

From Theatre to the Novel: The Rhetoric of Gender Difference

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## ABSTRACT

## From Theatre to the Novel: The Rhetoric of Gender Difference

Eva Moran

This thesis examines the articulation and configuration of modern gender in three texts: John Lyly's *Gallathea*, William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, and Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze*. The theoretical works of Laurie Shannon, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Ros Ballaster and Catherine Ingrassia are employed in order to think through the gender paradigms in each of these texts. The three principle texts for consideration offer neither a clearly crystallized binary system of gender, nor a concrete and heteronormative model of desire. Rather, an analysis of the tropes of desire reveals these paradigms as represented in the texts to be in the process of developing and becoming increasingly naturalized. These texts represent an emergent system of modern gender difference, which is a process that Michael McKeon has associated with Restoration and eighteenth-century economies, cultures and histories. Through the analysis of the interlocking nature of gender and class, this thesis also examines the shifting definitions of status and gender and asserts that private and public spheres as well as generic forms, whether theatre or print-based, inform the conception of these definitions. As part of this analysis, this thesis examines generic and rhetorical modes in each text, and argues that each author's chosen methods of representation inform the configurations of sex and gender.

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## Introduction

Since proposing a thesis on gender studies in Restoration English dramatic literature, I have been on the hunt for pre-modern and modern English texts that would better help me understand modern gender and sexuality from a materialist perspective. I found three texts that perplexed and intrigued me: John Lyly's *Gallathea*, William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, and Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze*. While not all of these texts are dramatic in the traditional sense of being meant for the stage, each addresses performance and theatre as sites for social interrogation and, in particular, the interrogation of gender. Authored by two men and one woman, the texts offer a perspective on the relationship between authorship and emergent modern gender systems. Although *Gallathea* (1592) dates from before the Restoration and *Fantomina* (1725) from after, both texts frame the flexible gender economy that *The Country Wife* addresses. All of these texts explore gender overtly (as overtly as fiction can) and so prove useful and interesting in the pursuit of my topic.

These three texts have generated a large and growing body of theoretical work in the fields of feminism, cultural studies and queer theory. Laurie Shannon provided a jumping-off point for my thinking about gender in *Gallathea*'s cultural context. I am greatly indebted to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick for her analysis of male homosociality as it appears in *The Country Wife* and Ros Ballaster and Catherine Ingrassia for their feminist readings of the cultural pressures that inform Haywood's writing. Certainly, the quality of their interpretations establishes how each of my principle texts of concern alone could warrant a thesis in literature and gender studies that would specifically consider each work in its respective historical moment.

My idea, however, in looking at these texts alongside each other was inspired by Michael McKeon's "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760," which describes shifts in understanding sex and gender in patriarchy from a cultural and historical perspective. I wanted to hold some culturally significant texts of recent theoretical relevance up to McKeon's theory that the "modern system of gender difference was established during the English Restoration." I wanted to do this to determine how accurate his thesis is and to see what aesthetic effects such social changes produce in contemporaneous literature. Although *Gallathea* belongs to a much earlier period than 1660, I believe that it is an important text that can help to contextualize the early "patriarchalism" McKeon describes as a system that tacitly understood what we now consider disparate social elements as part of an integral whole.<sup>1</sup> My other two texts more readily apply to the historical moments covered by McKeon and illustrate his primary concerns.

While I follow the historical trajectory mapped by McKeon and certainly borrow from his analysis in the emergence and definition of gender identities through the Restoration and into the eighteenth-century, I also take up the generic and rhetorical shifts that each author uses to explore social concerns about gender. Each text I have chosen represents a historical and cultural moment through the economy of desire, and those terms with which it explores desire can help to illuminate notions of, tensions about and definitions of gender. The language and form with which each author explores gender are necessarily a part of the way they define it. In terms of genre, I have chosen to examine a shift from court theatre to a more popular theatre, and finally to prose fiction. I have not used this shift from the theatre to the novel to reiterate the (I believe



too simple) line that the social importance of the theatre gave way to the emerging dominance of the novel, but to demonstrate how these genres inform each other and more importantly how the shift from a unified theatre public to a diverse print public represents fluctuations in power dynamics and produces different ways of classifying members of the public along different axes of power. Furthermore, I use the theatre to novel shift to examine the shift from a homonormative society to a heteronormative one. The rhetoric that each author uses enables a detailed and complex reading of these shifts in social operative systems and classifications of individuals. In other words, I think that looking at the major social shifts through rhetorical and generic lenses offers a detailed reading of the emergence of gender difference.

In chapter one, I analyze John Lyly's use of antithetical language in *Gallathea* in order to explore emerging gender difference within a non-oppositional (rhetorical) system. I employ the term homonormative in this chapter to highlight the 'preference for likeness' ideological and cultural environment that Lyly's writing in *Gallathea* embodies and addresses. During the English Renaissance, order was understood within the paradigm of the great chain of being. In such a system, men and women were part of different social ranks and, within those ranks, different statuses. These differences were integrated into a whole (the great chain of being) that strove for perfection: ascension towards heaven after the fall. Within the different ranks, men were understood to be closer to perfection than women. And, although perceived as differing in status, men and women were often characterized in terms of likeness. In his discussion of the one-sex model of gender, Thomas Laqueur demonstrates that this likeness ideology existed as part of scientific perceptions of male and female bodies. Laqueur provides a plethora of

examples in which Renaissance scientists represent female reproductive organs as internalized male organs. Within this homology (a term used by Laqueur to emphasize the period's likeness biology), women were imperfect men. Despite this difference in status, both sexes were understood to be male—women being a variation of men. Furthermore, although distinguished by degrees of difference, men and women were part of a social rank and that rank took precedence over their different statuses; especially at the courtly levels of Renaissance society where worth was more urgently determined by birth into a certain social rank. Not only were men and women perceived as biologically similar, but they could also be understood as socially similar if from the same rank.<sup>2</sup> That is not to say that difference was not perceived and not important, but instead that difference was often worked into similarity through a greater hierarchical social structure of interlocking rungs that was part of a larger cosmological whole representing the relationship between earthy creatures and perfection—the divine.

Antithetical logic operates within homonormative principles of difference integrated into similarity. However, Lyly's rhetorical representation of homonormative practices proposes a strain on fitting even slightly sexually differentiated bodies and desire between men and women into said system. The ambiguity produced by *Gallathea's* antithetical rhetoric exemplifies the equivocal terms in which he discusses desire and the difficulty of discussing male/female desire in a homonormative atmosphere and production. What is left off stage in *Gallathea*, heterosexual sex, is what cannot be represented in antithetical terms. Instead of operating on a subversive or hegemonic principle of difference, antithesis unites seemingly incongruent parts. While *Gallathea* demonstrates how this system works at many levels, aligning the experiences of regular

men with the experiences of the gods, for example, it also implies the early development of dichotomous gender difference and its incompatibility with such a system.<sup>3</sup> Love in the play is established between two like characters: they are both girls. Heterosexual sex, however, which drives the play forward and is implied as necessary to marriage as the completion of love, is unrepresented because incommensurate difference is ultimately unrepresentable in an antithetical theatrical paradigm; antithesis, as Lyly employs it, operates on a preference for likeness.

Antithesis as it operates in *Gallathea* represents the larger homonormative social system in which the play was produced. The historical and cultural experience of the theatre at court expresses the same social system and concerns of irresolvable difference in a symmetrical social structure. The need for Queen Elizabeth to have an heir was a pressing concern that threatened her position as monarch—a concern that *Gallathea* portrays as friction between homonormativity and the recognition of and need for difference. While the court theatre of the time and the antithetical rhetoric Lyly employs represent a preference for likeness and an effort to contain everything within a system of integrated unity, the emerging notion of heterosexual sex as the union of incommensurate difference is a constant, if minor, concern that potentially threatens such a system.

In the second chapter, I look at the formation of modern gender in *The Country Wife*. By the time William Wycherley wrote *The Country Wife*, gender was well on its way to being defined along a masculine/feminine binary in a homosocial/heterosexual system. According to Laqueur, during the Restoration, understandings of human sexuality slowly shifted from a one-sex model to a two-sex model. At the same time, the absolute power of England's monarchy destabilized as a result of two civil wars and

increased power to the parliamentary body—a change that marked the beginnings of civil power in a parliamentary democracy. Consequently, birth and worth decreased in social significance and the social significance of the Renaissance's differentiated status between men and women increased. With more regularity, male and female social positions and personal characteristics came to be understood as determined by their differently sexed bodies. In Louise Bourgeois' seventeenth-century account of female infertility she claims that “women would be as strong in both body and in spirit as men were it not for this organ, [the uterus] and more generally that God created its uniquely pathogenic qualities—its tendency to wander and cause hysteria, for example—so as to prevent envy between the sexes and lead man to pity and love woman.”<sup>4</sup> The different statuses of men and women persisted from the Renaissance with the new addition not only that oppositional body parts distinguished character more readily but also that heterosexual attraction was naturalized.

