LADY LIBERTINES AND FEMALE FREETHINKERS

IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH DRAMA AND SOCIETY

A Dissertation

by

YOUMI JUNG

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Chair of Committee,	Margaret J.M. Ezell
Committee Members,	Nandra Perry
	Laura Estill
	Britt Mize
	James Rosenheim
Head of Department,	Maura Ives

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reevaluates the role of early modern female libertines as sexual celebrities and analyzes how they performed their libertine sexuality in various types of literary and cultural texts. Female libertine performance should be conceived of differently than that of male libertines because women thrived as sexual celebrities both in variety of literary genres (such as plays, anonymous lampoons, memoirs, and secret histories) and in diverse media, including theatrical performances, painted/printed portraits, and extra-illustrated books. The focus of the dissertation is on female libertines whose public appearances took place between 1660 and 1700 but who have enjoyed culturally visible images for centuries: Nell Gwyn (1651?-1687), Barbara Palmer, countess of Castlemaine and later the duchess of Cleveland (bap. 1640, d. 1709), and Louise de Kéroualle, later duchess of Portsmouth (1649-1734). Their power and influence of transgressive sexuality, both political and cultural, becomes clearer when we stop dismissing them simply as Charles II's mistresses, or labelling them as "whores." In order to appreciate the full complexity of the past where early modern female libertines powerfully and radically challenge the early modern status quo, this dissertation locates how historical and fictional women performed at the intersection of visual culture, literature, theater, politics, and other cultural forms. Literary and cultural representations of female libertine transgression were collaborations between playwrights, authors, actresses, and inspiring lady libertines outside the theater. Playwrights wrote plays for celebrity actresses based on their public behavior. Actresses played libertine characters that often mirrored, played with, and parodied their public images. Audiences watched these performances with notions of transgressive female behavior in mind from the scandals surrounding the performers. Lady libertines of early modern England

challenged the conventional role of women in the patrilineage and the notion of family based on heterosexual and monogamous relationship. These women, both historical and fictional, sometimes carefully engineered transgression to shock and aggressively assert their rejection of the social norms they were meant to follow. In addition, their public image and celebrity take on a life on their own when initially personally maneuvered libertine transgression become social and cultural currency that can be exchanged and commercialized in visual, oral, and print media.

DEDICATION

To my *umma*, Jaesoon Jeong (1960-2012)

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INTRODUCTION

A popular anonymous lampoon (possibly dated March 1676) derides one of Charles II's mistresses, Barbara Palmer, then styled the Duchess of Cleveland (1640-1709), and her voracious sexual appetite by listing some of her rumored lovers. These include John Churchill, later Duke of Malborough (1650-1722), William Wycherley (1640-1715), Henry Jermyn, 1st earl of Dover (1636-1708), and Jacob Hall, an actor and acrobat (*fl.* 1662-1681).[1] In the lampoon Cleveland is portrayed as being so "overswayed" by lechery that "[s]he's fucked with great and small,/ From good King Charles the Second/ To honest Jacob Hall" (5, 26-28). What must have bothered this particular lampoonist the most is Cleveland's having "no discretion at all" in choosing who she sleeps with and enjoying such variety in lovers (6). According its modern editor, John Harold Wilson, the immediate occasion for this lampoon could have been the rumor that circulated in early 1676 that Cleveland was going to France with the intention to put herself into a monastery (20).[2] Whether Cleveland went for her children's education or not is unclear, but the lampoon used the rumor to connect to her another sexual transgression in the last stanza: "But now she must travel abroad/ And be forced to frig with the nuns./ For giving our sovereign lord/ So many buttered buns" (29-32). Cleveland's conversion to Catholicism made public in December 1663 and her widely known history of transgressive public sex life converge in the lampoon with Cleveland's imagined future orgies with nuns.[3] From the first line to the last,

[1] The lampoon is published in John Harold Wilson's *Court Satires of the Restoration*, pp. 20-22, using Harleian MS. 6913 as the copy text. According to Harold Love's "First-Line Index to Anthologies" in his book *English Clandestine Satire 1660-1702*, this lampoon appears at least in ten manuscript collections.
[2] Wilson cites *Hastings MS* II, 169 as the source of the rumor. Cleveland took her children to the English convent of the Order of the Conception in Paris, and she donated £1,000 for new buildings in 1678.
[3] Love notes that sodomy in cases of both sexes was "ineradicably associated in the minds of Protestant Britons with the Romantic Catholic clergy and with Catholicism generally" (59).

Cleveland is metonymized in the eyes of the lampoon's misogynist speaker. She is pictured as the big "cunt"—literally female genitals and figuratively a dangerously sexual and promiscuous woman (7, 11).[4]

This shamelessly misogynistic and brutal lampoon obviously targets Cleveland's sexual promiscuity, taking multiple rumors and gossip for its evidence. Wilson's annotation of the lampoon illustrates how accounts of such alleged affairs were widely circulated in contemporary gossip, recorded in diaries, and copied into miscellanies. In this lampoon and the gossip it used as source, what should be extremely personal and private details of Cleveland's life became cultural and political currency that was exchanged, circulated, and consumed. Cleveland's image as a "cunt" who does not discriminate among sexual partners is grounded in the allegedly "real" portrayal of her sex life, putting her in a position of visibility that in turn raises troubling questions regarding her powerful sexuality and the agency. Despite its clear mission to explain "the cause of her fall," this lampoon portrays Cleveland in a powerful, controlling position where she "fucked with great and small" (26). Her male lovers turn into subjects of her sexual reign when they are listed as just one of the "thousands and more" of lovers (24). The future general John Churchill turns into "a he-whore" doted on by Cleveland because of his "delicate shape" (2, 9) and the dramatist William Wycherley performs the part of "a drudge" while passively reclining and waiting for Cleveland to come to his bed (16). Cleveland is even likened to Charles II when the speaker sarcastically comments, "Why might she not fuck with a poet,/ When his Majesty fucks with a player?" (19-20).

[4] Comically exaggerated body parts such as monstrously enlarged vaginas and deformed penises makes habitual appearances in Restoration lampoons. Love notes how such descriptions "reinscribe an ancient body-hating morality inherited from the medieval Church and the attendant medical doctrine" (62).

Despite its depiction of Cleveland as a powerful sexual agent, a lampoon like this one is rarely read in favor of its subject Cleveland because of its misogynistic and brutal denunciation of her sexuality. It is true that Cleveland here does not have a "real" voice at all, and she probably did not have much control over the gossip about her. However, as I demonstrate in the opening and later chapters, her transgressive, public display of her sexual powers both fascinated and shocked people so much that they continued to talk and write about her, almost exclusively as embodied in her socially uncontrolled sexuality. Capitalizing on gossip already in wide circulation, lampooners and satirists constructed Cleveland's image in ways to make readers focus on her sexual magnetism and the transgressive nature of her sexual behavior. If we redirect our attention from the lampoon's attack on Cleveland as a person and consider instead the amount of public interest and media attention paid to Cleveland as found in rarely discussed texts such as lampoon, we would begin to be able to recover a sense of the extent of Cleveland's status and fame as an early modern celebrity based on her sex life.

Cleveland was not a rare example of female sexual celebrity—they were ubiquitous figures in early modern literature and cultural media. Whether as mistresses to prominent male courtiers or the monarch's mistress or as professional actresses, such women entered the public eye as already highly sexualized figures, gaining more notoriety with their further extra-marital affairs and the sheer number of their lovers. Although typically categorized in later accounts simply as men's mistresses or just whores, some of these women were in fact female libertines in the same circle of the infamous Restoration male libertines, which included John Wilmot, the earl of Rochester (1647-1680), Sir Charles Sedley (bap. 1639-d.1701), William Wycherley, and Charles II. These transgressive women are a consistent presence in lampoons, satires, biographies, and romance novels in early modern England. Even though they were frequently

denounced by critics as immoral, loose, and beneath contempt[5], their powers were also viewed as such that they were credited with having "subdu'd the most powerfull and Glorious Monarch of the world."[6] After the Restoration, their sexualized images have been consistently talked about, recorded, and reimagined over centuries; modern-day popular culture actively participates in the perpetuation of their images through historical romances and theatrical productions. The result is that people have never really stopped talking about these early modern transgressive sexual ladies as early celebrity figures whom people loved to hate, and their representations have operated as a complex sign system that, situated within a specific historical culture, continues to fascinate.

This dissertation aims to reevaluate the role of women libertines as female sexual celebrities and to analyze how complex sign system to which they belonged operated in early modern English literature and culture. I use various types of literary and cultural texts, such as printed plays, theatrical documents, painted and printed portraits, lampoons, satires, secret histories to locate female libertines' celebrity performances. Looking at cultural texts is especially important in the project because female libertines are different from the group of male libertines consisting of poets, playwrights, and performers; women as celebrities made use of multiple popular media of the day and become both visual and verbal icons actively constructed and widely consumed by the public for centuries. By engaging with diverse critical discourses in studies of early modern cultural history, theater history, art history, book history, media studies, and celebrity studies, this project seeks to recover and to contextualize the female libertine's performance of sexual celebrity.

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[5] Numerous court lampoons and satires would be good examples, including the 1676 lampoon from the opening of the introduction.

[6] Aphra Behn's epistolary dedication to Nell Gwyn in *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679). Todd, vol.6, page 87.

I am greatly indebted to recent studies involving gender- and sexuality-focused analyses of libertinism, but I hope to focus on aspects that they have not yet fully explored. Much of the scholarship has emphasized male libertines' predatory and misogynist sexuality, exercised at the expense of the female sex. Harold Weber focuses on how male libertines' sexuality is firmly "grounded on a hatred and fear of women," depending on "a conventional misogynous understanding of hierarchical relations between the sexes" ("Constructing Homosexual Economies" 102, 114). In 1995, Warren Chernaik argued that the ideologies of libertinism "justify oppression in the name of freedom" while noting that Restoration libertinism renders women's transgressive and indecorous assertion a "cause of anxiety" (4-5, 7). Focusing on the performative nature of libertinism, Jeremy W. Webster focuses his study of libertinism on male libertines' public performances of transgressive activities to contend that they offered English people "alternatives to normative sexual behavior" and enabled normative sexual desire to become actually normalized (35). Weber, Chernaik and Webster focused heavily on male libertines' literary texts such as poems, plays, and historical contexts in their study of libertine sexuality, building on the study of dramatic libertines and rake-heroes of the Restoration drama.[7]

In what he calls the study of "popular libertinism" in *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630-1685* (2002), James Grantham Turner suggested that liberationist claim of libertinism should be complicated by the politics of gender and class by paying attention to "low-libertine" culture. Turner's study of both popular and elite cultural texts including political and pornographic satires with a focus on sexuality integrated literary and cultural historical aspects of libertinism. Turner's study decenters the

[7] For male dramatic libertines and rake-heroes of Restoration drama, see Underwood, Hume, Holland, Braverman. Although Chernaik discusses a number of woman authors and their poems and writings, he focuses more on how they use their writings to "explore strategies to contest patriarchal domination" and imagine them as "the would-be female libertine" (20, 21).

focus of the study of libertinism from the elite male courtiers' transgressive behaviors and conventionally literary texts—poems and plays—authored by them. Turner also highlights the possibilities of female libertinism by concentrating on how *pornographia*—a term he uses to refer to "the sexually explicit discourse of prostitution" and all gendered female sexual transgression—is a locus of a "mutually provocative cycle of performance and representation" (164).

Emphasis on gender and sexuality in the study of libertinism has considerably helped to raise awareness of women's participation in libertinism and the resulting discourses of female sexual transgression. While female characters in Restoration drama that possess "libertine hearts" have long been viewed as showing male playwright's "fascination with the female libertine . . . in the fantasy world" (Weber "The Female Libertine" 139), female libertines as active agents of libertinism have only recently begun to gain more scholarly attention. As more scholars acknowledge the intersectionality between historical figures and fictional representations of female libertines, women are becoming increasingly recognized as libertines whose overt sexuality and acts of sexual transgression gave them the power to influence/shock/attract an audience.

For example, Kathleen Wilson in her 2004 article "The Female Rake: Gender, Libertinism, and Enlightenment" examines how real scandalous women with unconventional sexualities "incarnated the double standards on which Enlightenment notions of liberty, libertinism and gender were founded" (96) by focusing on female libertinism and Enlightenment categories of sexual difference through the case of Con Phillips (1709-1765)— courtesan, sexual adventurer, and memoirist. Wilson's case study of female libertinism is meaningful as she disproves the notion that women's "nature" was something natural. Fictional female libertine

figures likewise have been brought under the lens of scholarly attention. Laura Linker in her 2011 book initiates extensive research on the figure of female libertines in English literature between 1670 and 1730. Linker notes the influence of Lucretius' Epicurean ideas on early modern authors' characterization of the female libertine, arguing that the early novels of sensibility are tied to libertinism's main characteristic of rebellious sexuality.[8] By examining female libertine figures in a range of mostly prose and novels, Linker attempts to identify various types of lady libertine characters and their contribution to the earlier onset of the novel of sensibility. While Linker's work focuses on the rebellious sexuality of the fictional (mostly in novel) female libertines, my project goes beyond to cast a wider net of cultural texts to newly conceive of female libertines as active agents of libertinism.

The female libertines central to my project share a number of distinct features. Charles II's three most widely known mistresses, Nell Gwyn (1651?-1687), Barbara Palmer [née Villiers], countess of Castlemaine and *suo jure* duchess of Cleveland (bap. 1640, d. 1709, hereafter Castlemaine or Cleveland),[9] and Louise Renée de Penancoët de Kéroualle, *suo jure* duchess of Portsmouth and *suo jure* duchess of Aubigny in the French nobility (1649-1734, hereafter Portsmouth), will be my main objects of analysis, even though my definition of female libertines as erotic celebrities is not necessarily limited to these three ladies. Female libertines are first and foremost women whose sexual experiences or liaisons are made public matters through gossip because of their unofficial status as a public figure's mistress. Like the more familiar male libertine celebrities such as Rochester and Sedley, these women's sexual relations are not

[8] See Linker's *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, and the Rise of Sensibility 1670-1730*.
[9] Barbara Palmer is made countess of Castlemaine on 11 December 1661 when Charles instructed a grant to make Roger Palmer, her then husband, Baron Limerick and earl of Castlemaine. Lady Castlemaine was created duchess of Cleveland, countess of Southampton, and Baroness Nonsuch on 3 August 1670. I will refer to her either as Castlemaine or Cleveland depending on which point in her life I point to in my dissertation.

constrained by conventional morality, resulting in their often being denounced or dismissed for being promiscuous or "loose." While these three female libertines were best known for being royal mistresses to Charles II, it is important to realize, however, that they by no means were sexually or otherwise committed only to the king.

While both male and female libertines flaunted the tenets of contemporary sexual morality, female libertines uniquely performed their public and transgressive sexuality by giving birth to children with their sexual partners and then making those illegitimate children a highly visible part of their public, performed libertine persona. Unlike the male courtiers typically associated with libertinism in Charles II's circle, female libertines had diverse and sometimes ambiguous social backgrounds, ranging from an orange-selling actress to a foreign agent. Their initially obscure positions in the social hierarchy further complicated the status of their illegitimate children, as well as their own public images.

For example, Cleveland's multiple sexual relations with men of various rank and status were widely known to the public, as can be seen in the lampoon, and so were her illegitimate children by these men. Lady libertines' "bastard" children radically challenge the conventional role of women in the patrilineage and the notion of family based on heterosexual, monogamous relationship. Furthermore, lady libertines' children (mostly by the king) were mobile across the social ranks because they were often elevated to the peerage regardless of their mothers' social status. Portsmouth's son by the king, Charles Lennox (1672-1723), was created duke of Richmond, Yorkshire, in the peerage of England, and duke of Lennox in the peerage of Scotland in 1675. Nell Gwyn's first child by Charles II, Charles Beauclerk (1670-1726), was created the first duke of St Albans in 1684 by his father along with a considerable estate. Cleveland's first

son with the king, Charles (1662-1730), who bore the courtesy title of his mother's husband Roger Palmer until 1670, was made earl of Southampton in 1670 and began to be called FitzRoy.

Lastly, female libertines are sexual celebrities whose public intimacies have continued to fascinate for centuries. Female libertines' "open relationships" had the effect of a public performance because their private lives were constantly watched as information, stories, and rumors were circulated as gossip both in print and in casual conversations recorded in letters and diaries. Public attention paid to female libertines mixed the private with the public, the personal with the professional, and notoriety with celebrity, and constructed their images—their personalities, looks, and life-stories circulating in the absence of their person. Female libertines' images contain what we now call the "it" factors in iconic celebrity figures of popular culture. In his study of the history of iconic celebrity, Joseph Roach defines the ageless glamour of "it" as the power of "effortless embodiment of contradictory qualities simultaneously: strength *and* vulnerability, innocence *and* experience, and singularity *and* typicality among them" (*It* 8, his emphasis). For Roach, the Nell Gwyn was the prototype of the "it girl" that embodies these contradictory qualities, and offered a repeatable model for others to follow. While Restoration and eighteenth-century actresses have been the primary focus for investigations into the origins of such "it girls" by recent scholars,[10] my dissertation proposes to expand our scope to the theatrical dimensions of lives lived publicly as social and cultural icons more generally. Roach's working definition of the "it" possessed by abnormally interesting people as a certain quality that "fall[s] within our direct view or easy reach as a mass-circulation image" points to the ways

[10] Roach's works on celebrity heavily draw on examples from Restoration and eighteenth-century actresses, while noting how the mechanisms of celebrity are anchored in the world of the theater. Nussbaum similarly focuses on the theater and actresses to explore the celebrity of women players, but she critically examines how sexual politics played an important role in making actresses "the first female subjects in the public arena" (17). See also Engel for the study of the formation of actresses' celebrity.

female libertines not limited to Nell Gwyn have dominated our cultural imagination during their lifetime and after it ("Public Intimacy" 15).

The celebrity lives of female libertines like Cleveland and Portsmouth particularly thrived in visual and satirical print media. Their physical appearance and attire, as well as anecdotes about their actions were widely circulated by *gossipmongers*—a term I will use to refer to persons and agents who collect, make, distribute, and trade gossip pertaining to female libertines. The added word "mongers"—in contemporary seventeenth-century English dealers and sellers of commodities—emphasizes the active roles they played in female libertines' celebrity when they make reproducible prints of the iconic visuals of Cleveland or collect documents about Nell Gwyn to make a scrapbook. The figure of the *gossipmonger* differs from that of "the gossip," which *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "a person, mostly a woman, of light and trifling character, esp. who delights in idle talk; a newsmonger, a tattler" ("Gossip, n3"). Unlike "gossip," the term *gossipmonger* is not specifically gendered female, and their activities of *gossipmongering* feature a wider range of celebrity-making in visual, oral, and print media. Thus, *gossipmonger* could include diarists like Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), anonymous court satirists who record the town and court scandals, and engravers like William Sherwin (c.1645-after 1709) who might have accidently created a printable image of Cleveland as a queen. Varying kinds of *gossipmongering* could be done with vastly different motive—some politically factional and others just for fun—depending on the individual. However, my focus of analysis is how they all collectively contribute to creating, circulating, and sustaining the celebrity image of female libertines.

My research differs from previous studies in five ways. I focus on female libertines whose public appearances took place between 1660 and 1700 but who have enjoyed culturally

viable images for centuries. I argue that female libertine performance should be conceived of differently than that of male libertines because they thrived as sexual celebrities both in variety of literary genres (such as plays, anonymous lampoons, memoirs, and secret histories) and in diverse media, including theatrical performances, painted/printed portraits, and extra-illustrated books. I deal with both female libertines' performance and representation as a "mutually provocative cycle (164)," as Turner puts it, to analyze how their libertine performance is closely connected to how they are represented. Finally, unlike existing studies of English libertinism, I incorporate frameworks from diverse critical discourses from celebrity studies, art history, and media studies to analyze female libertines' celebrity performance of sexual transgression.

The focus of this dissertation on female libertines who were public figures between 1660 and 1700 specifically highlights the cultural significance and power of three women: Nell Gwyn, the Duchess of Cleveland, and the Duchess of Portsmouth. I begin with how their power and influence, both political and cultural, becomes both clearer and more complex when we stop dismissing them simply as mistresses, or labelling them as "whores." In recent years, historians such as Sonya Wynne, for example, have suggested that we should rethink the agency of royal mistresses in Charles II's court by raising questions about the possibilities of the actual political power they had as unofficial agents who participated in domestic and foreign policy. Both Cleveland and Portsmouth had their own court factions because of their proximity to the king that could be translated into the real power through royal favors. Following Wynne's call for the need to stop considering royal mistresses as "passive handmaidens for men in the political process" ("The Mistresses" 184), my project also seeks to reclaim the power and influence of female libertines. Additionally, unlike the male courtiers seeking influence through their proximity to the monarch and the ability to entertain him, I examine how transgressive women's

power and influence is made manifest in a variety of different modes of literary and cultural representations. I highlight how these women actually secured wealth and status, sometimes for themselves and always for their children, which few powerful male courtiers were able to do. Grants—conferment of a privilege, right, gift of money, or possession— and pensions, not to mention the titles female libertines and their children received by the king, concretely demonstrate their power and importance in contemporary court society.

Cleveland and her then husband Roger Palmer were first given titles of Castlemaine and a grant by the king in 1661. She then received a series of grants by the king when she was created duchess of Cleveland in 1670. In addition to her own palace apartments and Berkshire House, Cleveland was given several pensions for life. Her pension from the Post Office revenues, first granted in May 1667, increased until they reached £12,000 per annum from 1674. She had several of her children acknowledged by the king and given titles and the surname Fitzroy. Portsmouth was created Baroness Petersfield, countess of Fareham, and duchess of Portsmouth in 1673. She successfully arranged a pension of £600 per annum and a marriage for her sister Henriette-Mauricette to Philip Herbert, sixth earl of Pembroke. Portsmouth's son by the king was acknowledged, given the surname of Lennox, and created duke in the peerage of England, Scotland, and France. Portsmouth was given her own apartments in Whitehall, which gradually extended until they reached twenty-four rooms, and her pension from the king began at £8,600 a year in 1676 and increased to £11,000 per annum by 1680. Nell Gwyn was never given any title for herself, but received several substantial pensions and grants while making sure that her children received titles. Her pension reached £5,000 a year in 1676, but she had additional revenues and grants, as well as Burford House at Windsor. Her two children by the king were

given the surname Beauclerk, and the first son Charles was created Baron Heddington and earl of Burford in 1676 and duke of St Albans in 1684.

With pensions, grants, new semi-royal lineages, and proximity to the king, female libertines were women with resources and connections that even the most successful male courtiers strived to access. Although labelled as whores in an attempt to dismiss and erase their powers, at the same time, female libertines were often the "face" of the court faction wars, and their power based on royal favors was viciously targeted by those who envied such privilege. "[A]ll the powers [they] conquer with" over the kingdom were frequently satirized in court and state lampoons ("The Looking Glass"),[11] which reminds us just how much female libertines' power is based on their constantly being attacked for wielding that power successfully. Representation of having power matters primarily because perceived power and authority could easily translate to *actual* power and authority. As Rachel Weil argues in her reading of female royal favorites as politicians, issues of representation should be made more central in considering early modern women's political power (189). I suggest that how these women were represented should also be an essential element in considering the questions surrounding female libertine performances.

Thus, my reading of female libertinism and power tracks the complex relationship between women as transgressors, women as powerful cultural agents, and women as the subjects of representation. As an art historian Marcia Pointon reminds us, woman as representation cannot be split from woman as historical individual, and in order to understand both of these, we need to ask "the appropriate questions of the relevant body of material" (8). Studies of

[11] Portsmouth's sexual control of the king and her power over the state affairs are common subjects of the restoration satires. The satire is often alternately titled "Portsmouth's Looking-Glass" and sometimes attributed to Rochester. British Library MS Harley 6913, fos. 51^{r}-52^{v}.

Restoration-era male libertinism direct their focus to poems, plays, and on street performances. Rochester's poems, the rake-heroes in William Wycherley's plays, and Charles Sedley's naked performance at the Cock Inn are all considered public performance of transgressive activities that were "crucial to England's history of sexuality" (Webster 35).[12] Public performance of transgressive activities is at the heart of what it meant to be a libertine, but women's public performance of transgressive activities requires different kinds of analysis than that of their male counterparts. If we limit our scope to female playwrights and poets, we would not be able to appreciate the full complexity of the past where women powerfully and radically challenge the early modern status quo.

Cultural texts including both visual and verbal representations are thus significant in order to for us to describe and analyze early modern women's libertine performances. All of the tools we have for understanding libertinism come from studies of male libertinism, but the conditions of life for female libertines were very different. As a result, in order to fully understand female libertinism, we have to use different kinds of critical tools and expand our focus to different kinds of cultural texts in order to account for gendered differences between when and how libertines were able to develop their celebrity personae. It is not sufficient to simply apply the male model to women; we need new strategies and new critical lenses. Margaret J.M. Ezell's still relevant and important interrogation of how some feminist works reiterated the same "traditional" methodology of literary history that excluded and devalued some women's work over others is the guiding concern in my project.[13] Locating traces of

[12] Jeremy W. Webster analyzes libertinism as a series of performances with a specific focus on the relationship between libertinism and restoration theater He argues how libertinism's radical performances were crucial to England's history of sexuality because they have offered alternatives to normative sexual behavior and helped define normative sexual desire.
[13] *Writing Women's Literary History* 164-65.

female libertinism or critical perspectives interrogating male libertine behaviors in Aphra Behn's plays and poems is important; but we need to consider what we are missing if we restrict the model of libertine performance to writing poems and plays with libertine characters.

Female libertines performed at the intersection of visual culture, literature, theater, politics, and other cultural forms. As a result, their diverse cultural output requires an interdisciplinary approach. Typically, however, these women have been studied only within a single frame of reference. The joint collaborative exhibition organized by The National Portrait Gallery and the Yale Center for British Art in 2001, *Painted Ladies: Women at the Court of Charles II*, and an essay collection published in 2007 as the result of two conferences associated with the exhibition, *Politics, Transgression, and Representation at the Court of Charles II* spotlighted the new visibility of women in Charles II's court, as well as their various transgressive modes of behavior. A group of painted portraits known as the "Windsor Beauties" and how they operated in elite court society are the main objects of the collection's analysis. My project continues the study's focus on women's manipulation of visual imagery as a significant political and cultural move, but further extends their notion of women's performance by examining how their images were perceived, reinforced, and reconstructed in the popular cultural media.

Finally, emphasis on the visually dense and celebrity-obsessed cultural landscape of Restoration England echoes our own, which is filled with visual and textual materials related to "sexual celebrity." Therefore, contemporary media studies and celebrity studies that complicate the representational aspects of celebrity culture and the issue of agency in the celebrity's heavily manufactured self are also significant in my reading of female libertines as early modern prototypes of sexual celebrities. Drawing parallels between two different sets of female

celebrities will be helpful in reading how scandalous and fascinating women with public sexuality have operated in in our culture. Various popular entertainment media including reality television shows and social-media platforms like Twitter make modern female celebrity figures like Kim Kardashian ubiquitous figures. Kim Kardashian first became famous from a leaked home-made sex tape in 2007 and since then her public persona and sexual persona have been converged. Ever since the sex tape, Kardashian's body, more specifically her butt, has been significantly highlighted in a range of visual and textual materials related to her media presence. Kardashian's body became central to her transmedial self that is performed and highly sexualized. As Alexandra Sastre argues of Kim Kardashian's visible body in today's entertainment media, Kardashian's image as a sexual celebrity "echoes that of a broader history of women" whose images were constructed and authentic in contradictory ways (134).

The ways Kardashian exercises and commercializes her public identity across a range of media platforms by keeping her (body and other) image "consistently visible and 'accessible' to the public" are not simply novel modes made available by modern media platforms (Sastre 134). Restoration female libertines like Nell Gwyn, Cleveland, and Portsmouth similarly kept their literary and painted portraits highly visible and accessible to the public; their artful imagery and their sensational actions provided the gossiping public with material to talk about and react to. Even after their deaths, we are still talking about them, still amazed and amused by their libertine transgressions, but what we have not appreciated is the extent to which these unconventional women created and curated their sexual celebrity during their lifetimes across the multiple media available to them.

My dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter One, which focuses on Nell Gwyn, examines both her real-life libertine choices and her career as a beloved actress bringing life to

the female libertine characters. Carefully and skillfully fashioning a public identity out of her private life, Gwyn is an early example of a theatrical and sexual celebrity figure. Her image as a "pretty, witty Nell" also frequently appears in Restoration and modern popular cultural and literary media. Her position both as an actress and a mistress of multiple male libertines allows us to see how female libertines produced public intimacy as a celebrity figure on stage and in printed gossip.

Chapter Two focuses on more notoriously transgressive women, Cleveland and Portsmouth, and their public libertine performances as sexual celebrities. By looking at both portraits and satirical prints, I analyze the image of Cleveland and Portsmouth as uncrowned queens. Because of their highly curated and constructed images, these texts establish them as radical, agentic libertines rather than whores or mistresses.

Chapter Three examines Restoration comedies featuring female libertine characters, focusing on how these plays were written for celebrated actresses, known transgressive women, and their public behavior. For example, Nell Gwyn's love of pranks and her sexual liaisons with the actor Charles Hart and the courtier Charles Sackville, helped Joh Dryden to write unconventional female character Florimell in *Secret Love* (1667). Thomas Southerne tailored the cross-dressing female rake for the actress Susanna Mountfort in *Sir Anthony Love* (1691). Both Mountfort's expertise in performing a breeches role and the gossip surrounding her marriage and pregnancies played into her on-stage performance of the radically unconventional female libertine. Playwrights were writing for a particular set of actresses whose lives were known to the audiences, and the audience would have known about the scandals surrounding both the actresses and the lady libertines of previous chapters. These various public and private performances created a shared discourse that playwrights capitalized on in creating their libertine characters. I

suggest how these unconventional dramatic lady libertines can be read as collaborated creation of playwrights, actresses, and perhaps even inspiring lady libertines outside the theater.

Chapter Four deals with the popular and rich afterlives of female libertines, whose celebrity persists in various genres including secret history, memoir, historical romance, and fictional biography. These real women whose transgressive lives were constructed and circulated as celebrity images became fictions and have continued to play the parts of sexual celebrity up to the present day. The change in genre, for example, from lampoon to memoir, significantly altered the focus and the tone of these women's stories and images, but it nevertheless attests to their lasting popularity.

CHAPTER II

NELL GWYN

II.1 It Girl: Nell Gwyn in Our Cultural Imagination

As an actress and arguably the most famous royal mistress in English history, Nell Gwyn has all the factors that make her an early example of a celebrity figure, whose charm and charisma has survived over centuries and continue to fascinate readers and audiences. Nell Gwyn, as Joseph Roach puts it, indeed was "the 'It Girl' of her time" and she continues to be the "It Girl" even now (74). From the Restoration to the modern day, her image dominates the image of Charles II's hedonistic and immoral English Stuart court. Her name very often stands for Restoration theater, the rise of professional actresses, and a group of Charles II's numerous mistresses. The period's icon of actresses and mistresses, as *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* lists at the core of her cultural and historical identities, Nell Gwyn's spell still lives on as much as it did in Restoration England. It is actually quite interesting and amazing to see how Nell Gwyn does not lose her charm and continues to pervade our cultural imagination. People are still fascinated by and eager to read about her personal life, whether it be through her latest biography *Nell Gwyn: Mistress to a King* published in 2006 by Charles Beauclerk or a historical romance novel *Mistress Nell Gwyn* published in 2016 by Marjorie Bowen. Even after more 350 years, Nell Gwyn's story captivated theatergoers when put on stage in 2016, 2017, and 2019 based on a screenplay titled *Nell Gwynn* by Jessica Swale. These many afterlives indicate the extent to which modern-day audiences are just as interested in knowing every detail of her private life as were people in Restoration England.

Nell Gwyn's captivating character as "the darling strumpet" has been long been dynamically constructed through various types of media. Her humble and common beginnings have never been a secret. Indeed, they have been constantly discussed as part of her central rags-to-riches, Cinderella-esque story. Gwyn's early career as an actress and her much-praised talent for performing witty and assertive comic heroines contributed to her popular image as a person of quick, sharp wit. Half-naked portraits of Gwyn, sometimes styled as Cupid, have promoted an intense sexualization of Gwyn's image. Through titillation, such images encouraged readers to "consume" Gwyn's image. Gossip in contemporary's diaries and printed satires are copied and reproduced in later biographies and memoirs of Nell Gwyn that solidifies the image of Gwyn. Rewritten and reconstructed life narratives of Nell Gwyn that feature her as a romance heroine, a born-to-be an actress, a hopeless romantic, and an opportunistic whore that uses men around her to climb the social ladder (an image imposed by the first biographer John Seymour in 1752 but barely lasted in later narratives) have constructed and perpetuated her image in our imagination.

Although she might have been the "It Girl" for centuries, Nell Gwyn has not always had the reputation of being the harmless and fascinating woman as she is conceived in modern day historical romances. In fact, Nell Gwyn was variously characterized during her life. She was the hated "protestant whore" as she famously shouted to an angry crowd that suspected her to be even more hated French mistress to Charles II, Louise de Kéroualle, later Duchess of Portsmouth. Some contemporaries deemed her "a common, current bitch" that spread diseases both to her royal lover and to the public ("An Essay of Scandal"). She was also a "She Buffoon" born without a maidenhead ("Satyr"). What sets Nell Gwyn apart from other, more hated Stuart mistresses like Portsmouth, however, is that she was at times more adored by the public even when she was hated as the nation's enemy by satirists. Nell Gwyn was a perfect example of a

celebrity people loved and loved to hate, as can be seen in the diary of Gwyn's contemporary Samuel Pepys, who avidly recorded London gossip and the theater scene. According to Pepys, she was both "Pretty Nelly" whom people took pleasure in seeing (1 May 1667), and "Poor Nelly," who even on his deathbed the monarch could not forget. The public loved the fantasy she embodied as a lowly royal mistress, from rags to riches life story, and the glamour of the first-generation actresses. While calling her one of the "humbler mistresses," James Turner argues that as "the flashpoint for every kind of ambiguity," Gwyn sits on "the contested boundary between high and low libertinism, between the privileged *cortegiana* and the abject *puttana*" (15-16). As Turner rightly suggests, I believe that Gwyn's ambiguous in-between identity is what captivated the public's fascination with her. In this chapter, I examine her in-between public identity and argue that Nell Gwyn carefully and skillfully fashioned her public identity out of her private life. Furthermore, this creative self-fashioning was a significant part of her libertine performance.

Because female libertines did not perform in the same way as their male counterparts, in order to analyze Nell Gwyn's libertine performance, it is important to expand our understanding of the range of Restoration libertine performances. Elite, male court wits often initially circulated scandalous verses and plays within their social circles, but their works were later collected and published. Unlike female libertine performances which were much more ephemeral, male libertine performances were often published. William Wycherley's dramas were published and performed on stage during his lifetime, and he later collected his verses and dramas together and published them. Earl of Rochester circulated his poems and drama widely before they were published after his death.

