

I JUST NEED SOME SPACE!: SPACE, INVASION, AND GENDER RELATIONS  
IN RESTORATION DRAMA

By

LISA MAE SIKKINK

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

**MASTERS OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
Department of English

MAY 2009

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of LISA MAE SIKKINK find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

---

Todd Butler, Ph.D., Chair

---

Carol Siegel, Ph.D.

---

Kirk McAuley, Ph.D.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, Carol Siegel and Kirk McAuley, and my committee chair, Todd Butler. Their patience and advice that challenged and supported my efforts were much appreciated, and hopefully rewarded. Kristin Arola also deserves a nod for allowing me to try out thesis-related ideas in her seminar.

I owe my friends and family, who I completely neglected during the last two months of this project, an apology for my utter lack of sociability. This stalwart group also needs thanks for answering my many questions and late-night phone calls. Their patience and love were a source of motivation and encouragement.

I JUST NEED SOME SPACE!: SPACE, INVASION, AND GENDER RELATIONS  
IN RESTORATION DRAMA

Abstract

by Lisa Sikkink, M.A.  
Washington State University  
May 2009

Chair: Todd Butler

This work is interested in how men invade the physical and cognitive space of women by means of deception and lying in Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine*, while women are trying to maintain their physical and cognitive space by means of disguises and eavesdropping in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*; also important are the conceptions of physical rape, cognitive rape, and seduction. Male characters in *The Libertine* are too interested in male dominance and controlling women who only want personal space. Conversely, *The Rover*, although not an explicit response to *The Libertine*, provides a nice counterpoint to it: *The Rover* suggests that women use the same tricky means that the men had been using on women in *The Libertine*. The important difference here is that men in *The Libertine* use deception to control other people, while the women in *The Rover* use deception to gain control over their own lives. Behn followed her own advice that she gives in *The Rover* to take control over her own life and tried to make a way for herself; she had some measure of success, and even though she faced some opposition, she ultimately became a central figure in Restoration theatre culture and worked with most of the major names of the day.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. CHAPER ONE: <i>THE LIBERTINE</i> .....	13
3. CHAPTER TWO: <i>THE ROVER</i> .....	35
4. CONCLUSION: .....	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	60

## *Introduction*

Restoration drama, and the narrow period from the 1660s to the end of the seventeenth century in which it is found, provides a snapshot of an era in which English culture was in upheaval. Naturally, social, political, religious, or any other kind of turmoil makes for interesting study. There are monographs on hundreds of different aspects and elements of this brief time in history, but there is surprisingly little that explicitly explores changes in gender relations. There have been several general studies done on gender relations, but most of them are descriptive rather than analytical; they show that changes took place and suggest some of the causes for the changes in masculinity or femininity, but do not usually explore the implications or consequences of those changes. It is my intention to explore said implications and consequences, especially how Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine* dismisses female characters who overstep their (highly restrictive) bounds as troublemakers who deserve what they get, while Aphra Behn presents alternatives and argues for specific changes and shifts in power. Before getting into my central argument, however, it is crucial to understand how masculinity and femininity functioned during the Restoration and in the period just before it.

One of the works that discuss the state of masculinity and femininity during the Restoration period is Karen Harvey's "The History of Masculinity, circa 1650-1800," in which she lays out the major forms of masculinity from just before Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine* was performed in the mid-1670s and maps the changes through the early part of the eighteenth century. Her discussion establishes the patriarchy's almost total power over women before libertinism first appeared in England, then highlights how libertinism differs from the previous norm for "handling" women. What this means is that libertinism is a "hit-and-run" form of power--the libertine rapes a woman, which effectively destroys her sense of safety, security, and

often, identity.<sup>1</sup> Reviewing her text provides a familiarity with how women were treated before the libertine invasion of England and provides a basis for understanding why women might want to change their own social standing, and shift the balance of power a bit more towards their favor. Harvey also addresses the homosocial aspects of libertinism, but a more comprehensive discussion can be found in Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men* and Michael Mangan's "The Spectacle of Masculinity in the Restoration Theatre." Both Sedgwick and Mangan explore how libertines want nothing to do with women (beyond rape or money) and exclude women from their lives. This exclusion creates a power vacuum--under libertinism, there are not enough men who were able to effectively control the female population as they had been controlled previously by the pre-Restoration patriarchy. Thus, women became more assertive to fill that power vacuum left by the invasion of libertines and fops.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Mangan suggests, if the men wanted to regain permanent influence over women they would have to abandon the libertine mode of manhood for something that the women would not only tolerate, but accept and honor as their "superiors." The new and acceptable form of man must be able to keep women "in their place"--as the inferiors of men. Harvey also details that the "solution" to the "problem" of female assertive and independent tendencies took the form of the "new gentlemen" of the eighteenth-century; he is intelligent, refined, morally sound, and highly concerned with propriety. He has a great concern for ladies and does not want them to suffer or experience any discomfort--an excellent reason to keep women at home and attending only to tasks suited for their "delicate" constitutions (effectively containing women to a specific space under male control). Even though the libertine provides women with some

---

<sup>1</sup> Women were raped before libertinism appeared in England, but the libertine variety of rape is distinctive because many of their victims were initially willing, but after the women discovered what the libertine was really about is when they *felt* raped.

<sup>2</sup> Michael McKeon also discusses masculinity (including same sex intercourse and effeminacy) during this time. See McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760," 307-15.

freedoms (either by ignoring women much of the time, or by allowing themselves to be dominated by women), he is not a satisfying companion. How these themes play out in Restoration drama (specifically in *The Libertine* and *The Rover*) is that the female characters are interested in a relatively equal partnership; they are not interested in being used and discarded by a libertine (298-304).

During the Restoration, women's roles were becoming more and more limited. McKeon describes how during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century England was changing culturally, and "female identity [was restricted] to that of wife and mother, roles whose customary authority in the broad domain of kinship was now gradually limited to the circumscribed domain of the household" (McKeon 297). Many women chafed at the new restrictions, especially since men at the time were not limited in the same way. The cultural constructs of masculinity and femininity were set at odds by the different codes for sexual conduct, since men were allowed sexual liberty (and were generally expected to be experienced by the time they are married), but women were not supposed to give in to the intimate requests of men. As Jessica Munns states in "Change, Skepticism, and Uncertainty," "[t]here are, however, signs that the aristocratic/wealthy family as a unit was in transition. The new legal instruments that evolved, such as the strict settlement marriage contract with provisions for younger children and widows, enhanced patriarchal control while also undermining some of its traditional ability to consolidate power and wealth" (Munns 144). Even though the change was not dramatic, many traditionally held beliefs were now called into question: "Where there had been a tacit consensus that females are subordinate, there was now an increasing awareness that such subordination was a social rather than natural or inevitable inequality" (Munns 144). This made men nervous and so their plays show assertive women being punished for demonstrating less than the male ideal of female behavior, as in *The*



*Libertine*, where all the women are killed in public places. The implication is that if they were safely at home, they would still be alive.

At this point, the struggle is mostly coyness on the part of women and the men generally respect women who do not accept the men's sexual advances--this will change with the invasion of libertinism. To avoid generalizing about women, surely some of the women desired sex and only acted out chastity for the sake of propriety, while other women might truly have been shy and not sexually interested in their suitors. Men had to marry upper-class women if they wanted to have intercourse with them, giving women a small measure of control over their bodies. Of course, men could just hire a prostitute, and the male/female relationship is different in the context as the female (and probably male as well) have a different relationship with and connection to their own bodies sexuality.<sup>3</sup> An unmarried woman's value and respectability depended upon her virginity and chastity, which she had to fight to maintain, but even after marriage the power struggle continued, it just manifested differently. Drougge suggests that "The sexual double standard pervading Restoration premarital relations was naturally reinforced within marriage, where a double standard of adultery was powerfully conditioned by concern for orderly transmission of property. ... while the positive construction of male promiscuity which was (is) such a large part of the macho-virgin sexual culture naturally did not suddenly vanish after the wedding" (Drougge 553). An example from Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine* is Don John and his cohort who demonstrate the epitome of this double standard, marrying dozens of women just to have sex with them and then promptly abandoning them for other sexual pursuits. Even though Don John does not expect his "wives" to be faithful, the rest of society would hold the women responsible for the marriage; that is, the women would be held responsible if they did

---

<sup>3</sup> The seduction or rape of lower-class women was not unheard of, and was a common literary theme. The men could also simply rape prostitutes instead of paying for their services.

not end up dead by the end of the play. The oppositions within the culture create tension between the sexes, and so there is a need for other categories, one of which is the Whore: poor women who are attractive and only mildly assertive, but have a strong sexual drive which they are willing to act on, at the expense of their honor. This kind of woman might also be appealing because she alleviates some of the guilt a man might feel in having sex without marriage-- because she is already “fallen” and no longer has “honor” (at least in the virginal or chaste sense), he is not responsible for her initial fall from respectability. This group also possesses a lax moral code and is generally in this situation because they lack other, more respectable, options.

There are several other groups of women who are present throughout literature (or are at least common in specific genres) who do not fit into either of the categories described (upper-class women and whores); these other groups consist of lower-class women, aristocratic women who seek out sex (many of the female characters in Rochester’s poetry fit this bill), “fallen” women from any class (women who trusted men and had it backfire). Any of the types described above might have any number of stances on sex and their relations with men: romantic, ambitious, lusty, economic, or simply abused. The tension between men and women who subscribe to traditional masculinity and femininity is complicated by the Libertine and the Whore. Part of what Shadwell’s *The Libertine* explores is what happens to traditional, upper-class women when they interact with libertines who treat all women like whores, regardless of social status. Libertine disregard for class is another example of the challenge they pose to existing social structures, though their methods of challenging society obscure the potential benefits of the challenge itself. The effects were difficult for women, though they had not been happy with their “pre-libertine-encounter” situations, who are now forced to decide if they are

able to live in traditional society without their virginity (which is their only source of power when first getting married, then their husbands must rely on the chastity of their wives), or if they are willing to sink into the lowest levels of society and become a working Whore.<sup>4</sup> The female characters do not like either choice, and so they try to make their own ways.

*The Rover* and *The Libertine* are just two examples, but virtually all Restoration plays reflect (and comment on) the volatile social and political atmosphere of the late seventeenth century. Men and, less often, women used theatrical productions to voice their opinions with varying levels of subtlety; the main themes for these plays revolve around marriage and deciding to marry for love, money, or to obey one's parents. How the plays end and the kinds of arguments made throughout the text are an indication that things are changing. Even though the name "Restoration" implies a return of past values, norms, and social structures, the years following Charles II's return was actually a time of social experimentation, change, and rebellion. Libertines invaded England with the return of Charles II and spread their aggressive sexuality across the country, permeating city and countryside so that even the morally upright citizens were transformed into voyeurs who were familiar with all of the libertines' dirty deeds. Initially, the performance of private deeds in public (either literally raping women in the street, or figuratively since the rape would be gossiped about all over town) was shocking.

Libertines were wealthy, aristocratic (or at least upper-class) men who subscribe to a different version of masculinity; the libertine has an unrestrained sex drive and no moral code. They rejected all of society's standards on the pseudo-Hobbesian belief that anything pleasurable

---

<sup>4</sup> While this study focuses on unmarried women, many of the arguments could apply to married women as well. Men needed their wives to be sexually faithful in marriage to ensure the paternity of the children she bears, so it is only "natural" to restrict the movements and visitors of one's wife. If she cannot go into public alone (read: without her husband by her side, or other appropriate male relation, or female servant in the employ of the husband) then it is very difficult to have clandestine affairs with other men.

is good.<sup>5</sup> However, the libertines took pleasure to an extreme that is far beyond what Hobbes intended, thus libertine masculinity is purely driven by pleasure at the cost of everything, and everyone, else; they frequently engage in activities that are illegal and immoral by nearly all standards. By rejecting social standards, the libertines excuse themselves from the standards of masculinity as well--so they do not believe that they need to be responsible, productive, or even educated because all of these traits are tedious reminders of the dull life they left behind. The result of abandoning all this in order to have wild sexual exploits is that “sexual keenness seems to be practically the only kind of wit that the rakes have ... even the truly witty rakes ... are primarily defined by their extravagant sexuality” (Drougge 546). Drougge is suggesting that even their intellect has succumbed completely to sex and how to get it. Libertines have cognitively removed themselves from society’s norms for the sake of whoring and murdering that they have nothing left besides sex.<sup>6</sup>

The libertines’ voluntary (cognitive) withdrawal from society sheds light on several other divisions within Restoration drama, specifically the gender divides through space: cognitive, public/private, and physical. Cognitive space means the freedom to have and express original, individual thoughts, opinions, and emotions. This space can be taken away by more than just literary censorship, it can be invaded or destroyed by physical rape, defamation of character, or simply by being ignored. Rape can shatter one’s confidence, defamation of character might result in one’s ideas being discredited, and being ignored is humiliating. Public and private spaces in terms of literary criticism are generally synonymous with the domestic and public

---

<sup>5</sup> Many of the statements about the nature of libertines, their beliefs, and so forth are indirectly drawn from reading a variety of criticism (virtually any text in the Works Consulted will answer for many of these “facts”), though Jeremy Webster’s *Performing Libertinism in Charles II’s Court: Politics, Drama, Sexuality* and Warren Chernaik’s *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature*. The introductions to these texts were especially useful.

