etherege and Sir Charles Sedley been enemies, and had intellectual-property laws existed before the nineteenth century, the two playwrights would likely have gone to court over Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden* (1668). Sedley did not scruple to recycle several elements of *The Comical*

*Revenge*: the late-interregnum setting, the rich widow, the pompous dupe who impersonates a rake, the sharp split between historical narrative and quotidian bustle. For this reason, few critics have devoted more than a page to *The Mulberry Garden*; for the same reason, that page usually compares Sedley's play to *The Comical Revenge*. But Etherege and Sedley were close friends, and plagiarism trials were almost unknown in the Restoration. And despite *The Mulberry Garden*'s similarities to Etherege's first play, it merits closer study for its own sake. Aesthetically, it is a better play than its predecessor. If it lacks the delightful surreality of *The Comical Revenge*, it is more unified, more fully realized, peppered more liberally with memorable epigrams. In addition, Sedley revives an old literary motif: the *hortus conclusus*, or enclosed garden, which frames such medieval narratives as the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Decameron*. Sedley's *Mulberry Garden* plays a similar role, sheltering the rake and his friends from the turmoil of the outside world. In its pastoral calm, the *Mulberry Garden* corresponds to contemporary depictions of the Restoration itself. Removed from the vicissitudes of history, the park foreshadows the approaching peace. Sedley's rake, like the other denizens of the *Mulberry Garden*, navigates history by hiding from it. At the same time, though, he displays surprising political acumen, demonstrating that those who refuse to tangle with history are often the ones who survive it.

The relative decorum of *The Mulberry Garden* belies Sedley's reputation for riot and debauch. Born in 1639, three years after Etherege, he was the last of a

Kentish baronet's nine children, a fate reflected in Wildish's quip to his mistress and her sister: "[Y]our heads are so taken up with these Heirs Apparent, that you can't see a Younger Brother when he comes into the room" (III.ii.32-34).<sup>88</sup>

Sedley grew up in London, with a stint at Wadham College, Oxford—that hothouse for Restoration rakes—from 1656 until his marriage in 1657. In early 1660, he served as "a captain of the Kent volunteer horse"; but after the restoration of Charles II, he "took enthusiastically to the pleasures of the court and town," often with serious repercussions. In 1663, he was jailed and fined for appearing naked on a balcony and throwing bottles of his own urine onto the crowd gathered below. Some critics have attempted to alter this image: Harold Love notes that Sedley was "also respected as a wit and man of fashion," and that "Dryden in dedicating *The Assination* (1672) to Sedley is at pains to present him as a civilized advocate of 'erudita voluptas' with no resemblance to the wild wit of legend." Love's second point seems dubious: Dryden would hardly have rehashed his friend's most notorious exploits in his dedication. However, Sedley did enjoy a quieter middle age than many of his contemporaries: in 1687, Etherege complained that "Sir Charles Sedley sets up for good houres and Sobriety."<sup>89</sup> Sedley died in 1701, deeply in debt but "like a philosopher."<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> All biographical details from Harold Love, "Sedley, Sir Charles, fifth baronet (*bap.* 1639, *d.* 1701)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25021>, accessed 20 Feb. 2009.

<sup>89</sup> Etherege to an unnamed correspondent, Dec. 29, 1687, and to Charles Middleton, second earl of Middleton, Jan. 26, 1688, in Frederick Bracher, ed., *Letters of Sir George Etherege* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 167.

<sup>90</sup> Contemporary report, quoted in *ibid.*

Like its creator, *The Mulberry Garden* oscillates between lewdness and temperance, but it lacks the picaresque low plot of *The Comical Revenge*. Instead, the play divides itself between the well-off households of two aging, widowed brothers, mysteriously endowed with different surnames. Each brother has two beautiful, marriageable daughters, and the timeless struggles of the single father come to the fore in the first scene. Sir Samuel Forecast, a prurient Puritan, chides his royalist brother, Sir John Everyoung, for wearing fashionable clothes and allowing his daughters Olivia and Victoria to roam London unchaperoned. “Lord, what pains you take to Quarrel at my Dress and Mirth,” retorts Everyoung, “as if age were not tedious enough already, but we must adde neglect of our selves, and moroseness towards others: Children now adays are not so fond of their Parents, that we need use any Art to make ’um hate us” (I.i.34-39). Everyoung prefigures the aging rake of Augustan literature, but Sedley never allows him to grow as ludicrous as the *Spectator*’s Will Honeycomb. Instead, he makes the Everyoung household a model of lighthearted concord:

*Victoria.* Sir if you don’t use the Coach your self, my sister and I wou’d go abroad this Afternoon.

*Everyoung.* Take it Children, but don’t keep the Horses out too late (I.i.73-76).

The carefree Victoria might be a modern American teenager asking her father to lend her the car for the day. Appalled, Forecast forbids Victoria and Olivia to visit his daughters: “I’le spoil their sport at my House” (114-115).

Next, we meet Harry Modish, Ned Estridge, and Jack Wildish, three fashionable men of the town, in Modish’s lodgings. Wildish declares, like many a

doomed rake, that he will never fall in love or subject himself to courtship: “I have all the day to bestow upon my business, the night upon my Friends, whilst you are kissing the Cards at Ombre, or presenting Oranges at a Play-house” (I.ii.102-105). For Wildish, love is a “Disease,” best cured by “a Bottle of Wine or two, and a she Friend” (109-111). “Wou’d all the world were of his mind,” reflects Modish, “we Young men would pass our time well” (42-43). But Wildish dismisses this talk as bluster, and Modish and Estridge as vapid fops: “O never the better for that; such Mounsieurs as you by your Feathers are known to be Birds of prey, and though you catch nothing, you scare all . . . comb out your Periwig, shake your Garnitures, and be gone” (44-53).

The next scene opens in the Mulberry Garden, where Victoria and Olivia are strolling. Their conversation reveals that Estridge has been courting Olivia, despite sartorial setbacks: “the two Garnitures he brought out of France are soil’d; his Feather broke, and he has been so out of humor these two days, there’s no enduring him” (I.iii.19-21). Victoria complains of Horatio’s neglect, but the ladies are interrupted by Estridge and Modish, who woo them with tired tropes (“the Sea is easier emptied than a Lovers breast”). There is less laughter in the Forecast household, where Diana and Althea wonder—entirely in verse—what has become of their Cavalier devotees, Philander and Eugenio, who have left them to work for the royalist cause. Althea has more reason than Diana to mourn: Forecast is forcing her into marriage with the Roundhead Horatio, a plan he details in front of Olivia and Wildish, a friend of the family, who has known

Olivia since her childhood. After Althea and Forecast leave the room, Wildish reveals his love for Olivia, and persuades her to look kindly on him. However, Wildish is involved in a more nefarious scheme than the courtship of Olivia: he entices Forecast to the house of his “fair and wealthy Cousin,” actually the widowed cousin’s old housekeeper. Forecast courts her ineptly, assuring her that “Age hath its beauties too, as well as youth, and more universally ador’d. . . . Gold and Silver are the best red and white” (II.iv.80-86).

The third act introduces us to Eugenio and Philander, now in hiding from the state. Eugenio has heard of Althea’s betrothal to Horatio, and muses that “these few words (Althea is a Bride)/More wound my Soul, than can the world beside” (III.i.13-14). Philander assures Eugenio that it must be a false report, and persuades him to place duty above romance. Meanwhile, Wildish continues his suit to Olivia, presenting her with verses that Victoria sets to music. Forecast breaks in upon them, attired to meet his rich widow. Like Sir Nicholas Cully before him, he has abandoned his plain garb for a more rakish man’s “Bravery”: “I have two Laces in a Seam more than my Brother Everyyoung, and a Yard more in my Cravat” (III.ii.140-142). To “put him . . . out of conceit with Bravery” (178), Everyyoung pays three boys to cudgel Forecast, ordering them to “be sure you call him Sir John Everyyoung, and tell him of a Lady he affronted” (189-191).

The fourth act begins in the Mulberry Garden, where Wildish encourages Estridge and Modish to reveal the progress of their courtship. They boast that they have slept with Victoria and Olivia; but the ladies pop out of the arbor,

throwing the fops into confusion, and retire with Wildish. The scene then turns to Forecast's house, where Eugenio enters "like an Officer" and makes as if to arrest Forecast for harboring Philander and Eugenio himself. Having terrified Forecast, he snatches a moment alone with Althea, but too late: a band of soldiers, led by Horatio, breaks into the house to arrest him. Horatio suddenly decides to fight for Eugenio, but both are overpowered and taken with Forecast to the Tower. Oblivious to these developments, Estridge and Modish abduct the feigned widow, and Estridge marries her to revenge himself on Wildish. Before long, General George Monck transfers his allegiance from Richard Cromwell to Charles II, and all ends well: Forecast is released from the Tower and hailed as a royalist hero, Horatio decides that he still loves Victoria, and Forecast and Everyyoung preside over four unions: Wildish and Olivia, Horatio and Victoria, Eugenio and Althea, and Philander and Diana. The play ends with a fifth union, that of love and history, as the wedding celebrations mingle with "the peoples voice in joyful crys" (V.v.194).

Susan Staves, one of the few critics who have written about this play at length (and that length is three pages), identifies it as an explicitly political text whose two plots "contrast true liberty with the illusion of liberty" and expand the traditional love-war trope.<sup>91</sup> In *The Mulberry Garden*, love and war occupy not only separate worldly spheres, but also discrete ontological planes: again and again, Sedley associates war with time, but love with space. Sedley's "historical" characters are as easily identifiable as Etherege's. Like Bruce and Lovis in *The*

<sup>91</sup> *Players' Scepters*, 123.

*Comical Revenge*, Eugenio and Philander set their attachment to their king—and their affection for each other—above their love for their mistresses. When Eugenio, reeling from the news that Althea is betrothed to Horatio, vows to “fight him instantly, and make him know,/I am not more his Rival than his Foe,”

Philander urges him to remember his true vocation:

Thy life, alas (dear friend) 's no longer thine,  
Thou hast engag'd it in a brave design:  
Thy bleeding Country, and thy Princes Right,  
Are th'only Quarrels that thy Sword should fight,  
If you into the Tyrant's hands shou'd fall,  
Twou'd put a sudden ruine on us all. (III.i.71-78)

Eugenio acquiesces instantly: “Though Love possess, Honour must rule my heart” (82). The spectacle recalls Etherege’s duel scene, though with a difference. Unlike Bruce, roused to fight by “the beauteous Graciana’s eyes,” Eugenio declares, “My Nation’s Fate’s too great a Sacrifice/For me to make, though to *Althea’s Eyes*” (83-84). Indeed, Eugenio and Philander resemble Lovis and Bruce not only in their view of the world, but also in their love for each other. In the late seventeenth century, according to the *OED*, the name “Philander” meant “[a] lover; a male sweetheart”—usually the lover or sweetheart of a woman. However, etymology tells a different story. “Philander,” from the Greek *philandros*, means “loving or fond of men,” and the Greek adjective originally described a loving wife. The *OED* speculates that the name was later “misunderstood as meaning ‘a loving man’”; but Sedley, an accomplished translator of Martial, was surely aware of the word’s earlier connotations. In fact, Philander’s friendship with Eugenio seems as homoerotic as Bruce’s with Lovis

(with the crucial distinction that both Eugenio and Philander end up married to women). In the final act, Diana—dressed as a boy, significantly—tells Philander that “your fault was great,/To think of Honour when the day was set/For *Hymens* rites” (V.i.92-94). To justify himself, Philander cites his loyalty to his country and, in the same breath, his devotion to his friend:

’Tis true, before I knew *Diana*’s charms,  
I courted Fame in danger and in Arms,  
And thought no Cause cou’d lasting glory bring,  
Like the just quarrel of our injur’d King.  
*Eugenio*’s friendship too that Fire improv’d,  
And made me wed that Cause I ever lov’d (106-111).

With his marriage metaphor and talk of passionate “Fire,” Philander sexualizes both “*Eugenio*’s friendship” and his own political “Cause.” As in *The Comical Revenge*, this Greco-Roman military paradigm leaves no room for women: a soldier can marry only after the war is over.

Forecast differs from Philander, Eugenio, and even his ally Horatio: he speaks exclusively in prose, shows no concern for honor or virtue, and feels no romantic love, save toward the widow’s fortune. However, he is as historical a figure as any Cavalier. Forecast’s very name identifies him with the passage of time, and for good reason: he is forever glancing forward, altering his convictions to fit the pressures of the moment. The word “altering” applies literally, too: Forecast dresses in “little Cuffs, Black Cap, and Boots” (I.i.14-15), the getup of a devout Puritan, and when the disguised Eugenio enters his house, he reveals that his allegiance to the state is not even skin-deep. “I am utterly undone, suspected for a Traytor, and all long of these ungracious Girls!” he cries. “I am very glad I

have got my Christian Cloth on again” (IV.ii.5-7). Conflating his politics with his costume, he proves himself, in his own way, as foppish as Modish. As for his view of love—say rather, of marriage—it is founded entirely on his cowardice and financial interests. Horatio, he reminds Althea, has “[s]ix thousand pounds a year, an Estate well Wooded, and I am told very improveable, it makes me young again to think on’t” (II.i.3-6). On the other hand, Althea’s attachment to Eugenio threatens Forecast’s peace of mind:

Eugenio I never lik’d, and as things stand now, am right glad we had no more to do with him; but that I am one whose Affection and good will to the State has sufficiently manifested it self, I might be thought to have had a hand in their Design, and so have been put in the Tower, and had my Fortune seiz’d on; Eugenio shall never call a Child of mine, Wife, as long as I live. (II.i.6-13)

Following Etherege, Sedley paints the Puritan rulers as masters of mind control, sowing terror and discord in every household. Unlike the Cavalier characters, Forecast never explains why he supports his political cause, save that it keeps him alive and affluent. For the modern reader, Sedley’s version of the Commonwealth recalls Stalin’s Russia or Mao’s China: an Orwellian regime in which, says Eugenio, “Tyrants Eyes and Hands are every where” (III.i.80).

But Sedley creates one place where “Tyrants Eyes and Hands” cannot intrude: the urban Arcadia of the Mulberry Garden. Most of the scenes involving Olivia, Victoria, Wildish, and the fops take place here, in the park of the play’s title. The garden is more than a scenic landmark: it is a *locus amoenus* sheltered from historical pressures. In fact, it recalls nothing so much as the *hortus conclusus* of Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, where ten young nobles gather while the

Black Death depopulates Florence. As Eugenio and Philander fight for the King, Londoners “bring their Children” to the Mulberry Garden “to air ’um, and eat Cheese-cakes” (IV.i.27-28), while the young lovers chatter of everything but the war. True, political strife has depleted the garden: Victoria observes that “we don’t see half the Company that us’d to meet us here anights, when we were last in Town” (I.iii.1-3). But the sisters soon slip into idle gossip, and when Victoria’s worries drive her to verse—“To see *Horatio*, as I knew him once,/I would all other happiness renounce”—Olivia says merely, “Fye Sister leave this Ryming at least” (39-40, 47). Estridge and Modish distract Victoria further, and the scene ends when the four stroll off for syllabubs. In *The Mulberry Garden* as in the *Decameron*, history is linear and love elliptical: the historical narrative builds steadily to a climax, while the romantic narrative wanders among the trees.

The theme of wandering love is reflected in the play’s discarded title. Four months before the play’s premiere, Mrs. Knipp, the actress who was to play Victoria, told her lover Samuel Pepys “of a play shortly coming on the stage, of Sir Charles Sidly’s, which, she thinks, will be called ‘The Wandering Ladys,’ a comedy that she thinks will be most pleasant.”<sup>92</sup> Though Sedley changed the title, the image of wandering—or, more typically, “rambling”—appears and reappears throughout *The Mulberry Garden*. In the very first scene, Forecast asks Victoria and Olivia “what visits [they] intend” to pay in their father’s coach. “None Sir,” replies Victoria, “we were only going a Rambling.” This answer enrages her

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Pinto, ed., *Works of Sir Charles Sedley*, 104. It was around this time that Mrs. Knipp became Pepys’s mistress, though their flirtation was of long standing: two years before, he had “got her upon my knee (the coach being full) and played with her breasts and sung.”

uncle: “A Rambling, methinks that word sounds very pretty i’ the mouth of a young Maid; next time I ask ’um whither they’re going, I believe they’ll answer me, To drink a bottle or two” (I.i.79-85). The word “rambling” implies a blissful lack of purpose, a notion foreign to the calculating Forecast. And the ladies’ conversation with Estridge and Modish will take place in the Mulberry Garden, a place walled off from history and politics.

Even Forecast’s daughters dissociate romance from history: Diana argues that true love cares nothing for politics, while Althea speaks of love in spatial, not temporal, metaphors. Alone with her sister, Diana deplores their lovers’ decision to leave London:

Unkind Philander, had Love fill’d thy brest  
With half those flames thou hast so oft exprest,  
They had consumed in their purer fires  
All other thoughts, and thou wou’dst never mind  
Who were for Kings, and who for Slaves design’d. (I.iv.29-33)

The sensible Althea will have none of this intemperance, reminding Diana that “[t]he noble sense they show of the sad Fate/Of their dear Country, sets a higher rate/Upon their Love” (34-36). She might as well have been reading Clement Ellis. But when Horatio bursts into her chamber to woo her, comparing the progress of love to the course of war, she changes her tone. Attempting to explain his desertion of Victoria, Horatio shrewdly warps her name in order to praise Althea: “In Love like War, some Victor still there grows,/Whose spreading Empire nothing can oppose” (II.ii.81-82). But Althea declares the simile void:

Countries are fix’d, and cannot flye, although  
They apprehend a certain overthrow.  
Lovers, the force they can’t oppose, may shun,

And may with safety and with honour run. (83-86)

In other words, a lover is free to change—or ramble—as he pleases, so long as “Vertue and his Duty bid him flye” (88). Althea may not be free to wander the Mulberry Garden with her cousins, the eponymous “wandering ladys,” but she shares their view of love.