On the other hand, women acted on stage and in court. Female libertines existed in the same court and actively engaged with more famous male libertines, but their public transgressive performances have been dismissed mainly because they do not take the same form of authorship. While a male court figure like Charles Sedley became the talk of the town when he showed up naked at the Cock Inn (Pepys, June 16, 1663), pulling off multiple public performance of transgressive activities, Duchess of Cleveland commissioned Sir Peter Lely to paint a portraiture of herself her son by Charles II as Madonna and Child. While Sedley's and Rochester's shocking behaviors earned them the often-admiring title of "libertines," the women's transgressive actions were generally interpreted as failures of their moral characters, translated as lacking in feminine virtue, eventually reducing them to "whores." While in Restoration culture "whore" can refer to many transgressive subject positions—traitor, Catholic, impostor, and commercial writer—this conventionally abusive and misogynist term has made a substantial amount of these women's performances invisible (Conway 12). Labeling female libertines "whores," a practice initiated by Restoration satirists and continued by generations of critics, has masked how influential and powerful their transgressive performances were. This chapter proposes to make them visible by challenging this reductive understanding of female transgressiveness.

Nell Gwyn probably did not know how to write, as far as we know, and she never published her own thoughts or actions, not to mention any literary works. But if being a libertine means challenging the conventions, norms, and ideologies of Restoration English society, then she was a better libertine than any male libertines who published scandalous plays and poems. In her examination of female author portrait frontispieces from the seventeenth-century English books, Margaret Ezell persuasively argues that, as a genre, even literary author portraits reflect changes in the dynamic between the author, the publisher, and the reader ("Seventeenth-Century

Female Author Portraits" 43). If we begin to acknowledge this "variety of performance of authorship" ("Seventeenth-Century Female Author Portraits" 32) and extend the concept to Restoration libertine performance, more theatrical and non-theatrical performances of female libertines become visible. We can find even more "ideological and political statements that helped shape the future of English culture" in Restoration rakes' libertine performances, if we are to seriously consider female libertine figures' "challenging Stuart ideology's vision of marriage, the family, and government" (Webster 19, 31). The figure of Nell Gwyn and her subsequent libertine performance could be argued as even more powerful and influential than those of male libertines.

Despite her iconic status, little critical attention has been paid to Gwyn as an active agent of libertinism. There are a good number of studies mentioning her famous anecdotes of public appearances or her short-lived career as an actress that only spans between 1665 and 1670. However, Gwyn's public performance of transgressive activities are rarely studied with as much attention as that of her male counterparts. This lack of scholarly and critical attention, when contrasted with the still continuing popular fascination with her life, is the result of her unconventional performances, which often escape the prescribed methods of interpreting women's transgressive activities and public display of images. Evidence of her performances are scattered all over the cultural and historical landscape of Restoration England. This diffusion calls for some work to gather these evidences and place her libertine performances within the contexts of the creation of celebrity, women's theatrical and non-theatrical labor to build images, and libertinism place in Stuart culture.

Only recently have there been some scholarly efforts give more significance to Nell Gwyn both as an actress and an influential public figure. As both Elizabeth Howe and Gilli

Bush-Bailey persuasively argue, because the talent and popularity of Gwyn is thought to be the most powerful force that drove the success of the concept and the repertoire of the "gay couple" in the Restoration, Gwyn's short-lived acting career is anything but small and insignificant in terms of the development of the theater (Howe 67). Scholarship in Restoration theater history has revealed that Gwyn's influence during her six-year-career might have actually been much more lasting and powerful than we consider it to be. Examining a few types of the "new" female characters Gwyn played on stage, Howe contends that the creation of the "gay couple," the most distinctive characteristic of comedy in the 1660s, has much to do with Gwyn herself. Although Bush-Bailey agrees that Gwyn's influence on the creation of these roles must have been great, she does not use Gwyn's case to further develop her argument. Some fine studies on Gwyn's visuals and portraits have been done by art and cultural historians, mostly notably by Joseph Roach whose work illustrates her early celebrity status. While Roach brings much of Nell Gwyn's visual representations to light in his argument, he does not include how Nell Gwyn's "image" and carefully constructed public intimacy are represented in printed texts. As Ezell argues, creation of celebrity not only involves the manipulation of visual elements but also textual elements ("Seventeenth-Century Female Author Portraits" 43). Previous scholary studies have accounted for only part of Gwyn's celebrity persona.

In fact, Gwyn mostly frequently appears in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century's satirical, humorous works, and lampoons, although these textual representations are hardly flattering to her. It is understandable that feminist critics, in particular, tend to read these overtly and unapologetically misogynist so-called "shotgun libels," which were intended to defame specific individuals, as damaging to the subjects. In many satires and lampoons, Gwyn

features as a lustful, greedy whore (a manuscript copy of "The Ladies' March")[14]; a whore struggling to give Charles II an erection (Rochester's "A Satyr on Charles II" included in *Poems on Affairs of State*); or an upstart who climbed her way into the fashionable court circle and is now in rivalry with other mistresses ("pleasant dialogue betwixt two wanton ladies of pleasure"). Far from the active agent of her celebrated popularity, Gwyn can be more easily interpreted as a passive object of ridicule and hurtful rumors.

Despite her influential presence in the landscape of the Restoration court culture, Nell Gwyn is often considered a victim who could not escape "murderous porno-political critique" (Turner 256). Turner does put incredible effort into reading a bigger presence of royal mistresses, including Nell Gwyn, in the Restoration *pornographia*, a term Turner newly coined to discuss an act, a text, and a performative gesture against the graphic designation of "whore." However, his work is somewhat limited because it does not incorporate Gwyn's other performative aspects. My work continues Turner's own by critically examining Nell Gwyn's contemporary representations without rendering her as simply a victim of vicious attack. I also link this line of criticism to Roach's reading of Nell Gwyn as the ultimate celebrity and a beloved "Covent Garden goddess."

Therefore, in this chapter I put parts of Nell Gwyn's libertine performances in theatrical, textual, and visual representations together in order to view them in perspective and to argue for her active involvement in Restoration libertinism. By reframing her appearances and presences in various types of cultural and historical texts, this chapter highlights Nell Gwyn's significance in libertinism, especially as it challenged Stuart ideologies and provided alternative sexualities. Nell Gwyn further complicates the cultural and philosophical implications raised by the male

[14] In one of the manuscript copies of the poem "The Ladies' March," *Harleian MS.* 6913, Nell Gwyn appears as a hyper-sexualized "whore" in an added vulgar passage.

libertines of Charles II's court because she never belonged to the same elite, aristocratic circle. Furthermore, she also differs from the women discussed in the next chapter, Duchess of Cleveland and Duchess of Portsmouth, since she appears to have lacked the ambition to secure an aristocratic title for herself, though she made sure her sons were properly titled. S. M. Wynne mentions that there were rumors between 1673 and 1675 that Nell Gwyn might have aspired to a title (*ODNB*), but there is no known evidence that can corroborate this rumor. More importantly, this rumor, if it was indeed circulated, had a relatively short life compared to the others.

In this chapter, I focus on how her image and identity are fashioned and how they were received by the public and especially by the gossipmongers. Nell Gwyn's libertine performance actually involves her moving through hierarchy, which not only drastically sets her apart from male libertines and Charles' other mistresses but was probably a major factor in the public's fascination with her: the unsettling and resistant powers of libertine performance are made greater when it is a woman of humble origin with a successful career in entertainment business.

II.2 Nell Gwyn's Dramatic and On-Stage Roles

In an interview reprinted with the play *Nell Gwynn* after its 2015 success at the Globe Theatre, Jessica Swale calls her modern reimagination of Nell Gwyn's life "an entertaining homage to Nell . . . to honour Nell's memory, to capture her spirit and what she stood for" (9). Besides making the play rather entertaining to the modern audience, Swale's *Nell Gwynn* revives the namesake heroine as a figure whose story begins and ends with the theater. The play starts with Nell selling oranges in the pit where she wittily handles a heckler in the middle of the performance, leading to her being "discovered" by the star actor Charles Hart. In the final scene, after Charles II's death, Nell comes back to theater to play the part of Valeria in John Dryden's

Tyrranick Love. Furthermore, she gets to close the modern play with the actual epilogue of Dryden's play, which Gwyn herself supposedly wrote and spoke. Since Charles II was still alive in 1669—the year when Nell Gwyn was known to play Valeria in Dryden's play—the ending is far historically accurate. This reworking of historical timeline, however, shows how Nell Gwyn is conceived as an icon of theater more than anything else.

Swale portrays Nell as a theater-lover and an incomparable sellout actress whom Thomas Killigrew, a theater manager of the King's Company, relies on when the company is on the verge of shutdown. Swale's Nell is an actress with natural talent who helps indecisive playwright Dryden to create realistic women characters by offering her female perspective on how women are portrayed on stage. In Act 1 Scene 5, Nell advises Dryden on revising characters in his play that he calls "Boy meets girl, girl resists, boy persuades her. Kiss. Marriage. Happy ending," which we now know to be *Secret Love* (44). Upset by Dryden's first draft of the courting scene between Celadon and Florimell, Nell gives Dryden a piece of her mind about what women want and what a real woman would do:

NELL. And what does this flimsy whimsy want from life?
Adventure? Respect? No . . . all she wants is this flopsome fop
cos once he wrote her a poem and compared her to a flower.
Is that what you think women want?
DRYDEN. Well, I –
NELL. No, Mr Dryden! It's not! We're as knotty and tangly as
you are, and yet how do you write us? 'Oh Romeo, Romeo,
lend me your dagger so I can kill myself – for though I'm

young and healthy and have everything to live for – and I only met you a week ago – my life's not worth living now you've gone.' Really? It's hogswill. Juliet is a noodle. Who wrote that twaddle anyway?

DRYDEN. William Shakespeare.

NELL. Well, he should learn to write proper plays. Or let his wife have a go. Please, Mr Dryden. You can write for a real woman now. No one has done that before. Write from here – (*Indicating her guts*.) and write me a character! With skin and heart and some sense in your head. Celadon says he thinks he *might* marry her. You think she'd agree – to *that*? (46)

Nell here demands that Dryden write for real women who are as "knotty and tangly" as men, insisting on new characters and new plays for the new theatrical environment of the Restoration. Nell is imagined as the voice of female audiences of male-authored early modern plays, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Dryden's *Secret Love* here, who express concerns of female representation on stage. Assertive and feisty Nell demands "proper plays" for women and a real, down-to-earth female character for her to act while also mentioning the need for the female playwright.

This modern reenactment of Nell Gwyn as an advocate for better female representation on stage helps us to rethink the traditional historical narrative of Restoration theater and drama. As an icon of the first-generation actresses and their professional career, Nell Gwyn's passion in her career and concerns for working women's professional opportunities are emphasized in

modern imagination of Nell Gwyn. One specific example Bush-Bailey uses is *Stage Beauty* (2004), a film about Edward Kynaston, the last actor who played female parts before the coming of first actresses. Bush-Bailey observes that, in this film, Nell Gwyn is presented as a "'wannabe' actress who uses her sexual charms to persuade her royal lover to introduce the law that forbids men to play female parts" (4). Although there is no actual evidence that can back this up and the timeline does not quite match, as Bush-Bailey rightly points out, it is extraordinary to see how Gwyn's image is associated with Restoration theater and the commercial stage despite her short acting career. What is even more striking about Gwyn's image in this modern film adaptation is that through her middle-class, working women's concerns regarding their job security are expressed on screen. Whereas Gwyn's professional life is emphasized in these modern images, which represent her as an advocate for women on stage, her professional life has long been neglected in scholarship.

The significance of Nell Gwyn's very short-lived acting career and theater life is not limited just to Swale's wild, modern, and creative interpretation of the Restoration theater. Nell Gwyn the actress should be considered as one of the most influential and memorable in the Restoration theater not just because of the audiences' and the public's love for her, which has lasted even to modern day, but because of her real contribution to the new type of characters she played. In many cases characters she played were not written and created entirely by the playwright; instead, they were products built through a collaboration between the playwright and the actor/actresses.[15] Well-loved and much talked-about actresses like Nell Gwyn who already

[15] Importance of the roles actors and actresses played in the creation of new type of plays and character has been well noted by scholars. See Howe and Bush-Bailey for detailed discussion of the significance actresses.

had "life overwhelming fiction," to borrow Howe's words, played a much bigger part in the creation of characters and plots than she has been credited for.

Proving Nell Gwyn's influence on Restoration theater and collaboration with the playwrights and putting more weight on her theatrical career, however, are not without difficulties. Her iconic image associated with theater is therefore dramatically contrasted with her comparatively small place in the scholarship of theater history and of Restoration drama. Since there are few detailed records of her business and performance related to theater,[16] her involvement can easily be made invisible. Even Bush-Bailey, who raises questions and revises Restoration actresses' active involvement in theater as a profit-making enterprise and one of a few commercial centers that allowed women's participation, does not make much use of Nell Gwyn. Using a group of female playwrights and actresses with longer careers such as Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle, Bush-Bailey occasionally brings out Nell Gwyn's image. These include: "a sideshow entertainment . . . suspended 'outside'" (5), a perfect example of the Cinderella myth (14), and a dedicatee in Behn's play *The Feign'd Curtezans* (1679). In the last example, Bush-Bailey chooses to conduct an in-depth analysis of the working relationship between the female playwright Aphra Behn and the leading comedienne of the play Elizabeth Currer (43). Nell Gwyn is only granted, in Bush-Bailey's wonderful revision of how we think of women's role in Restoration and the Eighteenth-century theater industry, a very small role. Even though Nell Gwyn is the most well-known and influential actress of her time, her image is like her on the pub sign that is pushed outside and only brought inside as part of the reconstructed

[16] Milhous and Hume's recently published book *The Publication of Plays in London 1660-1800* has significantly improved our understanding of the social, theatrical, and cultural aspects of play publication and on-stage performance in Restoration and the eighteenth-century England. There should be myriad possibilities for research if we are to apply Milhous and Hume's extensive information surrounding the theater and the print industry to locating more of Nell Gwyn's traces in theater.

backstage life of the theater, to follow Bush-Bailey's metaphor (5). Reconstructing the power of her performance, therefore, should begin at the theater where she first started to make her name in the world and where she had unprecedented impact on the creation of the "new" type of female characters.

Nell Gwyn's popularity and impact on new types of characters can be witnessed in the Samuel Pepys's diary entries, who was an excellent gossipmonger and a frequent theatergoer, includes in his diary how he likes to see Nell Gwyn only in certain types of roles. While he passionately commends Nell's acting for her comic role Florimell in John Dryden's *Secret Love; or, The Mayden Queen*, he actively expresses his disappointment when he sees her in a tragic role. Pepys writes that he went to see Nell acting Florimell three times, twice in March 1666 and once in May the same year.

> But so great performance of a comical part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell do this, both as a mad girle, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant; and hath the notions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her. (2 March 1666/67)

He records his genuine excitement to see Gwyn acting a comic breeches role and commends on her so much that he thinks that her "notions and carriage of a spark" exceeds those of any man he knew. His pleasure and excitement in seeing Gwyn as a comical heroine who cross-dresses as her lover's rival makes him revisit the theater several times afterward, and he writes that "the more I see the more I like" (25 March 1666/67). His enthusiasm to see the actress performing

comical parts, however, drastically contrasts with his complete disappointment when he sees Nell Gwyn in tragic parts.

> After dinner with my Lord Bruncker and his mistress to the King's playhouse, and there saw 'The Indian Emperour,' where I find Nell come again, which I am glad of; but was most infinitely displeased with her being put to act the Emperour's daughter; which is a great and serious part, which she do most basely. (22 August 1666/67)

> And then with my wife to the King's playhouse, and there saw 'The Surprizall'; which did not please me to-day, the actors not pleasing me; and especially Nell's acting of a serious part, which she spoils. (26 December 1667)

Pepys's disappointment in seeing Nell acting a serious part might tell us how her acting skills were limited to certain types of roles, but it can also indicate how her parts and the audience reception of them mutually influenced each other. Nell Gwyn "spoils" serious tragic parts probably because her on-stage performance was viewed as heavily infused with her public image as a "witty, pretty Nell." Gwyn's star image was constructed in such a way that it made difficult for audiences to accept her in roles that went "against type." Thus, parts she played were not just characters of the playwright's own creation but a collaboration of the playwright and Gwyn. Restoration audiences had particular interests in the personal lives of the actresses behind fictional roles, and a big part of the theater industry and "new" plays of the Restoration was driven by what the public saw and wanted to see on stage. A few nights after Pepys saw Nell

"spoil" the tragic part in *The Surprizall*, he revisits the theater only to see her acting "a mad part":

> . . . And with my wife and girle to the King's house, and there saw 'The Mad Couple,' which is but an ordinary play; but only Nell's and Hart's mad parts are most excellently done, but especially hers: which makes it a miracle to me to think how ill she do any serious part, as the other day, just like a food or changeling; and, in a mad part, do beyond all imitation almost. (28 December 1667)

Although Pepys' particular taste and preference cannot be taken to represent more general public interest, his opinion can at least show us in some part how London theatergoers reacted to her acting and how their particular taste shaped new characters in new plays. There is also a possibility, as I will examine more in-depth later, that the public showed preference for seeing her in certain types of roles because they matched better with the public image of her private life. Gwyn probably first made it as a public figure when she started her career as an actress, but she had a much bigger public persona even outside the theater, a "life overwhelming fiction," with her quite public affairs with several well-known public figures and the monarch (Howe 91). I believe that so much of Nell Gwyn's scandalous life and publicly circulated image were brought into the fictional roles she played on stage that her theatrical performance should not separate fictional roles she played from her public image.

It has long been pointed out by critics that Nell Gwyn's popularity and her excellence in acting comical parts (and Restoration audience's apparent preference for seeing Nell in comical parts) have contributed to the invention of a specific-type of character and casting, the so-called

"gay couple" in Restoration comedy.[17] John Loftis notes in his commentary to the edited text of *Secret Love* that the play's most remarkable achievement is the characterization of the gay couple that "bear the impress of the personalities of Charles Hart and Nell Gwyn, who first acted the roles" (340). Loftis puts the players' real-life influences in the context of the literary tradition of the gay couple, arguing that these types of characters are not without their literary ancestors and progenies. Focusing more on Nell Gwyn, Howe similarly points out that the part of Florimell in Dryden's *Secret Love* is written for Gwyn because the description of the Florimell's physical appearance in the play matches the description of the actress herself (70). The popularity of actresses on stage and in real life had a huge influence on the creation of certain characters and repertoire of the commercial theaters. Actresses in Restoration theater, especially actresses with great popularity that can best be shown with an example of such as Nell Gwyn, were not mere vessels for the playwright's authorial intention. Nor were they simply commercial objects, rather they played more active roles in the plays and performances they were involved in. As these critics rightly point out, certainly Celadon's description of Florimell seems to be a description of Nell herself:

> Such an Ovall face, clear skin, hazle eyes, thick brown
> Eye-browes, and Hair as you have for all the world.
> . . . . . .
> A turn'd up Nose, that gives an air to your face: Oh, I find
> I am more and more in love with you! a full neather-lip, an
> out-mouth, that makes mine water at it: the bottom of your

[17] Critics have noted the importance of Celadon and Florimell in the gay couple in Restoration Comedy. See John Harrington Smith's *The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy*.

> cheecks a little blub, and two dimples when you smile: for your stature, 'tis well, and for your wit 'twas given you by one that knew it had been thrown away upon an ill face; you are handsome, there's no denying it. (1.2.48-49, 56-62)

All physical details seem to match what can commonly be found Gwyn's portraits, and what we know of her personality would suggest that her wit was of the daring and smart kind that Florimell displays.

Yet physical similarities are not the only evidence that proves Nell Gwyn played a part in the creation of the characters like Florimell. While pointing out how the proviso-scene and the ending, in which the couple agrees to marry make *Secret Love* "the first Restoration comedy in which both partners mutually recognise the difficulties of marriage" as equals, Howe argues that the play's portrayal of the assertive heroine Florimell owes much to the inspirational figure Nell Gwyn (71). Howe also rightly asserts that, as an inspiration, Gwyn encouraged the playwrights like Dryden to invent "a new approach to comic love relationships between the sexes" (71). These critics certainly agree that Gwyn herself provided a model for a new type of female character. However, they tend to attribute the innovation to the dramatist, with Gwyn contributing only as its muse. I believe that Nell Gwyn was more than mere inspiration that a character like Florimell should be viewed as a work of collaboration between the playwright and the actress. Dryden wrote the character for Gwyn and definitely used her public image in creating Florimell; Gwyn then completed Florimell by combining what Dryden wrote for her and her public image in herself as a spectacle.

If we re-evaluate the character Florimell not just as a dramatic character on page but as on-stage, real-life character brought to life by Nell Gwyn, we will be able to understand how this very unconventional and immensely popular female heroine provides us with a model lady libertine. Even from her first appearance on stage in Act 1 Scene 2 Florimell is introduced as a "rare Creature" (1.2.25). She clearly understands what she wants from her man, does not hesitate to dress as Celadon's rival to revenge herself upon her lover's infidelity, and refuses to commit to the marriage with Celadon. Following rakish Celadon's condemnation of marriage as "poor folks pleasure that cannot go to the cost of variety" and praise of inconstancy (1.1.27-28), Florimell while in disguise, immediately shows that she can speak the same language when she says back to Celadon, "what an unreasonable thing it were to stay long, be troublesome, and hinder a Lady of a fresh Lover" (1.2.23-24). Florimell's light-hearted libertine ethos and her praise of inconstancy would have had an extra layer of meaning to the original audience because in 1667, the same year as she starred as Florimell, Gwyn switched her lover from Charles Hart (who played Celadon in the same performance) to Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, and temporarily left the stage. Notably, after that affair ended, she returned to the stage in July of the same year. Her affair with Hart, followed by another brief affair with Buckhurst, must have been widely circulated in public, as a diary entry from Pepys indicates:

> . . . and I home to dinner, where Mr. Pierce dined with us, who tells us what troubles me that my Lord Buckhurst hath got Nell away from the King's house, lies with her, and gives her 100*l*. a year, so as she hath sent her parts to the house, and will act no more. (13 July 1667)

> Here [at the King's Head] we called for drink, and bespoke dinner; and hear that my Lord Buckhurst and Nell are lodged at the next house, and Sir Charles Sidley with them and keep a merry house. (14 July 1667)

Nell's temporary retirement from the stage greatly disappointed London theatergoers, and her rumored affair with Buckhurst must have been the talk of the town. Details of the affair, including the location of the house Buckhurst "kept" Nell in, and the curiously-mentioned third-wheel Charles Sedley drew public's attention.

> But there Sir W. Pen and I had a great deal of discourse with Moll; who tells us that Nell is already left by my Lord Buckhurst, and that he makes sport of her, and swears she hath had all she could get of him; and Hart, her great admirer, now hates her . . . (26 August 1667)

Gwyn's highly publicized and much rumored affair with Buckhurst barely lasted two full months, as can be seen in Pepys' diary entry. Hart's name is also brought up as one who supposedly "now hates her" when she came back to theater. Contemporary satires also mention Nell's brief affairs in 1667. In "A Panegyric" (1681), Nell Gwyn's liaisons with Hart and Buckhurst are mentioned as part of her climbing the social ladder: "Much more her growing virtue did sustain/ While dear Charles Hart and Buckhurst su'd in vain" (ll. 6-7). Nell's comeback to the stage appears in Pepys' diary in October of the same year, when he saw Nell dressing herself in "the tireing-room." He notes how she is "very pretty, prettier than I thought" (5 October 1667). Within just a few months, Nell performed Florimell with her then-lover Hart,

denouncing matrimony on stage; left the stage to be "kept" by Buckhurst as a mistress; and then returned to the stage to be the public's "mistress." Nell's Florimell tells her lover Hart's Celadon "what an unreasonable thing it were to stay long, be troublesome, and hinder a Lady of a fresh Lover" and indeed Nell lives such a life (1.2.23-24).

Florimell also outperforms the libertine she loves in all essential qualities that make him a "good" rake, including dancing, jousting, and seducing ladies. Despite her excellence in performing the rakish courtier better than Celadon, Florimell's cross-dressing has been read "to emphasize the seductiveness of her female identity" and her desire primarily governed by male hegemony (Flores 186).[18] The ending of the play, in which Florimell does not reject marriage in favor of her freedom but instead engages with the "reformed" rake Celadon, often encourages critics to belittle her powerful libertine performance. Although the actress's body in breeches was a huge appeal to a patriarchal audience, Florimell as played by Nell Gwyn is never just a "fulfillment of male hegemony" (Flores 186). In Act 5 Scene 1 Florimell comes on stage in man's habit, resolved to tame Celadon's inconstancy by robbing him of his other mistresses:

Florimell *in Mans Habit*.

Flor. 'Twill be rare now if I can go through with it, to out-do
this mad Celadon in all his tricks, and get both his Mistresses
from him; then I shall revenge my self upon all three, and save
my own stake into the bargain; for I find I do love the Rogue in
spight of all his infidelities. Yonder they are, and this way they

[18] Stephan P. Flores. "Negotiating Cultural Prerogatives in Dryden's *Secret Love* and *Sir Martin Mar-all*." *Papers on Language & Literature*

must come. −−−−−If cloathes and a bon meen will take ‘em, I shall do’t. −−−−−Save you Monsieur Florimell; Faith me thinks you are a very *jainty* fellow, *poudré & ajusté* as well as the best of ’em. I can manage the little Comb, −−−−−set my Hat, shake my Garniture, toss about my empty Noddle, walk with a courant slurr, and at every step peck down my Head: −−−−−if I should be mistaken for some Courtier now, pray where’s the dif-ference? −−−−−(5.1.1-13)

This short monologue provides a spectacle, which audiences like Pepys must have enjoyed because it gives Gwyn an entire stage with a spotlight when she comes on stage in man’s clothes so that she can point to parts of her body that can draw audiences’ attention to. Florimell also takes a jab at superficial and shallow male courtiers and court women by showing off how easily she can “be mistaken for some Courtier” and win both Olinda’s and Sabina’s affection with a few empty gestures. But it also clearly shows why Florimell goes through all this trouble for a rake like Celadon and what her opinions are regarding male courtiers and court women who go after them. Florimell’s main motives of “frolicking” are to “out-do” Celdon in his own tricks, “revenge” upon Celadon and his ladies, and to “save [her] own stake into the bargain” later, because she loves “the Rogue in spight of all his infidelities.” She clearly does not want “one of these solemn Fops” who are “good for nothing but to make Cuckolds” (3.1.290, 300).

The comic marriage proviso scene between Florimell and Celadon has also been read as rather a disappointing compromise of Florimell’s earlier libertine performance. Celadon and Florimell lay out the terms of their proposed marriage in order to avoid the conventional dangers

of matrimony. However, contrary to what scholars have suggested, this final scene makes its audience question whether the couple is indeed going to commit themselves in matrimony. Celadon reluctantly and light-heartedly suggests that they get married because Florimell took all the mistresses from him, and Florimell also jokingly agrees on the condition that they "invent" something together "to make it easie," that is to loosen the knot a little (5.1.513). Each lover adds one provision to their newly invented "marriage" contract and finally labels each other with "more agreeable names of Mistress and Gallant" instead of Husband and Wife (5.1.552). Not only it is absolutely unclear whether this is a serious consideration or pledge of matrimony, but also it wholeheartedly mocks and criticizes the institution of marriage.

Furthermore, because it is played by Nell Gwyn, who was already known to have multiple extra- and non-marital relationships, this light-hearted mockery of marriage has a greater satirical effect. This scene speaks something different that cannot be neatly contained in an argument like when Howe contends that this play is "the first Restoration comedy in which both partners mutually recognise the difficulties of marriage, and through a battle of wits, make some balanced attempt to safeguard both their own freedoms and the bond between them" (71). As critics including Howe agree, Restoration audiences were well aware of and had peculiar interests in the players' private lives through gossip that gossipmongers such as Pepys were careful to record. This "exceptionally personal relationship between actresses and their public" must be taken into consideration when we analyze the characters they played (91). Nell Gwyn's very public, well-known personal affairs with equally public figures could not be separated from the roles she played. Florimell's comical revision of "marriage" with Celadon criticizes and challenges the conventions of matrimony by displaying alternative, non-monogamous

relationship forms, and Gwyn, as a real-life female libertine, presents herself in a new sense equal to a male libertine.

Nell Gwyn's stage performances are so strong as to create certain types of roles in Restoration drama, but it was not just her excellence in acting certain roles that made her popular and influential. Restoration audiences took a special interest in the private lives of the actresses and the real women behind the actresses' roles as we do in the private lives of the celebrities, and these "exceptionally personal relationship between actresses and their public" had effects on the roles they played (Howe 91). One very famous example of Nell Gwyn's epilogue at the end of Dryden's tragedy *Tyrannick Love* shows how much of their real-life gossip about themselves these actresses brought into the roles they played. Nell Gwyn's character, the virtuous heroine Valeria, dies at the end of the play and is to be carried off. However, she comes to life in the epilogue to berate those trying to carry her "corpse" off the stage and to remind audiences how the role was at odds with what they know about her actual personal public life.

> I am the Ghost of poor departed Nelly.
> Sweet Ladies, be not frighted; I'le be civil;
> I'm what I was, a little harmless Devil.
> . . . . . .
> To tell you true, I walk because I dye
> Out of my calling, in a Tragedy.
> O Poet, damn'd dull Poet, who could prove
> So senseless, To make Nelly dye for Love!
> Nay, what's yet worse, to kill me in the prime

Of Easter-term, in Tart and Cheese-cake time!

. . . . . .

As for my Epitaph when I am gone,

I'le truest no Poet, but will write my own.

Here Nelly lies, who, though she lived a Slater'n,

Yet dy'd a Princess, acting in S. Cathar'n.

Here Nell Gwyn jumps right out of the serious part of tragic and virtuous heroine, which Pepys hated so much that he railed against his "pretty Nelly," and gives the audience the satisfaction of seeing the witty and lively Nell Gwyn that they probably were more familiar with. Gwyn played Valeria in 1669, the year we know that she became one of Charles II's mistresses. As was the case with Charles Hart and Lord Buckhurst, her affair with the King was not a secret. It was only in February 1671, after she gave birth to her first son with the King, that she was acknowledged as one of the royal mistresses, but their public affairs must have been widely gossiped about as we can now witness in gossip prints such as satires and lampoons. This epilogue actually includes interesting traces of the words used in those gossip prints to attack Gwyn as an "evil whore" or label her as an "innocent Protestant whore," as opposed to more hated Catholic mistresses. As she rises from "death" and begins talking to the audience as a "Ghost of poor departed Nelly," Gwyn humorously comforts the audience while promising she will be "civil," as she is and was just "a little harmless Nelly." Gwyn goes back and forth between her real-life public image and the fictional role she finished acting. Furthermore, it is hard to keep the two separate when she reads the epitaph she wrote for herself. As she proudly calls herself, Nell

Gwyn is something in between a "Slater'n" and a "Princess" or both. Therefore, it is not just Restoration audiences and playwrights who shared gossip about the actresses; these actresses also corroborated their public images and helped to reproduce/circulate them. Howe suggests that many of the Restoration actresses including Butler, Barry, and Gwyn quite often comically "reinforced the idea of themselves as whores, corroborating . . . what the satirists and gossips said about them" (98). In other words, speaking epilogues such as this one provided actresses with ways to create publicity for their public persona through actively participating in the manipulation of their scandalous reputations, which no doubt fed the public's appetite for gossip. While we tend to make universal claims regarding early modern women's reputation as being vulnerable and as something to be protected, these actresses used their "ruined" reputation to build a bigger, more marketable personae.

II.3 Nell Gwyn Becomes an Icon

Nell Gwyn's performance in theater and her more active role in contributing to the invention of the specific types of characters were not put to an end even when she left the stage for good in 1671, after officially becoming one of the Charles II's mistresses. Rather, she continued her support and love of the theater continued by acting as an inspiration, an icon, and a patron. There is evidence that her frequent visits to the theater were paid for by Charles II.[19] She is an inspiration and an icon that professional women writers could draw on and whose image writers could make use of.

[19] Manuscript titled "Account of expenses for Nell Gwyn's theater tickets" (Theatre Collection, Houghton Library) accounts for Gwyn's frequent visits to the theater. It also lists partial list of specific performances she went to including Thomas Shadwell's *The Libertine* (1676) and George Etherege's *The Man of Mode: or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676).

One good example would be Aphra Behn's epistle dedicatory to Nell Gwyn in *The Feigned Courtesans: or, A Night's Intrigue* (1679), the playwright's first published dedication. Behn begins the Gwyn dedication offering her "true worship": "Tis no wonder that hitherto I followed not the good example of the believing Poets, since less faith and zeal than you alone can inspire, had wanted power to have reduc't me to the true worship" (86). Behn notes how the whole world would "crowd to listen with that awful reverence . . . and bear away the precious words to tell at home . . . the Gracefull things you utter'd and cry" when Gwyn speaks (86-87). Roach argues that this is evidence that Nell Gwyn was extremely popular with women as well as men, citing that Behn wrote Nell Gwyn "an affectionate encomium" ("Nell Gwyn and Covent Garden Goddesses" 67). Alison Conway argues that Behn's dedicatory is one piece of evidence that Behn, as an author, used these "iconic" mistresses of Charles II in exploring and unfolding her status and identity as a female professional writer. What Conway argues about "the narrative potential of courtesan iconography" mostly has to do with the popularity of royal mistresses and their iconography, more specifically those of Nell Gwyn and Hortense Mancini. Although Conway keeps referring to this imagery as "courtesan iconography," I find Conway's argument about royal mistresses overlapping with their status as celebrity figures. Their private lives and public images do set up prototype of "whores" and create empty spaces to be filled with which allowed people to expand/change/develop their images.

What Behn does through this overtly elevating and indeed affectionate encomium is to challenge vicious, misogynist attacks on royal mistresses and what they attack using the label "whores." Behn imagines Nell Gwyn as a new kind of nobility while attacking opposers and enemies of Gwyn by elevating her reputation and status as a "whore" up to Elizabeth I (who is the absolute icon of Protestant woman in Restoration) when she writes to Nell Gwyn that "you

alone had the pattent from heaven to ingross all hearts." Behn describes Gwyn's natural ability to attract people's attention and charm the public as "the pattent from heaven" that is only granted to Gwyn. Conway argues how Behn has "a unique vantage point from which to recognize the narrative potential of courtesan iconography" as England's first professional woman author (50). She also suggests that the dedicatory "maintain[s] the ideal of the courtesan's timeless fascination and enduring authority" (53). This is a very good example of how a celebrity figure who is both loved and hated performs through their public imagery, and how and what people build on it for their own purposes.