<sup>6</sup> Even though libertines were abusive towards women, men, and public and private property, it can be argued that they paved the way for later sexual freedoms and planted the initial idea that sexual pleasure and satisfaction were ends unto themselves and not merely the means to something else.

spheres; I want to detail more specifically how I am going to use the terms public and private/domestic.<sup>7</sup> For my argument, the public sphere is associated with business, publishing, and stage acting--all things that require going around town, often alone, and into the homes and businesses of virtual strangers. On the other hand, the private/domestic sphere relates to things that happen at home or never leave the home; an example of the distinction between “happening at home” and “staying at home” is that some things occur only in the home (like family and married life) while things that “stay at home” are things that could happen in the public sphere but never make it that far (women are allowed to write in the private/domestic sphere, but 17th century social norms frowned upon women taking their private sphere writing into the public sphere by publishing).<sup>8</sup> I want to stress that in my use the public and private spheres are not merely places for ideas and similarly abstract creations, but also for physical bodies of individual people and objects. Public people interact in public businesses, at social functions, and generally run their own affairs and are seen in public spaces; private people are not observed in public: they send others into the public sphere to do business, they never appear without an escort at social functions, and they never publish or send their ideas from the domestic sphere and into the public sphere. During most of the early modern period women were kept in the domestic/private sphere, while men reigned in the public sphere, and any people who crossed those borders were crossing outside of social norms with the expected results of slander and ostracization. The third kind of space functioning in Restoration drama is physical space; this means both the physical space of one’s body and the niche one creates in one’s home--like a bedroom or personal sitting

---

<sup>7</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks’s *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* was the initial springboard for many of these ideas, even though she is discussing a different century, and even though there are significant differences between her notion of privacy and my notion of space. Her book looks at how people sought to be alone (or at least unobserved) to hide their thoughts and actions from others, while this study looks at finding enough space to have individual thoughts and space to act whether alone or not. *Privacy* provides the basis for (most of) my understanding of domestic and public spheres and what went on in each.

<sup>8</sup> Derek Hughes discusses these ideas in *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, 5-6. The first two chapters of this book provide a lot of context and history for Behn’s career, especially as a woman.

room. The invasion of either one's body or private rooms can lead to the varying psychological (cognitive) effects that were mentioned earlier.

Space is generally an open or free area that one can (physically or mentally) enter or leave at will. Space can be controlled in a variety of ways (as discussed above, and will be below)--physical space with locked and doors, cognitive space is much more delicate since it relies on itself for protection (one needs control over cognitive processes to detect lies, sarcasm, and intent in others, without that cognitive control these functions are difficult to perform accurately). There are very few reasons to willingly hand over one's physical space (or the means of protecting oneself) or cognitive abilities (the last line of defense if the physical barriers are breached). Most instances of entrance into another's space are by explicit invitation into one's physical space (personal chambers or access to one's body) or cognitive space (expressing affection without commanding affection).<sup>9</sup> So what happens when that invitation is not given but someone enters another's private space? Usually it is a form of rape, even if it is not a physical sexual penetration.

To avoid further complication, let us define and distinguish between physical rape, cognitive rape, and seduction for our purposes. Physical rape is unwanted sexual contact. Cognitive rape is hijacking an unwilling person's thoughts or feelings. Seduction is a form of coercion resulting in sex. Alone, these definitions are not useful, so to clarify: seduction (depending on the methods used) can be a form of cognitive rape--it is one person influencing the thoughts or feelings of another person. Seduction only becomes cognitive rape when deceptive means are used; for a hypothetical example, Don John telling a woman he will marry her after sex when he has no intention of following through with his promises. Don John's

---

<sup>9</sup> One example of explicit invitations are in marriages of mutual affection: these relationships provide a safe space to retreat from the outside world; they are also supposed to be a refuge from unwanted physical contact (rape or sexual harassment), and a haven for exploration of sexuality for a loving couple.

hypothetical victim has been assured that he loves her passionately and will marry her and live with her and do anything to please her as long she has sex with him. He has effectively influenced her feelings towards him, and she is mentally preparing for the imminent wedding while thinking about how dashing and handsome he is and it is amazing that he is so devoted to her and only her. Now, she never would have had these thoughts if Don John had not made her dozens of promises; he is not interested in marrying her or pleasing her or loving her--he only wants to have sex with her right now and will do anything to get what he wants, thus he has gone beyond just seducing the woman, he has cognitively raped her. He has removed any control she had over her own thoughts and filled her head with what he wants her to think. So he has raped her mind to have sex with her physical body. At the time of the sex act she is willing enough, but the next morning when Don John is gone (and so are a few of her valuables). Suddenly she realizes that maybe Don John was not sincere in his promise of eternal love and marital bliss. Her head clears of his sweet nothings, but she is devastated, furious, broken hearted. The specific emotion is not important, what is important is that Don John is still controlling her emotions--she would not be devastated, furious, or broken hearted if he had not had sex with her and left the next morning with no intention of returning. Now she is not only emotionally upset, but she is feeling physically violated--just like she had been physically raped. What is significant here is that if she had not been seduced via cognitive rape, she would never have had sex with him. But she did have sex with him and now she realizes that she did not really want to do that.

*The Libertine* does not provide women any personal space--either physical or cognitive. Both forms of space--physical and cognitive--are systematically taken from women in *The Libertine*. Essentially, the entire play is a mass rape of the women's minds and bodies. The

fictional libertines use any means necessary to physically rape women, usually in addition to (or as a consequence of the rape) abusing and controlling the women's emotions and cognitive space. Often "any means necessary" includes deception, aliases, and oath-breaking for the libertines; how can anyone see through all of the lies and misdirection? The women's lack of power and control (or their lack of knowledge about how to use power and control) seems indicative of the situation for real world Restoration women, who did not have many freedoms or liberties. The message Shadwell thus sends in *The Libertine* is that women who do not keep to their place come to a bad end.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to Shadwell's version of male/female relationships--in which the men have all the power and hold all of the cards while the women are frantically trying to escape the male libertines and prevent further damage to themselves--Aphra Behn's *The Rover* presents women who do more than just try to escape pain and suffering. Behn's female characters actively create their own deception and lies to carve out a space of their own while balancing the power scales. Behn's women do not want to hold all the cards or have complete control over men--they only want control over their own lives and personal spaces. As a female playwright, poet, and novelist, Behn fought against the patriarchal system that said women could not (and should not) write or publish their own work; she lived the life she wanted for her female characters--even if Behn was chronically broke and had to earn every shred of grudging respect she received--she published her ideas and argued for her political beliefs (especially later in her career).

Shadwell and Behn both draw on their own culture to create more meaningful messages for their work; specifically they use the social restrictions of women and the significant power

---

<sup>10</sup> Even though *The Libertine* is set in Spain (with a "Spanish" cast of characters), the message of the play (that women should know their place and not leave it) would not be lost on an English audience; the same holds true with *The Rover*, which is set in Italy (with a mixed English and "Italian" cast), even though Behn's message is more egalitarian.



that men have over women during the Restoration. The conditions in the real world are necessary if the messages of *The Libertine* and *The Rover* are to have any resonance with their audiences. The plays have very different approaches and cultural commentary, which is intriguing since the plays were written only a year apart. I am not arguing that Behn's text is a direct response to Shadwell's, but their close temporal relation is pertinent since the plays are so different even though they come from the same cultural context. Shadwell's female characters struggle to find their own space (of any kind), but they ultimately fail in finding any way to successfully function in a patriarchal society while maintaining their own safe space. Behn challenges Shadwell's treatment of women and provides alternatives for women, especially via disguises and anonymity. Behn not only presents a fictional example of how women can claim and maintain safe personal spaces, but she also practices in her own life what she preaches in her text.

## Chapter One

Libertinism accompanied Charles II into England and several decades were spent following these violent, promiscuous men on escapades into socially dangerous territory.<sup>11</sup> The powerful, wealthy, and influential men that became libertines retained their power and influence while slowly depleting their wealth. They used the resources at their disposal to disrupt social order: seducing and raping women (and sometimes men), stealing and vandalizing public and private property, and generally causing a scene wherever they went. As the libertines pushed the limits of social acceptance, their escapades escalated every time they received a response from the public. Since the libertines held such fascination for the public, it was an easy task for the playwrights to take up libertine characters and exploits as the subject of their plays. In Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine*, the libertine characters are aggressive, lascivious, and deceitful. They terrorize all those whom they encounter or charm their victims into a position of weakness and then take advantage of the unwitting--invading personal space through rape or destruction of the home, invading cognitive space by corrupting the intimacy of marriage, and violating the trust given by unsuspecting characters. The unrelenting and total libertine invasion of women's personal spaces drives women to look for an escape--they were unhappy under the thumbs of traditional men, but are miserable once the libertines take control.

Both traditional masculinity and libertinism entitle men to the freedom to do as they please, whether their desires are within reason, or not, regardless of class.<sup>12</sup> Most of Shadwell's primary masculine characters are libertines in the most extreme sense of the word; they take

---

<sup>11</sup> Webster and Turner both discuss libertinism as having developed (mostly) on the Continent (France in particular) and then spreading into England. Charles II's own embrasure of a libertine lifestyle enabled libertinism to become public without royal reprimand (for the most part).

<sup>12</sup> While lower class, traditional men could not be libertines because of the vast sums of money necessary for the role, they were in strict control of their wives and daughters.

every advantage of their freedoms, often to the point of abuse.<sup>13</sup> Granted, men without significant titles and money would not be able to maintain this kind of lifestyle alone, or at least not for long. Part of the appeal of libertines as fictional subjects is that they have enough money to throw around on lavish adventures. A poor man would not be able to spend extravagant sums without succumbing to common banditry: although libertines do steal, it is for pleasure, not necessity. Don John highlights that they are free from every societal expectation: “Thus far without a bound we have enjoyed / Our prosp’rous pleasure, which dull fools call sins; / Laughed at old feeble judges and weak laws; / And at the fond, fantastic thing called conscience” (1.1.1-4). He and his companions are not troubled by religion, law, or even a conscience Don Antonio even suggests that they “have got loose from education, / And the dull slavery of pupillage” (1.1.22-23). Even though Don John’s cohort still encounters the things that bind non-libertines, they do not feel obliged to bow to such frivolous and artificial conventions. They are able to go wherever they wish, they even “hire a vessel, and [they go] to sea together to seek a refuge and a new scene of pleasure” (2.1.61-63). They are not bound by anything, much less the societal “obligations” that the rest of the population values. While society’s rules are, in fact, optional, most people are willing to submit to laws, rules, and social niceties because those things (should) afford protection from people like Don John and his comrades. Without laws and social norms all strangers are a potential threat to one’s well-being; rules provide a foundation of trust in day to day interactions--one does not need to suspect everyone else might suddenly rob or rape others. The Dons are paradoxically dependent on the rest of society to obey those codes--they use the foundation of trust and initially pretend to subscribe to social norms only to betray suddenly the trust given to them by others.

---

<sup>13</sup> Shadwell is far from being an accidental writer, so by having these characters be so extreme in their “conquests” is likely a critique on real libertines.