However, the emerging heteronormative relations existed alongside a homosociality inherited from the homonormativity of the Renaissance. During the Renaissance, homosocial exchanges operated within a rank system, which took precedence over the status distinction between men and women. Restoration homosociality operated within a naturalized status system in which men were different and greater than women and in which such status distinctions were free of the homosocial/homonormative system of rank. In the Restoration, a new type of homosociality developed—one existing between men of many different classes and operating with a heteronormative imperative. Thus, as Sedgwick points out, the homosociality of the Renaissance that included women “but perhaps optionally”

transformed into a (male) homosociality that necessarily included women in the socially significant male bonding.<sup>5</sup>

This emerging system formed and reinterpreted a plurality of masculine identities and began to create a singular femininity. The developing singular feminine identity was part of the Restoration's trade in women. The new homosocial system used women to establish the social status of men, and so, women were compulsory in the relationships between men.<sup>6</sup> Because women were symbols of exchange in such a system and had little value other than that given to them through the process of trade, male homosocial relationships and exchanges took public precedence. In such a system, women also had less social mobility than men. However, the Restoration was a time in flux and as such the social definitions, even the gendered ones, were not set in stone. Rather, pliancy was a mark of the time. Wycherley use of wit illustrates the social definitions and separations as well as the social flexibility of the English Restoration. Wit was understood to be a pliancy of knowledge and gave one the ability, if used well, to move through social definitions. In the play, wit works to define and undermine those definitions. Horner, the character who is presented as typifying masculinity because of his use of wit, also disrupts his own masculine identity: first through his apparent impotence and second through his pliant use of knowledge and language. In addition, some of the female characters trouble social definitions because they use wit to manipulate their social positions as objects of trade. Margery manipulates identity, knowledge and language, temporarily affording her more flexibility in her social context. At the same time, Wycherley uses the diversified public of the theatre to establish the defining and flexible qualities of cognitive power through wit. Despite the flexible moments of the play and its

social context, the overarching male homosocial/heteronormative system that trades feminine objects takes precedence, and the play moves towards greater oppositional definition of the sexes and represents a social trend towards such definition.

I discuss *Fantomina* in chapter three as a way of portraying the naturalization of oppositional gender difference in the eighteenth-century and the feminine experience of existing in a male homosocial/heteronormative system. Where *The Country Wife* discusses the expression of Margery's desires in a limited way, Haywood deepens and broadens the discussion of female desire in her portrayal of Fantomina's sexual escapades. *Fantomina* uses the tropes of the theatre and of print fiction to outline the social dangers of circulating female desire in a male public sphere. Haywood seems to problematize the distinctions between male/public and female/private with her vision of fiction as she represents it in *Fantomina*, but the text accepts and further defines the sexes through fiction and its exploration of female authorship. While Haywood seems to accept cultural regulations of the domestication of the female and she establishes the qualities of femininity in the female body, she also separates the feminine from the female body by implying that fiction could be, in part, a feminine domain and a way to insert the feminine into a typically male sphere, even if only temporarily. Haywood does this by recognizing that with the shift from the popularity of theatre to the popularity of print, definitions of the public changed from a homogenous group to a heterogeneous group with subgroups. In the new diversified public, Haywood envisioned greater female autonomy fostered by the development of a separate feminine public sphere. Her own life, however, suggests that this was not a possibility and, although she strove for a public identity within her control, the separate spheres of the sexes made the fulfillment of her

desire for autonomy, at least, extraordinarily difficult. The public responses to Haywood's position as author and her threat to female domesticity represent a distaste for her insertion of feminine desire into the public sphere. Her writing and responses to it demonstrate an essentialized femininity as defined in opposition to masculinity and the growing trend toward the female as the site of privatized virtue.

All of these texts are concerned with desire. They are not concerned with the right and wrong of desire but rather illustrate desire's trajectories within a social framework. What is salient in these texts then is the rhetorical framework that defines characters and their interactions. The linguistic structures of characters and their sexual plights point to the different gender and status positions of each character and the nuances of the system within which they operate. The genres, whether drama or prose fiction, illustrate the relationship between each text and its social context as well as demonstrating what people, genders and classes are socially significant in certain systems by the representation of them or the lack thereof. As such, I take up what is represented and not represented in each text to crystallize the social import and influence of certain members of such systems. I point to ambiguities (those things which are referred to but not represented) in each text so that my analysis offers a fuller picture of the operative rhetorical system of classification and a better understanding of how each genre operates within a larger context. Rhetoric and genre, therefore, enable me to read across time and context to reveal those historical and cultural shifts in English society that have shaped and defined modern concepts about gender and sexuality.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Michael McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 295, 300.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making SEX: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990), 52-66.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproduction Biology," *Representations* 14 (1986): 1-41. Laqueur argues that an incommensurate gender model developed in which male and female were understood as opposing identities. Lyly cannot reconcile the love between a man and a woman on stage, implying that the difference between the genders is too disparate and uneven to be brought together through antithesis even if that is the play's underlying aim.

<sup>4</sup> Laqueur, *Making SEX*, 108.

<sup>5</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, (New York: Colombia UP, 1985), 49.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Sedgwick discusses the transition from Renaissance homosociality, in which bonds between men selectively include women, to the Restoration male homosocial system that makes women compulsory in the bonds between men.



## Chapter 1

Gender Difference in *Gallathea*

Lingering ambiguity is typical of John Lyly's writing, whether it takes the form of a well-known and studied prose piece in *Euphues*, or it hangs in the air after characters' speeches in a dramatic work such as *Gallathea*. Lyly organizes his writing on a principle of antithesis, which drives things into definition by opposing terms as much as it draws them together. In *Gallathea*, the antithetic ambiguity results in significant characters, such as the Agar, and elements of the plot, such as the truncated comic marriage ending, being theatrically unrepresented. Such incompleteness lends to open-ended interpretation. That is not to say that *Gallathea* cannot be interpreted as a debate about contemporaneous understandings of gender and sexuality. I want to look at gender in Lyly's writing as it works within a system of differentiated but related terms that his antithetical rhetoric frames as equivocal. In particular, I want to analyze antithesis in *Gallathea* because the performance of Lyly's writing at court places it directly within a social context that makes the relationship between his writing and courtly social order, including its treatment of gender, lucid.

The ambiguity of *Gallathea* mimics and portrays the stratified homogeneity of the Elizabethan court's social order. New Historicism has described the court atmosphere, for which Lyly wrote, in either/or gendered terms. For example, Phyllis Rackin describes the main arguments feminist theory has pursued regarding courtly performance during Elizabeth's reign as a struggle between "the presence of a powerful female ruler 'as a spur to feminism' [and] Elizabeth [as] the proverbial 'token' woman who reinforces patriarchal restraints."<sup>1</sup> While this line of argumentation has furthered the potential for

understanding possible gender construction in the Renaissance and Elizabeth's place in the social construction of status, it is limiting. To find gender problems to be either subversive of power or contained by the supportive model does not allow for "adventures to be pursued beyond or to the side of the repressive hypothesis"; different systems of power not reliant on binary arguments, such as the asymmetries in the sex/gender system, cannot be expressed or explored under such a rubric.<sup>2</sup> While the social problem of needing an heir to the throne may have been an important social concern during Elizabeth's reign and one modern theory typically associates with a problem of her female person in a masculine role, many feminist readings ignore the presence of gender inside a complex system of status at the time. The Queen cast her identity "in royal rather than in gendered terms."<sup>3</sup> Thus, when considering a play such as *Gallathea* and its treatment of marriage, it must be with the understanding of gender as part of a multiple rank system of power rather than as part of the modern dichotomal gender problem. The many social ranks in the English social order, such as royal, knight, noble, servant etc., present a power structure of different "elements which [were] tacitly understood and experienced as parts of an integral whole." This power structure eludes the hegemonic/subversive debate.<sup>4</sup> In the nearly fixed system of different but interlocking rungs, the discussion of (gendered) power dynamics requires a divergent logic—one that Lyly implies in *Gallathea*.

Lyly's antithetical rhetoric provides a space to discuss variety in a whole and difference or similarity as integral to one phenomenon. Frequently, Lyly's use of antithetical structures is discussed in reference to his prose work *Euphues*. Before moving on to discuss how antithesis works in the performance of *Gallathea*, a brief

understanding of this type of rhetoric is required. According to Jonas A. Barish, Lyly's writing in *Euphues* breaks down into three types of antithesis: the first occurs when a thing is defined by its opposite and the affirmation of something requires the denial of its opposite; in the second, opposites exist in equilibrium so that the opposites are proposed but not resolved; the third and final type of antithesis "asserts the actual co-existence of contrary properties in one phenomenon."<sup>5</sup> From this semblance of opposites, Lyly writes things into alliance and ambiguity.