Given Wildish’s role as rake-hero, it is fitting that he too should be called a Rambler. Drinking with his two friends in the Mulberry Garden, Wildish announces—disingenuously—that he has nothing to do with fine ladies: “all my acquaintance have two or three Names apiece, I assure you” (IV.i.134-135). “Well Jack,” retorts Modish, “. . . if thou wou’dst leave this Rambling, thou wou’dst lose nothing by it; There’s as hard drinking in Gentlemens Houses nowadays, as at Taverns, and as hot service in many a Ladys Chamber, as at Giffords” (136-143). Wildish’s alleged whoring is hardly the sort of freedom that Althea craves, but the reappearance of the word “rambling” should give us pause. Like Sir Frederick Frolick, Wildish acts as a “master of the revels,” with the Mulberry Garden as a backdrop for his tricks. When he wishes to expose his friends as idle boasters, he hides Victoria and Olivia in an arbor; when he reflects that “there are men would have fooled with *Olivia*, and fool’d her too . . . without ever ingaging in one serious thought,” the trees frame his soliloquy (IV.i.4-7). The pastoral scene affects even the fops, with Modish describing Victoria and Olivia as “two young juicy Girls, that stick as close to us, as the Bark to the tree, and part as unwillingly from us, as green fruit does from the stone” (119-122).

Only outside the garden does Wildish allow himself to discuss politics, warning Forecast that “there’s like to be a turn suddenly, ’tis thought the General will declare like an honest man” (IV.ii.196-197). But in his *hortus conclusus*, Wildish finds all his delight in “an Arbour and a Bottle of Rhenish” (IV.i.32).

However, some of his amusements would have been impossible before the Restoration. Sedley’s editor, Vivian de Sola Pinto, notes that *The Mulberry Garden* is peppered with anachronisms: “There is a reference to the game of Ombre, which only came in after the Restoration. We hear several times of the playhouse and the acting of plays, as though the theatre was a regular public entertainment, which it was certainly not until after the king’s return . . .” Pinto speculates that “Sedley wrote a play about the events immediately preceding the Restoration very soon after the event took place,” but later “added realistic scenes in prose in order to adapt it to the taste of an age which had been accustomed to a new sort of comedy by Etherege and Dryden, and introduced into those scenes the language of the Restoration court rather than that of the Protectorate.”<sup>93</sup> While Pinto’s theory is plausible, it assumes a certain naïveté on Sedley’s part. Worse, it closes off another possibility: that Sedley’s historical “incongruities” were not accidental but deliberate. In fact, Sedley’s portrayal of the Mulberry Garden as an ahistoric paradise recalls contemporary images of the Restoration itself.

Richard H. Perkinson argues that seventeenth-century “topographical comedy,” which describes “the manners and intrigues of habitués of some

---

<sup>93</sup> Pinto, *Works of Sir Charles Sedley*, 103.

definite, popular locality,”<sup>94</sup> uses locale to achieve “a double and somewhat contradictory function: the particular place contributes to realism and credibility; its characteristic atmosphere or reputation by extension and exaggeration, to improbability.”<sup>95</sup> In this calculus, Sedley’s Mulberry Garden heightens the rakishness of rakes and the foppery of fops: true, but not the whole truth.

Actually, the Mulberry Garden’s very seclusion from history allows it to prefigure a historical event: the Restoration. In the early 1660s, writers like Edmund Waller depicted the Restoration not as a period of history, but as its consummation—a second Golden Age, peopled with nymphs and Cupids.

Waller’s *On the Park at St. James’s* (c. 1660) extols St. James’s Park, established by the new king, as a “Paradice” for patriotic lovers:

Me thinks I hear the love that shall be made,  
The gallants dancing in the Amorous shade,  
The Lovers walking by the River side,  
They bath in Summer, and in Winter slide.

Far from confining his scope to everyday delights, Waller crams the park with mythic marvels:

A thousand *Cupids* on the billows ride,  
And Sea Nymphs enter with the swelling tide,  
From *Thetis* sent as Spies to make report  
And tell the wonders of her Sovereigns Court.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Richard H. Perkinson, “Topographical Comedy in the Seventeenth Century,” in *ELH*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Dec. 1936), 270.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>96</sup> It is this poem that Rochester satirizes in “A Ramble in St. James’s Park,” which transforms Waller’s paradise into an “All-sin-sheltring *Grove*,” and his gallants into “the amorous rout,/Who most obsequiously do hunt/The savory scent of salt-swoln cunt.” But Rochester follows Waller in one essential: his dystopia, “consecrate to prick and cunt,” remains closed off from the outside world.

Compare this idyll to the utopian Boston of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward from 2000 to 1887* (1887). In a sermon broadcast to every home in Boston, a preacher hails the new epoch as "the return of man to God . . . by the fulfillment of the evolution, when the divine secret hidden in the germ shall be perfectly unfolded. With a tear for the dark past, turn we then to the dazzling future, and, veiling our eyes, press forward. The long and weary winter of the race is ended. Its summer is begun. Humanity has burst the chrysalis. The heavens are before it."<sup>97</sup> Though seventeenth-century pastoral verse is a far cry from Social Darwinism, Waller's vision of the future corresponds uncannily to Bellamy's. In both the poem and the novel, history has stopped unfolding, lingering instead in "a new phase of spiritual development."<sup>98</sup> Waller's park is, of course, as much a *hortus conclusus* as Sedley's; but it also allegorizes the entire Restoration. Though Sedley's anachronisms may be slips of the pen, they may also suggest an equally allegorical function for his Mulberry Garden. The bucolic park, with its carefree rakes and ladies, foreshadows the peace to come.

Thus, the distinction between history and town life is not as sharp in *The Mulberry Garden* as in *The Comical Revenge*; and the language of Sedley's characters complicates the dynamic further, though this is not immediately apparent. In the first Mulberry Garden scene, Victoria and Olivia divide language neatly in two, assigning truth to the historians and deceit to the lovers. When Victoria urges Olivia to be as kind to Estridge "as you are severe to him behind

<sup>97</sup> Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward from 2000 to 1887* (New York: Signet Classic, 2000), 190-191.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

his back,” Olivia retorts, “The only way to oblige most men is to use ’um thus, it gives ’um an Opinion of our wit; and is consequently a Spur to theirs: the great pleasure of Gaming were lost, if we saw one anothers hands; and of Love, if we knew one anothers Hearts” (I.iii.29-34). At the end of the scene, after Olivia makes Estridge and Modish “promise to say nothing but what they think to us,” it is Victoria’s turn for a quip: “Faith, Sister, let’s bate ’um that circumstance, Truth is a thing meerly necessary for witnesses, and Historians, and in these places doth but curb invention, and spoil good Company” (122-125). Throughout the play, love, especially rakish love, is associated with witty deception. Wildish confides to Olivia that among men, “’tis held as great a part of wit to rallee women handsomely behind their back, as to flatter ’um to their Faces” (II.i.89-91). Later, he gives Olivia a song he has written for her, fibbing that it is no more than “the most passionate Copy of Verses you can find” (III.ii.68-69). Estridge shows Wildish “his Sisters Picture” and a “grizl’d” hair bracelet that he found on the ground, claiming that Olivia gave both to him as love tokens (IV.i.231, 259). Victoria and Olivia frequent the Mulberry Garden in vizard-masks, which Modish dismisses as a “pretty device to make a man in Love with he can’t tell who” (IV.i.279-281). To all appearances, Victoria’s distinction between historical accuracy and romantic deception holds true.

It holds true, that is, until we analyze the historical plot. Wildish, the romantic trickster *par excellence*, shows himself equally able to predict the ebbs and flows of history. When Puritan soldiers arrest Forecast for associating with

traitors, Wildish assures him that in due time, “to lye in Prison for concealing Cavaliers, will be great merit; and let me tell you as a friend, there’s like to be a turn suddenly, ’tis thought the General [Monck] will declare [for the King] like an honest man, I say no more; therefore carry your self moderately, this accident may chance to do you good service, if you have the grace to make the right use on’t” (IV.ii.194-200). The shift in Wildish’s character is no less remarkable than the “turn” in public affairs: the ahistoric rake, who gave no sign of having noticed the turmoil outside the Mulberry Garden, proves more politic than Forecast himself. Everyoung does Wildish one better, suggesting that rakishness actually keeps a man out of trouble: “[A]las, I know nothing but how to sort Ribands, make Horse-matches, throw away my money at Dice, and keep my self out of the Tower” (V.iii.24-28). Everyoung has been ahistoric—even atemporal—from the very first scene, in which he assures his brother that there is no harm in his “Extravagant” dress: “I’le not bate a Riband for the whole tribe of you can say . . . [W]hy an old man shou’d not desire to be thought young, I see no reason” (I.i.17-22). Like Ellis’s gallant, he takes refuge from history in the discourse of fashion. For Everyoung, ignoring time is the best way to stay youthful; and as he and Wildish soon discover, ignoring history is the best way to stay alive. These are the gallants whom Ellis censures for their political apathy; in *The Mulberry Garden*, however, they carry the day.

This is not to conclude, with J. Douglas Canfield, that “Restoration tragicomedy is generally a reaffirmation of feudal aristocratic values, portrayed as

under stress from challenges by bourgeois parvenus, libertine lovers, and ambitious statesmen; from ethical nominalists, political pragmatists, and metaphysical atheists.”<sup>99</sup> The outcome of *The Mulberry Garden* proves that “libertine lovers” like Wildish survive history precisely *because* of their indifference to it. But there is an element of truth to Canfield’s argument. In *The Comical Revenge*, the rake speaks the final couplet: a couplet fatalistic at best, blasphemous at worst. *The Mulberry Garden* ends with the restoration of the monarchy, “a great shout within,” and Philander’s challenge, both patriotic and erotic, to his newly married friends: “Let’s part a while, and vye who can express/ The highest sense of this great happiness” (V.v.198-199). The Mulberry Garden has opened its gates.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “Ridiculously Wild and Apish”: *The Man of Mode*

Till the world is an unpeopled void there will be an image in the mirror.  
—Henry James, “The Future of the Novel”

Unlike *The Comical Revenge* or *The Mulberry Garden*, Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* (1676) is a character-driven, not a type-driven, text. The play is imitative insofar as satire is imitative, and the characters are constrained by their task of aping the taste of the town; but the rake figure perplexes us because of his measure of negative capability. Conventional types diverge from reality as a consequence of their coherence, their predictability. Dorimant differs from us as

<sup>99</sup> Canfield, “The Ideology of Restoration Tragicomedy,” 448.

a friend or enemy might: by being no more than himself, in all his mysteries and contradictions. As a result, three centuries of critics have bickered over his narrative purpose. Does Etherege present Dorimant for scorn, applause, or merely observation? How are we to judge a rake who forces us to care about him? In *The Man of Mode* as in no other Restoration play, the rake figure comes to stand for his era; we feel that to reach a conclusion about Dorimant is to gain insight into the world that generated him.

Of course, there are perils inherent in this conclusion. We have no evidence that Etherege, anticipating modern fiction, set out to create characters that were more than the sum of their typical attributes. No evidence but this: that Dorimant, following Ellis's gallant, strives throughout the play to assert his personhood. His identity rests on his singularity; a fop weakens him, and a woman defeats him, by proving his mannerisms both imitative and easily imitated. History rarely enters this play, save in the persons of Lady Woodvill, "a great admirer of the forms and civility of the last age" (I.i.134-135),<sup>100</sup> and Old Bellair, a genial lecher of fifty-five. But it is no coincidence that Dorimant finds himself playing Mr. Courtage, a "foppish admirer of quality, who . . . never offers love to a woman below a lady-grandmother" (III.iii.377-379), in an attempt to win over Lady Woodvill. Again and again, Dorimant exposes his debts to history, to literature, and—most embarrassing of all—to other men. His very first lines are a quotation from a historical poem by Edmund Waller; he "repeat[s] verses" (II.ii.298) as he flees his

---

<sup>100</sup> All quotations from George Etherege, *The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter*, in Michael Corder, ed., *The Plays of Sir George Etherege* (Cambridge University Press, 1982).

mistress. He professes to shun fashion, but shows himself as much a man of mode as the eponymous Sir Fopling. In the end, the shallowness of Dorimant's life thwarts his attempts to construct a self-centered hagiography.

*The Man of Mode* contains no grand reversals of fortune. Instead, it follows a gentleman of leisure and fashion, as eager to rid himself of an old mistress, Mrs. Loveit, as to secure the hand of the country heiress Harriet. But Dorimant's love for Harriet does not prevent him from pursuing Mrs. Loveit's friend Bellinda, who succumbs against her better judgment. As a pretext for breaking off with Mrs. Loveit, Dorimant pretends to have caught her making eyes at "that very cock-fool of all fools, Sir Fopling Flutter," newly arrived from Paris (II.ii.254-255). Bellinda assists Dorimant by mentioning that she saw him at the playhouse with a masked lady; Mrs. Loveit flies into a tantrum, but soon resolves to make her lover jealous in earnest. Her public flirtation with Sir Fopling sways Dorimant's affections, but not for long: Harriet's wit, beauty, and fortune make Dorimant hers—or as much hers as Dorimant can ever be. Harriet tries to resist his charms, but cannot, though she remains chaste throughout the play.

However, Harriet is not at liberty to marry Dorimant, for her mother, Lady Woodvill, has betrothed her to Young Bellair, a sentimental youth in love with Emilia. Awkwardly enough, Young Bellair's middle-aged father, unaware of his son's attachment, has also fallen in love with Emilia. ("You have charms for the whole family," smirks Dorimant's friend Medley.) Dorimant himself has tried in vain to seduce Emilia, and confides to Medley that his interest in Young Bellair's

marriage is selfish: “She’s a discreet maid, and I believe nothing can corrupt her but a husband” (I.i.483-495). By the fourth act, though, Dorimant’s affairs seem close to resolution: he has debauched Bellinda, won Harriet’s heart, arranged Emilia’s marriage to Young Bellair, and all but shaken off Mrs. Loveit (though his jealousy of Sir Fopling lingers). Then the chairmen carrying Bellinda from Dorimant’s house bring her accidentally to Mrs. Loveit’s, Dorimant calls on Mrs. Loveit and finds Bellinda there, the two women berate him (Mrs. Loveit still ignorant of Bellinda’s affair), and the rake slinks off. Undaunted, he makes his way to the house of the canny Lady Townley, Old Bellair’s sister and Emilia’s confidante. Lady Townley’s chaplain has already married Young Bellair and Emilia, and Dorimant secures Harriet’s promise to let him visit her in Hampshire.

But Mrs. Loveit and Bellinda have followed Dorimant to Lady Townley’s. They burst in the door and discover Dorimant with Harriet, who ridicules Mrs. Loveit in front of the company. Dorimant pulls his old mistress aside and assures her that he must have “a wife, to repair the ruins of my estate that needs it” (V.ii.327-328). Then he scurries over to Bellinda and tries to arrange another rendezvous—“We must meet again”—but she banishes him with one devastating line: “When we do, may I be as infamous as you are false” (344-348). Mrs. Loveit and Bellinda retire, leaving a scene of only superficial concord. Dorimant and Harriet are not formally engaged, and Dorimant hardly seems inclined to observe his vows of constancy. Young Bellair and Emilia are happily married, but Dorimant has designs on the bride. Old Bellair has failed to secure Emilia for

himself; Lady Woodvill has failed to bring about an honorable marriage for Harriet. Bellinda has been duped by the man who deflowered her, while Mrs. Loveit declares that she “shall never more be happy” (330-331). For a comedy, *The Man of Mode* ends tragically indeed: almost every character is either disappointed or deceived. The only happy man is the hapless Sir Fopling, now scheming to “make my court to the entire sex in a ballet” (420-421).

Viewed through a plot summary, as through the wrong end of a telescope, Dorimant’s exploits seem paltry indeed. He boasts and vaunts in the vocabulary of revenge, but takes that revenge on vulnerable women and brainless fops. At the end of Act III, Medley suggests that Harriet “would well supply the loss of Loveit,” but Dorimant cannot abandon his jealousy:

That business must not end so, before tomorrow sun is set, I will revenge and clear it.  
And you and Loveit to her cost shall find,  
I fathom all the depths of womankind. (III.iii.384-389)

For all his bravado, though, Dorimant fails to achieve what he has planned. Bellinda refuses to have anything more to do with him, proving that he cannot “fathom all the depths” of the virtuous, and his philandering ways seem likely to alienate Harriet. Nor should we be surprised at Dorimant’s ineptitude, when even his clothes are capable of distracting him from his grand schemes. In an epitomic exchange near the end of the play, Medley asks, “When have you your revenge on Loveit, Dorimant?” To this the rake replies, “I will but change my linen and about it” (IV.ii.175-177). Vindice was never so fastidious. Put bluntly, here is a man with too much time on his hands, an avenger with leisure to change his linen.

In Act IV, Sir Fopling insists on performing a song of his own composition, a lyric describing a life of contrived gallantry and superficial romance. For all Dorimant's psychological complexities, for all his attachment to the language of affront and revenge, his life is as insipid as the one in the song:

How charming Phillis is, how fair!  
 Ah that she were as willing,  
 To ease my wounded heart of care  
 And make her eyes less killing.  
 I sigh! I sigh! I languish now,  
 And love will not let me rest;  
 I drive about the Park, and bow  
 Still as I meet my dearest. (IV.iii.149-156)

This is no coincidence, given the historical background of the play. In *This Side of Paradise* (1920), F. Scott Fitzgerald describes his pleasure-seeking contemporaries as “a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.”<sup>101</sup> The same sentiment suffuses the libertine world of Etherege's last play. Unlike *The Comical Revenge* and *The Mulberry Garden*, *The Man of Mode* is not set in a period of political turmoil. Nor did its hero come of age during the interregnum, as Sir Frederick Frolick and Jack Wildish did. If *The Man of Mode* takes place in the year of its premiere, and if Dorimant is in his mid- to late twenties, he was born around 1650, and was a very young boy when Charles II returned to England. The most pressing domestic issue of 1676 was the onset of the so-called Exclusion Crisis, triggered in 1673 when the Duke of York, the future James II, declared himself a Roman Catholic.

---

<sup>101</sup> James L. W. West, ed., *This Side of Paradise* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 260.

For the next eight years, Parliament would dispute James's right to the throne, in a series of debates that prompted dramatists to "engage with the political crisis in fascinating and complex ways."<sup>102</sup> In 1676, however, this conflict was too embryonic to influence a comedy of manners. Abroad, the third Anglo-Dutch War had ended two years previous, and the fourth would not start until 1680. There are no national traumas for Dorimant to ignore; he is ahistoric largely by accident.

But it is remarkable how much history *does* find its way into *The Man of Mode*, and how adeptly Dorimant adapts it to his own ends. As in Etherege's previous two plays, the first act opens in the rake's dressing room, with Dorimant's "clothes laid ready" as he enters "in gown and slippers, with a note in his hand made up, repeating verses." His first lines oscillate restlessly between the outside world and the sphere of his amours:

"Now for some ages had the pride of Spain,  
Made the sun shine on half the world in vain."