II.4 Talking about Nell: Anecdotes, Life Stories, and Gossip

Although Nell Gwyn herself never wrote or published autobiographies, she is one of the Restoration women whose details of personal life were often circulated and widely known to larger public (whether they be true or not and regardless of their authenticity). Her charming, legendary early life of an upstart from an orange girl to King's mistress must have been major part of the charm and unprecedented popularity of a former actress and a royal mistress. Her short-lived yet impressive career as an actress in London commercial theater must have played some part as well. Nell Gwyn as a successful actress had "a spell of public intimacy" (Roach "Celebrity Erotics" 226). And she continued the spell with her very public affairs--series of affairs--with prominent men. Starting with Charles Hart, the star actor who introduced her to his profession, Nell Gwyn moved on to Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, and to Charles II, all as their mistresses. Intimate, private details of each affair were often circulated and shared as gossip. On 26 October, 1667, Pepys writes in his diary about a short dispute between Gwyn and another actress, named Rebecca Marshall, when they called each other a whore:

> . . . Nelly and Beck Marshall, falling out the other day, the latter called the other my Lord Buckhurst's whore. Nell answered then, "I was but one man's whore, though I was brought up in a bawdy-house to fill strong waters to the guests; and you are a whore to three or four, though a Presbyter's praying daughter!" which was very pretty.

Pepys records that he heard the story when he and his wife were at a dinner with Mrs. Pierce and Mrs. Corbet. What each woman was reported to have said would probably not have been accurate, but Pepys' gossipmonger friends circulate and record details of gossip regardless. Pepys' interesting response to the rumored "catfight" might also indicate how this gossip could have been adapted in favor of Gwyn, who was just "but one man's whore" unlike her counterpart. As can be seen in Pepys' diary, these were not private extramarital affairs but rather very public gossips shared and circulated in various types of oral and printed formats. Roach insightfully points out that these public anecdotes of the seventeenth-century actresses' personal lives should be acknowledged as "theatrical labor," as producing public intimacy with such "offstage performances" is the result of their hard work (226). With a couple of more examples from Restoration actresses including Moll Davis and Margaret "Peg" Hughes, Roach persuasively argues that these actresses' works are "commercial versions of the 'life-like' illusions that upper-class women negotiated privately" (226). Very much like modern day celebrities such as the Kardashians, these women create their public personae using details of their private life. Media studies scholars have paid attention to how female celebrities like Kim Kardashian "exercises her public identity across a range of media platforms that include reality television and various social-media tools that keep her consistently visible and 'accessible' to the

public" (Sastre 134). Thus, created public intimacy help them promote their commercial identities, and Nell Gwyn was a forerunner of taking advantage of promotional opportunities to build a public and sexual image.

Raquel Gonzalez and Laura Martinez-Garcia point out that Nell Gwyn and her scandalous gossip surrounding her private life are part of her "self-fashioning" because she was one of a few Restoration actresses who not only had unprecedented popularity but also accepted and owned "the public role given to her" (102). Gonzalez and Martinez-Garcia argue that Gwyn differs from her fellow actresses because of her ability to take advantage of a public persona created for her. Instead of trying to deny the scandal surrounding her life, Nell Gwyn accepted and appropriated it and used her visibility to fashion herself as a woman who defied and resisted classification (109). Nell Gwyn's attitude regarding rumors and scandalous gossips surrounding her private life overlaps quite much with "the madcaps" character type she often played during her days on stage. Gonzalez and Martinez-Garcia take up one of the famous Gwyn anecdotes in which she publicly but also humorously dubbed her royal lover Charles III—followed by her former lovers Charles Hart and Charles Sackville—as an evidence of her "celebrated wit" (103). Then they make a point that her real-life celebrity character shows a close connection to the madcap type characters she was quite well known for. It is quite interesting to note here that Gonzalez and Martinez-Garcia go back and forth to discuss both Nell Gwyn as a royal mistress and Nell Gwyn as a character in plays. Gwyn appropriated the qualities of the roles she played, but in another, she brought her real-life presence and her popularly circulated real-life gossips and humors into the roles she played. It thus becomes hard for us to set boundaries between the real-life celebrity Gwyn and the roles she played on stage. Her "self-fashioning" then is the result

of constant work that involves the circulation of gossip about her private life and her on-stage and off-stage performance.

Producing public intimacy is as theatrical labor as acting on stage is, and Nell Gwyn, at the height of the public fascination with her private life, was a master of performing through producing public intimacy as a celebrity figure. Lampoons and satires, as printed gossip, were important medium of Nell Gwyn's public intimacy, ironically enough, because they were actively producing and circulating the private details of her life. Lampoons and satires contain both gossip that Nell Gwyn could directly control, at least in part, by participating in circulating certain stories and gossip that she cannot control. I argue that printed gossip in lampoons and satires should also be regarded as "theatrical labor" and in part byproducts of celebrity's work. Although a lot of lampoons and satirical prints deliver misogynist attacks on these women's lewdness and are sometimes based on groundless rumors, not all of them are baseless accusations. Gossip based on events that actually happened exist. While it does not necessarily mean that all these lampoons and satires are always based on real events, they nevertheless did need to be fed with actual anecdotes about the subject of the gossip. Scholars have recently paid attention to how these satires can be read a form of life narrative. Julia Novak re-evaluates Restoration verse satire about Nell Gwyn as a site of early modern life-writing by looking into how satirists have "contributed significantly to Gwyn's entrance into the biographical canon and laid the foundation for her status today as a British cultural icon" (461). Despite gossip's sometimes questionable factual basis, it should be considered valuable text that contribute to Gwyn's image.

One thing that is particularly notable about the way that the lampoons describe royal mistresses is that sometimes they seem to assign a set of type characters to each mistress. As the

genre becomes more popular and well-defined, qualities are more settled in each character. Speakers/narrators of the lampoon often directly reproach, condemn, and viciously humiliate the mistresses' lack of morality, promiscuity, and/or political ambitiousness. In a verse lampoon comparing Portsmouth with Nell Gwyn, these division of roles and characters is shown quite clearly:

> Have you not heard how our Soveraign of late
> Did first make a Whore then a Dutches Create
> A notable Wench of the Catholick kinde
> A Whore not onely before, but a Bugger behinde
> Poor Protestant Nell, well were it for thee
> Wert thou a Whore of a double Capacity
> Alas the Royall Pintle never yet went
> Into thy Maiden Lach or Fundament
> Thou art Resolv'd, what e're on it come
> Protestant like to keep Chast thy Bum.
> Thou nobly scorns't, by such base Arts to thrive
> But let the best French Whore that's now alive
> Meet if she dare, and fairely with thee swive.

Other than the obvious difference in their religious identities, Portsmouth being Catholic and Nell Gwyn being Protestant, these two royal mistresses are given different qualities and characters that ever increase the separation between the two. The subject of more severe attack

here in this lampoon seems to be Portsmouth not only for her being a French Catholic but for her being "a Whore of a double Capacity" referring to her alleged political maneuvering. As Harold Love argues, this lampoon puts more effort to aim Portsmouth by associating her Catholic identity and political ambition with sodomy which is linked to not so "natural" state of hierarchy (*English Clandestine Satire*, 59-60).[20] What I would like to note here is that even though this is specifically targeted to attack Portsmouth, Nell Gwyn is being evoked in an important way that "supports" the main target of the attack.

In a satire titled "An Essay of Scandal" dated in 1681 Nell Gwyn is grouped again with the King's other mistresses, Portsmouth and Cleveland, and blamed for the King's poverty. It is interesting to see how each mistress is given a specific vice or evil attribution. Portsmouth, for example, is mostly and severely blamed for being too expensive and profligate, and the satire calls for her to be replaced with "cheaper whores." Nell Gwyn is mostly mocked for her promiscuity, more specifically her "generosity" in not discriminating her sexual partners. Her major vice is being "Daily struck, stabbed, by half the pricks in town" (line 45), which could further make her dangerous not only because of the "old diseases" she spreads but also because she does not discriminate. The narrator/speaker points out that the king and his poor subjects "share" old diseases by sharing Nell Gwyn:

> Yet still her stubborn courses come not down
> But lie and nourish old diseases there,
> Which thou and many thy poor subjects share.
> 'Twas once indeed with her as 'twas with ore,

[20] Charles II's Catholic and French mistresses are in oftentimes targeted more viciously and more frequently in satirical lampoons, which will be discussed more in the next chapter.

Uncoined, she was no public store,

Only Buckhurst's private whore.

But when that thou in wanton itch

With royal tarse had stamped her breech,

She grew a common, current bitch. (46-54)

The narrator explains Nell Gwyn's becoming a royal mistress turned her from "Lord Buckhurst's "private whore" to a "common, current bitch." Gwyn's non-discriminating promiscuity ironically becomes the most public or "common" when her breech is "stamped" with "royal tarse" as if the King granted permission to make Gwyn "public store" even though we assume that being an acknowledged royal mistress could not have made Gwyn more "available" than the times when she worked as an actress. Thus Gwyn's growing "common" might mean something other than her sexual promiscuity and open relationships with multiple men. Gwyn must have become an even more public figure after the royal affair and by becoming the celebrity of the time she could be one of a few women in the public domain.

Examining lampoons that frequently pair Nell Gwyn and Portsmouth, James Turner quite accurately describes them as "an indispensable pair" and each defines "the two kinds of contaminating Other" (258). Turner here explains how they are portrayed in a number of lampoons and satires as an evil pair that corrupts and damages the monarchy. In this caricature-like portrayal, each mistress is given a distinct role. Nell Gwyn is usually cast as a loyal innocent who is less political and satisfies the King's pleasure. Portsmouth is a more vicious, politically-driven and power-hungry Catholic mistress who poses a much bigger threat to the nation and to the English throne. Each mistress has distinct "area of expertise" and they were turned into a set

type or a stereotype. Turner hints at the two mistresses as set types when he describes how the Nell Gwyn figure settles into "the jester-like Wandering Whore role, apolitical except for her cheery self-identification as the Protestant Whore in times of anti-Catholic tension" (234). Turner's naming of Gwyn's role as "the jester-like Wandering Whore" is very similar to what Gwyn was rumored to call herself, "the Protestant whore." It also echoes the epilogue she spoke in Dryden's *Tyrannick Love* when she calls herself "a little harmless devil." There is definitely an affection for Gwyn's public image and her persona coming from the Restoration public since her persona projects non-threatening and entertaining, and therefore more likeable character. Gwyn crossed boundaries, but her transgression is thought to be limited compared to other more hated mistresses. According to Love, lampoons need a cast that preferably consists of well-known people with "instantly recognizable signs by which they can be identified and stock accusations against them that are universally known and accepted" (*English Clandestine Satire* 23). Love's explanation of the nature of the lampoon and stock characters that are featured in them is quite similar to the stock character types in Restoration drama. These specific character types in satire were as much "a conscious artistic construction as a character in comedy" (Love 24).

Nell Gwyn, or the image of Nell Gwyn, is therefore an artistic and cultural icon as strong as the roles she played on stage in the Restoration theater. As Roach reframes seventeenth-century actresses' offstage performances through gossip as theatrical labor ("Celebrity Erotics" 226), I believe these very distinct and theatrical stock characters, as well as the accusations that are repeatedly generated in cheap print satires and lampoons should also be considered as an element of these mistresses' offstage performances and theatrical labor. Building celebrity images and constantly developing them through personal life stories and scandalous acts should

be understood as conscious work undertaken to develop their persona. Furthermore, how much control Gwyn had over her public image becomes less important when we do not delimit Nell Gwyn as the sole agential author of her own heavily manufactured self. Gwyn's transgressive public images were enjoyed and celebrated through visibility, publicity, and popularity, which should be recognized in favor of the celebrity women in the Restoration England. Exploring women's political power in the late Stuart court, Rachel Weil suggests that "how the reality of women's involvement in politics was affected by the ways in which that involvement was represented" (181). Weil strongly and very persuasively argues that the images of women and their actual power should not be separated from one another, and the complex interplay between the way these women are represented and their actual "power" or agency needs more attention. Similarly, the ways Gwyn has been represented and how her image has been constructed in popular cultural imagination needs a new reading where we do not render her as a fragile victim of misogynist poets' attacks.

Representation of power matters—sometimes matters more than the actual power itself—because people's belief in or perception of power can easily lead to the actual power. As court politicians, royal mistresses strove not just to prolong the king's affection but to be *seen* to have the king's affection, because the perception that they had power "took on a life of its own and translated into a form of power" (Weil 185). This perceived or represented image taking on a life of its own to become a different form of cultural power can extend to the case of Nell Gwyn, a woman of remarkable visibility in public spaces of entertainment and a celebrity who have catered to public appetite for the female "star" for centuries.

CHAPTER III

COMPETING MISTRESSES: CLEVELAND AND PORTSMOUTH

III.1 "Rochester's Women": The Need for a Feminist Epistemology of "the Mistress"

Libertines during the period of the Restoration in England challenged authority in ways that defied the prevailing social, political, religious and cultural norms. They also craved and wielded influence through complex gender performances that defied established modes of power. These performances can be found in actions of both real-life libertine figures and onstage and fictional adaptations sparked by real life figures' personality and wit. By doing so, libertines flagrantly asserted an autonomous self that rejected social, religious, and political restraints. What has been consistently underestimated in the study of Restoration libertines is how women's participation in this movement ultimately redefines it and the implications of the kinds of questions it raises. The court wits of Charles II, many of whom are considered "exemplary" libertines, rarely include the most powerful and transgressive women in the same court—Charles II's socially prominent mistresses. As Kevin Sharpe rightly asserts, Restoration culture was the first in England to "publicize, and in some cases to celebrate, female sexuality" (203). Restoration ladies were sexual and social agents who used sex as "the solvent of the boundaries of class and of the moral properties" in a society where "lineage and legitimacy were the fundamentals of property and power" (Sharpe 202). However, their unconventional modes of libertine acts, which did not include writing, publishing, or performing on street or on stage have long excluded them from the discourse of Restoration libertinism. Charles' mistresses are almost always discussed in the context of the monarch's scandalous choices, and the focus of analysis is his "unapologetic lack

of discretion" in continuing the liaisons (Mowry 14). Even when discussing Restoration women in command of their bodies, they are referred to as "Rochester's women" (Sharpe 203).

Each royal mistress's tenure is quite short and the legitimacy of her power—even when she was the reigning mistresses—has been almost always questioned. There is no denying, of course, that no royal mistresses had absolute or lasting power over the monarch; they had very limited forms of agency. As can be seen from the examples of these three most important mistresses, their tenure often overlapped, as one was replaced by another (or others). Barbara Palmer, Countess of Castlemaine, later Duchess of Cleveland, held tenure as Charles's principal mistress from roughly 1660 to 1670. Louise de Kéroualle, later Duchess of Portsmouth, attracted the King's attention in 1671 and remained the King's most important mistress until 1685. Nell Gwyn got a hold of Charles's affection probably in between 1668/9 and 1685. These timelines have been used as evidence of Charles II's libertine nature, as well as the precariousness of the royal mistress's tenure. Their status and power in court, if at all recognized, tended to get vilified, mostly through the satires and lampoons attacking their lack of feminine virtue. While they were publicly talked about and widely known mistresses, they were still not part of the actual institution of monarchy or marriage.

In recent years, several historians most notably Sonya Wynne, have started to raise questions about the actual political power of these women, encouraging us to rethink the agency of royal mistresses in Charles II's court. As Wynne rightly suggests, factions formed around the mistresses and their involvement with the King's ministers in court extended to participation in domestic and foreign policy (180-81). Wynne's active and revisionist reading of the royal mistresses' unofficial political actions not only saves them from being rendered "passive

handmaidens for men in the political process" but encourages us to rethink these powerful women's cultural, historical, and literary influence (184).

In addition to these royal mistresses, recent scholarship has recovered quite a number of powerful early modern women who had long been made invisible. Actresses and female commercial writers, as early models of professional middle- and lower-class women, have gained particular attention. Especially with the emerging field of early modern celebrity studies, these "notorious" women and their various strategies of self-representation and self-promotion have been brought to our attention. These studies raised our awareness of the cultural significance of actresses as both celebrities and newly emerging economic agents marketing their private lives in public sphere. Borrowing Joseph Roach's concept of "public intimacy," Felicity Nussbaum argues that actresses manipulated the vague boundary between public and private life to heighten their commercial value (150). Public intimacy greatly helped to promote the commodification of celebrity figures and fueled the sales of tickets, portraits, memoirs. However, it also wielded "the potential to afford women an avenue to class mobility in a way previously unavailable" especially to women (152). In her study of eighteenth-century British actresses and their strategies for image making, Laura Engel examines their practices of self-representation and self-promotion through visual, narrative, theatrical codes. Engle argues that actresses had some agency in the shaping of their public images, while their images were fashioned according to the eighteenth-century audience's desire and taste (*Fashioning Celebrity*, 2-3).

Although actresses' reinvention or challenging of traditional female identities through new modes of image making have been brought to our attention, actresses were not the only women who fashioned celebrity in a world that was quite uneasy about the place of powerful women in the public sphere. Royal mistresses, despite their use of similar publicity techniques

have often been excluded even in these feminist readings of powerful early modern women. Mistresses occupy almost no space in the economics of celebrity, with the exception of Nell Gwyn, whose cultural and historical significance has been focused more on her very brief career as an actress than on her longer tenure as Charles's mistress. Other royal mistresses in Charles II's court often had significant political influences, as Wynne points out, but their cultural impact has not been well investigated.

Just as actresses exercised agency through "public intimacy," so too did royal mistresses, whose celebrity—or notoriety—was based on their carefully constructed and curated images. Examining how celebrity figures "performed" their images using constructed, circulated illusions and icons, which left the audience tantalized and longing for the material thing, we can appreciate how these celebrity types fit perfectly well with the ways royal mistresses performed their new social, political and sexual power. This chapter focuses on two of the notable royal mistresses, Barbara Palmer, the Duchess of Cleveland and Louise de Kéroualle, the Duchess of Portsmouth, both of whom actively constructed and manipulated their celebrity status, using "public intimacy" to make their private lives very public. As we shall see, these royal mistress' celebrity performances establish them as libertines rather than whores, as radicals rather than dismissible and regrettable "queans."

III.2 The Image War: Painted, Printed, and Circulated Portraits[21]

Notoriety usually suggests the opposite of celebrity. For recent cultural commentators, Nell Gwyn is considered to project celebrity, while Cleveland and Portsmouth are dismissed with

[21] Images from the British Museum (Figure 1, 2) and the Yale Center for British Art (Figure 5) are reproduced under a Creative Commons License. Figure 3 is reproduced with permission from National Portrait Gallery, London, under Academic License. Figure 4 is reproduced with permission from the Royal Collection Trust.

possessing notoriety.[22] As Boone and Vickers note in the introduction to the 2011 *PMLA* Special Issue on celebrity, fame, and notoriety, we need to expand our conception of celebrity to include wider concepts of notoriety and fame. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that notoriety has always been considered a major part of male libertine performance. Male libertines thrived on notoriety, and in some cases, they were willing to write provocative poems and plays just to gain a reputation for wild, socially transgressive behavior and views. This raises the question of whether celebrity, fame, and notoriety—all so closely related to reputation—are also highly gendered social constructions of particular historical periods. These seventeenth-century notorious women who were famous for being famous, attracted numerous "haters," can help us challenge what we have conceived of as being early modern women's constraint by reputation. Such questions can certainly lead us to consider why male libertines' notoriety was celebrated as libertine performance while female libertines were thought to have become victims of their notoriety.

Using the examples of both Cleveland and Portsmouth Sonya Wynne argues that the mistresses held unofficial but very significant political roles in the Restoration court. While Wynne focuses mainly on the actual possibility of actual female influence on the Restoration court politics, which has been overlooked ("The Mistresses" 186), in this chapter, I will focus more on how these women used different methods to consolidate power and influence, methods which are often unrecognized or dismissed. This is where the female libertines' celebrity status plays a significant role in expanding what we conceive of as female influence. It might be true that the mistresses at times failed to influence Charles II on political matters and state affairs, but

[22] This tendency of reserving positive celebrity to Nell Gwyn and notoriety to Cleveland and Portsmouth is evident especially in modern interpretation of the ladies in Charles II's court.

their cultural and political capital consisted of more than what they were able to make the king do.

The images of royal mistresses in contemporary paintings and printed engravings are important texts using a new style of self-representation, just like Rochester's poems and Wycherley's plays. Using them to create public political and social statements, however, was not totally new practice. In his important and meticulous study of the representations of power and authority in early modern England, Kevin Sharpe analyzes the representation and performance of monarchy in a public sphere while evaluating each monarch's skill at publicizing her rule. As "the first monarch of the marketplace" who made the monarchy part of the material culture of consumption, Elizabeth I successfully negotiated her image as both sacred and popular (115). Elizabeth I's successful performance strategies included provoking a desire to possess some token associated with the monarch—portrait miniatures, medals, playing cards, and copies of the queen's words. Charles II, according to Sharpe, also reconciled the need in Restoration England for a monarch to be both mystical and familiar by making "his very ordinariness a means of elevating his kingship, of attracting public affection and support" (119). What is interesting in Sharpe's examination of both monarchs is the significance of the role of visual images, such as portraits and objects with portraits, played in the representation of power.[23] Starting at least from Elizabeth I's reign and reaching its peak at Restoration England the visual arts constituted the representation of monarchy and aristocratic society. What has been less studied than these images of monarchy are those of the mistresses, who likewise exploited the visual system of the royals.

[23] While Sharpe argues Lely's painted ladies and "the new place of women in society" in the Restoration England in his discussion of the representation of power in Charles II's court, he mainly focuses on the transgression of male courtiers and the king and how male libertines use the image of royal mistresses as "novel sexual representation" (223).

While critics have largely overlooked how royal mistresses in Charles II's court actively used visual images as part of their performance of power, some have started to pay attention to how eighteenth-century actresses adopted similar strategies to create their public images. Examining the portraits of eighteenth-century actresses with muffs (both as a fashion item and as contemporary euphemism for female genitalia), Laura Engel explores three main vehicles for publicity the women used: print, the stage, and pictures (284). As Engel argues, portraiture was one of the most highly effective and popular forms of the actresses' self-promotion, which allowed them to participate in "the visual system of the upper class" (18). Actresses disrupt and revise traditional models of non-aristocratic female identities by calling into question the boundaries of class- and gender-specific modes of display. While scholarship on these actresses' self-promotion praise their ingenuity in appropriating the royals and aristocracy's visual system, in fact, royal mistresses had already provided them with a precedent in doing so. Using iconic portraits (among other publicity strategies), royal mistresses took advantage of the visual arts to fashion and perform their identities.

Royal mistresses witnessed the formal and economic changes in the visual arts in the late seventeenth-century England. As a result, they took full advantage of the arts, which became "a widespread commodity, produced, owned, distributed and discussed by many" (Sharpe 206). With the public's increased interests in engraved prints and the mezzotints, there was a rising market for inexpensive printed portraits of royal and public figures. As more people came to be able to purchase and possess such images, the more powerful the subject of the image became. As England's most loved monarchs, such as Elizabeth I and Charles II, negotiated their public images, performing their monarchy by presenting themselves as both familiar and revered, royal mistresses consciously constructed their celebrity image by dominating the public imagination

through portraits. People who were fascinated (and/or abhorred) by their public, extramarital liaisons with the King (not to mention their other transgressions) became consumers of their visual image by actively imitating and revising the image.

Barbara Villiers, married name Palmer but more often appears in prints and in records as Lady Countess Castlemaine and more later as Duchess of Cleveland, was the "Queen" of the practice of subtle but daring image-making through portraits.[24] She seemed to have had a particularly close working relationship with the painter Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), Castlemaine's "promoter" as Julia Marciari Alexander puts, supporting him in the court as his patron and commissioning him to collaborate with her in certain types of image making through portraits. Castlemaine was well versed in how to code her power and influence into her portrait in a way that could provoke people who regarded her with both attraction and hatred. Her images, created by Lely and his studio, were copied, re-created, distributed and discussed by general public. In "the Image War" of Charles II's Restoration England and his court, Castlemaine fashions her image ranging from an ambiguous Penitent Magdalen to usurping Queen's own iconic representations.

Sitting for a portrait can actually indicate the sitter's more active involvement in the painting's composition and symbology. Commissioning portraits that function in certain ways can be read as an early modern form of celebrity image making. Painters seeking patronage and positions in court very strategically collaborated with the sitters in order to paint them in a way that could direct the viewers to a certain reading of the sitter's image. Especially in the case of Peter Lely's portraits of Castlemaine, her image is strongly infused with symbols and cultural

[24] Castlemaine was created Duchess of Cleveland on in July 1670 along with a series of grants by the King including substantial pensions. I will hereafter use Castlemaine to discuss her portraits painted and printed before 1670 and Cleveland to discuss images after 1670.

references that early modern audiences would have been able to easily identify instantly. What is more fascinating about Castlemaine's portraits is that these images tread the line between obvious allusions that are easily translatable to the audiences and ambiguity that allows room for imagination/interpretation.

Lely's early portrait of Castlemaine dated around 1662 is what Julia Marciari Alexander calls the painting as Castlemaine's "signature image," which later became established as Lely's most popular iconography of Castlemaine. This signature image of Castlemaine, as Alexander points out, is "Lely's erudite pictorial quotations" heavily loaded with symbols that mark the beginning of the creation of her public image (120). Alexander specifically focuses on the composition and the pose, showing her resting her head on her hand, and its association with iconography both of Melancholia and of the "Penitent Magdalen." Lely's portrait is definitely meant to evoke the Magdalen, the beautiful sinner who became a discipline of Christ through her repentance and one of the most famous and popularly consumed female images in the seventeenth century. She is invoked not only through the sitter's pose but also through the detail of her unbound flowing hair. All references and allusions to the Magdalen would have been familiar to the Restoration audience, and Lely's and Castlemaine's creation of an English—that is Protestant—version of the Catholic saint could provide evidence of both the sitter's manipulation of her public image and the audience's construction of her image. By having herself painted as Magdalen, Castlemaine acknowledges that she is a sinful and sexually transgressive woman, but she is also capable of virtue and salvation.

This signature image and the iconic pose, however, does not depict the sitter as a saint in the biblical setting. This portrait is far from a simple portrait of Castlemaine as the Magdalen since it also deliberately reinforces and eschews the obvert symbols that confine the image to the

role of the penitent saint. These pictorial ambiguities "evoke multiple aesthetic and symbolic associations and speak to numerous audiences in several varied ways" (Alexander 120). The portrait is the culmination of a well calculated and balanced mixture of the real, the familiar, and the symbolic. Mary Magdalen's early incarnation as a sinner and a reformed prostitute easily allowed audiences to think of Castlemaine's adulterous relationship with the King, which was publicly known and gossiped about by the time this portrait was painted and circulated at around 1662. However, the ideal beauty and reverence the associated image of the saint evokes necessarily has an impact on the image of Castlemaine, who was an actual adulteress and a mistress to the king. The portrait is most importantly and on the surface representing Castlemaine herself in contemporary seventeenth century setting and the treatment does not intentionally mythologize or fictionalize the sitter. The portrait—regardless of its load of symbolic references to the figure of the Penitent Magdalen—depicts Castlemaine as a more accessible and familiar contemporary figure, as the same Lady Castlemaine whom the courtly and public audiences saw, read, and talked about on a daily basis.

Figure 1. Line engraving of the Countess of Castlemaine as the Magdalen by William Faithorne (1616-1691), after Sir Peter Lely, c.1666 © Trustees of the British Museum

This iconic portrait of Castlemaine became immensely popular, spawning numerous studio copies and printed reproductions. Her image was easily commercialized to meet the popular demand through the medium of reproductive print such as line engravings, etchings, and mezzotints (See Figure 1). The image composed and crafted by the master painter and Castlemaine herself, while being reformatted in cheaper and mass-produced prints such as line engravings and/or mezzotints, and while imitated in numerous studio versions, obviously went through significant changes that reflected and contributed to her public image. For example, Castlemaine's conversion to Catholicism was added to the etching print of her portrait type as

the Magdalen produced by J. Enghels[25] at around 1667, along with other symbols including a crucifix, skull, ointment jar, books opened to Psalm on the bottom (See Fig. 2). Subtler and more ambiguous symbols embedded in Lely's oil painting (which was accessible only to a limited number of people in inner court circle before it was reproduced in print in a few following years) were changed to more widely known, publicly accessible images that could attract and intrigue the more general public outside courtly and aristocratic circles.

[25] According to the curator's comments in the British Museum website, the identity of J. Enghels must be a Dutch form of the name Josias English who was a "Mortlake tapestry worker and etcher" whose surviving works include a few etchings between the late 1640s and 1650s. It is also suspected that the etcher might have had reasons to disguise his identity because he did not have Lely's permission to make the print. I think that controversial nature of this print—or what English added to Lely's original—must have been part of the reason for adopting a Dutch name.

Figure. 2. Etching of the Countess of Castlemaine as the Magdalen by J. Enghels (Josias English, fl. 1649-d.1705), after Sir Peter Lely, 1667 © Trustees of the British Museum

Castlemaine's deliberately ambiguous and multi-faceted images work as immensely successful sites of libertine performance. Initially conceived by Castlemaine and realized by Lely, her constructed image as the Penitent Magdalen gradually incorporated the general public's particular interests in her. As images of Castlemaine became more widely available through reproduction, they became more legible to popular audiences, thereby increasing their impact and spreading of her fame. These paintings and various types of more accessible prints as sites of libertine performance are closely connected to Castlemaine's celebrity status as one of the most notorious women in Restoration England.

This early portrait successfully introduced Castlemaine into the public, as well as courtly imagination, and it coincided with her growing political influence in Charles II's court between 1662 and 1665. Her later portraits are even more daring and transgressive performances, publicly flouting the boundaries that supposedly confined the mistress in polite society. Her rejection of knowing the social norms and refusal to keep her place suggest her increasing political power in the court between 1665 and 1670. Lely's painting of Castlemaine and her son by Charles II, Charles Fitzroy, as the Madonna and Child is a carefully engineered transgression intended to shock and provoke her political rivals, as well as her haters in the court and on the street (Fig.3). It also aggressively places her and her son in the royal lineage, audaciously elevating her to be the Queen not of the Court but of Heaven, with her bastard son a version of the infant Christ.

Figure 3. Portrait of the Countess of Castlemaine and her son Charles Fitzroy as the Virgin and Child by the studio of Sir Peter Lely, c.1665-1675 ©National Portrait Gallery, London

One of the last among Lely's portraits of Castlemaine, painted around 1667, is the portrait of her as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a saint of noble birth who dedicated her life to religious devotion. Lely's 1667 portrait evidently responds to one of his rivals, Jacob Huysmans (c.1630-1696)'s 1664 painting of the Queen, Catherine of Braganza, as the namesake saint (Fig.4). As Alexander rightly suggests, "the composition showing Barbara Villiers as St. Catherine would have been considered an ironic, humorous and even dangerous appropriation of the emblems more properly associated with the Queen" (130). This dangerous appropriation of the Queen's image must certainly have been both a political dare and an insulting blow. Castlemaine's not-so-secret status as the "uncrowned Queen of England" can be evidenced in

this portrait where she posits herself as “the Queen’s usurper, triumphantly transforming her into ‘Catherine.’” (Alexander 130).

Figure 4. Portrait of Catherine of Braganza as a Shepherdess by Jacob Huysmans (c. 1633-1696), 1664, Royal Collection Trust /© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019

Castlemaine’s usurpation of the queen’s image and her transgressive performance at court in her commissioned portraits took an interesting turn as the imagery engineered and produced by Castlemaine herself was then widely commercially circulated through reproducible

prints. The engraver William Sherwin (c.1645- after 1711) created an image of Castlemaine as a shepherdess in 1670 that integrates Lely's iconic portrait of Castlemaine as the Penitent Magdalen and Huysmans's portrait of the Queen Catherine as a shepherdess (Fig.5). As Antony Griffiths suggests, it is plausible that Sherwin might have based his work on already printed and circulated portraits and simply merged both images by accident.[26] One can never know whether Sherwin intentionally merged the Queen's portrait with that of Castlemaine's and captioned it as "Barbara Dutchess of Cleveland and Countess of Castlemaine" below, literally transforming Castlemaine into the Queen. However, I think this attests to the important aspects of libertine performances and a new style of self-representation in a commercialized world. Publicly produced images like Sherwin's show how initially personally engineered libertine transgressions develop into social and cultural currency that people exchanged and appropriated.

[26] I completely sympathize with the engraver Sherwin if he indeed failed to identify Castlemaine from the Queen. Although it is true that unique features of an individual's appearance are well represented in portraiture, Duchess of Portsmouth's porcelain skin for example, it is also very odd to see how women's faces in this period's portrait look alike. This tendency became more dominant as the portraits become more widely available in reproducible prints.

Figure 5. Line engraving of the Countess of Castlemaine as a Shepherdess by William Sherwin (1645-1711), 1670 ©Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

Castlemaine's fashioning of her celebrity identity and her performance of libertine identity are a clever adaptation of the way monarchs and royals have used portraits as an important part of politics and ruling. She manipulated her image most frequently and powerfully through portraits within this tradition, equipping herself with a proper weapon in the battle of visuals. What also makes the images of Cleveland striking is how they were "at once touchable and transcendent" (Roach 16). Cleveland's hybrid images fit very well into Roach's working definition of celebrity in that they "circulate widely in the absence of their persons . . . but the very tension between their widespread visibility and their actual remoteness creates an unfulfilled need in the hearts of the public" (16). This unfulfilled longing for the celebrity in the

absence of their persons impelled more commercially produced reproductions of their images. Castlemaine's self-fashioning strategies and performances bear many similarities to how later century's actresses tactfully used printed visuals and their private public lives for self-representation. Laura Engel, while examining strategies used by eighteenth-century actresses to fashion their celebrity identity, argues that the actresses had agency in the creation of their public images. At the same time, Engel argues, "their personas were fashioned in many ways already for them by the tastes, desires, and anxieties of eighteenth-century audiences" (2-3). She also argues that the actresses' strategies for self-representation in their autobiographical narratives are directly related to the impact of their portraits and their theatrical roles. So much of the actresses' techniques for creating their personas relies on audience's knowledge of these images and performances as well as their own sense of their self-image as primarily visual. Castlemaine's manipulation and performance of her public image through transgressive visual arts similarly depended on public's knowledge of her private life as well as her own awareness of the impact of the visual statement.

III.3 Lampoons and Satires

Lampoons and satiric prints, in contrast to commissioned formal portraits, are vicious, yet sometimes humorous, attacks on political and public figures of almost any kind. Royal mistresses, women who were known for their transgressive sexuality and unofficial political maneuverings, were therefore perfect targets for these types of attack and ridicule in both verse and image. The transgressive nature of their relationships to the King and their position at the court provoked numerous anonymous publications of such texts that are often used as evidence of their contemporary notoriety. These women, as examples of "fallen" women that violated

sexual and social decorum, appear in various types of contemporary printed texts ranging from the famous *Poor-Whores Petition* (1668) to the published dedications of Aphra Behn's plays and novellas. Misogynistic attacks that obsessively—and almost exclusively—sexualize these women. Sometimes through male authors writing as the royal mistresses themselves, make the women victims of satiric attacks, or "a kind of quasi-rape," as Susan Staves argues (166). Examining the eighteenth-century verse satires of spurious authorship, Staves examines how male authors of satires "put words into a woman's mouth when she does not want them there, and [forces] her to utter them in print, against her will," thereby robbing "her [of her] control over her identity" (166). Therefore, in these satires, men writing and speaking as women in these satires, therefore, not only take economic advantage of the women's notoriety to appeal to readers who want to consume the exclusive and supposedly never-before published gossip; they also assault the royal mistresses by spreading rumors and forcibly stealing their control over their identity.