In *Euphues*, for example, Lyly explains the city of Naples by what it is and what it is not: "[Naples is] rather to bee the Tabernacle of Venus, then the Temple of Vesta" (I, 185).<sup>6</sup> Alliteration and parison used in this short passage demonstrate the antithetical nature of definition that Barish wishes to elucidate throughout Lyly's work: things are defined against that from which they differ.<sup>7</sup> The balance established through the phrases of equal length and corresponding sounds sets the infinitive phrases directly and pointedly against each other. In Barish's understanding of Lyly's meaning, it is clear that such comparisons gave Lyly the rhetorical "power to make discriminations."<sup>8</sup> The effect of writing phrase-to-phrase oral syntactical structures, however, not only distinguishes the terms from one another but also establishes the possibility for their association. In the above quotation many different meanings emerge from the comparative description of Naples: Naples is like the temple of Vesta and should be more like the Tabernacle of Venus; Naples once was the Temple of Vesta and will become the Tabernacle of Venus; Naples ought to be the Tabernacle of Venus but is not and is instead the Temple of Vesta, and so on. Clearly, this example does more than define one phrase directly against the other, for they are not discrete—one phrase does not necessitate the denial of the other—

but relational. Lyly's use of rhetorical antithesis functions as much to define things one against the other as to draw them together. Moreover, the multiple possibilities of interpretation, including the instability of not knowing if the terms should be defined against or with one another, creates an ambiguity in syntactical meaning: the definition contains "equivocal possibilities."<sup>9</sup> Lyly's rhetorical aesthetic in *Euphues* envisages a world in which definition, absolute contradiction, and uniformity of an element cannot exist. Rather than "drive the terms as far apart as they will go" to clearly define elements and their qualities, Lyly's writing demonstrates equivocality.<sup>10</sup>

The diversity of Lyly's writing style in *Euphues* was well suited to the social system of the court that was a diversified homogeneous space. Wilson Knight argues that the style found in *Euphues* "relates significantly" to Lyly's dramatic works and Barish also stipulates that such antithetical "logicality ... continues to play as conspicuous a role in the dramatic prose as it did in the novels."<sup>11</sup> The public presentation of Lyly's rhetoric in the production of *Gallathea* does more than just put the antithetical rhetoric found in *Euphues* onto a courtly stage. Its production clearly relates the many-properties-in-one-element logicality of *Gallathea* to the courtly social context. *Gallathea* was performed at court, where at least two differing social ranks came together: "the actors and the audience constituted two homogenous groups."<sup>12</sup> Although this example only stipulates two homogenous groups and does not outline them as coming together, the prologue and the epilogue to *Gallathea*, which address the court directly, illustrate the discursive interaction of groups made possible by the performance of antithetical rhetoric. By allowing the opposed elements of the antithetic structure to sit suspended without resolution—pointing out the contrary elements in a whole without explaining one

element as the better option—Lyly's writing style fostered uncertainty and debate, a highly valued form of Renaissance public entertainment.<sup>13</sup> The antithetical style of *Gallathea* not only mirrored the dynamics of the court, with its differentiation and relation of gods, shepherds, and common men, but created a space where the integration of differing social elements in the court revealed antithetical logic of English society: a system of interdependent aspects that are differentiated but that operate on similar principles of taste and order. The ambiguity and equivocality of *Gallathea* suggest a complex homonormativity that is pervasive in all social contexts but this was particularly pertinent to the performance at court—a site that was both diverse and preferred homogeneity. *Gallathea* is a play “that only a brilliant society would appreciate”—one of many levels and seemingly contrary elements while “making a unified effect” which “was a positive virtue.”<sup>14</sup>

The prologue and the quick shift from classical references, to royal and then to the common men in *Gallathea*'s production demonstrate the antithetical relationship of the courtly context to the rhetoric of the play. In the prologue, Lyly sets the stage for mutual contradiction, employing a variation of the third type of antithesis. The prologue's opening lines are “Ios and Smyrna were two sweet cities, the first named of the violet, the latter of the myrrh. Homer was born in the one and buried in the other” (prologue, 2-3).<sup>15</sup> The syntactical structure of the first sentence seems to separate the two cities entirely; the mere mention of the fact that they are two cities within the first clause separates them and the two phrases that follow describing the different nominal qualities of the cities seem to distinguish one entirely from the other. However, both are established as similarly sweet and brought together within the trajectory of Homer's life. One may argue that these two

sentences together split Homer's life, defining his birth against his death but, given the antithetical rhetoric of Lyly's style, it is more likely that the line should be read as fusing differing properties in one element. Although the differing qualities define the two cities against one another, they, in the end, join as qualities in one element: Homer's life. The following lines address the Queen. Lyly describes the Queen as embodying two qualities, judgment and favor, which come from different beneficial aspects of her character, but they are nonetheless qualities belonging to one character (prologue, 3-6). The Queen is one being capable of displaying divergent characteristics. That a description of Elizabeth immediately follows a reference to Homer alludes to her preference to be understood in a classical royal role rather than in a feminine "caste." It is not that the dramatic representation is subject to her adjudication (although her patronage was important), but rather that she is part of a system of social order, one illustrated as inherited from ancient times, in which difference is unified. Things that are different are also associated or brought together in terms of likeness, allowing for a more complex understanding of an element and the qualities that compose it.

Shortly after explaining the presence of an antithetical system in the highest strata of society, Lyly demonstrates the unity of difference and antithetical structures at another social level. The scenes that Barish claims represent a simple "mock logic" present an antithetically ambiguous position.<sup>16</sup> The regular men—their status—and their reasoning reproduce the antithetical order. They represent the lowest rung of the world order of *Gallathea*, are blatantly different from the other classes of characters and yet are an integral part of the overall social setting. At the end of the play Rafe, Dick, and Robin, the three main characters of the subplot, mingle with the deities and main characters.

These three “mock logic” characters promise to provide the final resolution of the play through a song. Although Venus claims that they “malapertly thrust themselves into our companies” (5.3.210-211), because Rafe, Dick and Robin are there at the play’s resolution, their presence and function represent a greater harmony in *Gallathea*. Rather than presenting a dubious logic in the play, it is more likely that the three men of the play represent a category “below that of poetic creation (which is not therefore independent of them), and ... tend to impose a seeming simplicity on a real complexity.”<sup>17</sup> Given their appearance at the play’s conclusion and their relation to the poetic creation of *Gallathea*, the common men of the subplot represent the antithetical rhetorical meaning of the play; that is they are one of the interlocked rungs of hierarchy. Hunter explains the function of the subplot, and every aspect of Lyly’s theatrical writing: “The process is one of agglomeration, by which similar experiences are being added together” to produce a formal unity of sense.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the three men’s experiences of the world should not simply be read as “some parody of serious concerns by low-life characters,” but part of Lyly’s rhetorical craft.<sup>19</sup>

While Dick, Rafe and Robin provoke laughter and ridicule, I do not think that they are the objects of laughter. The three men are, by far, the most realistic contemporaneous characters in the play. Alone, they present no sense of comedy; they do not function as clowns. However, once contextualized in an antithetical fashion they proffer the form for *Gallathea*’s ambiguity. As the three depart, each going his separate way, they sing a song together that unites their identities: “Rove then no matter wither, / In fair or stormy weather, / And as we live let’s die together. / One hempen caper cuts a feather” (1.3.108-111). The three men see themselves as unified through life until death.

Thus, when the play portrays only Rafe's encounters, it is as if his experiences represent that of all three men. It is through Rafe's encounters with unknown and questionable characters and ideas that humorous events develop. For example, when Rafe meets with the Astronomer, who believes he can order the cosmos, the Astronomer falls backwards into a pond after saying that he "will make the heavens as plain ... as a highway" (3.4.80). The humor of the moment implies the absurdity of trying to reduce the mysteries of the universe to an obvious path. The Astronomer's folly is his reduction of the complexity of the universe to prediction based on one aspect of the universe. Lyly's mockery of the Astronomer's basic interpretation of the cosmos suggests a preference for ambiguity. Rafe attracts and is attracted to such silliness in high-flown men. He furthers the humor of their ideas by acting as a straight man to their absurdities. However, Rafe never discounts the men's foolish interpretations; instead his encounters portray the second type of antithesis by allowing multiple possibilities to rest in suspension.

His first encounter with one such man is with the Mariner, who claims that he does not fear the sea any more "than a dish of water" (1.2. 44). Meanwhile, the wild sea has almost cost the Mariner and Rafe their lives. Rafe replies to the Mariner's preposterous claim in a simple, realistic, if sarcastic, manner: "O, thou hast a sweet life, mariner, to be pinned in a few boards and to be within an inch of a thing bottomless" (1.2.26-28). In this scene, the sea is either a shallow, benign substance or a hermetic, sinking grave. Between the earthy male characters and Rafe, the dialogue produces manifold interpretations of one element, resulting in seeming absurdities—comedy. The absurd situations Rafe encounters allow for multiple interpretations and demonstrate a



preference for multiplicity over singular simplicity. Thus, the comic moments of the subplot exemplify the ambiguity of antithetical logic.

Balance as well as conflict evolve throughout the stories of the common men. Again, Rafe alone does not portray the antithetical rhythms of the higher poetic language of the pastoral and divine characters of the play; rather, the conflict and likeness of Lyly's language reveals itself in Rafe's interaction with others. When Rafe speaks to the Astronomer about his craft, the sarcasm unfolds one element to demonstrate its possible meanings:

*Rafe.* But what be those signs?

*Astron.* As a man should say, signs which govern the body. The Ram governeth the head.

*Rafe.* That is the worst sign for the head.

*Astron.* Why?

*Rafe.* Because it is the sign of an ill ewe.

*Astron.* Tush, that sign must be there. (3.356-62)

The Astronomer understands the signs as fixed in meaning rather than subject to interpretation. Rafe, on the other hand, points to their fluidity. The Ram, which, for the Astronomer, must rule the head, connotes cuckolds horns to Rafe.<sup>20</sup> And he takes the meaning of ewe one step further when he suggests that having the head of a Ram is a poor birth: "an ill ewe."<sup>21</sup> As before, one thing has differing meanings, even though they belong to one unifying element. What happens, as in the other examples of antithesis, is that the meaning of an element, here a ram's head, becomes equivocal. A similar pattern emerges when all three men, Rafe, Robin, and Dick try to learn the Mariner's measures.

