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Masculinity in Restoration Drama

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Even though the study of masculinity as a distinct and historical category has only recently attracted major attention, the representation of men has been among the most controversial aspects of Restoration drama. Men in the comedies have shocked audiences and critics by their apparent callousness, their sexual voraciousness and their resistance to marriage. Villains in the tragedies share these faults in addition to their often-sadistic violence, while the heroes can appear merely bombastic. By contrast, others have admired the sexual energy, razor wit and brilliant machinations of men in the comedies, as well as the integrity and complexity of the men in the tragedies. Whether admired or despised, the distinctiveness of masculinity on the Restoration stage cannot be denied.

While historians have long acknowledged the significant social changes during the period and the changes in constructions of the feminine, too often masculinity has been understood as something that transcends history. But while men have long enjoyed certain privileges over women of their own class, the terms of gender division and even the idea of gender itself have been anything but stable. Restoration drama documents a small revolution in what it meant to be a man in at least four major ways: first, males lost the assumption of absolute authority over women and children in their families *as fathers*; second, European men began to understand themselves as a group *as men* in a way that the overwhelming force of rank would not previously have allowed; third, the capacity to rise through money destabilized certain status-based associations of masculinity; and fourth, increasing global travel and commerce that brought Europeans into contact with a range of peoples helped construct masculinity as part of a racial and ethnic identity as well. But while the plays distinguish men from each other through a variety of subtle assumptions about age, class and race, the comedies – and to some extent the tragedies as well – defined male difference perhaps most explicitly through sexuality. Formations of masculinity on the Restoration stage, of course, emerged in the context of broad social and political changes explored elsewhere in this volume in greater detail. Nevertheless, I will briefly touch on

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The Restoration

Charles II returned from exile to a country that had authorized the execution of his father. While the English Revolution had tremendous consequences for the political order in general, it also had particular consequences for the age's construction of masculinity. In fact, the question of the relationship between the king's authority over his people and a father's authority over his family became an important debate in the Restoration. John Locke and Sir Robert Filmer articulated opposing positions on this matter. Filmer's *Patriarcha*, written to defend Charles I, was reprinted in the context of the Exclusion Crisis. In this essay, Filmer argued that a king rules his people by exactly the same authority that a father rules his family. In this traditional form of patriarchalism, each father becomes a small king of his own family, holding absolute authority over them and at the same time owing complete protection to them. This does not mean, however, that pre-Restoration England demanded women's complete subjugation to men. In practice women had considerable responsibility – some historians, in fact, have argued that the end of the seventeenth century marked a sharp *decline* in options for women (Clark 1968). Legal, social, religious, philosophical and medical doctrine, however, assumed a non-negotiable hierarchy between men and women.

John Locke contested Filmer's *Patriarcha* in his *Two Treatises of Government*. In these essays, Locke attacked Filmer for his equation of masculine domestic authority with royal authority, separating a public sphere from the private in a way that Filmer had not. Locke argued that while a man derives his authority over his wife from nature, the king derives his authority over the people through an implied contract with them. Thus if the king violates the trust of the people, the people have the right to question his authority. Locke specifically argued against Filmer's analogy between the absolute authority of the king and the absolute authority of the father. Filmer, he pointed out, ignored the authority of mothers in his scheme, who shared responsibility for the children with the father. Further, Locke insisted that parents only maintain absolute power over their children until those children reach an age at which they can make decisions for themselves. Instead of absolutism, Locke advocated the natural rights of self-ownership, property ownership and ownership of the products of one's labour. As a result, Locke has been admired by some feminists for his critique of Filmer and for the way his *Treatises* open up the possibility of equal rights. At the same time, other feminists have pointed out that Locke's division of the public from the private and insistence on male authority in the private sphere laid the groundwork for a different kind of gender inequality. Locke, in other words, separates *natural* authority, which husbands hold over wives simply by the law of nature and natural differences between men and women evident in the garden of Eden, from

political authority, which is contractual and thus negotiable. Thus in Locke, the decreased importance of birth in some ways created an increased importance in gender.

While some historians have recently argued that Locke's advocacy of contractarianism was still radically outside of the mainstream of political thought, the *Treatises* themselves can still be read as symptomatic of the ways masculinity began to change at the end of the century. As Susan Staves has shown in *Players' Scepters*, playwrights, like political writers, also explored analogies between the authority of the king and the authority of the father or husband. Women on stage begin to suggest, she argues, that if the people had some right in choosing their monarch, then a woman had some right in choosing her husband. Staves's insight helps explain why the plays so often show men, often in poignant and hilarious ways, on tenuous, shifting ground: anxiety in the plays about cuckoldry and female disobedience in general suggested that the culture no longer took patriarchalism for granted.

