

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Libertinisms in George Etherege's *The Man of Mode*

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INTRODUCTION TO GEORGE ETHEREGE AND HIS WORKS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *THE MAN OF MODE*

One morning, Dorimant was lounging in his room when an orange-woman made her appearance. Dorimant, who had a remarkable reputation as a lover, heard that a young woman of quality and fortune from the country had fallen in love with him at sight. Although he was in the process of ending an affair with Lady Loveit and beginning a new one with Bellinda, Dorimant was interested. Shortly afterward he received his friend Belliar, a fop who was very much in love with a young woman named Emilia and wished to marry her instead of the wealthy bride his father had picked out for him. The father's choice was Harriet, the young woman who had been so taken with Dorimant.

Lady Loveit was beside herself at the neglect she suffered at the hands of her lover. She complained bitterly to Bellinda, not knowing that it was Bellinda who had won the recent attentions of Dorimant and about to become his mistress. True to his promise to Bellinda, Dorimant came that afternoon and notified Lady Loveit that he was finished with her. At Lady Woodvill's lodgings that day, the lady herself was preparing Harriet to meet young Bellair. When the two young people met, they quickly confided their dislike of the match to each other. Then they proceeded to play a mock love scene for the benefit of the parents, to throw them off the track.

One afternoon, Bellinda and Dorimant met at the home of Lady Townley. Dorimant made Bellinda promise to have Lady Loveit walk on the mall that evening so that Dorimant could confront her with Sir Fopling Flutter, a fool of a fop, and accuse her of being unfaithful. As they spoke, Sir Fopling entered the company and proceeded to

demonstrate what a fool he was by the oddities and fooleries of his dress, deportment and speech. Later, there was a party at Lady Townley's house. Dorimant, under the alias of Mr. Courtage, concealed his wooing Harriet as the gallant from her mother, Lady Woodvill. Harriet trying to hide her love and admiration from him, showed that her wit was as sharp as Dorimant's.

By the time the party broke up, it was five o'clock in the morning. Dorimant had to hurry home in order to keep a rendezvous he had made with Bellinda, who had promised to spend part of the night with him. In the morning, as she was ready to leave, she was almost discovered there by several of Dorimant's friends. The carriers, accustomed to taking Lady Loveit from Dorimant's house, took Bellinda to the former's Lodging where Lady Loveit saw Bellinda step from the Chair. Because of her wit, Bellinda made the men to say that they had picked her up elsewhere. A few minutes afterward, Dorimant arrived and began berating Lady Loveit but embarrassed when Bellinda appeared from an adjoining room.

Early that morning, at Lady Townley's house, young Bellair and Emilia were married without the consent of Old Bellair. As the ceremony was ending, Lady Woodvill, Harriet and Old Bellair arrived to meet with Young Bellair and to sign marriage contract between the two families. In the confusion of the moment, Emilia asked Harriet if she was in love with Dorimant. Harriet refused to admit. In this point, while the others were off in another room, Dorimant arrived, when he confessed his love to Harriet, she also admitted that she was in love with him. Just then Lady Loveit and Bellinda arrived in pursuit of Dorimant. He made his excuses to Lady Loveit by telling her that he intended to marry Harriet and thus improve his fortunes. Lady Loveit admitted that under the

circumstances she could only wish him well. Bellinda was grateful because his excuse concealed her affair with him and kept her honor intact. Lady Woodvill learned that his intentions were honorable and that he was the same courtage whom she had admired the evening before, mollified to the extent of inviting him to visit the Woodvill estate in Hampshire.

George Etherege (1635-1691) born on Maidenhead, England. He was the eldest son but not the eldest child of the seven children of Captain George Etherege and Maria Powney. The family was prosperously middle class. Etherege's letters indicate that he had a reasonable education. He was well-read in English poetry and had at least working knowledge of Horace. He had travelled in France during his youth but by 1654 was apprenticed to an attorney at Beaconsfield, George Gosnold, to whom he was still articled in August 1658.

The transformation of an articled clerk into a wit and associate of young aristocrats had taken place by winter of 1663-64 when he carried a bawdy verse correspondence with Lord Buckhurst, to whom his first play, *The Comical Revenge* (1664) is dedicated. By the time his second play *She Wou'd if She Cou'd*, he was a member of the group of courtiers, wits and rakes which included Sir Charles Sedley, the Earl of Rochester and the Duke of Buckingham. Etherege's easy wit and literary success brought court favour. In 1668 he was made Gentleman of the privy chamber in ordinary and then appointed to an important and delicate diplomatic mission to Turkey. Not until 1676 was *The Man of Mode* produced, and by then, according to the Dedication, Etherege was in some way in the service of Mary of Modena, wife of the future James II.

Though Etherege wrote only three plays in his literary career, they owe their critical acclaim to their etched-in-acid portrait of love rituals in contemporary London high society, the brilliance of their dialogue and surprisingly enough-the humanity of their characters.

There out to be no question that *The Man of Mode* is a finely ballanced and brilliantly executed comedy of the sexes. Its psychological insight is allied to a complex and open exploration of the patterns and social proscriptions which, self-consciously and unconsciously, govern courtship. Courtship rituals are also games which are exploratory, allowing the lovers to discern the nature of their partner before full commitment. The norm form which the lovers start is inevitably supplied by their society, though usually the younger generation seeks its own pattern of Conventions as distinct from that of their parents. *The Man of Mode* is about the enjoyable, necessary and finally serious games which people play in the most crucial area in which personal fulfillment and instinctual drives have to be accommodated within a social framework-courtship and marriage. While it exhibits the tolerance and gaiety of comedy, *The Man of Mode* is not an entirely comforting or comfortable play. Its affirmation is balanced by an ironic skepticism.

A direct claim for the success and importance of Etheretge's final comedy *The Man of Mode* is necessary because interpretations vary so widely as to call any pretensions it may have to coherence or value into serious doubt. Bonamy Dobree remarks that, "Etherege's three palys are pure works of art directed to no end but themselves, and are entirely unmotivated by any moral stimulus" (60). *The Man of Mode* has also been characterized as a delightfully satiric entertrainment as an uncompromisingly tough and realistic play. This is a bleak and bitter comedy which

exposes Dorimant's life of isolation, and as an expression of Dorimant's Hobbesian aggressiveness, competitiveness, and desire for power and glory.

The Man of Mode is the realistic comedy which captures the texture of the then Restoration society from a specific viewpoint. The question of the delicate relationship between "realism" and the comedy's bearing on actual life can be conveniently focused on Sir Fopling, Dorimant, Mrs. Loveit and Bellinda. But comic illusion does not exclude realism since realism itself is a literary convention. The original audience was too eager to recognize its own world in the play. Sir Fopling offers the classical Aristotelian pleasure of imitation. Laughter springs from instant recognizability and from Etherege's precise observation of linguistic and social mannerisms.

One function of comedy is undoubtedly to release aggression and anxiety, especially the anxiety and aggression surrounding sexuality. The rake hero gains the audience's support because he acts out that side of his audience's psyche which is in real life either denied or compromised by the ties or obligations of society. The moral issue inevitably focuses on Dorimant. Yet the case for *The Man of Mode* must be drawn from the whole play: it is the contrast with other attitudes and characters, along with the interplay between themes, which defines Dorimant's vitality and ambiguity. And the play as a whole reflects the strains and tensions of a society in a state of flux over attitudes to gentility, marriage and sexual behavior. Judging from the varying responses to Dorimant within the comedy, he is as ambiguous within the play as for later critics. The obvious conflict is that between generations. Lady Woodvill, an antiquated beauty and a great admirer of the forms and civility of the last age, still hankers after the *précieus* modes of courtesy of the court of Charles I and Henrietta Maria. In her view, Dorimant delights in

nothing but in rapes and riots (III.iii, 106). Manners have changed: Dorimant, despite his Danish serenade of Mrs Loveit, belongs to a far more dangerous category-the genteel rake , who pursues his women not in whorehouses but in private houses. What the wits enjoy are the freedoms of the present.

The ambiguities of Dorimant's London cannot be resolved by any appeal to established values. Lady Woodvill's outmoded ideas of gallantry and Subordination give no viable alternatives. They can not because they ignore the facts of society in the persons of Lady Woodvill and old Bellair, they are inconsistent and hypocritical. The real ground for Lady Woodvill's hatred of the depraved appetite of this vicious age is that her beauty is no longer admired. The younger generation tastes nothing but green fruit and loathes it when it is kindly ripened. Kindly, which can also mean fully ripened according to its nature, is a witty reminder of the vitality of the natural forces which manners seek to control which she denies. The young people have gone so far as to get an ill habit of preferring beauty, no matter where they find it. For Woodvill and old Bellair, marriage is mercenary and social affair: sons and daughters should be governed by their parents. Old Bellair's boorishness, his assumption of total authority over his son and his pursuit of financial advantage over personal happiness where his son's marriage is concerned give the lie to any claims his generation can make for superiority. P.F Vernon argues, "The comedy of Etherege is not hostile to the institution of marriage itself, but is opposed to marriages of convenience" (370).