The Mariner states that there is not an element in his profession that “hath not a special name or singular nature” (1.4.59). All three men are unable to manage the Mariner’s definite language: Rafe says, “I will never learn this language” (1.4.78), echoing Robin’s statement that he “shall never learn a quarter of it” (1.4.69), and Dick, disappointed in his attempts to learn, states that he will “never do it” (1.4.67). The three are unable to learn a language of absolute meaning. Early on in the scene with the Mariner, their humor explicates their understanding of meaning as diversified:

*Dick.* What callest thou the thing we were bound to?

*Mar.* A rafter.

*Rafe.* I will rather hang myself on a rafter in the house than be so haled in the sea.

...

*Rob.* Sea! Nay, I will never sail more. I brook not their diet. (1.4.7-10, 21)

The Mariner knows the proper name of the piece of wood that the men cling to before coming ashore. Rafe, however, plays on the Mariner’s meaning and imagines the rafter that has saved their lives as the rafter in a house from which one might hang oneself. Robin too equates the sea—a dish of water for the Mariner—with the experience of dying; he claims that the sea may starve him. The Mariner’s ordered world of seafaring is treacherous to Rafe, Dick and Robin. Their humorous banter draws forth the ambiguity in each term. They do not completely negate the Mariner’s understanding of the sea, nor does he theirs. Nonetheless, the comparison of meanings opens the element under consideration to many possible interpretations. The regular men in *Gallathea* are not merely examples of “mock logic” but instead function as an integral part of the play’s antithetical complexity, even if they seem simple.

It is through most of Rafe, Dick and Robin's dialogues that the sea becomes an overt symbol in the play of open interpretation. For the Mariner the sea is life. For the three men, especially Rafe, the sea represents death. As within the rest of the play, the men of the subplot reveal the rhetorical devices to be found in the other aspects of the play. Gallathea's father, Tityrus, expresses a similar understanding of the sea when he explains the history of Lincolnshire. He tells Gallathea that, in prosperous times the sea/Neptune offered "safety by water" (1.1.21) but that because fortune is "constant in nothing but inconsistency, [she] did change her copy" and cause "the seas to break their bounds" (1.1.22-24, 31). As a means of regaining the former calm of their home, the "fairest and chastest virgin... is left for a peace offering unto Neptune" (1.1.48-52). Thus in the rest of the play, the sea plays a significant role in representing the unpredictability of an element with manifold interpretations. One moment the sea is calm and the next it is wild, and all this turns on nature's whim, which is inconsistency. Throughout the play, as indicated in Tityrus' speech, Neptune and his sea are to be feared or revered; they are both the axis of life and the administrators of death. Seeming opposites, life and death, are brought together in the opaque depths of the sea. The sea, as explained by Tityrus, is a site of ambiguity of the kind stemming from the third type of antithesis.

The antithetical nature of Neptune's element informs the appearance of an indefinable character: "he [Neptune] sendeth a monster called the Agar" (1.1.5-6). Tityrus tells Gallathea that the Agar comes to execute the bargain between Neptune and the people of Lincolnshire to ensure their safety but what the Agar does, and its relationship to Neptune, are mysteries and will remain unknowable: "whether she [the sacrificial virgin] be devoured of him [the Agar] or conveyed to Neptune or drowned

between both it is not permitted to know and incurreth death to conjecture” (1.162-64). Guessing at what exactly the Agar does is suicide. To try to pin Neptune’s obscure sidekick down results in a disagreeable outcome: the end of life. This outcome, of course, seems odd since it is through the sacrifice of the fairest girl in Lincolnshire that there is a proliferation of life within the country. That is, peaceful life results from the disappearance of one into the ignominious unknown. The footnotes of Rabkin and Fraser’s *Gallathea* reveal to the audience that the etymology of the Agar is a “variant ... of ‘eager,’ the ‘bore,’ a high tidal wave caused by the rushing of the tide up a narrowing estuary” (footnotes 127). The ambiguous actions of the sacrificial moment of the play clearly connote heterosexual intercourse. The Agar represents a male body (Tityrus uses the objective pronoun him when referring to the Agar) who has the potential of entering a female body. The loss of one of Lincolnshire’s virgins to the Agar implies a metaphorical loss of virginity. The loss results in a continuation of life in Lincolnshire after her disappearance. However, the sexual overtones of the sacrifice represent a type of death as well.

In “Nature’s Bias: Homonormativity and Elizabethan Comic Likeness,” Laurie Shannon argues that the union of a man and woman is a type of death sentence during the early English Renaissance:

a pose of erotic communication [two naked bodies bound together] is hijacked for abuse as an instrument of juridical violence, and the way it simulates desire or intimacy fuels the revulsion this punishment works to inspire. A canny punitive power makes such mingling [of unlikes] fatal, as if death works its effects by a sinister graft.<sup>22</sup>

Shannon discusses images from a Renaissance compendium of writing from 1586. Like the images from this collection of writing imply, the sinister graft of heterosexual sex, which proffers life and the sustenance of the human species and its continuation in the Lincolnshire of *Gallathea*, is also monstrous and to be feared. However, unlike the image of naked bodies bound together in physical “(mis) matching”, one alive and the other dead, the Agar cannot be dramatized and the sacrificial embrace remains unseen.<sup>23</sup> The Agar is ambiguous. The action of the Agar is not represented. Rather, he acts as an unseen promise for life motivating the entire action of the play. *Gallathea* enables the audience to imagine the possible salvation of Lincolnshire through the encounter of a virgin with the Agar through an imagined but not represented (i.e., staged) heterosexual union.

But if the Agar is a body in the play that cannot represent the potential of life through its act of heterosexual intercourse, it cannot represent the aspect of death that it implies either. The Agar remains an elusive but present threat that is never realized. Gallathea's father cannot think about the Agar and the Agar's actions, or he may die. Gallathea is likely to do the same if she thinks about the Agar. Thus, the Agar's threat is one of the mind. The Agar cannot be pinned down by sensual perception. His name, Agar, only alludes to a sexual action that ends in something unknown and unknowable; that is, what happens to the sacrificed virgin is opaque. Thus, heterosexual sex, alluded to through the ever-threatening Agar but never represented in *Gallathea*, remains an idea that will not gain representation in theatrical physicality. The life and death in one unphysical body, the Agar, represents but never presents the coming together of differing bodies, male and female, and eludes the audience's physical perceptions. However, their

knowledge of the Agar's whereabouts and what he will do is the fear and promise driving the play forward towards its end. The Agar is ambiguous because it represents knowledge—the knowledge of heterosexual sex. It is the fear of heterosexual sex that drives the fathers of the play to cast their disguised daughters into the forest and it is the promise of heterosexual sex that moves *Gallathea* towards a happy marriage ending. Furthermore, the antithetical foundation of the play is heterosexual sex as an imagined act, as knowledge and so un-representable and ambiguous. The play envisions heterosexual sex as the coming together of two unlike bodies in one embrace—that Agar and a virgin joined—to execute continuation and an end. The Agar's actions employ both second and third types of antithesis and the action and body of the Agar must remain unstaged to maintain the ambiguity of their antithetical nature.

To ensure Gallathea's safety from the penetration of the Agar, Tityrus disguises her in boy's clothing and sends her into the woods. Another shepherd from Lincolnshire, Melebeus, does the same to his daughter, Phyllida, he too fearing the ravishment of his daughter by the Agar on behalf of Neptune. Once the two girls dressed as boys enter the forest, Diana's realm, the problems of heterosexual desire plague the minds of the forest characters. One of Diana's Nymphs, Telusa, falls in love with cross-dressed Gallathea because Cupid has struck her with one of his arrows. Telusa is not comfortable with her desire for a boy and describes her lust as "new conceits ... strange contraries ... breed[ing] in [her] mind" (3.1.1-2). Just as in the Petrarchan love tradition, the notion of love between a man and a woman results in a conflict within the loving subject. Eurota, another Nymph subjected to love, explains that her thoughts "unknit" and she recalls that upon falling in love she felt "his wit ... [bereave her] of her wisdom" (3.1.53, 70-71).

Collectively the Nymphs understand the effects of heterosexual desire as a problem in which opposites come together in the loving subject. Their love, as they describe it, is antithetical knowledge; it is a problem of the mind alone and not one of physicality.