Gender

Yet there are other ways in which masculinity changed even more radically. Thomas Lacquer, Thomas A. King and Michael McKeon have in different ways suggested that the early eighteenth century marked the emergence of the modern category of gender itself; that is, as King argues, only in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did men begin to see themselves as a group *as men*. These arguments have a precedent in those of feminist historians who have questioned the extent to which it is useful at all to talk about 'women' as a group before the Restoration when rank and status were such powerful forces. Clearly Queen Elizabeth had far more in common with male aristocrats than with female agricultural labourers. Nevertheless, this insight has only recently been extended to thinking about men. Filmer's version of patriarchalism did not entitle men equally to authority *as men*, but rather emphasized the rigid hierarchies between them. With the general discourse of rights, contract and possessive individualism, however, this possibility began to emerge. But while Locke's sense of universal self-ownership may have planted the seeds for claims to general human equality, the late seventeenth century demonstrably retained – or reinvented – gendered and other hierarchies. Carole Pateman, in fact, has argued that what happened in the late seventeenth century was not the fall of patriarchy, but rather a rearrangement of male authority from *paternal* patriarchy to *fraternal* patriarchy. Paternal patriarchy accepted the father as the absolute authority over his wife and children; fraternal patriarchy insisted on the basic equality of all (reasoning, non-slave, adult, European, propertied) men in the public sphere, but defined these men as full citizens in a way that their wives and sisters were not. Thus masculinity itself, among other factors but in distinction from rank *per se*, defined citizenship. Further, many scholars have argued that as a result the public sphere became the domain of masculinity and the private sphere the domain of the feminine. This rough and

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generally defensible division, however, should not obscure the importance of men in the private sphere (Maurer 1998) and women in public. While conduct books insisted on the importance of women in upholding the reputation of households and families (Armstrong 1987), husbands and fathers nevertheless maintained considerable authority over their wives and daughters (Staves 1990). Still, there were also women who achieved authority in the public sphere as writers, shopkeepers, philosophers, merchants and scientists. The theatre constituted a unique opportunity for women's participation in the public sphere, both posing risks and offering opportunities. Theatre had long been associated with disreputable elements of society. Some critics attacked actresses as prostitutes, for not only did these critics understand the public attractiveness of some women as suggesting their public availability, but they also associated the women on stage with the prostitutes who apparently met their clients at the theatre. Nevertheless, the theatre was one of the very few – if not the only – public institutions that virtually guaranteed the high-profile employment of women.

Theatre as Public Institution

While Restoration drama spoke to a less diverse audience than did the plays of Shakespeare and incorporated some elements of private court theatre, it nevertheless remained firmly in the commercial marketplace. The coffee houses that developed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries created a male public sphere that excluded women; in the theatre, on the other hand, men and women operated in the public sphere together as audience members, performers and writers. While women certainly wrote plays before the Restoration, nearly all of the plays performed in public had been written by men. But in the early decades of the Restoration, Aphra Behn became one of the most popular playwrights; in the 1690s, several other women playwrights launched their careers. Given this integration of women performers and women writers, some critics have observed that commercialization itself offered particular opportunities to and advantages for women. But in noting the new participation of women in theatre as actors, writers and even managers, we must also acknowledge the sometimes astonishing release of misogyny that accompanied these changes in plays and satires of the age (Nussbaum 1984) as well as the gender hierarchies that the eighteenth century established. As I have argued elsewhere in greater detail, it seems that since the evidence supports both observations (of women's success in the marketplace *and* of the gender-specific challenges they faced), we need a more balanced model than either simple progress or simple decline (Rosenthal 1996: ch. 1).

But what did this mean for men? Even in the Restoration with its range of sexual possibilities and permutations, options for men seemed to be narrowing. While a certain level of homoeroticism had been more or less standard on the Renaissance stage with boys playing the women's parts, that particular kind of gender fluidity had

become constrained by a presumed consistency between the gender of the actor and the gender of the character. Preening gradually became unmanly. Kristina Straub has argued that the Restoration stage marked a transition from an earlier power dynamic in which the object of the gaze held authority to the emergent eighteenth-century dynamic in which power belonged to the spectator. Thus the position of spectatorship became masculine, while the position of the object of the gaze became a feminized one. As a result, acting could compromise a man's masculinity and even lead to rumours about his sexuality. Like women, male actors also became stereotyped by their bodies, with the odd-looking ones limited to comical roles. Male actors clearly had some advantages over their female colleagues: the better ones earned admiration and respect as artists in ways less readily available to the women. While their sexuality could come under suspicion, they were probably on the whole less vulnerable to this kind of attack than women. Earning money through public display did not associate them with prostitution as it did the women; they could more readily move into management positions and were more likely to write for the stage as well as act on it. Nevertheless, the women on stage attracted a great deal of attention unavailable to the men. Some productions, in fact, ignored men completely and cast all parts with women actors. Thus, men who trod the boards not only worked closely with women but also placed themselves in situations increasingly defined as feminine. Some, like Colley Cibber, who specialized in fop roles, seemed to recognize this and turned it to their advantage. All male actors, however, had to negotiate this complex combination of authority, admiration and yet potential compromise to their masculinity.