All of the female characters in *The Libertine* want to have a greater degree of independence and freedom, but the men in their lives refuse to allow the women to make decisions, even regarding who they marry.<sup>14</sup> They do not look forward to their wedding day because it is also their “execution day” (3.2.245), and they will have even fewer liberties than they do now. Once they are married, they will “grow wild by confinement” (3.2.254), especially since they do not get to choose their husbands. The implications of women growing “wild by confinement” are similar to that without any freedom the women are going to become so much more unmanageable than if they had been given even a few liberties. What makes the idea of Don John so tempting to Clara and the other women is not that they are particularly pleased with him specifically, but because his declarations of love and devotion represent an alternative to “the trap of matrimony” that they “are tumbled headlong and blindfolded into” (3.2.292-4), regardless of their feelings. The idea of a woman being able to “choose for herself” (3.2.293) is appealing to Clara, Flavia, and the other women in this play; they wish they had the opportunity to “run and ramble whither and / with whom they please and defy all censure” (3.2.263-64). Having a private place allows the women space to create a self-identity independent of their relation to a man (i.e. sister to, wife of, etc.), and where they are able to make their own choices. The libertines will let them ramble, but only because they have no use for a woman after they have bedded her. It seems as though Shadwell is criticizing the repression of women by showing these rebellious behaviors in his female characters.

The description of domestic life for women in the play is bleak at best and provides ample motivation for the women’s desire to leave it behind in favor of adventures and spaces to

---

<sup>14</sup> Shadwell might write his female characters as wanting freedom, but he does not write their endings so they get what they want. Other readings of this play might suggest that Shadwell is implicitly advocating for reform, but he fails to provide any alternatives to the existing social structure, making it an ineffective argument--he can say the situation is bad, but if he cannot think of how to change it there is little to be done.

call their own. Clara and Flavia complain about being confined the most, even though they do not do as many dramatic acts in order to find their freedom. They only find small, highly permeable spaces, like the woods, in which to be free. Both women say variations of “[a] Spanish wife [has] a worse life than a cooped chicken” (3.2.250-51). Not only are women trapped, but also they feel like they are treated worse than a chicken (who is undoubtedly going to be slaughtered and eaten). The animal analogy seems to suggest that women are kept around as long as suits their non-libertine male captors, only to be used (sexually) and then discarded however the men please. Although the libertines did not treat the women any better--the only difference is a shorter time in captivity before being discarded. The women can only tolerate the repressive, exploitive masculine atmosphere for so long before they start wishing for freedom. After recognizing their captivity, Clara’s and Flavia’s song is a strong indication that they do not want to be subject to men any longer: “Woman who is by nature wild / Dull bearded man encloses; / Of nature’s freedom we’re beguiled / By laws which man imposes, / Who still himself continues free; Yet we poor slaves must fettered be” (3.2.311-16). The song suggests that women are naturally free and not meant to be contained. They are “wild” and not supposed to work as “slaves” who are “fettered” to the house and never allowed to go without their masters. They had been “beguiled” them out of the wild and into the “enclosed” space of the domestic sphere by men who used deceptive methods to capture and “enslave” them. The home remains the place for women (even though they do not appear to have much control over it), while the men are able to enter public space just as freely and easily as they dominate private spaces that the women wanted for themselves. Ultimately, the women were tricked out of their freedom by men who now abuse them while the men flaunt their own dismissal of moral or social restraints.

Having been tricked into captivity, the sisters decide to use their own power to try to gain their freedom. Their description of their powers sounds remarkably like “feminine wiles”: “Let us resume our ancient right, / Make man at distance wonder; / Though he victorious be in fight, / In love we’ll keep him under. / War and ambition hence be hurled, / Let love and beauty rule the world” (3.2.349-44). They could implement their mysterious qualities to hold men in awe of women so they can use love to get their way. Men might have more physical prowess, Flavia suggests, but women can use love against them so the women are free and the men are bound only by their desire and awe of women. This speech has several spatial indicators: “distance,” “under,” and “hurled,” and “world.” It seems fitting that women who are trapped are most acutely aware of space in their own rhetoric. Their entire plan is based on having enough physical and cognitive space to remove themselves from men and then gain power over men (but not necessarily trap them, just enthrall them).<sup>15</sup> The difference between being trapped by men and enthralled by the women is that the men are using violent means to trap (physically and cognitively) women, while the women are using their attractive powers to draw the men to them (but they do not want to physically confine the men or falsely alter their mental states, just to inspire love and loyalty in men). However, the plan cannot work because the men hold the women too closely for the women to gain the distance necessary to seem mysterious, thus they cannot make the men fall in love with them (which is required to gain power over the men). It is impossible to “hurl war and ambition” when men are currently “ruling the world.” But the sisters then bemoan the fact that a world ruled by beauty and love does not exist, Flavia says, “O dear Clara, that this [song] were true! But now let’s home; our father will miss us” (3.2.347-48). Flavia understands that the dream is impossible in their current powerless state; the ties that bind

---

<sup>15</sup> Neither the characters nor I are suggesting that women withhold sex to control men, but use sex as a positive reinforcement reward. The men and women would enjoy fulfilling each others needs so there is no need to use sex as a power tool, no need to force or withhold sex to manipulate the other.

her are too strong to break without assistance or the wild desires that might have originally driven her.

The sisters are not alone in being bound by social norms, even though they desperately want to escape them. Don Francisco is also bound by social custom to treat Don John with respect, even after Don John seduces his daughters, gaining control over their minds and effectively running their value for the marriage market, because Don John has been Don Francisco's guest. Don Francisco had originally been willing to offer his home as a sanctuary to Don John as a traveler in need of shelter, but he was not expecting Don John and his friends to take advantage of the hospitality by having sex with his host's daughters and then abandoning them. The seduction of the girls included marriage promises (which the girls were predisposed to be receptive towards since they were to fulfill their arranged marriages the following day), but since Don John had no intention of keeping the marriage promises to the girls, the girls are heartbroken and shamed while Don Francisco is insulted and shamed by this affront to his nobility, hospitality, and daughters (who are basically his property). Suddenly, Don John's presence is unwelcome, and Don Francisco is eager to restore his home to the state it was prior to being invaded. He says, "my house has been [Don John's] sanctuary, and I am obliged in honour not to act as a magistrate, but [his] host. No violence shall here be offered to [him], but [he] must instantly leave this house, and if [Don John] would have safety, find it somewhere else. Be gone" (4.1.157-61). Even after the horrible crimes Don John committed under his roof, Don Francisco is not willing to further violate the safe space the home provides (or to disregard society's standards for the relationship between host and guest) by killing Don John himself.

The libertines are able to control the physical spaces they occupy and invade the physical and cognitive spaces of the women around them. Sometimes their control even extends to the

men around them; Jacomo is most often taken advantage of by the Dons, partially, at least, because he is their servant (at least in deed, if not in name). Don John is able to maintain the privacy of spaces by using Jacomo and the others as guards, telling Jacomo that “[w]hen [he is] wanton with [his] whore within, / [Jacomo], with thy beads and prayer-book, keep’st the door” (1.1.44-45), so Don John might rape in peace. Even serenading is a form of invasion, as it is meant invade the house through music and is usually done by people who are not allowed inside. Other instances are much more objectionable, such as when Don John uses murder as a form of invasion: “I run him through the lungs handsomely” (1.1.108), or when he refuses to let Jacomo pray in his presence or else he will “beat out [Jacomo’s] brains if [he] dare be so impudent as to pray in [Don John’s] company” (1.1.92-93). Don John is able to manipulate space so everything is to his liking and is completely submissive to his commands. When killing Octavio, Don John “draw[s] him further off, that his groans may not disturb [his] pleasure” (1.1.383-84). No one is permitted to disrupt or intrude upon Don John’s pleasure, either physically (he sets guards and locks doors to prevent it) or audibly (he removes the sources of groaning and threatens those who object to his actions). Not even sacred places are safe from Don John. Jacomo says that he “never knew [Don John] go to church but to take sanctuary for a murder, or to rob churches of their plate” (1.1.114-15). Don John uses the church as a sanctuary from his pursuers, while simultaneously taking away the sanctuary the church offers to other people (since it is a gathering place for those who cannot protect themselves). Not only is he violating the protection a church is supposed to offer, but also he depends on the protection to save him from people who would stop him from hurting the innocent bystanders in the church. Don John is breaking religious and legal concepts by abusing sanctuary.



Traditionally during the Restoration safe places, like the home or a convent, do not afford enough protection and/or isolation for women from men. Invasions of the home are particularly shocking because the play represents homes as places the characters expect to offer safety and repose. Not places that are easily invaded and manipulated. When Don Antonio admits to raping his own sisters it is the ultimate violation of home and family. When Maria calls out Don John on the crimes committed against her (in third person), “[t]his is the villain who killed the lover of Antonio’s sister, deflowered her, and murdered her brother in his own house” (4.1.109-10), she places emphasis on the fact that these horrible crimes were perpetrated on her brother in “his own house.” More than that, she is outraged because she considers it her house too (even though she cannot officially claim it) because it is supposed to protect her from just this sort of situation. Even with her safeguards against intrusion she was not safe at home, which suggests that one does not expect crimes of this nature to occur in a space that is supposed to provide the most security.

One way Maria had tried to control her reality was to have an illicit affair with Octavio. In theory, she would be able to control her sexual contacts and be able to construct the relationship in such a way that her needs were satisfied, as well as her male partner’s. She would also gain some measure of protection from libertines by having not only her brother to protect her but also a male lover, and a series of walls, doors, and locks in between her and the outside world. By all appearances, the affair was far from public since the couple met at night and with passwords and signals to ensure the secrecy of their actions. She had established the signals as safeguards against unwanted visitors (indicating her control over their encounters). Maria’s use of signals, passwords, and keys to gain access to her bedroom gives her the opportunity to turn Octavio away at almost any stage. These safeguards are crucial to her personal safety--as Don

John demonstrates time and again, it is not safe for women to leave their homes unescorted, though sometimes even an escort is not enough.<sup>16</sup> Keeping the affair secret prevents Maria from being perceived as a “public” woman who can easily be seduced (read: taken advantage of).<sup>17</sup>

The passwords and signals the couple employed also gives Maria more control over if Octavio (or anyone else) could visit her outside of the restrictions set by her brother. However, all of her precautions end up failing her when Don John kills Octavio (after he had called up to Maria for entrance) and steals his key to the garden door. Don John has effectively gained entrance, having passed the last test: Maria embraces Don John disguised as Octavio and then suggests that they “retire to [her] chamber” (1.1.411). Don John has invaded not only Maria’s private room, but also her cognitive space; by pretending to be her lover he has a temporary pass into her head and heart. As long as she believes he is Octavio she might disclose very private information or emotions to him (which he could use against her later). But when she discovers that it is Don John and not Octavio in her room, she cries about how she is “ruined and betrayed” (1.2.5), because Don John changed the nature of the encounter. Instead of being a safe romantic interlude with her trusted lover, it is at least a cognitive rape with Don John laughing all the while. Maria had one expectation of what was going to happen (Octavio joining her for a romantic evening), but instead her physical space is violated (by someone other than Octavio entering her room) and her cognitive space is assaulted (the unwanted physical invasion and it disrupts her emotional state). She is shocked that he was able to penetrate so far into (what she thought was) a safe space; to add insult to injury, she believed him to be her loved one and then he turns out to be a hateful invader. He had convinced her he was trustworthy by using her

---

<sup>16</sup> Don John killed Octavio and disabled her brother, both of whom would have been Maria’s escort if she left the “safety” of her room and went into public spaces.

<sup>17</sup> The general impression seems to be that once women have publicly fallen, they lose their respectability and become targets for other men; it also follows the general truism that after doing something the first time, it becomes easier each subsequent time.

cognitive state against her: she was expecting Octavio, so Don John acted like him (like a trusted lover) and then entered Maria's physical space. He effectively invaded her mind so she believed him to be Octavio and used that belief to invade her (her room and then her body). Other elements that make the situation worse are that Don John is a stranger to her and the scene was loud enough that her honor has been compromised even if she is not actually raped (hence her cries about being "ruined"--rumor is sometimes enough to devalue a woman on the marriage market).

Maria's active participation in romantic encounters has given her practice in navigating the world on her own, and once she has tasted that independence, she wants more. Octavio's murder gives her the opportunity to venture into the world and take what she wants. Don John kills Octavio, providing Maria with an impetus to leave her domestic situation and become more independent.<sup>18</sup> There are two streams of consequences from Octavio's death: (1) Maria no longer has a motivation to stay in her domestic sphere, so she leaves it to do as she pleases. She has no ties, no restrictions, and no fear of reprimand. (2) Her primary goal now is to cause trouble (and death) for Don John; he took her man (and by extension the romance and independence that came with her relationship with Octavio), so she needs something to fill the resulting vacuum with a new pursuit. By setting out to kill Don John, Maria abandons "conscience, / Which serves for nothing but to make men cowards" (1.1.4-5); by ignoring society's standards of how women should behave, Maria is able to actively work towards fulfilling her own desires instead of waiting for society to allow her to do so.