Young Bellair and Emilia are true love's representatives in *The Man of Mode*, and are what passes in this play for the *ingénu* lovers. They are very carefully set apart from the young rakes about town. Young Bellair is a handsome, well bred and by much the

most tolerable of all the young men that do not abound in wit. The positive and vital quality of wit is allied to malice which belongs to Dorimant and Medley. These two men talk about irrationality of marriage when the irregular demands of sexuality are more easily and satisfactorily met outside the narrow obligations of a legal tie. As wits, they embody what the word had come to mean in colloquial language Richard Flecknoe, in a work published in 1675 and probably alluded to satirically by Medley as belonging to the last age, observes, “ wit now (is) but new names for an *Atheist* and *Debauchée*” (5). The alliance between the wits and libertine strains of thought was once felt by contemporaries and given countenance by the circulation of Rochester’s libertine lyrics in the 1670s even had they not been backed up by his well-known escapades.

Although *The Man of Mode* respects the relationship of Emilia and young Bellair, they are seen as less perceptive and less vital than Harriet and Dorimant. Their idealism as romantic lovers necessarily restricts them. Emilia’s distaste for fools is regarded as a little too delicate, exhibiting a lack of the robust tolerance of the older women. In this comedy, Emilia is sharply aware of the unsurety of the human heart as the wits. Even the romantic lovers must take account of a realism based on reasonable arguments. Love is again and again described in images which demystify its claims to absoluteness by presenting it in naturalistic and materialistic terms-as a sickness, a legal battle, a pleasurable business, a kind of hunting, a card game and so on. Love is essentially irrational and temporary in its nature, a fact recognized by both the characters and audience. These attitudes and assumptions of impermanence leave very little reasonable space for true love. *The Man of Mode* finally allows the two different pairs of young lovers to come together. Young Bellair and Emilia employ a benign and easily

accomplished trick marriage in order to fool their parents. But Dorimant and Harriet have to approach one another much more warily through the rites of a witty courtship and other dangers.

The particular formulation of *The Man of Mode*'s balance between apparent cynicism, comic tolerance and emotional honesty depends importantly upon the interplay between key words, which embody a complex of tensions in contemporary anxieties about love and manners. Dorimant and Harriet are linked by their shared "wildness" which distinguishes them from all other characters in the play. Dorimant is the one of the wild young man in the town. Harriet has more wit than is usual in her sex and as much malice. Then, she is as wild as we would wish her. The combination of wit, wildness and ability to dissemble are shared by both the lovers. The word's frequent occurrences in the play call on a wide range of meanings. It can mean merely restive, but the word's connotations extend to the ideas of gaiety, of fecklessness, of resisting control and of ferocity and savagery. The figure of the wild man, sexually and morally unconstrained by society's restrictions, clearly echoes libertine aspirations. Maximillian Novak points out, "The word has a particular resonance in the comedy of the 1670s" (16). The hero's and heroine's wildness in *The Man of Mode* is dangerous for others and especially for the lovers. Both choose to live at risk.

Harriet's wildness is integral to her sexual attractiveness. Although able to remain within the bounds of propriety through her charm and manipulation of those about her, Harriet is essentially untamed. Her sometimes freakish and extravagant behavior is an accepted part of her character. Extravagance is also joined in the character of Dorimant. It has recently been suggested that the ideas of Extravagance is a defining quality of several

rake heroes in Restoration comedies. Maximillian Novak writes, “Etherege’s Dorimant, who assumes madness for much of *Love for love* is extravagant narcissist (.....) In making the extravagant city rake into a comic protagonist, the playwright gave him something equivalent to the qualities that were supposed to arouse admiration in the rhymed heroic plays” (16).

Mrs. Loveits mighty spirit prevents her from keeping a balance between a passionate nature and the need for self control. She is the most passionate in her love and the most extravagant in her jealousy. The extravagance of uncontrolled passion creates a fatal vulnerability. Love and jealousy rage strangely in her and her attraction to Dorimant meets the needs of a self-destructive element in her character. The psychological accuracy of Etherege’s portrait of Mrs. Loveit is important. She is too driven by arrogance and a love for power and is therefore doomed to choose a man like Dorimant. She shows a foolish disregard for the realities of life. Even when she nearly has Dorimant in retreat, her feelings cause her to throw away her advantage. Passion reduces her to the level of comic automation. The sternness of her rejection stems from her demonstration of the destructiveness of love: she had believed in the extravagant words men speak in love.

The other obvious extravagant in the play is Sir Fopling, who mistakes manners for substance. Just as the Dorimant’s pursuit of women is self-regarding, pursuit of town’s admiration and not more than that, vanity is a motive force behind Sir Fopling as well, which is at least harmless. Within the social world depicted by *The Man of Mode* , the naked pursuit of these ends is contained and made tolerable by the town’s code of manners which places a high valuation on easiness and complaisance. Complaisance, a

word drawn from the French refers to the variance of true feelings and appearance. It takes the width of meanings like reservation, dissimulation, dexterity, patience, civility and affability. The same width of meaning is apparent in *The Man of Mode*. On several occasions it means no more than acting in such a way as to please others, as when Sir Fopling explains that his unwillingness to dance is not want of complaisance. But when the word comes into Dorimant's orbit, the concept becomes more slippery, for his wildness is accommodated within an effectively complaisant manner, which is deliberate cover for his depredations. He is under a necessity to create an image of politeness.

The final scene in *The Man of Mode* brings together the various strands of the comedy, but allows the audience no easy resting place. Harriet's recognition of Dorimant's love is expressed in a new rhetoric of love which is at once knowing and idealistic. The comedy moves in its conclusion towards re-establishing the norms of generosity, good nature and mutual love, so discovering a new stylishness through which to affirm conservative values. The moment of affirmation is not allowed to conclude the play's movement. Instead *The Man of Mode* turns back to the problem of Mrs. Loveit and Bellinda, whom Dorimant faces with Harriet. His just discovered faith in love does not prevent him from presenting his forthcoming marriage as purely materialistic in its motive. The play, like most good jokes looks in two directions. The comic pattern imposes the wish for a happy ending, yet the play has shown all too clearly the enemies to that happiness within the characters and within their society. Nevertheless, the ideal remains a possible if difficult one. And it is the balance between the possible and probable that gives the poignancy to Dorimant and Harriet's final exchange, an exchange, which turns on the opposition between Town and country underlying the whole play. An

essential condition placed by Harriet upon Dorimant is that he should prove his love by visiting her in the country.

In this study of Etherege's polemic play *The Man of Mode*, though Etherege seems distinguished and harsh critique of the then London's traditional values and mores, libertinism is taken as a tool to inspect the play. Central focus will be on the paramount characters Dorimant and Harriet. I have used the available reference materials and criticism on *The Man of Mode* as my supporting documents. The research has been divided into five chapters including the first introductory chapter and the last concluding one.

Critics have interpreted Dorimant as a symbol of transgression, disruption and moral degradation and thus threat to society, but this study argues how George Etherege integrates the libertine radicals into society's traditional institutions. Dorimant sustains complete lack of self awareness. But Harriet leads him to that awareness which is necessary to join him into mainstream social framework.

CRITICAL REVIEWS ON *THE MAN OF MODE*

The first recorded performance of *The Man of Mode* or *Sir Fopling Flutter* by George Etherege, which may also have been its premiere, was given before King Charles II at the Duke's theatre, Dorset Gardens on 11th March 1676. The extraordinary success of the production was long remembered because of its strong cast and shocking issues.

Immediate responses to the work were understandably mixed. Many critics condemned it as parasitic to social stability because of its libertine ethos. Others applauded the work's originality and sparkling wit. Readers found the protagonist of the play, Dorimant, to be both perpetrator and victim of his disastrous obsession with libertinism. He becomes breaker of life of the play's two heroines, Mrs. Loveit and Bellinda. Though the play spurred debates and criticism, it was brilliantly executed and finely written comedy of the Restoration period. John Downes writes, "This comedy being well acted and well cloath'd, got a great deal of money" (111).

Critics of Etherege's *The Man of Mode* suffer distress when faced with Dorimant, who, though the hero is after all damned libertines. He maintains three mistresses, treats them all shamefully, interrupts an evening with the woman he professedly loves for a sordid liaison and sneers at his friend Bellair behind that "tolerable" young man's back. At the same time, he is witty, charming, and magnetic, so deserves the love of the most fascinating woman of his world, Harriet. Evading the need to address this contradiction, Harriet Hawkins writes:

The primary purpose of this comedy seems to be neither immoral nor moral but rather spectacular-to exhibit, rather than to censure. The disturb Dorimant provokes should not disturb us, because Etherege did not intend

us to judge his hero, but merely to appreciate him (.....) we are seeing Etherege's libertines in human, not in moral terms (.....) Etherege's attitude toward his society is not amoral but rather satirical, like that of any responsible satirist, he is to correct as well as to expose. (370)

It is Dorimant, a Restoration "Don Juan" almost too intense a personality to be the hero of a comedy, who dominates the play. He never wastes a word, his comments are devastating and he has a detachment and self control that put all the other characters, except Harriet, at his mercy. Even Harriet's courage and self-possession occasionally tremble on the verge of defeat and the duel between the two generates an unusual tension. Dale Underwood writes:

The activities of Dorimant are explicitly and predominantly the expression of "a Hobbesian aggressiveness, competitiveness and drive for "power" and "glory", a Machiavellian dissembling and cunning; a satanic pride, vanity and malice; and drawing upon each of these frames of meaning, an egotistic assertion of self through the control of others. (73)