Court Influence

While Restoration theatre was a public, commercial institution, the influence of the court should not be underestimated either. Particularly in the early part of the Restoration, Charles II and the court culture influenced the kinds of masculinity displayed on stage. Charles's philandering became legendary and acquiring mistresses fashionable. He became lovers with both Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis after watching them act. Courtiers imitated their king, and the plays themselves frequently featured plots around male rakishness. Rakes on stage sometimes implicitly flattered the king and his court by representing royalist men as sexually desirable (Markley 1995). The use of stage rakes could also be an expression of loyalty to the Crown by mocking the conservative sexual morality advocated by the Puritans. But as we will see when we turn to the plays, stage rakes were not necessarily entirely positive. Many who supported the king found his sexual behaviour disturbing, and critics accused him of ignoring affairs of state for the affairs of his bedroom (Weber 1995). Male sexual prowess sometimes became a metaphor for effective political or masculine authority in general, but this relationship was often illustrated through impotence, cuckoldry and other forms of sexual failure.

Sexuality

The undeniable fascination with sexuality itself on the Restoration stage has been variously explained as a reaction against the reign of the Puritans but also as a continuation of Puritan prurience (Thompson 1979, for example). But given the major changes in male identity as described above, perhaps it is time to reconsider this relationship. Religious movements had long proscribed sexual behaviour. But if men were beginning to form a self-understanding as a group across status positions, then it would make sense that sexuality would become a defining factor in this emergent masculinity. Indeed, Randolph Trumbach has argued that by the early eighteenth century, a third gender had appeared in the form of the sodomite, the despised outsider to dominant masculinity against whom heterosexual men could define themselves. But while traditional (paternal) patriachalism was dissolving in the Restoration, a stable fraternal patriarchy with a hegemonic male heterosexual identity had not yet fully replaced it either. This transition could very well have contributed to the flurry of pornography, the fascination with prostitutes and the style of comedy in which most problems and solutions revolved around sexuality. (Tragedy explored masculinity as well, but not always in such explicitly sexual terms as the comedy.) Comedy, of course, has long explored sexual desire. Few other periods, however, explore it with such explicitness or expose such profound anxiety or ambivalence. And while questions of sexuality in literature so often revolve around women, those questions in the Restoration address masculinity as least as – if not more – powerfully.

Restoration drama – especially comedy – defined masculinity primarily through sexuality; masculine types are generally sexual types. Historians of sexuality have suggested that while long-term, monogamous relationships between men of equivalent status may have been uncommon, the seventeenth century tolerated sexual relationships between men and boys (see King forthcoming: introduction). This possibility, as Thomas King argues, depends on a model in which gender has not yet emerged as a primary social category and other social hierarchies prevailed. Some Restoration poetry suggests that men still eroticized masculine hierarchical relationships: John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, for example, represented the sexual appeal of boys as well as women. The plays, however, suggest that male effeminacy, which was beginning to be associated with sodomy (King forthcoming; McKeon 1995; Trumbach 1998), had become a subject of both fascination and ridicule.

But just because Restoration drama begins to mock male effeminacy does not mean that it does not represent desire between men. The emerging fraternal patriarchy of the Restoration compelled men to direct their sexual desires towards women, but relationships with each other remained extremely important – although most acceptably in ways that suppressed any sexual element. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has described this pattern as *homosocial*: much of a man's social world consisted of men, but erotic or intimate feelings towards those men had to be channelled through the

medium of a woman. For example, in Restoration drama men frequently try to cuckold each other, which on the surface suggests the simple desire for sex with a woman who happens to be married. But as Sedgwick has pointed out, cuckolding is something that a man does to another man; cuckolding establishes through the medium of a woman a relationship between two men that expresses dominance or even desire for intimacy that cannot be expressed any other way. Thus, men in Restoration plays pursue married or engaged women not only in spite of their previous attachments, but also sometimes *because* of those attachments.

While some men in these plays relentlessly pursue a variety of women, many seek marriage as well as or even instead of affairs. Men in the tragedies often fall profoundly and passionately in love; men in the comedies, however, sometimes see marriage as a restraint on their pleasure. Nevertheless, Restoration England, like so many cultures, established kinship networks through exogamy – that is, by marriage outside the family. Gayle Rubin has described this practice as 'the exchange of women', for families will offer a daughter in marriage in order to connect themselves with another family. Women thus come to inhabit the contradictory position of being objects of exchange between families but also human beings in their own right. This tension provides the plot for numerous comedies in which a relative insists on a young woman's marriage to someone she finds unacceptable. Men find themselves in this position as well, however. While relatives sometimes try to compel them to marry against their inclinations, often men (and women) are willing to accept lucrative matches without passionate love. This can strike modern readers as cynical; we must keep in mind, however, that these plays were written before the hegemony of bourgeois domesticity. Some plays accept the need for practical concerns in marriage, some plays pit desire against interest, and some plays both raise and avoid this problem by having this conflict turn out to be some kind of misunderstanding.