The importance of having cognitive independence and freedom of action becomes apparent when contrasting Maria's willingness to carry out revenge with Clara and Flavia's

---

<sup>18</sup> Her actions seem to become more masculine because she begins to act in public (and dresses up as a man), but simply acting publicly does not make her masculine (although that is what Shadwell would have us believe).

impotence in a similar situation. The sisters are not as experienced as Maria and are not willing to abandon their consciences. Shadwell is using the sisters (and even Maria and Leonora) to show that trying to succeed on their own will only result in failure, or if they by some bizarre chance accomplish something, they will eventually be killed or have so ruined their usefulness (read: marriage eligibility) that they will be social outcasts.<sup>19</sup> After they discover Don John's true nature and are shamed in front of their father and would-have-been husbands, they express their concerns and despair about surviving in the world alone: "What will become of us, poor miserable maids lost in our fortunes and our reputations? Our intended husbands, if they recover their wounds, will murder us; and 'tis but justice. Our lives to now cannot be worth the keeping" (4.1.217-20). The sisters seem to accept that their situation is hopeless and that the natural course of action is to wait to be killed since they are useless. They are not able to fight against what they perceive to be as their fate because they do not have enough worldly experience to know that there is another option (as Maria has demonstrated). Instead of going out into the world to try to revenge themselves on Don John (as Maria decides to do), Clara suggests that they: "not waste our time in fruitless grief; let us employ some to pursue the murderers. And, for ourselves, let's to the next monastery, and there spend all our weary life in penitence" (4.1.222-24).<sup>20</sup> The sisters believe that they have failed in their duties as daughters since they so easily gave their virtue (the only thing of value they possess) to Don John and because they disobeyed orders and were romping about in the woods--very much an unsafe, non-domestic space that their father would hardly have thought appropriate for women, especially without an approved male escort.

---

<sup>19</sup> At this time the sisters did not know that their fiancées would take them back at the end of the play.

<sup>20</sup> They do get vengeance later via Don John's death/abduction to hell, but it is not a result of their own action. This is much less satisfying than if they had directly commanded his beheading or some other violent end, but at least they are alive to know that he is gone.

Ultimately the sisters are not able to find their own space, so they must continue to live in the masculine world. Maria's affair and the sisters' struggles in the play are representative of pervasive cultural issues during the late 1600s. In the play, such severe limitations on women's ability to choose for themselves only encourages them to find other ways to escape the straight and narrow path that their fathers and husbands seem to think appropriate for women. They want to escape the masculine space in favor of inhabiting impermeable feminine spaces, but finding such spaces seems an impossible task--especially given its contradiction of the traditional notion of the feminine always being permeable.

Even protected spaces like the convent are not completely safe. The convent was the only place where an all-female society might exist, and with its thick, high walls to protect it from masculine invasion it stood a good chance of surviving. But such a place presents the ultimate challenge to libertines, especially since nuns take vows of chastity and poverty, making them the antithesis of libertines. The Dons' choice to burn the convent instead of simply invading and raping its occupants is significant because burning is a complete form of destruction--it is fast, thorough, destroys the building, kills many people, and flushes out survivors into the open for the libertines to rape or murder. Fire also seems fitting since it is often used to describe a man's passion for a woman--or in this case the Dons' passion for sex is enabled by the fire since it sends the convent's female occupants out of its walls and into the waiting arms of the libertine arsonists. Once a fire has been set, there is little that can be done to stop it, and even if it can be stopped, the building is unusable and must be rebuilt. It would take a long time for a group of nuns to raise the money and then reconstruct not only the physical

building, but also the sense of security it offers. The situation would leave them physically and emotionally vulnerable to the libertines for some time.<sup>21</sup>

Before any of Shadwell's female characters encounter libertines, they had a very limited amount of cognitive space allotted to them by the men who strictly controlled the women's lives; these men limit the amount and kinds of experiences that the women are allowed to have, so the women are not prepared for anything beyond a narrow scope of relatively harmless situations. The places which they are confined to are easily accessed by men and provide virtually no privacy for the female occupants. Leonora wonders: "Under / what strange enchantments [she is] bound" (1.1.218-19) that cause her to be attracted to a man like Don John. Without a place to be alone and determine who she is and what she wants, she is not able to fathom, or escape, her feelings for a man that she has no reason to love. Even Jacomo, who is a relatively submissive male, is able to manipulate the women, and expects to be obeyed. The language he uses when he tells Leonora to stop by the next day suggests his implicit power over her: "[c]ome in the morning, and I will / place you in the next room where you shall overhear our discourse" (1.1.275-76). He places her there, instead of her hiding herself, rendering her incapable even of handling herself in clandestine plots; he thoroughly controls and owns the space.

When Don John initially appears to the women, he presents himself as an honorable gentleman who is respectful of women, making him seem like a pleasant alternative to overbearing fathers and brothers. He invites Clara to disobey her father when she declines his invitation: "'tis impossible to bring it about. My father has disposed of me" (4.433-34). Don John tells her to "Dispose of [her]self. [Don John]'ll do well enough with [Clara's father], and [Don John's] / fortune and quality are too great for him, for whom you are / intended, to dispute

---

<sup>21</sup> The Dons' reasons for burning the convents (with its occupants still inside) are to flush women out into the open so the Dons might catch and rape them, while other convent burnings were politically and financially motivated.

with [Don John]" (3.2.435-37). This early indication that he might be willing to let her make her own choices gives Clara and the other women some hope for independence. But Don John only encourages the women to disobey other men so that he can use them to fulfill his own sexual desires. He essentially wants them to leave one trap for another. After swearing a series of oaths, Don John claims that they are only "Snares to catch conceited women with" (2.1.137). He refuses to be contained himself, but much prefers for women to be under his strict control until he is finished with them. He quickly changes tactics once he has the women's trust, then (as shown in one particular scene) he and the other Dons literally trap several of Don John's wives to rape them. The women start trying to escape, but Don Antonio says, "Let 'em go. They are confined; they can't get out" (2.1.359). Women came to him willingly, but he changes the situation into a literal and emotional trap that only he can escape. The betrayal these women experience is complete: Don John emotionally deceives and physically invades them. He inspires hope in them for independence, then reveals that he just wants to rape and discard them--not give them their promised freedom. He gains their trust so they would follow him, then he destroys that trust by trapping them so he can rape (and sometimes) murder them. The play suggests that these victimized women are foolish to try and want anything that the patriarchy will not give them, and that they should (and do, in the play) suffer for their misguided desires.

Even when it seems Don John is himself trapped, he is able to control many women at once--even when they are on the cusp of causing him significant physical harm. When he is assaulted by all of his wives, he subdues them, if only temporarily, by saying, "Well, ladies, know, / then, I am marriage [sic] to one in this company; and tomorrow morning, / if you will repair to this place, I will declare my marriage" (2.1.228-30). He tempts them into obedience while sowing dissention between the women by suggesting that he is truly married to one of the

women present and will reveal her tomorrow if they will all wait patiently until then. Each these women (who truly believe--via Don John's powers of seduction and cognitive rape--that they love him and he returns their affections) expects that Don John will reveal that he is married to her and his offer implies that she will be able to set up house with him and have his affection and protection. However, this is just a ploy to subdue the women so he and his comrades might more easily rape all of the women trapped in that room. For Don John to coerce half a dozen angry women with a single sentence, he must have stolen their minds (via their hearts) at an earlier date, and done so in such a manner that they will do his bidding for so slight a temptation as discovering which of them *might* be married to him. Don John effectively seduces and the cognitively rapes these women so he still has complete ownership of these women's minds--part of his efficacy stems from his knowledge of what these women were raised to need: marriage, and he is willing to tell any lie necessary to control them.

Perhaps the most thoroughly invaded mind in *The Libertine* is Leonora's. Don John has so thoroughly invaded Leonora's mind that she cannot do much of anything without him. His deception of her is so complete that even after he reveals himself to be an uncaring incubus, she still wants him. Leonora refuses to accept Don John's chastisement for chasing him when he is the one that provided the impetus for the chase; if he would have been faithful, she would not have had to hunt him down. Leonora seems to be utterly under Don John's sway, yet she holds him accountable for his words and actions towards her, even when he squirms under the pressure and tries to place the blame on Leonora: "You women / always rook in love; you'll never play upon the square with us" (2.1.122-23). She does not give in because Don John was clearly the one who was not honest. He accuses her of cheating, even though Leonora has been nothing but honest and straightforward, while it was Don John who deceived her and continues to play word



games to escape his responsibility.<sup>22</sup> Don John suggests that love is a temporary, fleeting thing, instead of the durable state that others frequently attest to: “Yes, faith, I did love you and showed you as frequent and / hearty signs of it as I could, and egad, y’are an ungrateful / woman if you say the contrary” (2.1.87-89). He did love her, but once his feelings for her passed, he was instantly freed from his vows to her. Love is very different for men (especially for libertines), than it is for women, and has very different consequences.

In many instances, love for men equates to lust, while for women “love is a disease to which women are dangerously prone. Women too must learn to have autonomous, solipsistic sex lives and to fuel them on power and pride, not love. Love means loss of control and relinquishing of power” (Drougge 559). Leonora does not understand that her actions or statements have very little to do with Don John’s faithfulness, or lack thereof, or to his initial feelings for her; she demonstrates her lack of understanding when she asks: “O heaven! Did you--and do not now? What crime have I / committed that could make you break your vows and oaths and / banish all your passion?” (2.1.90-92). She and Don John are operating on such different levels that basic communication has broken down. She believes his oaths and he uses them to control her; she does not realize that her personal cognitive space has been commandeered by another who is using it to control her and her emotions. The men in the play consistently try to blame the lack of veracity in their oaths on the women; Don John does this first when he tells Leonora that he would not have broken his oath if she would not have forced him to make it initially (2.1.132-34). It seems that love and libertines are incompatible, at least from the women’s perspective and definition of love, which is part of the original problem: the men are after something (casual

---

<sup>22</sup> Even though Leonora’s mind is the most thoroughly invaded, that does not mean that her mind is completely controlled by Don John.

sex without commitment) so different from what the women have been raised to require (faithful marriage with a steady income) that relationships between the sexes are all but impossible.

Returning to Leonora specifically, we find that even though Don John convinced Leonora that he is worth loving and she continues to pursue him, she still has enough private emotional space to try to prevent him from shifting blame to her. Leonora is able to hold these seemingly contradictory impulses simultaneously--to give all of her life and emotion over to Don John but fight against his will. Emotions are a unique form of cognitive space, it is difficult for an individual to have power over her own emotions, much less to truly control the emotions of another person, though the fictional libertines are able to influence those emotions. It is difficult for libertines to overtly and permanently control women's (or anyone's) emotions; emotions can be manipulated and one person might purposely incite specific emotions in others, but the outcome is hard to predict. As we see with Leonora and Don John: he made her love him, but he cannot prevent her from following him without physically restraining her in some way; he cannot remove the desire to follow him, if anything he made her love him too completely and now he cannot get rid of her. By using Don John's actions against him, she is able to manipulate the situation to her liking; he made her love him, so any discomfort he feels via Leonora is his own fault. Leonora will either make Don John return her love or he will somehow make her stop loving him. Both scenarios, however, seem unlikely (and neither actually comes to pass). Leonora's somewhat underhanded (and partial, at best) control of her situation is problematic for Shadwell's presentation of libertine gender relations because it means that Leonora has managed to reserve some portion of her mind for herself and no one else can access it, not even Don John, the master manipulator. Shadwell remedies this complication by having Don John poison her-- women who are not compliant and stay in the (limited) space allotted to them cannot be

tolerated. The simplest way to “solve” the problem Leonora presents (continually resisting complete submission to men) is to kill her--which Don John does just a few lines after she confronts him. Don John (and libertines as a group) does not want Leonora (or any woman) to have any part of her selfhood impervious to penetration, and allowing her to survive would be contradictory to the play’s message that rebellious, thinking women will be punished.