These descriptions of Dorimant sound more suited to a Volpon, an Iago or even Satan, than to Etherege's "genteel rake of wit." Justifying the character of Dorimant, Harriet Hawkins writes:

Indeed, audiences have delighted in characters whose behaviour and attitudes shock them, in characters who have the pride, energy, intelligence, cunning or power to overlap moral fences and to invert traditional values. And certainly playwrights have enjoyed creating such characters, perhaps taking it for granted that what would outrage the moral

philosopher might nevertheless please an audience that, like themselves, their audiences would just as soon imagine an Iago as an Imogen , a Dormant as an Emilia. It is mainly Judicious retrospect that characters whose vices do become them represent a combined critical and moral dilemma to their audience; for a different order of theatrical salvation and damnation can take place on the stage down here. (594)

Recognizing all Dorimant's rakish ways, we need a modern approach to Restoration comedy. There is a question that Is it really necessary to require an Etherege moralise in order to enjoy *The Man of Mode*? The games people play in his comedy are timeless (if trivial) ones. *The Man of Mode* is still amusing and relevant enough on its own terms. Harriet Hawkins writes:

It is unnecessary to deplore the amorous intrigues of rakes and flirts in such a light comedy unless the comedy itself specifically calls for a harshly moral attitude toward its characters – an attitude which the Ovidian norms and the dramatic emphasis of *The Man of Mode* seem designed to preclude. In a different play, moral evaluations of the characters may be quite appropriate. (...) But the best way to enjoy Ethereges's comedy seems to be follow the advice given in its prologue, and "be not too severe." (75)

Rose A. Zimbardo, in his essay *Of Women, comic Imitation of Nature*, considers what in the nature of comic perspective makes the role of women crucial. Zimbardo analyses the function of female characters in a great comedy like Etherege's *The Man of Mode* which stands as a crux in the development of comic "Imitation of Nature."

Etherege is midway between the imitation of nature as idea and the imitation of nature as human actuality. We have been made to think that “King Charles’s golden days” were different from other times and that comedy in his time presents the peculiar life of a peculiar period with “photographic realism” In all of these arguments Etherege’s *The Man of Mode* has been cited as evidence and explicated. Zimbardo writes:

Etherege depicts nature’s force breaking through the limitations of inadequate, rigid forms to free expression within human figures, but he realizes his idea of nature, as early seventeenth century playwrights did, by delineating it metaphorically within a structural design. The shape of *The Man of Mode* is a mounting progression toward the idea of human nature freed from the iron fetters of social expediency but bound by the golden chains of natural necessity.

The female characters in the play *The Man of Mode* each present the libertine, Dorimant, with a call to love. We are presented successively with love as simple appetite or commodity (Molly the true-bred whore) whose appeal the fastidious Doimant has long since outgrown; love as power over the other and the attempt to arrest nature’s mutability by outworn language and oath (Mrs. Loveit), love as deception and self deception (Bellinda), and finally love as self knowledge and surrender to fate (Harriet). Dorimant is being asked to make a journey to nature by Harriet and there to encounter his fate in a traditional image of the three melancholy sisters. This is comedy’s true challenge to “Know thyself” in relation to nature’s truth. The agent and instrument of nature is Harriet as Zimbardo writes:

Harriet tries to bring Dorimant to self-knowledge is the very method of the comic poet. She “holds the mirror upto nature”. As in the Mall, where she imitates him and mocks the theatricality of his loverly posture, then she arranges a playlet in which he must play the role of Mr. Courtage, a caroline beau (.....) Harriet, then is the classic comic woman, the agent of nature who undermines heroic pretension. (384)

Dorimant tries again and again to employ all the extravagant language, oaths and posturing of heroic love in wooing Harriet. Harriet’s constant aim is to strip him of pretensions. She will not allow him to assume the posture of heroic lover, rather her challenge is to bring him to nature.

Lisa Bergland, in her essay *The Language of the Libertines*, analyses the language which libertine characters like Dorimant speak in *The Man of Mode*. Any character who attempts to influence, attack or join the society of the wits, but does not speak its language can not possibly succeed because his inarticulateness betrays his ignorance of the code of libertinism, and exposes him to contempt. Dorimant, Medley, Young Bellair, Harriet, Emilia and Lady Townley form an exclusive witty society from which all other characters from old Bellair to Molly the whore, are excluded. These six witty characters clearly differ from the rest of the dramatis personae because they alone use and understand extended metaphors. To reconcile with his moral sense, his enjoyment of dangerous antisocial behaviour, Etherege’s libertine speaks a highly metaphorical language that conceals the true nature of his sexual activities. Bergland writes:

Libertine’s use of analogy to discuss the institutions in which restrictive and conventional morality is most overwhelmingly embodied- love and

marriage-disguises his rebellion against those institutions, and displaces both confession and criticism into an understood sub-text (.....) Dorimant and his peers avoid confession and judgement by perpetually speaking of other things. They most usually cloak their licentiousness in allusions to health or to games of chance; their disdain for honest love is voiced as disdain for the church and “devotions”. For example Emilia, Medley and Dorimant discuss the risks of illicit love and Mrs. Loveit’s tiresomeness, in terms of gambling. (371)

Turning to the relationship between Dorimant and Harriet, libertine language helps them to play a kind of game. Harriet fascinates him because she speaks the libertine language as effortlessly as he and he therefore treats her as an equal, a fellow wit. Because she has fallen in love, Harriet understands Dorimant even better than does any character in the play that he takes more pleasure in the ruin of a woman’s reputation than in the endearments of her love. She also recognizes that Dorimant is so much the rake, he calculates every word movement, and she therefore confronts him with the charge of affectation. Her speaking of metaphorical language is a strategy, as Bergland writes:

By turning the libertine language to her own ends, and making it a vehicle for honest avowals rather than a cloak for profligacy, Harriet forces Dorimant to confront the libertine ideology to which he subscribes, and to recognize that she unites wit with love, desire with constancy. (380)

Drawing upon the characterization in the play *The Man of Mode*, John Dennis in his *Defense of Sir Fopling Flutter* presents his approach from historical point of view. He

argues that Etherege looked to his friends and acquaintances-and possibly to himself-for sources and models for Dorimant. Dennis writes:

Now I remember very well, that upon the first acting this comedy, it was generally believed to be an agreeable representation of the persons of condition of both sexes, both in court and Town, and that all the world was charmed with Dorimant, and that unanimously agreed, that he had in him several of the qualities of Wilmot Earl of Rochester, as, his wit, his spirit, his amorous temper, the charms that he had for the fair sex, his falsehood, and his inconstancy (....) and lastly his repeating, on every occasion, the verses of Waller, for whom that noble Lord had a very particular esteem.

(248)

Etherege's audience delighted in recognizing the many details from fashionable London life of the 1670s, particularly those used to characterize Dorimant. But John Harold Wilson in his *The Court Wits of the Restoration*, gives a more boarder view. He writes:

Etherege seized upon and embodied in his play not the real, day by day life of Whitehall, but the life which Whitehall was pleased to imagine it led. Individuals items may be factual, but the total picture is a comic illusion.

(164)

Leslie H. Martin, in his influential essay *Past and Parody in The Man of Mode*, analyses parodies in the play *The Man of Mode*. Martin gives description of the character of Mrs. Loveit in terms of her termagant traits. To view Mrs. Loveit in an aura of bittersweet pathos and to subtilize her at the expense of consistent comic interpretation

may appeal to the post-romantic sensibility. But in 1676 such notions were meaningless. Etherege's contemporaries saw Loveit as ludicrous without sentimental qualifications because they recognized in her violent passion and its codified articulation in terms of love, hate, jealousy and revenge an exquisite parody of a stock character in heroic drama, the termagant heroine. Martin writes:

Full enjoyment of Loveit's "rage", piquant for Restoration audiences stepped overlong in *préciosité*, necessitates sharing their familiarity with the termagant's traits, function and idiom. The termagant is a woman of uncommon "spirit" or "soul" who encumbers the protagonist with avowed passion. At first seductive, she turns pursuer when spurned, a tactic which in the *précieux* iconography of the emotions signals a reversal of appropriate sexual roles and a grave violation of *biénseance*. Debarred from the hero's affections by his suit to her rival, the termagant alternates wildly among disparate emotions- enraged, tender, despondent, hopeful- but preoccupies herself with ineradicable jealousy and a quest for revenge.

(364)

Loveit speaks many of the conventional lines of the *Precieuse*, replete with appeals to constancy, honor and the inviolability of love, and at the same time enacts the petulance of the disappointed female suitor at odds with all restraints. By thus mingling contraries in a single character, Martin writes, "Etherege achieves an attitude of studied nihilism" (366). Neither the curbs of convention nor their total abrogation have objective validity; misapplied law, contending with unwise license, propels Loveit toward

destruction. But the parodic nature of the characterization confines Loveit within strictly comic context.

Loveit's distinctive idiom, coupled with her violence and jealousy, ensures Etherege's conscious parody of "Courtly" values and 'sacred convention.' Thwarted love begets hate; hate engenders jealousy; and jealousy induces a consuming passion for revenge.