(*Then looking on the note*) "For Mrs. Loveit." What a dull insipid thing is a billet doux written in cold blood, after the heat of the business is over? It is a tax upon good nature which I have here been labouring to pay, and have done it, but with as much regret, as ever fanatic paid the Royal Aid, or church duties; 'twill have the same fate I know that all my notes to her have had of late, 'twill not be thought kind enough. Faith women are i' the right when they jealously examine our letters, for in them we first discover our decay of passion.—Hey!—Who waits! (I.i.1-13)

In this brief speech, Dorimant makes four volte-faces, turning from a poem celebrating a naval battle to a note excusing his absence; referring again to politics, with his reflection on the fate of Puritans ("fanatics") under Charles II;

---

<sup>102</sup> Susan J. Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 2.

musing on the shrewdness of women; and, finally, acknowledging his valet outside the door. Etherege's editor, Michael Cordner, identifies the lines of poetry as "the opening couplet of [Edmund] Waller's 'Of a War with Spain, and a Fight at Sea' . . . John Dennis recorded that the original audiences, discerning in Dorimant 'several of the Qualities of *Wilmot* Earl of *Rochester*,' took as one of these 'his repeating, on every occasion, the Verses of *Waller*, for whom that noble Lord had a very particular Esteem.'"<sup>103</sup> Perhaps, but what strikes me about Dorimant's quotation is its irrelevance to the matter at hand. Waller's poem, written in his Cromwellian phase (which lasted roughly as long as Cromwell held power), describes a naval battle of 1656, which allowed "victorious Montague" to return to England "with laurels in his hand, and half Peru." Even read allegorically, the poem makes little sense in the context of Dorimant's entanglement with Mrs. Loveit. Take the first stanza:

Now, for some ages, had the pride of Spain  
 Made the sun shine on half the world in vain;  
 While she bid war to all that durst supply  
 The place of those her cruelty made die.  
 Of Nature's bounty men forebore to taste,  
 And the best portion of the earth lay waste.  
 From the new world, her silver and her gold  
 Came, like a tempest, to confound the old;  
 Feeding with these the bribed electors' hopes,  
 Alone she gives us emperors and popes;  
 With these accomplishing her vast designs,  
 Europe was shaken with her Indian mines. (1-12)

An especially rash reader might interpret Dorimant as the Spanish crown, plundering the bodies and spirits of the women who love him. However, I would argue that the quotation's significance lies in its very incongruity. In *The*

---

<sup>103</sup> *The Plays of Sir George Etherege*, 219.

*Comical Revenge*, Sir Frederick Frolick's indifference to history heralds the emergence of a new age; in *The Mulberry Garden*, Wildish's and Everyyoung's political apathy is actually a survival mechanism. But Dorimant acknowledges large-scale history only to emphasize its irrelevance to his affairs. In fact, this pattern continues throughout the play: quotations drift from his mouth, but rarely have much bearing on events. At the end of Act II, for instance, Dorimant arranges to dine at Long's, a local eating-house, with Medley and Young Bellair. "You may have a hackney coach if you please, sir," offers his footman. "I may ride the elephant if I please, sir," rejoins Dorimant, and walks offstage singing, "'Be calm ye great parents,' etc." This is a duet from *The Enchanted Island*, Thomas Shadwell's operatic adaptation of *The Tempest*, first performed in 1674 and itself adapted from John Dryden's and William Davenant's play of 1667.<sup>104</sup> In the song in question, Amphitrite begs Neptune to calm the seas, so that the lovers can return to Naples from the island. Neptune consents, and the two sing together: "Be calm, ye great Parents of the Flouds and the Springs,/While each *Nereide* and *Triton* Plays, Revels, and Sings."<sup>105</sup> The duet is set to a catchy, almost infectious, tune, and it is easy to imagine the song flitting idly through Dorimant's brain as he talks to Medley and the footman. But again, it has no connection to Dorimant's dinner plans or long-term schemes. Dorimant excels in stripping history and literature of meaning, turning words into empty signifiers.

<sup>104</sup> Dryden and Davenant took significant liberties with Shakespeare's plot, adding several female characters and countless scraps of sexual innuendo.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas Shadwell (after John Dryden and William Davenant), *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* (London: printed by J. Macock for Henry Herringman, 1676), 62-63 (EEBO image 38). Early English Books Online: [eebo.chadwyck.com](http://eebo.chadwyck.com), accessed 19 March 2009.

In short, he treats language as Ellis's gallant does: having "*laden* his Memory with a few broaken *Ends* and *Chippings* of History" (195), he "make[s] it his whole businesse whensoever he *dares* be *Bookish* . . . to furnish himselfe with an *Elegant* and *Courtlike expression*" (31). For Dorimant, Waller's historical poem is as profound and absorbing as a modern pop song.

*The Man of Mode* departs from the view of history that characterizes *The Comical Revenge* and *The Mulberry Garden*. This is not to say that Dorimant, like Ellis's "true gentleman," assumes responsibility for his nation's fate; he feels no sense of responsibility for anyone but himself. However, Dorimant's very solipsism implicates him in the process of history. He renders history intimate by making it self-centered. In so doing, he assumes the burden of making it interesting; but the bare facts of his existence sabotage his attempts at hagiography. No matter how he exaggerates, he cannot transform his gaudy life into a dark tale of revenge and betrayal. At the same time, his fear of enthusiasm undermines his penchant for hyperbole. Like Ellis's gallant, Dorimant dreads emotional investment. "Good or bad 'tis all one, I never knew you commend anything," scoffs a fruit seller in the very first scene (I.i.41-42). Among his friends, Dorimant insists that he is pursuing Harriet for her fortune; only in muttered asides does he confess his love. Even as his valet dresses him in the latest fashions, he laments "[t]hat a man's excellency should lie in the neat tying of a ribbond, or a cravat! how careful's nature in furnishing the world with necessary coxcombs!" (I.i.385-388). (To this, Young Bellair replies ingenuously

—or wickedly?—“That’s a mighty pretty suit of yours Dorimant.”) He has developed a crippling reliance on irony, an attachment to detachment.

In short, Dorimant loathes his own common humanity, as if, in Ellis’s words, “the onely *shame* he fear’d were the retaining of that *Form* which *God* and *Nature* gave him” (24). Dorimant identifies sentiment with sentimentality, and enthusiasm with the raptures of Sir Fopling or Young Bellair, but he cannot find a tenable alternative to human emotion. “I love her, and dare not let her know it,” muses Dorimant as Harriet speaks (IV.i.164-166). His excuse—“I fear she has an ascendant o’er me and may revenge the wrongs I have done her sex”—seems no more than an articulation of his fear of attachment. After all, the only “revenge” Harriet could take would involve ensnaring Dorimant further. As late as the final scene, he is still protesting to Mrs. Loveit, whose affection he has no desire to keep, that he is marrying Harriet only for her estate. The oddest part of this act is that Dorimant puts it on for people who do not share his scorn for love—people, moreover, to whom he feels superior. For all his disdain for his acquaintances, he seems remarkably determined to impress them with his self-centered history. “Nay, good master,” says a shoemaker to Dorimant, “why should you not write your own commentaries as well as Caesar?” (I.i.301-302).

The shoemaker’s remark brings home the triviality of the rakish existence. If Dorimant wants a commentary on his own life, he will have to write it himself, as no one else will care to do it for him. (Etherege being the obvious exception—but Etherege is Dorimant’s creator, not his hagiographer.) So Dorimant, like

Cervantes' Ginés de Pasamonte (or, later, Tristram Shandy), is forced to chronicle his adventures even as he lives them. He does this not in writing, but in his melodramatic reflections on his own existence. He excels in exaggeration, speculating that Harriet is probably "some awkward ill-fashioned country toad, who not having above four dozen of black hairs on her head, has adorned her baldness with a large white fruz, that she may look sparkishly in the forefront of the king's box, at an old play" (I.i.57-61). Sir Fopling is not merely a fop, but "the pattern of modern foppery" (I.i.402-403). Dorimant dwells in superlatives, vowing facetiously to "pursue, and persecute" Bellinda "more impertinently than ever any loving fop did his mistress" (II.ii.187-189). In exaggeration he yields nothing to Mrs. Loveit, who is capable of raging, "Would I had made a contract to be a witch when first I entertained this greater devil, monster, barbarian; I could tear myself in pieces" (II.ii.299-301). But strip away Dorimant's language, and nothing remains of his world but a motley assortment of imperfect mortals, neither saints nor demons.

It seems, then, that Dorimant's mania for quotation can take him only so far. His desire for singularity conflicts with his use of language, for language is a form of representation—and thus, by default, a kind of imitation. Throughout the play, Dorimant reveals his own distaste for imitation, a distaste so strong that he refuses to place a mirror in his home. "Prithee Dorimant! why hast thou not a glass hung up here? a room is the dullest thing without one," cries Sir Fopling, practicing his dance steps (IV.ii.93-95). Finding Dorimant unwilling to reply, he babbles on:

“But I mean in case of being alone. In a glass a man may entertain himself—”

Here Dorimant interrupts: “The shadow of himself indeed” (97-99). He refuses to say more on the subject, but in these five words of reproach he echoes Ellis, who refers to the rake as the “*shadow*” (4) of the true gentleman. Dorimant flatters himself that he has moved beyond empty foppery, but Harriet, at least, spots his self-delusion. “He’s agreeable and pleasant I must own,” she tells Young Bellair, “but he does so much affect being so, he displeases me.” Young Bellair defends his hero—“Lord madam, all he does and says, is so easy, and so natural”—but Harriet presses on: “Some men’s verses seem so to the unskilful, but labour i’ the one, and affectation in the other to the judicious plainly appear” (III.iii.28-34).

Ironically, Harriet herself is dissembling her regard for Dorimant, but it is significant that she harps on that particular flaw. The other characters, if they criticize Dorimant at all, criticize his loose morals. Though they never call Dorimant a “rake” or “rakehell,” their language recalls the etymology of those epithets. Harriet’s own mother declares, “He is the prince of all the devils in the town, delights in nothing but rapes and riots” (III.iii.133-134). Likewise, says Mrs. Loveit, “I know he is a devil, but he has something of the angel yet undefaced in him, which makes him so charming and agreeable, that I must love him still, be he never so wicked” (II.ii.17-20). By contrast, Harriet refuses to see Dorimant as an angel, damned or undefaced. Instead, she dismisses him as “ridiculously wild and apish” (V.ii.63-67). Dorimant seems to relish being known

as “the prince of all the devils in the town”; “ridiculously wild and apish” lacks the same flair.

Harriet sees what the other characters do not: that Dorimant, for all his devotion to uniqueness, revels in aping others. He does it facetiously, but is too skilled to pass it off as less than a cultivated talent. When Mrs. Loveit scoffs that “you can be vain and loud enough,” Dorimant retorts, “But not with so good a grace as Sir Fopling. Hey, Hampshire—oh, that sound—that sound becomes the mouth of a man of quality.” Mrs. Loveit will have none of this mockery: “Is there anything so hateful as a senseless mimic?” (V.i.103-108). Earlier in the play, Dorimant mimics another man at greater length: in order to call on Lady Townley while Harriet and Lady Woodvill are present, he assumes the character of Mr. Courtage, capable of such opinions as “Forms and ceremonies, the only things that uphold quality and greatness, are now shamefully laid aside and neglected” (IV.i.16-18). Harriet notes his success: “He fits my mother’s humour so well, a little more and she’ll dance a kissing dance with him anon” (36-37). Dorimant may be “a wild extravagant fellow of the times” (372-373), scornful of history and the old models of courtly love, but he has clearly taken the time to master the modes and mores he despises.

Harriet demonstrates that Dorimant is not only “apish” and “affected,” but also capable of *being* imitated, even by a woman. When Dorimant recalls “how you were pleased when the fops cried ‘She’s handsome, very handsome, by God she is’ and whispered aloud your name,” Harriet rejoins, “I do not go begging the

men's as you do the ladies' good liking with a sly softness in your looks, and a gentle slowness in your bows, as you pass by 'em—as thus sir—(*Acts him*) is this not like you?" (III.iii.108-119). Unlike Dorimant, Harriet never pretends indifference to "the dear pleasure of dissembling," as when she and Young Bellair conduct a dumb show of love for the benefit of their parents (III.i.128-129). Young Bellair assumes, naïvely, that Harriet will not be able to imitate what she has not lived through: "Can you play your part?" Harriet is more cavalier: "I know not what it is to love, but I have made pretty remarks by being now and then where lovers meet" (130-133). Lisa Berglund observes that Harriet "bewitches Dorimant by playing his game better than he does himself: *she* never unmasks, or allows her language to grow too 'particular,' and their courtship ends by reversing the play's established relationship between Dorimant and women."<sup>106</sup>

Sir Fopling has the same effect on Dorimant, though unconsciously. "Like Harriet," notes Berglund, ". . . Sir Fopling penetrates the metaphors of Dorimant and Medley and discloses their polite secrets; he does so, however, because he is sublimely unaware that anything has been concealed."<sup>107</sup> From the moment Sir Fopling appears in London, Dorimant attempts to put distance between them, but there is no getting rid of the man. So far as I know, Berglund is the only critic to suggest that Sir Fopling, ludicrous though he may be, poses a threat to Dorimant's identity. Robert B. Heilman, for instance, proposes that fops "minister to the sense of superiority in the larger world that observes them. . . . So they are a boon

<sup>106</sup> Lisa Berglund, "The Language of the Libertines: Subversive Morality in *The Man of Mode*," in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 30, no. 3 (Summer 1990), 382.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

to men and women who take themselves to be the true center—rational, sensible, balanced, good entrants in the accepted forms of worldly competition, who can think well of themselves by thinking ill of others who do less well.”<sup>108</sup> Dorimant is just such a man, but Sir Fopling proves, again and again, that Dorimant cannot separate himself from fophood. More than once, he brings up the uncomfortable fact that the two men were associates in Paris, where Dorimant seems to have taken the rake’s obligatory tour. “Dorimant, let me embrace thee,” Sir Fopling cries, “without lying I have not met with any of my acquaintance, who retain so much of Paris as thou dost, the very air thou hadst when the marquise mistook thee i’ th’ Tuileries, and cried ‘Hey chevalier’, and then begged thy pardon” (III.ii.170-175). Apparently, Dorimant has known Sir Fopling even longer than that, for he recalls, “He went to Paris a plain bashful English blockhead, and is returned a fine undertaking French fop” (IV.i.328-330). Dorimant grows visibly uneasy when Sir Fopling effuses, “Thou art a man of wit, and understands the town” (III.ii.179-180). Clearly, he wants no part of the wit that Sir Fopling finds admirable.

Dorimant’s chief objection to Sir Fopling is that he is artificial. When Dorimant and Medley mock Sir Fopling, Emilia protests, “However you despise him gentlemen, I’ll lay my life he passes for a wit with many.” Dorimant rejoins, “That may very well be, nature has her cheats, stums a brain, and puts sophisticate dullness often on the tasteless multitude for wit and good humor” (III.ii.291-296).

---

<sup>108</sup> Robert B. Heilman, “Some Fops and Some Versions of Foppery,” in *ELH*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Summer 1982), 391.

In the seventeenth century, the words “sophisticate” and “sophisticated” signified not elegance or refinement but empty contrivance; Dorimant is accusing Sir Fopling of being “mixed with some foreign substance; adulterated; not pure or genuine,” or “altered from, deprived of, primitive simplicity or naturalness.”<sup>109</sup> However, there is a coded pun in the phrase “sophisticate dullness.” Elsewhere, Dorimant refers to Sir Fopling as a blockhead, while Medley calls him a fool (I.i.417). The opposite of the word “sophisticated” was some form of “natural”; but until the early twentieth century, “natural” could also be a noun meaning “a person having a low learning ability or intellectual capacity; a person born with impaired intelligence”:<sup>110</sup> in other words, a fool. Sir Fopling may be “sophisticate,” but he is also “natural”—and natural in the modern sense as well as the obsolete. No matter his vanity, he simply cannot pull off artifice, and the reader should take care not to confuse the two.

True, Sir Fopling puts too much stock in outward trappings: in what may be the first example of product placement in English literature (III.ii.250-259), he rattles off the Paris designers who made his suit, accessories, shoes, periwig and gloves (“Orangerie! You know the smell ladies!”). So intent is he on flaunting his wealth that he forgets the difference between night and day, calling for flambeaux after sunrise (IV.i.488). His antics lead Virginia Ogden Birdsall to cast the rake and the fop as combatants in the war between nature and artifice: “Clearly the

---

<sup>109</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, “sophisticated,” *ppl. a.*, definitions 1 and 2. “Sophisticated” in the sense of “subtle, discriminating, refined, cultured” did not enter the language until the late nineteenth century.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, “natural,” *n.*, definition 7.

difference between Dorimant and Harriet on the one hand and Sir Fopling on the other has to do in part with style as a manifestation of self. For Dorimant and Harriet style *expresses* the natural man. For Sir Fopling style *replaces* nature.”<sup>111</sup> But if Birdsall is correct, how do we explain Sir Fopling’s inability to hide his feelings or schemes? “Sir Fopling has no patience with concealment,” writes Berglund. “Sir Fopling’s vitality derives from being purely extrinsic; he incorporates into his surface everything that the rakes wish to conceal.”<sup>112</sup> In front of two women, he cries, “Dorimant, I could find it in my heart for an amusement to have a gallantry with some of our English ladies” (III.ii.260-261). In the last scene, surrounded by the entire cast, he declares his plan to “make my court to the whole sex in a ballet” (V.II.420-421). Moreover, Sir Fopling proves incapable not only of maintaining his own disguise, but also of preserving Dorimant’s. Even after Dorimant explains that his reputation depends on his new role, Sir Fopling forgets himself again and again: “Dorimant, Courtage I would say, would thou hadst spent last winter in Paris with me” (251-253). Surely this is not a man who “has acted the part of the ‘Compleat Gentleman’ for so long that no vestige of spontaneity is left.”<sup>113</sup>

By contrast, Dorimant admits freely to his own duplicity. “Constancy at my years!” he exclaims to Mrs. Loveit, “’tis not a virtue in season, you might as well expect the fruit the autumn ripens i’ the spring” (II.ii.203-205). He seems unperturbed at Mrs. Loveit’s charge that he is a “damned dissembler”: “I am so, I

---

<sup>111</sup> *Wild Civility*, 79.

<sup>112</sup> “The Language of the Libertines,” 375-376.