Ultimately, the most frustrating thing for all women is that they have no real freedom (even though they only want some control over major events in their lives), while the men who have every freedom do not appreciate their independence. Instead, the men take advantage of their power and use it to control and manipulate others. The libertines are even worse than the traditional men since the libertines use their unrestricted freedom to rape, rob, and pillage everyone around them. None of the men are willing to give the women any power because power operates on a balance system--the more power the women have, the less power the men have. For women there is little distinction between libertines and traditional men since both are determined to use her as they see fit, the only difference is what the man is going to use the women for: seduce and discard her one, or marry her off to someone in whom she has no interest where she might suffer for years (her husband could be a sexual sadist, physically or verbally abusive, or she could be completely ignored and isolated).

After their attempts to carve out spaces of their own the women are not left with any options but to leave masculine society altogether to gain their freedom. They had tried to make compromises when living in masculine society, and some women turned to marriage in the hope they would be able to influence their husbands. They had tried to make compromises when living in masculine society, with some women turning to marriage in the hope they would be able to influence their husbands. But they still do not have control or freedom because Don John

passes them around. Many a woman had married Don John or one of his companions, thinking that his love was such that he would not set many restrictions on her, but that she would still fit into the normal mold of a family. Don John, however, freely gives his wives to his friends for their sexual pleasure: “Let me see, Antonio, thou shalt / have for thy present use, let me see, my sixth wife. ‘Faith, she’s a / pretty, buxom wench and deserves hearty usage from thee” (2.1.324-26). Even once the women submit to the one bond they do not mind (marriage), they are more than just prisoners, they are slaves to the whims of Don John who has corrupted marriage into a sadistic farce.

Whether or not each sister is actually attracted to him is irrelevant--they want a way out of arranged marriages and there he is; they do not know that his words only bind him for the moment and once he no longer loves a woman, he does not hold himself to the commitment. Shadwell might be obliquely critiquing traditional morals here, but he does not appear to offer any alternatives, and is certainly not willing to suggest love-matches for all unions. For a woman in this era, this fickle, physical definition of love is very damaging--once her virtue is gone she does not have a real future. As Munns succinctly states, “[c]haracters like ... Shadwell’s libertine trio are dangerous because they use and abuse social conventions, skeptically aware of them as instruments of a social control from which they cynically exempt themselves” (Munns 150). While characters like Don John are dangerous, Munns gestures towards the seemingly innocuous social conventions as dangerous as well. These specific conventions (patriarchy, arranged marriage, control and abuse of women) are all the more dangerous because everyone is comfortable with them and does not examine them too closely.

Leonora had tried to maintain a relationship without marriage, but did not like the results. She had believed Don John’s oaths might have some binding influence, but this is not the case.

She tells Don John that “[she] trusted in [his] truth and constancy; / without the bond of marriage, yielded up a virgin’s treasure, all [her] / innocence” (2.1.78-80) and is now worthless in the eyes of the masculine society. Marriage is supposed to provide shelter from the outside world--it is supposed to be a refuge from rape while providing women a safe place to explore their sexuality with their husband. Don John repeatedly violates the naturalized intimacy of marriage and his vows to his “wives”: they “believed [his] solemn contract when [he] invoked all the / powers above to testify to [his] vows” (2.1.80-81). When Don John poisons Leonora, his remorse only lasts for a second, but given that he had never previously thought twice about his wretchedness, it is a remarkable feat Leonora has accomplished. Don John’s refusal to be permanently affected by this incident suggests that Shadwell does not want women to have the same kind of power over men as the libertines have had over the women throughout the play; even if he will not own to it, Leonora and the wives’ willing deaths suggests that, if given the right tools (and sufficient practice), women are just as capable as men at manipulation.<sup>23</sup> Even though Leonora and the others were not eavesdropping or using anonymity in the strictest sense, they used the knowledge they had to influence other people--the same effect that the Dons’ use of their knowledge had.

Clara and Flavia have come to believe that confinement is good for them, especially since their brief attempts to free themselves failed. The pair leave the bounds set by their father after his death to enter into even more severe confinement within the nunnery: “for ourselves, let’s to the next / monastery, and there spend all our weary life in penitence” (4.1.223-24). Even though the monastery requires the women to obey very strict rules and to live in a specific kind of life, it is an exclusively female society that will free them from the direct over-lording of men (since it

---

<sup>23</sup> It is impossible to say exactly what Shadwell thought about women’s potential for power, but certainly the male characters resented any power gained by the female characters.

is a given that the abbess reports to the area (male) bishop).<sup>24</sup> The restrictions are still better than “for each [sister] to be con/fined to one [man] whom yet we never saw and, a thousand to one, shall / never like” (3.2.246-49). Flavia would rather ignore the world and continue her isolated existence than be forced into marriage, that will make her truly miserable. Flavia describes the nunnery as their “last sanctuary in this world.../There is no safety, or no hope / but there. Let’s go and bid a long farewell to all the world, a thing / too vain and little worth our care” (4.2.225-28). The bitterness of Flavia’s words speaks to how damaging (emotionally and physically) associations with Don John can be. She is now jaded and has little faith in humanity and seeks refuge with God. The convent should provide the sisters with a place to live in physical safety, a place to work and earn her keep, and a place of emotional and spiritual respite--surely God would not treat them as harshly at all the men they have known. Their innocence might have been taken but their naiveté is still intact.

For all the searching the women do, they only find more masculine spaces, or places that men can easily invade. Maria, Flora, Leonora, and several minor female characters are all killed by the Dons during their pursuit of safe spaces; this seems to suggest is that women will never find an impermeable, non-masculine space, so they should stop looking and accept that they will always be subject to masculine control. The women refuse to quietly acquiesce to yet another command from men and so they make the most out of their deaths. One of Don John’s wives is the first to use her death to thwart the Dons; Giacomo had brought in six of Don John’s wives in an attempt to irritate him and make the women turn on Don John for his lechery. The fourth wife refuses to allow them to rape her and remove any honor she might still have, but when the men continue in their actions, she cries “No, monster: I’ll prevent you (*Stabs herself*) (2.1.343). The

---

<sup>24</sup> It is also ironic that the sisters are entering a nunnery since they do not think they will be able to marry, but nuns are married to Christ.

Dons are astonished at her actions, having never met a woman who could escape them. Don Antonio says that this is “[t]he first time [he] e’er knew a woman so” (2.1.344-45), and Don Lopez simply says that “[s]he has prevented [him]; she’s dead” (2.1.346). Having never been kept from having their pleasure by a woman before, the Dons are not sure how to respond and are left dumbstruck until they remember that there are five other women still trapped in the room with them. The fourth woman ultimately decided that it is better to be dead than to be raped by these men again and probably killed at their hands afterwards. She takes the only control she can by committing suicide so that they can no longer control or invade her in the most intimate way. Although Leonora’s death is not intentional on her part, she uses her last words to manipulate Don John into experiencing sympathy, if only for a brief moment. Don John and Leonora meet in the woods, Don John offers Leonora a (poisoned) drink, and once she finishes it off and knows that she is dying, she tells Don John that “[he] has murdered the only creature / living that could love [him]. Heaven will revenge it, though to [her] ‘tis / kindness. Here all [her] sorrows shall forever cease” (3.2.614-16). Don John is left feeling confused and assaulted, he asks “Why would [she] persecute [him] with [her] love?” (3.2.617) and then he realizes that “[t]his the first time [he] ever knew compassion. Poor fool, [he pities] / her, but ‘tis too late” (3.2.630-31). His remorse only lasts for a second, but given that he had never previously thought twice about his wretchedness, it is a remarkable feat Leonora has accomplished even though it has little influence.

## Chapter Two

Even though Leonora and Maria are both killed, they suggest alternatives to subjecting themselves to society's status quo for women. In the end the women do all find undisturbed space in their graves--but to be forced into death to find that space is a price they should not have to pay. Aphra Behn supports the idea that the price of personal space for women is too high, so she provides alternatives in her play *The Rover*. She does not simply give all of her female characters complete control over the males, because that would be just an inversion of the situation in *The Libertine*. Instead, she suggests that men and women should form relatively equal partnerships.<sup>25</sup> Behn does give her female characters time and space to speak freely and the tools necessary (most notably disguises and a willingness to perform minor deceptions) to function in public without major reprimand. In *The Rover* Behn gives her women the opportunity enter the public sphere without repercussion, and the women turn out to be successful and fulfilled, instead of resorting to sacrificing everything for the privacy of the grave. In *The Libertine*, the libertines continue to try to invade women's spaces, but the fact that women had time alone on stage is a significant indication that they were not going to be silenced for much longer. Granted, what female characters accomplish on the stage (via their playwrights) does not equate to what women in the real world can, will, or are able to do. Real women at this time still had a long way to go in terms of concrete rights, but they seem to gain more power in small social settings. The real world movement towards independence, agency, and self-determination for women is not a straight, ever-improving line--it is a series of jagged points that seem to shift generally upwards, but are continuously experiencing swings back towards enforced-silence, isolation, and servitude.

---

<sup>25</sup> Although *The Rover* is not an explicit response to *The Libertine* as far as my research goes, Behn's play does provide a nice counterpoint to *The Libertine* by showing what might happen if women are given half a chance.



In *The Rover*, Behn presents women who operate independently financially and mentally: Angellica runs a successful prostitution business, Lucetta takes revenge on the male sex by stealing from clients, and other women demand to choose their own husbands. Mostly, the women use their voices to express their desires and then they seek ways to fulfill them while evading traps set by the rakes. This is a sharp contrast to the women in *Shadwell* who only have a vague idea of wanting freedom and equality in their marriages and do not have any means of getting it, even if they did know; those women are at the mercy of men and what the men are willing to allow the women to have or pursue. Angellica and Lucetta have their own physical spaces (rooms and houses), and these physical spaces give them enough privacy and security to have cognitive space as well. Their private rooms provide them protection from physical assault since they are able to control who enters the space; the women are able to use their homes to make money through prostitution which allows them to hire guards for the doors to their homes, which provides even more security than a lock. The guards also provide some degree of prestige since important and desirable people require protection; this is not the same kind of protection that male relatives would provide for women. Brothers and fathers are “obligated” to protect the honor of their sisters and daughters, but they use that obligation to restrict the women’s movements, whereas a hired guard takes orders from the woman who hired him and follows her when she leaves the house (which provides her with a relatively safe physical space in public too, since the guards would not let anyone get too close). It seems that, at least in these plays, private physical space is necessary for (or at least contributes significantly to) freedom in cognitive spaces. Angellica’s situation seems to indicate that Behn suggests that prostitution is more profitable (financially) and provides more freedom and power to women than a traditional marriage would. However, as Rogers and Glenn have suggested, it takes a tough woman to play

with the men; and interestingly, Angellica resembles Behn in some respects. Both Behn and her character are women who function successfully in an economic environment exclusive to men, and both have a significant measure of control over their own lives and cognitive spaces.

In *The Libertine*, Shadwell presents several extremes (some of the period's most vile and violent rakes and some of the most repressed women) that are both a nod to the vestiges of the "good ol' days" before the Restoration and a matter-of-fact statement that women who enter public spaces are only going to come to a pitiful end.<sup>26</sup> Certainly, Shadwell did not believe that all of his characters' actions are right and a model of behavior. Instead of focusing on the evilness of libertines, let us for a moment, consider what they represent: Don John and his company represent the freedom to fulfill one's desires without limitation. This is an appealing notion, especially for women who are denied freedoms at every turn. Comparing how this notion is handled in *The Libertine* as opposed to *The Rover* reveals two different approaches to personal freedom; the former seems ambivalent: Don John and his friends enjoy themselves thoroughly, but they must also accept the consequences (going to hell), which Shadwell washes his hands of (*he* is not going to take responsibility for the Dons' actions!). While the entire play is Shadwell's creation, it seems that he does not want to be perceived as condoning the all of the Dons' actions or their lack of repentance.

*The Rover*, however, approves of qualified pleasure. In *Interpreting Ladies*, Pat Gill implies that Behn does not want to prevent anyone from pleasure, but just because she had a certain "[a]dmiration of a wholehearted lust for life does not necessarily mean an endorsement of all methods used to satisfy it. Behn's plays indicate both her recognition of the power appeal of rakish vitality and her awareness of its latent cruelty to the objects of its desire" (Gill

---

<sup>26</sup> While the Puritan Commonwealth immediately preceded the Restoration, the return I refer to is the days of Charles I, a return of the monarchy.