Class and 'Race'

The significance of class – or, more precisely for the Restoration, social rank – cannot be underestimated. While the tragedies draw large-scale distinctions between royalty and pretenders, aristocrats and commoners, the comedies often rely on subtle distinctions between men of leisure and men of business. We even find this conflict between playwrights themselves, for the elite amateurs considered themselves superior to the working professionals. As noted earlier, finance and mercantile capitalism destabilized distinctions in status during the Restoration. Merchants and businessmen gained more power and prestige, competing in both social and economic terms with the established gentry. The new economy brought a variety of world cultures to the attention of Londoners on an unprecedented scale. Global commerce may have influenced the comedies in more subtle ways, but it shaped the entire meaning of many of the tragedies. The tragedies frequently explore conflicts over colonial rule and trade

routes; in the process, they suggested different versions of masculinity intersected by racial and national differences.

The Plays

Thus far, I have discussed the larger cultural shifts in masculinity. In the rest of this chapter, I will illustrate these conflicts through particular representations on stage. No essay could cover all the permutations of masculinity during this period. Nevertheless, by looking at various character types, I will attempt to touch on several of the problems suggested by the discussion above.

Aphra Behn's *The Rover* displays a wide range of masculine possibilities particular to the Restoration. We might first notice the absence of fathers, for Behn sets the plot in motion through Don Pedro's usurpation of paternal authority. At first Don Pedro tries to persuade his sister Florinda to follow their father's will and marry Don Vincentio, a wealthy old merchant. Their sister Hellena bluntly expresses the horrors of this possibility: Don Vincentio repulses the young women not only because of his age, but because global travel and trading for slaves have associated him with 'third world' rather than European masculinity (Hellena calls him 'Don Indian' [162]). To underscore the point that trading in African people contaminates the trader, Hellena compares the marriage market to the slave market, although not with the usual gender configuration: 'He thinks he's trading to Gambo still, and would barter himself (that bell and bauble) for your youth and fortune' (162). While later drama will struggle to lionize the merchant, here global commerce undermines male sexual attractiveness. With Don Vincentio so firmly rejected through his racialized mercantile associations, Don Pedro then insists that Florinda marry *his* choice, Don Antonio. Young, handsome and rich, Don Antonio proves harder to make a case against, except that Florinda has already given her heart to the English cavalier Belville. Thus while Don Pedro attempts to exert his masculine authority over his sisters, the plot involves not just Florinda's rebellion against her brother but Don Pedro's rebellion against his father. Don Pedro suggests to Florinda that the absence of their father offers the perfect opportunity quickly to marry Don Antonio and thus avoid Don Vincentio. Further, the death of Don Pedro's uncle, Angellica Bianca's former lover, creates the conflict between Don Pedro and Don Antonio when Angellica places herself back on the sexual market. The conflict of the younger men over Angellica Bianca, which ends up also involving Willmore as a suitor and even Belville because he fights in disguise on Don Antonio's behalf, constitutes a kind of Oedipal plot in which the 'brothers' fight over the surviving lover of the 'father'. (Of course, none of them actually killed Don Pedro's uncle as a true Oedipal plot would require, but Don Pedro had desired Angellica Bianca long before his uncle's death.)

The Rover also shows masculine identity intersected by nationality in the implicit comparisons between the Italian men and the English cavaliers. The play compares Pedro's rigid concerns with money, honour and family status to the apparently more

English value of love, represented by Belville. Belville stands out in this play filled with men seeking prostitutes for his companionate ideas and monogamous desire. While many of the English men pursue several women, Behn's creation of the one male character devoted to the same woman throughout the play suggests romantic monogamy as a particularly English masculine possibility. Blunt and Willmore both seek affairs with local women, but Belville in some ways disturbs local authority most directly by wishing to marry Florinda. Yet the play crucially ends not with his secretive marriage to Florinda, but with Don Pedro's acceptance of this alliance after his disappointment in Don Antonio. In order to earn this acceptance, Belville must undertake a journey through the complexities of the male homosocial order where the obstacles to his happiness lie. Belville accidentally joins the fight over Angellica Bianca when he takes Willmore's side in a sword fight against Don Antonio. Later in the play Willmore injures Don Antonio, which prevents him from keeping his appointment to duel Don Pedro over Angellica. Thinking Belville the injurer after Willmore runs away, Don Antonio nevertheless forgives him and then asks him to fight Don Pedro in disguise. Belville agrees, thinking that this will give him the opportunity to fight for Florinda's honour. He defeats Don Pedro, spares him at Florinda's request, and would have married her at that instant disguised as Don Antonio had not Willmore let the cat out of the bag. Nevertheless, Belville's willingness to fight for Florinda's honour earns him Pedro's respect, whereas Don Antonio's interest in Angellica Bianca and failure to keep his appointment to duel make him a less worthy potential husband. Thus Belville's emotional trials in this play have little directly to do with Florinda, for their feelings for each other stay the same from beginning to end. Rather, his challenge lies in winning the affections of Don Pedro and respect in his apparently more traditional sense of masculinity. Since Belville secretly marries Florinda without Pedro's approval first, there must be more at stake in getting this approval than simply a means to the woman. Pedro's change of heart towards Belville seals the homosocial circuit of the play, for without it there could be no happy ending.