Jeffrey plank, in his *Augustan conversion of pastorals*, analyses the pastoral elements developed by Edmund Waller and Sir John Denham in the play *The Man of Mode*. He argues that *The Man of Mode* includes so many passages from Waller's pastorals that it seems to insist on an even broader discussion of its formal mixture than that developed by Hume. The response of a Restoration audience to a stage play would not be limited by its dramatic experiences but it is important to look offstage to other "Augustan" literary strategies in order to put the play into a period perspective. Plank writes:

Etherege's extension of Waller's pastorals in his stage play parallels the contemporaneous poetic extensions of Waller's pastoral procedures. The difficulty of adapting inherited pastoral narrative to new, historical conceptions of reality, the eventual containment of inherited pastoral narrative by the Augustan georgic, and the concomitant ranking of perspectives (the engaged actor subsumed by the spectator whose own character is neutralized through disengagement) are all issues pertinent to Etherege's use of Waller's pastoral in his stage play. (192)

Extending inherited Restoration pastoral by subsuming it within the “georgic” actually begs the psychological concern of Waller’s pastorals. Etherege’s choice of form indicates that he would rather continue to grapple with pastoral problems than avoid them. If Denham’s poem is a “georgic” that includes pastoral narrative, then Etherege’s stage play is a pastoral that includes satiric description. Plank again writes:

When Harriet directs Dorimant to play the dying fop and make the piece complete, it is clear that Dorimant has changed from “hunter” to the “stag.” His position fits that of the speaker in the Waller’s lyrics he has been citing throughout the play (.....) Etherege’s extension of Waller’s pastorals is, therefore an attempt to place in the foreground domestic issues that Augustan writers, with very mixed success, repress until the 1740s. What Etherege wants to emphasize is the difficulty of domestic disengagement and engagement, too, for once Dorimant is indeed attracted to Harriet he can not engage himself because he has practised disengagement. (194)

The Man of Mode gives us the picture of its historical social scene, of the masks people wear and of the way people play the game of love. And its creator explicitly instructs us. He instructs us to sit back and relish both the spectacle on the stage and the spectacle round about. For he is a comic poet and a true comic poet is a philosopher who always instructs us laughing.

The critics up-to-date have focused on moral issues, language, characterization, parody, comic imitation of nature and role of pastoral elements in *The Man of Mode*.

These critical views do not basically pinpoint my title which is George Etherege's effort to bring libertine social outcast, Dorimant, into mainstream social framework.

Libertinism In The Restoration Period

Libertinism refers to the unrestrained indulgence in licentious practices. *Webster's comprehensive Dictionary* clarifies the concept of libertinism as: "an extreme exercise of freedom in thought or opinion, especially on religious subjects" (315). But libertinism took broader view when it comes to the performers of libertine ethos in the Restoration period. Throughout Charles II's reign, the libertine was a familiar figure as a sexual adventurer and as a radical questioner of social, political and moral values. Not only was the libertine a dominant figure in the poems and plays of the Restoration era, but he was also a subject of frequent discussions in the alehouses and coffee shops of London. Restoration libertinism was in the literary works of John Wilmont, Sir Charles Sedley, Sir George Etherege, William Wycherley and George Villiers who were public performers of private pursuits. Libertines in this period were constantly performing for an audience - either in actual deed or in reported tale. The libertines in Charles II's court were also sceptical of public life and the ability and willingness of England's public institution to indulge, protect and further their private joys.

Indeed, the libertine's pursuit of pleasure often placed him at odds with England's many figures of traditional authority: London's constables, women's husbands, fathers and employers, and England's king and his ministers. The libertines engaged in sexually secretive acts to entertain his friends and king with the story of successful seduction. More than this they engaged in traditionally degraded acts- excessive drinking, carnality, sodomy, sedition, assault and sacrilege- in the public sphere in a variety of ways.

On the stage of Charles II's court, the libertines performed drunken scenes of transgressive love and sex. So, libertinism is best studied as a series of public

performances and its defining properties are better understood as a theatrical props than as precise attributes showing its playful performative qualities. I analyze the performative nature of libertinism as its defining constitutive element and it traces its consequences for English drama, politics and sexuality. Actually libertinism was performed in at least three ways: the libertines were actors who captivated spectators with their scandalous behaviour, the libertines were playwrights who embodied their own reputations in their libertine protagonists, and through their activities and plays, the libertines were themselves texts to be analyzed, interpreted and evaluated. In other words, libertines enacted private acts in public through their characters or by themselves. This blurring of distinction of public and private acts challenged the political strategies of Charles and many of his ministers. Thus helping to shape the direction of Restoration drama and expanding the possible sexual roles and identities available to late seventeenth century men and women. And this performance based paradigm raises several questions in scholarship on libertinism, Restoration literature of seventeenth century history. And these issues are to answer within the contexts of the libertine fraternity in Charles II's court, Stuart ideology and the theatricality of Restoration politics.

Public performance of transgressive activities was at the heart of what it meant to be a libertine as Samuel Peppys gives account of the performance of Sir Charles Sedley. He reports that on June 16, 1663, Sedley accompanied by Charles Sackville, lord Buckhurst and Sir Thomas Ogle, dined at the Cock Inn. During their meal, Sedley was seen:

Coming in open day into the Balcone and showing His nakedness-
acting all the postures of lust and buggery that could be imagined

and abusing of scripture and, as it were from thence preaching a mountebanke sermon from that pulpitt, saying that there he hath to sell such a powder as should make all the Cunts in town run after him- a thousand people standing underneath to see and here him. And that being done, he took a glass of wine and washed his prick in it and then drank it off, and then took another and drank the king's health. (209)

This episode encapsulates many of the characteristics of libertinism in and around the court of Charles II. Acting all the postures of lust and buggery that could be imagined fueled contemporary perceptions of libertines as sexual revelers who were always ready to scandalize the general populace. Indeed much of the scholarship on Restoration libertinism emphasized the breathtakingly clear power dynamics at work in the so called libertine ethos. It should be clear that Restoration rake is the person who is sexually predatory male whose goal is to have as many affairs in as short a time as possible and who plays off the illicitness of the liaison against his own reputation for sexual conquest. In this view, libertines flaunt a deliberately provocative male self fashioning that depends on a conventional misogynous understanding of hierarchical relations between the sexes. In this point, we can observe that libertines violated previous concept of class and gender. Thus libertinism was less a philosophic system than a way of life. Dale Underwood, taking Machiavellian and Hobbesian Concept of the natural man explains:

There is at least an implied recognition by most seventeenth Century libertines that the Stress upon freedom of indulgence led in actuality to a state of war much like that which characterized the

natural man for Machiavelli and Hobbes. The more idealistically minded might tend to skirt this Consequence of liberty. But the Restoration libertine, particularly as we shall find him in the comedy of manners, is always fully and ironically aware of this reality. He insists in fact, upon man as naturally self seeking in motivation and ruthless in his means. (12)

More recent scholars have studied the ways in which the libertine's freedom of indulgence depended on the violence and oppression inherent to Machiavellian and Hobbesian notions of life as war. Warren Chernaik, for example maintains that "The ideology of libertinism can justify oppression in the name of freedom, liberating the will to possess and destroy." (4)

It is certainly right to say libertine performances such as Sedley's, as expressions of the rakes' elite aristocratic privilege: These men could enact such performances of sacrilege and sedition precisely because they were elite intimates of the king. Thus, without surrendering upper class identity, the chief license that these careless aristocrats seek is sexual. The rake's cynicism was a gesture of status and hence, perversely reasserted that status in the very act of sneering at the hypocrisy of the language which officially supported it whose methods might be sophisticated by civil society but whose basic aims could not be transformed within it. There are two problems with this stress on libertinism as primarily sociocultural violence. First, it de-emphasizes the recognition that most seventeenth century libertines were fully and ironically aware that freedom of indulgence led in actuality to a state of war. As we will see the plays written by libertines in Charles II's court were often concerned with this problem and rather than ignoring the

social consequences of their acts and writings, often foregrounded these consequences as part of their socio political agenda. Second, it is also a matter of disagreement with the dismissal of a radical component to restoration libertinism since its doctrine of sexual freedom is always complicated by the politics of class and gender. While libertine ideology was indeed complicated by the rakes' enjoyment of the privileges of aristocratic masculinity, libertinism was not simply predatory and misogynistic. Indeed, the only way to show just how complicated Restoration libertinism truly was is to elaborate fully both its embracing of aristocratic male privilege at the expense of other classes and women and its radical challenge to the patriarchal system upon which that privilege was based. It should be clear that radicalism, a hotly contested term among historians, signifies that it is a subversion of the status quo and replace it, rather than simply to improve or amend it. In this connection, radicalism can mean active disobedience of the law, particularly in the form of such activities as rebellion, assassination, the publication of allegedly seditious literature and the use of violence to prevent legally constituted authorities from enforcing the law. Another broader view about radicalism is about monarchy and electoral processes. Growing out of an emphasis on the debates of the period on whether power rested in and flowed from the monarch to the people through the parliament or from the people through the parliament to the monarch, this alternative vision of radicalism accentuates a belief in the electoral processes (and thus the parliament as the seat of governmental power rather than the crown), its roots in custom and common law over monarchical prerogative, and its active and varied resistance to opposing viewpoints.