*Interpreting* 150). Behn acknowledges that the libertines have a reckless appeal via their complete disregard for rules and restrictions imposed by others, naturally women who are desperate to break free of those restrictions would be interested in men who had done just that. What the women must navigate is how they will fulfill their desires without desecrating everyone else's rights in order to achieve personal pleasure. Through her female characters, Behn is arguing for a live-and-let-live policy of social power: "Although in general Behn's drama still conforms to Restoration conventions of masculine privilege and power, and women neither ratify nor threaten men as they do in other Restoration comedies" (Gill *Interpreting* 140). Behn's female characters might not overtly threaten masculine privilege and power, does indicate that she would like to see some changes. Specifically, in *The Rover* Behn makes several moves: she suggests that men can still have their freedom and power, but her women are not as compliant to the rules as they are in other plays. Even though Gill says that women do not threaten men, Behn seems to say that the women suggest that the men should consider the consequences of their actions (for themselves and for others)--especially since Behn's women are not the isolated saps that male playwrights make their female characters out to be, her women have some backbone and a will of their own and are tough and cunning enough to survive their forays into the public sphere. Shadwell's female characters do not have happy endings because Shadwell will not allow them to be happy; Behn's women are happy because she writes them good endings, and more significantly, she writes happy endings for her male characters as well. The world of these plays are constructs of their authors' respective imaginations--Behn shows she wants both men and women to be satisfied, while Shadwell is not willing to so because it would upset the power status quo between men and women.

The women Shadwell presents are unhappy and have very limited options; they have no real freedom, while the men, who have every freedom, do not appreciate what a privilege it is to have freedom. Instead of respecting the power freedom gives them and using it wisely, they men take advantage of their power and use it to control and manipulate others. The libertines are even worse than the traditional men since the libertines use their unrestricted freedom to rape, rob, and pillage everyone around them. As we saw in *The Libertine*, none of the men are willing to give the women any power (even though they only want some input on the major events in their lives) because power operates on a balance system (in the plays and the real world)--the more power the women have, the less power the men have. Naturally (according to *The Libertine*), the men do not think women should be able to take anything away from a man—it would be a challenge to the supposed superiority of men over women. So even though Shadwell is aware of the women's plight, he depicts it as the natural order of things and depicts women who try to disrupt that order as needing to be punished as they are in *The Libertine*. He paints the women as having an inappropriate disregard for society's rules, when really the women are oppressed and are trying to fight for basic freedoms.

Behn disagrees with this so-called "natural order"; even though she had to fight to earn her right to speak in public, she freely gives the women in *The Rover* that space to speak--a sharp contrast to the women in Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine* who are consistently raped, verbally abused, and forced to act in desperation to fight for even the most basic opportunities (like choosing their mate). The male characters in *The Libertine* use anonymity in the form of disguises and aliases to take advantage of women, as well as eavesdropping to gather information to make their disguises more effective. It only seems appropriate that the women in *The Libertine* would try to find ways around the harsh hands of men; they tried making

traditional marriages work and they tried escaping to convents (among other tactics), but none of them are successful in *The Libertine*. However, Behn gives her characters in *The Rover* the same tools as the men use in *The Libertine*: disguises to gather information and try to avenge themselves on the men who wrong them. Even with these deceptive tools, the women are determined to avoid invading the privacy of others (even though the men have little regard for the privacy of women), so instead they eavesdrop publicly. The disguises the women wear give them the opportunity to watch and listen without being recognized; they eavesdrop in public so they are not invading the private spaces of others to gather information. The purpose of examining the use of disguises and eavesdropping (by women) in *The Rover* is that it contrasts with how the libertines use the same methods in Shadwell, but with hostile intent. Intent is an important element in all of these deceptive acts--the characters' motives for wearing a disguise or using an alias or listening in on a conversation are critical in determining if the act is hurtful and invasive or only mildly distasteful. By giving her characters a motive that is so decidedly different from the intent of Shadwell's libertines Behn is able to highlight how different her message is from that of *The Libertine*. While Shadwell dismisses the female characters who overstep their (highly restrictive) bounds as troublemakers who deserve what they get, Behn embraces those women because they are taking (outdated and unjustly punitive) social norms into their own hands and reshaping them into a more equal standard for men and women. (Though, admittedly, the suggested system is not truly equal, but it does offer women more choice and a bit more power over their own lives.)

The first indication that *The Rover* does not have the same focus or purpose as *The Libertine* is that it opens with Florinda and Hellena planning their last days of freedom before they are married and sent to the convent, respectively. While a scene of characters discussing

their freedom (or lack thereof) is not unusual, the play opens with women (not men) who are seriously planning their lives up until they take orders (either religious orders or orders from a husband) for the rest of their lives. With the opening lines Behn has made it clear that women are going to be her focus and that they are not going to match traditional expectations. To accomplish their goals for their remaining days, the women decide to dress up and venture out of domestic space and into the public space of carnival. In fact, all of the female characters, aside from Angellica, spend time on stage in masquerade costumes or a disguise. Since the play takes place during carnival, the wealthy noblewomen dress as courtesans or gypsies (Behn 1.2).<sup>27</sup> When Callis (Florinda and Hellena's governess) questions them about what they are going to do at the carnival, Hellena replies, "That which all the world does, as I am told, be as mad as the rest, and take all innocent freedoms ... We'll outwit twenty brothers" (Behn 163-64). They are sure they can deceive their brothers and still have a good time at the public carnival. The sisters disobey their brother and attend the carnival, stating explicitly their intention to play games on the men they find there: "I'll to him, and instead of telling him his own fortune, try my own" (Behn 168). Hellena is not using her disguise to cheat or abuse Willmore, only to make witty conversation with him, and although they do set up a tryst for later that evening she does not give any emphatic speeches about how she wants to rape or rob him. Her intentions are simply to have an adventure before she takes vows and begins her life of religious devotion. There is little damage in this sort of anonymity--neither party is emotionally invested at this point, nor will either party suffer from a brief romantic interlude.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> One exception is Angellica: as a business owner/prostitute she is already a public woman and thoroughly entrenched in the public sphere, so she does not need to disguise herself to protect her reputation. If anything, being seen in public will be a form of advertising and help her business (since she is selling herself).

<sup>28</sup> It is not stated if the couple is planning on having intercourse or not, so we'll be conservative and assume not and that the encounter is without long-lasting consequences (i.e. children).

Even though none of the characters are entirely sincere during the carnival scenes, no one suffers because no one expects honesty when everyone is masquerading as someone else. It is also equally available to everyone, so no one is excluded or at a disadvantage during a masquerade. Lucetta cannot be blamed for watching Blunt and observing that “he’ll venture to follow me; and then if I understand my trade, he’s mine; he’s English too ... a woman with any wit may flatter ‘em into any sort of fool she pleases” (Behn 170). Blunt understands the concept of carnival, yet he goes with Lucetta anyway, losing his purse, clothes, and dignity to her. Even though Lucetta seems to be a libertine in the most pertinent ways (using her abilities to seduce men, then cheating them in some way), she does not permanently hurt him or take from him anything that cannot be replaced; she does not even take sexual advantage of him--which he might view as the worst of the insults.<sup>29</sup> Blunt is the archetypal “provincial fool” and his situation is presented as a fair price for him trying to play in the same league as Lucetta and the other powerful libertines.<sup>30</sup> Through the role reversal in this scene (Blunt as the foolish, naïve woman, and Lucetta as the libertine), Behn shows how unpleasant it is to be taken advantage of--even in relatively mild circumstances. While deceitful whores are common in Restoration drama, Lucetta’s motivations might not be the same as a libertine’s, though she does provide a situation in which a man taken advantage of and having his expectations disappointed. Blunt expected to have sex and leave immediately after, what he ends up naked and penniless, he is thoroughly shamed. When the circumstances are reversed and a libertine takes advantage of a woman, she expects to exchange tokens of love, have sex and then marry her partner in the very near future, what she ends up clothed (usually), sometimes penniless, and shamed when her man

---

<sup>29</sup> Such a reaction was not unheard of since Rochester’s “A Ramble in St. James’s Park” reflects these themes.

<sup>30</sup> This is just once instance when “Behn’s plays dramatize with biting mockery the hypocritical, self-devoted, pretentious behavior of fops, provincial fools, and old lechers. England’s national character had changed, and Behn satirizes the more deplorable and preposterous products and perpetrators of that change” (Gill *Interpreting* 139).

is not interested in marriage. The disappointment of expectations that each depended upon having fulfilled is what is shaming. The man wanted sex and could not get it; the woman wanted marriage and could not get it. Blunt should have known better than to expect plain dealings during carnival.

Behn's deliberate creation of the situation between Blunt and Lucetta is a result of the carnival space (where there are no rules, even though there are still sometimes consequences). Lucetta's behavior (and lack of punishment) acts as a counterpoint to the other women's behavior; this suggests that just because women are able to abuse and steal from men does not mean that they will. This is related to space in that all the women had to leave their private homes and enter the public realm to find the men that they spend the play chasing; what Behn is really showing with the juxtaposition between Lucetta and the other women is that while some women might use public space to enable them to act badly in private, most of them will not, and their public actions (even though in *The Rover* most of the women enter the public sphere in disguise) have positive results for some of the men they interact with (i.e. love-match marriages).

Beyond just turning the victimizer into the victim, Behn presents an aspect of female life that is significantly missing from *The Libertine* that appears in *The Rover*: the women's maids and governesses. Initially Moretta and Callis seem to have only periphery roles in *The Rover*, but upon further inspection, they are on stage for the majority of the play and act as observers and intermittent commentators on the action. These two women have several functions in the play: their presence indicates that the scene is public, they have incidental interactions with the libertine culture, but are not part of it; and (under some circumstances) they would serve as a kind of spy for the women's brothers and fathers--the maids would observe what their mistresses do and then report back to the men. If necessary, the maids could immediately intervene on the



men's behalf.<sup>31</sup> Behn could do any number of things with Moretta and Callis, but it seems that she is representing a central part of life of Florinda and Hellena as well as showing that some women have even less freedom than the daughters of middle and upper-class gentlemen. There is little indication that Moretta and Callis have any chance of improving their situations, which might be Behn's reassurance to her male audience that she is not suggesting a total social upheaval. Even though Behn is arguing for more acceptance of women in public, she is not eliminating all of the restraints; women like Florinda and Hellena will still have governesses to act as observers who will report back to their employers. While this is not complete freedom in public, it is still better than being exclusively confined to the domestic sphere, as we saw in *The Libertine*.

The presence or absence of Callis and Moretta from a particular scene is an indication of how public the scene is and functions as a barometer of the characters' attitudes. While these women are an indicator of "publicness," it does not seem that Behn is using them to challenge the masculinity of public space (would that she were!). Instead the governesses are part of the tradition of not allowing women to be alone in public--the governesses follow their charges into public spaces so there is minimal unsupervised time. Their near-constant and near-silent presence serves as a form of eavesdropping, since they are largely ignored by the central characters; the pair are present for, but not part of the scene. Callis and Moretta are on stage for approximately 29 and 20 pages, respectively, yet they have only a handful of lines between them. They are referred to by other characters and are often given instructions, but they rarely respond. Not only do the characters not really expect action from these women, they also do not seem to expect a verbal response, since the conversations generally move on with any input from Callis

---

<sup>31</sup> Moretta and Callis are flat characters who appear desexualized since there is little that requires them to be women: they "betray" their own sex by reporting to men what their charges do, and they are not involved in romantic situations. The pair lack gender as well as a sexuality.

or Moretta. Florinda asks, “Callis will you give us leave to go?” (164) and Callis’s response does not directly signify one way or the other, merely a distrust of young girls. To this Florinda gives Callis another command, which is not a response to Callis's non-comment: “Thou see'st my brother's gone already, and thou shalt attend, and watch us” (164). Florinda explicitly tells Callis to come and to watch, giving her permission to observe even though she is not part of the action. Perhaps they are meant to observe how women are treated, though being women themselves, surely they would have a grasp on the situation. However, when the main characters are in a vulnerable state, Callis and Moretta are absent, suggesting that such observation is not appropriate for that particular situation, but might be most useful (especially if it is the men who are having difficulties since the women could use that kind of information against them). Blunt expresses a considerable amount of anxiety about being exposed to the public, and Callis and Moretta are not present for the scenes in which he displays his vulnerability; nor are they present for most scenes that do not require masquerade attire.<sup>32</sup>

Callis and Moretta are not involved in the play any further, they are not present for the last act, which takes place in Blunt’s chambers and has virtually the entire cast present and active. It seems odd that two characters, who had been present for almost everything else in the play, are suddenly excluded. This implies that their roles are primarily as observers, since they have rarely been part of the action; it seems that these rather static characters are outsiders (even though they are virtually Florinda and Hellena’s shadows) and it would not be appropriate for them to be present for the intimate pairing of unmasked lovers in this last scene. During the course of the play, Moretta and Callis are allowed to watch the action, because the other

---

<sup>32</sup> It is a form of power to control what and when the maids hear, but it seems that the main female characters do not recognize it as such. Part of the power associated with eavesdropping is the knowledge gained from it, yet the maids do not seem to do anything with the information they have gleaned. Perhaps it is just curiosity, or they are not even paying attention to and do not care what their mistresses do.

characters are disguised. The literal disguise prevents identification of the individual, and makes associating actions with a specific person difficult, hence the multiple cases of purposeful, and inadvertent, mistaken identity in the play. Characters choose to act other than themselves and they choose to act as their acquaintances, as when Belvile dresses up as Antonio.