The companionate ideal may organize Belville's desires, but Behn presents it as one among many possible configurations of male sexuality. Don Pedro, at least initially, values men for their status; he pursues the courtesan Angellica Bianca, who clearly gains some of her appeal for having been the lover of his powerful uncle. The eponymous Rover – Willmore – seeks to seduce any woman he meets. The rakish Willmore is one of the play's most appealing characters – witty, passionate, attractive, full of life and reckless sexual energy. Behn defines Willmore's character through his sexuality and his irresistibility to most women; sexual desires, inclinations and skills distinguish one man from another more than anything else in this play and so many others. While Belville seeks one woman, Willmore connects with three different ones: the spunky yet virginal Hellena (Florinda's sister, who pursues Willmore to escape the convent); the beautiful courtesan Angellica Bianca, also pursued by both Don Pedro and Don Antonio; and finally Florinda, whom he mistakes for a prostitute and attempts to rape. Behn's portrayal of Willmore is complicated: his vitality often

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upstages the more sentimental Belville; his appetite for sex seems endless, as the other characters often note in amazement, and unlike some other Restoration rakes he does not appear to seduce women for the purpose of humiliating their husbands or male relatives. In fact, he lands in Naples seeking prostitutes, the seduction of whom would, at least in theory, only strengthen the homosocial network since it demonstrates heterosexuality without transgressing against male property. His enjoyment of prostitutes, however, is limited by his lack of funds; unlike Pedro or Antonio, he cannot possibly offer Angellica the high price she requires. But Willmore has another limitation as well. While Belville has an ability to assess the status and sexuality of most of the women he meets, Willmore comes across as remarkably oblivious. Sometimes he resembles the fool Blunt, whom I will discuss next, more than his sophisticated cavalier friends. This obliviousness also leads him, often inadvertently, to disrupt the male homosocial network in ways that sometimes prove almost fatal.

Willmore's combination of penury, sexual attractiveness and sexual appetite end up making him quite similar in some ways to the prostitutes in this play (Rosenthal 1996: ch. 3). Male heterosexual prostitution is not unusual in Restoration writing: Behn has a male character trade sex for money in *The Lucky Chance*, and Lyric in Farquhar's *Love and a Bottle* pays off his landlady with sex. Men are just as likely to marry for money as women in the plays; Willmore, in fact, makes his choice of Hellena over Angellica only after he learns of her financial value. Along the way, however, his adventure ends up disturbing the homosocial network, but not intentionally. Perhaps worst of all, he almost rapes Florinda when he takes her for a prostitute as she waits outside for Belville. Belville, of course, is outraged, and when Willmore pleads that he did not know the woman was Florinda, Belville wonders 'If it had not been Florinda, must you be a beast – a brute? A senseless swine?' Willmore also expresses his contempt for Angellica Bianca even as he pursues her. 'Yes, I am poor', he tells her, 'but I'm a gentleman. / And one that scorns this baseness which you practise; / Poor as I am, I would not sell myself.' But of course, the discovery of Hellena's fortune makes her more attractive as a marriage partner.

If Behn's Willmore, in spite of (or perhaps because of) his occasional brutality, frequent drunkenness and obliviousness represents the successful rake, Blunt represents the failed rake. While Willmore achieves the male fantasy of free sex from a prostitute due to his overwhelming powers of attraction, Blunt gets the opposite. He thinks that Lucetta loves him, but in fact with the help of her pimp she takes his money without even giving him sex. He vows revenge on all women and, like Wilmore, tries to rape Florinda. When he discovers Lucetta's cheat, Blunt calls himself a 'dull believing English country fop', another male type developed in different ways by other plays. Blunt has in common with other stage fops a kind of insufficient or alternative masculinity. He lacks the heterosexual allure of Willmore and his vanity makes him an easy target for Lucetta and her pimp. The play ends in the visual joke of Blunt 'dressed in a Spanish habit, looking very ridiculously' (245); throughout the Restoration, fops would become notorious for their sartorial excess.

Much later in the century, Congreve's *Way of the World* offers a different kind of rake more consistent with, as Richard Braverman has shown, the emergence of contractarianism over absolutism. While Willmore seems to have inborn gifts that render him irresistible to most (but not all) women, and Horner from Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (to which I will next turn) has an inborn talent for pleasing women sexually (although in both cases the playwrights complicate their rakes with a dark side), Congreve's Mirabell, Braverman argues, uses contracts rather than strictly inherent value and attractiveness to attain his sexual goals. Mirabell not only negotiates the personal terms of marriage with Millamant, but he saves the day at the end by producing a prior contract made with Mrs Fainall. But this does not mean that women and men contracted with each other as equals. In fact, *The Way of the World* clearly shows that Mrs Fainall, as a married woman, could not control her own assets except by entrusting them to another man, whose honesty she would then become entirely dependent upon. The play, in fact, shows the vulnerability of both Mrs Fainall and Lady Wishfort in a contract society quite poignantly. Nevertheless, while Willmore sees the offence to Belville and not Florinda as the reason he should not have tried to rape her, Mirabell, as Richard Braverman has argued, actually shows some ability to negotiate and compromise with Millamant herself.