Staves sees this "quasi-rape" and notes that unlike later women—including Mary Robinson, who was a mistress to Frederick, Prince of Wales in 1779-81, and who published her own defense of her conduct—royal mistresses to Charles II did not attempt to publish any defenses. Satires circulated and published by men before 1700 show how women were victimized by male satirists. Staves focuses on special set of texts in which men pretended to be a particular living woman and claimed female authorship. Although Staves' reading of texts involving false authorial identities brings to our attention the ways the unflattering images of the royal mistresses were constructed through misogynistic attacks, it still reduces these notoriously transgressive and powerful female celebrities into silent, unresponsive victims, abused by male satirists.

It is indeed true that these printed texts show that royal mistresses did not have control over how their images were constructed and circulated by others in their absence. But the actual "reality" of their image and related questions of agency, authorship, and intent of their representation become more complex as we examine how their image operates both as constructed and authentic in often contradictory ways. As Joseph Roach has argued on the impact of the actors' and actresses' public images even in the absence of their physical bodies, the illusion of the celebrity persona and what the audiences (or in this case readers and satirists) want the celebrity to be often replaces the "real." Celebrity performance and authorship, therefore, should not be limited to the study of what the "real" body did and instead should be extended to the study of the illusion and aura of the celebrity as they are produced and consumed by the audience. Then lampoons and satires provide multiple examples of how the royal mistresses performed their libertinism through their celebrity/notoriety.

Charles II's royal mistresses, whom people loved to hate, and their images dominated the talk of the town and evoked a certain social energy that propelled consumption of their public images. As Harold Love rightly suggests, "the lives of the mistresses were perpetual theatre: they were the targets of all eyes, and the gossip of all tongues" (37). The theatrical nature of their gossip-generating lives made them into contemporary social icons. People wanted to see them and hear about them, but most of all they hated these women so much that public opinion was soon added to the emerging images of the mistresses as powerful and transgressive libertines.

Even before we start examining the trace of the celebrity performance of royal mistresses, there are a couple of points that can attest to the power and influence of royal mistresses in Charles II's court. Lampoons that criticize the mistresses' strong political influence most often bring up how they do not deserve their power and how they abuse it for personal gain. These

texts express authors' (sometimes anonymous an sometimes identified) jealousy toward women who achieved proximity to the King, which could be translated into the real power through royal favors. Who has how much access to the King was especially significant during Charles II's reign, and his "politics of access" were closely connected to the broad political goals of the monarch and the regime.[27] This jealousy could be very real because lampoons were effective weapons in the war between court factions, especially since they used every stratagem to promote their own candidates. One effective way that can promote a certain candidate is to conduct negative campaigns about the rivals, as was in the Restoration court politics as well as in the twenty-first century politics. Male courtiers who wanted to promote their own candidate, therefore, used ribald satires against their rivals (Love 38).

Since the mistresses were powerful political agents in the midst of faction war, and as the wealthiest and most powerful women among the court women, it seems almost natural that they were the primary targets of vicious lampoons that attempted to immensely damage these women's reputation and potentially remove the royal favor. In a fiercely competitive court environment where uncertainty of royal favor was institutionalized, the mistresses not only worked as an important intermediary between courtiers and the King but also worked as the significant core of their own court-like establishments. Lampoons can thus ironically expose the threatening and significant power of royal mistresses in the Restoration court.

In this section, I want to concentrate on a set of satiric texts, in forms of letters and dialogues, that claim to be written or spoken by Charles II's royal mistresses. These texts were usually published on a single sheet of paper as broadsides, and most were published in or around 1682. Although publication information, including the publication year and the publisher, is at

[27] Brian Weiser analyzes how Charles II carefully managed the political effects of access which sustained the king's reputation for openness.

times included at the end of the print. However, this information cannot be blindly trusted for its accuracy considering the ephemeral nature of the single sheet satires and their scandalous and abusive content. Some of the series of correspondences that create the illusion of real conversation and exchange between mistresses, for example, were supposedly published by different publishers, but as Staves notes, this could be the publisher's marketing strategy, intended to produce controversy by allowing the same writer to write on both sides (175). What is much more important than the accuracy of the publication details or the authorship is how the mistresses' images are constructed and circulated through lampoons. Regardless of the actual authorship of the lampoons, these texts were advertised specifically as being authored by the mistresses themselves, although even naïve readers would not have believed this to be true. Through the production and circulation of lampoon, these published versions of fictionalized conversations and letters between women actively create public images and personas of each mistress through ventriloquized characters, showing the impact of lady libertines' celebrity performances and the powerful hold they had on the public imagination.

The dialogue format between two or more mistresses allowed the satirists to exploit stock accusations associated with each mistress in the already existing oral and printed gossip in order to build a character based on them. These lampoons bear resemblance to often politicized playlet pamphlets and dialogues popular during the Interregnum.[28] Although such lampoons are not clearly meant for theatrical production, I will use the term "dialogue playlets" to highlight its use of the performance script framework and dramatic construction of parts. As was examined in the last chapter on Nell Gwyn, each mistress had stock character features or a distinct role. Nell

[28] See Susan Wiseman's *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War,* especially the interchapter titled "'The life of action': playing, action and discourse on performance in the 1640s" for the discussion of politicized playlet pamphlets and dialogues popular in the 1640s.

Gwyn was the non-political, Protestant English whore from humble birth while Duchess of Portsmouth was a calculating spendthrift and a treacherous foreigner. Lady Castlemaine later Duchess of Cleveland was also an extravagant spender but who was often portrayed as ageing and resenting the loss of her beauty and the royal favor. These dialogue playlets, which present royal mistresses as a group, were at the peak of publication in 1680s when the merry monarch was keeping relationships with multiple known mistresses. This allowed publishers, satirists, and lampoonists an opportunity to have an ensemble cast of well-known characters to employ in their writings. Dialogues can also be quite effective in attacking women without risking revealing the individual voice or style of the satirist behind them. Also, staging a dialogue in which the royal mistresses attack each other, rather than having outsiders do so, reinforces the satirists' misogynist mission to negatively portray women as a group.

This dramatization of hypothetical conversations between rival royal mistresses often highlights their mutually shared harmful influence and immorality. However, some satires have more specific targets than others. As was briefly mentioned in the last chapter, Portsmouth, due to her connections to and active involvement with the French court, was the object of a more vicious attack compared to other mistresses. In *A Dialogue between the Dutchess of Portsmouth and Madam Gwin, at parting* (1682), Nell Gwyn and Duchess of Portsmouth make verbal jabs at each other occasioned by Portsmouth's heading to France, perhaps as an intermediary with the French ambassador. Portsmouth did make an actual visit to France from March to June in 1682 after regaining the royal favor after the monarch's short affair with Hortense Mancini, the Duchess of Mazarin.[29] Portsmouth's role as an intermediary between French and English courts must have increased national concerns in England and invoked series of satires to be written and

[29] See Wynne's article in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

printed. This would be why the more obvious target of the text's theatrical catfight is Portsmouth and Gwyn has the last word to tell Portsmouth to never come back to England and spare "the Grievance of the Nation." It is quite apparent that more intense hostility is directed toward Portsmouth and that Gwyn is the voice of the concerned English people when she proudly says "It is Nell's Birth-right now to Reign at home" emphasizing her Englishness several times:

> G. In my clear Veins best Brittish Bloud does flow,
> Whilst thou like a French Tode-stool first did grow,
> And from a Birth as poor as thy Delight
> Spring up a Mushrom-Dutchess in a Night,
> Nor did I ever with the Brats I bore,
> The Royal Standard Stein in Monstrous gore,
> Which makes thee fly to France, where thou must rot,
> Or cure the Ulcers which the Bath cou'd not.

As a response to the Portsmouth character's verbal attack on Gwyn's "obscure" origin, Gwyn character here gives a list of things Portsmouth was often criticized for in addition to her most obvious, hated attribute—her Frenchness. Even though Portsmouth tried hard to claim her family's lineage to the ancient nobility, her claim was often deemed groundless by her political opponents and especially by the English people. Gwyn character mentions Portsmouth's likewise poor birth and she extends the attack to Portsmouth's political ambition by calling her a "Mushrom-Dutchess" made in a ridiculously short period of time, and rails against her pursuit of personal advance through children she had with Charles II. The satirist of the pamphlet also

shows extensive knowledge of the gossip regarding the mistresses and their whereabouts. Portsmouth visited springs in Bath for a few weeks sometime in 1676 to take the waters, which at the time began to be in the fashion among court ladies as a way to "enhance their looks."[30] Portsmouth's absence from the court also piqued public interests in the possible changes in court dynamics between royal mistresses who were then vying for the royal favor. The satirist was clearly keeping up with the details of their lives and used specific topic references in the text when Gwyn character bids Portsmouth to either rot in France or "cure the Ulcers which the Bath cou'd not."

After covering topics of promiscuity, obscure or low birth, and political ambitions, the satires reaches its climax when Gwyn and Porstmouth argue about who the "Peoples Curse and Hate." While Portsmouth argues that Gwyn alone deal with the public's scorn and anger, Gwyn refutes Portsmouth's conjecture by telling her she is not so hated by the English people as she:

> G. The peoples Hate much less their Curse I fear
> I do them Justice with less Sums a Year.
> I neither run in Court nor Citys Score,
> I pay my Debes, Distribute to the Poor.
> Whilst thou with ill kept Treasures does Resort
> T' uphold thy splendor in the Gallick Court.
> But France is for thy Lust too kind a Clime

[30] Henri Forneron in his 1887 biography of Portsmouth notes that she has traveled to Bath from May 25 to July 4 in 1676 as it was "the fashion" to take the waters to restore beauty and health (146-47). John Buttrey, however, in his 1995 article on the French operamaker Robert Cambert, mentions Portsmouth's trip to Bath to take the waters prompted by her miscarriage of the king's baby in 1676 by citing *Archives des Affaires Étrangères Anglaises*, 118, ff.112, 116.

In Africk with some Wolf or Tyger Lime:

Or in the Indies make a new Plantation

And Ease us of the Grievance of the Nation.

The Gwyn character claims that she is good value for the English people since she costs less, which was in reality a big part of her public identity as a "cheap whore." Her low and humble birth and perceived lack of political ambition made her more attractive to the English public than her rivals. In 1681 and 1682, public concerns regarding the expenditure of King Charles II's court peaked, especially after the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament in March 1681.[31] King Charles II and his court's poverty became highly visible to the public when he was denied supplies by all his recent Parliaments in the summer of 1681, and the satirists found the occasion fitting to blame the King's acknowledged mistresses. Portsmouth's notorious profligacy as an "embezzling cunt" ("An Essay of Scandal" 1681) and Gwyn's relatively "humble" lifestyle must have begun to register their characters around 1681, followed by amplification and reproduction of those images in 1682. Duchess of Cleveland, as Wilson calls her "the King's mistress emeritus" (66 n32) who was living in France then and almost forgotten by the Court poets, was rumored to return to live in England in 1681, though she actually returned to England in April 1682. There are no known accounts of whether Gwyn started doing charity work around this time; however, the Gwyn character here convinces the reader that she pays back her debts to the English people by distributing her wealth to the poor and the indebted, unlike Portsmouth who uses her "ill kept Treasures" only to "Resort/ T'uphold [her] splendor in the Gallick Court."

[31] Wilson, 63.

Portsmouth's French foreignness and her seemingly shameless spending are two major features of her character even when she is paired with other royal mistresses from previous generations, including the Duchess of Cleveland and the ghost of Jane Shore, one of the mistresses of Edward IV in *A Dialogue between the D. of C. And the D. of P. at their meeting in PARIS, with the Ghost of Jane Shore* (1682). However, Portsmouth's supposed evils are less viciously targeted when she is grouped with her "sister Concubine" Duchess of Cleveland who was deemed no more favorable by the public. In this "the pot calling the kettle black" satire, formatted in a simulated dialogue between two living women and one ghost, all women are in a cat fight viciously picking each other's faults. Cleveland calls Portsmouth "Thou French She-Horse-leech of the English State" accusing her French rival of gaining riches from England, but this time the accuser proves to be a partner in crime and Portsmouth does not wait long to return the attacks back to Cleveland by reminding her that she did the exact same thing: "England did once to you an Harvest Yield." In addition to their common tendency to privatize "the English Gold," the satire makes each mistress verbally attack her opponent using pre-existing gossip. When Cleveland spits disdain toward Portsmouth by calling her "a Beggar . . . in disguise" who will be laughed at by the noble ladies of the Court, Cleveland character actively uses the fact that Portsmouth and her father, Guillaume de Penancoët, count de Kéroualle, claimed the supposedly ancient lineage of Breton nobility:

> C. My envy! No thy meanness I despise.
> Thou art a Beggar still tho in digsuise.
> The noble Ladys of the Gallick Cou[rt]
> Will mock at your fine gaudy Train and Port.

Thy Convers and thy Company they'l scorn,

Since thou of Genteel Blood was't never born.

Portsmouth's "meanness" of birth, or her family's half-successful claim to nobility, becomes a significant part of her character in this satire although it is never brought up by the Gwyn character in their shared dialogue. Pointing out how her "train and port" (possibly meaning her entourage or her fine looks including clothing, hair, and/or jewelry), which Portsmouth takes so much pride in is merely a disguise to mask her obscure and probably mean origin, Cleveland warns her rival that her manners will eventually reveal a lack of "Genteel Blood." While Gwyn's humble origin could be used to make her stand out from the rest of the group of more expensive mistresses, Portsmouth's questionable nobility and her obscure origin makes her even more hated. While Nell Gwyn's lack of aristocratic blood and her embrace of her humble birth are rarely held against her by the satirists, Portsmouth's pretenses are often used as an evidence of her dishonesty and suspicious character. Portsmouth's widely disbelieved claim to nobility and her family's supposed ancient lineage were a few of the repeated points of attack, and satirists must have found it fitting to dismiss her claim. It was probably registered into her stock characteristics around 1680s with a burgeoning number of satiric pamphlets and lampoons, which lasted well into the nineteenth century as part of her public image. *The Secret history of the Duchess of Portsmouth* (1690), a popular anti-Portsmouth fiction, begins by mocking her family's claim and narrating an account of her father as French iron merchant, not as an impoverished Breton nobleman, as Portsmouth tried quite long and hard to claim as being the case.[32]

[32] This secret history of Portsmouth is a highly romanticized life narrative, which will be discussed in detail in the last chapter.

Cleveland and Portsmouth continue to argue who would be "the King's Example Dutches" between them, deriding each other's aged looks and "that French face," both of which are undeserving the monarch's continued affection. Their battle of beauty then finally turns to a battle of wit and power. The year 1682 was when Cleveland returned to England after her and her children's intrigues in France, and it seems that Portmouth's overall confidence and her quite aggressive attack on Cleveland and overall confidence show that not only did Portsmouth have the King's favor at the time but it was publicly known. Portsmouth character proudly says that Cleveland is now "Cast off" when Portsmouth herself is still courted by the King. The Cleveland character retorts, reminiscing how she "did raign like a Queen" when she was still in favor, how she sat above the nobles in court, "adored by the numerous Croud," and possessed more riches than she ever wanted. Portsmouth character's response to Cleveland ridicules what Cleveland just boasted of as trivial and shallow. She then slays her rival by telling her how she reigns:

> P. It shows my Wit and Beauty had most power,
> When I subdu'd your mighty Conquerour;
> And that I broke into your Beauties Charms,
> And ravished your Hero from your Arms.
> I'ave rul'd as well as your and my French pate,
> Have div'd into the great intreagues of State:
> In Balls and Masques you revel'd out your nights,
> But Madam I did relish state delights,
> My politiques and Arts were deeper Bred,
> Than ever came into your shallow Head,

Vain Pride and pleasure were the things you sought,
Whilst that four Kingdoms did imploy my thought.
States men did know that you were but a fool,
But they from me took Measures how to Rule.

Portsmouth's political influence and active involvement in both French and English court politics made her the most hated woman and an enemy of English people, but they also attest to how powerful she was—or at least how powerful she was perceived to be in the public imagination. Portsmouth character here proudly suggests that it is her wit and beauty that possess the most power of all, because she is the one who "subdu'd" and "ravished" the King away from Cleveland's arms. As if to mock her rival's ways of "reigning like a Queen," Portsmouth uses the masculine language of domination and conquest to depict how she rules in a completely different way. In this radically transgressive construction of her image, the Portsmouth character reverses the imagined status of mistress as a subjugated agent and instead establishes herself as a ruler and a conqueror, not just in romantic relationships with the King but also in political and social context. With her "politiques and Arts," Portmouth enjoys "state delights" when other mistresses, including Cleveland, are busy with trivial matters such as appearing at balls and masques, seeking the applause of the court. The imagery is even more provocative when she says that she has not just meddled with state affairs but "rul'd as well as your [English] and French pate." The Kings become subject in her language and Portsmouth even takes over the role of a King when she says that statesmen seek advice on how to rule from her.

While it is not a novelty specific to this lampoon to present Portsmouth as politically influential, defiant proclamation of her power through her own supposed voice creates a bigger

interpretive space for its audience who are reading and "watching" her performance. What is supposed to be a self-inflicting mockery of her inappropriate political ambition takes the form of celebration of her power, which creates the unintended effect of her character persona's dramatic performance. In an imagined dialogue between mistresses each woman's image is usually created by her rival's attack, but these characters speak for themselves in character when they are flaunting their own superiority to their rivals. Reading or listening to unashamed claims to power and superiority made in the individualized voices of the mistresses has the effect of witnessing their advocating their "glorious Conquering Charms" and "politiques and Arts." One might argue that this lampoon at the end dismisses these powerful self-assertions and still delivers misogynistic perspectives because Cleveland and Portsmouth are joined by the Ghost of Jane Shore, a royal mistress to King Edward IV, at the end of the lampoon who appears as "a moral voice" to rebuke two living royal mistresses and to ask them to "Repent, repent, and to reform begin." Although the Ghost of Jane Shore gets to have the last word, delivered with an extremely moralistic overtone, her cautionary presence does not erase Portsmouth's prior celebration of her quasi-regal power.

As well as the dialogues and playlets, private letters supposedly written by the mistresses were also popular formats for lampoons printed around 1682. Since these similarly claim the genuine authorship or at least plays off of the reader's expectation by ostensibly copying the authentic letters exchanged between the mistresses, they also have dramatic effect on the readers. These letters are also longer, and as a result, allowed far more generous space for each mistress to justify her actions and promote herself in her own "voice." While the imagined dialogues between rival mistresses mostly allowed the women to attack their rivals and slander each other, the letters enabled mistresses as characters to develop further and reveal more details about

themselves. In these letters mistresses not only throw slandering jabs at each other but also show more features of their characters, which better represents the more complex characters of the royal mistresses in public imagination.

In "A Letter from the Dutch. of Portsmouth to Madam Gwyn, on HER Landing in FRANCE" (1682), Portsmouth begins her letter by proposing to give her rival "the most moderate Account" of her travel from England to visit France because she neither intends to give Gwyn too much pleasure by telling her that she had a horrible trip nor too much anxiety by telling her that she arrived safe. This ambiguous positioning as a concerned rival continues when Portsmouth goes on to boast of her dealings with Neptune, whom she later kindly clarifies as "Charles' Vice-Admiral." Portsmouth confesses to Gwyn that Neptune offered her vast treasure of jewelry hoping she "wou'd interceed to make him Admiral" when she has no intention to advance his favor and instead thinks of her own son by Charles, the Duke of Richmond, in that position. Portsmouth's confession primarily boasts her unofficial power over monarch and influence over court appointments, which could have been very true at least in the public imagination of her as a powerful woman. This confession Portsmouth makes to Gwyn enables her to flaunt her own riches and influence to her rival but also builds some sort of familiar relationship between the two. Examining how these texts were printed as though royal mistresses had written them, Susan Staves briefly mentions that the Portsmouth character is made to assume "a catty camaraderie" with Nell Gwyn (175). Although Staves neither further investigates this odd friendship or camaraderie between Portsmouth and "her confidant" nor connects it to her following advice for Gwyn on marriage, she is right to point out a camaraderie of a certain kind between royal mistresses that could not be seen in other types of satires and lampoons.

This odd portrayal of the relationship between royal mistresses, which resembles friendship more than rivalry, is significant because the tendency is quite oddly specific to this type of satire that assumes the format of intimate letters addressed to one another. Possibly a sequence of letter-type satires, "A letter from the Dutch. of Portsmouth to Madam Gwyn, on HER Landing in FRANCE" (1682) and "Madam Gwins ANSWER TO THE DUTCHESS Of Portsmouths LETTER" (1682) are good examples of this secretly imagined private friendship or alliance between these women. While Portsmouth's letter, which apparently is the first in order, voices Portsmouth character's usual aspersions upon her rival and English people, it also stages sisterly bond between royal mistresses. It is both "you and I," Gwyn and Portsmouth as "the Miss," that Portsmouth is concerned about. The latter half of the letter from Portsmouth to Gwyn, as was briefly referenced, is dedicated to Portsmouth's cautionary advice for Gwyn to marry while she still can.

> Well! of all sorts of Whores, the Miss is the most Deplorable, Naked and Expos'd to the Lash of every Parish-Beadle, whilst Matrimonial Concupiscence passes invisible under that Vizard. The fawning Cuckold will vindicate his Wives Honour, to save his own Reputation, and is always pushing in his own Defence, and well he may, for his Horns are generally the largest of all the Beasts in the Forrest.

What starts out as the commentary on "the Ladies of England" quickly turns to her crying out how "the most Deplorable, Naked, and Exposed to the Lash of every Parish-Beadle" her status as an unmarried mistress is.[33] This ironically prompts her to praise "Matrimonial Concupiscence"

33 Staves briefly mentions how this can be read as Portsmouth's "aspersions on the sexual appetites of English ladies," which prompts Nell Gwyn in her response to refute and defend English ladies (175).

that will make the husband do whatever he can to protect his cuckolding wife's (and his own) honor. Portsmouth character argues, simply put, that marrying someone can make you a "better whore" because a married woman will have her husband as her defender. As a result, her behaviors will be scrutinized less harshly. Portsmouth's argument about how married women make the best "whores" should, of course, be read with bitter, ironic humor. However, it does contain a certain amount of legitimate criticism of the contemporary practice of matrimony in general.

The letter then concludes with some heartfelt "career advice" from one concerned friend to another:

> In truth, take my Advice, Marry and take up in time, before you be cast off, for you will find at my return, the Ebb will be so low, that the next Retrenchment must be upon the Whores. . . . The best Gennet, when she is past Service, is thrown to the Dogs. It may be your Fate, since Wrinkles, Age and Ugliness, the Tyrants of Loves Empire, have already Usurpt the Throne of Beauty, and have a care you fall not a Fee to the Grooms of the Stable, when you are no longer fit for the Royal Game. This (*Madam*) if you mind in time, is the last and best Advice can be given from
>
> *Your Friend*
>
> PORTSMOUTH

While Staves focuses more on each mistress's much talked about Frenchness and Englishness, I believe that the sense of camaraderie is overlooked in Stave's analysis.

Portsmouth's advice to her friend is simple: marry when you still can, or you will soon lose what you have and be removed from the King's favor. Her advice resonates with the common perception of women's commercial value and royal mistress's precarious position at court. Portsmouth's language refers to Gwyn (or women in general) both as a whore and as a wife, emphasizing their exchange values in their respective markets. Women, not excluding whores, like expensive court baubles or a horse that is no longer ridable, can easily be thrown away when they no longer can fulfill their promised function and prove worthless. The "worth" mostly has to do with women's physical appearance, and it also has an expiration date because it can be affected by wrinkles, age, and ugliness. In order to make the best of her existing value, Gwyn had best marry quickly and secure "the Cloak of a Husband" for her own protection.

"Madam Gwins ANSWER TO THE DUTCHESS Of Portsmouths LETTER" (1682) purports to be written by Nell Gwyn as an answer to the letter previously examined, and it is obviously and intentionally written and published as a direct response. These letters apparently mimic authentic documents because their exchanges make sense as a sequence. However, they purport to be published for different people, one for "J. S." and another for "J. Johnson." The Gwyn character here talks back to Portsmouth's by providing a point by point counter-argument. Gwyn's letter is structured in the same order as Portsmouth's letter, starting with her response to Portsmouth's account of her voyage and followed by Gwyn's piece of mind about Portsmouth's marriage advice.

The tone of Gwyn's letter here is more vulgar and more straightforward than that of Portsmouth in the previous letter, which is very much befitting Gwyn's social status as a former actress and her publicly known character. Gwyn points out in her letter how Portsmouth is ambitiously "Bigbelly'd with hopes" that her Prince will be made an Admiral, adding that her

own child, “a little Lord that crep out of my cranny” should deserve something similar to what Portsmouth claims for her son Duke of Richmond because “both sprung from one Branch.” While Gwyn is often portrayed as less ambitious for her own and her sons’ social advancement in other satires when she is coupled with more “greedy” mistresses, such as Portsmouth or Castlemaine, she is depicted as ambitious, making arguments for her own sons’ deserving titles.

Gwyn’s attack on Portsmouth’s proud boasting then continues with her dismissing her spurious aristocratic lineage. While this appears to be in direct response to Portsmouth’s contrast of her own superior social status to Gwyn’s low birth, Gwyn is addressing points that were not included in the Portsmouth letter that this letter is supposedly responding to:

> You that will drudge like an Apple-wench for Gold; would drudge like an Oyster-woman for Pearl, therefore leave off your Vainglorious boasting for we know you too well to believe you. Hereafter forbear medling with my Mamma its true she dyed in a ditch, but what then; she was a soul, she loved Brandy, and as your Pappa his lodging in Wiltshire was but in a Pigsty, that if I came from a Drunken family, you spring from a swinish race and pray what’s the difference when our Pedigree is summed up?

Directly referencing Portsmouth’s claim of her family’s nobility, Gwyn here compares Portsmouth with other working-class women in England—Apple-wench and Oyster-woman—who will “drudge” for gold and pearl, just as Portsmouth would slavishly work to get the same things. Calling out Portsmouth’s claim of nobility as nothing more than “Vainglorious boasting,” Gwyn also adds that “we” English people know her too well to actually believe her empty and ill-supported claims. Then her temper moves on to respond to Portsmouth’s non-existent (at least

in the previous letter that Gwyn is writing back to) attack on Gwyn's mother who drowned in a ditch while being drunk in 1679.[34]

[34] Death of Nell Gwyn's mother was published on the 5th of August, 1679 in the *Domestic Intelligencer*: "We hear that Madam Ellen Gwyn's mother, sitting lately by the water-side at her house by the Neat-Houses near Chelsea, fell accidently into the water and was drowned." The account of her mother's death was printed in broadside format as "true accounts" in 1679.

CHAPTER IV

DRAMATIC LADY LIBERTINES

IV.1 Female Libertines in Life and Fiction

Women's libertine performances in life and fiction have rarely been neatly separated from each other, and celebrity culture has, in part, thrived on such interconnectedness. Celebrity generally depends on a "distinctive and deeply gendered narrative," and female celebrities' private lives play a significant part in such gendered narratives (van Krieken 17). Fictional representations of transgressive women share in the discourse surrounding the real women themselves. This is especially the case when the woman's private life is marked by scandal. This close relationship between a celebrity's image and her private life can be more easily seen in the examples of modern-day female celebrities.

For example, Taylor Swift capitalized on the public's obsession with her private life in her album *Reputation,* released in 2017, making the audience inevitably connect "the minutiae of celebrities' lives—their romances, their feuds, real or imagined" to her songs.[35] The video for the song "Look What You Made Me Do" is full of iconography referencing various scandals and feuds from her career.[36] Swift's gossipmongers, both fans and trolls who have consumed her public image for a long time would be able to get hidden details and every inside joke. Rapper Cardi B's short career as a stripper and the pride she expressed in the media have boosted her

[35] See Alexis Petridis' review in *The Guardian*, "Taylor Swift: Reputation review—superb songcraft meets extreme drama." Petris quotes from a sleeve note of Swift's album where she rebukes those who interpret her songs as being about her personal life.

[36] Under the music video of the song posted on Taylor Swift's official Youtube channel, user id xoxo, Jo Calderone commented a long list of all of the hidden references in the video. For example, Swift's wearing a lot of snake jewelry throughout the video could be referencing her being called "a snake" after her public feud with Kim Kardashian and Kanye West. The user comment also switched the names Kim Kardashian to "Kimbo KarTRASHian" and Kanye West to "KlownYe," which bears strong resemblance to celebrity-making in the portraits I examined in chapter two and secret histories in chapter four.

public image as being a highly sexualized subject, which must have boosted the sales of her latest album in 2018, *Invasion of Privacy*. Before she had a musical career, she became famous for her Vine/Instagram videos, many of which she would take while she was at home or car or at the strip club. Cardi B's production of her own public image from inside of her private life has made her famous and the musical career came later. Angelina Jolie's relationships and marriages, her humanitarian work, and life decisions are major aspects of her public image which cannot be disconnected from the characters she plays on screen. For example, one of Jolie's recent characters, Vanessa in the film *By the Sea* (2015), has been considered almost in its entirety an intertextual reference to the actress's private life.[37]

Screenwriters, directors, and producers write roles and songs for them in ways that make the most of their image, even when these women are not writing and directing for themselves. Celebrity in some sense demands that women's private lives be made public, and they become part of the star image. Female celebrity's image becomes a text for audiences to read just like texts authored by dramatists. When these women play characters, their roles are intertextually informed by the celebrity discourse that has been built around their private lives. Therefore, publicly known women's personal lives often converge with fictional representations of transgressive women when they use their private lives to promote their career by capitalizing their image and when the audience watch, read, listen to, and consume transgressive women's image.

Lady libertine characters in Restoration comedies can be better appreciated when we consider how these dramatic representations of female transgression were collaborations between

[37] The film was produced by and starring Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt in 2015 when they were a couple. Shot during their honeymoon, the film was often derided as Jolie and Pitt's "vanity project" because it cannot be read independently from the star couple's star image.

playwrights, actresses, and inspiring lady libertines outside the theater. Playwrights wrote plays for known actresses based on their public behavior, as Dryden specifically wrote the role Florimell for Nell Gwyn (discussed in Chapter One). Actresses played characters that often mirrored, played with, and parodied their public images. Audiences watched these performances with notions of transgressive female behavior in mind from the scandals surrounding the performers.

Although it is not entirely uncommon to encounter female characters in Restoration drama who demonstrate libertine feats and hearts, these transgressive and daring characters are quite often interpreted as ancillary to male characters. Male rakes play tricks, disguise themselves, and perform transgressive acts for various reasons, including just for fun, but women seem to use such tricks often as ways of getting male rakes to reform their behaviors. These clearly gender-specific roles are, in part, a result of the generic conventions of Restoration comedies. However, they also stem from the limited selection of texts and the ways we read female characters' libertine behaviors on the page. Reformation of rakes and virtuous women aiding the reform loom larger in post-1670 plays where the unpleasant and extreme behaviors of rakes are attempted to be controlled through marriage.

For example, Amanda's rather extreme method of disguise as a libertine seductress in Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696) is "an important ingredient in the recipe for a happy marriage" that the rakish husband "Loveless's reform comedy" offers (Gollapudi 13). The feminine virtue and charms that lie behind a woman's transgression serve as the efficient cause and a means of the rake's conversion. In this type of "reform comedy," a woman pulls tricks to test her man's fidelity or to reform her suitor's rakish behavior. She cross-dresses and wanders the streets and taverns of London just to teach her lover a lesson, making him realize how

virtuous and worthy she is. After proving her worth, the rake and virtuous woman can finally have a happy ending that involves a wedding or the prospect of marriage. A reformed rake is rewarded with a virtuous wife with this marriage, no matter how temporary or superficial his reformation actually is. When the reformation expires, as can be seen in plays such as John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1696) or Aphra Behn's *The Rover Part 2* (1681), a virtuous wife comes up with more trickery to control his roguery one more time, or another female character is introduced to take over that role. Female characters' virtuous (and male-serving) intentions and their monogamous desire have dominated our readings of how women are represented in Restoration drama, despite the fact that the Restoration has never been monolithic at any point. Female characters' naughty and transgressive libertinism is either appreciated as a temporary clever guise to reform a rake or brushed off as belonging only to minor characters.

Modern scholarship hardly acknowledges the existence of female rakes or libertines not because there are no comedies featuring female libertines but because the character type has been heavily tagged as male and is associated with several misconceptions of the Restoration comedies. Robert. D. Hume, in his study of Restoration comedies *The Rakish Stage*, suggests that modern readers have "oversimplified and misunderstood" the libertine sentiment and antimatrimonial talk in comedies by misrepresenting not-so-typical rake-heroes as iconic figures that epitomize the period's values (138).[38] Restoration comedies, as Hume argues, by no means blindly endorse such libertine values, and few plays actually feature unrepentant and unmarried rakes like Wycherley's Horner in *The Country Wife* (1675). There are definitely more comedies that mirror "the rebellion of the Court Wit outlook against social convention . . . and its

[38] Hume's chapter "The Myth of Rake" in his book *The Rakish Stage* tackles how modern readers have oversimplified the Restoration comedies by arguing that the libertine attitude toward love and marriage are prevalent in almost all comedies of the period.

inevitable failure" than plays that endorse libertines and their hostility to marriage (175). Even in debunking the myth of the unrepentant and all-conquering Restoration rake, however, Hume neither questions the role of female characters in rake comedies nor includes women in discussing the rake as a character type. Female characters are discussed in terms of marital discord in comedies and the proviso scenes between the gay couple pattern, but even then, the libertine rebellion against social convention is reserved for male characters.

The misogynist reputation of Restoration libertines in life and in drama might also have prevented modern readers from reading female characters through the lens of libertinism.[39] Instead, female characters with libertine dispositions are often grouped into two distinct categories of virgins and whores. Virtuous virgin heiresses, Harriet in *The Man of Mode* (1676) or Hellena in *The Rover* (1677), might have "libertine hearts" but they rarely show sexual promiscuity or other visible transgressions. These heroines show the same "mixture of virginal care and libertine philosophy" and eventually marry the rake.[40] The other group, sexually experienced lovers of the male rakes, are minor figures and neatly disposed of in the end. These women, Mrs. Loveit in *The Man of Mode* and Angellica Bianca in *The Rover*, are often dramatically expelled as the embodiment of unpleasant features of male libertine transgression, which needs to be removed.[41] Often labelled as "whores" and minor antagonists in the love plot, these women do not have a place in radical libertine questioning of social convention. Whereas male rakes' sexual promiscuity is one of their more distinctive features, sexual promiscuity in female characters diminished their importance and undermines their transgressive status. Plays

[39] Turner analyzes libertine expressions both in literature and in cultural documents to argue that such misogynistic expressions were in the midst of a cultural network of violence against women in the public sphere.
[40] Todd editorial notes in page 458. Vol. 6.
[41] Rosenthal reads these cast-mistresses and lovers of the rake as figures of "embodiment of the evidence of [the rake's] libertinism . . . disarmed and escorted off the stage" ("All injury's forgot" 17)."

seem to celebrate only virgin heroines' libertine hearts and philosophy, but these are not accompanied by any actual sexual promiscuity or any known sexual experience. But again, we will find more representations of female libertines that do not conform to this convention if we broadened the scope of what we consider Restoration comedy and female rake characters.