<sup>113</sup> *Wild Civility*, 79.

confess, good nature, and good manners corrupt me,” he replies, creating a paradox akin to the classic “Everything I say is a lie, including this.” At the same time, though, he portrays himself as a plain-dealer whose honesty shades into brutality. When Sir Fopling begs Dorimant to be “intimate” with him—“there is no living without making some good man the confident of our pleasures”—Dorimant begs off: “Why first, I could never keep a secret in my life, and then there is no charm so infallibly makes me fall in love with a woman as my knowing a friend loves her. I deal honestly with you” (III.ii.180-190). Moving between qualified honesty and freely confessed deceit, Dorimant seems uncertain where he stands in relation to words. He does not want to be a mere deceiver or a mere plain-dealer, a mere type of either; he wants to complicate—or sophisticate—his language. Yet he finds no way to do this but by infusing lies with truth and truth with lies. He cannot break out of the simple dichotomy that his words have constructed for him.

Recall Victoria’s remark to her sister as they flirt with Estridge and Modish in the Mulberry Garden: “Truth is a thing meerly necessary for witnesses, and Historians, and in these places doth but curb invention, and spoil good Company.” Dorimant seems to have taken this sentiment to heart, but it has only hampered him. He must write his own history as he lives it, comment on his exploits before they are complete; he must be his own witness, his own historian, his own most eloquent advocate. But advocating for himself with his mistresses means lying; advocating for himself with posterity—or the audience—means being frank.

Using others' words is safe, but it allows him to communicate only so much.

Using his own language is more perilous, as his friends have grown accustomed to his habits of thought. "This jealousy's a mere pretense, a cursed trick of your own devising," scoffs Mrs. Loveit—correctly—when Dorimant accuses her of alluring Sir Fopling "with that softness in your voice, and all that wanton kindness in your eyes, you so notoriously affect, when you design a conquest" (II.ii.274-275, 258-261). In her next breath, Mrs. Loveit utters a sentence fatal to Dorimant's sense of identity: "I know you."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### "Now I Can Blaze No Longer": The Aging Rake

And then their Tenderness appears,  
By adding largely to my Years:  
He's older than he would be reckon'd,  
And well remembers *Charles* the Second.

—Jonathan Swift, "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," 1733

"Modern people do not live the present," wrote Roger Scruton in 1996. "They live the pastness of the present—confronting each moment as it *will* be, from the vantage-point of future time."<sup>114</sup> Whether or not the habit of premature retrospection is unique to modernity (and I would argue that it is not, as Tacitus' concern for *posteritas* suggests), it characterizes much of modern literature. It does not, however, characterize the literature of the Restoration. The rakes of Etherege, Sedley, and Wycherley rarely glance farther into the future than their next assignation or game of ombre. They are stubbornly young: apathetic—and,

<sup>114</sup> Roger Scruton, "The Aesthetic Endeavour Today," in *Philosophy*, vol. 71, no. 277 (Jul. 1996), 331.

it seems, impervious—to the passage of time. They come to terms with the past and grapple with the present, but avoid peering forward. In general, Restoration poetry seems equally uninterested in the future. The *carpe diem* spirit of Cavalier verse lingers in the lyrics of poets like Waller, but with little variation on the standard message: roses wilt, beauty fades, lovers get bored. This message seeps into the drama, as well. “What we swear at such a time may be a certain proof of a present passion,” Dorimant tells Mrs. Loveit when she laments his broken vows, “but to say truth, in Love there is no security to be given for the future” (II.ii.229-231). The Restoration’s deepest statement about the future appears to be that we all will die at some point, but not now.

It is surprising, then, to find in the poems of the age’s most notorious libertine a tendency “to summarize and pre-empt the past of the present moment.”<sup>115</sup> Despite—or because of—his reckless lifestyle, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, was preoccupied with the specter of the future. “After Death nothing is, and nothing death,” begins his translation of Seneca’s *Troades*—a classic *carpe diem* sentiment, but altered to describe the death of the spirit, not of the body.<sup>116</sup> A more flippant poem, written when Rochester was in his twenties or very early thirties, presents one of the only fictional rakes willing to envision his old age. In “The Disabled Debauchee,” a young man imagines himself impotent but flush with old triumphs, like “some brave Admiral, in former War/Depriv’d of force,

---

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> All Rochester quotations from Harold Love, ed., *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester* (Oxford University Press, 1999). As Rochester died in 1680 at the age of 33, these poems likely come from the 1670s or late 1660s.

but prest with courage still.” Though “Forc’d from the pleasing Billows of Debauch/On the Dull shore of lazy Temperance,” the speaker will take his pleasures by proxy:

My pains at least some respite shall afford  
While I behold the Battels you maintain,  
When Fleets of Glasses sail about the Board,  
From whose broad sides Volleys of Wit shall Rain.

But “lazy Temperance” does not imply meekness, for this rake longs to urge “hopeful youths” down the path of iniquity:

Or should some cold-complexion’d Sot forbid,  
With his Dull Morals, your bold Night-Alarms;  
I’ll fire his bloud, by telling what I did  
When I was strong, and able to bear Arms.

Note the second person: the speaker addresses himself not to a mistress, but to dissipated posterity. Frozen in the heyday of his debauchery, he speaks to us as well as to those “hopeful youths.” He preserves his youth by placing himself in the future tense and his exploits in the future perfect; indeed, he preserves his youth by writing at all. Shakespeare’s sonnets do that favor for a beautiful young man (“My love shall in my verse ever live young”), but Rochester’s speaker does it for himself. No matter how many generations read the poem, its hero will always be a young rake anticipating old age, and his exploits will never fade into memory:

I’ll tell of Whores attack’d, their Lords at home;  
Bauds Quarters beaten up, and Fortress won;  
Windows demolish’d, Watches overcome,  
And handsome Ills, by my Contrivance, done.

Nor shall our Love-fits *Cloris* be forgot,  
When each the well-look’d Linkboy strove t’ enjoy;

And the best Kiss was the deciding lot,  
Whether the Boy Fuck'd you, or I the Boy.

In his bravado, the rake makes a rash assumption about posterity: that the young gallants of the future, with their “Fleets of Glasses” and “Volleys of Wit,” will take any interest in an old man’s nostalgia. He assumes that the mores of the early eighteenth century will match those of the Restoration: that his young friends will applaud his tales of smashed windows, vandalized churches, and handsome boys. The speaker can imagine his own body impotent and diseased, but fails to predict the public backlash against the libertinism of the early Restoration.

It was a backlash that Rochester never witnessed: he died in 1680, at the age of 33 (one suspects that he appreciated the irony). Like the rock stars of the 1960s, the rakes of the 1660s tended to die before old age. It would be risky to assume a pattern: few courtiers were as self-destructive as Rochester, who professed to have been drunk for five years on end, and the ordinary people of the Restoration died as young as its rakes. But no matter the cause, the hedonism of Charles II’s court had faded by the mid-1680s. Charles himself died on February 5, 1685, of a sudden illness that “helped to fuel rumours that he had been poisoned” by Catholic followers of his brother James.<sup>117</sup> The Duke of Buckingham died in 1687, and Aphra Behn in 1689. Sir Charles Sedley and Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, retired into quiet married life, to the annoyance of their old friend Etherege, now a homesick envoy in Bavaria. In the 1690s, a

---

<sup>117</sup> Paul Seaward, “Charles II (1630-1685), in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Sep. 2004). <http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/5144>.

new generation of wits—Joseph Addison, William Congreve, John Vanbrugh, Jonathan Swift—brought glamour to temperance.

Of course, the word “temperance” is relative. The comedies of Congreve and Vanbrugh were censured for their immorality, most notably by the clergyman Jeremy Collier (1650-1726), who published *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* in 1698. In this lengthy pamphlet, Collier levels dozens of charges against contemporary plays, addressing “Their *Smuttiness* of *Expression*; Their *Swearing*, *Profainness*, and *Lewd Application of Scripture*; Their *Abuse* of the *Clergy*; Their *making their Top Characters Libertines*, and giving them *Success* in their *Debauchery*.”<sup>118</sup> Working from the premise that plays should “expose the Singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible, and to bring every Thing that is ill under Infamy, and Neglect,” Collier attacks early and late Restoration drama with equal vehemence. But he structures his arguments clumsily, skipping from one play to another with little regard for continuity. Aesthetically, he is on even shakier ground: for instance, he lambasts Vanbrugh for ignoring “the three dramattick unities,” which had fallen out of fashion at the turn of the seventeenth century. Despite his wide reading, Collier constructs a shoddy, unconvincing argument.

Yet it was an argument that four well-known playwrights—Congreve, Vanbrugh, John Dennis, and Thomas D’Urfey—felt compelled to rebut. Given Collier’s dubious credentials, it is odd that Vanbrugh, a celebrated dramatist and

---

<sup>118</sup> Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage, Together with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument* (London: printed for S. Keble, R. Sare, and H. Hindmarsh, 1698), 1.

architect, should have devoted 79 pages to refuting *A Short View*. It is even odder as Vanbrugh was clearly aware of the discrepancy between his talents and Collier's. In the opening lines of *A Short Vindication of The Relapse and The Provoked Wife from Immorality and Prophaneness*, Vanbrugh assures the reader that "the Righteous as well as the Unrighteous persuaded me, The Attack was so weak, the Town wou'd defend it self."<sup>119</sup> He pressed on, he claims, because he discovered

That by the Industry of some People, whose Temporal Interest engages 'em in the Squabble; and the Natural Propensity of others, to be fond of any thing that's Abusive; this Lampoon has got Credit enough in some Places to brand the Persons it mentions with almost as bad a Character, as the Author of it has fixt upon himself, by his Life and Conversation in the World. (2-3)

But Vanbrugh's assault on Collier cannot be explained away by the mere bad taste of the town. If *A Short View* garnered a wide readership, it was because England's moral climate had shifted since the early Restoration. Indeed, Vanbrugh himself accepts Collier's main premise, conceding that "the Business of Comedy is to shew People what they shou'd do, by representing them upon the Stage, doing what they shou'd not" (45). To admit this, however, is to admit that comedy fails when its audience continues doing "what they shou'd not." And despite his wit, Vanbrugh never proves that his plays convey effective lessons. He is at his best when poking holes in Collier's self-contradictions. "I know of no Bawdy that she talks," he writes of *The Relapse*'s ebullient Miss Hoyden. "If the Strength of [Collier's] Imagination give any of her Discourse that Turn, I suppose

---

<sup>119</sup> John Vanbrugh, *A Short Vindication of The Relapse and The Provok'd Wife from Immorality and Prophaneness* (London: printed for H. Walwyn, 1698). Early English Books Online.

it may be owing to the Number of Bawdy Plays he has read, which have debauch'd his Taste, and made every thing seem Salt, that comes in his way" (7). But such negative arguments take Vanbrugh only so far, and the consequences of the tract war indicate that Collier won. "Before the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century," writes Eric Salmon, "both Richard Steele and Colley Cibber had publicly declared that they approved of Collier's attack and both of them claimed that their own plays were influenced by Collier's views."<sup>120</sup>

As Restoration comedy faded, so did the Restoration rake. Writers of the early eighteenth century conflated the rake with another well-worn character type: the *senex amans*, or "loving old man." To be sure, the aged lecher had appeared in many Restoration plays—take Everyyoung of *The Mulberry Garden*, Old Bellair of *The Man of Mode*, or Antonio of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*—but usually as a farcical foil to the seductive rake. In Restoration drama, there are as many variations on the aging rake as on the young one. Everyyoung is affable and engaging, if mildly pathetic, in his powder, periwig, and "flirting Hat." Old Bellair pesters Emilia with his attentions, but surrenders her freely to his son (one cannot help but imagine subsequent family dinners). Antonio, a cowardly Venetian senator, is perhaps the first masochist in English literature, begging his young mistress to "spit in my Face" and "use me like a Dog a little" (III.i).<sup>121</sup> But

<sup>120</sup> Eric Salmon, "Collier, Jeremy (1650–1726)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5917>, accessed 7 April 2009. Ironically, Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* had provided the model for *The Relapse*, in which Cibber had played Lord Foppington.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Otway, *Venice preserv'd, or, A plot discover'd* (London: printed for Jos. Hindmarsh, 1682).

despite their differences, these three men resemble one another in outlook. In Restoration comedy, youth is the desirable state of being, and libertinism the desirable code of behavior; far from reminiscing over years past, the *senex amans* throws himself into the spirit of the new age. He never quite succeeds, but at least he conforms to the dominant ideology of his social circle.

This paradigm shifted around 1700, when Augustan writers began using the *senex amans* as Restoration writers had used the young rake: as an instrument for the selective rewriting of history. Old Bellair is fifty-five in (presumably) 1676, but unlike Lady Woodvill, he refuses to romanticize the Civil War or the court of Charles I. By contrast, the aging rakes of Augustan literature struggle to preserve a particular era: the Restoration before the fall of James II. Unluckily for them, the Restoration was an era when the typical attributes of youth—mischievousness, high spirits, sexual prowess—took precedence over temperance and sobriety. Only young men could keep that age alive, and the young men of the eighteenth century were of a different mind. Rochester's speaker has resigned himself to age and impotence, but not to the possibility that the next generation might be more virtuous than he. More to the point, he imagines himself vanquished by "Pox and Wine's unlucky chance," not by a force as mundane as time. In the Restoration, the rake was timeless and ageless; at the turn of the century, the rake stood for the Restoration. And as Rochester's generation aged and died, so too did its amorality. By casting the rake as befuddled and impotent, younger writers hastened the Restoration's demise.

We should not assume, however, that the old rake was nothing more than an Augustan literary trope. In 1660, Clement Ellis demonstrated that the gallant was a social problem as much as a fictional construct; in the 1680s, George Etherege performed the same favor—albeit unwillingly—for the *senex amans*. In 1685, the newly crowned James II sent fifty-year-old Etherege on a diplomatic mission to Regensburg, the capital of Bavaria.<sup>122</sup> Etherege lived there for the next four years, writing regular dispatches to Charles Middleton, second earl of Middleton (1649/50-1719), James's secretary of state. It was a tedious job, made worse by the monotony of Bavarian social life and the malice of Etherege's Puritan secretary, Hugo Hughes, who may have been in league with the future William III.<sup>123</sup> Etherege beguiled his empty hours by writing to London friends, bemoaning the soporific life of an envoy and reflecting with fondness on the debauches of his youth. Meanwhile, Hughes penned his own dispatches—in both English and Latin—to an unknown recipient, casting Etherege as a faded roué whose drinking, whoring, and compulsive gambling alienated him from the Regensburg gentry. It would be a mistake to put too much stock in Hughes's tales, given his political leanings and his personal hatred of Etherege. But no matter his accuracy, Hughes anticipated later writers in his eagerness to force the Restoration moral code into obsolescence. Though writing at cross purposes, Hughes and Etherege managed to construct the same stock figure: the aging

---

<sup>122</sup> Etherege referred to the city by its Latin name, Ratisbon (or its French one, Ratisbonne), but I use the German version.

<sup>123</sup> Frederick Bracher, ed., *Letters of Sir George Etherege* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), xx.

*enfant terrible*, uncertain how to spend his maturity now the time for prodigy was past.

Written in late 1686, the first of Hughes's Etherege letters begins with an account of the two men's journey to Regensburg via The Hague. "I suppose you have already been inform'd," writes Hughes,

of what past at the Hague: either as to his loosing 250 £ by play, his haunting pitifull and mean houses contrary to Mr. Skelton's advice, or as to his making Love for which he was Sufficently laugh'd at. And not to mention his caressing every dirty Drab that came in his way from Holland to this place, I shall onely begin with the manner of his life and conversation after his arrivall.<sup>124</sup>

Hughes dwells at length on Etherege's gambling addiction, which drove him to rely on "Severall french sharpers" who used to drink with Etherege "till 2 or 3 a clock in the morning." Then, according to Hughes, Etherege and the Frenchmen would "walk about the Streets with clubs in their hands . . . so drunk that endeavouring to go home they shou'd be found next morning to lie sleeping in the Streets" (294). Worse, Etherege fell in love with a comic actress from a "Company of Strawlers come hither from Nuremberg," lost no time in making her his mistress, and scandalized the town by handing her "into his coach before all the Company notwithstanding all the giggling and hishing of the Austrian Ladys and of the Ministers Wives and Daughters, himself humbly walking home on foot" (299-300). As in this passage, Hughes tends to portray Etherege's manners, morals, and even politics as less offensive than ludicrous. Hughes may be

---

<sup>124</sup> Bracher, *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, 292. All Hughes and Etherege letters come from this source, and my pagination follows Bracher's.

exaggerating, or even lying, but his accuracy is less important than his technique. In his account, Etherege is not a dangerous rake but a pathetic laughingstock.

In his letters to English friends, Etherege made no secret of his boredom and restlessness in Regensburg. "All my business in this dull place is to give a bare account of what is done, which requires only a little playn sense," he complained to the Earl of Dorset. "I have lost for want of exercise the use of fancy and imagination" (135). His accounts of himself are more ambiguous than his descriptions of the city. In some letters, Etherege claims to have recovered his old spirits; in others, he writes frankly about the torments of aging. He shifts constantly between an ebullient determination to recapture his youth and a melancholy awareness of his years. "It is well known when play and women are in the case I am no Sleeper," he declares (179); but four months later, he insists that "I am wean'd from the very thought of play" (207). At times, he blames his lack of romance on the prudery of the German ladies: "In a word les badinages is all the freedome has been allow'd me by these sorte of Mistresses" (101). But in darker moods, he looks to time for the source of his loneliness. "I am sorry to hear you complain of an Ebb at your years," he wrote to William Jephson in 1688. "It makes me open my Eyes, and trust me it is a sad prospect a man has after fifty. No more Spring tydes of Love are to be expected. Yet I will endeavour to be as wise in this point as Anacreon was and cherish the spark that remains, now I can blaze no longer" (201).

His plight was especially hard as the companions of his youth—Buckingham, Sedley, Dorset—had settled into marriage and sober retirement. Over and over, Etherege laments their regular hours and loyalty to their wives. His complaints are facetious, but under his cavalier wit lies a sense of loss, even of betrayal. The pattern begins with an incredulous letter to Buckingham, now fifty-eight: “I Received the News of your Grace’s retiring into Yorkshire, and leading a sedate contemplative Life there, with no less Astonishment than I should hear of . . . the Pope’s wearing a long Perriwig, and setting up for a flaming Beau in the seventy-fourth Year of his Age” (66). To Dryden, he writes of Sedley’s impotence: “I hope you have not yet attain’d the perfection I have heard Sir Charles Sydlie brag of, which is that when a short youth runs through every veine and puts him in minde of his ancient prowess, he thinks it not worth while to bestow motion on his *et cetera muscle*” (103). To an unknown correspondent, he gripes, “Sir Charles Sedley sets up for good houres and Sobriety, my Lord [Dorset] has given over variety and shuts himself up within my Ladys arms” (167). If these men had reformed as thoroughly as Etherege suggests, we should not wonder at his surprise. In 1663, Sedley had come, in the words of Samuel Pepys,

in open day into the balcone and showed his nakedness—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 pulpitt, 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.<sup>125</sup>

Small wonder that Etherege raised an eyebrow at Sedley’s good behavior.