But while men in Restoration comedies often distinguish themselves through their sexual vitality, the plays just as often characterize them by sexual inadequacy. Male impotence, in fact, provides the plot for Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, in which Horner pretends that venereal disease has left him a 'eunuch' in order to gain easier access to other men's wives and female relatives. While Willmore does not seem to intend to disturb the homosocial network through his sexual adventures, Horner's motives are more complicated. He states at the beginning that he has had no trouble seducing women, but invents this trick to get at *particular* women attached to *particular* men. In short, he wants to seduce women in the higher ranks of society for reasons that seem to have as much to do with the husbands as with the women. Horner wants to cuckold – something, as Eve Sedgwick has pointed out, a man does to another man through the medium of a woman. Thus his sexual play with Margery Pinchwife draws its pleasure from not just the act itself but the enraged response of her husband. For this reason, though, Horner cannot fully satisfy his desires with the Fidget ladies since the male involved – Sir Jasper Fidget – believes the story about Horner's impotence. In this plot, Horner's feigned impotence ultimately becomes both literally and metaphorically genuine. Greeting Horner's trick as an opportunity, the Fidget ladies make Horner their private sex toy, using him to satisfy themselves until he is all used up. Metaphorically, the now-enforced secrecy of his sexual ability renders him impotent as well, for he finds that he cannot cuckold Sir Jasper without Sir Jasper's open knowledge of his sexual 'conquests'.

While libertines combine sexual mastery with sexual vulnerability, fops perform different kinds of sexual and gender variations. Like libertines, individual fops both fulfil recognizable types and exhibit particular characteristics. While characters occasionally accuse a woman of foppery, the identity generally serves as a type of

masculinity (as the name of the play, *The Female Fop*, like the phrase 'male nurse', suggests). The fop's outstanding characteristic is excess: a giant wig, too much lace, exaggerated gestures, copious theatricality. In some ways the fop parodies an outdated form of masculinity. In the early seventeenth century, for example, male courtiers expressed their power through expensive clothes designed to draw the gaze. In the Restoration and eighteenth century, however, the politics of the gaze were changing. Simpler clothes became fashionable for men; elaborate dressing and thus attracting the gaze became feminized pursuits (Kuchta 1993). In a contract as opposed to an authoritarian society, women needed to make themselves as desirable as possible in the marriage market through, among other things, their appearance. The fop, however, comically approximates the behaviour of the old-fashioned courtier and the contemporary woman. Thus he becomes associated with both femininity and an increasingly criticized aristocratic mode (McKeon 1995). While fops in Restoration drama commonly court women, their association with effete aristocrats and femininity in general associated them with sodomy as well – a transgression rumoured to be popular among aristocratic men. But understanding the way fops mimicked aristocratic behaviour only tells part of the story, for often this mimicry marks the distance between a play's true gentleman and a country bumpkin trying to be suave. Thus as much as fops try to be fashionable, they overshoot the mark and thereby inadvertently reveal their humble origins to those in the know. Behn describes Blunt as 'an English country gentleman': he lacks the urban sophistication of his friends. He is easily flattered and duped; he eroticizes being looked at rather than looking. When Lucetta glances his way, he concludes: 'I have beauties which my false glass at home did not discover' (170). Significantly, the last visual joke of the play involves Blunt appearing on stage 'dressed in a Spanish habit, looking very ridiculously' (245).

But a better example of the type than Blunt and perhaps the most famous fop of the Restoration is George Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter from *The Man of Mode*. The contrast between Sir Fopling Flutter and Dorimant demonstrates the complex ways in which class intersects with masculinity and male sexuality in the Restoration. In order to compare them at all, however, we must begin by noting their similarity. Both men want to be 'men of mode', but understand somewhat different things by that term. While the play satirizes Sir Fopling's obsession with clothes and fascination with himself in the mirror as both trivial and effeminate, it nevertheless has a long opening scene in which Dorimant dresses himself as he gossips with his friends and pumps a bawd for information about a new heiress in town. Clearly Dorimant sees himself as just as much an aesthetic object as a desiring subject in a way that would soon become less acceptable for men: he takes great care with his appearance and charms, planning to use both of them to attract and marry an heiress who will repair his fortune. Like Willmore, there is a sense in which Dorimant also trades his body for money in the heterosexual marketplace. Neither of these men shows any lasting interest in women without sufficient fortune, no matter how much they may enjoy having sex with them, although, interestingly, the sequel *Rover II* kills off Hellena and finds Willmore engaged in a more equal and less financially based romance with a prostitute. While

Etherege's play, especially in the light of *Rover II*, presents perhaps a more cynical view of male heterosexual desire, both plays assume the inherent sexual attractiveness of these dispossessed but well-born men and show men with no compunctions about using their sexuality to repair their fortunes.