Unlike Diana's Nymphs, who envision love as a problem of a singular mind and do not try to pursue their sexual curiosities but rather try to undo their "intolerable passions" (3.1.61), Gallathea and Phyllida try to realize their heterosexual desires in one another. After retreating into a "grove" to "make much one of another, that cannot tell what to think one of another" (3.1.65-67), Gallathea and Phyllida come up with no new information that clears their minds of doubt, which suggests that they are still full of love. They have found out nothing about each other. The joke that the two girls find nothing when they retreat into the grove is that nothing may also refer to female genitalia.<sup>24</sup> The humor in the moment eroticizes girl-girl physical discovery and contact. However, there is another simultaneous joke when the girls who are actually cross-dressed boys come out of the grove stating, "we are both boys" (4.4.17). This time Lyly eroticizes through a titillating joke about the possibility of boy actors revealing what lies beneath their costumes. Having the boy actors playing the girl characters who are dressed as boys furthers the humor, enabling the mockery of Gallathea and Phyllida's remaining confusion after having gone to discover each other beyond audience eyes, thus tripling the effect of cross-dressing. The thickness of their disguise disables them from discovering each other's identity. Phyllida comically and pitifully comments in her monologue at the end of the "discovery scene":

And may it not be that her [Gallathea's] father practiced the same deceit with her  
that my father hath with me. and [sic], knowing her to be fair, feared she should

be unfortunate? If it be so, Phyllida, how desperate is thy case! If it not be how doubtful! For if she be a maiden, there is no hope for my love; if a boy a hazard. I will after him or her, and lead a melancholy life, that look for a miserable death.  
(4.4.40-49)

The comedy of the monologue lies in the fact that the audience knows what Gallathea and Phyllida do not: that they are the same. It is also funny because, while the two girls do not know it, the audience is sure that they have not experienced each other in a “loveth deadly” (3.1.96). However many comedic complications Gallathea and Phyllida’s costumes provide them, the complications are staged either verbally, or physically. However, these staged comedic discoveries satisfy neither the girls nor the audience. The one piece of elusive information that would satisfy the girls’ curiosities and move the play towards its end is the un-representable: heterosexual desire. If one of their bodies could penetrate a differing body, as does the Agar with the sacrificial virgin, they would undo their confusion, and the play would end because, in the logic of the play, heterosexual intercourse implies an ending. It is Gallathea and Phyllida’s quest for the knowledge of another different body that does indeed propel the play towards its end. The rhetoric of antithetic ambiguity anticipates an ending through divergent properties coming together. The unity of seemingly opposed things is ambiguity and thus cannot be staged. If Gallathea and Phyllida join in marriage as a man and a woman, as the play promises, the ending must be opaque.

Neptune decides to release the people of Lincolnshire from their sacrificial duties, not because of Gallathea and Phyllida’s partnering, as may be expected, but because of the wounding of Diana’s Nymphs. Love replaces the Agar, and takes on the



qualities of the third type of antithesis. In an argument with Venus, Diana discloses that her “virgins’ hearts” are “deeply” scarred with love (5.3.54). Venus scoffs at Diana, and corrects Diana’s description of the state of her Nymphs: “Scars, Diana, call you them that I know to be bleeding wounds? Alas, weak deity, it stretcheth not so far both to abate the sharpness of his arrows and to heal the hurts” (5.3.55-58). In either description of Diana’s Nymphs, love has wounded, and its manner of wounding is through penetration. Venus’ portrayal of the wounds is more vividly erotic in that it implies a still open orifice. Moreover, it moves the loving subjects closer to death; that the wounds of love are bleeding still, is an image of wounds that cannot be staunched, and thus will “fester to the death” (5.3.59). Bringing together love with the potential for death operates within the antithetical and erotic workings of *Gallathea*. And it is because of this coming together of opposites that Neptune “will forever release the sacrifice of virgins” (5.3.82-83), for all he craves is that his temple “be dyed with maiden’s blood” (5.3.19-20). Love, as it has progressed towards the end of the play, provides Neptune the satisfaction of the penetration of virgins that the Agar did in the beginning of *Gallathea*. Love displaces the Agar by becoming a potentially lethal quality promoting heterosexual desire and fulfillment. Love appeases Neptune, in the end of the play, allowing the people of Lincolnshire to live peacefully. Thus, Love is an antithetical element, embodying that which the Agar once did: the potential for life and death.

Regardless of the switching of elements from Agar to Love, heterosexual intercourse, the ambiguous trait that the Agar and Love represent, remains the one thing that *Gallathea* cannot present. Once Gallathea and Phyllida admit that they are girls, they fall into implacable woe:

*Gall.* Unfortunate Gallathea, if this be Phyllida!

*Phyl.* Accursed Phyllida, if that be Gallathea!

*Gall.* And wast thou all this while enamoured of Phyllida, that sweet Phyllida?

*Phyl.* And couldst thou dote upon the face of a maiden, thyself being one, on the face of fair Gallathea? ...

*Gall.* I had thought the habit agreeable with the sex, and so burned in the fire of my own fancies.

*Phyl.* I had thought that in the attire of a boy there could not have lodged the body of a virgin, and so was inflamed with a sweet desire ... (5.3.133-147)

Interestingly, Gallathea and Phyllida's lines echo each other. Unlike the antithetical language in other parts of the play, the parallelism of the girls' lines in the moment of echoed monologue (it would be hard to qualify it as dialogue) stagnate the action. Their statements are bald and provide no new information to the audience and there is no conflict in the language implying an ambiguity that could propel the action forward towards an end. It is not until Venus intervenes and promises to "turn one of them to be a man" (5.3.168-169) that the action of the plot moves forward again. Diana and Venus join in discussion as to how Venus will transform one of the girls. As they do so, the girls enter into verbally parallel language supposing an embrace (5.3.175). The language they use brings the play to a halt. Moreover, that Gallathea and Phyllida remain attired in boys' clothes seems to halt the play as well. They cannot proceed if they are both girls and they cannot proceed in the desired embrace if they are both boys. Directly after the homoerotic moment, the conversation slips into a petty and parallel discussion between Tityrus and Melebeus:

*Mel.* Soft daughter, you must know wither I will have you a son.

*Tit.* Take me with you, Gallathea. I will keep you as I begat you, a daughter.

*Mel.* Tityrus, let yours be a boy, and if you will, mine shall not. (5.3.177-182)

Again, Venus interrupts to move the action forward, this time suggesting that she will change one of the girls into a boy but not reveal who will be changed until the wedding.

Venus offers the ambiguity of love. To which the girls reply:

*Phyl.* And satisfy us both, doth it not, Gallathea?

*Gall.* Yes, Phyllida. (5.3.189-190)

Finally, their speech propels the action forward; an answer fits nicely into the question and ushers the play towards an end. Of course, the question and answer only hint at the union of two differing bodies in one. The trajectory of the antithetical nature of fulfilled Love, as explained in the play, moves from the realm of the living into oblivion. Lyly eschews the marriage ending because he has established heterosexual union within an antithetical paradigm. A man and a woman coming together is necessarily equivocal in *Gallathea*. While the whole play strives towards such a union, it is always a promise of life mixed with the threat of death. It is the epitome of the antithetical. It is the ambiguous Agar. It is conflicted love. And is ultimately un-presentable because truly antithetical elements favor diverse interpretation and ambiguity.

Ultimately, *Gallathea*'s noncommittal ending pleased the members of the Elizabethan court; it followed popular aesthetic practice and covertly discussed the need for an heir. While much theatre of the time, popular and courtly, operated on similar debate aesthetics, Lyly's writing in general, and in dramatic works such as *Gallathea*, "manages... to keep the neatness of a debate dominated play... [in which] the fable

moves forward by repetitions and antithesis” in a feat of great artistic craft.<sup>25</sup> One imagines that, after seeing *Gallathea*, the courtiers reveled in the potential for debate that the antithetical ambiguity made possible. Like the play itself, the debate is not one of an overtly serious nature; rather it is one of high-grade artifice, part and parcel of the elaborate and elegant world of the courtiers.<sup>26</sup> That is, both a play such as *Gallathea* and the courtiers’ post-performance discussion, depended on overt mental stimulation in the form of controversy, and work as a simultaneously many-sided argument. The debate provoked by Lyly’s writing was yet another repetition in form; there is no clear end. Possible differences and likenesses come together through language and theatrical presentation and sit unresolved. Phyllida and Gallathea do not get married on stage. The desired ending is delayed. The real need for Queen Elizabeth to marry and produce an heir to the throne is an undercurrent of the play, but that is deferred by the postponed ending. This allows for subtle argument about the issue of her virginity without resolution and the superficial enjoyment of debate. The happy stasis of unbalance, which entertains as well as promises progression, continues. All different voices, on stage, and in the court, “chim[e] together” in a discordant concord.<sup>27</sup> Gods, maidens, shepherds and common men stand together at the end of *Gallathea*, happy and ready to enjoy a potentially poorly sung song:

Dick. Ay, Ladies, we bear a very good consort.

Ven. Can you sing?

Rafe. Basely.

Ven. And you?

Dick. Meanly....

Ven. Then you shall go with us, and sing Hymen before the marriage. (5.3 221-228)

In typical Lylian antithetic rhetoric, words such as basely and meanly, have multiple meanings (e.g., poorly/bass) that are not resolved. Furthermore, Dick's suggestion that the lack of definition about the common men's abilities to sing is harmonious—a type of consort—imply the fine ambiguous balance of incongruent elements inherent to antithetical structure. Whether in the first, second, or third type of antithesis, Lyly's writing evades definition, absolute contradiction and uniformity, enabling an environment of peaceful disagreement in one presentation or situation. An emphasis was placed less on distinction between things and more on the process of one large and differing group, or put another way, many differing properties in one element. As Hunter points out, "the interest is focused on the groups, and the individuals... are arranged to complement one another, not to establish separate individualities."<sup>28</sup> *Gallathea* ends with the promise of distinction but does not deliver: Gods consort with peasants, shepherds with gods, but little boys still fall in love with little boys (or little girls with little girls); they all operate on antithetical logic and the love of Phyllida and Gallathea, operates on a preference for likeness; thus the stage is open to many readings because it represents difference inside a uniform production.