This chapter thus will examine Restoration comedies that feature libertine female characters who are at the center of the plot and who engage in the libertine questioning of the status quo. Female dramatic libertines also raise several interrelated questions that explore the place of women in Restoration libertinism: 1) Can women be libertines? 2) How different are the consequences for women when they follow libertine desires? 3) What kind of radical arguments do female libertines make?

Female characters somewhere in between the spectrum of virgin heroines and whores (or a mixture of those two extremes) who excel as dashing rakes will be my focus. I begin with Clarabell in Elizabeth Polwhele's manuscript play *The Frolicks* (c.1671) as a case of an early "she-rogue" comedy that explores the possibilities and limitations of the female "extravagant rake." Reading Aphra Behn's *The Second Part of The Rover* (1681) with a focus on the courtesan heroine La Nuche, I highlight the complications of women's pursuing libertine desires and sexual passions. Written by female playwrights, these two plays highlight their distinctly female perspectives in critiquing male rakish behaviors through uniquely complicated female characters. However, as we have seen in previous chapters, these dramatic women are collaborative creations of playwrights, actresses, and inspiring lady libertines outside the theater. Playwrights wrote these remarkable parts for actresses with larger-than-life celebrity status, thereby capitalizing on both their talent and the gossip about them that was already widely circulated. The distinctions between dramatic characters and performing actresses blur in female

libertine characters on stage. Thomas Southerne's *Sir Anthony Love* (1690), despite its being written by a male playwright, features one of the most radical and subversive female libertine characters Sir Anthony/Lucia. Modelling the admired talent of the star actress who played the part, Susanna Mountfort, Southerne succeeds in critically exploring what a hard-core female libertine looks like on stage and what such a presence means.

IV.2 Gwyn-type Carnivalesque Female Rake in Elizabeth Polwhele's *The Frolicks* (1671)

Elizabeth Polwhele's far understudied early comedy *The Frolicks; or The Lawyer Cheated* (1671) features a striking early example of a heroine whose tricks and banter do not necessarily have the sole aim of reforming her beloved. Witty and playful heroine Clarabell favors the rakish and bankrupt Rightwit for her romantic partner, against her rich lawyer and moneylender father Swallow's wish. Clarabell's love of frolics and her daring acts carry sarcasm targeted at male rakes throughout the play, showing a female playwright's take on the 1660s comedy innovation of the "gay couple." Written and probably performed for the King's Company in 1671, Polwhele's *The Frolicks* not only critically engages with the then-new theater trend in the theater that consists of "a pair of lively, witty lovers whose love contains an element of antagonism" (Howe 66) but also envisions a type of comic heroine who can be playful, witty, and liberated. The play's close association with the "gay couple" characters and plot also makes one imagine that the role of Clarabell might have been created for and performed by Nell Gwyn, whose acting career as a gay, witty heroine remained immensely successful between 1665 and 1670.[42] Although the play contains no casting information of the play, let alone any indication of

[42] See Milhous and Hume's "Introduction." where they note the similarities between the role of Mirida in James Howard's *All Mistaken* and Polwhele's Clarabell by pointing out that Mirida was played by "pretty, witty Nell Gwyn, who would have made a delightful Clarabell and indeed could just have done so (23)."

whether it was commercially performed on stage, Clarabell obviously bears similarity to Gwyn-type characters who are assertive and witty in rejecting conventional horrors of matrimony. Like Mirida in James Howard's *All Mistaken* (1665) played by Gwyn, Clarabell genuinely enjoys teasing her beloved and other suitors without any serious intention of ever getting married or reforming her rake. Although the play ends with multiple marriages including the match between Clarabell and Rightwit, it is celebrated as part of a masquerade set in the bawd Procreate's house alongside two other tricked marriages. Therefore, the match, which was first proposed by Clarabell as a dare while she makes fun of Rightwit locked in prison, does not necessarily assure the forfeiture of her frolicking lifestyle to the prospect of matrimony. Such an outlook is even more absurd when the couples dance to Ralph's singing of the cuckolds in the last scene. In *The Frolicks*, Polwhele writes her own Gwyn-type character by making Clarabell the master of wit and banter who outmaneuvers every man in the play. Possibly inspired by several lady libertine figures, including the actress Nell Gwyn and their infamous love of frolics, Polwhele dramatizes a witty and fun-seeking heroine that follows Mirida in Howard's *All Mistaken* and Florimell in John Dryden's *Secret Love* (1667) and precedes Hellena in Aphra Behn's *The Rover Part I* (1677) and Cornelia and Marcella in *The Feign'd Curtezans* (1679).

As Judith Milhous and Robert Hume, who recovered this "lost" play from the collection of law-related materials at Cornell University and gave it a new life through modern edition in 1977, acknowledge, the name Elizabeth Polwhele is "completely unfamiliar, even to specialists in Restoration drama" ("Two Plays" 1). *The Frolick*'s singular existence as one undated manuscript that was probably never printed must have contributed to Polwhele and her play's obscurity. Polwhele's lack of presence in other existing printed materials, her very short-lived career (which spanned only two years) made her and her work even more obscure. Polwhele's

obscurity as one of the earliest female playwright and her play's almost non-existence in Restoration drama scholarship, however, still persist even decades after the "lost" play was revived and printed in a modern edition. Polwehele, along with another obscure female playwright named Frances Boothby,[43] has only one full play attributed to her and may have had only "limited success," but her play was publicly performed by the King's company not more than two years before Behn's first production (Bush-Bailey 31).[44] The continuing neglect of an obscure woman's status as a playwright in scholarship, as Gilli Bush-Bailey notes, might be due to the critics' desire to keep Aphra Behn as the "first" commercial female playwright and the "best" one (32). This unconscious replication of male hierarchies found in feminist historiography results in ignoring the "other writing women . . . [from] whom Behn could and *did* learn" (35). As Behn's extensive collaboration with the actresses and female theater-managers has been well recognized more recently, Polwhele's career and her play should also be re-evaluated in the context of social and cultural milieu of women writers and women in the theater.

Polwhele's biographical details have not been verified and what we have lack evidence in general. She certainly was not an accomplished writer with an extensive literary or theatrical career, considering only two of her plays are known and attributed to her. Since *The Frolicks* is dated to be written and performed in or around 1671, a few years after Samuel Pepys stopped writing his diary entries with details of his journeys in the theater, lack of performance records do not definitely rule out the possibilities of the actual performance as is the case for many other

[43] Frances Boothby has an entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, while Polwhele does not have one. Although both women's identities still remain obscure and each has only one play known, Boothby's play made it into print in 1670.

[44] See Findlay's anthology where we have a partial script of Polwhele's heroic tragedy and another play only mentioned in her dedicatory epistle, *Elysium*.

Restoration plays. Polwhele's obscure identity could also mean a couple of different things. For example, it is quite possible that the playwright wanted to remain anonymous or low-profile in order to avoid exposing herself, as did quite a number of her contemporaries.[45] Whoever Polwhele actually was and however good a playwright she was (or was deemed by her contemporaries), she and her play nevertheless are part of the group of celebrated and lionized female writers of the period. Contrary to what critics have argued about the play's general lack of literary merit, which they argue suggests the author's inexperience, *The Frolicks* shows signs of the author's deep familiarity with dramatic repertoire from the previous decade of 1660s and with the theater industry of the period.

When Polwhele wrote *The Frolicks* either in 1670 or in 1671, it had only been ten years or so since the theater reopened with the restoration of monarchy in England, and the infamous bawdy, racy Restoration sex comedy has just begun to be fully developed. The 1670s were still the time when "dramatists exploit[ed] shock value" showing "a steady escalation in sex and titillation" (Milhous and Hume 15). In the first phase of the dramatic libertine figures in Restoration drama, which runs through the early seventies, he is "a broadly comic figure who breathes new life into a society recently freed from the Puritan yoke" (Braverman 142). Most closely fitting to the type of the "extravagant rake,"[46] as Jordan and Hume developed and expanded it, this early character of the extravagant rake is characterized by "frantic intensity, promiscuity, crazy impulsiveness, cheekiness, reckless frivolity, breezy vanity, and devastating self-assurance" (Hume 155). These wild but likeable early rakes in Restoration comedies of the

[45] Milhous and Hume suggested the daughter of Theophilus Polwhele, a prominent nonconformist minister, who married the Reverend Stephen Lobb as a possible candidate for the author Elizabeth Polwhele ("Introduction" 44-45).
[46] Robert Jordan defines "extravagant rake" in his article "The Extravagant Rake in Restoration Comedy" (1972), Robert Hume in The Rakish Stage adds to Jordan's categorization.

1660s, like a "one-man *mardi gras*" (Jordan 87), provides a "therapeutic release," and his actions are not necessarily taken seriously. However, when it comes to their presence on stage or outside the theater, the light-hearted and carnivalesque libertines, however, when it comes to their presence on stage or outside the theater was not limited to the male sex. Extravagant female rakes appeared in drama as well, based on and inspired by the notoriously promiscuous and wild women of the period. Nell Gwyn's love of pranks and witty banter are the subjects of contemporary gossip and appear frequently in eighteenth-century cheap print accounts. Nell's administering a laxative to her rival Moll Davis when Moll was to bed with the King was widely reported.[47] Nell's other on-the verge-of-malicious pranks, such as the burning off the Duchess of Portsmouth's pubic hair with a candle and then explaining to the King that "there is an Act of Parliament for burning all French commodities that are prohibited," were also quite often gossiped about and ended up in print.[48] These types of widely circulated anecdotes of spirited and witty women with their strong hold on the public's attention definitely prepared Polwhele to create a female extravagant rake for her play.

In crafting a heroine like Clarabell, Polwhele also engages her play with the drama of the 1660s and the rise and the development of the "gay couple." The development of the "gay couple," where the witty couple rails against marriage but succumbs to love, has been well highlighted in the scholarship, especially with the rise of popular celebrity actor and actress pair Charles Hart and Nell Gwyn.[49] Knowing the performers is especially important in properly understanding this immensely popular character type. Although such a couple in "the merry war of courtship" is certainly not the invention of restoration drama, as it appears in earlier plays

[47] The anecdote is recorded in an anonymous booklet *Joke upon Joke*, published in 1760.
[48] This story is told by Captain Alexander Smith in his book *School of Venus*, published in 1716. See John Adlard's "A Note on Nell Gwyn."
[49]See especially Peter Holland and Elizabeth Howe.

such as Shakespeare's Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing*, the Restoration "rom-com" couple has been recognized as "the most distinctive new contribution to comedy of the 1660s, the first new change in the comic form in the Restoration" (Holland 83). Gwyn's witty and attractive personality was received extra-ordinarily by the audiences as Pepys once wrote about her special talent in bringing comic parts to life. After Hart and Gwyn's first successful gay couple performance together in Howard's *All Mistaken*, several similar roles were significantly tailored or created to capitalize their popularity. George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham's 1667 adaptation of John Fletcher's *The Chances*, for example, majorly transformed and enlarged the part of the second Constancia, played by Gwyn, into the kind of "free spirit who engages in bouts of wit with the hero and wins him in the end" (Howe 67). The couple's rejection of marriage, based on the mutual recognition of the difficulties of keeping the marriage bond, has been argued as the hallmark of the restoration gay couple. Elizabeth Howe suggests that these types of characters dramatize the lovers "in a new sense [as] equals" with "a new approach to comic love relationships" (71). Gwyn's talent, personality, and public private life very much shaped this type of dramatic heroine, as the "gay couple" started gaining more popularity when Nell Gwyn became the real-life mistress of the star actor Charles Hart around 1665 and even more so when her scandalous relationships with Charles Buckhurst and the King continued until 1671 when she left the stage for good. Based on one of the most important dramatic development of the 1660s and the most celebrated actress of the Restoration stage, Polwhele portrays a witty, playful, strong, and independent heroine in Clarabell.

Clarabell who "belongs to the new breed of heroine" that is "tough, emancipated, and vigorously independent ("Introduction" 23)," as Milhous and Hume note, is a remarkable female character because her excellence in frolics serves no one else but her own. Her tricks and hijinks

do not involve contriving elaborate schemes to "reform" Rightwit, a bankrupt rake to whom she is attracted to.[50] Clarabell's actions are sometimes on the verge of malicious pranks, and she even seems to have little interest in actually marrying Rightwit let alone "fixing" his ways of living. Although some read Clarabell's "frolic" as part of "her project to reform" Rightwit (Findlay 50), Clarabell as a "she-rogue" shows more interest in dealing with her passion for Rightwit" rather than in reforming him. Clarabell very well understands Rightwit's "ill conditions" (3.53), while struggling to "better justify [her] passion" (3.55-56). She also genuinely enjoys trickery and actively participates in antics as a master of pranks. Clarabell dominates the stage and takes an upper hand in manipulating the situation.

In Act 3 where Clarabell cross-dresses as her cousin Philario to prevent Rightwit's undoing by her father, Clarabell directs the witty frolics while making her foolish suitors cross-dress as lewd ladies of pleasure to be arrested later. Clarabell goes into the tavern disguised as her cousin Philario to deliver Rightwit a warning message that her father had his people watch Rightwit. At a tavern, she is "prettily metamorphos'd" (3.48) as a "she-rogue" (3.58), which gives her freedom to roam the city without compromising her reputation. When Rightwit invites Clarabell to stay in the tavern with him, she decides to stay and "droll away" the night together (3.59): "'Tis very late, and yet I have a mind to go and put some trick upon the widgeons to make us merry. They are such fools they'll never know me" (3.62-64). When Clarabell, together with Rightwit and Philario, walks into the other part of the tavern to join the company of her other two suitors, Sir Gregory and Zany, she is already unmistakably perceived as "a young cock-chicken of the game," (that is, a cocky young womanizer) by other men (3.94). In disguise,

[50] As Hume points out, rakes rarely show remorse in the still early phase of the development of dramatic libertines. Serious drives and attempts to reform libertines are fully fledged only after 1680s and 1690s.

Clarabell complains about the lack of wine or ladies, which makes the tavern dull, while generously paying the drawer to procure music, women, and drinks for the group (3.90-100).

Disguised as a young cocky womanizer, Clarabell suggests that some of the men in the tavern should "disguise and act" as women to liven up the dull mood of the crowd (3.138). To this idea of "a handsome frolic" that would be "worth talking on," Sir Gregory and Zany who strive to pull off a good couple of frolics themselves are immediately on board (3.140). Sir Gregory is eager to join the folic because "'Tis *à la mode* to be talk'd on" (3.142) and Zany even begs to let him perform the woman because he has an experience in performing a woman's part in a "country morris[51]" (3.144). Their eagerness to cross-dress and perform as women in a tavern is clearly part of a comical device that makes Sir Gregory and Zany the play's fools. It also shows, however, how rakish men about the town, or aspiring rakes, obsess with what is considered fashionable and with being gossiped about. The prank reaches its climax when Sir Gregory and Zany, only left with the tavern bill and in. women's clothes, are arrested as "lewd beasts in petticoats" (4.44). Despite the lack of stage or costume directions, we can assume that women's clothes the tavern mistress brought for Sir Gregory and Zany must be the type of clothes that make them to be identified as "ladies of pleasure," meaning "whores," as the Constable and Swallow both recognize them as such. Moreover, they are not considered "good" ones because according to Swallow "their very looks give [him] two stomachs, one to vomit, another to purge" (4.46-47).

Alison Findlay rightly points out that the scene shows the ways Polwhele utilizes the figure of the actress and the character to defrock "the theatrical tradition of transvestite performance of women's roles" as "the character, playwright, and actress deflect charges of

[51] According to Milhous and Hume, a country morris is a rustic entertainment dumb show "in fancy costume featuring extravagant dancing" (65)

lewdness back onto the men who commodify them" ("Playing for All" 52). As Findlay reminds us, Clarabell's pranks must have had much bigger impact when the scene is performed on stage: an actress in man's clothes (Clarabell) directs and controls the scene where actors in women's clothes (Sir Gregory and Zany) are condemned to be "lewd." Clarabell's masterly performance of antics not only demonstrates her capabilities to "pull off a gig" better than any other rakes in the play but also playfully mocks the behaviors of male rakes.

Clarabell's teasing, sarcastic frolics are not solely targeted at the fools of the play but also at Rightwit despite her romantic interest in him. Rightwit's rakish behaviors work as good materials for Clarabell's frolics as well. In Act 4, Rightwit is confronted by his previous mistresses and their bastard children, demanding his paternity support. Polwhele here rewrites a scene from Howard's comedy *All Mistaken* (1665), where the rake Philidor is similarly chased by three women who have been bringing up his bastard children (Act 1). In Howard's play, the rake Philidor confidently celebrates his fertility before he chases away the women. In Polwhele's rewrite of the scene, however, Philidor turns into an on-stage spectacle when his cast-off mistresses strap his bastard children to his back to make him look "just like the monster with three heads, one growing out of each shoulder and the third where it should, i'th'middle" (4.146-48). Rightwit remains mostly helpless with his bastard children tied upon his back, and Clarabell, as an audience to the scene, enjoys witnessing how Rightwit deals with what he "purchas'd willingly" (4.151). Clarabell's laughs fill the stage even when she is off-stage, unseen while peeping how he is ridiculed by the vengeful fools Sir Gregory and Zany (4.162-90). She also refuses to unbind the children from his back per Rightwit's request, at least not until she has "tired [herself] with laughing" at his three-headed monstrosity (4.205). Polwhele reworks the scene from Howard's play, where Mirida does not get to see her rakish partner Philidor's cast-off

mistresses and his bastards, by involving the romantic heroine Clarabell in actively mocking the male rake's behaviors. The male rake's fertility and his bastard children must also have echoes of libertine courtiers, including Charles II, who were notorious for having multiple mistresses and bastards, as is referenced in Swallow's middle-aged clerk Mark's song that celebrates that "he with a score may multiply" is doing a service to his nation and generation (2.509-12). Clarabell's mocking of and laughing at Rightwit also invokes the image of Nell Gwyn, whose affair with Charles II led her to give birth to two sons by the king in 1670 and 1671, adding to a number of Charles's other bastard children.

Clarabell's extraordinariness as a character goes beyond "the gusto of her practical joking [which] matches even Rightwit's" (Milhous and Hume "Introduciton" 23). Her wit does not prove her as a fitting match for the rakish rogue Rightwit; rather, Clarabell is clearly a dominant figure in the couple's competitive romping and frolicking. When Rightwit and his friend Philario are locked in prison for binding Rightwit's bastard children on Swallow's back, Clarabell designs the scene and directs the plan to get them out of the prison by deceiving the Turnkey:

> Rightwit. 'S death, I'll down and beat out the rogue's brains with his bunch of keys. That's a safe and sure way—
>
> Clarabell. To be hang'd. Does your neck itch for a rope? I have a safer way, by far, than that. As my humour is comical, so shall my exploits be. If I free you not without a tragedy, condemn me.
>
> Rightwit. Dear rogue, thou cam'st to free us, then.
>
> Clarabell. But how? Can you tell? No brains, betwixt you both. Here—clap on these false beards to disguise your true rogueries. I will go work with the Turnkey; and

> when I give the watchword, come down. I'll whisper it to you. Mark, be ready for your business. I'll bring you off clearly, except you spoil yourselves by the way for fear. (4.401-13)

Upon hearing Rightwit's rather violent ideas, which could get them into further trouble, Clarabell suggests a "safer way," that fits her comical humor. She proposes to disguise herself as a "Sister" who gives the prisoners some counsel and throws the Turnkey off guard. As a director of the scene that follows, Clarabell brings in the props (false beards) and directs actors of the scene with cues for movement.[52] She is the witty rogue and the director of the frolicking scene, and she does not forget to tease the men for having "[n]o brains" to properly "frolick." Polwhele makes it clear throughout the play that Clarabell outwits Rightwit as in the tavern and the prison scenes, with the exception of the last act where Rightwit has to respond to Clarabell's dare to get her father's marriage consent: "Meantime, go get my father's good will, and I'm a rogue if I marry thee not as soon as thou hast it (*All laugh*.)" (4.447-48). Rightwit succeeds in tricking Swallow to give him consent for marriage and as a result he "wins" Clarabell in the final scene, but this does not necessarily mean that either Rightwit or Clarabell is going to transform into a traditional married couple with newly assumed roles as a husband and wife. Although Clarabell has shown persistent attraction to Rightwit, the marriage is proposed as a playful dare, which people (including the couple) took at least partially as a joke. It is difficult to imagine that the couple would show different relationship dynamics as a married couple. Clarabell would continue to outsmart Rightwit while teasing him for having "[n]o brains."

[52] See Carr for Polwhele's use of the beard and its properties in establishing "their skill and stagecraft in a male-dominated sphere, thereby solidifying their presence in a field dominated by men and marked by sexual exploitation of female bodies." (191-92).

Clarabell's practical joking, playful dare, and light-hearted singing and dancing reveal more about her female libertine heart and her cynical views on male rakes. Clarabell sings three songs in total, one in Act 3 and two in Act 4, all as answers to Rightwit's rakish advances. In Act 3, Rightwit tries to kiss her in the tavern while suggesting that they "beget an excellent race of merry bastards" (3.103-04). Clarabell laughs off his advances and sings:

> Thou shalt not touch my lips,
> Nor anything else that is warm.
> I know thou wilt do me no good,
> And by God, thou shalt do me no harm. (3.113-16)

In this simple and playful song which Clarabell sings while she is disguised a young and cocky womanizer in a tavern, she shows how she well understands what sexual advances from a man like Rightwit can do to a young woman. Clarabell powerfully but also humorously refuses to be publicly touched in lips and "anything else that is warm" because it will do a woman like her "no good." Clarabell is adamant here that she is not going to let *him* do her any harm. Clarabell's strong-willed rejection of Rightwit's rakish advances fit her comical humor because she sings it as a song, but nonetheless delivers a smart young woman's critical understanding of the gender-specific conditions and consequences of libertine actions.

When Clarabell visits Rightwit and Philario in prison to get them out using her wit, Rightwit again makes vulgar advances telling her that he will "cure thy [her] greensickness" and "kiss thee [her] a little" because that is what she "cam'st for" (4.356, 368-69). Clarabell responds in two songs, one to his suggestion to cure her "greensickness" and another to his assertion that

even “the holiest of you [women] cannot live without it [a kiss]” (4.369-70). Both songs cleverly refute two popular misconceptions of female sexuality from an actual female perspective:

> If I were tortur’d with greensickness,
> Dost think I would be cur’d by thee?
> I then too soon might swell in thickness—
> A pox upon your remedy!
> The cure may prove worse than the anguish,
> And I of a fresh disease might languish.
> But I’ll keep myself from such distemper
> In spite of all that you dare do;
> Although you are so free to venter,
> I’ll be hang’d if I did not baffle you. (4.358-67)

Since the male “remedy” for women’s supposed greensickness is sex, Clarabell sings how such a “remedy” could lead a woman to unexpected pregnancy. Such an outcome may prove worse than the greensickness itself and even develop into a “fresh disease.” Therefore, Clarabell sings of how such greensickness is not a disease that make women suffer but men’s “cure” that gives women anguish. She ends the first song with a strong declaration, as she does in her earlier song, that *she* will keep herself from such distemper despite Rightwit’s persistent sexual advances.

Clarabell’s last and the third song, which almost immediately follows directly, counters Rightwit’s claim that all women crave a kiss (or sex) from men and cannot live without it. Rightwit echoes what male seducers have long argued about women’s sexuality and sexual

intentions, when he says he *knows* what Clarabell wants.[53] Laughing at Rightwit's conception of female sexuality, Clarabell answers:

> Kissing's not such a recreation
> But, faith and troth, I can live without it.
> Though I confess 'tis all in fashion
> And so will continue, we need not doubt it.
> Though many a cuckold, I am certain,
> Hath been made by kissing—and their fortune.
> But to Heaven all cuckolds go, 'tis granted;
> Therefore my husband's soul I'll save:
> Of horns he never shall be scanted,
> Whilst I but youth and courage have. (4.371-80)

Clarabell points out that a woman can certainly live without a kiss from a man, not necessarily because she does not enjoy her sexuality but because she pursues her own desire. If she kisses, she does so not because she cannot live without it, as some men might think, but because she wants to. While there is no room for women's intentions and active agency in arguing that all women are completely driven by blind carnal desire, Clarabell refutes such a claim by singing about how women can explore and control their desire as they wish. Her argument thus moves on to women who make their husbands cuckolds by pursuing their desire. Quoting a proverbial consolation popular in comedies of the late seventeenth century, "to Heaven all cuckolds go,"

[53] "Come, prithee let me kiss thee a little. 'Tis that, I know, thou cam'st for. The holiest of you cannot live without it." (4.368-70).

Clarabell humorously sings that she will give her husband cuckold's horns and save his soul as long as her "youth and courage" do not run out. Whether she is serious about cuckolding her imaginary husband or not is not altogether clear, as again her humor is sarcastic, and it can possibly be part of her rhetorical jest to show how she can rhetorically outsmart Rightwit. However, her songs carry far more serious responses to what men think and say about female sexuality. Clarabell's songs, if read as female playwright's and actresses' real responses to what has been argued about greensickness and women's sexual drive, provide more complicated portrayal of an independent and liberating Gwyn-type "gay couple" heroine. The ending of the play, where Clarabell marries a rakish and bankrupt Rightwit, should not lead us brush off what she, as a brilliantly witty and outspoken heroine, has shown throughout the play.

As in most of the early Restoration sex-comedies, the perils and evils of matrimony are only temporarily put aside at the end of *The Frolicks*. Although the play ends in a festive mood of a masquerade, celebrating four new marriages and one restored marriage, not one match can be considered remotely close to being "ideal." Two foolish suitors to Clarabell, Sir Gregory and Zany, thinking that they are marrying Clarabell, are respectively married to Lord Courtall's cast-off mistress and a bawd Procreate and Rightwit's sister Leonora. Lady Meanwell's sister, Mistress Faith, marries Sir Francis Makelove under the pretense that she is an heiress. Lady Meanwell successfully cuckolds her husband while making him believe that she is faithful to him. The play's unrepentant rake, Lord Courtall, whose married status does not stop him from pursuing a number of mistresses, remains unpunished for all his sexual escapades and successfully disposes of his ex-mistress Procreate by tricking a fool to marry her. "[A] general happiness" in the end, as the rake Lord Courtall declares, exists in the moment of the masquerade where people are either blinded by the reality or willfully ignorant of it (5.342). Most marriages

in the play are created and maintained despite their being based on deceptions and tricks. As the romantic center of the play's more amoral and cynical portrayal of marriages, the Clarabell and Rightwit pair is not entirely based on deception and lack of mutual affection. Both show attraction to each other and benefit from marriage; the marriage detaches Clarabell from her abusive father, who considers her "a pert, headstrong baggage" (5.278), and grants Rightwit some financial gain. Clarabell and Rightwit's marriage, however, first proposed as a playful dare to trick Clarabell's disapproving father Swallow, promises to be an unstable and temporary union even without the gay couple's "balanced attempt to safeguard both their own freedoms and the bond between them" (Howe 71). Rightwit is the same rake who once "chaffer[ed] away a brave estate for wine, pox, and wenches" (2.56-57), discarded at least three of his bastard children, and persistently demanded sex ever since they first met. Even though she meant "not to marry with any man" (4.445-46), Clarabell prefers Rightwit to other foolish suitors enough to consider him as a partner for the time when she is "weary of [her] life." She may or may not become a cuckold-maker, as she warned him in her song, but would certainly continue to maintain her libertine and critical views on marriage. Polwhele uses marriage as a fitting dramatic device to end a comedy, but does so in a way that cynically laughs off the notion that it is an ideal union between lovers.

As close reading of Clarabell's songs reveal more about her playful critique of the male rakes and her own libertine views, what seem at first glance lighthearted, scrappy, and superficial songs deserve more attention. While acknowledging and defending the play's lack of literary merit as "the work of an intelligent young playwright learning her trade," Milhous and Hume note that this play could be better appreciated if enjoyed in part as we enjoy today's popular entertainment TV shows ("Introduction" 32):

> Critics in search of theme and "meaning" tend to forget how easily Pepys is charmed by an isolated scene, character, jig, song—or shapely female leg. *The Frolicks* must be judged as a lively stage vehicle well contrived to amuse its audience. The lavish use of song and dance, the rapid succession of skitlike scenes, the horseplay, all remain dead on the printed page. In the theatre, boisterously performed, they could serve as the basis for an entertaining romp. The play is indeed just what its author calls it—a series of frolics. ("Introduction" 33)

Milhous and Hume challenge the ways that we often read printed plays, pointing out how easy it is for us modern readers to overlook such plays' pursuit of theatrical fun as a popular entertainment. Many features that would make the play good entertainment, "the rapid succession of skitlike scenes," for example, are often read as lacking significant form or meaning on page. As Milhous and Hume argue, this play could be better appreciated when we take the entertainment value at its core where Clarabell masters the stage as the celebrated hero. A series of the most entertaining frolics are performed and designed by Clarabell, contrary to what the audience might have expected to see when the play opens with Rightwit as "an extravagant rake." As Pepys mentions several times in his diaries, the audience appreciated the entertainment value of seeing the actress's dancing a little jig in boy's clothes sometimes more than the play's "meaning" itself.

Clarabell as the master of the "frolicking," her singing, dancing, and cross-dressing, could also be better appreciated as a female libertine character if we imagine how powerful her performance must have been on stage both as an eroticized object and as a sexual subject.

Though the actress's "shapely female leg" must have been a main attraction for the audience, her singing and dancing allow her to perform her womanhood as a sexual subject. Possibly written for Gwyn, whose sharp wit and excellence in performing gay breeches roles were very well known, Clarabell is a character that celebrates the actress's deft manipulation of scenes dominated and governed by the rules of male rakish desire. Imagining a blend of a female extravagant rake and a gay couple heroine, Polwhele created an early female libertine character who shows mastery in sexual exchanges. Such a female character shows Polwhele's critical understanding of theatrical repertoire of the 1660s, including theatrical tropes and the audience's taste in entertainment. She also skillfully capitalizes on the talent and celebrity of the star actress in order to introduce an extravagant "she-rogue" who outwits the men about her and pursues fun in frolicking.

IV.3 A Whore in Love: Elizabeth Barry in Aphra Behn's *The Second Part of The Rover* (1681)

Aphra Behn's dark and cynical comedy, *The Rover Part II*, written and performed in 1681, features a prostitute-heroine ardently in love with a libertine rake-hero. One of the most celebrated and admired actresses of the time, Elizabeth Barry played the infatuated La Nuche, creating a new and sympathetic image for the prostitute character.[54] As opposed to simply vilifying prostitutes as mercenary, callous, and loose, La Nuche is deeply enamoured and suffering for love. Patriarchal control of fathers and husbands is not an issue for La Nuche, as it is for most heroines in romantic plots, but her unyielding sexual desire for her rake is what is at the heart of the working women's dilemma. Behn and Barry collaborated in creating this new-

[54] See Howe for Barry's role in creating a new type of suffering and sympathetic whore characters.

type female character whose sexuality and desire to "win" the men she loves is fully explored in the play.[55] Despite the new character type's protofeminist significance, however, the play's ending is rather disappointing. La Nuche enters into a non-matrimonial commitment with her rake Willmore after she has off-stage sex with him, even though he thought she was a stranger he met in the dark. The play ends with a compromised "happy ending" where La Nuche gets what she wants knowing that it will not last long.

This compromised "happy ending," ostensibly celebrates the victory of the libertine rake, as Willmore is able to have sex without paying the courtesan. However, this does not mean that Behn "sacrifices the complexity of her female characters to the needs of royalist propaganda" (Burke 131). Although the character of a "whore" in love with a cavalier rake could allow political readings of the play written and performed during the Exclusion Crisis, as critics have pointed out, Behn's female characters are more than symbolic vehicles of her Tory agenda.[56] Considering the political significance of the time and very prominent political presences of Charles II's royal mistresses, it is almost difficult *not* to connect Behn's depiction of women with public sexuality to her royalist and other political agendas, especially when contemporary political attacks against the monarch depict the court as a place "where all women are or will be whores" (Wynne 47). However, it is my intention here to look beyond what the royalist Behn might have intended with her sympathetic portrayal of prostitute heroines and instead to unravel the complexity of Behn's "whores" and their female libertine desires. As Restoration culture was the first in England to "publicize, and in some cases to celebrate female sexuality," as Kevin

[55] Noting Barry in the part of La Nuche is immensely significant as the actress played the part of Hellena in *The Rover Part I*. The virtuous virgin heroine Hellena and the courtesan heroine La Nuche are literally integrated in the actress's body on stage.
[56] For political readings of the play, see Markley, Owen, Pfeiffer.

Sharpe points out, it provided a proper stage for female characters with public sexuality (203). As a play that explores the multifaceted problem of female sexual desire, *The Rover Part II* should be read as a black comedy that takes the dilemma of women's desire as its subject matter, not just as a vehicle for Behn's support of Stuart rule. I will discuss how Behn dramatizes a wider range of female desires and perspectives by capitalizing on a pool of experienced actresses in The Duke's Company. Then I will examine the prostitute-heroine La Nuche as a female libertine by focusing on the ways her own dilemma, and that of other minor female characters like Petronella, reflect how complicated it can be to be a female libertine—or a "whore in love."

Despite its focus on women with actual sexual desire, *The Rover Part II* has not appeared in many critical works, except in brief references in relation to *The Rover Part I*. In a small number of significant works on *The Rover Part II*, Behn's treatment of the relationship between female characters and restoration politics has been well highlighted.[57] However, Behn's plays as "the corporeal clutter of a stage performance" have not been fully explored yet by many critics (Hughes 2). Elizabeth Howe argues that Behn and Barry's joint efforts in creating the original heroine characters—chaste and suffering prostitutes—successfully drew attention to women and women's problems at the end of the seventeenth century. Derek Hughes analyzes *The Revenge* (1680) and *The Rover Part II,* focusing on the ways that these two relatively apolitical plays, which were performed during the political crisis, show Behn's interaction with the contemporary theatrical repertoire and her manipulation of audience expectations. Building on this scholarship, I read Behn's "prostitute plays" as full-on dramatic explorations of female desire, coauthored by the playwright and a group of well-established casts of actresses active at around 1680.