---

<sup>125</sup> Quoted in George E. Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 9.

But why should his friends' reformation have disturbed him so deeply? The answer lies in his last reference to Sedley and Dorset, near the end of his correspondence:

What a change is it for me who was restless in London and still hurrying about to seeke some fresh adventure to sitt Ev'ry day two or three houres bound to the good behavior in a chair with armes to know the Capitulation a Town was surrender'd upon and to learn the desseins of an approaching Campaigne. This may reclaime me and make me grave enough by that time I return to play a game at Backgamon with my Lord Dorset and Sir Charles Sedley, but it will hardly make me fop enough to be of a politick club. (201)

Here and elsewhere, Etherege protests that he loathes politics; though "businesse has its charmes as well as other things" (197), he wishes that he "could love the rusling of papers so well as I have done the rusling of Petty-coats" (201). At times, this stance seems less natural than cultivated. Like the ahistoric rakes of so many plays, Etherege shows no desire to accustom himself to politics; he keeps his distance from public affairs, placing the Bavarian ministers firmly in the third-person plural. He scorns, almost smugly, the mechanisms of bureaucracy and hierarchy. To the Secretary of State, his official superior, he sends the following verses:

From hunting Whores and ha[u]nting play  
And minding nothing else all day  
And all the night too you will say—  
To make grave legs in formal fetters,  
Converse with Fops and write dull Letters,  
To goe to bed 'twixt eight and nine  
And sleep away my precious time  
In such an idle sneaking place  
Where vice and folly hide their face . . .

Defying the petty concerns of *hoi polloi*, Etherege casts himself as the plain-dealing gallant, impatient with pretense—or, at least, with any pretense he finds dull. He seems desperate to prove that he has not become “one of them,” has not traded rakish aberration for thoughtless conformity. Like Ellis’s “gentile sinner”—or, indeed, like Dorimant—Etherege fears nothing more than the loss of his identity. One by one, his friends have sacrificed pleasure to stability; he is the last rake of their circle, the last man to look skeptically on virtue and monogamy. Ironically, he has achieved just what the fictional rake desires: a sense of uniqueness. At the same time, though, he cannot ignore the mundane truth: that he has accepted a middling diplomatic post in a remote German city. Tightly though he clutches his scraps of gallantry, he cannot stay a rake unless surrounded by others of his kind. Uniqueness proves less than a blessing—and here we reach the chief perplex of the rakish persona. It crumbles when imitated, and it fades when left alone.

Powerless against this paradox, Etherege tries desperately to preserve his rakehood. He couches his tales in the language of libertinism; sex and beautiful women are his default similes. “Pray make my compliments to my Lord Godolphin and my Lord Dover,” he writes to Henry Guy. “I intend to do it suddainly myself, for it is as great a pleasure to me to discharge my duty to the men whom I am oblig’d to honor as it is to a Lover to discharge the impatience he has in his veines on his Mistress” (107). In this jarring analogy, Etherege assumes the role of a man who desires women so strongly that he is willing to feminize his

male friends. Nor does he conceal his determination to retain a youthful worldview. He upbraids a younger correspondent for “the malice you have shew’d in putting me in minde of my being old. I have always by my way of Living taken care to banish age from my thoughts, and what have I done to provoak your envy, who are young and vigorous, to remember me that I bear a burthen my humor makes me insensible of” (111). To an older friend, he writes more temperately:

But while we approach this vertue [chastity], let us take care our years do not sower us with any of the common vices of age. Let us still preserve our good humor and our good nature to make us wellcome near those young people who possess that plentiful Estat we have pretty well run out of, that we may help them rail at the morose and cry out with fallstaff, “Down with them; they hate us Youth.” (157)

His mention of Falstaff indicates a sharp sense of irony. But still, like Rochester’s debauchee, he assumes that the young men of 1687 will welcome him into their throng. In any case, Etherege had little time left to win their favor: he died, probably at Paris, in 1691 or 1692.

Reading Etherege’s *fin-de-siècle* reflections on rakehood, one would be tempted to proclaim him the last gallant of the Restoration. But William Wycherley lived well into his seventies, and the mishaps and debauches of his old age made him the scapegoat of later moralists. Victorian and early-twentieth-century scholars were especially fond of Wycherley as cautionary tale. Writers as prominent as Thomas Babington Macaulay and Leslie Stephen passed judgment on Wycherley’s dissipated life and appropriately miserable end. As late as 1930, Willard Connely felt free to paint this deathbed scene (ellipses his):

About two hours later—the short winter day was unfolding its blanket of dark, and it would soon be candle-time—Will Wycherley died. It was so easy for him. It was as if breathing had grown superfluous . . . and there was no need . . . to go on.

So came peace on New Year's Eve to Bow-street.

Had they asked Wycherley where he desired to be buried he would have answered in the words of his own Horner: "Oh, amongst friends, amongst friends."<sup>126</sup>

Most of Wycherley's biographers dwell at length on his relationship with Alexander Pope, and for good reason. Their friendship and falling-out seems to exemplify the tension between the Restoration and Augustan worldviews. The two men met in 1704, when Wycherley was sixty-four and Pope sixteen, and struck up a correspondence crammed with courtesy on Pope's end and ribaldry on Wycherley's. Since the letters passed through Pope's hands before their publication in 1735, it is possible that Pope—no stranger to self-aggrandizement—edited them to strengthen his own side of the controversy. But assuming that they are more or less accurate, the letters provide a vivid picture of another aging rake, desperate to ingratiate himself with a younger, more talented poet. To this end, Wycherley invokes old Restoration tropes—whoring, drinking, laziness—but to little effect: the chaste, sober, industrious Pope sidesteps Wycherley's talk of taverns and beautiful women. The awkwardness swells when Pope begins altering Wycherley's mediocre verse, reminding the old man that poetry is a product of labor, not afflatus. With Wycherley's complicity, the new generation edits the old out of memory.

What we have of the correspondence begins with a 1704 letter from Pope, assuring Wycherley that "whatever lesser wits have risen" since the death of

---

<sup>126</sup> Willard Connely, *Brawny Wycherley* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 334.

Dryden in 1700 “are but like Stars appearing when the Sun is set . . . Our Wit (as you call it) is but reflexion and imitation, therefore scarce to be call’d ours.”<sup>127</sup>

Pope’s letter inaugurated an extended exchange of pleasantries, but Wycherley’s mind turned quickly to sublunary matters: sex and fame. In a letter written on March 22, 1705/6, Wycherley recounts a recent coach journey into the country:

. . . there were four Woemen in the Coach, to my Man, and myself, one was handsome and sick so was useless, tother three were well and Ugly enough to make any man Sick, of their company the first who was Sick if well deserved better Jumbling, than that of the Coach nay she might have deserved Jumbling in a Coach in Covent Garden, when it moved whilst the wheels stand still . . . (14)

After continuing in this vein for a while, Wycherley asks Pope “to look over that damn’d Miscellany of Madrigals of mine to pick out (if possible) some that may be so alterd that they yet may apeare in print again I hope with better Success than they have hitherto done” (15). Pope’s reply is stiff and businesslike: without the vaguest nod to Wycherley’s tale of “Jumbling,” he asks for clarification of his task, notes that he has enclosed “a Sample” of some poems already altered, and ends with a characteristic flourish: “The few Things I have entirely added, you will excuse; you may take them lawfully for your own, because they are no more than Sparks lighted up by your Fire; and you may omit them at last, if you think them but Squibs in your Triumphs” (16).

Pope edited Wycherley’s poetry until 1710. He clearly thought it an honor to have gained the trust of so well-known a writer; yet out of awkwardness, discomfort, or a growing sense of his own literary superiority, he held Wycherley

---

<sup>127</sup> All Wycherley and Pope quotations from George Sherburn, ed., *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope* (Oxford University Press, 1954).

at arm's length. But the older man, whether blind to Pope's prudery or scornful of it, kept flooding his young friend with innuendo. In one letter, he describes a quack prophet whose chief follower, Betty Grey, was

so pretty and handsome a young Wench, (as they say) that she wou'd be able to turn you to her; and communicate to you some of her Sanctify'd Agitations of Body, by the secret Operations of her Spirits, upon Yours, and put you into such blissful Agitations of an Amorous Extacy, that you wou'd not know where you were, in Heav'n or Earth. (35)

With time, Wycherley's entendres took on an edge of malice. After the playwright's death, Pope would describe him as having "had the true nobleman look"; Wycherley would not have said the same of the invalid Pope. With Victorian circumlocution, Stephen speculates that Pope may have been impotent: "There is no proof that Pope was ever licentious in practice. . . . For this there was the very good reason that his 'little, tender, crazy carcass,' as Wycherley calls it, was utterly unfit for such excesses as his companions could practice with comparative impunity."<sup>128</sup> It is unclear how much Wycherley knew about Pope's tortured relationships with women, but his hearty injunction to "cure your headach with the smart of your Nymphs Taile and be damn'd" (65) seems insensitive at best. In the same letter, he assures Pope that "I seldom break those Promises to my Friends, which would deprive my self of my Pleasure, no more than I wou'd have fail'd formerly an Assignation with my She-Friend, whereby I shou'd have been the greatest Looser" (65). For some reason, Wycherley is doing his best to portray himself as virile and lustful. Like Etherege, he peppers his

---

<sup>128</sup> Leslie Stephen, *Alexander Pope* (London: Macmillan, 1880), 14.

letters with libertine wit; unlike Etherege, he hardly expects his correspondent to reply in kind.

Why, then, did Wycherley refuse to leave off? In part, I think, because of the confidence—verging on arrogance—with which Pope criticized his work. Early in their friendship, for instance, Pope edited Wycherley’s poem on dullness, providing a detailed gloss on the changes: “The Poem is now divided into four Parts, mark’d with the literal Figures I. II. III. IV. The first contains the *praise* of Dulness, and shews how upon several suppositions, it passes for 1. Religion. 2. Philosophy. 3. Example. 4. Wit. And 5. The Cause of Wit, and the End of it” (31). In this painfully neoclassical schema, Pope discounts the notion of “ease,” one of the prime qualities of Restoration verse. In the Restoration, writers strove to give the impression that all their verses were fugitive: that poetry was amusing, but they had better things to do. Poets and dramatists were not supposed to be scholars. Idle in Regensburg, Etherege reflected, “Reading is the most constant and best entertainment I have now. The conversation I find is as tedious to me as Books were when I had the advantage of good Companie.”<sup>129</sup> That one of the best Restoration writers found books “tedious” says much about the age as a whole.

For his part, Wycherley ventures a veiled objection, thanking Pope for “the pains you have taken to recommend my *Dulness*, by making it more methodical . . . since true and natural *Dulness* is shown more by its pretence to form and method, as the sprightliness of Wit by despising both” (33). Clearly

<sup>129</sup> Bracher, *Letters of Sir George Etherege*, 189.

affronted, Pope counters, “This is true enough, if by *Wit* you mean no more than *Fancy* or *Conceit*; but in the better notion of Wit, consider’d as propriety, surely Method is not only necessary for Perspicuity and Harmony of parts, but gives beauty even to the minute and particular thoughts” (34). The letter immediately following this one describes Betty Grey and her “Sanctify’d Agitations of Body.” The description no longer seems a harmless bit of badinage. Pope may surpass him in mind, Wycherley implies, but not in body. His association of sex with writing is logical, given the aesthetic assumptions of his age. Restoration comedy, like modern rap music, led the audience to believe that the writer moved in the milieu he described. A man who wrote about rakes was presumed to be a rake, as a rapper who rails against authority is presumed to have defied it. For Wycherley, literature and the body were bound up in each other, and he tried to salvage his poetry by calling attention to his old sexual conquests. But those, too, belonged to an era long past.

Even while Wycherley lived, other writers than Pope were laboring to make his era obsolete. In the reign of Queen Anne, two periodicals advanced a new version of history, a version that complicated the history-fashion diptych of the Restoration. Richard Steele’s *Tatler* first appeared in 1709; the *Spectator*, by Steele, Joseph Addison, and other writers, followed in 1711. In the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, history is public, dynamic, and immediately accessible to the common man. Readers of the periodicals no longer observe history as they would a heroic tragedy; they shape it, alter it, and suffer its consequences. The *Tatler*’s Isaac

Bickerstaff and the *Spectator*'s eponymous narrator are more than observers; they are also prescient historians, forming for posterity a picture of their age. The *Spectator* defines "the most agreeable Talent of an Historian" as the ability "to lead us Step by Step into the several Actions and Events of his History," so "that his Reader becomes a kind of Spectator" (420).<sup>130</sup> And as the *Spectator* demonstrates by example, an observer need not stay passive: to cast judgment on any age, no matter how long past, is to participate in the creation of historical narrative. In these periodicals, history is a vital, protean organism, not a statue carved across the Channel in France or Flanders. Let the Duke of Marlborough capture what cities he will; Bickerstaff and the *Spectator* are committed to recording "the proper and just Notices of Persons and Things, that make up the History of the Passing Day" (*Tatler* 15).

This new worldview had serious consequences for Restoration notions of history. In *The Comical Revenge*, *The Mulberry Garden*, and even *The Man of Mode*, history is a backdrop, a specter, or a figment of fiction; the characters carry on their private affairs despite history, not in concord with it. Sir Frederick Frolick pays no heed to political upheaval; Jack Wildish takes refuge from it in the *hortus conclusus* of the Mulberry Garden; Dorimant uses it to embellish his private narrative, but never acknowledges its significance. All three plays assume that history is lofty and remote, with little bearing on love, wit, or trickery. By contrast, the *Tatler* and *Spectator* integrate the Mulberry Garden with the wider

---

<sup>130</sup> Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Tatler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Essays cited by number, not page.

world, the gossip of London with the battles of the Continent. For Addison and Steele, Augustan history is made up of the very minutiae that Restoration history ignores. This leaves no place for the ahistoric rake, whose identity depends on his apathy to history. If history includes love, wit, and trickery—the very stuff of the rakish existence—what value lies in apathy? Little by little, Augustan writers subject the Restoration rake to the passage of time, forcing him to age and suffer.

In his introduction to the first number of the *Tatler*, published on April 12, 1709, Steele provides a key to the format of his periodical:

All Accounts of *Gallantry*, *Pleasure*, and *Entertainment*, shall be under the Article of *White's Chocolate-house*; *Poetry*, under that of *Will's Coffee-house*; *Learning*, under the Title of *Graecian*; *Foreign* and *Domestick News*, you will have from *St. James's Coffee-house*; and what else I have to offer on any Subject, shall be dated from my own Apartment.

As the months progress, the dispatches from St. James's grow rarer, and public life begins to meld with town gossip and private morality. "While others are busied in Relations which concern the Interests of Princes, the Peace of Nations, and the Revolutions of Empire," writes Bickerstaff, "I think (tho' these are very great Subjects) my Theme of Discourse is sometimes to be of Matters of a higher Consideration"—which means, in this case, a quack doctor's "late Cure done upon a young Gentleman who was born blind" (55). By number 160, published a year after the inaugural paper, Bickerstaff is complaining of a friend who wakes him two hours before sunrise with the report "[t]hat the *French* were driven from the *Scarp*, and the town of *Douai* was invested." After the man knocks a second time, Bickerstaff stays sullenly awake, "reflecting with a great deal of Anger and

Contempt on these Volunteers in Politicks, who undergo all the Pain, Watchfulness, and Disquiet of a First Minister, without turning it to the Advantage either of themselves or their Country.” In the space of a year, Bickerstaff has progressed from faithful accounts of “*Foreign and Domestick News*” to outright mockery of news addicts. As wit, art, and history grow increasingly symbiotic, the *Tatler* involves readers more directly in “the History of the Passing Day.” But this endeavor, paradoxically, requires engagement with ages past.

The third number of the *Tatler* describes a recent performance of Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*, which premiered in 1675 and now, according to Bickerstaff, preserves a mere antiquarian attraction:

The Character of *Horner*, and the Design of it, is a good Representation of the Age in which that Comedy was written; at which Time, Love and Wenching were the Business of Life, and the Gallant Manner of pursuing Women, was the best Recommendation at Court . . . A Poet had, at that Time, discover’d his Want of knowing the Manners of the Court he liv’d in, by a Virtuous Character, in a fine Gentleman, as he would show his Ignorance, by drawing a vitious One to please the present Audience.

Throughout the *Tatler*, Steele betrays a conscious effort to distance the reign of Anne from the lascivious Restoration of three decades past. (The fifth number, for instance, refers to Rochester as a poet of “long ago.”) By presuming (or pretending to presume) that modern theatergoers demand virtuous heroes, Steele paints vice not as unnatural or wicked, but as hopelessly *passé*. Gallantry belongs to an old reign and its outmoded habits of thought; to be fashionable is to be virtuous. Most of the great Restoration wits aided Steele’s project by being prematurely dead. And while Wycherley would live until 1715, he seemed, in

Leslie Stephen's words, "a relic of a past literary epoch"<sup>131</sup>—not least, perhaps, because of the historiography of such periodicals as the *Tatler*. While Stephen's portrait partakes of Victorian contempt for Restoration literature, it also indicates Steele's success in distancing his age from the lewdness of the distant past—or, more accurately, of the "distant past."

The *Spectator* employs different means for the same ends, embodying the Restoration in two aging men: Sir Roger de Coverly, a sedate baronet with a rakish past, and Will Honeycomb, a washed-up fop. These men belong to a club of London types—an Augustan update of the Theophrastan cast of characters—meeting "on *Tuesdays* and *Thursdays*" to discuss the affairs of the world.<sup>132</sup> A few decades previous, "Sir ROGER was what you call a fine Gentleman, had often supp'd with my Lord *Rochester* and Sir *George Etherege*, fought a Duel upon his first coming to Town, and kicked Bully *Dawson* in a publick Coffee-house for calling him Youngster" (2). In other words, he was the quintessential "gentile sinner," cavorting with the foremost rakes of his time. But after being "crossed in Love, by a perverse beautiful Widow of the next County to him," Sir Roger "grew careless of himself and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a Coat and Doublet of the same Cut that were in Fashion at the Time of his Repulse, which, in his merry Humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve Times since he first wore it." Here is the paradoxical fate of the ahistoric rake: refusing to participate in history, he becomes associated with a particular place and time. In the

<sup>131</sup> Stephen, *Alexander Pope*, 15.