The ending of *Gallathea* leaves much to be desired. Physically, on stage, an ending is denied. Much like in the second type of antithesis that presents several options but offers no preference, differing desires sit together at the end of *Gallathea* without being resolved. The focus of *Gallathea* seems to be the tenuous position of heterosexual desire as expressed through marriage. If, after all, it is the phenomenon that drives the

play, than perhaps it is the desire the play prefers. Perhaps, Lyly's work prefers a system of patriarchal heterosexual desire as executed through marriage. The ambiguity of such desire could add to such a claim. However, it could as easily refute it, and in turn suggest that the play offers male homosexual desire as the epitome of love. After all, two boys leave the stage to get married at the end of the play. Or, because the story focuses on girls, and it is Gallathea and Phyllida who disappear to explore one another's bodies and it is they who leave the stage to be married, perhaps this is the example of free and staged female-female desire that is not truncated by heterosexual marriage of Valerie Traub's dreams.<sup>29</sup>

Regardless of the possible interpretations, what the antithetical rhetoric does allow is an exploration of a union of dissimilar in a dramatic world that preferred a "likeness topos" without coming to a definitive resolution.<sup>30</sup> The fact that the typical marriage ending of *Gallathea* is indefinitely postponed allows many types of desires to sit suspended alongside one another for inspection. Homonormative preferences are considered alongside heteronormative preference. Whether Venus does or does not transform one of the girls/boys is irrelevant. That she may need to for a union is what matters. The appearance of the notion of differing kinds does not yet, as seen in *Gallathea's* ending, force heterosexuality and heteronormativity apart from homosexuality and homonormativity but the suggestion of heterosexual union as a complete ending implies that it will be in the unstaged future. *Gallathea* presents likeness physically on stage, but demands that the union of differing kinds be held in the mind; one is presentational and the other representational. While the structure of Lyly's writing does offer the possibility of these dissimilarities, he is nowhere near the

recognition of women, men, heterosexuality, and homosexuality as different types that is the characteristic understanding of later times.<sup>31</sup> What is interesting about the friction in differences created in *Gallathea* is that it represents a shift in pre-modern structures which favored a "hierarchy of interlocking rungs" organized around likeness in rank, to a system of horizontal classification based on the differences of gender, characteristically attributed to the late seventeenth century.<sup>32</sup> In *Gallathea*, the emergence of the notion of love as a heterosexual affair ending in marriage and involving differing types drives homosocial norms and homosexual desire apart.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Phyllis Rackin, "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 29-41.

<sup>2</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank eds., *Shame and its Sisters: a Sylvain Tomkins Reader*, (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Laurie Shannon, "Nature's Bias," *Modern Philology* 98, no.1 (2000): 199.

<sup>4</sup> Michael McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 300.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> R. Warwick Bond, ed., *The Complete Works of John Lyly* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1902). All following references to Lyly's prose piece *Euphues* come from this text. Volume and page number are indicated in parenthesis.

<sup>7</sup> Parison is a poetic and rhetorical device in which there is an even balance in the members of a phrase.

<sup>8</sup> Jonas A. Barish, "The Prose Style of John Lyly," *ELH* 23 (1956): 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 28, and G. Wilson Knight, "Lyly," *The Review of English Studies* 15 (1939): 146.

<sup>12</sup> Rackin, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Jocelyn Powell, "John Lyly and the Language of Play," in *Elizabethan Theatre* (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), 159.

<sup>14</sup> G.K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 97, 139.

<sup>15</sup> John Lyly, "Gallathea," in *Drama of the English Renaissance I The Tudor Period*, eds. Russell A Fraser and Norman Rabkin (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976). All of the following references to *Gallathea* come from this text.

<sup>16</sup> Barish, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Knight, 150.

<sup>18</sup> Hunter, 199.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>20</sup> The editor's notes of *Gallathea* indicate that horns worn on the head was a recognized symbol of a cuckold at this time.

<sup>21</sup> OED.

<sup>22</sup> Shannon, 183.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and male homosocial desire* (New York: Colombia UP, 1985), 35.

<sup>25</sup> Hunter, 8, 157.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>29</sup> Valerie Traub, "The (In) Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire," in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Johnathan Goldberg (Durham: Duke UP, 1994), 78. Valerie Traub argues that femme-femme desire is "ultimately reduced and fixed within the institutional prerogatives of heterosexual marriage ... within a patriarchal economy" but that maintains that the displacement of such homoerotic desire did not mean it did not exist. The tone of Traub's conclusion suggests a yen for a femme-femme desire that signifies.

<sup>30</sup> Shannon, 186.

<sup>31</sup> In *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: GMP, 1982), Alan Bray posits that homosexuality as a type and as a culture only comes about at the end of the seventeenth century.

<sup>32</sup> McKeon, 300. As Laurie Shannon points out, "Elizabeth preferred to cast her identity in royal terms than in gendered terms" (199). Clearly, the preference was to value rank as an identifier over gender, but the two systems of identification were available and co-existed.



## Chapter 2

Femininity in *The Country Wife*

If *Gallathea* represents a preference for likeness—a likeness that contains differences—William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* exhibits differentiation based on gender and class and troubles it. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has partially covered the ground I aim to tread in this chapter. In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Sedgwick looks at *The Country Wife* as part of her genealogy of male homosocial desire from the Renaissance to the latter part of the nineteenth century. Sedgwick argues that because of shifting power structures, male homosocial desire in the Restoration sees the routing of such desire through women as compulsory whereas in the Renaissance it “[includes] a woman, but perhaps optionally.”<sup>1</sup>

Michael McKeon's “Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England” examines “what changes patriarchy takes under different historical circumstances.” According to McKeon, “the long-term and uneven shift from patriarchalism to modern patriarchy entailed a separation out of elements which had formerly been tacitly understood and experienced as parts of an integral whole,” such as in Lyly's aesthetic for *Gallathea*. The unity of differing parts gave way to a “differentiation of discrete interests.” During the Restoration, understandings of human sexuality slowly shifted from a one-sex model to a two-sex model. And after two civil wars and increased power to the parliamentary body, the absolute power of England's monarchy destabilized. Consequently, worth as established through birth into a certain rank decreased in social significance and the social value of the differentiated status between men and women that had existed in the Renaissance homonormative culture

increased in the Restoration; in the seventeenth-century there is an "imperative to distinguish and divide difference of kind" based on a biological system. With more regularity, people's positions and personal characteristics came to be understood as determined by their two different types of reproductive organs. Women and men were well on their way to becoming entirely differentiated based on their different bodies. The different status between men and women persisted from the Renaissance into the Restoration with the new addition that not only that oppositional body parts distinguished character more readily but also that heterosexual attraction was naturalized.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the homosociality of the Restoration differed from that of the Renaissance in that it operated within an emerging heteronormativity.

Much work has been done by Rictor Norton, Sedgwick and Michael McKeon, to name a few, to examine the definition of masculinity in relation to femininity in the period. However, this sort of work, which mainly examines male homosexuality and homosociality as defined against the new ostensible male heterosexual economy of desire, does not account for "women's as well as men's desire... in the new regime." If women are "users of symbols" and desiring subjects, then they may also be regulatory instruments of the fluctuating power schema.<sup>3</sup> This becomes more salient when taken in conjunction with what McKeon describes as a time in which gender becomes a social tag that operates between the fixity of sex and the fluidity of class.<sup>4</sup> The complicated social negotiation of fluid, mutable, and fixed elements in the revolutionary and politically turbulent Restoration necessitated a plan of differentiation but also fostered potential ruptures and loopholes in any attempts at categorization.

The variables of feminine or effeminate ambiguities are a good place to search for the covert aspects of the Restoration homosocial/heteronormative economy of desire. Wycherley's use of wit, and its fluid and defining logical structure, not only functions in the mouths of well defined characters, but also in less easily defined characters such as Lucy, Margery and Horner. The vicissitudes of power must be explored in those extreme and marginal participants. Those who control the rhetorical power of wit move fluidly through an unstable class system and have a modicum of power in gender definition. Those with less influence also help to determine the definitions and the fixed and fluid components of the homosocial/heteronormative system. *The Country Wife* explicitly discusses the transactions of power and desire. Wycherley also uses the theatre to discuss a gendered economy. The theatre, a site for witty exchange, and the differing bodies that populate it, serves in producing *The Country Wife* to exemplify the emergent system of classification and identification.

Drama of the Restoration period demonstrates the web of categories, the hodgepodge system that McKeon proposes existed in the later seventeenth-century. To begin with, the court theatres of the time were not like the court theatres of the Renaissance. During Lyly's time, court theatre entertained courtiers. The two patent theatres of Wycherley's time, D'Avenant's troupe, the Duke's Theatre, and Killigrew's, the King's Theatre "were not predominantly [for] the debauched aristocrat," as one might suppose given the content of Restoration comedies. Instead, the theatres entertained everyone, from kings to whores. There were, of course, social customs regulating the orders of society. The prices of tickets certainly suggest a selective though not necessarily aristocratic audience: "[the poorer clientele] paid a shilling for an upper-

gallery seat... but [the price was] too high for [truly] poor folk.”<sup>5</sup> However, as Pepys, a middle-class patron of Restoration drama, suggests in his diary, many of the audience members were part of the growing middle-class and were accompanied by a growing number of commoners, apprentices and servants. Furthermore, one’s status determined where one sat. The most expensive seats were at the front of, or in boxes on, the stage. Thus, nobles sat closest to the stage. The further back one was from the stage the lower their class, resulting in the servants sitting in the galleries.<sup>6</sup> Women—good women—typically sat in boxes and whores circulated in the pit. Order relied on distinctions between classes and genders at these publicly accessible theatres.