[57] Hutner and Markley read the celebration of female desire and Behn's support for the Tory rules. Owen focuses on Behn's political affiliation coexisting with the negative treatment of male libertinism. Pfeiffer examines an ambiguous portrayal of sexualized women to argue how Behn intervenes in contemporary partisan politics.

Behn's play is full of female characters, including the prostitute-heroine, who act on their desire either within, in-between, or outside the rules of patriarchy. Capitalizing on a cast of experienced actresses in The Duke's Company, Behn's works represent a wider range of women and female perspectives on the public stage. Highlighting Behn's possible experience in the process of the theatrical production of her plays, Gilli Bush-Bailey points out that Behn's dramatic work should be situated "within the network of actresses in the Duke's Company" during her exclusive association with the company between 1670 and 1682 (38).[58] Heralded by several star-actresses including Barry, Mary Betterton, Charlotte Butler, and Elizabeth Currer, and supported by a number of minor or unidentified actresses, Behn's plays feature women that represent fuller spectrum of female experiences in early modern England. It was this company of women that not only brought about new opportunities for professional women, including playwrights and actresses, but also allowed diverse female characters to be represented on stage. Written and performed at the peak of the twelve-year period of Behn's association with the Duke's Company, *The Rover Part II* dramatizes the complexity of female desire and resists a monolithic portrayal of desiring women.

The brilliance of the play lies in its pool of female characters, which resists a simple and easy portrayal of women and what women want. La Nuche's inner debate between her desire for Willmore and her need for money oddly resembles her rival Ariadne's dilemma between pursuing a stranger of her choice and marrying her detested cousin as her father wants. La Nuche's money concerns are inevitably shadowed by her old bawd Petronella's extreme detestation of poverty and strong desire to regain youth and beauty. In the subplot, two Jewish sisters from Mexico comically echo the other women characters' status in the marriage market

[58] See Bush-Bailey's table of Behn's plays performed by the actresses in the Duke's Company titled "The company of women (40-42)."

and in the prostitution. As foreign heiresses with undesirable—or less marketable— physical appearances, these Jewish sisters lay bare the ways men desire women for different purposes. However, even when the "monstrous" sisters parody how men treat women, they also show their unique, respective desires. The Giant is adamant not to marry a man "whose Person and Courage shall not bear some proportion to [hers]" (3.70-71), while the Dwarf is happy to please her suitor by "completing" her beauty according to his desire (3.107). Female desire in Behn's plays thus hardly comes down to one thing or the other, especially when they often discuss their differences and conflicting views on stage with each other.

While Behn persistently wrote more female characters for stage throughout her career as a dramatist and worked with a number of actresses, Behn and her company of women staged a particularly interesting web of female characters in these plays. Most importantly, the play explores the relationship between the prostitute-heroine and their bawd, "a procuress, or a woman keeping a place of prostitution" ("Bawd"). As a feminine-gendered term from around late seventeenth century according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "bawd" also referred to women who had histories as prostitutes but did not necessarily run a brothel. Behn's bawds likewise worked in the sex-trade, but they also continued to work in the trade despite drastically decreased number of customers. With the absence of patriarchs, bawds are more than simple middle-women for the prostitutes; using their previous experience in the sex trade, they teach details of the trade to younger girls, negotiate appointments with the customers, and run the business. They are also to a certain extent in rivalry with the prostitute-heroines, as Petronella tries to scavenge the business opportunities the younger ones missed. Bawds' concerns contradict those of the prostitute-heroine who has the heart and passion of a virgin gentlewoman but without matching social status and money. The prostitutes' business is "only to be lov'd not

to Love," as La Nuche well understands, and their desire "to Love" could be dangerous both to the heroine and their bawd, as it could impede their business. Almost as if to externally dramatize the heroine's dilemma between her sexual desire and her concerns as the prostitute, the mercenary and old bawds incessantly remind their younger counterparts of the perils of their passion and choice.

The Rover Part II thoroughly explores the complexity of two women's relationship. Behn's collaboration with the actresses to further develop the prostitute-heroine and the bawd pair continues as Barry, who played Hellena in *The Rover Part I*, is now a "Spanish Curtezan" named La Nuche and Mrs. Norris, who played Hellena's governess Callis, is now the bawd Petronella. Critics often read Petronella either as an evil or comic foil in directly oppositional to La Nuche's tragic heroine character. However, the relationship between the two women and the ways Petronella influences La Nuche's choices have not been much explored. Bawds prioritize commercial values and women's monetary exchange value in the market, while prostitutes in love resist such values and market rules by trying to follow their "nature." This makes them more like heiresses or gentlewomen like Hellena and Ariadne. As Derek Hughes notes, Behn presents her "fascination with the interchange and confusion between the gentlewoman and the whore" (*The Theatre*, 125). As La Nuche thinks and acts more like "Women of Quality" in the play, English gentleman like Blunt and Fetherfool find it hard to tell one from the other (1.382). Therefore, Petronella the bawd brings in the financial and social realities of the prostitutes to the romantic love comedy and cast the dark shadows over the choices these prostitutes make. As an obstacle impeding the prostitute's "nature" to love, Petronella not only teaches her protégé ways to make her sexuality commercially profitable but also keeps assisting her in procuring new

customers. Petronella's advice and instruction address primarily her own business concerns as a procurer, but they ominously reflect the financial and social realities of working women.

La Nuche's strong and persistent attraction to Willmore is repeatedly interrupted by Petronella's aged body, her own insecurities, and her persistent questioning whenever La Nuche agonizes over love. Petronella's own experience and her aged body bring La Nuche to her senses when she is most determined to throw herself and her career away (albeit temporarily) for Willmore. When La Nuche first appears on stage in act 1, it is Petronella's body as "a decay'd poor old forsaken Whore" that helps her to extinguish a flaming passion for Willmore upon seeing him (1.269-70). Petronella, as a ridiculous and comic object, casts a haunting shadow over La Nuche's status as the most sought-after courtesan in Madrid. Petronella represents what La Nuch will be on day in the future. In a comic subplot, Willmore disguises himself as a mountebank and cozen his English friends with the magical elixir that brings the dead back to life and a powder that can supposedly make women stay "fair and wear eternal Youth" (2.237-38). Petronella, whose aged and grotesque sexuality is described as an object of ridicule, is introduced into the play's second act, the mountebank's stage, when her body is "*Dress'd like a Girl of Fifteen*," carried in a chair, and paraded in front of men. As "a famous out-worn Curtezan" who has a history as a prostitute, Petronella attempts to restore her business resources by purchasing a magical aid from the disguised Willmore (2.278). In this "Baths of Reformation," Willmore promises that his magic will work and Petronella soon should be able to again "wound a thousand Hearts with Love" (2.345). Petronella pays him fifty *pistols* and promises him that "as I earn it you shall have more" (2.347). Although Petronella does not say much in this scene, her ridiculous purchase and the visual presentation of her body, dressed in girl's clothes and elevated in a chair, speak louder on stage and overlap with La Nuche's

lingering concerns for her fortune. The spectacle of old Petronella dressed like a fifteen-year-old girl raised up and down in a chair on stage at the back of a group of men pursuing La Nuche creates a disturbing comic effect on La Nuche's romantic prospect with Willmore.

Examining the generally negative and hostile portrayal of the bawd in *The Rover Part II*, Pfeiffer notes that this scene broadcasts "both Petronella's desire for youth and [her] gullibility" in order to ridicule the bawd as a "desperate, easily fooled woman who will go to any length to continue attempting to attract men" (10). Pfeiffer also points out that Behn's "cruel treatment" of Petronella as "the focus of *The Rover, Part II*'s ire" can be explained as the playwright's joining "her royalist peers in turning a sexualized female figure into a symbol of the anarchy that could ensue were the Stuarts to lose power" (14).[59] Considering how Behn positively portrays sexualized women and women's sexuality elsewhere especially in *The Rover Part I*, Behn's characterization of Petronella as an object of ridicule and mockery might make more sense if read as a political statement of Behn's Tory politics. This reading, however, pays little attention to the ways Petronella's experience as a prostitute can be read alongside La Nuche's dilemma and eventual decision. What makes an especially strong contrast between the courtesan and the bawd is their current physical desirability. La Nuche's divine, angelic form makes her the most sought-after courtesan while Petronella's aged body makes her an outworn whore. According to how men within the play describe her, the undesirability of Petronella's body is the result of her age. During the "Baths of Reformation," when her body is objected to the most vicious ridicule, it is adorned with a young girl's clothes, which visually presents how her age plays a significant role in separating her from La Nuche. As Blunt comments upon seeing Petronella, when he

[59] Pfeiffer notes how Behn characterizes Petronella using similar language and rhetoric from the Exclusion Crisis-era satires against the London procuress Mother Creswell, a Whig who publicly opposed to Stuart rule.

mockingly compares her to Helen of Troy, it is "her Antiquity" that make her an "out-worn Curtezan" (2.279, 278).

Since Petronella's age, which has eroded her once celebrated beauty, is what makes her undesirable and poor, it is inevitable that La Nuche's now-celebrated angelic form would soon eventually become quite similar to her bawd's aged body. When a woman's body and sexuality are indispensable tools in her trade, choosing love and its pleasure over her trade can be an especially riskier choice. Because La Nuche is quite well aware of such risks, Petronella's persuasion often succeeds in bringing La Nuche to her senses. In act 4, extremely upset when she thought she lost her chance with Willmore, La Nuche fiercely blames her bawd Petronella for teaching her "to Jilt, to flatter and deceive" against her "plain Nature" to love (4.362, 363). Fighting off her pupil's rage, Petronella asks La Nuche: "will Love maintain ye?" (4.351). Petronella's question raises important issues about the perils of a woman's pursuing her own sexual desire—or following the "plain Nature" that teaches one to love—when she needs to earn money and her body's "Beauty and Youth"—the tools of her trade—do not last long. Petronella persuasively points out that a woman's aged body itself is not a problem when it is "splendidly attended" and adorned (4.371). Offering her "wretchedly despis'd and poor" self as an example, Petronella weeps and persuades La Nuche to be more "industrious in [her] Youth" to avoid the desperate financial situation she finds herself in (4.367, 373). Using her own aged body, experience in sex trade, and their shared social status as "working-class" women as examples, Petronella warns La Nuche how dangerous falling in love and neglecting her trade can be. Falling in love with and pursuing a desired man that a woman desires can mean taking much bigger risks in life, especially for working women like La Nuche and Petronella.

Petronella's desperate "Counsel" and her regret for not being more "industrious" in her trade when she was younger go hand in hand with the schemes she pulls towards the end of the play when La Nuche chooses to love Willmore. Although it is true that Petronella remains mostly in the comic realm as an object of ridicule and laughter, this unique character is never without concerns of financially supporting herself. Behn characterizes her bawd to insinuate the desperate financial situation Petronella is in. La Nuche's neglect ofher customers and business duties can be detrimental to Petronella's business as a keeper of the bawdyhouse. When La Nuche does not come back to the house for two appointments with Carlo and Fetherfool as she promised she would do, Petronella, who cannot afford to lose the business, comes up with a trick to "finish two good works at once; earn five hundred Crowns, and keep up the honour of the House" (4.335-36). By putting two men together in one bed and taking advantage of the fact that they want to keep the meeting a secret and protect their reputation, Petronella successfully takes their money and keeps her business unharmed. In the last act, when Petronella fails despite all her efforts to keep La Nuche in the trade, she intends to steal La Nuche's money and jewels, purchase beauty and youth from a mountebank, and start a new life as a virgin "fled from the rage of an incens'd Brother" (5.388-89). Her attempt to secure wealth and maybe some romantic interests results in epic failure when she loses all prospects because she hands it over to a good-for-nothing English gentleman named Blunt who deceives her with an empty promise to "secure" and "marry" her (5.391). Rather than simply being "avaricious and unsympathetic to love" or just "overtaken by greed," Petronella comically satirizes the stakes that a woman like La Nuche has to face when she is not an heiress like Hellena or Ariadne (Pfeiffer 14).

The close working partnership between La Nuche and Petronella can be seen throughout most part of the play until La Nuche finally acts on her desire for Willmore in the last act after a

full four and a half acts of hesitation. The celebrated courtesan and her bawd appear on stage in the second scene of act 1, where "a great many People" pour out and crowding in front of the Church probably after the mass.[60] Church, like a public theater house or the streets of London, is depicted as an open space where people gather, watch others, and make arrangements for clandestine meetings. As she did with the previous scene where Don Carlo and Willmore had a sword fight to take La Nuche, Behn depicts the scene again with such an ambiguity that enables the reading of the scene either as a cautious courtship or as prostitution. Two sets of bargaining/dealings happen at the same time, one between La Nuche and Willmore at the center of the stage and the other between Petronella (for the sake of La Nuche) and another English gentleman, Fetherfool, at the corner of the stage. The audience only hears the conversation between La Nuche and Willmore but is visually presented with Petronella's work to get La Nuche customers.[61] Noticing Fetherfool's interest in and attraction to La Nuche, Petronella offers to "manage" the business with him while La Nuche wishes to manage her lovers' negotiation with Willmore.

P: Let me alone to manage him, I'le to him—

La N: Or to the Devil, so I had one Minutes time to speak to Willmore in.

P: And accosting him thus—Tell him—

La N: (in a hasty tone)—I am desperately in Love with him, and am Daughter, Wife, or Mistress to some Grandee—bemone the condition of Women of Quality in Spain, who by

[60] Considering that the setting of the play is in Madrid, it is likely that it is a Catholic church and therefore part of Behn's deliberate scheme to mock it as a place of prostitution.

[61] Various levels of spying, spectating, or gazing happen in the play where characters are being watched by others almost all the time, and the Church scene is the first where the audience gets to see how this is a society where people are always watched by others.

too much constraint are obliged to speak first—but were we blest like other Nations where Men and Women meet—

[La Nuche] Speaking so fast, [Petronella] offering to put in her word,

Is still prevented by 'tothers running on

P: What herds of Cuckolds wou'd Spain breed—'Slife, I could find my heart to forswear your service, have I taught ye your Trade to become my instructer, how to couzen a dull Phlegmatick greasy brained *English* Man—go and expect your wishes. (1.377-89)

La Nuche appears on stage already quite smitten by Willmore and starts a dialogue that echoes that of a virtuous heiress in love. Contrary to her determination from the previous scene, she enjoys imagining that she is a woman of quality courting Willmore. Petronella laughs and interrupts her by telling her that she has a "Trade" that she needs to pay attention to. Petronella does not speak again for about a hundred lines before she comes back to take La Nuche away from Willmore. However, Petronella working as La Nuche's "Matron" in the back, never leaves the stage and shadows what seems to be a lovers' quarrel between La Nuche and Willmore.

Money incessantly interrupts La Nuche's romantic daydreaming with Willmore, where she can "bemone the condition of Women of Quality in Spain." While in the following scene Ariadne proudly tells Willmore that she is "not to be sold," La Nuche must fight off her desire in order to be sold at a fair price (2.35). Impoverished cavalier Willmore, as part of his incessant effort to avoid paying for sex, ferociously condemns La Nuche's business and trade that "all this Cunning's for a little Mercenary gain" while claiming that he owns his poverty with pride because it is "a Royal Cause [he] suffer[s] for" (1.462, 456). Willmore's ranting against La Nuche's trade, however, immediately turns to an object of ridicule when Petronella walks toward

the front of the stage after closing the deal with Fetherfool and takes La Nuche away from Willmore telling her that "Poverty's catching" as does a venereal disease (1.469).

Money is more important in *The Rover Part II* than in probably any other Behn's plays, and it is of special significance for female characters. The play portrays how wealth can allow women more freedom, but simultaneously notes how vulnerable and temporary such freedom can be. The wealth that the women in this play possess can be roughly divided into two types: inheritance from their fathers as a dowry (as in the cases of Hellena, Ariadne, and the two monsters), and money earned, as in the cases of La Nuche and Petronella. Heiresses, despite their different shapes and forms, are not consistently haunted by the fear of poverty as working women are. The two monsters with "a hundred thousand pounds a piece" become highly sought-after maids, and whether their suitors are financially wealthy enough to support them is not something that they consider in choosing a husband (1.171). However, they are often bound to the terms that they should marry a man of their father's or patron's choosing because such wealth only comes to women as a form of dowry. Romantic heroines in Behn's plays often strive to exert their power by pursuing their desire. In an attempt to make her own choice free from the patriarch's control, Ariadne tries running away with her casket of jewels and eloping with Willmore. Ariadne's attempts fail in the midst of a confusion of identities, and she reluctantly accepts the marriage to Beaumond, as her social condition prescribes her to do. Upon marriage, as can be seen in the case of Hellena in *The Rover Part I*, such wealth can easily be dispensed with by husbands.

Working women in the play who are free from the imprisonment of social status are not bound by such patriarchal control because their self-earned wealth is theirs to do with as they choose. Since their property does not require them to marry particular men, it does not serve any

other than their own wish. La Nuche and Petronella's wealth, however, is inevitably short-lived and vulnerable because it was attained by exchanging their limited and temporary resources of beauty and youth. It is this oddly (but only temporarily) liberating position La Nuche finds herself in, when she is charmed by Willmore. The fear of poverty that encumbers La Nuche's sexual desire until the last act of the play plays a significant role in the characterization of Behn's prostitute-heroine. Unlike Willmore's "honourable poverty," La Nuche's obsessive fear of poverty is real and haunting (1.36-37). Even when her desire for Willmore is the strongest, La Nuche's fear does not go away entirely. From the first scene where she tells herself not to forget what happened to Petronella, "a decay'd poor old forsaken Whore" (1.269-70) to the moment when she murmurs "No, I was made for better Exercises" (5.83) and proclaims that she should not choose to suffer "every ill of Poverty" (5.125), La Nuche struggles to fight off her desire and avoid her ruin. Moments in which La Nuche gives in to her sexual desire for Willmore are preceded and followed by her most determined rejection of poverty. Act 5 opens with La Nuche and Willmore about to have sex in her chamber, which had been prepared for her appointment Beaumond who already finished paying. In the previous scene, La Nuche quite adamantly insists that she will not be ruled by her desire and only "submit to Interest" to "be wise" and "be rich" (4.391, 388). Thus, the prepared apartment, adorned with flowers and perfume, ready for commercial sex, surprises first the audience and then Beaumond as both see La Nuche "in an undress" and with Willmore "at her Feet, on his knees." Willmore clearly sees "a yielding" in La Nuche's eyes, and La Nuche gives him her consent by bowing down her head and telling him with a sigh "---or if---it must---dispose---me as you please---" (5.8). The long pauses between the words show her hesitation, probably not an unwilling consent but rather her still ongoing internal debate whether to give in.

La Nuche's internal conflict, shown in her hesitations, turns into a more substantial dramatization when Beaumond, who promises her never to let her "be expos'd to storms of Poverty" (5.129), and Willmore, who promises "one hour of right-down Love" and divine pleasure from it (5.87), are put in the same room. It seems almost that Beaumond's sudden appearance has once again reminded La Nuche of her financial situation. La Nuche's concerns are not all "vanity" or "mercenary," as Willmore makes her believe, because she remembers that she cannot be poor again and goes to "a substantial Merchant in Love":

> La Nuche: But when I've worn out all my Youth and Beauty, and suffer'd every ill of Poverty, I shall be compell'd to begin the World again without a Stock to set up with; no faith, I'm for a substantial Merchant in Love, who can repay the loss of time and Beauty: with whom to make one thriving Voyage sets me up for ever, and I need never put to Sea again. (5.122-28)
>
> *Comes to Beaumond*

Here La Nuche tells herself that she cannot afford to "be compell'd to begin the World again without a Stock to set up with." Because she has no inheritance but her "Youth and Beauty," to make the most of, La Nuche needs to plan for her future so that she does not have to be "put to Sea again." Thus, her fear holds her back even when her desire renders her helpless.

La Nuche's fear of poverty, which makes her an unusual romantic heroine, is closely related to her "un-marriageability." I use the term "un-marriageability" to refer to both her independence and freedom from marriage as a patriarchal institution and her social status as a woman for whom marriage is not an option. La Nuche's "un-marriageability" in many ways fits

her libertine disposition but also reveals how such libertine lifestyle can be complicated for a woman without nobility and matching resources. Although La Nuche is at the center of "the realm of romantic comedy," as Markley notes, and does occupy the "happy ending" portion of the play mainly because she ends up with Willmore, La Nuche's character and her "happy ending" should be read with her peculiar condition of "un-marriageability." Her "un-marriageability" is both what gives her freedom from what she calls the "slavery" of "Women of Quality" and what drives her to find an alternative way to pursue her love (4.161). In his ongoing attempt to claim his the night he paid for with La Nuche, at the beginning of act 5 Beaumond, on his knees woos her: "Did I not know that thou hadst been a Whore, I'de give thee the last proof of Love—and marry thee—" (5.115-16). Beaumond's words are meant to give her the highest possible praise, that he would offer her a marriage as "the last proof of Love," but they also ironically show that such thing is not possible now that he knows her to be a prostitute. In response to Beaumond's rhetorical non-offer, Willmore outcries his libertine views on marriage and tries to talk to La Nuche about how marriage vows are but empty words "fools only swallow" (5.123). Beaumond's non-marriage offer and Willmore's libertine views on marriage, however, remind La Nuche of what she would be left with when she would have nothing in the world. This bleak prospect of her later life "put to Sea again" makes her hesitate what she should choose. Poverty looms larger in the choices she makes in the last scene where she decides to follow Willmore and "live and starve by turns as fortune pleases" (5.504). La Nuche joins his libertine choice for "Love and Gallantry" (5.610-11), and Willmore's bargain with La Nuche is made "without the formal foppery of Marriage" (5.508).

Since Willmore is not forced to marry La Nuche as he married Hellena in *The Rover Part I*, his match with La Nuche is ostensibly an ideal union between two libertines who reject the

idea of marriage as "the last proof of Love" (5.116). However, Behn makes it clear that their libertine union can never offer an alternative to marriage, especially for women. Libertine choices to follow "Nature" and "Loves diviner Dictates" result in different consequences for women as they do for men (4.356). In addition, Willmore's and La Nuche's understanding of the evils of marriage spring from completely different places. While Willmore tends his penchants for variety and "softer joys" for "Woman in abundance" (1.117-18), La Nuche leaves that "slavery" for women like Hellena or Ariadne (4.160). It is not her "constitution" or "business" to marry, and marriage is not something La Nuche looks forward to or even expects, as she clearly understands that Willmore can "never be [hers] that way" (3.459). Unlike the virgin heiresse whose "ruin"is more concerned with their chastity and reputation, La Nuche's "ruin" is more closely related to abandoning her vow of "Allegiance to [her] Interest" (3.233). Submitting to her desire to love Willmore *for free* and betraying her allegiance to the trade, therefore, "compleat [her] ruin" (5.177). La Nuche's choice to submit to her own desire is emphasized when she speaks out her determination before she runs off to Willmore: "He has, he shall, he must compleat my ruin" (5.177).

The final union underscores these dark connotations, because La Nuche accepts Willmore knowing that he slept with her thinking that she was someone else. Not knowing who she really is in the dark, Willmore calls La Nuche "a Whore" multiple times in front of her before they go off-stage to have sex (5.233, 234). La Nuche has known that he will only remain "constant for want of Appetite" (1.433). Willmore's libertine views persist, and he is still the same one "fal'n even to the last degree of Poverty" (3.437-38). Willmore does not promise his reform in any way, as he does with Hellena at the end of *The Rover Part I,* where he admires Hellena's "Love and Courage" and proposes to "venture in the Storms o'th'Marriage-Bed" together (5.545). The

ending is much darker in *The Rover Part II,* where La Nuche's and Willmore's libertine union is only temporarily built on the lack of mutual understanding of their desires.

> La Nuche: And you it seems mistook me for this Lady; I favour'd your design to gain your heart, for I was told, that if this Night I lost you, I shou'd never regain you: now I am yours, and o're the habitable World will follow you, and live and starve my turns as fortune pleases. (5.501-04)

La Nuche here acknowledges that she voluntarily chose her "ruin" because it was the only option she had in order to pursue her desire to be with Willmore. With thorough understanding of the financial implications of her choice, she finally surrendered to her sexual attraction to him mostly based on her fear that she "should never regain" him after that night. Therefore, reading La Nuche's final decision either as "idealistic celebration and promotion of feminine desire" (Hutner 117) or as the heroine's transformation into "a submissive companion" in order to accede to Willmore's desire (Pfeiffer 8) overlooks the complex situation that La Nuche is in as a working woman with sexual desire. La Nuche *chose* to satisfy her desire over her wishes for money, but not without understanding that Willmore took her for another random woman he met on the street. She submitted to her *own* desire to have him rather than someone else's, knowing the consequences she had been dreading since the beginning of the play. She is determined to "live and starve" with Willmore, but she knows that it will be her "ruin."

Behn carefully orchestrated the couple's union in a way that highlights the complex web of situations in which La Nuche's sexual desire overpowers her other desires. Willmore celebrates their joined commitment to "Love and Gallantry" outside marriage (5.610-11), but the

union is only made possible because of La Nuche's choice to follow him. Willmore misinterprets the whole situation and his partner's motives when he accepts her decision: "Tho art reform'd, and I adore the change" (5.512). The word "reform" gives an illusion that this union can be paralleled to that of Hellena and Willmore in the *Part I* where Willmore promised his reform. While Willmore's reform promised the possibilities of "taming" his libertine lifestyle through marriage, La Nuche's does not promise anything significantly similar. What Willmore calls La Nuche's "reform" merely refers to La Nuche's decision to have sex with Willmore without charging him. Furthermore, the union does not promise a longer or stable commitment where both enjoy "Love and Gallantry" because Willmore does not understand what prompted La Nuche's change of mind.

Willmore's use of the word "reform" for La Nuche's change, however, does highlight how conditions and effects of women's libertine desires can differ from those of men. While La Nuche is more often compared to her noble female counterparts, Hellena or Ariadne, Willmore's words put La Nuche in parallel with the libertine rake-hero. Such a parallel enables us to critically examine La Nuche as a female libertine whose proclivity for "the joys of human Life" drives her to love (4.358). Following "Nature" and its "diviner Dictates" becomes problematic for La Nuche in a way that does not trouble Willmore because of her limited resources and social status. Rejecting marriage as "the last proof of Love" and enjoying "Love and Pleasure," as Willmore suggests, are ways to live a libertine life, but such a life requires more than a simple libertine heart. La Nuche's libertinism, unlike that of Willmore, does not lie in her prolific sexuality or the number of sexual partners. If libertine philosophy and libertinism means challenging cultural/institutional convention and placing more value on the individual's instinct, desire, emotions, La Nuche's libertine choice to follow what her "natural" emotions lead her to

do has more to do with resolving competing desires. By creating a prostitute heroine that embodies strong sexual desire, desirability, and female "virtue" all at the same time, and by carefully creating their dilemmas and other female characters' concerns inextricable, Behn's play presents issues of female desire at the center of the stage.

IV.4 Susanna Mountfort as "the arrantest rakehell" in Thomas Southerne's *Sir Anthony Love* (1690)

As Thomas Southerne proudly boasts to his friend Thomas Skipwith in the dedication of *Sir Anthony Love: Or, The Rambling Lady* (1690), the comedy enjoyed "the Favours from the Fair Sex" (Epistle Dedicatory, 36).[62] This play, so popular with the ladies, is a highly unconventional comedy about a cross-dressing woman who fully lives a life of "the arrantest rakehell" (1.1.7). The heroine leads a libertine life on two levels: one as a male libertine named Sir Anthony Love and another as a female libertine named Lucia, who chooses to pursue an extramarital relationship with her lover Valentine. Lucia performs the identity of Sir Anthony Love as if it is her own, which is not at odds with the choices she makes as a woman.[63] This quintessential rake role was originally performed by one of the most well-known comediennes of the time, Susanna Mountfort (1666-1703),[64] who was particularly celebrated for her excellence in acting breeches parts (Heddon). Mountfort's own complicated and dramatic life, well-known to audiences of her day, may help to explain the original popularity of this profoundly disruptive representation of

[62] *Sir Anthony Love* was first performed in October 1690 and published in 1691. All citations of *Sir Anthony Love* refer to the Clarendon Press *Works of Thomas Southerne.* References are by act, scene, and line number, with the exceptions that reference the epistle dedicatory, prologue, and epilogue.
[63] I will use the name Sir Anthony consistently to discuss the main character of the play except when there are needs to separate Lucia from Sir Anthony.
[64] Susanna Mountfort's maiden name was Percival before her marriage to William Mountfort in 1686. She was also known as Susanna Verbruggen after her second marriage to John Verbruggen in 1694.

male libertinism. As we see in the well-studied example of Nell Gwyn and her signature creation of the assertive libertine heroine Florimell in John Dryden's *Secret Love* (1667), the popularity of actresses on stage and in real life had a huge influence on the creation and perception of dramatic characters. The actor and stage manager Colley Cibber, one of Mountfort's contemporaries, praised the actress as "Mistress of more Variety of Humour, than I knew in any one Woman Actress":

> Nor was her Humour limited, to her Sex; for, while her Shape permitted, she was a more adroit pretty Fellow, than is usually seen upon the stage: Her easy Air, Action, Mien, and Gesture, quite chang'd from the Quoif, to the cock'd Hat, and Cavalier in fashion. People were so fond of her seeing her as a Man, that when the Part of *Bays* in the *Rehearsal* had for some time lain dormant, she was desired to take it up, which I have seen her act with all the true coxcombly Spirit and Humour that the Sufficiency of the Character required (95-96).

Susanna's excellence in performing breeches roles became fully fledged after her second marriage in 1694, which gave her the name of Verbruggen, but Sir Anthony Love is the role that built her reputation as a witty breeches actress and made her audience crave her on-stage performance as a man.[65] As Cibber notes, people's desire to see Susanna as a man was so strong that it could rekindle public's passion for the play *The Rehearsal* (1671) when she decided to play the part of the male protagonist Bayes, which was not written as a breeches role.

[65] Although Susanna Mountfort often appears as Mrs. Mountfort or Mrs. Verbruggen in the dramatis personae and in contemporary documents, I use her first name Susanna to avoid confusion with her first husband William Mountfort.

Susanna's performance, which exceeds the limits of her sex carries another layer of meaning when we consider another factor that modern readers often overlook but which Restoration audiences must have been well aware of when seeing Susanna performing Sir Anthony. In *Sir Anthony Love*, Susanna co-starred with her then husband William Mountfort (c.1664-1692), who played Sir Anthony's lover/fellow rake Valentine. During their six-year marriage (1686-1692), they were often cast together as a "gay couple" following Nell Gwyn and Charles Hart from the 1660s.[66] However, Susanna's four pregnancies during these six years prevented her from performing on stage full time, which led to more frequent romantic pairing of her husband with another celebrated actress, Anne Bracegirdle, who also premiered in *Sir Anthony Love*. As Diana Solomon points out, their frequent pairing on stage and Susanna's dwindling presence due to pregnancy could have "easily fired audience imagination about an affair ("From Infamy to Intimacy" 3-4)." It is possible that this public perception eventually led to the murder of William Mountfort in 1692 by Captain Richard Hill and Charles Mohun, who were infatuated with Bracegirdle.[67] As Holland notes, the rumor of the affair was so common that Hill certainly believed that William was his rival for Bracegirdle's favor (143). However, more important than whether William Mountfort and Anne Bracegirdle actually had an affair is how rumor about the affair must have been widely known to the public including theater patrons and how it must have affected how audiences watched the performance.

[66] For the invention of the "gay couple" in Restoration comedy and the real-life influences of Charles Hart and Nell Gwyn, see Loftis, Smith, and Howe. William and Susanna Mountfort performed together as comic "gay couple" in plays including Dryden's *Don Sebastian* (1689), Shadwell's *Bury Fair* (1689), and Mountfort's *Greenwich Park* (1691).

[67] For the rumor about William Mountfort and Bracegirdle's off-stage relationship and its effects on their stage performances especially in Southerne's *The Wive's Excuse* (1691), as well as the prologues and epilogues of Thomas D'Urfey's comedy *The Marriage Haters Matched* (1692), see Holland, Solomon, and Bush-Bailey.

Sir Anthony Love is a play where the star couple's marriage, rumors about William Mountfort's supposed affair, and Susanna Mountfort's popular cross-dressing performance are capitalized on by commercial theater. Susanna's Sir Anthony adamantly refuses to marry William's Valentine when by 1690, in real life, the actors had been married for four years. When audiences were watching Sir Anthony's playful yet satirical portrayal of male libertines, they must have had rumors about William's alleged affair with the other actress in the back of their minds. When we read the character with Mountfort's private life in mind, Sir Anthony's radical transgressions and her very libertine choice to stay outside marriage, destabilize and satirize earlier Restoration representations of male libertinism. As Sir Anthony, Susanna "performs" libertine male sexuality—the gold standard of Restoration comedy—but not as a typical breeches part would do by always suggesting the character's innate and stable femininity even in male attire. Instead, her performance de-glamorizes and destabilizes male sexuality and authority. Combined with Susanna's adept performance of masculinity, Southerne's comedy and its "rambling lady" not only comically challenges our understanding of the cultural representations of the heavily male-centered libertinism from earlier Restoration society. It also critically examines the role and status of women in libertinism and the romantic conventions associated with breeches roles and happy marriages.

To borrow Hume's words, Thomas Southerne and his plays are "almost totally neglected" even decades after the publication of a standard edition of his works (275). Southerne is best known for two tragicomedies, *The Fatal Marriage, or the Innocent Adultery* (1694) and *Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave* (1695), which made his reputation as a tragic dramatist and an adapter of Aphra Behn (Kaufman 203). While most of Southerne's plays suffer from overall critical neglect, his comedies have suffered even more intense and longer neglect. Critical

attention to Southerne's comedies centers on the comic sub-plot of *Oroonoko* and *The Wives' Excuse; or, Cuckolds Make Themselves* (1691). The comic plot of *Oroonoko* and its cross-dressing heroine Charlotte have often been read within the scope of the common theme of human property (slavery, marriage).[68] *The Wives' Excuse* enjoyed short critical attention as a realist comedy that critiques the conventions of earlier Restoration comedy and scrutinizes the implications of the failed marriage to "demonstrate realistically the unequal and intolerable position of the wife in 1691, and the psychological damage it could inflict" (Kaufman 47).[69] However, the play's particularly unflattering and harsh treatment of female characters, such Mrs. Friendall and Mrs. Wittwoud, may have kept critics away from what Paula R. Backscheider referred to as "Southerne's surpassingly ugly and vicious play" (443).

Sir Anthony Love is the first of Southerne's comedies to bring the playwright significant popularity and financial success after his brief military career. Despite the play's popularity among contemporary audiences, which made Southerne's comeback to the London commercial stage successful, *Sir Anthony Love* has been read by most subsequent critics as a play about an entertaining "extravagant rake" whose escapades are not taken seriously or just largely ignored.[70] On a rare occasion where the female libertine hero of the play is the subject of analysis, her libertine choices merely reflect "Southerne's fascination with the female libertine" in the fantasy world (Weber "The Female Libertine" 138).[71] The heroine's actions, which often lack morality

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[68] See Pearson, Rosenthal, and Hendrickson. For the analysis of the play's treatment of the rarely discussed female character Widow Lackitt, see Bross and Rummel.