<sup>132</sup> Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Spectator* (Oxford University Press, 1965). Essays cited by number, not page.

Restoration, an apathy to history was a requisite for rakehood; but the writers of later years associated that apathy with a specific historical moment. Now “in his Fifty sixth Year,” Sir Roger has reformed, much like Sedley and Buckingham: he is “cheerful, gay, and hearty, keeps a good House both in Town and Country; a great Lover of Mankind; but there is such a mirthful Cast in his Behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed.” But his clothes and his past mark him as a relic of the Restoration, adapted to the Spectator’s time but better-suited to his own.

Will Honeycomb is a more pathetic figure, “a Gentleman who according to his Years should be in the Decline of his Life, but having ever been very careful of his Person, and always had a very easy Fortune, Time has made but little Impression, either by Wrinkles on his Forehead, or Traces in his Brain” (2). Like Sir Fopling, he “knows the History of every Mode, and can inform you from which of the *French* King’s Wenches our Wives and Daughters had this Way of curling their Hair, that Way of placing their Hoods.” More to the point, he embodies the history-fashion dichotomy of *The Gentile Sinner*. Politics and history leave him cold: “As other Men of his Age will take Notice to you what such a Minister said upon such and such an Occasion, he will tell you when the Duke of *Monmouth* danced at Court what Woman was then smitten, another was taken with him at the Head of his Troop in the Park.” Like the young Etherege, Will cares little for books: when his friends tease him about the misspellings in “two or three Letters which he writ in his Youth to a Coquet Lady,” he retorts “with a little Passion, that he never liked Pedantry in Spelling, and that he spelt

like a Gentleman, and not like a Scholar” (105). Will seems never to notice the scorn he invites, but to take refuge in a shell of faded glamour and outworn profanity.

The *Spectator*’s most explicit reflection on old age appeared on Valentine’s Day, 1712:

We are eternally pursuing the same Methods which first procured us the Applauses of Mankind. It is from this Notion that an Author writes on, tho’ he is come to Dotage; without ever considering that his Memory is impair’d, and that he has lost that Life, and those Spirits, which formerly raised his Fancy, and fired his Imagination. . . . It is this, in a word, which fills the Town with elderly Fops, and superannuated Coquets. (301)

Later in the essay, this folly is identified explicitly with the Restoration.

“WILL. HONEYCOMB, who is a great Admirer of the Gallantries in King *Charles* the Second’s Reign,” sends the Spectator “a Letter written by a Wit of that Age” to a haughty, decrepit mistress. The letter contains an allegory in which Old Age, banishing Youth and Love from a fertile valley, seizes the man’s mistress in his arms. The irony, of course, is that Will, amused at the woman’s folly, fails to recognize his own resemblance to her. Two months later, in fact, Will gives the club “an Account of his own Amours. I am now, says he, on the Verge of Fifty, tho’ by the way we all knew he was turn’d of Threescore.” Needless to say, his intrigues always end in disaster: “I could give you an Account of a thousand other unsuccessful Attempts, particularly of one which I made some Years since upon an old Woman, whom I had certainly bore away with flying Colours, if her Relations had not come pouring in to her Assistance from all Parts of *England*.” Will ends his anecdote with a passage from *Paradise Lost*, in which Adam

laments that the Creator failed to “fill the world at once/With men as angels without feminine” (345). Perhaps Will is not so ill-read, after all. But Milton tells us that since the fall of Eden, everyone has aged and died, no matter his passions and pursuits. It is a lesson that Will Honeycomb never learns, and that Etherege and Wycherley learned all too well.

### CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have proposed a link between the Restoration rake figure and seventeenth-century notions of history. Investigating that connection with reference to works both religious and secular, I have achieved a clearer view of the rake’s relationship to the recent past. However, no two rakes are alike: Sir Frederick Frolick’s interactions with history differ widely from Dorimant’s, and it would be rash to squeeze both characters into a crude calculus of historical engagement and political apathy. Indeed, what emerges most vividly from my work is the tension between opposing historiographies. For didactic writers like Clement Ellis and Richard Steele, every citizen played a part in the construction of a national historical narrative. Ellis links the classical concept of public virtue (Machiavelli’s *virtù*) with the Christian association of church and state. Writing in a less tempestuous era, Steele and Joseph Addison encourage their middle-class readers to participate—honorably, of course—in the “History of the Passing Day.” This paradigm is a far cry from the historiography of *The Comical*

*Revenge* or *The Mulberry Garden*. In these tragicomedies, history is hewn and chiseled by absent generals and couplet-spouting Cavaliers. The rake survives not by shaping history, but by ignoring it: that is, by committing the very crime of Ellis's apathetic "gentile sinner." *The Man of Mode* holds the diptych together: as Dorimant constructs his own history, he cannot help but implicate himself in history at large.

In each chapter, my aim is simple: to analyze the rake figure's historic—or ahistoric—actions and attributes. My chapter on *The Gentile Sinner* argues that Ellis portrays the sinful nobleman as the crux of England's moral and political life. In Ellis's view, the rake precipitated the Civil War, and only he could mend its disastrous effects. By deconstructing the rake's image of his own singularity, Ellis attempts to turn his attentions to more worthy concerns. Ellis was also instrumental in developing the character of the rake: a self-important aesthete, blasphemous and obscene, terrified that his own humanity would render him unoriginal. Aspects of Ellis's "gentile sinner" appear throughout Restoration comedy, and though I have encountered no writer who refers explicitly to Ellis, he was popular enough in the Restoration to have influenced the chief playwrights of the day.

One of those playwrights was Etherege, whose first comedy, *The Comical Revenge*, is also the first major dramatic representation of the late interregnum. Sir Frederick Frolick, one of the earliest rakes in Restoration drama, ignores historical pressures in favor of private intrigues; he associates with royalists, and

shows no hostility to their views, but never comments on the political upheavals of the time. However, his giddy solipsism does not triumph entirely, for his scheme to inherit Mrs. Rich's fortune ends in disaster. Jack Wildish and Sir John Everyyoung of Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden* have a more sophisticated relationship to history: though one takes refuge in the ahistoric *hortus conclusus* of the Mulberry Garden, and the other in the ahistoric discourse of fashion, both display a keen sense of political advantage. They hide from history, but only to weather it. (Recall Everyyoung's epitomic quip: "I know nothing but how to sort Ribands, make Horse-matches, throw away my money at Dice, and keep my self out of the Tower.") Etherege's third and final play, *The Man of Mode*, is less explicitly political than *The Comical Revenge* or *The Mulberry Garden*, but no less concerned with history and the rake. Dorimant constructs a self-centered hagiography, narrating his exploits even as he performs them. When he alludes to actual history, it is only to strip it of its power. But by placing himself at the crux of history, he demonstrates the insipidity of his own existence.

My last chapter begins after the Restoration, when writers began conflating the seducer with the *senex amans* figure. In the 1660s and 1670s, the libertines of Charles II's court had been in their twenties, thirties, and early forties; by the 1680s, they had reached middle age, and rake literature altered accordingly. No longer was the fictional rake timeless and ageless. Feeling his vigor giving way, he clung to the pursuits of his youth, but slid inexorably into farce. Nor was the aging rake a mere figment of fiction. In his melancholy letters from Bavaria,

Etherege portrayed himself as a faded gallant, nostalgic for his old adventures and uncertain how to employ his last years. Wycherley's letters to Pope, written two decades later, display less self-awareness and more desperation. In 1735, Pope's publication of Wycherley's letters cast the playwright as the archetype of the decrepit rake, condemning him to two centuries of ill treatment at the hands of didactic historians.

Though I could have adduced many fictional discussions of the *senex amans*, I chose to focus on the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, two periodicals that recast history as intimate and immediate, not cold and remote. Both papers associate gallantry with the Restoration, and both seek to discredit it by depicting it as unfashionable. In the Restoration, the rake had been timeless and ageless, but his pursuits were those of a young man. As the years passed, fewer young men embraced the libertine life, and the rakes of the Restoration lost the ability to sustain it.

My project represents a very limited survey of Restoration rake literature. Almost every Restoration play features a rake, and none of those plays was written in an ahistoric vacuum. As a result, the number of historical rakes created between 1660 and 1700 is far greater than the number I ended up discussing. For instance, I should have liked to address Manly of Wycherley's *The Plain-Dealer* (1676), and Heartwell of Congreve's *The Old Bachelor* (1693). Most of all, I wanted to include a chapter on Aphra Behn's *The Rover, or the Banish'd Cavaliers* (1677), which follows the exploits of Royalists in Naples, but I was thwarted by considerations of space. My discussion of three rake plays, two

periodicals, two collections of letters, and one moral treatise hardly exhausts the field. The problem, in literature if not in life, is one of too many rakes and too little time.

The eighteenth century seems the logical next step in my investigation, as the *Tatler* and *Spectator* did not spell the death of the rake. He haunted the Western imagination for another hundred years, appearing in such major novels as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), and Choderlos de Laclos' *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782). Even Jane Austen, not normally associated with libertine literature, seems to have been preoccupied with the rake figure. John Willoughby of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), George Wickham of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and, to a lesser degree, Frank Churchill of *Emma* (1815), all carry the rake trope into the nineteenth century. However, there is a marked difference between these men and their counterparts in Restoration literature. In the seventeenth century, the rake's reformation, when it happens, is rarely convincing. In the eighteenth century, most rakes reform, and their conversion is portrayed as genuine and irreversible. This is not to conclude, though, that eighteenth-century rakes differ completely from Restoration seducers. In fact, two prominent rake figures of the eighteenth century tangle with the historical themes of earlier libertine literature.

The first is a woman: the eponymous narrator of *Moll Flanders*. Moll is not a rake in the sexual sense; her conquests are material, not erotic. But she effaces history from her memoirs, creating, like Dorimant, a self-centered hagiography.

The novel concludes with a brief, almost epitaphial, phrase: “Written in the Year 1683” (343).<sup>133</sup> By this, and Moll’s admission that she is “almost seventy Years of Age,” we can conclude that she was born around 1615 and lived through the reigns of James I and Charles I, the Civil War and Cromwell’s Protectorate, and the Restoration. To none of these events does she ever allude. “Written in the Year 1683” is the novel’s sole concession to history, and it is the editor’s, not Moll’s. A narrator as shrewd as Moll is capable of recalling and recording what she chooses, and even thieving bigamists cannot have been oblivious to a war whose casualties exceeded a hundred thousand. But as the plot progresses, the reader comes to understand, with Homer O. Brown, that Moll can retain her identity only by pursuing “a voluntary exile in the midst of society.” After stealing “a Paper of Lace” from a shopkeeper during a royal progress, Moll gloats that “the Lady Millener paid dear enough for her gaping after the Queen” (256). By rendering history irrelevant to her tale, Moll reshapes our expectations of her world, obliging us to judge her by the standards which, if we wish to participate in the story, we have no choice but to accept.

Like Moll, Robert Lovelace of *Clarissa* sets more store in conquest than in consummation. Jilted in youth by a beautiful woman, Lovelace has sworn to take his revenge on every lady he can seduce. However, his erudition soon eclipses his sexuality. Evoking Dorimant, Lovelace quotes compulsively from history, literature, and even Scripture. “He had always the folly and impertinence to make

---

<sup>133</sup> Daniel Defoe (D. A. Starr, ed.), *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, &c.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

a jest of me for using proverbs,” gripes Lord M., Lovelace’s bumbling uncle.<sup>134</sup>

But as the plot unfolds, it becomes clear that the provinces of rakedom and platitude share a border. Though Lovelace grouses that “I was early suffocated with [Lord M.’s] *wisdom of nations*” (610), his own polished periods recall his uncle’s rougher ones. As James Grantham Turner notes, Lovelace’s “experimental and tendentious approach to seduction undermines the libertine’s claim to originality,”<sup>135</sup> and it is a short step from sexual to linguistic cliché. “In his experiments on female virtue,” writes Turner, “[Lovelace] seeks to validate not only a libertine sexual ideology but a libertine literary tradition.”<sup>136</sup> Midway through the novel, Lovelace even casts himself as the rake in a comedy: “I have a title ready; and that’s half the work. *The Quarrelsome Lovers*. ’Twill do” (571). For all his deliberate iconoclasm, Lovelace belongs to a clearly defined tradition—a tradition, moreover, which turns rakes into walking commonplace books. By his own standards of originality, Lovelace stands twice-condemned.

As the centuries passed, the rake dissolved into the popular consciousness. Aspects of his character appear in Byron’s *Don Juan*; in the sinister aesthetes of Henry James and Oscar Wilde; in the dissipated socialites of Jazz Age satire; in the sexual braggadocio of modern rap music. Will the rake regain the prominence he enjoyed in the heyday of Restoration comedy? Not unless the genre itself

---

<sup>134</sup> Samuel Richardson (Angus Ross, ed.), *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004).

<sup>135</sup> James Grantham Turner, “Lovelace and the Paradoxes of Libertinism,” in Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor, eds., *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

makes a comeback, which seems more and more unlikely. But if the rake never again assumes his Restoration form—and why should he?—writers, readers, and lovers will still find themselves drawn to figures of his kind. The self-important seducer will continue to construct his own historical narratives. Sex refuses to get old, after all, and history is forever new.

## APPENDIX

Though the witty, erudite intriguer starred in many Restoration comedies, he became a rake, per se, only after the death of Charles II, the most flamboyant rake of all. The word “rake,” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s sense of “a fashionable or stylish man of dissolute or promiscuous habits,” did not enter the language until 1687.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, it made its début not in a bawdy comedy of manners but in an anti-atheism tract, and retained its religious overtones throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. “Rake” had evolved from “rakehell,” an epithet applied in the sixteenth century to Catholic priests, and in the early seventeenth to drunkards, rebels, and traitors. Perhaps prompted by these associations, later critics imposed the word on the central character of a morally ambiguous corpus.

In this appendix, I trace the lexical history of the word “rakehell,” as noun and adjective, from the mid-sixteenth century to the beginning of the Restoration. To get a sense of the order of magnitude, I turned to Early English Books Online

---

<sup>137</sup> “Rake, n. 7,” *OED*.

(EEBO), which allows searches for individual words and their variants. After gathering the 20 known variants on “rakehell,” I searched for each one decade at a time, starting with 1600-1609 and ending with 1690-1699. The search engine provided both the frequency of the word’s occurrence and the number of texts in which it occurred. I limited myself to the second measure, as “rakehell” often appeared several times in a single text, and my goal was to discover how many different authors used the same word. For the sixteenth century, I did not have to search decade by decade, as the word occurred relatively seldom; however, it was used in 64 different texts between 1600 and 1700. In my analysis of the word in the seventeenth century, I grouped the 64 texts into two categories, religious and secular. Granted, “religious” and “secular” are misleading terms, especially in a century in which most published material carried religious overtones. However, I had no choice but to be crudely reductive, defining “religious” writing as primarily theological and “secular” as primarily temporal (though often didactic). Spiritual and temporal literatures diverged sharply enough in the early seventeenth century that I felt justified in following two lexical threads from the turn of the century to the Restoration.

There are limits to this brand of analysis, which sometimes, alas, recalls Ben Ross Schneider’s statistical exploits. In fact, if the word’s lexical history reveals anything, it is the peril of attempting to establish early-modern definitions. While some religious writers linked rakehells to Catholicism, others did not, choosing instead to portray the rakehell as thoughtless, violent, deceitful, or boyishly

naughty. Ben Jonson anticipated Restoration dramatists in an allusion to the rakehell's unbridled sexuality, but no other secular writer followed suit. Moreover, each generation of writers seems to have imbued the rakehell with the pet vices of the time. It is hardly surprising that Civil War authors should associate rakehells with war, that a Restoration lexicographer should define "rakehell" as "a lewd Spark or Deboshee," or that the more decorous Samuel Johnson should decide that the word was an adjective meaning "base; wild; outcast; worthless." In short, "rakehell" seems to have been a catchall epithet, interchangeable with "rogue," but every generation of moralists maligned a different rogue.

The problem is linguistic as well as moral. The advent of standardized orthography created a demand for standardized meaning: Johnson's dictionary defines all the words it spells. But the structuralist notion of language as a series of contrasts applies particularly well to pre-Johnsonian English. A rakehell is a rakehell because he is not a rascal or a scoundrel—or, perhaps, because he is. Certain Restoration lexicons resemble the circular glossary at the end of Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. *A New Dictionary of the Canting Crew* (1699), by the unidentified "B. E. Gent.," defines "Rake, Rake Hell, Rakeshame" as "a lewd Spark or Debauchee," a "lewd spark" as "a Man of the Town, or Debauchee," a "Man o' th' Town" as "a lewd Spark, or very Debausche," and—best of all—a debauchee as "a Rake-hel."<sup>138</sup> Given that *The New Dictionary* is a lexicon of

---

<sup>138</sup> B. E. Gent., *A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew* (London: printed for W. Hawes, 1699).

thieves' cant, it is possible that B. E. was more crafty than careless. Either way, the words exist in symbiosis, feeding on each other's off-color allusions. We can distinguish between them only in context, but to rely on their context is to shirk the duty of defining them.

---

In the sixteenth century, the rakehell first appeared adjectivally, in a 1547 sonnet by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey:

When Windesor walles sustained my wearied arme,  
 My hand my chyn, to ease my restlesse hedd,  
 Ech pleasant plot revested green with warm,  
 The blossomed bowes with lustie veare yspred,  
 The flowred meades, the weddyd birds so late  
 Myne eyes discovered. Than did to mynd resort  
 The joily woes, the hateles short debate,  
 The rakhell life that longes to loves disporte.  
 Wherewith, alas, myne hevy charge of care  
 Heapt in my breast brake forth against my will,  
 And smoky sighs that over cast the ayer.  
 My vapoured eyes such drery teares distill  
 The tender spring to quicken wher thei fall,  
 And I half bent to throwe me down withall.<sup>139</sup>

At first glance, this is a secular sonnet, replete with conventional complaints: the “smoky sighs,” the “drery teares,” the Petrarchan lover prone on the grass. However, the scene is governed by reverse pathetic fallacy: the year progresses blithely, and the speaker feels powerless to follow suit. The word “rakhell” comes last in a string of oxymorons: woes are not jolly by nature, debate is not “hateless,” and so, by implication, a rakehell life does not involve much love.