In evaluating the two sides of this debate, many scholars argue that whole sale structural changes are theoretically as well as practically unachievable in the seventeenth

century. Even in times of great social and political upheaval, seventeenth century discussions of social and political changes were confined within a linguistic framework that both provided scope for many alternative programs. These linguistic frameworks set the limits within which any could be articulated. Thus, on a rhetorical level, actual subversion of political ideology was impossible because the debate itself was always grounded in already available political discourses. When we analyze attitudes of seventeenth century reformers towards poverty, we find that even the most radical reformers in the period - ones who all scholars agree were radical – nevertheless retained their culture’s patriarchal model of familial and societal organization based on hierarchical relations between the sexes. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the libertines in Charles II’s court likewise embraced many aspects of patriarchy as the foundation of their vision for a better society. Being neither feminists nor levelers, they, like their nonconformist contemporaries, were radical in their challenge to restoration order in city, state and church. Sexual libertinism of the 1670s has much in common with some of the radical religious sects of 1640s and 1650s most notably the Ranters. The Ranters not only glorified sex and sinful behaviours as evidence of grace but also denied the immortality of the soul. They looked forward to the skeptical antiscripturism that became the distinctive mark of the rake’s heterodoxy twenty years later.

Analyzing the performative nature of libertinism will help us see its radicalism more clearly. Sedley’s performance at the Cock Inn functions much like performance art today, though there are obvious limits to this analogy. By its very nature, performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists. Performance art has been a way of appealing directly to a large public. It makes audience

reassess their notions of art and culture by shocking them. It can be performed in different ways and in different places- theatre, café, bar etc. Content of it rarely follows traditional plot or narrative, lasting from few minutes to many hours with or without prepared script. Sedley's debauchery anticipates many of these elements of performance art. With different postures, he performs identifiable sexual acts to cause the audience to reassess their notions of social mores. Just as live art requires an audience, libertine performance rely on observers to respond to their transgression of normative codes of conduct regarding art, life, politics audience hold dear.

Like performance artists, Restoration libertines provoke their audiences with their performances of traditionally secretive acts in the public, challenging their observers to examine critically the foundations upon which Stuart institutions were built. The rake necessarily raises ambivalent responses, for the sexual energy that he represents threatens the stability of social order even while it promises to provide the vitality that must animate the structures of that order. These ambivalent responses govern not only the plots of Restoration comedies but our own reactions to libertine activities as well. One such reaction is made out of feminist response to libertine activities which emphasizes aristocratic male's oppression of women and lower class men. Another response to these activities can be rooted in feminist theories of performance. When performance art shifts in focus from authority to effect, from text to body, to the spectator's freedom to make and transform meanings, feminist theories are keenly observing to this shift. Feminists know that highly personal, theory sensitive performance art, with its focus on embodiment promotes a heightened awareness of cultural difference, of historical specificity, of sexual preference, of radical and gender boundaries and transgressions.

Through their libertine performances, libertines used first their bodies and then those of their actors as social texts responding provocatively to historically specific issues of politics, culture, sex and gender boundaries and transgressions.

Nearly every aspect of the libertine's personal life was displayed for public consumption. As we see libertine lived his life, even its potentially shameful parts, as if it were a play for public viewing. Pepys records startling gossip involving Buckingham, a libertine playwright, Lady Shrewsbury and her husband in this way:

I am also told that the countesse of shrewsbury is brought home by the Duke of Buckingham to his house; where his Duchess saying that it was not for her And the other to live together in a house , he answered, "why, Madam, I did think so; and Therefore have ordered your coach to be ready to carry you to be ready to carry You to your father's, " which was A devilish speech, but they say true: And my lady Shrewsbury is there it seems. (201)

In this way, public knowledge of Buckingham's sexual and domestic affairs demonstrates that the majority of libertine's life, especially his love life, was available for public scrutiny and entertainment.

These performers and their friends enacted libertinism on "Stages" throughout London and Countryside. Behaviours of the libertines would often compete with the actors for the audience's attention. In this connection Pepys records about the activities of Sedley in this way:

Vexed all the while with two talking ladies and sir Charles Sedley, yet pleased to hear their discourse, he being a stranger; and one of

the ladies would, and sit with her mask on all the play (....) she also making sport with him very inoffensively, that a more pleasant reencounter I never heard. (71-72)

Thus, theatre as well as brothel were the place to meet and seduce new women at the time. The libertines in Charles II's court also performed their outrageous deeds on the streets of London. Sedley and Buckhurst, for example were once arrested for running up and down all the night with their arses bare through the streets and at last fighting and being beat by the watch. Libertines were seemingly everywhere, getting drunk, seducing women, frequenting whores, starting brawls and generally causing mischief. As we shall see, the libertine wits played up their association with these reported deeds, using them to construct protagonists for their theatrical ventures and thus capitalizing on the audience's interest in their scandalous adventures.

The multitude of people who first watched and violently responded to Sedley's performance of lust, buggery, sacrilege and sedition on the Cock Tavern suggests that libertine performances generated spectators who evaluated and interpreted their activities. Initially Charles II and his fellow libertines were the primary audiences for the wit's scandalous performances. Being the king's companions and entertaining him with stories of exciting activities, however illegal and antisocial often kept the libertines out of the Tower and local jails. In this point Pepys records the following account:

I had an hour's talk with Lord Sandwich about the ill posture of things at this time, while the king gives countenance to Sir Ch. Sedly and Lord Buckhurst, telling him their late story of running up and down a streets a little while since all the night, and their

being beaten and clapped up all night by the constable, who is
since child and imprisoned for his pains. (338-339)

These things show the ill posture of things at this time. The libertines in Charles II's court, therefore learned quickly how advantageous it was to recount their every adventure with wit and humour when the king was nearby. Their contempt for authority, entertainingly represented, ironically brought them within the court and further access to the king. Many Londoners found the wits' activities fascinating as well as Rural inhabitants apparently found reports of the libertines' bad behaviour equally riveting. Just as the wit's poetry circulated around the court in manuscript form. In such a way all the segments of the society such as citizens, prentices and others had a vested interest in libertine activities. And they were increasingly attending the theatre. As the audience's reaction to Sedley's performance attests, audiences interpreted, evaluated and responded to libertine activities as scholars have identified seventeenth century as the cradle of modern spectatorship. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the European bourgeoisie begins to carve out for itself a distinct discursive space, one of rational judgement. Attempts to bring social order to this discursive space resulted in the creation of a "binary Opposition between spectator and spectacle. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White also discuss this binary analyzing one of John Dryden's prologues, they say:

It is no longer sufficient for Dryden that the theatre goers
participate in the spectacle and enjoy themselves as part of a
crowd: they must be disciplined into 'true judges' silent
appreciators or critics in short, separating out their individual

faculties of evaluation from the visceral pleasures of crowd
behaviour.” (84)

So its result was the creation of modern criticism. Relying upon their observers’ critical attention as a means of exerting political and cultural power, libertine playwrights in the period actively engaged their audiences as critical spectators. In this connection Nancy Armstrong says: “Work of the pen is rivaled only by that of the eyes” (122).

These libertines seem to have intuitively understood what Michel Foucault would analyze as the “Pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light” (45). Consequently libertines exercised power that, in Foucault’s words, asserted itself “in the pleasure of showing off, scandalizing or resisting” (45). Through their public spectacles and theatrical works, libertine performers encouraged their spectators to question, monitor, watch and spy on their transgressive performances. This appeal to the public’s voyeuristic interest in libertine sex and scandals brought them a measure of power in Restoration Society. Thus libertine performers simultaneously exerted an influence over popular views on politics, the theatre, and sexual behaviour. In this way they used the spotlight to challenge their culture’s dominant discourses and systems-marriage, fidelity, Protestantism and fealty to the king. In this connection Warren Chernaik says, “Where Hobbes and Lucretius challenged false, illegitimate authority, libertines assumed that all authority was illegitimate: the state, the church, the family etc. were institutions equally parasitic on man’s fear of freedom” (25). Sedley’s behaviour outside the Cock Tavern attacks all three of these institutions. Buckingham’s reported speech that he would send his wife away in order to make room for his mistress in his house likewise reflects the libertine’s

rejection of the family as an authoritative institution. Consequently, these performances were not merely entertainments; they were ideological and political statements that helped shape the future of English culture.

Libertine performances dramatically attacked certain elements of their society in an effort to participate in the continuing negotiations of the larger political and cultural settlement that followed the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Libertine performance thrived between the poles of the two great political events of Charles II's reign: his Restoration in 1660 and the exclusion crisis of the late 1670s and early 1680s. In the eighteen years between Charles's Restoration and the eruption of a crisis that laid bare the fragility and the constructed nature of post interregnum Stuart ideology, contentions over the nature and locus of power and authority dominated English culture. The libertines in Charles II's court were actively involved in this struggle. Initially they wanted to affect the king's policies and later they attempted to change the populace's ideas of authority religion and morality with the help of theatre. Problem arose for the king when theatres helped citizens to be questioners, that is, modern spectators rather than obedient subjects. Thus order was to be threatened.

Charles returned to England in 1660 with a specific ideology in hand. Ideology is a system of representations which serves to sustain existing relations of class domination by orienting individuals toward the past rather than the future, or towards images and ideals which conceals class relations and detract from the collective pursuit of social change. A society chooses and codifies the acts that most closely correspond to its ideology; this is why the existing of certain genres in a society and their absence in another reveal a central ideology, and enable us to establish it with considerable certainty.