Fopling Flutter differs from Dorimant in both personal terms and terms of status. While Dorimant moves through the world as one 'to the manor born', Sir Fopling Flutter only recently came into his fortune. Like Blunt, he is a country bumpkin trying to fit in with the sophisticated elite men of the town. While masculinity changes through the century to the point that male preening begins to suggest effeminacy and even sodomy, in this play the difference between Dorimant and Flutter lies in their preening skills and not the preening itself. But even *The Man of Mode* shows this change in masculinity on the horizon, for the satire of Flutter circles back to some sharp satire on Dorimant himself. Nevertheless, Dorimant clearly possesses an excellent fashion sense, an irresistible body and finely tuned amorous skills. Flutter, on the other hand, consistently overshoots the mark: he wears too much lace, he spends too much time looking at himself in the mirror and he seems deficient in the arts of love. His problem is not too much attention to fashion, but in some ways not enough attention compared to Dorimant's years of self-cultivation. Dorimant's ability, however, appears to be inborn. While Sir Fopling Flutter, like many other fops, shows a class outsider attempting to imitate the manners of his betters, fops also come to suggest the excess of the aristocracy itself. Whatever the social origin of the individual fop, his manners and tastes satirize aristocratic masculinity that encouraged men to understand themselves as cultivated objects of the gaze when in the middle class this position was increasingly assigned to women. While men in the eighteenth century did not entirely renounce their preening, the increasingly powerful middle class defined masculinity in terms consistent with the emerging capitalist economy. Libertinism came under suspicion as a dangerous distraction from business, and even sometimes as a violation of a code of chastity that some thought should apply to men as well as to women. The libertine in Restoration drama almost always belonged to an elite class, even if he had been impoverished. Labouring-class men or men of business who drank and whored as much as the libertine would have had a hard time surviving. *The Man of Mode* explicitly and satirically recognizes this disparity early in the play when Dorimant reprimands his shoemaker for practising vices that should be reserved for the elite classes. Etherege's scene between Dorimant and his shoemaker shows a consciousness that different classes defined virtue in different ways; the scene both revels in and satirizes the dissolution of the aristocracy.

Arguments for male chastity held little force on the early Restoration stage, unless in the context of a romantic commitment. But by the end of the century, those who spoke for the reform movement demanded restraint for men as well as women. John Dunton's *Nightwalker*, for example, tells the story of a male reformer who visited prostitutes in an attempt to 'rescue' them. While on the surface women seem to be the object of reform, most of the stories that these prostitutes tell suggest that their unhappy fates resulted from male iniquity. *Nightwalker* treats female sexual transgres-

sion with surprising tolerance, but male philandering with little sympathy. *Nightwalker* certainly does not challenge the 'fraternal patriarchy' (Pateman 1988) emerging at the beginning of the eighteenth century, for it represents women as victims of male callousness rather than as full social agents. Rather, it suggests a collective male responsibility for the preservation of female chastity and female lives (Maurer 1998). For a man to seduce a woman in *Nightwalker* becomes less an offence against her father than a threat to the emergent bourgeois family that needs women to become wives and mothers.

Nevertheless, heterosexual male chastity remained controversial well into the eighteenth century. Henry Fielding comically explored it in his novel *Joseph Andrews*, in which a young male servant resists the advances of his mistress. Female prostitution, by all accounts, flourished. Randolph Trumbach has argued that the eighteenth century tolerated prostitution because it emerged as an important way for men to demonstrate their heterosexuality and thus difference from the sodomite, the despised third gender. Yet the late Restoration also saw an intense anti-prostitute reform movement. Jeremy Collier and others in the late seventeenth century attacked the theatre as immoral, associated the seductiveness of actresses with prostitution and objected that the theatres had become places for prostitutes to meet clients. Collier also thought that the plays themselves encouraged lascivious behaviour. Congreve and others defended the stage, but some of the playwrights responded by creating tamer versions of sexuality in their work. Thus by the end of the seventeenth century male heterosexual purchase of commercial sex or support of long-term mistresses was neither completely forbidden nor entirely condoned. In part because of this contradiction in expectations for male sexuality, prostitution became one of the most talked-about and written-about social issues of the Restoration and eighteenth century.