There is a correct way to love, the sonnet implies, and it involves “revesting”

---

<sup>139</sup> Emrys Jones, ed., *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey: Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964). The sonnet was published posthumously in 1547, but I do not know when it was composed.

oneself as the earth does. Instead, the speaker opposes God's plan, refusing to join the "blossomed bowes" and "flowred meads" in their rejuvenation. Indeed, these signs of "lustie veare [spring]" actually cause him to sigh and weep. But nature continues in its course, and his tears merely "quicken" the season.

Superficially, Surrey means that the fluid nourishes the grass, but the word "quicken" carries religious as well as biological significance. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, "quicken" could refer to the resurrection of Christ, which took place, of course, in the spring. This is a sonnet about resisting change, and the religious imagery—revestiture, resurrection, penitence—situates it in a specific theological discourse. In some aspects, this may be a sonnet about the Reformation.

Despite his Catholic antecedents, Surrey moved in evangelical circles; his friends later suspected him of recusancy, but he professed his low-church beliefs until his execution in 1547. Though it would be imprudent to read the sonnet as a precise reflection of these conflicts, the speaker makes his religious ambivalence clear. His old faith robs him of agency, retarding his attempts to move forward. He grows entirely passive: his sighs escape "against [his] will," and even when he considers throwing himself on the grass, like a good Tudor lover, he bends only halfway before changing his mind. Whether this poem depicts Surrey's vacillation or his country's, it is more than an erotic lament. "Surrey wrote often of 'reckless youth' and the 'rakhell' [unconsidered] life," notes Susan Brigden; "reckless and 'rakhell'" in the double sense of imprudent and careless of his own

danger or of public opinion.”<sup>140</sup> In this sonnet, though, the “rakehell life” seems not rash but reactionary. The rakehell may “[long] to loves disporte,” but he can only long for it; his uncertain passion prevents any definite act.

I can make such bold conjectures about the sonnet’s religious aspects because, to the best of my knowledge, no sixteenth-century author mentioned the rakehell in a secular context. Until the 1580s, the epithet was applied almost exclusively to Catholics. The fervently Protestant Edward VI died in 1553 at the age of fifteen, and the next five years saw a religious upheaval in England. The Catholic Mary I tried to reverse the dissolution of the monasteries, begun under her father Henry VIII, and appointed bishops who sentenced hundreds of Protestants to death. Many Protestants fled to Germany, Switzerland, and the Low Countries, returning after the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558. From the Marian persecutions came a body of didactic literature, more or less Calvinist, influenced by earlier German writings and the turmoil of the present day. These sermons, ballads, and tracts, printed in forbidding Gothic minuscule, seem a far cry from Stuart frivolity. They link rakehells with Cain, Satan, and the Antichrist, not salons and boudoirs. But their moralistic tone foreshadows later criticisms of the Restoration stage.

In 1556, seven years after the posthumous publication of Surrey’s poems, the rakehell appeared in a more somber context: Rudolf Gwalther’s *Antichrist, That is to saye: A true reporte, that Antichriste is come, wher he was borne, of his*

---

<sup>140</sup> Susan Brigden, “Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516/17–1547),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: OUP, Sep. 2004); online edition, Jan. 2008.

*Persone, miracles, what tooles he worketh withall, and what shalbe his ende*, a collection of five long anti-Catholic sermons translated from the Latin by John Olde.<sup>141</sup> For Gwalther, the Pope, or “Bishop of Rome,” is the Antichrist, bent on placing intermediaries between Christ and his flock. Instead of stressing “the grace and favor of god,” Catholic prelates “teache righteousness to be in mennes owne workes and merites. They teache folkes, to seeke forgeuenesse of sinnes, at the handes of wicked, and hooremongering, yea most filthy rakehell masse priestes” (181). Olde indulges himself in a number of vivid epithets: the priests are not only rakehells, but also “arrogant sawcy hellhoundes” (170), “dronke & hooremongering filthy varlettes” (175), and “a hainous and abominable pestilence” (171). A rakehell may violate religious laws, but he also violates the laws of common decency, like the more riotous rakes of the Restoration.

In 1560, the rakehell appeared in a similar context: John Awdeley’s *The Cruel Assault of Gods Fort*, a self-published broadsheet ballad allegorizing Mary’s restoration of Catholicism. Awdeley imagines the Protestants immured in “the fort of gods truth,” defending the walls against luxurious “Papists . . . [w]ith corned [horned] caps, tippets, and gownes.” Led by such prominent prelates as Edmund Bonner, bishop of London, and Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, the Catholics show no mercy:

The Holberts [halberds] and the Bowmen eke,  
Came preasing toward the Fort with spede:

---

<sup>141</sup> With the exception of Surrey’s sonnet and, in my last paragraph, Edmund Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, I viewed all the quoted texts through Early English Books Online (EEBO). I have chosen to cite these texts by EEBO image number instead of page number, as sixteenth-century pagination is erratic at best and nonexistent at worst.

These were the rakehels that did seke,  
To haue mens goodes playde Cains dede.

In modern English, this means something like “These were the rakehells who imitated Cain in seeking to take other men’s goods.” Whether the scriptural Cain was a thief as well as a killer is questionable but irrelevant: Awdeley wrote the ballad not for the literati but for the public, who would likely have been content to associate Cain with monstrous treachery. Theological minutiae matter little to the poem: England is split between Catholics and Protestants, reformers and recusants, Cains and Abels. As Cain divided his family by dispatching his own brother, so Mary’s Catholic prelates divide a rightfully Protestant nation against itself.

The impious trinity of Cain, the Antichrist, and rakehells resurfaced the next year, in John Bale’s *A declaration of Edmonde Bonners articles, concerning the cleargye of London dyocese whereby that execrable Antichriste, is in his righte colours reveled in the year of our Lord a. 1554*. Bonner assumed the bishopric of London in 1540, seven years before the death of Henry VIII, but went to prison in 1549 under Edward VI, whose reforms he openly opposed. Pardoned and released at Mary’s accession, Bonner resumed his bishopric, professed Catholicism, and sent hundreds of Protestants to the stake.<sup>142</sup> Whereas Awdeley alludes to the burning of heretics under Bonner and the other Marian bishops, Bale addresses Bonner’s theology: specifically, *A Profitable and Necessary Doctrine with Certain Homilies Adjoined Thereto* (published in 1555,

---

<sup>142</sup> Kenneth Carleton, “Bonner, Edmund (d. 1569), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

not 1554).<sup>143</sup> The Catholics are not only bloodthirsty tyrants, he argues, but also skilled rhetoricians, capable of enforcing their will through the ruse as well as the rack:

This limme of the deuill and working tole of Sathan, bloody Bonner, seeketh here to deprivue you of faith, true doctrine, and Gods religion, all after the mischeuous example of Cain and the other rake hels . . . and so to brynge you into his most damnable snares. He pretendeth a great reformation in the cleargye and laitye, but marke the good stuffe that he bryngeth forth for it . . . (10).

In the guise of teacher and reformer, Bale's Bonner seeks not to martyr true Christians, but to convert them—an even greater sin, for it increases the number of English idolaters. Bale's world could not be farther from the bawdy, frothy milieu of Restoration comedy, but in his Cain-like rakehells we see the crafty seducers of a more secular reign. Awdeley's rakehells show little learning and less finesse, but Bale's are wily and duplicitous. More importantly, they write, ensuring that their words outlast their deeds. Eros does not enter this picture, but allurements do. In 1561, the rakehell was not yet Don Juan, but he already knew how to lead his victims to hell.

As Elizabeth's reign progressed, "rakehell" kept its religious connotations, but no longer described Catholics alone. In 1589, John Lyly used the word in a crown-endorsed rejoinder to the Marprelate tracts of 1588 and 1589.<sup>144</sup> Under the name of Martin Marprelate, a writer or group of writers attacked the Anglican episcopacy, arguing in favor of presbyterian church government. Written in

<sup>143</sup> John Bale, *A declaration of Edmonde Bonners articles, concerning the cleargye of London dyocese whereby that execrable Antichriste, is in his righte colours reveled in the year of our Lord a. 1554* (London: John Tysdall for Frauncys Coldocke, 1561).

<sup>144</sup> John Lyly (anonymously), *Pappe with an Hatchet. Alias, A figge for my God sonne. Or Cracke me this nut. Or A Countrie cuffe, that is, a sound boxe of the eare, for the idiot Martin to hold his peace, seeing the patch will take no warning* (London: anonymously printed, 1589).

Marprelate's own seriocomic vein, *Pappe with an Hatchet* shuns the delicacy of such scholars as Bell. "I professe rayling," declares Lyly's narrator, "and think it as good a cudgell for a Martin, as a stone for a dogge, or a whippe for an Ape, or poyson for a rat" (3). At first, he recalls, he "determined to write a proper newe Ballet [ballad] . . . to no tune, because *Martin* was out of all tune" (5-6). Then he "thought to touch *Martin* with logick," but "a little wag in *Cambridge*," trying to do the same, produced enough false syllogisms to discredit logic altogether (6). Clearly, the only surefire method is open mockery:

Nay, if rime and reason be both forestalde, Ile raile, if *Martin* haue not barreld vpon all rakehell words: if he haue, what care I to knocke him on the head with his own hatchet. He hath taken up all the words for his obscenitie: obscenitie? Nay, now I am too nice; squirrilitie were a better word: well, let me alone to squirrel them (6)

Rejecting both Awdeley-style versifying and the decorous rhetoric of scholars like Bell, the speaker decides to attack Martin on his own terms. It is the first time that an author describes language as "rakehell" (just as Dryden, in the preface to a 1680 translation of Ovid's *Heroides*, would call free translations "libertine"). It is also the first time that the word targets a man of a lower church than the writer's. Indeed, Lyly seems to imply that a presbyterian is as dangerous as a Catholic to effective church government. Whether or not "rakehell" once carried explicitly Catholic connotations—as it seems to have done before 1589—it had assumed broader meaning by the end of the century.

Five years later, its meaning expanded still more, as seems fitting in a tract with an 85-word title. *Questions of profitable and pleasant concernings talked of by two olde seniors, the one an ancient retired gentleman, the other a midling or*

*new vpstart frankeling, vnder an oake in Kenelworth Parke, where they were met by an accident to defend the partching heate of a hoate day, in grasse or buck-hunting time called by the reporter the display of vaine life, together with a panacea or suppling plaister to cure if it were possible, the principall diseases wherewith this present time is especially vexed,* by O. B., is a series of dialogues between Dunstable, a country gentleman, and Huddle, a citizen of London.<sup>145</sup> In the first dialogue, the two men debate whether education is a reliable means to social betterment. Dunstable recalls how much he has invested in his son's learning, so that "though I am not able to breed a Gentleman, I may perhaps, as well as some of my neighbors, bring vp one" (8). Huddle scoffs at this radical notion: "Euery one to whom Mastership [of arts] belongeth is not a Gentleman, what purchase soever his father maketh, vnlesse he can procure blood to alter kinde: that you cannot giue your sonne, because you haue not attained vnto it your selfe" (8). Huddle's opinion is borne out the next day, when Dunstable laments the distressing behavior of his son, newly returned from abroad:

He had not bin two daies with me ere he fell vpon his yonger brothers, the true conforts of my laboures, reuiling besides his mother and me with such rakehelly words, and hellish oathes, that I feared more than in a tempest, the downfalling of my house on our heads. . . . [His mother justifies] all his vices, which she would haue me allow for virtues . . . saying the rude hinds his brothers cannot tell how to giue a Gentleman his due, that hath bin abroad and learned manners and fashions. (16)

Here, in a few sentences, is the Elizabethan avatar of the Restoration rake. The Grand Tour has corrupted young Dunstable, who now scorns his family with "outfacing and wording." It is the first prose description of a secular rakehell.

---

<sup>145</sup> O. B., *Questions of profitable and pleasant concernings* (London: Richard Field, 1594).

True, Huddle puts a moral gloss on the story, chiding Dunstable for “setting proud feathers higher in his toppe at the first, than you are able to reach and pull downe againe when you would”; but *Questions of profitable and pleasant concernings* is merely didactic, not theological. In his “horrible swearing” and “hoate and hastie stomach,” Dunstable’s son anticipates by seven decades the rakehells of Restoration comedy.

More importantly, he anticipates them in his ambiguous social standing. Restoration rakes oscillate between high and low life, consorting with thieves and whores even as they court ladies in verse. Granted, young Dunstable is a poor man carousing beyond his means, while later rakes are gentlemen prone to slumming. In both cases, though, the rakehells subvert common mores by challenging class distinctions. The resulting zeitgeist mingles the worst extremes of rich and poor, proving the gentleman’s hedonism as squalid as the beggar’s sin. If men cannot be equal in birth, virtue, or fate, they can at least be equal in wickedness. This is what social leveling means to Huddle, and, for better or worse, what it would mean in the Restoration.

In the next century, the religious uses of “rakehell” grew more varied. Its first seventeenth-century appearance is in Andrew Willet’s *An harmonie vpon the first booke of Samuel* (1607), which handles “aboue foure hundred theologicall questions” in under 200 pages.<sup>146</sup> Willet associated with Puritans and questioned

---

<sup>146</sup> Andrew Willet, *An harmonie vpon the first booke of Samuel wherein according to the method obserued in Hexapla vpon Genesis, and Exodus, but more compendiously abridged, these speciall things are obserued vpon every chapter* (Cambridge: printed by Cantrell Legge for L. Greene, 1607).

the divine right of bishops, but despite his low-church affiliation, he does not use “rakehell” as his Lutheran forebears do. In *An harmonie*, rakehells are mercenary murderers, not Catholic priests. Under the heading *Whether David did well in receiuing those vnto him, which fledde away for debt*, Willet notes that the debtors who flocked to David “were not such a band of ruffians and rakehells, as wicked Ahimelech [*sic*] hired to kill his seuentie brethren.”<sup>147</sup> An anonymously translated English Bible of 1684 renders Abimelech’s followers as “vain & light persons,” a phrase that also appears in the King James Bible of 1611.<sup>148</sup> It seems likely that Willet’s “ruffians and rakehells” evolved from this phrase, especially as Chaucer’s Manciple’s Tale associates rakehells with “vain and light” behavior. In this tale, Apollo’s pet crow tells him that his wife has been unfaithful; Apollo slays her, then curses his own thoughtless violence: “O rakel hand, to doon so foule amys!”

In the next decade, the word appeared in three religious texts. The first, Francis Mason’s *Of the consecration of the bishops in the Church of England* (1613), challenges Catholics to “make a stande a while, looke backe, and take a view of your golden succession, wherein are so many monsters, villaines, and rakehels.”<sup>149</sup> Also published in 1613, *The Prophecies of Obadiah* is a collection

<sup>147</sup> At first glance, this reference is perplexing, as the first book of Samuel features a priest named Ahimelech who gives David consecrated bread and the sword of Goliath. However, Willet refers to Judges 9, which describes a fratricidal Philistine prince called Abimelech (also known as Ahimelech).

<sup>148</sup> Anonymous (London: Christopher Barker, 1584), EEBO image 140.

<sup>149</sup> Francis Mason, *Of the consecration of the bishops in England with their succession, iurisdiction, and other things incident to their calling* (London: Robert Barker, 1613), image 94.

of sermons by John Rainolds, who served as principal of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, from 1598 to his death in 1607. In his discussion of men who defied Elizabeth I, Rainolds refers to “*Stukeley the rakehell the Popes Irish Marques.*”<sup>150</sup> Thomas Stucley was an Catholic adventurer who fell out of royal favor during his five years in Ireland, from 1565 to 1570. He later intrigued with Spain, encouraging Philip II to attack England, and died in battle against the Moors in 1578. Rainolds’s use of “rakehell” cements Stucley’s link to the Pope, but may also refer to the soldier’s romantic persona: Peter Holmes notes that his “life became a subject for balladeers and dramatists, who saw him as a hero whose martial reputation was enhanced by his notoriety.”<sup>151</sup> Finally, Thomas Taylor uses “rakehell” in an analogy drawn from secular life, and not a direct condemnation of Catholicism: “So, a Physician sends a soueraigne potion or cordiall by some rakehell boy in the shoppe; doth this hinder the worke and vertue of the Physicke that takes it according to the direction?”<sup>152</sup> Here, the word seems to mean nothing more than “disreputable” or “inept,” or possibly “careless.”

In the 1620s, “rakehell” appears in three more texts, the most colorful of which resurrects the fiendish Catholic rakehell. Matthew Sutcliffe’s *The blessings on Mount Gerizzim, and the curses on Mount Ebal* (1625) uses the word

---

<sup>150</sup> John Rainolds, *The prophecie of Obadiah opened and applied in sundry learned and gracious sermons preached at All-Hallowes and St Maries in Oxford by that famous and iudicious divine Iohn Rainolds D. of Divinity and late president of Corp. Chr. Coll.* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1613), image 81.

<sup>151</sup> Peter Holmes, “Stucley, Thomas (c. 1522-1578),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>152</sup> Thomas Taylor, *Dauids learning, or The vway to true happinesse in a commentarie vpon the 32. Psalme* (London: printed by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, 1617), image 104.

no fewer than four times.<sup>153</sup> The “*Romanistes*” are “a rabble of damnable and indiabolated rakehels”; “*Parsons* and such like malicious rakehels” wish “to bring their countrey into bondage vnder the Pope and *Spaniard*”; “*Romish* priests” are lumped with “rakehell Iebusites”; at last, “the Romish Church” consists of “a rabble of rakehelllike massepriestes, filthy monkes, friars, and nunnes.” The last instance, in fact, seems to be an uncited quotation from Gwalther. Sutcliffe’s is the last Gwaltherian use of “rakehell”; after the 1620s, the word seems to have become a catchall epithet, as difficult to define as “rascal.” The only instance in the 1630s, for example, reminds the reader of the priests who, in Kings 1:21, accept the false “testimony of . . . rakehells” and execute Naboth, who would not surrender his lands to King Ahab. It is impossible to tell why these liars are rakehells, except that they are liars.