The main pageant of the Lord Mayor's Day Show in October 1660, for example, told the story of Charles's escape from revolutionary forces by hiding in an oak tree. This connection to divine providence shows the revival of trade and prosperity and restoration of unity and concord by connecting Charles connection with Stuart past. Theatrical discourse was the most prominent genre through which Charles II's government, one cultural group, as well as libertines, another cultural group inculcated its subjects with its ideology.

While Charles II brought with him an ideology of monarchical authority influenced by his years in absolutist France, many of his subjects thought of the monarch and monarchical power differently. Many of England's citizens feared the Restoration's effects on their nation though the idea was disseminated that his return is the God's answer to heartfelt prayer of the nation. This shows that England of 1660 was politically and culturally different from that of Charles's father and grandfather. People's fears of "more terrible popery" and arbitrary government extended when Charles attempted to align England politically with Catholic absolutist France against protestant Dutch. Again, he used materials of legitimation for the tyrannical rule, like his father's statue had been replaced in Guindhall yard, king's arms once again hung over the speaker's chair in the parliament. Navy's colours, flags and standard had been replaced with those of 1648. In this way Charles made London a national theatre and used it in a variety of ways to help secure his throne.

The "institutional reconstruction" that followed the restoration of the monarchy included the reopening of the theatres. Charles II used both formal theatre and popular spectacles to create a myth with which to appeal to a broad public consensus. He also

maintained control over the professional theatre and was actively engaged in discussing with the dramatists what they should write and with the theatre management what should and should not be staged. Thus, drama after Restoration started to produce pro-Stuart propaganda. But all the dramas were not in this line. For the most Restoration comedies were social comedies-comedies that socialize threats to the ruling class explicitly or implicitly. Etherege's *The Man of Mode* is the example of this kind. It might be expected of tricksters, challengers of order, libertine drama moved back and forth across the ideological divide of supporting and critiquing the political hegemony. These libertines had a vested interest in wealth and property then to pass on their wealth to their legitimate heirs. Enjoying cultural power, they resisted any challenge to it. Libertines had a difficulty when they often found themselves shut out from exercising political power in Charles II's court, a power that could be necessary to preserve the transmission of property. Because Charles thought of them only as an entertainment committee. Telling important people about their exploits served the libertines well in the 1660s. But these same exploits led to their marginalization by the early 1670s. As a result of this, libertines in Charles II's court turned to writing for the theatre as a means of counteracting their potential loss of celebrity and cultural significance.

Libertines began to draw more forcefully upon their reputations as rakes in order to cast versions of themselves as the central figure in their plays. This casting complicated the relationship between audience and playwright since the writer became confused with his actors. Stephen Greenblatt argues in his work on Renaissance self Fashioning in this way:

Self fashioning derives its interest precisely from the fact that it functions without regard for a sharp distinction between literature and social life. It invariably crosses the boundaries between the creation of literary characters, the shaping of one's own identity, the experience of being moulded by forces outside one's control the attempt to fashion otherselves. (3)

By crossing the boundaries between literature and life, the Restoration libertines embraced the gossip concerning their scandalous activities and incorporated it into their plays. By becoming authors, these playwrights fashioned an identity for themselves that transcended the mere entertainment value of their lived acts and theatrical plays.

The relationship between authorship, playwriting and identity is unique one. Drama relies on the "fluid delimitations" between art and life. So it is impossible to draw the exact dividing line between where one kind of activity stops and drama proper starts. Dramatic performances are given life not by the texts that give rise to them but by the social performances they imitate. Dramatic works by Buckingham, Etherege, Wycherley, Rochester and Sedly base their libertine protagonists on their own reputations. The libertine dramas, such as *The Rehearsal*, *The Country Wife* and *The Man Of Mode* cited the social and behavioural practices of real life people has been a common place of Restoration drama since the late Seventeenth Century.

Beyond amusing the King or filling the theatre, gossips and accounts of wits activities also show that libertinism was a kind of double performance-once for the immediate pleasure of wine, wit and/or women and, at least once but perhaps repeatedly

for the pleasure of recounting their adventures with wine, wit and/or women to people who had not been part of their original pleasures.

In the process of expanding the audience for their performances, the libertines in Charles II's court also began to fashion "otherselves" Libertines saw the world as their stage and performed scandalous acts to gain public's attention perpetuating their own celebrity. They effectively wrote the scripts of their lives, acted the parts of dashing, aristocratic hedonists and then publicized accounts of their infamous deeds through conversation, poetry, and eventually through drama to an interested audience.

In this connection the concept of "identity" should be clear. Identity is a theatrical invention that must be reiterated if it is to endure. Judith Butler reports, "identity is fashioned through reiteration" (136). It is worth to analyze that identity is performed on the surface of the body through acts, gestures and desire that produce an effect of an internal core or substance. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed are "performative" in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. As Judith Butler explains, "performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate act, but, rather, as the effects that it names" (2). Gender and sex are performed on the body through various gestures, acts and desires. Through the repeated performance of these gestures, acts and desires, the subject becomes convinced that the performance is essential to his or her identity rather than a role he or she has learned to play. Literature, media, law, political parties, for example, are the supporters of performances. These concepts of identity and gender are in keeping with Restoration

notions of “person” Thus, identity can be shaped and changed, represented and acted, that it doesn’t inhere in the very cells and fibres of the body.

Through the reiterative performance of libertine acts via gossip and drama, a vision of certain aristocratic masculine identity, the libertine was perpetuated in Restoration society. Through their performance of such acts and gestures as running naked through the streets of London, getting drunk and preaching Mountebanke sermons, acquiring mistresses and seducing other men’s wives and disguising themselves as tavern keepers and Italian physicians and, repeating these performances over and over again in deed, in tale and in their plays, the libertine wits created an identity for themselves in the court of Charles II.

The libertines in Charles II’s court cast themselves as tricksters by challenging Stuart ideology’s vision of marriage, the family and government. In this way they worked to fashion a new model for English culture based on their own vision of individual liberty. This included more permissive notions of sexual behaviour and individual conscience. This agenda is embodied in the libertine protagonists of their plays in the 1670s. Like their creators, these characters challenged the social political, social, religious, psychic and narrative order. Understanding their friendship with other rakes is crucial to our appreciation of their challenge to Stuart ideology. According to Eve Sedgwick:

In any male dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power (.....)
For historical reasons, this special relationship may take the form

of ideological homophobia, ideological homosexuality, or some highly conflicted but intensely structured combination of the two.

(25)

This vision of male relationship in Restoration England offers us an important insight into libertinism. Libertine masculinity was grounded as much in the rake's bonding with other libertines as in his sexual activities with women.

A performance of masculinity, sexuality and homo-sociality, libertinism is inevitably a major plot point in narratives of the history of sexuality. Because the libertines in Charles II's Court were the last generation to conceive masculinity as permitting a relatively inclusive sexual behaviour. We can place the paradigmatically masculine figure of the aristocratic rake of the Restoration at the center of the early modern shift from a sexual system of hierarchy to one of difference. So, concept of male friendship offers scholars a better model for understanding male-male desire than libertinism. It is to emphasize that the two figures of the masculine friend and the sodomite were distinct and even "diametrically opposed" in the public imagination throughout the renaissance, but during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these two figures became mutually indistinguishable at important cultural moments. Although the libertine is not the defining identity of male sexuality in the eighteenth century, he is nevertheless important to the history of male sexuality because he is a liminal figure who combines the characteristics of the "masculine friend" with those of sodomite.

The libertine seduces sexual partners with promise of flying to love's theatre, but the only real retreat from the "Gawdy Gilded stage" of court life is with one's male companions. The libertine movement of the 1660s and 1670s is an important episode in

the study of male friendship and male sodomy. Contemporary constructions of libertine excess as sodomy affected not only the period's visions of libertinism but also those of the libertine playwrights themselves, increasingly divorcing it from masculine friendship and creating the image of the rakish libertine hell bent on sodomizing the God-fearing populace.

This study reads libertine drama within its historical context and libertine fraternity in Charles II's court, in order to focus on the manner in which these libertine playwrights use performance, both theatrical and personal, to fashion political and social identities in the 1670s.

LIBERTINISM IN *THE MAN OF MODE*

The Man of Mode begins with the libertine Dorimant attempting to cast off his current mistress, Mrs. Loveit, in favor of new game, Loveit's best friend Bellinda. As he pursues a liaison with Bellinda, he falls in love with a heiress, Harriet, who has been brought to town to marry Dorimant's friend, young Bellair. Neither Harriet nor Bellair intends to follow through with this marriage, as Harriet insists that she will find her own husband and Bellair is in love with another young woman, Emilia. Over the course of the play, Dorimant succeeds in bedding Bellinda, embarrassing Loveit, and attaching himself to Harriet. Dorimant is charming, inconstant and he expresses his amorous intentions toward at least four women over the course of the play orchestrating much of the play's sexual intrigue. Lady woodvill, Harret's mother, sums up her understanding of his reputation when she asserts "Dorimant is the prince of all the devils in the town who delights in nothing but in rapes and riots" (133). So, he is indeed "a wild extravagant fellow of the times" (372).