[69] See Kaufman and Thompson for the short-lived critical attention *The Wives' Excuse* has received in the late 1980s and 1990s.

[70] Hume identifies as the "extravagant rake" as characterized by "frantic intensity, promiscuity, crazy impulsiveness, cheekiness, reckless frivolity, breezy vanity, and devastating self-assurance" (268). This extravagant rake "fills 'a carnival role' in which he 'is a one-man *mardi gras*' providing 'therapeutic release'" (Hume 269).

[71] Weber's analysis of the female libertine characters in Southerne's comedies *Sir Anthony Love* and *The Wives' Excuse* focuses on how the male playwright's fascination with the powerful and troubling female

and seriousness have not been received well, even by feminist scholars. Elizabeth Howe briefly analyzes the play with a focus on its cross-dressing heroine Lucia but concludes that this character is "not so much a 'feminist hero' as an amoral trickster and prostitute" who merely exploits "the corruptions and deceptions of society in her favour" (61). Thus, Southerne's Sir Anthony has been seen as a female version of Restoration comedy's charming rake, one that reflects either Southerne's fascination with female libertines or women's temporary fantasy of sexual subjectivity. At best, Sir Anthony showcases female sexuality "just as confident and assertive as male sexuality" (Drougge "Female Sexuality" 548) or as a "fantasy for women" (Drougge "Mrs. Barry" 414).

Part of the reason that Sir Anthony's transgressive character have been generally dismissed may be because critics are divided over how subversive cross-dressing roles in comedy can be. Some argue that cross-dressing illustrated the possibilities of female agency and autonomy, while others assert that most drama was meant ultimately to reassert the validity of male supremacy and promote female subordination to male authority.[72] When a cross-dressing female "dons male disguise as an unnatural action caused by some obstacle to her marrying her lover" and then returns to a "conventional female role at the end of the play," we are more inclined to read female subordination to male authority (Howe 59). It is indeed disappointing to find "an unwillingness to seriously challenge the male status quo" when we expected to see more provokingly feminist heroes in breeches roles (Howe 59). Sir Anthony's cross-dressing performance, however, embodies an increased awareness of gender ambiguity and its social

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libertine is immediately retracted the following year in the latter play when he exacts "retribution for the woman who dares to enjoy privileges not hers by nature" (138).

[72] While Rogers and Howe focus more on the gendering of spectacle in analyzing breeches roles, Straub and Fishman argue that cross-dressing performances can upset and challenge conventional gender roles and expectations.

constructedness. If Sir Anthony is an identity based on the imitation of heterosexual male rake, it is an imitation that outperforms the original. In Sir Anthony's female performance of male libertinism, "gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original" and "a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself" (Butler 313). If Sir Anthony's performance does not offer a serious challenge to the male-dominated status quo, it at least unveils how this status quo unsuccessfully endeavors to sustain heterosexual patriarchy and its compulsory system of difference.

As soon becomes apparent in the play, gender and sexuality are not stable and fixed in *Sir Anthony Love,* whose heroine freely and successfully adopts any identity at her will and according to her plan at the moment. This playful and performative flouting of gender is one of the many factors that might baffle modern readers and audiences who try to make conventional sense of the course of the play's action. Furthermore, there are five different but oddly similar couples' subplots that overlap with the main plot, which is not helpful for keeping boundaries straight or keeping track of the main plot. Sir Anthony is the only character who freely jumps from one plot to another to play both men and women according to her needs and schemes. Curtis A. Price even points out that the main plot of the play is sometimes difficult to follow because of the "labyrinth of tangled plots" in which the playwright's "inexperience shows" (169). However, this hyper-chaotic story, however, stems not from the playwright's inexperience as a comedy writer but from his very conscious attempt to challenge and question theatrical representations of masculinity, sexuality, and the libertinism of the previous age. As critics note, the years of the United Company (1682-1695) when *Sir Anthony Love* was staged and written are recorded as having a very limited market for new plays, with older plays from the 1660s and

1670s being acted.[73] 1690 was a year that allowed Southerne to bring new perspectives and flavors to the familiar recipe of restoration comedy. The popularity and talent of actresses including the star-comedienne of the United Company Susanna Mountfort, Mary Betterton's "natural successor" and the company's star Anne Bracegirdle, and a popular actress, dancer, and singer Charlotte Butler must have been an important part of Southerne's new comedy. Using Susanna's considerable talent for physical acting and the audience's love for her, Southerne wrote the role of Sir Anthony specifically for the actress, capitalizing on her specialty in performing not-so-conventional breeches roles. In the epilogue spoken Charlotte Butler who played Floriante, the woman to whom Sir Anthony ends up marrying her lover Valentine, Susanna's ability to play diverse roles across gender is celebrated as the central appeal of the play and its hero.

> You'l hear with Patience a dull Scene, to see,
> In a contented lazy waggery,
> The Female Mountford bare above the knee.
> She makes a mighty noise, like some of you,
> Who often talk of what you never do:
> She's for all Womankind, and aws the Town,
> As if her Husband's Breeches were her own.
> She's been to Night our Hero, tho' a Female,
> Show me but such a Whoremaster, tho' a Male:

[73] Scouten and Hume note "scanty performance records before 1705" as a problem in analyzing the failures of the early years of the United Company (57). Holland similarly notes the company's experiencing the difficulties in getting an audience while pointing out the season 1690-91 as a turning point (140).

Who thro' so many shifts, is still the same,

Pursues all Pettycoats, preserves her Fame,

And tho' she can do nothing, keeps the Name. (Epilogue, 14-25)

Here Butler celebrates "The Female Mountford bare above the knee" as an entertaining spectacle for the audience, which saves a play from simply presenting "a dull Scene." Susanna is presented as the night's hero. Her excellent ability to bring Sir Anthony to life on stage and her "so many shifts" between female and male are described as if the actress, Susanna, and the character of Sir Anthony are inseparable. It is Susanna who awes the town while wearing her husband's breeches as if they were her own, but it is Sir Anthony who preserves her fame while pursuing all ladies in town. Southerne also explains in his dedication how the character of Sir Anthony is indivisible from the actress: "as I made every Line for her, she has mended every Word for me" (Epistle Dedicatory, 18-19). To some critics, Butler's suggestive epilogue lightheartedly applauding the star-actress's charm and talent might reinforce the image of actress as a sexual object (Howe 61). However, Susanna is an entertaining spectacle, or what we may call "a celebrity sellout," that creates, mends, and performs the role of a hero. Susanna's "Variety" (Epilogue, 9) and Sir Anthony's ability to "put on [male] Sex with [her] breeches" (1.1.8-9) together underscore the radical power of the choices Sir Anthony makes in the play.

Although any effort to neatly summarize the entire plot of *Sir Anthony Love* would be futile, one can at least try to grasp the play's central plotline to highlight its recurring features. Lucia, the play's heroine, was sold by her guardian aunt to a much older Sir Gentle Golding when she was too young "to Judge between the Fortune and the Fool" (1.1.507-08). The nature of the relationship between Lucia and Sir Gentle Golding is ambiguous throughout the play:

Lucia once calls Sir Gentle Golding "my Keeper" (1.1.46), which might indicate her being kept as his mistress. She may have been married to Sir Gentle Golding, although the play defines their relationship only in commercial transactional terms. Indeed, every marriage in the play blurs boundaries between marriage and affair, wife and mistress.[74] Lucia escapes from Sir Gentle Golding after several years, robs him, and bolts to Montpelier in Southern France, where, disguised as a beau Sir Anthony Love, she charms the local beauties in order to confound their suitors, apparently with the aim of taking a general revenge on the male sex. The role-switching reaches a dizzying climax when Sir Anthony, disguised as Floriante, a woman betrothed to Valentine, agrees to marry Sir Gentle, who is yet unaware that he is remarrying his runaway "wife" Lucia. The relationship between Sir Anthony and her rakish companion Valentine is also central in her scheme, since their libertine companionship and romantic relationship are completely unaffected by the sex Sir Anthony puts on.

The Sir Anthony/Lucia's breeches role was part of the popular comic convention of women performing in male attire, but Southerne made the role suggestively different from cross-dressed comic heroines in earlier Restoration theatre. As Howe suggests, nearly a quarter of the plays produced on the public stage in London from 1660 to 1700 contained one or more breeches roles (57), and there were several well-known actresses who specialized in flirtatious, comic breeches parts, including Susanna Mountfort, Charlotte Butler, and Anne Bracegirdle. These actresses and the breeches roles they played were major attractions for the audiences who came to see their cross-dressing performances. Susanna, however, was not a conventional actress who only played certain types of pretty and virtuous female roles (like those Anne Bracegirdle

[74] These types of blurred boundaries between marriage and affair, wife and mistress, commonly occur in Restoration marriage- plot comedies as can be seen from Cornelia and Gilliard in Aphra Behn's *The Feigned Courtesan* (1679).

played). Rather, Susanna was willing to alter her appearance to portray physically unattractive comic roles, as well as charming young men.[75]

Critics have pointed out how female actors' cross-dressing in post-1660 London theatres appealed to male heterosexual desires, thus completely conforming to commodification of female body. According to Kristina Straub, female theatrical cross-dressing in late seventeenth century was not considered as travesty unlike masculine version of the same act (127). It was viewed mostly with "part of the fun of seeing women in breeches," and as a marketing strategy to sell attractive female bodies on stage (128). Judith Milhous and Howe similarly assert that the popularity of breeches roles on Restoration stage can be linked to economic competition among theater companies due to the roles' sex appeal. The breeches that "suggestively outlin[e] the actress's hips, buttocks and legs," render these roles a mere tool in the commodification of female body (Howe 56). However, Southerne's comic heroine in breeches departs from a simple commodification of female body; Sir Anthony can do everything her libertine brothers do and do it a lot better; as such, her performance of masculinity exceeds that of the traditional male libertine. As Valentine and Ilford, another rakish friend, talk of Sir Anthony, they deem him a man of unmatched wit who "is as much respected by the Men, and better received by the Women, than any of us" (1.1.334-35).

From the opening, Sir Anthony appears on stage having adopted and mastered the newly created masculine identity. Lucia is already Sir Anthony, "the arrantest rakehell of'em all" (1.1.8-9), when she first appears before the audience. From the start, she behaves like the male libertine rakes from popular comedies of previous decades (Horner from William Wycherley's

[75] As Heddon and Howe notes, Mountfort was known for "the performance of both witty breeches roles and grotesque characters" (Howe 82). For example, she played an ugly old maid in Southerne's *The Maid's Last Prayer* (1693), "a stale Virgin" in Thomas Wright's *The Female Vertuoso's* (1693), and a eunuch named Achmet in Mary Pix's *Ibrahim* (1696).

The Country Wife, Dorimant from Sir George Etherege's *The Man of Mode: or, Sir Fopling Flutter*). Wearing male clothes enables her not only to successfully enact her schemes according to her own desires but also to impersonate male libertines. In this, she is quite different from the disguised heroines of early modern romantic comedies: Sir Anthony is not a love-stricken lady whose thinly veiled femininity is eventually celebrated with happy marriages. What she wants and pursues through her male disguise, for example, is nothing like what Rosalind wants in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. As David Mann notes, for Shakespearean breeches parts "male attire is a temporary phase, usually to allow them [women] to travel in safety; then variously a help or hindrance in furthering their amatory affairs, and bringing with it gender expectations from others which they find intimidating or exciting" (225). While this type of breeches part continues to thrive in Restoration theater as can be seen in the characters like Semernia in Behn's *The Widow Ranter* and Hellena in *The Rover,* Sir Anthony's breeches is neither a "transient one" nor "an attempt . . . to contain and neutralise the contemporary problem of the rebellious woman" that ends with her "reincorporation back into society and subservience through marriage" (Mann 228, 231). Sir Anthony is closer to Horner from *The Country Wife,* who enacts male impotence to seduce married women, than Viola in *Twelfth Night* or Charlot in Ariadne's *She Ventures and He Wins*. Sir Anthony uses her male disguise to rob her foolish and roguish "husband" Gentle Golding of more money and to enjoy roguery. Sir Anthony never seeks the ideal of marriage as a sacred union of two people in love; she is not playing a part for the purpose of being able to triumphantly resume her female attire and wed the man she loves. I argue that this libertine aspect of Sir Anthony's performance of the comic breeches part is how Southerne deliberately satirizes earlier male Restoration rake figures and their theatrical libertinism.

Sir Anthony's performance of a masculinity that is sexually attractive to both men and women should be read as subversive and challenging because she is deliberately and consciously playing a well-established type of libertine rake from Restoration drama and society. Female performance of male libertinism is more than mere "representations of fantasies of female empowerment" (Prieto Pablos 84) because it shows how a woman can better perform a man—even the best libertine rake—and demonstrates how women's "nature" was neither natural nor inevitable. As Helga Drougge rightly argues, it is important to note "how well the disguise fits, how natural and true is the 'Anthony' personality which Lucia creates by exercise and conversation" ("Female Sexuality" 551). Sir Anthony is considered a "better rake" than other male characters in the play, excelling at wit, humor, and trickery. Sir Anthony uses trickery to deceive others, "pimping" women, and showing deep distrust in marriage as an ideal union of lovers. Sir Anthony's perfect appropriation of the characteristics that define a rakish gallant suggests the possibility of how women can do a better job of being a rake—or a man. At the opening scene of *Sir Anthony Love*, Sir Anthony's governor Waitwell admires how his master can "so perfectly act the Cavalier" and could "put on our Sex with your Breeches" (1.1.8-9). Sir Anthony's performance is so excellent that he proudly claims that he "would be fear'd, as well as lov'd: As famous for my Actions with the Men, as for my Passion for the Women"(1.1.12-14). Valentine also considers Sir Anthony to be a man with "a great deal of Wit" (1.1.338), and his wit is so "Perfect, and Uniform, without a design" that he and his friend Ilford will never arrive at Sir Anthony's wit (1.1.342). Ilford repeatedly threatens or dreads Sir Anthony as a strong romantic rival (2.1).

Rakes represent amplified or heightened heterosexual masculinity, and in this sense, Sir Anthony is "manlier" or better at being a "man," with her masterful performance of the rake. Sir

Anthony, in conspiring with Valentine to take Floriante from her fiancé Count Verole, advises Valentine to "make it a good Night" with his "English Lady," a prostitute Sir Anthony allegedly introduces to Valentine:

Sir Ant. Then you are not one of those fine Gentlemen, who because they are in love with one Woman, can lie with nobody else?

Val. Not I, Faith Knight; I may be a Lover, but I must be a Man.

Sir Ant. When the dear days of Rambling Joys are o're,

When Nature grudges to supply your Whore,

There's Love enough for Marriage left in store. (3.5.41-46)

Love, marriage, and whoring are all mixed in this short conversation between two rakes, and both men define the libertine actions of enjoying "Rambling Joys" as what a "Man" should naturally do. When Sir Anthony procures a whore for Valentine and even pays for it, "supply[ing his] Whore," she perfectly understands the exchange value of women between men and actively participates in circulating women between men by pimping.

Securing women for sexual exchange is a major part of what establishes the reputation of Sir Anthony/Lucia as a renowned rake. When asked by Waitwell what fun she finds in "following" ladies when she can't "enjoy 'em" (1.1.31), Lucia answers, "But I make 'em ready for those who can" (1.1.32), adding that she gets the same pleasure that some men get in pursuing women when she tries to game the system by being the best rake. Her inability to actually consummate the relationship with the ladies primarily drives her to substitute Sir Anthony's presence with other men. However, Sir Anthony's pimping is not simply a clever

strategy to keep her fake identity safe. Rather, it is more closely related to the choices Lucia/Sir Anthony makes in her life and what she understands about women's life in her society. For example, the meeting she sets up to reveal her identity to Valentine is arranged in the first place as a prostitution where she declares never to marry Valentine. Valentine remembers how Sir Anthony in the past "father'd a Bastard" for him in Paris (4.2.53), probably when Valentine ran away leaving his bastard child and her mother behind. Sir Anthony took over the reputation for fathering the bastard child, although she had to tell the woman's father the truth when he pressed Sir Anthony to marry his daughter (4.2.53-60). Although Sir Anthony might have needed that reputation in order to be perceived as a libertine rake, she must have seen and experienced enough to know how women are treated and disposed of in marriage. When Sir Anthony assures Valentine to take Floriante as his wife and take herself as a mistress, she adamantly insists that "Matrimony, that's her" and "security is mine" (4.2.81-82).[76] Sir Anthony's choice to stay outside the conventional practice of marriage and her active involvement with pandering other women suggest how her cross-dressing libertine performance stems from a feminist critique of the institution of marriage, in which women are disposed of against their will or easily replaced, when we note how her pandering at times goes hand in hand with the collusion of other women.

Most cases of Lucia's pandering conclude with marriages, which destabilizes both practices—marriage and pandering. Every marriage in the play is made possible by Sir Anthony's pandering: she actively procures her lover Valentine a wife, Floriante; matches Ilford with Volante; and makes a match between Count Verole and Charlott. Sir Anthony even marries Lucia to Sir Gentle Golding before she demands five hundred pounds a year from him on the

[76] In Jordan and Love's text, which uses the first quarto printed in 1691 as the copy-text, the line is printed: "… but Matrimony, that's her security is mine: I can't apprehend her in a Wife" (4.2.81-82). I added a comma between "her" and "security" in my reading of the line.

condition that she stays away from him. Selling women for money and marrying women are closely connected and are even interchangeable in Sir Anthony's ostensibly immoral and debaucherous actions. Although these four marriages might suggest happily-ever-after endings, each of them demeans the notion of marriage as a sacred and happy union of two lovers or as an ideal social institution. As Charlott (who marries Count Verole even after his previous engagement to her sister Floriante) says, "Any man had been as welcome" because she was "out of love with a Nunnery" (5.6.43-44). Both women and men in these plays, though more so women, seem to agree that marriage can be an empty means to get more money, better social status, or freedom of some kind. The marriage of Valentine and Floriante includes Sir Anthony as a third wheel from the start, as Valentine and Sir Anthony mutually agree upon continuing their extra-marital relationship.[77] Ilford and Volante's marriage is made possible when Sir Anthony pretends to marry Volante first and sends Ilford to their marriage bed to consummate the marriage. Count Verole and Charlott's marriage is based on mistaken identities, which does not bother either of them. Marriage between Sir Anthony and Sir Gentle Golding barely lasts, since it is part of Sir Anthony's tactic to extort good money from Sir Gentle Golding. Valentine officiates a divorce settlement between Lucia and Sir Gentle Golding when he demands "a Rent-charge of Five hundred" (5.7.135-36) in order to disown his marriage to "old Mrs. Lucy" and "new Lady-wife" (5.7.124).

Along with this grim vision of four weirdly contrived marriages, the play concludes with still unapologetic Sir Anthony cynically suggesting that fools are "the best Husbands":

Sir Ant. Thus Coxcombs always the best Husbands prove

[77] It could be problematic, of course, that Floriante remains ignorant of the third wheel of her marriage.

When we are faulty, and begin to rove,

A sep'rate Maintenance supplies our Love (5.7.143-45).

Lucia, now in Floriante's dress to trick Sir Gentle Golding into thinking that he is marrying Floriante, bitterly mocks marriage and love when she pronounces only a "sep'rate Maintenance," a financial settlement between once-married couples during and after legal separation, can sustain "love" between her and Sir Gentle Golding. She "continues [her] opinion of marriage" (4.2.76), as Valentine put it when he first found out Sir Anthony was a woman, even when she does not have to be Sir Anthony, a rakish gallant. Whether as a man or a woman, Sir Anthony's view on marriage remains unchanged.

Through pandering and libertine flirtations, Sir Anthony is more concerned with staying outside her marriage and continuing debauchery. Like Wycherley's Horner, Sir Anthony remains an undomesticated and unapologetic libertine rake. She remains a free-living woman who survives unpunished despite her libertinism. As a man, Sir Anthony says to her clique of rakes that "cuckoldom" is not only lawful but also "the liberty, and a separate maintenance the property, of the freeborn women of England" (2.174-77). As a woman, Sir Anthony is willing to share her lover Valentine with another woman as a "Jest" (5.3.9) and as a "diverting piece of Roguery" (5.3.8). In the character's complete dismissal of the romantic institution of marriage, as well as her mocking attitude towards its conventions, Sir Anthony does not go through any changes, and it is hinted that there will be an undisturbed continuation of this libertine lifestyle even after the play ends. Sir Anthony is indeed an embodiment of Restoration libertinism in such a sense, with the only significant difference being that this libertinism is performed by a female body. Libertine masculinity can be natural to women, and it is radically destabilized in Sir

Anthony when she becomes neither a simple appropriation/imitation of male libertinism nor a celebration of free female sexuality.

When analyzing female sexuality in Southerne's comedies, Drougge argues that Lucia is a rare example of positive female sexuality in Restoration drama, focusing on how the cross-dressing female rake can "open new, intriguing vistas for a female audience, inviting them to share both the pleasures and dangers of rakishness" ("Female Sexuality" 562). I add that cross-dressing female rake performances such as Sir Anthony's serves different purpose in critiquing and satirizing male-centered libertinism and male patriarchy. Therefore, Lucia helps Valentine to marry Floriante not because Lucia is done enjoying Valentine and ready to move on to the next partner, as Drougge suggests, but rather because she knows men (including Valentine) too well "to think of securing [him] that way" through matrimony (4.2.72). She also knows how women are treated in institutionalized marriage based on patriarchal heterosexuality. Therefore, regardless of what Sir Anthony wears, she shows profound skepticism about marriage because of what she learned from her initial experiences with Sir Gentle Golding, which is confirmed repeatedly by her experiences as a libertine man.

Sir Anthony, despite her pandering and misogynistic libertine chattering, does help other women challenge the patriarchal decisions that confine them. Southerne gives us a glimpse of what women other than Sir Anthony want and subtly lets Sir Anthony aid the women in achieving it. Act 2 introduces a great example of how Sir Anthony can indeed be a "woman's man" in helping two young women defy their father and other controlling men. Act 2 starts with a scene in which Count Canaille, father of Floriante and Charlott, makes up his mind to "dispose [his] youngest daughter in a nunnery and instantly marry Floriante" to rid him of his fears of being dishonored by his daughters (2.1.25-26). This decision, made against the daughters' will, is

followed by a conversation between Abbe, the ladies' uncle, and three eligible bachelors (including Sir Anthony). Abbe then wraps up the gentlemen's conversation by "distributing" his three nieces, Floriante, Charlott, and Volante: "Gentlemen, you are three, and my Nieces are three, I wo'nt meddle in your Choice, agree among your selves, win 'em, and wear 'em" (2.1.196-98). Until the first half of the second act, three "marriageable" women do not have any voice and remain completely silent when men around them ridicule how powerless women are in choosing partners. This changes with the ominous song about "We Women" (254, line 5) in the middle of Act 2, a song about how women are invaded, extorted, and abandoned by men in the "Land of Love" (254, line 4).[78] The song warns women of dangers of "being won" by men, and advises to "be wise" (254). The song then is followed by a conversation between two daughters, Floriante and Charlott, discussing how they would fulfill their "purpose of Disobedience" and involve Sir Anthony as their "proper Counsellors" (2.1.337-38).

These women clearly know what they want. Floriante and Charlott both detest the lives within the walls of a nunnery and prefer men's company. Floriante wants Valentine—not Count Verole as her father appointed her—and Charlott just wants to be away from the nunnery. Their strong desires and specific design, albeit passive ones compared to Sir Anthony's, contrast with the things that men in the previous scenes try to do with their lives. Sir Anthony assists their "Disobedience" when she cleverly fights off Count Verole's abusive and misogynistic attempt to force Floriante to marry him. Sir Anthony even threatens "to cut [his] throat," scaring Verole off (2.1.469). Of course, the voices and agency of these women, with the only exception of Sir Anthony, are very limited, and it may be "unwise to push this idea [of Sir Anthony as a feminist]

[78] Clarendon edition prints this song at the end of the play, following the copy-text. Jordan and Love argue that the text might have "failed to record the point in act II" and should be provided after line 333 (169).

too far," as Jordan and Love suggests (165). However, I suggest that this female empowerment of women would have had more effect on an audience watching the cross-dressed actress's physical performance, intimidating men and performing as a hero on stage, than reading the action on the page as modern readers do.

In Catherine Trotter's initially anonymous play *Agnes de Castro* (1695), Susanna Mountfort (then Mrs. Verbruggen) spoke the epilogue in men's clothes in order to comically comment on the play's unknown authorship in relation to her male disguise.[79] In this epilogue, which Diana Solomon calls "tendentious paratexts [bartering] with the audience" where the speaker asks for the approval of the play in exchange for nudity or sexual favor, Susanna flaunts her body and the popularity of her breeches parts by teasing the audience (*Prologues and Epilogues* 78). Susanna then invites the audience to give the poetess applause, admiration for "her strength of Judgment," and praise for "her Wit" by crowding to the theater (Epilogue 43-46). Only then might she finally "lay aside her Modesty and Fear" (Epilogue 48). Of course, the apparent sexual innuendo might lead one to read Susanna's performance as self-objectification. However, Susanna demonstrates that she understands what the audience wants from her and shows no remorse in taking advantage of her popularity. Susanna's making a cameo appearance to endorse a novice female playwright attests to her power as a celebrity, and she uses her influence and reputation to empower Trotter, who enters the London stage for the first time.

The libertine performance of the female cross-dressing rake, which Southerne wrote for a popular celebrity actress known for her daring physical comic abilities, cannot be read simply as that of a modern "feminist hero" or as the traditional breeches part with the female character's subordination to male authority. Mountfort-as-Lucia/Sir Anthony should also not just be

[79] Considering that Susanna does not appear in the dramatis personae of the printed play, she might have appeared in a cameo in the epilogue to help Trotter's debut succeed.

interpreted as offering an objectified female body satisfying male audiences' desires and gazes. According to contemporary accounts, there were women in the audience who championed the play and apparently endorsed what they saw on stage. Southerne's *Sir Anthony Love* is a complicated satirical caricature of earlier dramatic representations of Restoration male libertinism that offers a carefully constructed challenge to the traditional dramatic conventions of both fixed gender identities and the patriarchal system of marriage found in Restoration comedy.

CHAPTER V

AFTERLIVES

V.1 "There is no such thing as bad publicity"

There is some truth in the phrase "there is no such thing as bad publicity," especially in a society like Restoration London where everyone where the desire to be the topic of all conversation appeared to be a worthy goal for the men and women seeking a place in Charles II's court. Fashionable gentlemen would pull off stunts just to be gossiped about because "'Tis *à la mode* to be talk'd on."[80] Some enjoyed such attention for pure fun, while others took advantage of the gossip to advance their own interests. Horner's impotence has to be talked about in order for his plans of cuckolding to work. As dramatic representation often mirrors off-stage figures and events, being "talk'd on" mattered in real life as well. Pepys' diary entries emphasize the significance of being talked about, whether it be a new play, a new actress, an event, or a portrait. Since becoming the talk of the town was closely linked to the subject's larger reputation and increased commercial value, it can easily create the subject larger-than-life personalities. As I have argued in previous chapters, actresses built their careers and made a living by becoming the talk of the town, and playwrights actively participated in expanding their public personalities by writing plays for them. Early modern women and their reputations, however, are often discussed in a way that reduces women to victims. Supposedly, becoming the talk of the town rarely works in a woman's favor, and a ruined reputation often leads to dire consequences in which she becomes unmarriageable or banished from respectable society. When a woman's sexuality or any sexual activity are the subject of the talk, her "ruin" is immediately assumed.

[80] *The Frolicks* Act 3 line 142

Focusing on how women tried to avoid being victimized by evil word of mouth, modern readers rarely read "bad publicity" as something potentially positive for early modern women. By reclaiming the phrase "there is no such thing as bad publicity," this chapter suggests new perspectives for reading how early modern women were "talk'd on." Indeed, this phrase is fitting for early modern women, whose celebrity reputation and captivating personae have enjoyed long afterlives.

Lampoons, oral gossip, and satirical prints flourish while the subject is alive and powerful, but they slowly decrease in number as time goes by, mostly because people stop talking about individuals who are no longer alive in the public eye. Modern readers are not familiar with anecdotes of what Charles Sackville did or what he said in an afternoon because his gossip does not interest anyone anymore. In contrast, female libertines in the same court, continue to make their appearances in various forms of printed genres, essentially being "talk'd on" for centuries. Vicious, misogynist attacks on these women's public sexuality (and related transgressions) in lampoons and satirical prints over time have turned into memoirs and secret histories containing longer and more elaborate narratives of their lives. Satirical prints typically take aim at lady libertines' promiscuity, extravagance, or political maneuvering, but the change in genre significantly alters the focus and the tone of the stories told about them. Their sexuality and life stories, as they did in lampoons and satirical prints, are at times used in serving the political needs to reconstruct the culture of Charles II's court with a sense of nostalgia. Even with the rewritten narratives' political motives in mind, it is still striking how over time these women often came to represent not just the entire court but sometimes the spirit of Restoration England. If the mistress's power and influence are only limited to the meager power granted to them by the monarch during the tenure of the royal favor, it would be natural to see their

presence fade out with the death of the monarch. If we begin to consider their celebrity as part of their libertine performance, rather than their short-lived royal favor being at the core of their authority and power, their rich afterlives as celebrities in various forms of "stories" come to light.

While lampoons and gossip-based prints are usually concerned with quite in-the-moment and "fresh" rumor, longer narratives of celebrity lives are printed when their influence starts to diminish (or after their death) to explicate and construct their life story as a whole rather than in part. Life accounts began to be published around and slightly after the king Charles II's death in 1685. Occasions such as these women's deaths or divorce trials reflect how certain events evoked public interest, which led to more publications. For Barbara the Duchess of Cleveland, her divorce trial with Henry Fielding in 1707 and her death in 1709 incentivized printers to publish more (mostly anonymous) prints about the duchess to resolve the readers' curiosity. Accounts of the Duchess of Portsmouth were mostly written as secret histories beginning in 1685 and continued even after her death in 1734. Nell Gwyn had the longest celebrity "life" due to her popular reputation as an icon even after her death in 1687.

A number of stories under the proposed genre of biography, memoir, and, most notably, secret history continued to appear throughout the eighteenth- and the nineteenth-century. Secret histories about lady libertines and the court of Charles II, popular until the mid-eighteenth century, were usually published anonymously because of the nature of the information regarding the monarch and the state affairs that they contained. Late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century memoirs and accounts show an interesting turn in how these women were "talk'd on" and written about as cultural icons. Anna Jameson published compiled biographies of the ladies at the court of Charles II not as political or satirical accounts but as "glamor album of court

beauties" (Booth 264). Jameson's *The Beauties of the Court of King Charles the Second* (1833) features Restoration lady libertines' lives as "memoirs biographical and critical" (title page). Peter Cunningham published the first edition of *The Story of Nell Gwyn* in 1852 based text that appeared in The Gentleman's Magazine in 1851. Henri Forneron's *Louise de Kéroualle, duchess of Portsmouth, 1649-1734: Society in the Court of Charles II* was first published in French in 1886. Later that year, it was translated into English through multiple editions with a preface by G. M. Crawford who might have worked as a translator as well. These compiled biographies of the ladies of the court of Charles II went through several editions, in some cases resulting in editions that were "extra-illustrated," enlarged, annotated, and beautifully decorated by readers and collectors. These visually annotated copies often actively construct and expand the subjects' celebrity and reputation. One copy of the enlarged third edition of Jameson's *Memoirs of the Beauties of the Court of Charles the Second* published in 1851, has a hidden fore-edge painting of the narrative's central ménage-a-trois, with Charles II in the middle and the Queen Catherine of Braganza and Nell Gwyn by his side (Figure 6).[81] A number of copies of Cunningham's *The Story of Nell Gwyn* were "grangerized" to various degrees, and a single copy could be extended to two simple small volumes or four gigantic volumes with heavy annotation.

As briefly referenced in earlier chapters, modern readers have not stopped talking about Restoration lady libertines. Popular historical romance novels set in the court of Charles II keep the stories of exceptional and sexual women in modern readers' imagination. Susan Holloway Scott's *Royal Harlot* (2007), *The King's Favorite* (2008), *The French Mistress* (2009) each take up a royal mistress, in the order of Duchess of Cleveland, Nell Gwyn, and Duchess of Portsmouth, as the subject of the story, usually writing in the woman's first-person narrative.

[81] Cushing Memorial Library & Archives, Texas A&M University

Nell Gwyn's lasting fame and celebrity can be witnessed in The Nell Gwynne Tavern, a pub named after her on the site of the Old Bull Inn in London, Gillian Bagwell's romance novel *The Darling Strumpet* (2011), and recently premiered production of Jessica Swale's *Nell Gwynn* (2015). They have been the talk of the town for centuries and their power to captivate public imagination has proved to be great.

Figure 6. Hidden fore-edge painting of Charles II, Catherine of Braganza, and Nell Gwyn in Anne Jameson, *Memoirs of the Beauties of the Court of Charles the Second*. 3rd ed. 1851. © Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University

V.2 Odd Secret Histories and Memoirs

With the death of the libertine monarch Charles II in February 1685, the decadent and libertine English court that started with the restoration of monarchy in 1660 slowly faded out. Charles's unexpected and sudden death and his brother James's coronation brought about drastic changes, including the closing of the London theaters that the former king had been such an avid supporter

of. The first and the most obvious change can be found in the courtier lifestyle that had fed the public interest and gossip since the 1660s (Ezell, *Later Seventeenth Century* 312). Compared to Charles' court where all eyes were on the courtiers, searching for gossip, James' court would "slowly cease to be the glittering spectacle on display for all the viewers" (313). It was around this time when the "memoirs" and "secret histories" of very powerful and transgressive women started burgeoning. Memoirs often claim to print less known private and public details of these women, while secret histories are more frequently discussed in relation to development of the novel and to its political significance. Although these two genres ostensibly occupy distinct places, they often overlap with one another when the subject is lady libertines. Using oral and printed gossip, as well as supposedly undisclosed private details of lady libertines' lives, both memoirs and secret histories recount the complete life narrative of the woman of the subject. Beginning with the subject's family lineage, birth, and childhood, narratives end with the woman's death or, in some cases, the death of Charles II. Apparently much fictionalized accounts of their lives do not always serve one political agenda over another; rather, they represent lady libertines' lives as "glittering spectacle on display for all the viewers" at times for titillation and entertainment. Memoirs and secret histories also infuse romance elements, reimagining lady libertines as heroines. This attests to how the authors and printers of these narratives use and promote these women's celebrity image.