The characters use costumes to hide not only their actions and public identities, but also their private identities. They do not want to be known for who they “really” are; Blunt illustrates this when he tries to prevent everyone from entering his chamber after he had been attacked and robbed by Lucetta. He thinks that “Frederick has betrayed [him], they have heard of [his] blessed fortune” (Behn 229); up until this point, Frederick was the only one who knew about Blunt’s state, and Blunt thinks Frederick has told everyone else and now they have come to make light of his situation. He does not want to be exposed either literally, since he is in his underwear, or figuratively, since he was duped by a woman and now looks like a fool. It seems only fitting that the play’s end reveals all the characters for what they really are: Hellena as a female libertine, Blunt as a fool, and so on; this is especially tidy since “Behn’s distribution of gender attributes corresponds to that found in manners comedies, but the disposition of punishments and rewards for suspect female behavior differs substantially.<sup>33</sup> Women who betray their loyal lovers suffer dearly for it, but those who steal, lie, and cuckold for true love escape grievous reprisals” (Gill *Gender* 193-94). So even though Hellena is not a truly honest, virtuous woman, she is loyal to her love and has few qualms about the necessary actions required to keep him and as far as Behn shows us, is not punished for her actions.

---

<sup>33</sup> An interesting aside is the title of the play: *The Rover*, which can function as another term for a libertine. There is some ambiguity about if the title refers to Willmore or Hellena. Also the association between roving-roaming-freely moving is pertinent.

Gill generalizes about Restoration comedies, saying that they “satirize women for their easy virtue or privilege the prospect and effects of cuckolding over those of mutual delight. The plays concentrate on the loss or increase of male power and status, on whether the character is a cuckold or the victim of one--in other words, whether he controls or is controlled by women” (Gill *Interpreting* 142). Instead of falling into the same category as other Restoration playwrights, Behn (at least in *The Rover*) is trying to remove the moral double standard based on gender. By operating on a single standard, Behn makes private and public spaces equally available to men and women, as well as norming the consequences of actions in those spaces. Gill states that Behn’s “[c]haracters learn that they cannot possess all they purchase or keep all they win. Often her heroes and heroines have a much harder time uniting legally and must enjoy each other illicitly or not at all” (Gill *Interpreting* 142). In her plays Behn does not shy away from the practicalities of real life: often marriage is not an option for lovers (especially since most marriages were arranged without the consent of the people to be joined), so Behn needs her female characters to enter public spaces to meet their extra-marital lovers.<sup>34</sup> Thus, women should have the same opportunity as men to find pleasure outside of marriage; Behn is much more concerned with writing relatively realistic endings for her characters, rather than taking cheap shots at men. Granted, Behn would not condone such behavior in real life, she is not opposed to such arrangements in her fictional world. Even though most of the lovers in *The Rover* are able to marry, the female characters still needed opportunities to operate freely in public spaces to initially meet their love interests.

The endings of the plays reveal that there is little harm for fictional characters in using tools of deception and control to balance the distribution of power, but using those same tools to

---

<sup>34</sup> While it might be shocking that Behn might suggest married couples cheating to fulfill their needs, Gill certainly argues her to be capable of it and some of Rochester’s poetry discusses women roaming about town, looking for sex just as freely as men.

abuse others results in punishment for the abusers.<sup>35</sup> In her chapter, “Change, Skepticism, and Uncertainty,” Jessica Munns generalizes about Restoration drama that highlights the shift in power from *The Libertine* to *The Rover*. She says, “In comedies, the last act generally sees the rake who has reformed engaged to the virtuous heroine, or, if unrepentant, discomfited and mocked. In tragedies, the villains or heroes who have followed nature and personal inclination are defeated or subdued. Nevertheless, in either mode it is the liberating energy of those who question or defy authority that has driven the plot” (150). What this means is that in *The Libertine*, the Dons follow their “personal inclinations” and are defeated, but since they defy authority (secular and religious law and most social norms) they are the ones who drive the plot.<sup>36</sup> In *The Rover*, the women tame their rakish love interests and secure engagements; here it is the women who question authority (disobeying their brothers/fathers and entering the public sphere) and it is their actions that forward the plot. Thus, the endings of *The Libertine* and *The Rover* show that the intention behind observation and deception is crucial to determining if it is morally justified.

In *The Libertine* it is clear that the Dons use deception (lying and aliases) to coerce women into sex (using coercion and cognitive rape to have sex is clearly immoral). In *The Rover* the women also use means of deception (eavesdropping or disguises), but they do not use the knowledge they acquire for any truly evil purpose, so the morality of deception in. Though the

---

<sup>35</sup> The extent to which women might use deception in the real world and not be punished for it is impossible to prove, though there are numerous texts in which women are selective or stilted in their inter-spousal communications. Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath* is a notorious example of a woman who used rhetoric and sneaky antics to her advantage--though it is not until she comes to an honest agreement with her last husband that she is somewhat (if temporarily) content.

<sup>36</sup> This is assuming that *The Libertine* is a tragedy and that *The Rover* is a comedy, though there are arguments for reversing the genres. I classify *The Libertine* as a tragedy because of the death and violence, and the demise of most of the central characters (the majority of the women as well as the Dons) by the end of the play. *The Libertine* could be a comedy since the bad guys are ultimately punished for their behavior, but I am not convinced. *The Rover* fits easily into the comedy genre since there are no deaths and the play ends with (somewhat contrived) marriages for almost all the characters. The only complication is whether or not the libertines in *The Rover* have actually reformed, or if they are just waiting for their next conquest to appear.

ending of *The Libertine* somewhat problematizes the situation when Don John seems willing enough to go into the fiery hellmouth; thus, it begs the question, is he really condemned if he does not object to following the demons and ghosts? If he wants or enjoys the punishment, is it really punishment? The ending of *The Rover* neatly pairs off the lovers, but is complicated by the missing sense of finality--it just seems like a temporary arrangement until Willmore decided to revert back to his libertine ways. Even though the arrangements are satisfactory for the women in *The Rover* (everyone is paired with her choice), it does not seem that the women have any permanent control or influence over their spouses or themselves. Behn might not have planned on that effect, and it could easily be cynicism on the part of the reader that the ending is not completely satisfying. As seen in *The Libertine*, marriages are easily turned into farces, wives are readily abandoned, and the bond is only as strong as the person it means the least to. The situation for the women in *The Libertine* is not acceptable: Don John and company might be gone from this world, but most of the women are dead and do not benefit from Don John's death--or even knowledge of his demise. However, the absence of a "pat" ending seems fitting since nothing is really changed and the tools used in each play are imperfect.

Methods of deception are fine for plays, but what about women in the real world? If fictional women need to eavesdrop and wear disguises to be successful, where does that leave real women? This is a problem, especially since a real woman who was "assertively intelligent was thought to be self-indulgent and licentious" (Glenn 146). By juxtaposing Shadwell alongside *The Rover*, Behn's cultural critique is much more striking and effective since *The Libertine*'s ending is rather ambiguous and allows the characters to continue their misanthropic ways. Conversely, *The Rover* does not leave any doubt for the reader/audience what the anonymous author (whomever *he* might be!) thinks of London at the time. It is terribly

convenient that *The Libertine* was published in 1676, and then *The Rover* was released the following year--it provides a useful snapshot of a period in England's social history and gender dynamics of the time.

## Conclusion

The seventeenth century did not treat women kindly, nor did it have great expectations for them. When a woman accomplished anything it was not generally received with praise, but the general public was not usually openly hostile toward women who entered the public sphere either. (Though the public's ambivalence might be more insulting since it seems that women were not worth noticing.) That is not to say that it would be easy for women to write and publish since she would still be risking her respectability, since many of the previous era's ideas of propriety (especially where women were concerned) were still held during the Restoration. Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold* discusses the position of women in writing up through the Renaissance, noting that "despite the truly spectacular number of assertive women in Renaissance literature, female courage and tough-mindedness--both actual and fictitious--continued to be widely regarded as exceptional and 'unnatural' " (Glenn 132). Because of the uncertain reception a woman's written work would receive, and the socially crippling repercussions for the female author if the reaction is not positive, women had to present their work very carefully, ensuring that the content was not inflammatory or publishing it anonymously. One of the primary patriarchal traps for women is that "once a woman violates one convention of her traditional domestic role silence, confinement, or obedience, she automatically falls into orgies of lust and vanity (and violates the third convention of chastity)" (Glenn 134).<sup>37</sup> The repercussions of violating her domestic role might seem contradictory to the

---

<sup>37</sup> An especially telling moment in rhetorical history is that *Classical Rhetoric*, George A. Kennedy's canonical textbook, lists only three women who were educated (and writing) during the English Renaissance: Queen Mary, Lady Jane Grey, and Queen Elizabeth I (231). While there were obviously other educated women at the time, Kennedy only finds three that are worth discussing. It is an unlikely coincidence that all three women were nobles and two out of the three were Queens, one of whom reigned without a king. Kennedy has equally little to say about English women in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries (262-63).



public not expressing open hostility, but the reception is not usually hostile as long as the woman breaking social norms jumps through enough proverbial hoops to placate the masses.

It was still frowned upon for women to write (especially if they criticize mainstream culture), but during this time women, as a whole, began to participate more regularly and more successfully in public life. Harold Weber has done a rather thorough comparative study of women's situation in the real world during the Restoration in *The Restoration Rake-Hero*. He opens the historical portion of the chapter by saying, "the years up to 1714 have been called an 'Age of Transition,' for no definitive changes in the position of women in society can be defined for the seventeenth century" (Weber 143). He says that many of the supposed "improvements" in women's status were contradictory at best, a stagnant at worst.<sup>38</sup> Weber's discussion of the emergence of actresses and female playwrights in the 1660s complements Cheryl Glenn's research on the lack of opportunities for women to safely enter the public sphere prior to the Restoration. Weber also details how the "female players" were both "elevate[d] and degrade[d] at the same time"; they were elevated because women were finally allowed the freedoms to act, earn income, and appear in public (all of which men had long taken for granted), but it was simultaneously degrading because actresses were thought to be sexually available and acting was not a noble profession, especially since many of the characters women played were fools or whores (Weber 150-53). Women also started writing for the stage, a remarkable achievement since "[p]rior to the reopening of the theatres [in 1660] there is no evidence that women attempted to write for the public stage" (Weber 151). So for Behn (a young woman without a

---

<sup>38</sup> His discussion is heavily researched via primary and secondary sources; it includes women's wealth (since women could inherit, but they did not have the appropriate education to know what to do with their funds) (145-46), economic shifts (household industry vs. mass industry) (150), and a series of contradictions in attitudes towards women. The major contradictions are those of the libertines whose beliefs emphasize "the naturalness of the passions that people shared with beasts, might seem applicable to women as men. Yet the men who fashioned such doctrines reveal a hostility and ambivalence towards women that appears little different from the misogyny of society at large" (146-47). Apparently the libertines operated on a principle that everyone is entitled to those passions, but some are more entitled than others.

literary family names to trade on) to start her public writing career only ten years after the theatres reopened, and then to continue to write and publish for the rest of her life is a dramatic change from the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>39</sup> However, her career was highly unusual and she frequently suffered at the hands of the critics and went without a paycheck.<sup>40</sup> But Behn was one of the women who balanced their time between the spheres by choosing to (occasionally) publish anonymously, so their voices were still heard--even if no one else knew it was a woman's voice that was speaking.