The relationship between Medley, Dorimant's intimate friend, and dorimant is seen as sodomitical in the play. Throughout the play, Medley's focus is on Dorimant. Medley greets Dorimant saying: "Dorimant my life, my joy, my darling sin" (73). After greeting Dorimant, Medley embraces and kisses him, evoking the orange woman's exclamation: "Lord what a filthy trick these men have got of kissing one another!" (75). The phrase "darling-sin" certainly draws attention to the same-sex desire inherent in two men kissing. Furthermore, Medley seems to be jealous of Dorimant's friendship with young Bellair; he admires feminine beauty, but does not pursue women and is an opponent to marriage; he is portrayed as effeminate, one who is comfortable with women

as companions not lovers and who shares their habits. All of these characterists are in keeping with traits associated with sodomites during this period. On the other hand, Dorimant, the pattern of modern gallantry, and sir Fopling, the pattern of modern Foppery, are often presented as mirror images of one another. Young Bellair, for example, recalls that sir Fopling gave Mrs. Loveit “a catalogue of his good qualities, under the character of a complete gentleman” (422). According to sir Fopling, a gentleman “ought to dress well, dance well, fence well, have a genius for love letters ,an agreeable voice for a chamber, be very amorous, something discreet, but not over-constant” (424). In this scene alone, Dorimant has demonstrated four of these traits: his ability to dress well, to write love letters, to be amorous and to be discreet but not overly constant as he asserts:

“I love to be well dressed sir: and think it no scandal to my understanding
(....). I will smell as I do today, no offence to the ladies’ noses (....). That
a man’s excellency should lie in neatly tying of a ribbond, or a cravat!
how careful’s nature in furnishing the world with necessary coxcombs.”
(385-386)

We, too are forced into this recognition that, when Dorimant assumes the disguise of Mr. Courtage, when he is a man made up of forms and common places, sucked out of the remaining lees of the last age.

Harriet, who has fallen in love with Dorimant, recognizes that Dorimant is so much the rake who calculates every word and movement, and she therefore confronts him with the charge of affectation. As she describes Dorimant to young Bellair: “He’s agreeable and pleasant I must own, but he does so much affect being so, he displeases

me” (28). Later, she characterizes him as: “affectedly grave, or ridiculously wild and apish” (66). Likewise, when Dorimant asserts to Harriet: “That demure curtsy is not amiss in jest, but do not think in earnest it becomes you,” she responds: “affectation is catching I find; from your grave bow I got it” (118). Thus, Harriet’s retort tells Dorimant that she finds his pose that of the libertine no more attractive than he finds her assumed prudery. As Harriet explains: “Dorimant’s seductive conversation might work on some easy women, but it will not affect me since we are not all born to one destiny” (181). Throughout the play, what Harriet demands of Dorimant is a believable declaration of his love, one that connects his conversation to his desire and that leads to marriage. In other words, she attempts to force him to give up his social trickery in exchange for marital respectability and sexual honesty. This requirement suggests that Harriet finds fault with the present, a calculated and affected style of presentation consisting of disguises, tricks and ruses of illicit seduction.

Harriet’s criticism of Dorimant’s affected performances is extended in the play to include libertine posing more generally. Dorimant is the most sophisticated and self-conscious of the wit’s libertine figures. His sophistication lies in the fact that he, like the libertine wits themselves, is always performing cozening tricks. Dorimant’s entire life is made up of one performance after another. He believes that the world is “a gawdy, guilded stage” with himself as the star of the production. For example, in act I, he discusses his orchestration of his break up with his old mistress, Mrs. Loviet, since, as he reveals: “next to the coming to a good understanding with a new mistress, I love a quarrel with an old one” (261). To achieve this goal, he and his new mistress, Bellinda, have scripted a play to act in front of Loviet. As Dorimant explains:

“Bellinda made me yesterday at the playhouse make her a promise before her face, utterly to break off with Loveit, and because she tenders my reputation, and would not have me do a barbarous thing has contrived a way to give me a handsome occasion.” (240)

While visiting her friend Loveit, says Dorimant, Bellinda “means insensibly to insinuate a discourse of me, and artificially raise Loveit’s jealousy to such a height, that transported with the first motions of her passion, she shall fly upon me with all the fury imaginable” (253). Dorimant will then “play his part” (258). As he goes on to explain: “I will confess and justify all my roguery, swear her impertinence and ill humour makes her intolerable, tax her with the next fop that comes into my mind, and in a huff march away” (258).

Bellinda is horrified by Dorimant’s cruelty to Loveit when the plan is enacted. She admonishes him for the cruel part he has played. Dorimant’s libertinism is all about playing parts with no consideration for how his actions affect other people. He is well aware that his libertinism is merely a performance with only one exception, his eventual love for Harriet, all of Dorimant’s relationships in the play seem to be predicated on playacting social roles or pursuing sexual desires, not on genuine feeling or emotional commitment. Dorimant continues to perform as a trickster as he moves on to third mistress, Harriet. When Harriet’s mother, Lady Woodvill doesn’t want to meet him because of his reputation as libertine trickster, he assumes a new name, Mr. courtage as well as new personality. Dorimant plays this role so that he can speak with Harriet and court her in front of her mother. Dorimant and Harriet court one another by enacting a courtship before the other characters. Dorimant is able to throw off his disguise after his

friends convince Lady woodvill that his reputation as a heartless rake was unjust. As she exclaims: “ Mr. Dorimant, everyone has spoke so much in your behalf, that I can no longer doubt but I was in the wrong” (428). Although these lines are spoken in the middle of Dorimant’s cruelest treatment of Loveit, he escapes censure because his friends cover up his behavior with their praise of his character. Because Dorimant is always performing tricks, it is difficult for the characters as well as audience to believe anything he says or does.

We can see Bellinda’s heartfelt pain at her own self deception. After her liaison with Dorimant, Bellianda extracts a promise from him to never see Loveit again, except “ in public places, in the park, at court and plays” (33). Dorimant readily agrees to this, assuring her that: “Tis not likely a man should be fond of seeing a damned old play when there is a new one acted” (34). In spite of this promise, Dorimant, immediately visits Loveit’s apartment, where, unbeknownst to him, Bellinda has mistakenly been brought. Bellinda is correct when she asserts:

Other men are wicked, but then they have some sense of shame! he is never well but when he triumphs, nay! glories to a woman’s face in his villainies (...). I knew him false and helped to make him so! was not her ruin enough to fright me from the danger ? It should have been, but love can take no warnings. (340)

When Dorimant attempt to make up with her, she resists the temptation and swears: “may I be as infamous as you are false” (347).

The real challenge the author and the play faces regarding how to manipulate and reform libertine trickster, Dorimant, into plain dealing is accepted by Harriet woodvill. Dorimant's only effective rival on the battlefield is Harriet. Her effectiveness is in part due to the fact that Harriet is cast throughout the play as a woman who can enact the same kinds of performances as the libertines but who also contains these performances within society's prescribed boundaries. Like Dorimant she knows how to dissemble and to perform identities. Unlike the libertine, however, her tricks are part of a game that has no losers. When her maid assumes that Harriet will marry the man her mother has brought her to town to marry, Harriet responds:

Hast thou so little wit to think that I spoke what I meant when I overjoyed her in the country, with a low curtsy and what you please, madam, I shall ever be obedient (...) This was to get her up to London! Nothing else I assure thee. (42-43)

Such performances continue when she meets young Bellair. The two act the part of young lovers in order to avert their parent's suspicion that neither has any intention of marrying other. In fact, Harriet readily agrees with this plan "for the dear pleasure of dissemnling" (128). She even uses affectation against Dorimant to hide her love for him in the following conversation:

Dorimant: Where had you all that scorn and coldness in your look?

Harriet: From nature sir, pardon my want of art: I have not learnt those softness and languishings which now in faces are so much in fashion.

Dorimant: you need'em not, you have a sweetness of your own, if you would but calm your frowns and let it settle

Harriet: My eyes are wild and wandering like my passions, and can not yet be tied to rules of charming. (122)

Harriet's consummate use of art is revealed by her declaration that she uses no art; she seeks to conceal her passion by convincing Dorimant that she can not conceal passion. Like Dorimant and libertine wits, Harriet uses performance as a means of both attracting men and hiding her true thoughts. Unlike them, however, her use of trickery protects her honorable reputation, attracts a permanent mate, and never masks her true identity.

Harriet's female version of libertine trickery can also be seen in her flaunting of social convention when she walks alone with young Bellair in the mall. Their separation from the group is a violation of social convention but Harriet's decision is simply excused by her mother as a "freak" whim (6). Her mother does not look strangely at Harriet's walking off with her intended fiancé because her self control will prevent her from doing anything rash:

Young Bellair: These conversations have been fatal to some of your sex, madam.

Harriet: It may be so; because some who want temper have been undone by gaming, must others who have it wholly deny themselves the pleasure of play? (53)

Harriet sees no reason why she should not have the liberty to converse with young men as much as she likes, since she will never confuse that liberty with license. It is precisely when their conversation turns to the pleasure of "play" that Dorimant enters and Harriet's "gaming" begins:

Dorimant : you were talking of play, madam, pray what may be your stint?

Harriet: A little harmless discourse in public walks, or at most an appointment in a box barefaced at the playhouse; you are for masks, and private meetings; where women engage for all they are worth I hear.

Dorimant: I have been used to deep play, but I can make one at small game, when I like my gamester well.