Scholarly interest in memoirs and secret histories of lady libertines lie in their political significance and the subject's relation to state affairs. These stories propose to rewrite and reconstruct the past that is the Restoration court. The court of Charles II is often reconstructed with a political agenda, geared towards explicating how corrupt or liberal the court life was like during Charles's reign. These are concerned not only behind-the-scene "intrigues of the court"

and probably unknown accounts of the King's death. They are also quite invested in early life stories of the subject's mistresses. Quite a number of these types of secret histories were created with the intention of politicizing theses women's lives by revealing the secret of their corrupting influences on the monarch. As characterized in lampoons and satires, mistresses in these political secret histories are predominantly characterized as evil, greedy, cunning, and power-hungry political agents. Since their political maneuvering is the main subject, mistresses who were deemed by the public to be more political were more obvious target in this type of genre while less political (or at least considered less political) mistresses were apparently not their focus. This might explain why Nell Gwyn appears far less in the genre of secret history than does Duchess of Portsmouth.

The secret history genre has recently been gaining attention from scholars as important political "counter-history" or as fictional forms for the early English novel.[82] Rebecca Bullard focuses on secret histories' depiction of royal mistresses' power as a political strategy intended to portray the monarchy "in a state of undress" (2). Bullard argues that royal mistresses certainly provide a titillating glimpse of royal lives, but their sexual intrigue ultimately becomes less important than their political scheming. Annabel Patterson categorizes three types of secret history based on the subject matter: the erotic secret history, the scandal narrative, and the political secret history (155). Although her categorization provides a helpful analytical tool, such a reading can overlook complex layers of secret history that combine titillation, libel, and hidden truths behind political events all at the same time. Secret histories are indeed mixed forms, as Michael McKeon notes that they have "a double charge of objectivity and subjectivity, publicity and privacy, state affairs and amatory affairs" (472). McKeon considers the secret history genre

[82] Ros Ballaster's book demonstrates the importance of French fictional forms in the development of the early English novel.

in the context of the formal domestication of the novel and the establishment of the private and public realms, pointing out how the genre is dedicated to "an experimental inquiry into the limits of their [the realm of the public and the private] emergent separability" (472). Erin Keating expands McKeon's brief exploration of the amatory romance plots in political secret histories, reading two secret histories about Charles II published between 1680 and 1682.[83] Keating argues that the use of romantic modes in early secret histories framed how that readers could understand political issues by creating an "affective intimacy between reading subject and royal hero" (63). With the king as a romance hero of the story where he is abused by sexually voracious and manipulative female villains, the secret histories Keating examines strengthen the reader's feeling of affinity with the monarchical hero. Keating's argument about the "affective intimacy" between the readers and the romance hero/heroine can be useful in examining those secret histories of royal mistresses wherein they are depicted as romance heroines rather than vicious, manipulative villainesses.

Royal mistresses' secret histories are appealing to both writers and readers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century not only because of their role as unofficial political intermediaries but also because their lives piqued and piques people's interests in public and transgressive women with obscure pasts. Both Duchess of Portsmouth and Nell Gwyn had obscure pasts before they became highly visible public figures with powerful and eminent status in court. These women's obscure past provided secret historians an empty narrative space that they could fill. It also allowed the public the room that they can use to construct and commercialize their celebrity images, if celebrity can be understood as "a form of large scale public attention" paid to individuals who "have rarely executed any heroic actions, nor have been

[83] Keating examines anonymous work *The Perplex'd Prince* (1682) and Sébastien Brémond's *Hattigé: or the Amours of the King of Tamaran* (published in French in 1676 and translated into English in 1680).

born into a noble or royal class" (Wanko 5). Nell Gwyn became the icon of Protestant Englishness, generosity, and the "rags-to-riches" story, as opposed to Portsmouth's corrupt Catholicism and French wickedness. Nell Gwyn's early career as an orange girl and an actress definitely contributed to people's imagination of her origin and past as straightforwardly common and humble.

Portsmouth's case and construction of her past, especially in secret histories, are a little bit more complicated. Unlike Nell Gwyn, whose humble origin is fairly well-known, and the Duchess of Cleveland, whose past is relatively well-documented, the Duchess of Portsmouth had a number of peculiar factors that stoked the public imagination of her earlier years. Portsmouth's childhood and early years in France are not very much known before 1668, when she was appointed a maid of honor to the Duchess of Orléans, a sister of Charles II. Furthermore, her boasting of an ancient but obscure lineage left significant room for secret historians to fabricate her origin and past as they liked.

One of the early secret histories of the Duchess of Portsmouth is *The Secret History of the Dutchess of Portsmouth: Giving an Account Of the Intreagues of the Court, during her Ministry. And of the Death of K. C. II.* (1690).[84] This secret history was published in 1690, five years after the death of Charles II, when Portsmouth's influence in the court ha been almost completely swiped away. This interesting "account," as is the convention of the genre mostly due to its scandalous content, does not identify the author other than its bookseller Richard Baldwin.[85] Its

[84] There are presumably two different editions that now exist with differently set types. ESTC R24517[more copies exist and EEBO copy] and ESTC R491541[with only one existing copy]

[85] The identified publisher Richard Baldwin is known for publishing salacious and scandalous prints. The last two leaves of this edition are the list of books published for Richard Baldwin. Many titles included seem to be heavily political texts, including *The Anatomy of a Jacobite Tory. In a Dialogue between Whig and Tory, occasioned by the Act for Recognizing K. William and Q. Mary* and *The Fate of a France. A Discourse where it is shew'd, That by the Happy Revolution in England, all the Designs of the French*

possible political stance is hinted at even in the title page, where it claims to give an account of the Duchess of Portsmouth's "inteagues" during "her Ministry." Although the text claims to be a secret history, which would customarily use pseudonyms for characters and print the "key" separately, this does not even try covering what the text is about. On the title page, both the words "DUTCHESS" and "PORTSMOUTH" are printed in the biggest and boldest letter types to advertise the text as the secret history of the England's most hated French mistress. The anonymous author labels Charles II's reign as Duchess of Portsmouth's "Ministry," with her as the head. The frontispiece also makes an interesting statement on the type of story this secret history is about to disclose. The frontispiece portrays two very dramatic scenes: the first of King Charles II at his deathbed surrounded by courtiers, and the second of a lady (most likely the Duchess of Portsmouth) holding a small treasure chest asking other panicking courtiers "Is He dead." These very dramatic scenes depict what is characteristically Portsmouth in public imagination: a gold-digger whose power and wealth are on the verge of disappearing upon the death of the King. The frontispiece shows how the heroine of this specific secret history is a selfish and evil woman while at the same time pointing out how temporary and illusory "her Ministry" was. It also visualizes one of the moments in the last few pages where the prince suddenly becomes ill and Portmouth departs the country and the king at the first chance:

> So soon as the Prince was taken ill, she made strict Inquiries of his Physicians, Whether there was any danger? and when she was advertis'd that he was threatened with Death, she began to prepare for a Retreat: she presently put up all her Jewels, and all the Gold

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King for the Universal Monarchy are disappointed; and the Rational Grounds to believe his Donwfal near. In three Dialogues betwixt Father Petre, Father La Chase, and two Protestant Gentleman.

> she had, made away the best part of her Goods; and all that she could not conveniently send away into *France*, she put into trusty Hands here; after which, she stay'd here so long as she could conveniently, to indeavour to get some Arears due to her, being very unwilling to leave any thing behind her, but what she could not take along with her. (160-61)

This depiction matches Portsmouth's then very public image, well circulated in lampoons and satires, as a voracious and materialistic Frenchwoman.

This barely one-paragraph treatment of the Prince's (Charles II's) sudden illness and Francelia's (Portmouth's) unsympathetic reaction to it, however, is not what the rest of the secret history is about. Although the title page and the frontispiece give the impression that the focus of the narrative is going to be mostly on Francelia's intrigues at court during her ministry and her relationship with the King Charles II, most of the narrative centers heavily on her as a romance heroine, following her adventures beginning at her birth as a "Daughter of a French Merchant of Iron" and ending with the rumored later life in France (3). Even the ending does not stick to advertised agenda of depicting Portsmouth as a villainess. Shortly after the above quoted scene, where she takes all the "best part of her Goods" and departs for France, the narrator informs the reader of her most recent turn of fate with a deceiving gentleman who pretended to be in love to extort some twenty thousand pounds from her. The deceiving gallant, who proved to be "most passionately in Love . . . more with her Gold, than with her Person," wins money from her at the gambling table and never appears again (161). This could be one way that the narrative restores justice—by "punishing" her. However, it reinstates her as a romance heroine even though doing

so is at odds with the secret history's purported aims and the blatantly royalist, anti-French political intentions suggested in the title page and the frontispiece.

As fitting for the generic conventions of secret history, characters' names are primarily referenced as pseudonymous references to the historical figures they represent.[86] Some characters that depict famous court figures are quite easily identifiable even without the keys, while other characters from Francelia's earlier days in France that read more like fictional characters are not. Portsmouth, whose first name is known to be Louise, is in the secret history Francelia, a name that suggests her infamous Frenchness. Her rival and Charles II's other mistress, the Duchess of Cleveland, is Cornelia, while Charles II's sister Henrietta Anne Stuart, Duchess of Orléans, is the Princess Dorabella. Some names are supposed to be more mocking and sarcastic than others, as is the case of the King of France Louise XIV styling as Tyrannides. Characters can be both real and fictional in the sense that they can evoke readers' imagination of very real public figures but place them in the world of romance. The narrative itself is also a wonderful mixture of believable fact and romantic fiction. For example, the Duchess of Orleans's role as an intermediary between France and England for the Secret Treaty at Dover in 1670 is fairly well described as part of the story. Francelia's earlier childhood years and her adventure in Candia are apparently fictional, though they resonate with contemporary travel narratives, which also blurred the boundary between fiction and fact.

More than the first half of the secret history depicts Francelia's adventures in Paris and Candia as she follows the Duke of Bellame as his mistress in the habit of a page boy. Borrowing common tropes and plot from contemporary travel narratives, Francelia's early years as a young lady before she becomes a political instrument of the French King are widely imagined like a

[86] As mentioned earlier, the title page does not conceal what the secret history is about by printing Duchess of Porstmouth on the title page and the first page.

travel narrative of a dashingly beautiful and witty heroine. Surrounded by men seeking to gain her favor or violate her, Francelia deftly handles multiple potentially dangerous encounters. What sets her apart from the typical virtuous heroine of this type of narrative, however, is Francelia's active and willing deeds that put herself out to the world. The narrative makes it clear that Francelia was not "stolen" or kidnapped against her power (30), as her aunt believes, but rather "embrac'd the offer" to follow the Duke to the distant land of Candia because she desired the Duke and wanted to show that "she had as much Courage as she had Wit and Beauty" (24). After the Duke immediately disappears from the narrative due to a mine explosion, Francelia strategically uses a number of men who approach her to keep her safe before she is safely delivered back to France. Francelia comes back to France with the help of the Marquis who contracted to get "the same Favour which the Duke of Bellame had enjoy'd" in exchange for a "handsom Lodging" (74). Francelia comes back to France as a mistress just as she left the land as a mistress, not forgetting what she can get from such arrangements.

Portraying Francelia's morally questionable choices to readily remain a mistress to multiple men ironically makes her an extraordinarily complex romance heroine. After she comes back to France from Candia, Francelia plans "what excuse to give the World for her Ramble to Candia" (75):

> She thought none more fit, than to say, That while, to her great content, her Aunt was making means to admit her into the Dutchess of Bellame's Retinue, the Duke, her Husband, had accidently had a view of her, and had casu'd her to be forcibly carried to Marseilles, where he had put her on Board, and carry'd her away to Candia, much against her Will, and all the Supplications that she could make to the contrary. (75)

Francelia rewrites her "formal story" so that it can be an acceptable and presentable history of a young and distressed lady. It shows how she understands the social repercussions of her earlier choice to willingly travel abroad as a married man's mistress. This point illustrates an interesting shift in Francelia's character because it shows how she carefully but actively constructs her image by manipulating her public story. Francelia has been depicted up to this point as a beautiful young girl whose sister's jealousy drove her out of her parent's house, a girl whose excessive passion for a married Duke made her accompany him to a foreign island of Candia, and a young lady thankfully "left unmolested" (35) when surrounded by male soldiers and sailors that find her irresistibly attractive despite her disguise as a male page. From this point on, Francelia shows exceptional ability to critically examine her situation, manipulate her "story," and fascinate the audience to her advantage.

This contrived story captivates Princess Dorabella (Duchess of Orléans), and the narrator describes that it was a magical combination of Francelia's charm and wit that made the princess accept Francelia into her family as her waiting woman. Primarily, Francelia rewrites her story of "feign'd Innocence" to her advantage but then she performs her story with "her gay Humour" and "the prettiness of her Person" (75). Francelia's power to captivate even influences the French King Tyrannides (Louis XIV of France) to the point that he decides to send her to England as his political agent. Tyrannides sees Francelia fit to "influence wholly the Prince and the chiefest Ministers of his Councils" in a role that exceeds a mere "Cypher" or a simple seductress:

> She was therefore pitch'd upon to be one of the Princesses Attendance to the Isles; and not only as a bare Cypher, but as one proper to manage, with good Directions, any

> business of State that should be committed to her charge : It is certain, that her sound Judgment, accurate Apprehension; her happy Memory, her smart Wit, and insinuating Way was sufficient to Captivate the Mind of so Amorous a Prince as was the Prince of the Isles, especially, when all those Accomplishments were accompany'd with some share of Beauty and Love, though but in an outward appearance. (76)

Francelia's "Accomplishments," as Tyrannides lists them, include sound judgment, accurate apprehension, entertaining stories to tell from her past, smart wit, and cultivated way of conversation. All of these qualities when combined with her beauty, make her "proper to manage . . . any business of State." This explanation of how Francelia got to be one of the English princess' waiting women and favored by the French king as a fitting instrument is, of course, a crucial part of the political secret history that frames Portsmouth as the French "politic whore." However, such a project inevitably constructs her as a powerful woman who can properly manage state business between two monarchs.

Reading about and imagining a historical figure as a romance heroine must have created a feeling of intimacy between readers of the text and the text's historical subjects. In the 1690 secret history of Portsmouth, Francelia is written as an amatory character, and readers get an access to her passion, thoughts, and motives. If secret histories of the royal subjects and their private sexual lives attract readers to the author's own political persuasion by masking political biases and creating an intimate relationship between readers and the subjects (66), as Keating suggests, secret histories of the mistresses complicate the success of the text's political mission by creating a feeling of intimacy between readers and the subject. Texts that should breed the

"haters" of the subject ironically encourages readers to sympathize with the subject's situation and admire her outstanding character.

Later published secret histories of Portsmouth make more explicitly moralizing moves of directing the readers to condemn the subject by directly framing Francelia as the archetype of evil women. However, the effectiveness of this type of overt moral is questionable considering that the text creates strong affective intimacy between readers of the text and the subject. *The Life, Amours, and Secret History of Francelia, late D..ss of P…h, Favourite Mistress to King Charles II* published in 1734, the year she died, can be a good example. This one also features her as "Francelia," and most of the narrative follows the plot of the 1690 secret historys. The full title on the title page better sums up the nature of the story and the type of romance narrative contained, as it advertises the story mainly as a romance featuring "a surprising Series of amorous Adventures, Love-Strategems, Escapes and Detections" while "interspersed with several Intriegues of that Prince's Mistresses, and his Courtiers, in his facetious Reign" (title page). While the 1734 secret history mostly follows the plot of the earlier story, it does add a few explicitly moralizing and misogynist statements about how "Female Minds" are made (65). Denouncing "Women of Vogue and Fashion" who are not suitable to be mothers of "Worthies" "Patriots" or "Heroes," the narrator or the 1734 secret history attempts to enforce the moral that applies to all the female sex (66).

Yet the narrator's brief moral does not coincide with the character of the heroine Francelia who has been witty, fun, and intelligent. Writing the hated French mistress as a romance heroine aligned the reading subject with the subject of the text, allowing readers to feel sympathetic with both the character and the woman she represented. Francelia's humble birth as a daughter of a French iron merchant—differently imagined in secret histories from

Portsmouth's claim of her family's ancient noble lineage—and her adventures in various different places including the island of Candia and the French and English Court, make her a sympathetic heroine whom readers feel connected to. Francelia's "heart too disposed to Love" (17), wit that exceed any other courtiers, and generally likeable personality are the qualities that mark her as the embodiment of what Joseph Roach calls "It," an icon that exudes "the contradictory qualities that reliably excite the fascination of It: vulnerability in strength, profanity in sanctity and intimacy in public" (175).

Late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women's "memoirs" also pose interesting questions of how lady libertines and Restoration royal mistresses are constructed as icons of fascinating but contradictory qualities. Texts that advertises themselves as "memoirs" are indeed puzzling because they are mostly composed of unverified rumor and gossip, which are used as reliable source from which to narrate the subject's life. Memoirs differ from secret histories in that they do not show any effort to romanticize the narrative. Scholars have paid significant attention to the mid- to late- eighteenth-century women's "scandalous memoirs," mostly women of scandalous profession (and/or questionable reputation) narrating their own life or justifying their "fallen" status or damaged reputation. Beginning with Felicity Nussbaum who focuses on the "scandalous memoirs" of women as "sites of converging and competing discourses that display the ideologies of gendered character" (178), scholars have mostly focused on memoirs written by women like Charlotte Charke and Mary Robinson. For them, the memoirs function as "apologies in the classical sense of defense or justification within admission of guilt," and "the memoirist acts as a historian who compiles and relates the facts and encourages the reader to respond sympathetically as judge and jury" (Nussbaum 180). Lynda M. Thompson also notes that the memoirists "confessed to 'frailty' not only as a marketing technique but also in order to

turn their own admission into a weapon with which indulged *them* while spurning fallen women" (6). Breashears examines the longer literary history of eighteenth-century "scandalous memoirs" by adding more neglected narratives to the genre.

While these scholarly efforts certainly help our understanding of this far understudied genre, as well as help to rediscover the voice of "fallen" women who have been largely ignored, they often overlook the important late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century precedents of the "scandalous memoirs." Scholars have understandably emphasized the significance of those scandalous women's memoirs actually written by women. What Breashears calls a "self-authorized" memoir, meaning that either the subject wrote the memoir or contributed to it and affirmed its authenticity, is often the focus of analysis as it relates to how these women used their voices. As authors of their own stories, scandalous memoirists turn from "fallen women" into a "historian" actively utilizing the reader's sympathy as a weapon to stand against public shame. Memoirs of royal mistresses of my interest thus occupy an odd place in the context of contemporary women's scandalous memoirs.

These scandalous memoirs of lady libertines are neither written by the subject nor confirmed in its authenticity, but still is promoted under the impression that the subject either wrote it or at least contributed to it. The most obvious motive for such publication would be because they make financial sense. Personal details of scandalous women's lives supposedly previously unpublished or unknown certainly had selling power, especially if they were advertised as the memoir. Many of them are printed in a pamphlet-like format, which began to be "established [as] fictional form of the 'novel'" since the 1670s (Ezell *Later Seventeenth-Century*, 354). These early forms of novel very much engaged in revealing private details of the famous women. The full title of Cleveland's memoir, published in 1709, the year that Cleveland died,

Memoirs of the life of Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, Divorc'd wife of handsome Fielding, who departed this life at her house at Chiswick on Sunday night the 9th of this instant October, 1709. With an account of her birth and parentage, her familiarity with K. Charles II. And the children she had by him. With other very memorable and curious passages (1709) reveals how this pamphlet is more invested in disclosing the details of Cleveland's last years and what she was left with after Charles's death than it is in narrating her life story as a whole. This very brief memoir does not present its readers much previously unknown or new information; it rather is a short narrative account of what is known about Cleveland, as it is stripped of the kind of interesting but gossipy details that one would find in lampoons and secret histories. However objective and factual the author might have wanted the memoir to be, it inevitably enlarges two aspects of her life over others: her children and her scandalous divorce with Robert Fielding in 1706, a few years before the publication of this memoir.

While noting her noble birth and the various titles and "Dignities she enjoyed by satisfying the Pleasures of a Prince (2)," the anonymous author of the memoir points out "one thing that ought to make her Name memorable," the children she had by the King (3). The author gives an account of five children Cleveland got acknowledged and ennobled, specifically focusing on their titles and estates. Twice emphasized in the short eight-page pamphlet is how Cleveland's children by Charles II are "great Honour and Ornament to the *English* Nation" (3, *italics* original), unlike their mother whom the author constantly finds "not much more to be said of" even in this short print. Unlike the secret histories where these women are re-imagined as romance heroines with great attention paid to their private thoughts, this memoir has other peculiar motives. The author's purpose and interest do not concern "Whatever Character has been given to this Lady," and instead more on "her Birth and Quality" (2). It is repeatedly

pointed out that her beauty was not the only factor that won her royal favor but the "Loyalty of her Father, who was Slain on the King's part in the Grand Rebellion of [16]41" was the very first step that made the royal favor possible" (2). According to the author, the favor that she enjoyed was, at least to a point, Cleveland's reaping a "Reward" for her father's sufferings and sacrifice.

What makes this memoir odd but interesting is the second half, signaled in the title page as "other very memorable and curious passages," a collection of letters Robert Fielding wrote to his former wife titled *The Dutchess of Cleveland's Evidence against Mr. Fielding: Being a Collection of Letters to his former Wife*. These letters were supposedly written starting from the first one dated 14 November 1705 to the last undated one. Seven letters from Fielding to his wife Mary Wadsworth are presented as Cleveland's evidence in her bigamy trial, but these letters mostly contain unverified intimate sex talk between Fielding and his wife. Four out of eight pages of Cleveland's "memoir" include vivid description of how Fielding "sp—d" ("spurted" is my guess for this redacted word) at the thought of his wife. The almost pornographic text of Fielding's love letters are included as part of Cleveland's scandalous "memoir." Scandalous women's memoirs then can be very broadly defined as any story relating to private, intimate, titillating details of the subject's life.

Stories of Nell Gwyn were also written and printed as memoirs in the eighteenth century as can be seen in the case of *Memoirs of the life of Eleanor Gwinn, a Celebrated Courtezan, in the reign of King Charles II. And Mistress to that Monarch* (1752) written by the comedian John Seymour. The first full-length life story of Nell Gwyn traces her rise from humble beginnings to becoming Charles II's celebrated courtesan. This version of her life depicts her as ambitious "conniving opportunist" who steadily improved her status by strategically becoming mistress to multiple men, as Nussbaum rightly observes (*Rival Queens* 95). The memoirist also emphasizes

Gwyn's other virtues, such as her generosity and benevolence, suggesting that they make her worthy of being beloved by the monarch despite her publicly displayed and talked about sexuality: "if she deserves Blame for want of Chastity, there are few who challenge such lavish Encomiums for other moral Qualities" (60). Gwyn's 1752 memoir marks the beginning of the production and circulation of an intense and consistent public personality, as well as her lasting identity as a celebrity icon.

V.3 Reading Extra-illustrated Nell Gwyn; or, Experiencing Restoration England through Virtual Reality

Peter Cunningham, one of the nineteenth-century biographers of Nell Gwyn, published the first edition of *The Story of Nell Gwyn: and the sayings of Charles the Second* in 1852. Cunningham insists in the "Advertisement" that his book "must be read as a serious truth, not as a fiction—as a biography, not as a romance" because it has "no other foundation than truth." Questions about Nell Gwyn's life inevitably arise due to the lack of verifiable accounts (most of which were based on anecdotes and gossip), which might have contributed to the author's defense of his book as history rather than a romance. Cunningham uses a wide range of documents as sources to reconstruct the life of Nell Gwyn and the Restoration world she lived in. As Cunningham admits in the last chapter of the account, he chose not to "wander into the satires of the time, and poison my[his] pages with the gross libels of an age of lampoons" (178). Although it is an irony that his account of Nell Gwyn's life is also based on the compiled anecdotes and written adulations by her admirers, Cunningham makes it a point to refuse to include satires and lampoons that attack Gwyn's transgressive sexual mores and public sexuality. Whether Cunningham's highly embellished biography, which depicts Gwyn as a woman and a mother

who "had a generous as well as a tender heart," should be read as "a serious truth" aside, his text is significant in that its copies show Nell Gwyn's lasting celebrity in the forms of the readers', fans', and collectors' interactions with the text. Extra-illustrated copies of Cunningham's book, as readers' scrapbooks, visualize and materialize a conversation between the reader and the book. Extra-illustrated texts of Nell Gwyn attest both to the reader's passionate engagement with the text and its subject, as well as to the subject's lasting celebrity.

Extra-illustration, which is the practice of visually and textually annotating an existing text, became widespread with the 1769 publication of James Granger's *Biographical History of England.*[87] Granger published an un-illustrated text with "thumbnail biographies with lists of portraits," and readers supplemented their own purchased copies with the mentioned portraits (Blake 4). Although the practice first started with readers' simply supplementing the missing images in order to "complete" or augment the text, extra-illustration evolved and developed into a much more complicated reading practice. What is a suitable text for extra-illustration varies from person to person and from copy to copy, considering how each extra-illustrated book is a unique creation of its maker and the owner. Motivations for extra-illustration can vary from financial gain or a form of self-education to the pleasure of collecting and arranging as an end in itself (Blake 5). The same person could even extra-illustrate the same text to different ends, as can be seen in the examples of Augustin Daly's extra-illustrated editions of Shakespeare. This does not mean, however, that there are not certain tendencies in the scope of extra-illustrated books. Most of the books selected during the heyday of extra-illustration from 1770s to 1830s

[87] Granger lent his name to the practice as "grangerizing" or "grangerization." The practice since then, however, has evolved as the practice became even more popular in the late eighteenth- and the nineteenth-century. Erin Blake notes that while it would be convenient to confine the term "grangerizing" to the eighteenth-century portrait-centered works to use "extra-illustration" as the broader term, contemporaries must have used two terms interchangeably. Amanda Visconti also notes that "extra-illustrating" is a broader term than "grangerizing."

were “patriotic in tone and antiquarian or historical in subject” (Peltz 1). Even after the practice became more diverse and idiosyncratic afterwards, the scope remained almost the same. Lucy Peltz in her book lists common subjects for extra-illustration: “places and people, chronicles of contemporary life, the lives of artistic and theatrical celebrities, and a variety of then-modern writers, notably Byron and Dickens” (1). General tendency is that topics that contain extra value—whether it be economical, cultural, or literary—get to be chosen. So, the subject and the text chosen for extra-illustration are of immense significance. Early practice of extra-illustration in the mid-fifteenth century focused dominantly on religious texts as people customized prayer books with images of local saints. The text chosen thus attests to the subject’s popularity, as well as the personal and social impact they had on readers. The costliness of the practice also suggests the topic’s importance to the reader as well. As Amanda Visconti notes, extra-illustration started as a practice widely pursued mostly by the upper-class because it required “a trifecta of free time, money, and the social connections necessary to locate the needed images.” Although by the mid-1880s printing innovations lowered the cost of the practice with affordable prints and images, extra-illustration was never a cheap and easy reading practice. Considering the wealth, social connection, and passion required to locate and purchase images matching the needs of an extra-illustrated book and then willing to cut up a work containing a needed image, it is no wonder that extra-illustration points to a limited class of hobbyists or collectors and hobbyists.

As the readers’ unique interactions with the text were physically displayed *in* the text, an extra-illustrated copy replicates the maker’s enjoyment by allowing its readers “a multi-sensory experience” of the text, the subject, and the maker (Peltz 5). Extra-illustrated copy displays the production, circulation, and reception of the subject all in one place. Those who turn the pages of the extra-illustrated books share the same reading experiences and visual pleasures. In the case of

an extra-illustrated copy with rare, original, or authentic materials, the pleasure of experiencing the time period and the subject of the past is augmented. One of Cunningham's 1852 copies of *The Story of Nell Gwyn* in Houghton Library at Harvard University is extra-illustrated and has been expanded to four volumes, measuring five linear feet each, by Augustus Toedteberg (1823/4-1909) of Brooklyn, New York, who worked as an illustrator in the publishing industry in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The expansion of the book is done through the insertion of 833 items, including autograph letters, leaves from playbooks, printed landscapes of places, playbills, and engraved portraits. Cunningham's *The Story of Nell Gwyn,* grangerized by Toedteberg, features original prints and images added on extra pages that are rebound into the codex. It provides a visual form of annotation that situates the book temporarily and materially between common-placing and scrapbooking (Visconti). The Houghton copy of Cunningham's *Story of Nell Gwyn* is an extraordinary example of grangerization in this sense. Toedteberg might have extra-illustrated it for Augustin Daly and Calrence S. Bement, since the book include bookplates of both Daly and Bement.[88] Daly, an early American playwright, seemed to have had a profound interest in drama and theater, which could explain his interest in Cunningham's *Story of Nell Gwyn*, which focuses on a lot of theatrical documents and prints. The book is quite carefully and tastefully curated and expanded to include reference to people, place, plays, history, and social dynamics surrounding the life of Nell Gwyn and the broader theatrical landscape of the Restoration court.

[88] Augustin Daly and Augustus Toedteberg see to have collaborated on a regular basis. There are more theatrical documents and collections in Harvard University that bear the name of both Daly and Toedteberg. See the article in Folgerpedia that has a short paragraph on Augustin Daly, "American theater manager and playwright" who is also "a prodigious book collector and extra-illustrator." Folgerpedia article focuses more on Daly's extended sets of Shakespeare. And this 2013 acquisition is extensively explored in Collation blog post as well.

With numerous engraved portraits, broadsides, original tradesmen's bills, and newspaper cuttings, this four-volume biography of Nell Gwyn reconstructs the Restoration court and theater. Reading the gigantic collection inevitably enables the reader to experience the dynamic pleasures of the extra-illustrator. Readers can re-live the social milieu of Nell Gwyn, as the numerous names and places of the distant past are visually presented along with the text. Effects of time travel are not impossible with extensively extra-illustrated copy with visual aids, original print and manuscript sources. A composite object of image, word text, and unique original (mostly on paper) objects that readers can feel and smell is a pathway to the world of Nell Gwyn that resembles the workings of modern-day "virtual reality," an interactive computer-generated experience within a simulated environment.

This extra-illustrated copy of Cunningham's *Nell Gwyn* also invites readers' creative and critical engagements with the text through the maker's visual annotation, providing primary sources and materials that he uses as evidence. For example, when Cunningham writes about the relationship between Nell Gwyn and the Duchess of Portsmouth he uses satirical prints to provide his constructed interpretation of the dynamic between the two:

> She and the Duchess frequently met at Whitehall, often in good-humour, but oftener not in the best temper one with the other, for Nelly was a wit, and loved to laugh at her Grace. The nature of these bickerings between them has been well but coarsely described in a single half-sheet of contemporary verses printed in 1682—"A Dialogue between the Dutchess of Portsmouth and Madam Gwin at parting." The Duchess was on her way to France, I believe, for the first time since she landed at Dover, and the language employed by the rival ladies is at least characteristic. Nelly vindicates her fidelity.…The Duchess

> threatens her with the people's "curse and hate," to which Nell replies: … Another single sheet in folio, dated a year earlier, records "A pleasant Battle between Tutty and Snapshort…" . . . . . And the dialogue is supposed to allude to some real fray between the rival ladies. (122-23)

Cunningham here uses mainly two satiric prints "A Dialogue between the Dutchess of Portsmouth and Madam Gwin at parting" and "A pleasant Battle between Tutty and Snapshort." Although both prints are clearly satiric and humorous in tone, he proposes to discuss both the mistresses' personality and character to refer to their temperament. What Cunningham does here resemble what literary scholars do in that he tries to analyze materials from the past in order to reconstruct the court of Charles II. Since his focus in this biography is on Nell Gwyn, her wit and humorous temper are his points of discussion and his purpose in presenting this material. Cunningham uses these contemporary satires supposing that they not only "allude to some real fray between the rival ladies" but that they also, at some level, represent their real characters and personalities.

In Daly and Toedteberg's extra-illustrated copy, two satires that are subject of analysis and discussion are inserted in between the pages facing Cunningham's text that contain the excerpt. On a very basic level, the added materials partly validate Cunningham's argument and his authority as a quick "fact-check." But on another level, they allow the readers to compare Cunningham's argument with their own interpretation since they are invited to read on their own by perusing the document. By inviting the readers to engage with the text and the subject while offering the multi-sensory experience of Nell Gwyn's life, the extra-illustrated copy opens up

wide variety of meanings and interpretations of the celebrated actress, courtesan, and a mistress Nell Gwyn.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION[89]

An engraving of Nell Gwyn and her two sons by the king, Charles and James Beauclerk, attributed to a French painter and engraver Antoine Masson (1636-1700) depicts one of Charles II's many "families" Charles II had (Fig. 7). The engraving depicts Nell Gwyn reclining on a bed of foliage by the side of a lake. Her long curls and loose robe, which exposes her naked bosom, take the full center of the engraving's composition, drawing the attention of the audience, while her two sons, depicted as cupids, fly above and surround her goddess-like presence. Charles II stands in the far background, across the lake, seemingly looking over to Nell Gwyn and the two sons he acknowledged to be his and gave the surname of Beauclerk. This family portrait is somewhat similar to Lely's portrait of Cleveland and her son Charles as the Virgin and Child (Fig. 3) in that the portrait similarly evokes the presence of the king as the father of these families even when he is absent or minimized in the background. The difference between Lely's portrait and Masson's engraving might be that Cleveland actively worked with the painter to have herself and her son painted in purposefully shocking and transgressive ways, while Nell Gwyn may not have engineered her "family" portrait as Cleveland did.[90] It is quite likely that the engraver came up with the portrait based on the public perception of Charles II's relationship with Nell Gwyn and their two "bastard" children, whom he made the earl of Beaufort and the lord Beauclaire, as the engraving's alternate title suggests. While Masson's engraved family

[89] Figure 7 from the Royal Collection Trust is reproduced with permission from the Royal Collection Trust. Figure 8 is reproduced with permission from National Portrait Gallery, London, under Academic License.

[90] There is rarely any evidence to prove the connection between Nell Gwyn and the French engraver or Gwyn's patronage of him.

portrait is not quite like Sir Anthony van Dyck's (1599-1641) royal family portrait (Fig. 8), it certainly parodies and humorously mimics the conventional genre of royal family portraits. Lack of children between Charles II and the queen Catherine of Braganza, in contrast to an array of illegitimate children Charles II's mistresses gave birth to, must also have contributed to the production and circulation of these alternative royal family portraits.

Figure 7. Engraving of Nell Gwyn, her two sons, and Charles II attributed to Antoine Masson (c. 1677-1680), Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019

Figure 8. Mezzotint of the family portrait of King Charles I, Henrietta Maria, and her two eldest children, King Charles II and Mary, Princess Royal and Princess of Orange after Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), c.1632. © National Portrait Gallery, London

The family portrait of Charles II and his mistresses like Lely's and Masson's show how lady libertines of the Restoration England challenged the conventional role of women in the patrilineage and the notion of family based on heterosexual and monogamous relationship. These women sometimes carefully engineered transgression to shock and aggressively assert their rejection of the social norms they were meant to follow. But perhaps more importantly, their public image and celebrity take on a life on their own when initially personally maneuvered libertine transgression become social and cultural currency that can be exchanged and commercialized in visual, oral, and print media.

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