However, this seemingly clear system of differentiation often faltered. As Sparkish from *The Country Wife* indicates, the line between audience and actor, poet and patron was tenuous at best. Sparkish reports that he often tries to upstage the actors but that they more often upbraid and outwit him. The distinction between rich patron and poorer patron was also flexible. Nell Gwynn, a famous prostitute and actress, attended the theatres first as an orange wench/prostitute, then as an actress and later as a well taken care of mistress to King Charles II.<sup>7</sup> One encountered all types at the theatre. Furthermore, the increased riches of the middle-class merchant enabled their social climbing to the benched seats in the pit. And clothing, which was regulated according to rank during the English Renaissance by sumptuary laws, was used in the Restoration “to regulate and discriminate genders far more than social orders.”<sup>8</sup> One could move through class by dressing “up.” Beau Wilson of London society in the 1680’s represents just such a social climber. He was without an estate and was a mere commoner but his “meteoric rise to public splendor” was marked by “a display of wealth more lavish than the court”

made evident predominantly by his “Garb.”<sup>9</sup> While the speculation surrounding Wilson’s rise suggests he was a kept man, it was possible, as indicated by the Fop in Sir John Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse*, to buy one’s way into the nobility. Novelty Fashion is said to have purchased a Lordship to become Lord Foppington, and his clothing is ridiculously lavish, demonstrating that signifiers of class such as clothing were mutable (I.iii.18-20).<sup>10</sup> Although, disguise was popular (many women wore masks to the theatre), clothing never functioned to disguise one’s sex. When a woman wore men’s clothing, while performing breeches roles in the Restoration, it only functioned to accentuate her female identity as framed in a heterosexual dynamic: “seeing a woman’s buttocks outlined in tight trousers, and getting a good idea of the shape of her legs—which were usually hidden under wide skirts—had a strong sexual fascination... [and] strongly appealed to the men in the audience.”<sup>11</sup> In addition, male actors no longer wore women’s clothes in most disguise plots. If actors donned a disguise, it was, more often than not, one that was evidently male, such as a monk’s robe or a servant’s habit. All these categorical customs point to an affirmation of class as fluid and sex as fixed. The costuming also suggests that gender was flexible but that it operated within male/female distinctions.

In the Restoration, wit was an important currency in the defining and flexible system. Dryden describes wit as a much-needed import to England. Upon King Charles II’s return to England and his reopening of theatres, which incorporated Italian and French theatrical traditions, Dryden extols the King for having lifted

the dull and heavy spirits of the *English*, from their natural reserv’dness; loosn’d them, from their stiff forms of conversation; and made them easy and plyant to each other in discourse. Thus, insensibly, our way of living became more free;

and the fire of the *English* wit, which was before stifled under a constrain'd, melancholy way of breeding, began first to display its force: by mixing the solidity of our Nation, with the air and gaiety of our neighbors.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, Dryden links the social behavior of this new time with the easy and pliant discourse brought back from continental Europe. In this way, his comparison is much like Mikhail Bakhtin's assertion contextualizing the language of novels. Bakhtin argues that fictional language is "inseparable from [the] social and ideological struggle" of its users' environment.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the new free, pliant, and easy wit of the English Restoration represented a freer way of being but it was also understood as an imported item, suggesting that it may have been understood as a type of merchandise with value.

Wycherley's own life represents the social value of wit. George, Duke of Buckingham, reported that Wycherley was courting Barbara Villers, the Duchess of Cleveland and mistress of Charles II. The rumors threatened Wycherley's support from Charles II for his writing. Wycherley appeased Buckingham's spreading of rumors through his wit. Furthermore, when Wycherley won a post as Captain Lieutenant, the duke's right hand man, in the duke's regiment, it was because the duke was "in love with Wit."<sup>14</sup> Social climbing through the use of wit was also available to women. Nell Gwyn rose from the slums of London to be the king's mistress and mother to his children through "her natural wit and charm."<sup>15</sup> Evidently, wit had some social value. And, it clearly worked its fluidity through a fluid socio-economic social structure. In this way, it is both a product for and of the English economic structure. If one employed wit well, then one accessed all sorts of levels of society.

However, wit is not so easily reduced. It has a greater range than an upward and downward trajectory and social adaptability. Peggy Knapp describes the English wit as demonstrative of a new vivacity in English drama.<sup>16</sup> However, when Dryden wrote his commentary on the new English wit, pliant meant “liveliness or resilient” as well as lithe, flexible and easily folded. A word, an utterance, or a gesture operates, if one is practiced in witty discourse, on a plethora of meaningful levels. Within the first act of *The Country Wife*, many words and turns of phrase operate in a manifold manner but none so well suited to a play of wit than the word “conversation.” Harcourt uses the word in its literal sense: “No, the Rogue will not let us enjoy one another, but ravishes our conversation... he signifies no more to’t” (I.i.236-7).<sup>17</sup> Later in the play, Horner uses the word in a more variable way: “Because I do hate’em, and would hate’em yet more, I’ll frequent’em; you may see by marriage, nothing makes a man hate a woman more than her constant conversation. In short, I converse with’em as you do with rich fools, to laugh at ‘em and use’em ill” (III.ii. 16-20). In the first example, Harcourt’s expression of conversation means talk or way of life.<sup>18</sup> When Horner uses the word he is aware that his listeners, Dorliant and Harcourt, will think that he is referring to the incessant talking of women; however, he is also using conversation in the seventeenth-century fashion to imply sexual intimacy.<sup>19</sup> The meaning for the single word “conversation” bifurcates, multiplies just within these two scenes of the play. The quality of wit—its pliancy—is diverse. There are three obvious meanings of one word. The comedy happens because of the flexibility of the language to mean many different things at once.

While at first there seems to be little difference between antithetical and pliant constructions of humor, the social function of each differentiates the two. Where

antithetical structures work to balance seemingly opposed elements in one phenomenon, wit functions to distinguish and separate elements. All humor relies, in one way or another, on paronomasia, but wit in *The Country Wife* distinguishes characters based on what they do or do not know. Horner's meaning of conversation depends not only on the audience's tacit understanding of the various meanings of "conversation," including its sexual connotation, but also on an understanding of Horner's character as set up in Act I, scene 1 and developed throughout the play as a virile, sexually aggressive man. The audience knows that Horner alludes to something sexual given his demeanor, while Horner and the audience know that Harcourt simply means mode of living or talk because he has said as much and he does not know that Horner is virile and potent sexually. Thus, the knowledge and uses of the meanings of "conversation" define Harcourt and Horner. Their characters are partially revealed by the knowledge they possess.

From the onset of the play, Horner is the master of wit—the double-entendre, the deceit or the disguise. He reports that he is impotent about town so that he can have access to all of the women and cuckold their husbands. Although Harcourt is also a wit and hardly innocent in his attempts to woo Alithea from under his acquaintance's nose, he is not the sexually greedy and all knowing Horner. He reveals his position as a gentler, less knowledgeable wit through his simple utterances and understandings of witty repartee as exemplified in his comprehension of "conversation." Part of what distinguishes one character from another on the basis of wit is who laughs and who is the object of laughter. Horner holds the same position as the omniscient audience and it is, in effect, from Harcourt's limited understanding that the audience and Horner take pleasure. Unlike the experiences of the common men in *Gallathea*, where humor is not necessarily



always at someone's expense, in *The Country Wife*, Horner and the audience laugh at Harcourt's expense. Horner demonstrates his virility through his acrobatic use of language. He is the true wit. Harcourt, though still considered a wit, is defined in such a scene by his limited knowledge as more honest, a man subordinate to Horner.

It is no wonder that Sparkish declares, "wit to me is the greatest title in the world" (I.i. 303). Sedgwick points out that men achieve power by employing wit. To have wit or be a wit is not enough. Nor is having great knowledge of something. Knowledge is most potent when another man is unaware of his lack of knowledge and, thus, is unaware of his position in the dynamic between him and the man with more knowledge. Most importantly, the man with more knowledge must have a hand in creating an unbalanced dynamic between men to be powerful. Wordplay is vital to the development of such a dynamic. In Sedgwick's understanding of the development of homosocial bonds in *The Country Wife*, the dynamic between men necessitates "an impoverishment of horizontal or mutual ties in favor of an asymmetrical relation of cognitive transcendence."<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the definition of social control and character between men results in a vertical structure of worth.

Sparkish fancies himself a wit but is a buffoon who winds up as the butt of everyone's jokes. He cannot manage linguistic flexibility like the other men. Ironically, though, he has no understanding of language as literal either. Harcourt deceives Sparkish with the most blatant language. When Sparkish is first introduced in the play amongst the wits, Harcourt, Dorliant and Horner, the three ask him to leave their company, but Sparkish thinks they are merely fooling because he believes "'tis but in jest... what we do for one another, and never take any notice of it" (II.i. 249-251). Yet, they have told him

plainly what will happen if he does not leave “We’ll thrust you out.” Later they beg him to leave: “pray go sir” (I.i.309, 312). Even when Harcourt, Dorliant and Horner thrust Sparkish out of the room, he comes back in the merriest of dispositions asking them, quite seriously “where do we dine?” (I.i.320). All three men have a laugh at Sparkish’s expense. Clearly he is not in their league; he is not a wit. His ready acceptance of their language as sarcastic rather than literal makes him the laughingstock of their company and makes him less likeable as a character. On the totem pole of social value that reflects the conversational exchange between men, Sparkish is at the bottom.