As a playwright, Aphra Behn attempts to use public space (the theatre) as a forum for her personal agenda (securing free, safe spaces for women to think and live). In her plays Behn presents her argument for women to use the means they have available to get what they want. In *The Rover*, the female characters are mostly interested in having control over major life decisions (primarily, choosing who they marry), whereas in *The Libertine* the women want to be left alone since they never have any personal space (in either the domestic or public spheres). One of the most distinctive differences between *The Libertine* and *The Rover* is that in the latter play the female characters have abandoned the passivity that marks the women of *The Libertine* in favor of pursuing their desired men in the public sphere under the protection of masquerade. As we have seen in the women's pursuit, the women in *The Rover* might not have any more personal space than those in *The Libertine*, but Behn has her characters take advantage of public spaces.

Behn exemplifies the challenge her plays present to masculine spatial dominance by becoming a successful playwright under her own name (or in some cases anonymously), rather than choosing a masculine pseudonym. Because she published her work under her own name

---

<sup>39</sup> Also see McKeon, "Gender Difference in England," 298-300. He discusses how the changes in women's economic situation and changes in power in the domestic sphere affected women's work outside of the home and how/when/why they got married.

<sup>40</sup> Angeline Goreau's *Reconstructing Aphra* details Behn's career and the criticism she faced.

and did not qualify it with an appropriately humble preface or alter her content so it was “appropriate” for a woman to have written, her plays were charged with bawdiness and her personal reputation suffered for those accusations (Todd *Behn, Aphra*). Behn not only had to carve out a physical and cognitive space for herself by freeing herself of dominating male influences (one example is never remarrying after her first husband died), but also by finding a niche for herself in the literary sphere. Normally, women had to justify their presence in publishing (usually via the self-deprecating prefaces), but Behn refused to engage in the topoi of modesty that almost all female authors used (and even some male writers if they were dedicating it to royalty, or someone else sufficiently high ranking). As a woman Behn had to present her work carefully and sometimes anonymously if she wanted it to be viewed at all, much less taken seriously. However, if persistent enough a woman might succeed: as Katherine Rogers simply states, Behn “demonstrated that a woman could openly succeed as a writer if she was sufficiently tough” (20). Because a woman was not perceived as having the same inherent credibility as a man, she was not able to present her argument for social change without men viewing it as a flippant assault on traditional seventeenth century sensibilities or as a whining complaint from a petulant child instead of as a thoughtfully presented argument for honesty and space to speak.

Usually this placation was accomplished by many women who simply decided to publish anonymously or write self-deprecating apologies for having written at all. The protective shields of apologies and anonymity were easy alternatives to the balancing act the text would have to otherwise manage, but it was difficult to be commissioned or make a living by one’s pen if no one knows what one has already written. This might not have been a concern for a noblewoman or a wealthy merchant’s wife, but for a poor, young widow like Behn, money was a foremost concern. Publishing anonymously was not a practical option, and given the over-arching

arguments in Behn's texts, writing an apology was not acceptable on principle. As Janet Todd describes in the introduction to her edition of Behn's collected works, all of Behn's plays have an agenda--she consistently made statements in favor of women's right to choose her husband (or at least reject ones she does not like), her right to be treated honestly, and acknowledgement that women are not naturally silly and inferior to men. She also made many political statements (like her male peers), but "[a]lthough her plays frequently indulge in political satire and diatribe, unlike the plays of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, they do not attempt to link a nostalgic allusion to past times and standards to a moral rearrangement of present conditions" (Gill *Interpreting* 140); Behn did not want to return to how things were, she argued for cultural change (i.e. some measure of equality for women), not cultural return. Returning to pre-Restoration morality and sensibility would counteract all of the liberties women had gained since 1660.

She worked hard to live that philosophy--after her husband died she never remarried and supported herself by writing. Rogers's notion of toughness is crucial--Behn must work much harder than her male contemporaries and justify her presence in ways that they do not. As Todd details in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, most of Behn's works have prefaces or prologues that take many approaches to earn her right to the stage--sometimes indignant, self-righteous, apologetic, or even honest (as one specific reference about needing to write in order to eat). In prologue for *The Rover*, which was first acted and published anonymously (Todd Chronology ix), Behn discusses how difficult it is to be a new (and anonymous playwright): "Rabel's Drops were never more cried down / By all the learned doctors of the town, / Than a new play whose author is unknown" (Behn Prologue 3-5). This suggests that new authors were discredited before their plays have even started, but after it was over the playwright was then dismissed again because the critics were jealous. She addresses the critics: "If a young poet hit

your humour right, / You judge him then out of revenge and spite” (Behn Prolouge 10-11); it seems that new authors were bound to come up against some criticism, but this was her seventh play to be acted, she was hardly a novice. Even her numerous defenses of her work did not always provide an unqualified welcome into the world of theatre. Among these pursuits in the real world, was writing and publishing.

The first part of Behn’s career was spent trying to prove herself and earn the right to publish her work without reprimand. Using Todd’s chronology, Behn published her first two original plays under her own name and then the Epistle to the Reader to her third original play (*The Dutch Lover*) is a scathing rebuke to her audience “complaining she had been attacked because she was a woman” (Todd ix). Behn had to assume the mask of anonymity to protect herself in public, much like her characters in *The Rover*; she had tried to operate publicly under her own name and was punished for it, so for this play she needs to try a different tactic to be heard. Behn starts off overly polite to cover her anger that boils over in the second sentence:

Good, Sweet, Honey, Sugar-Candied READER,  
Which I think is more than anyone has called you yet, I must have a word  
or two with you before you do advance into the Treatise; but 'tis not to  
beg your pardon for diverting you from your affairs, by such an idle  
Pamphlet as this is, for I presume you have not much to do and therefore  
are to be obliged to me for keeping you from worse employment, and if  
you have a better you may get you gone about your business: but if you  
will misspend your Time, pray lay the fault upon yourself; for I have  
dealt pretty fairly in the matter, told you in the Title Page what you  
are to expect within.<sup>41</sup> (Summers 221)

Even though she addresses the altercation and did not back down at the insult, her next three plays are all adaptations of other works. It would appear that she needed to have several “safe” texts published before she tried her hand at an original work again; this is probably the result of

---

<sup>41</sup> Behn highlights that she has “dealt pretty fairly in the matter” so that the reader, especially the male reader who might be offended at the treatment of some of the male characters (especially Blunt who is duped and shamed), is fully aware of what to expect when s/he reads this particular play.

financial need, not just bruised ego. After the three adaptations of other plays, she published *The Rover*, her first anonymous play--and her most successful. Once it was established as popular she added her name to the piece for publication (Todd ix).<sup>42</sup> None of her other works were ever published anonymously, though she could have saved herself from multiple charges of bawdiness if she had kept her name off the title page and playbills.

Before Behn even reached the publishing point for her work, she had to contend with the Restoration's beliefs in the remaining vestiges Renaissance tenets that "writing and femininity seemed incongruous, despite the best efforts of humanists and reformers. If the educated woman was exceptional, the writing woman might be absurd. Regardless of their education, women were still, *by nature*, timid, passive, and tender of heart; those who were immodestly publishing their scholarly or political writing were simply unnatural" (Glenn 131). Once Behn came to terms with the possibility of losing her respectability and the struggle she would face as a female writer, she still would have to face the social and public fallout for writing and publishing her work--all of which was further complicated by the socio-political commentary that is present in her plays. The public's reception of her work was crucial, especially since, as Glenn points out, leaving the domestic sphere leaves women in a "double bind: she would not only have to break through cultural-social restrictions and expectations but resist the models and worldview of various fictional stereotypes as well. Her resistance would be read against the gendered threat of female monstrosity, which could only end badly" (Glenn 136). While writing did not end badly for her, she did face many accusations of bawdiness and some harsh criticism throughout her career. She was also subject to gossip since she never had children or remarried and had long-term relationship with a couple men at different points in her life--hardly a straight-laced woman,

---

<sup>42</sup> Disappointingly, there is little sense of what the response was to Behn's being the author of *The Rover*, though one might presume that it was a positive one since it remained on the English for decades after Behn's death.

but one who did not allow society to dictate to her. In any case, she was never prevented from writing since there were no legal grounds against her and she did not have a husband to prevent her--just a series of on-and-off again lovers who could hardly stop her from pursuing her career (especially since they did not appear to support her)--so she continued to fight for social change.

By the end of Behn's life, female writers were no longer such an oddity, but Behn was the most successful with a career to rival most of the men of her period. Even though women were allowed to speak, they had to do so in such a way that would not anger the men or call for extreme shifts in power. This is where Behn's text provides a useful example of how to accomplish this careful balance of arguing for change but without attacking the other side. She presents alternatives to complete suffering on the part of the women, as shown in *The Libertine*, while gently critiquing libertine behavior, showing that sustained philandering and criminality do not pay. Even though she does not want the libertines to rape and murder women, she is not saying that men need to completely subject themselves to the superiority of women. In fact, it is quite the opposite: "As a rule, Behn's heroines aspire to mutual pleasure and autonomy, not autocratic power; those who crave merely the latter are taught to prefer otherwise" (Gill *Interpreting* 141). Instead, Behn's argument is for a more balanced distribution of power in male/female relationships. She levels the proverbial playing field in *The Rover* by letting women use the same tools as the men to get what they want, but without a gratuitous man-bashing ending.

*The Libertine* was too interested in male dominance and controlling women who only want personal space. Conversely, *The Rover*, although not an explicit response to *The Libertine*, provides a nice counterpoint to it: *The Rover* suggests that women use the same tricky means that the men had been using on women in *The Libertine*. The important difference here is that men in

*The Libertine* use deception to control other people, while the women in *The Rover* use deception to gain control over their own lives. Behn followed her own advice that she gives in *The Rover* to take control over her own life and try to make a way for herself; she had some measure of success, and even though she faced some opposition, she ultimately became a central figure in Restoration theatre culture and worked with most of the major names of the day.



## Works Cited

- Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko, The Rover, and Other Works*. Ed. Janet Todd. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- Bennett, Kate. "Shadwell, Thomas (1640-1692)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford UP. 2004. Online Ed. 2008. 3 February 2009.
- Chernaik, Warren. *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Drougge, Helga. "'We'll Learn That of the Men': Female Sexuality in Southerne's Comedies." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 33.3 (1993): 545-63.
- Fisk, Deborah Payne, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.
- Gill, Pat. "Gender, Sexuality, and Marriage." Fisk 191-225. Print.
- . *Interpreting Ladies: Women, Wit, and Morality in the Restoration Comedy of Manners*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994. Print.
- Glenn, Cheryl. *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1997. Print.
- Goreau, Angeline. *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn*. New York: Dial P, 1980. Print.
- Harvey, Karen. "The History of Masculinity, circa 1650-1800." *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005): 296-311.
- Hughes, Derek. *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.
- Kennedy, George A. *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition: From Ancient to Modern Times*. Rev. 2nd ed. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1999. Print.

- Mangan, Michael. "The Spectacle of Masculinity in the Restoration Theatre." *Staging Masculinities: History, Gender, Performance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 95-134. Print.
- Maus, Katharine Eisaman. "Playhouse Flesh and Blood": Sexual Ideology and the Restoration Actress." *ELH* 46.4 (1979), 595-617.
- McKeon, Michael. "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28.3 (1995): 295-322.
- Munns, Jessica. "Change, Skepticism, and Uncertainty." *Fisk* 142-57. Print.
- Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2005. Print.
- Rogers, Katharine M., ed. *The Meridian Anthology of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Plays by Women*. New York: Meridian, 1994. Print.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia, 1985.
- Shadwell, Thomas. "The Libertine." *Four Restoration Libertine Plays*. Ed. Deborah Payne Fisk. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. 1-84. Print.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.
- Summers, Montague, ed. *The Works of Aphra Behn*. Vol. 1. 6 vols. 1915. New York: B. Blom, 1967. Print.
- Todd, Janet. "Behn, Aphra (1640?-1689)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford UP. 2004. Online Ed. 2008. 3 February 2009.

- . Chronology and Introduction. *Oroonoko, The Rover, and Other Works*. By Aphra Behn. Ed. Janet Todd. New York: Penguin, 2003. viii-22. Print.
- Turner, James Grantham. *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630-1685*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- , ed. *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, and Images*. 1993. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Weber, Harold. "The Female Libertine on the Restoration Stage." *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth century England*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986. 130-78. Print.
- Weber, Harold. *Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth Century England*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986. Print.
- Webster, Jeremy W. *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court: Politics, Drama, Sexuality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.