Harriet: And be so unconcerned you'll ha' no pleasure in't. (75)

This last criticism of Dorimant demonstrates Harriet understands that he takes more pleasure in ruin of a woman's reputation than in the endearments of her love. Because of this understanding, Harriet is careful to preserve her reputation in all of her dealings with Dorimant. Harriet's trickery not only allows her the pleasure of play but also keeps her from staking her entire reputation on a game that could destroy her. She remains firmly within the bounds of decency and honour in all of her interactions with men and this form of libertinism seems worth of approving.

Harriet's power throughout the play lies in her ability to manipulate others into ludicrous breaches of stylistic propriety which Dorimant employs so effectively. One such breach is made in Dorimant's own libertine pose. When Dorimant notices her embarrassment at his arrival in act V, Scene II and asks: "what have we here, the picture of the celebrated beauty, giving audience in public to a declared lover", she retorts: "play the dying fop, and make the piece complete sir" (107). Thus, she casts him as the affected fop, since all he knows is posing and disingenuous performance. Where he sees a scene in which he can play the part of a lover, she finds an opportunity of putting him back in his place. Until he can stop playing the part and prove that he truly loves her, she refuses

to hear his rehearsed lines seduction. This strategy works. Harriet compels Dorimant to make such extravagant declarations of his love that he exhausts the affected role of seducer and surrenders to her superior gamemanship: "I will renounce all the joys I have in friendship and in wine, sacrifice to you all the interest I have in other women" (156). At this point Dorimant has blundered and Harriet springs her trap: "Hold-though I wish you devout, I would not have you turn fanatic-could you neglect these a while and make a journey into the country?" (159). By forcing him to this comic humiliation, she has in fact compelled the only gesture of heroical sacrifice which her wit will allow her to accept, his removal away from the city and into the country. This is the iron hand in the velvet glove.

We know that Dorimant's love for Harriet is genuine not only because he is willing to be embarrassed by her but also because he reveals it to the audience in an aside: "I love her, and dare not let her know it, I fear sh'as an ascendant o'er me and may revenge the wrongs I have done her sex" (164). By this admission, we are led to believe that Dorimant's hopes of marrying Harriet at the end of the play are based on his love for her and not simply on his need for her fortune, which is the excuse he uses to Justify his actions to Loveit. After establishing Dorimant as a libertine trickster and then critiquing Dorimant and that trickster tradition, Etherege moves toward a potential domestication of libertinism. By providing Dorimant with a suitable mate in the form of Harriet, Etherege modulates libertinism's excesses and guarantees the libertine's incorporation into the community. Dorimant ends his play by embracing marriage over bachelorhood and restraint over license. His choice is made clear in the following conversation with Harriet, which follows her request that he accompany her into country:

Dorimant: To be with you I could live there: and never send one thought to London.

Harriet: Whatever you say, I know all beyond High park's a desert to you, and that no gallantry can draw you farther.

Dorimant: That has been the utmost limit of my love-but now my passion knows no bounds, and there's no measure to be taken of what I'll do for you from I ever did before.

Harriet: when I hear you talk thus in Hampshire, I shall begin to think there may be some little truth enlarged upon. (162)

Knowing that Dorimant's pursuit of sex revolves around London, Harriet elicits a promise from him that he will leave London, and thus his libertine tricks, behind. His new behaviour: "will be unlike anything I ever did before" (165). When Dorimant then begins to propose marriage to her, Harriet cuts him off, postponing any promise until he has proven his love by leaving the city. He promises to follow her but she promises nothing except to hear his protestations of love. Unlike Bellinda, Harriet is quite aware that Dorimant's promises last only until his desires are satisfied. What Harriet, therefore, undertakes is the transformation of Dorimant's desires: she wants to wean him away from licentiousness and toward domesticity. But she does not want a permanent residence in the country which would stifle Dorimant's energy and competence. What she does want is to teach him to bring his natural desires to the social framework of marriage. For this reason, she postpones any public declaration of her love for him until he has proven that what he truly desires is honorable marriage.

Finally, while Etherege ultimately transforms his libertine-Dorimant does agree to follow Harriet into the countryside-his libertine trickster nevertheless hopes to remain libertine. After his declaration of limitless love for Harriet, Dorimant seems once again to make advances toward his former mistresses. He declares to Loveit that he is marrying Harriet simply to repair the ruins of his estate: “To satisfy you I must give up my interest wholly to my love, had you been a reasonable woman, I might have secured them both, and be happy.” (315)

In other words, he would marry Harriet for her money and maintain his relationship with Loveit on the side. Likewise, Dorimant insists to Bellinda: “we must meet again” (344). Whatever he tells Harriet, in his own mind at least, his future continues to hold liaison with women other than her, but none of the other women currently want to continue their relationships with him. Harriet makes sure of this by driving Loveit from the stage. When Lady Woodvill becomes convinced that Dorimant’s reputation is not what she had thought, Loveit protests and advises Bellinda saying: “give thyself wholly upto goodness” (432). Harriet takes this opportunity to disarm her primary rival, Loveit:

Harriet: Mr. Dorimant has been your God Almighty long enough, ‘tis time to think of another-

Loveit: Jeered by her! I will lock myself up in my house, and never see the world again.

Harriet: a nunnery is the more fashionable place for such a retreat, and has been the fatal consequence of many a belle passion.

Loveit: hold heart! Till I get home! Should I answer 'twould make her
triumph greater. (432)

Thus, it is Harriet, rather than Dorimant, who is triumphant at the end of the play and one suspects that she will know how to keep him home at night, safe from the Loveits and Bellindas of the world. Throughout the play, Harriet demonstrates that she knows the tricks and techniques of her rivals and that she is able to play Dorimant's game better than either he or his mistress can. As a result, Etherege's libertine is moving toward domestication, whether he wants or not. This domestication of the libertine is both radical in its empowerment of the female and contained in its rejection of a libertinism divorced from society's institutions. Dorimant, the protagonist of the play, is likely to marry a woman at least as equally witty and vivacious as himself. Although he intends to continue indulging his libertine desires, she has other ideas and will probably be able to control these desires. While Etherege clearly does not reject the libertine's fundamental belief in pleasure, *The Man of Mode* suggests that he sees a point at which the libertine must place greater value on other goods in life: marriage, property and the perpetuation of social institutions. Rather than stand outside of society's mores and institutions, the libertine must engage in social interaction without turning every conversation into a hollow performance of social codes or trickster fictions of romance.

CONCLUSION

The most noticeable feature of *The Man of Mode* is its libertine theme. Flaunting social convention and pursuing pleasure is only good in libertine's life. This is the libertine's basic nature to involve in whoring, carousing, playgoing, drinking, gambling etc. which were inevitably expensive at a time when England's economy was changing. Where inflation and growing population had boosted land prices, rents and other goods, libertine's pursuit of pleasures put them into difficult situation because they were also costly without involving into main stream social framework like marriage and homosocial bondings, they could not sustain their lives with economic stability. On the one hand, heavy burden of expenditures could not be fulfilled without marrying a woman of fortune at the time and companionless man was unable to rely on his friends to help bail him out of debt. On the other hand, libertines were under the threat of social expulsion because of their reputation as a corrupted and morally degraded person. George Etherege, being a libertine himself, was watching these consequences seriously. So, *The Man of Mode* works to combat these problems where Etherege dramatizes the reformation of libertine performance within socially actable boundaries by moderating many of its excesses through possibility of marriage.

Libertine ethos of Dorimant is the guiding factor to make story move forward. His pursuit of pleasure satisfies when he succeeds to destroy women's reputation. He is a trickster who always performs tricks to seduce a woman. Dorimant performs fake identity as a heroic lover before his mistresses through rehearsed lines of love. Because of this same heroic pretension, Mrs. Loveit's reputation is damaged. Her mighty spirit prevents her from keeping a balance between a passionate nature and the need for self-control. The

extravagance of uncontrolled passion creates fatal vulnerability. On the other hand, Bellinda is the victim of her own self deception. Though Dorimant does not make any believable declaration of love to her, she deceives herself by believing that he truly loves her.

Dorimant faces strong resistance when he comes to court Harriet. She is equal to him in her wit, and is able to contain Dorimant's libertine activities. But she confines her libertine performances within society's prescribed boundaries. She enacts her libertinism to reform Dorimant into plain dealing. Harriet casts Dorimant as the affected fop, since all he knows is posing and disingenuous performance. Where he sees a scene in which he can play the part of lover, she finds an opportunity of putting him back in his place. Until he can stop playing the part and prove that he truly loves her, she refuses to hear his prepared lines of seduction. By the end of the play, this strategy works and he surrenders accepting his genuine love to her, making promise to follow her to the country. The comedy moves in its conclusion towards reestablishing the norms of generosity, good nature, and mutual love, so discovering a new stylishness through which to affirm conservative values. In obeying the rake reformed pattern *The Man of Mode* does not simply fall back upon conventional values. Dorimant and Harriet have chosen marriage freely and knowingly, and their witty understanding accommodates a direct and unblinkered knowledge of the dangers facing their love. The comic pattern imposes the wish for happy ending, yet the play has shown all too clearly the enemies to that happiness within the characters and within their society. Nevertheless, the ideal remains a possible if difficult one, and it is this balance between the possible and the probable that

gives the poignancy to Dorimant and Harriet's final exchange, an exchange, which turns on the opposition between town and country underlying the whole play.

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