As the century progressed, the meaning of “rakehell” became contingent upon context. Religious writing began assuming a more secular character, which makes our already shaky distinction even harder to maintain. As a result, it seems best to return to the first years of the century and follow the secular uses of the word up to the Civil War. From 1600 to 1609, rakehells featured in three plays, all comedies and all written, at least in part, by Ben Jonson. Given Jonson’s omnipresence in later drama, it seems likely that his use of “rakehell” influenced Restoration playwrights. *Every Man in His Humor*, premiered in 1598 and published in 1601, belongs to the city-comedy genre from which Restoration

---

<sup>153</sup> Matthew Sutcliffe, *The blessings on Mount Gerizzim, and the curses on Movnt Ebal. Or, The happie estate of Protestants compared with the miserable estate of Papists vnder the Popes tyrannie* (London: printed for Andrew Hebb, 1625), images 44, 157, 158, and 181.

dramatists drew much of their inspiration. Wishing to escape punishment for fighting, Giulliano tells Thorello that “a sorte of lewd rakehelles, that care neither for God nor the Diuell” caused the brawl, and Thorello immediately concludes that they came to court his wife Hesperida.<sup>154</sup> We should not assume that “lewd” here means “lecherous”; in the seventeenth century, it could as easily mean “vulgar,” “bungling,” or “good-for-nothing.” But in *Eastward Ho* (printed 1605), by Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston, the identification of rakehells with lechery is explicit. A goldsmith has two apprentices: Quicksilver, “of a boundless prodigalitie,” and Golding, “of a most hopefull Industrie.” Quicksilver threatens to leave their master, and mocks Golding for his desire to stay. “Goe,” retorts Golding, “yee are a prodigall coxcombe, I a cowheards sonne, because I turn not a drunken whore-hunting rake-hell like thy selfe?” There is little to choose between “drunken whore-hunting rake-hell” and the bulk of Restoration insults.

The following decade brought a rakehell in a new genre: the epistolary guide, forerunner of the epistolary novel. Nicholas Breton’s *Conceyted letters, newly layde open* teaches by example “all the perfections or arte of episteling.”<sup>155</sup> “Rakehell” appears in “a dogged Letter to a displeasing Companion,” replete with rhetorical conceits and ending, “[I]f that God does not the sooner mend you, the

---

<sup>154</sup> Ben Jonson, *Euery man in his humor* (London: printed by S. Stafford for Walter Burre, 1601), image 29.

<sup>155</sup> Nicholas Breton, *Conceyted letters, newly layde open: or A most excellent bundle of new wit wherein is knit vp together all the perfections or arte of episteling, by which the ignorant may with much modestie talk and argue with the best learned* (London: printed by B. Alsop for Samuel Rand, 1618), image 17.

Gallowes will end you; to deale plainly with you, as a Rakehell I found you, so a Rakehell I leave you.” This letter gives us no sense of *why* the man is a rakehell, but Breton allows him a reply. “O Man in desperation,” he scoffs, “how are thy wits out of fashion; it seemed by thy spight, thy Spleene is full of corruption, for thy wishes they cannot hurt me; nor can thy words trouble mee . . .” It is striking that the rakehell should dismiss his companion’s criticism not as wrong or malicious, but as “out of fashion.” The rakehell’s foppish side has begun to emerge. Breton’s “displeasing Companion” takes offense, but feigns cavalier indifference.

In the 1620s and 1630s, secular rakehells appeared exclusively in histories: Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion* (1622), Sir Francis Bacon’s *The historie of the reigne of King Henry the Seuenth* (1629), John Trussel’s *A continuation of The collection of the history of England* (1636), and Charles Aleyn’s *The historie of that vvise and fortunate prince, Henrie the seventh* (1638). In all of these books, rakehells are rebels in need of royal suppression. *Poly-Olbion* is a historical and geographical poem written in alexandrine couplets; the 1622 volume describes northern and eastern Britain, including the “Rebellions, Stirres, Commotions, and Vprores” perpetrated by the peasant leaders Wat Tyler and Jack Straw (1381) and Jack Cade (1451). But, adds Drayton, the historian should dwell on higher subjects than “that Rakehel *Cades*, and his rebellious crue.”<sup>156</sup> The next three texts all discuss Henry VII, a popular subject for historians after the publication of

<sup>156</sup> John Drayton, *The second part, or a continuance of Poly-Olbion from the eighteenth song* (London: printed by Augustine Mathewes for John Marriot, John Grismand, and Thomas Dewe, 1622), image 230.

Bacon's history. Henry, founder of the Tudor dynasty, had usurped the English throne at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. His claim to power was tenuous at best, and his greed was notorious, but most Tudor historians glossed over his flaws. Under the Stuart James I, however, Bacon felt free to criticize Henry in "an exercise in the new 'politic history' inspired by Tacitus and Machivelli."<sup>157</sup> Narrating Perkin Warbeck's Yorkist uprising of the 1490s, Bacon quotes Henry as scoffing that "*The King of Rake-hells was landed in the West.*"<sup>158</sup> So influential was Bacon that even his use of "rakehell" guided his imitators. Trussel reports that Wat Tyler rounded up "twenty thousand of the very dregges, and skum of his rakehells,"<sup>159</sup> while Aleyn, writing in sestets, follows Bacon in calling Warbeck a rakehell: "*Henry came thether, soone as he did heare/That King of Rake-hells roeing in the West.*"<sup>160</sup> (The italics indicate that Aleyn is quoting Bacon consciously.) By the Civil War, the connection between rakes and history had been firmly established.

Two Civil War texts seem especially worthy of note: *The Souldiers march to salvation* (1647), by Francis Bland, and John Taylor's *Christmas inside and out, or Our Lord & Saviours Christs birth-day to the reader* (1652). Anticipating Ellis by 13 years, Bland stresses "[w]hat innocency ought to be in soldiers" who fight

<sup>157</sup> Markku Peltonen, "Bacon, Francis, Viscount St. Alban (1561-1626)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>158</sup> Francis Bacon, *The historie of the reigne of King Henry the Seuenth* (London: printed by I. Haviland and R. Young for Philemon Stephens and Christopher Meredith, 1629), image 93.

<sup>159</sup> John Trussel, *A continuation of The collection of the history of England beginning where Samuel Daniell Esquire ended, with the raigne of Edward the third, and ending where the honourable Vicounte Saint Albones began, with the life of Henry the seventh* (London: printed by M. Dawson for Ephraim Dawson, 1636), image 65.

<sup>160</sup> Charles Aleyn, *The historie of that wise and fortunate prince, Henrie of that name the seuenth, King of England* (London: Thomas Cotes for William Cooke, 1638), image 65.

for a just cause.<sup>161</sup> Bland speaks in favor of neither the Roundheads nor the Cavaliers, but his sympathies can be inferred from a passage in which he exhorts “Princes and Magistrates . . . to draw the sword, and make warre” against “the intestine disobedience of unnaturall Traitours and Rebels (as *David* by the rebellions of *Absolom*, or *Shebah*” (image 47). However, Bland’s patriotism is not so fervent as to blind him to the “violence and iniquity” of some royalist soldiers: “It is a disgrace to an honest man to have wicked persons lodge in his house, and to a School-master to have Rakehells under his tuition, and to a Generall to harbor villains under his command” (image 10). Like Ellis, Bland shows himself as ready to blame his own side as the opposite one. His rakehells seem no more than naughty schoolboys, but it is significant that he compares them to misbehaving Cavaliers.

The next work, *Christmas in & out*, is a short royalist tract narrated in the voice of Christmas himself. Few world leaders are known to have outlawed Christmas, but Cromwell was one of them. Puritans condemned the holiday as a decadent Catholic festival that distracted worshippers from their faith. Taylor says it best: they believed “that Plumb-Pottage was meer Popery, that a Coller of Brawn was an obhomination, that Roast Beef was Antichristian, that Mince Pies were Reliques of the Whore of Babylon, and a Goose, a Turkey, or a Capon, were marks of the Beast.” (One wonders what Cromwell would have made of the modern Western “holiday season.”) Like Joseph and Mary, Taylor’s Christmas

---

<sup>161</sup> Francis Bland, *The souldiers march to salvation wherein is shewn the lawfulness of voluntary serving upon the assured knowledge of a just cause, how it is lawful and necessary for prest souldiers to obey authority in case of doubting* (York, 1647).

wanders England in search of shelter, but “a grave Fox-furr’d Mammonist,” intent on protecting his treasure, “reviled his poor starveling Servant, saying, thou Villain, hast thou let in base Rakehells to rob me, and cut my throat.”<sup>162</sup> The greedy, hypocritical Puritan, willing to hoard riches but not spend them on Christ’s birthday, dismisses Christmas with the word “rakehell,” by now an outmoded slur on high-church practices. Taylor acknowledges the connotations of the epithet, but turns them to his own ends, much as the gay-rights movement has adopted the word “queer.” If Christmas is a rakehell, then the word has lost all satirical force, except against the Puritans themselves.

Though dozens of texts were omitted from this analysis, the ones I have cited suffice for a lexical history. Over a century, the word “rakehell” took on a myriad of religious, historical, political, and sexual connotations. The rakehells of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were many things to many writers: indecisive, reckless, Catholic, bloodthirsty, clumsy, lecherous, mischievous, treasonous. Indeed, it seems that every author associated the rakehell with the qualities he found most distasteful. In the early days of Elizabeth’s reign, Lutheran writers refused to forget the Marian persecutions, and Bishop Bonner became the quintessential rakehell. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the rakehell was a rebel against the Crown; in the war itself, he was a callous soldier. After the Restoration, he would alter still further, but without losing his old affiliations. But that belongs to another story.

---

<sup>162</sup> John Taylor, *Christmas in & out, or, Our Lord & Saviour Christs birth-day to the reader* (London: self-published, 1652), image 7.

## WORKS CITED

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### CHAPTER ONE

Clement Ellis, *The gentile sinner, or, Englands brave gentleman characterized in a letter to a friend both as he is and as he should be* (Oxford: printed by Henry Hall for John and Edward Forrest, 1660). Early English Books Online (ProQuest LLC, 2008): <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>.

Richard Flecknoe, *Enigmaticall characters, all taken to the life from severall persons, humours, & dispositions* (London: self-published, 1658).

Titus Lucretius Carus (William Ellery Leonard and Stanley Barney Smith, eds.), *De Rerum Natura* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1942, 1970).

William Wycherley, *The Plain-Dealer* (London: printed by T. N. for James Magnes and Rich Bentley, 1677).

## CHAPTER TWO

George Etherege, *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*, in Michael Cordner, ed., *The Plays of Sir George Etherege* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

## CHAPTER THREE

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward from 2000 to 1887* (New York: Signet Classic, 2000).

Sir Charles Sedley, *The Mulberry Garden*, in Vivian de Sola Pinto, ed., *The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Sir Charles Sedley* (London: Constable & Company, 1928).

## CHAPTER FOUR

Etherege, *The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter*, in Cordner, ed., *The Plays of Sir George Etherege*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, et al. (Donald F. Bond, ed.), *The Spectator* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage, Together with the Sense of Antiquity upon this Argument* (London: printed for S. Keble, R. Sare, and H. Hindmarsh, 1698). Early English Books Online.

Sir George Etherege et al. (Frederick Bracher, ed.), *Letters of Sir George Etherege* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).

Thomas Otway, *Venice preserv'd, or, A plot discover'd* (London: printed for Jos. Hindmarsh, 1682).

Alexander Pope et al. (George Sherburn, ed.), *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954).

Richard Steele (Donald F. Bond, ed.), *The Tatler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

John Vanbrugh, *A Short Vindication of The Relapse and The Provok'd Wife from Immorality and Prophaneness* (London: printed for H. Walwyn, 1698).

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

#### CONCLUSION

Daniel Defoe (G. A. Starr, ed.), *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, &c.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Samuel Richardson (Angus Ross, ed.), *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004).

#### APPENDIX

Charles Aleyn, *The historie of that wise and fortunate prince, Henrie of that name the seuenth, King of England* (London: printed by Thomas Cotes for William Cooke, 1638).

John Awdeley, *The Cruel Assault of Gods Fort* (London: self-published, 1560).

O. B., *Questions of profitable and pleasant concernings talked of by two olde seniors, the one an ancient retired gentleman, the other a midling or new vpstart frankeling, vnder an oake in Kenelworth Parke, where they were met by an accident to defend the partching heate of a hoate day, in grasse or buck-hunting time called by the reporter the display of vaine life, together with a panacea or suppling plaister to cure if it were possible, the principall diseases wherewith this present time is especially vexed* (London: Richard Field, 1594).

John Bale, *A declaration of Edmonde Bonners articles, concerning the cleargye of London dyocese whereby that execrable Antichriste, is in his righte colours*

*reveled in the year of our Lord a. 1554* (London: John Tysdall for Frauncys Coldocke, 1561).

Francis Bacon, *The historie of the reigne of King Henry the Seuenth* (London: printed by I. Haviland and R. Young for Philemon Stephens and Christopher Meredith, 1629).

Francis Bland, *The souldiers march to salvation wherein is shewn the lawfulness of voluntary serving upon the assured knowledge of a just cause, how it is lawful and necessary for prest souldiers to obey authority in case of doubting* (York, 1647).

Nicholas Breton, *Conceyted letters, newly layde open: or A most excellent bundle of new wit wherein is knit vp together all the perfections or arte of episteling, by which the ignorant may with much modestie talk and argue with the best learned* (London: printed by B. Alsop for Samuel Rand, 1618).

John Drayton, *The second part, or a continuance of Poly-Olbion from the eighteenth song Containing all the tracts, rivers, mountaines, and forrests: intermixed with the most remarkable stories, antiquities, wonders, rarities, pleasures, and commodities of the east, and northerne parts of this isle, lying betwixt the two famous riuers of Tweed, and Thame* (London: printed by Augustine Mathewes for John Marriott, John Grismand, and Thomas Dewe, 1622).

B. E. Gent., *A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew* (London: printed for W. Hawes, 1699).

Rudolf Gwalther (John Olde, trans.), *Antichrist, that is to saye: A true report, that Antichriste is come wher he was borne, of his persone, miracles, what tooles he worketh withall, and what shalbe his ende: translated out of Latine into Englishe* (London: Christopher Trutheall, 1556).

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (Emrys Jones, ed.), *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey: Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

Ben Jonson, *Euery man in his humor As it hath beene sundry times publickly acted by the right Honorable the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants* (London: printed by S. Stafford for Walter Burre, 1601).

John Lyly (anonymously), *Pappe with a Hatchet. Alias, A figge for my God sonne. Or Cracke me this nut. Or A countrie cuffe, that is, a sound boxe of the eare, for the idiot Martin to hold his peace, seeing the patch will take no warning* (London: anonymously printed, 1589).

Francis Mason, *Of the consecration of the bishops in England with their succession, iurisdiction, and other things incident to their calling: as also of the ordination of priests and deacons* (London: Robert Barker, 1613).

John Rainolds, *The prophecie of Obadiah opened and applyed in sundry learned and gracious sermons preached at All-Hallowes and St Maries in Oxford by that famous and iudicious divine Iohn Rainolds D. of Divinity and late president of Corp. Chr. Coll.* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1613).

Matthew Sutcliffe, *The blessings on Mount Gerizzim, and the curses on Mount Ebal. Or, the happie estate of Protestants compared with the miserable estate of Papists vnder the Popes tyrannie* (London: printed for Andrew Hebb, 1625).

Thomas Taylor, *Dauids learning, or The vway to true happinesse in a commentarie vpon the 32. Psalme* (London: printed by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, 1617).

John Trussel, *A continuation of The collection of the history of England beginning where Samuel Daniell Esquire ended, with the raigne of Edward the third, and ending where the honourable Vicounte Saint Albones began, with the life of Henry the seuenth* (London: printed by M. Dawson for Ephraim Dawson, 1636).

Andrew Willet, *An harmonie vpon the first booke of Samuel wherein according to the method obserued in Hexapla vpon Genesis, and Exodus, but more compendiously abridged, these speciall things are obserued vpon every chapter* (Cambridge: printed by Cantrell Legge for L. Greene, 1607).

## SECONDARY SOURCES

Lisa Berglund, "The Language of the Libertines: Subversive Morality in *The Man of Mode*," in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 30, no. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer 1990), 369-386.

George F. Berkeley, "Préciosité and the Restoration Comedy of Manners," in *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2 (February 1955), 109-128.

Virginia Ogden Birdsall, *Wild Civility: The Comic Spirit on the Restoration Stage* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1970).

Fredric V. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," in Jonathan Goldberg, ed., *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

J. Douglas Canfield, "The Ideology of Restoration Tragicomedy," in *ELH*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Autumn 1984), 447-464.

———, "Religious Language and Religious Meaning in Restoration Comedy," in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 22, no. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer 1980), 385-406.

Willard Connely, *Brawny Wycherley* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930).

Umberto Eco (James Fentress, trans.), *The Search for the Perfect Language* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995).

Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: The University of California Press, 1967).

Thomas H. Fujimura, *The Restoration Comedy of Wit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

Graham Greene, *Lord Rochester's Monkey: Being the Life of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974).

Chester Noyes Greenough and J. Milton French, *A Bibliography of Theophrastan Character in English* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947).

Robert B. Heilman, "Some Fops and Some Versions of Foppery," in *ELH*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Summer 1982), 363-395.

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

Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in Ralph Cohen, ed., *New Directions in Literary History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 11-41.

Michael G. Ketcham, *Transparent Designs: Reading, Style, and Form in the Spectator Papers* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1965).

L. C. Knights, "Restoration Comedy: The Reality and the Myth" (orig. pub. 1937), in Knights, *Explorations: Essays in Criticism Mainly on the Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 149-173.

Charles Lamb, "On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century," in E. V. Lucas, ed., *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, vol. II, *Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia* (London: Methuen & Co., 1903).

Robert Markley, *Two-Edg'd Weapons: Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

B. Eugene McCarthy, *William Wycherley: A Biography* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1979).

Charles O. McDonald, "Restoration Comedy as Drama of Satire: An Investigation Into Seventeenth-Century Aesthetics," in *Studies in Philology*, vol. 61, no. 3 (Jul. 1964), 522-544.

Susan J. Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Richard H. Perkinson, "Topographical Comedy in the Seventeenth Century," in *ELH*, vol. 3, no. 4 (December 1936), 270-290.

Ben Ross Schneider, *The Ethos of Restoration Comedy* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

Arthur H. Scouten and Robert D. Hume, "'Restoration Comedy' and Its Audiences, 1660-1676," in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 10, Literature and Its Audience (1980), 45-69.

Roger Scruton, "The Aesthetic Endeavour Today," in *Philosophy*, vol. 71, no. 277 (Jul. 1996), 331-350.

Susan Staves, *Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

Leslie Stephen, *Alexander Pope* (London: Macmillan, 1880).

James Grantham Turner, "Lovelace and the Paradoxes of Libertinism," in Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor, eds., *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Dale Underwood, *Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

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

Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Rose A. Zimbardo, *At Zero Point: Discourse, Culture, and Satire in Restoration England* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998).

———, “The Satiric Design in *The Plain Dealer*,” in *Studies in English Literature*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Summer 1961), 1-18.