I have spent most of this chapter addressing the comedies in the Restoration because those are the plays most likely to appear on a syllabus and in contemporary productions. Further, in some ways the comedies exemplify the conflicts and variety of possibilities available in masculinity more clearly than the tragedies, for comedy has always explored human sexuality. Nevertheless, the tragedies deserve attention as well. George Haggerty has recently argued that Dryden's *All for Love* and many other Restoration tragedies are organized around passionate male–male love that does not necessarily refer to sexual activity. Close attention to the language of male affection for each other certainly reveals rhetoric indistinguishable from the way men pledge their love to women in Restoration tragedy. Haggerty's work complicates the standard observation that men in Restoration tragedy tend to face a conflict between love and honour, for this love can be for a man as well as for a woman. But while sexuality most significantly distinguishes men from each other in the comedies and also remains central to the tragedies, other distinctions tend to prevail. Restoration tragedy explicitly explores racial, ethnic and national differences (and similarities) between men. I have already touched on the ways in which Behn takes advantage of perceived cultural differences between Italian men and English men. In the tragedies, however,

this can often be a central issue in the context of the nascent British empire. Sir William Davenant's play, *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, for example, makes the commonly used suggestion that English colonialism proceeded with less violence and more respect for the natives than the colonialism of the other nations. Near the end of the Restoration period, Thomas Southerne adapted Aphra Behn's novel *Oroonoko* into a play of the same name that became one of the most popular tragedies of the eighteenth century and tells the story of a slave rebellion in the New World. Southerne's play, which arguably participates in the emergent racism of his culture and does not entirely condemn slavery, articulates the degradation of enslavement in terms of compromised masculinity. Oroonoko, an enslaved African prince, suffers most acutely when his status renders him helpless to rescue his white wife from rape. Like Joseph Addison's *Cato* (1713), Southerne's *Oroonoko* defines masculinity through both a transracial romance and a passionate male friendship. The prevalence of colonial settings and exploration of masculinity through racial, ethnic and national difference in Restoration tragedy demands more attention and research.

Finally, we cannot leave the topic of masculinity in Restoration drama without at least briefly thinking about the controversies it has stirred up. To summarize in extremely broad terms that must necessarily omit interesting exceptions, from the middle (or even early part) of the eighteenth century until the middle of the twentieth, many critics found male sexuality of the Restoration, with its frequent definition through libertinism and cuckoldry, to be offensive, mostly because it appeared to encourage unchaste behaviour and disrespect for the male obligation to uphold female chastity. While the historical burden of chastity has tended to fall to women, the burden of protecting that chastity has fallen at least in part to men; some writers, however, have genuinely objected to male promiscuity as well. Perhaps even more than male promiscuity itself, critics have found the calculating, unsentimental and acquisitive view that so many male characters in Restoration drama take offensive. These men commonly make little pretence of a relationship between sex and love, and thus their pursuit of pleasure as its own end has troubled some readers. Rejecting this moral critique, new generations of critics in the second half of the twentieth century, perhaps inspired by their own sexual revolution, began to argue for these plays as psychologically insightful and/or celebratory of human sexuality. Feminists, however, soon pointed out that the plays tend to celebrate *male* sexuality, often at the expense of female sexuality. Many pointed out that the sexuality in these plays and in their performance took the particularly modern form of the visual fetishization of the female body, a possibility that earlier English theatre, with boys in women's roles, could not accomplish in quite the same way (Diamond 1989). Queer theorists complicated this view by arguing that the individual supposedly empowered male spectator could never actually live up to the phallic power he was supposed to hold (Straub 1992; Weber 1995) – hence the emphasis in these plays and in Restoration culture in general on male sexual inadequacy. Kristina Straub has also looked at the ways in which the male actor, as the object of the gaze, came under suspicion for his own sexuality. Thus masculinity in Restoration drama has been read

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I cannot resolve these conflicts in the space of this chapter, but clearly we need to keep thinking about them. The comedies are among the most riveting in the English language because they explore, among other things, both the bright and the dark sides of the period's conceptions of male and female sexuality in so many of their complexities. While they often use sexuality as a way of representing politics and social transformations, they also can demystify gender and sexuality – and sometimes even class and race – in a way that rarely appears in the later drama. And while they clearly emerge from a society struggling to maintain male domination in the wake of serious challenges to traditional patriarchy, in the process they challenge some fundamental assumptions. Let us take the famous 'china' scene and drinking scene in *The Country Wife* as an example of this. In brief, Horner has begun affairs with the Fidget ladies by convincing Sir Jasper that he can't have sex at all. When drunk, the ladies reveal that their show of sexual virtue only masks their nearly insatiable desires. In the 'china' scene, one lady after the other keeps demanding sex from Horner until he has no more 'china' to give. Now one could see this as misogynistic, in the sense that the playwright suggests that all claims to female virtue are hypocritical and that women's lust reduces them to a kind of animalistic desire. There is indeed something disturbing about the way Wycherley represents these ladies. On the other hand, one could argue that these ladies have hoisted Horner with his own petard, so to speak. Since Horner cannot reveal his scheming he can never reap the full homosocial rewards for his plot. Thus these women have trapped Horner, forcing him to meet their sexual desires with apparently little consideration for *his* pleasure. He has thus inadvertently reduced himself to their sex toy; he serves rather than conquers; he, rather than any of the ladies, has become objectified. While no example of equal and tender heterosexual desire, this scene may offer a rare instance of unabashed female pleasure, albeit closeted and frankly shocking to Horner. Such scenes alone are worth the price of admission.

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