He is not alone. Wycherley makes an example of another character that shares Sparkish’s position: Pinchwife. Pinchwife is often thought of as Sparkish’s foil.<sup>21</sup> Unlike Sparkish, Pinchwife is highly suspicious of everything that the wits do and say. His understanding of the wits as deceitful leads to his own entrapment in their witty exchange. He is unable to conceal his emotions and so reveals his situation:

Pinch. (aside) How the Devil! Did he see my wife then? I sat there that she might not be seen...

Horn. What, dost thou blush at nine-and-forty, for having been seen with a wench?

Dorl. No, faith, I warrant ‘twas his wife which he seated there out of sight...

Harc. He blushes. Then ‘twas his wife... (I.i. 440-446)

He cannot lie as playfully as the men in his acquaintance can. The three wits discover Pinchwife’s secret easily. He does not have the wherewithal to deceive London’s men-about-town. Sparkish and Pinchwife are too foolish to play at wits with the rogues.

Harcourt, Dorliant, and Horner continually outwit them. Lack of wit devalues Sparkish and Pinchwife and in this way defines their worth amongst men.

Conversation, however, as it defines men as witty or foolish, is not its only distinguishing function. Conversation, in its second, sexual meaning, determines the kind of men in *The Country Wife*. McKeon stipulates that the emergent heterosexual paradigm of the Restoration divided men into types based on their interactions with women.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Sedgwick points out that wit and value are inextricably bound up with the exchange of women.<sup>23</sup> Conversation, a leitmotif of the play, operates on the social spectrum of identifying and classing them based on their abilities to speak cleverly and also on a gender spectrum based on their abilities as lovers of women. To cuckold parallels the power dynamics of witty repartee; the active participant with more knowledge and control of the cuckolding has ascendancy over the passive ignorant cuckold. A witty rogue attains true satisfaction and power when he has sexual access to the betrothed of his friends because it brings them into an unequal alliance. This is why Horner invites Pinchwife to join him in a friendly supper after he discovers that Pinchwife is married; he wants his wife so as to gain power in a homosocial acquaintance with Pinchwife. Thus, the rogue has secret companions and power over the cuckold through a homosocial dynamic through his heterosexual activities.

Horner represents the epitome of the virulent cuckolder in the play. He disguises himself as a eunuch to “abuse the husbands... [and] disabuse the wives” (I.i.134-135). He is the homosocial/heterosexual hero.<sup>24</sup> He remains friends with all of the men in his acquaintance and maintains their trust, while duping them and sleeping with their wives. The famous china scene is the epitome of witty homosocial/heterosexual contortions. In

the china scene, Sir Jasper Fidget allows Horner to lock himself in a room with Lady Fidget, his wife, to have sex. Of course, Sir Fidget believes that his wife is only interested in Horner's china; china, in this case, stands in for sex. Lady Squeamish comes over to Horner's and also expresses an interest in his china; he promises to have sex with her another time. All the while, Sir Jasper does not suspect a thing. At the end of the exchange, he says that a kiss from Horner "Has no more harm in't than one of my spaniels" (IV.iii.223). Because Horner has knowledge and, essentially, narrative control of most private and public relations with men and women, Horner is the yardstick of homosocial masculinity against which to measure the other characters in terms of status and gender identity.

Where Horner represents control and seeming balance of male friendship and the sexual exchange of women, Pinchwife represents a lack of the homosocial drive and an overvaluing of his heterosexual bonds. Pinchwife distrusts his old acquaintances from the onset of the play; he is paranoid, constantly worried, because he knows that the wits want to make a cuckold of him (I.i.428). Although he knows the London customs, he thinks that through marriage he will avoid being jilted by the circulation of his mistresses between his friends. Horner claims that "a marriage vow is like a penitent gamester's oath, and entering into bonds and penalties to stint himself to such a particular small sum at play for the future, which makes him but the more eager, and not being able to hold out, loses his money again, and his forfeit to boot" (I.i.415-420).

By comparing the exchange of women to gambling, Horner exemplifies his perception that women are only valuable when in fluid exchange between men and that that exchange is inevitable; one must not enter into the game tightly holding onto one

sum because this gives no currency to the player. Just as Pinchwife hates “simile” because it represents the exchange of language amongst men lending it different meaning and value, he hates the flexibility of the value of women in their exchange between men. He believes that because he says, “you shall never lie with my wife” (I.i.427) and because he keeps her under “lock and key” that he can maintain her status as naïve wife and thus free himself from the exchange between men that makes all husbands potential cuckolds. He treats his wife as a treasure. As Horner puts it, Pinchwife has married “to keep a whore to” himself (I.i.433). Pinchwife recognizes his wife as a commodity but does not appreciate the market. Essentially, “Pinchwife imagines that he can pick one element out of the larger stream of exchange and stamp it forever with the value that is really, however, lent to it only by its position in that stream.”<sup>25</sup> Clearly, Pinchwife misunderstands the value of his relationship to women. He wants so badly to increase his personal, private value that he negates his (homo)social circumstance and focuses on his private estate: his wife. He wishes to remove himself from the homosocial exchange. Because he does not value both the homosocial and the heterosexual bonds his masculine status in a homosocial/heteronormative system is one of little social prowess compared to the masculinity of Horner. Valuing one half of the system is problematic to a male character’s perceived social significance. Pinchwife is what McKeon describes as the emergent heterosexual male, who understands desire as based on a principal of sexual difference.<sup>26</sup> Pinchwife does not desire closeness with men, only with women.

Sparkish on the other hand, revels in the homosocial exchange. He is so free with women that their value is negligible to him. If McKeon is right and “the emergence of ‘heterosexuality’ ... [marks the emergence] of heterosexuality’s other, homosexuality,”

then Sparkish is a prototypical homosexual.<sup>27</sup> Sparkish understands correctly that bonds with women are meant to be subordinate and only instrumental in his bonds with the wits but he goes too far. He tells his fiancée, Alithea, that she “must bid welcome [to his friend Harcourt] ever to what you and I have” (II.i. 129-130). He is so concerned with Harcourt’s approval of his choice that he bids him to go into a corner with her so that he can “talk to her of anything” (II.i.191-92). Harcourt attempts to steal Alithea from under Sparkish’s nose. He does so in the most blatant fashion:

Harc. Truly, madam, I was never an enemy to marriage until now, because marriage was never an enemy to me before.

Alith. But why, sir, is marriage an enemy to you now? Because it robs you of your friend here?...

Harc. ‘Tis indeed because you marry him; I see, madam, you can guess my meaning...

Spark. Poor Frank!

Alith. Would you be so unkind to me?

Harc. No, no, ‘tis not because I would be unkind to you.

Spark. Poor Frank! No, gad, ‘tis only his kindness to me. (II.i.161-74)

Sparkish is so entirely focused on his relationships with men that he does not recognize when other men try to seduce his fiancée. The language Harcourt uses is quite clear—clear enough for Alithea to catch his meaning easily. Only a blind fool would not discern Harcourt’s attraction to Alithea and his desire to cuckold Sparkish. Sparkish is such a blind character. Harcourt tells Sparkish that “true lovers are blind, stock blind” (II.i.188-89). It is clear that the true love that Sparkish has is for a kindness—a likeness between

himself and Harcourt. He cannot even fathom that Harcourt is in love with Alithea, because he is blinded by his love for the wits. Thus, he bandies Alithea about amongst his friends thinking that they share his overdeveloped sense of male camaraderie and underdeveloped appreciation of women. His lack of desire for women undercuts his masculine identity.<sup>28</sup> Coupled with his desire to be on display at theatres—"we are so often louder than the players... [to] become the poets rivals" (III.ii.93-95)—this exemplifies his effeminacy. As Kristina Straub points out, putting the male body on display, brought with it suspicion of effeminacy.<sup>29</sup> Such an "effeminate male was likely to be taken... as an exclusive sodomite or molly."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the aristocracy, of which Sparkish aims to be part (III.ii.120), was increasingly considered a site of homosexual practices.<sup>31</sup> Finally, when Sparkish loses Alithea to Harcourt he says to her, "I never had any passion for you...I might have married your portion, as other men of parts of the town do sometimes" (V.ii.66-69). Unlike Pinchwife, whose wife is his guarded estate, Sparkish is interested only in Alithea's dowry and even then he seems not to value that much. Instead, Sparkish believes that the only value Alithea has is in relationship to his rivalry with men. His extreme homosocial tendencies, fixed with his desire to be seen and his wish to associate with an increasingly impotent hierarchical homonormative breed of aristocrats, present Sparkish as an effeminate-fop—part of an emerging homosexual identity.

Wit, women, and men's relationships to them, define men, both economically and in terms of sexual identity. Sparkish cannot learn to be witty; the play suggests that he can never be anything but a fop. Nor can Pinchwife be anything but a money grubbing, wife-abusing dullard. Their names suggest as much. Just as the name Pinchwife implies

his character in relation to his wife, other characters in the play are also defined by their relationships to women. So much so, that a character such as Sir Jasper Fidget, whose name has more to do with his wife's nervous concern for her reputation, only exists in the play as someone's husband. He only appears amongst the other men to pass his wife off to Horner, whom he believes is a eunuch. Like Pinchwife, he is worried about his wife's value but has no capacity for witty exchange; he is nothing more than the ideal foolish cuckold businessman lacking in social graces.

Unlike the men in the play, the women are not absolutely defined. Like the effusive wit that cannot and does not prefer easy definition but variation through exchange, women elude clear definition in the exchange between men. It may be true that the honesty of the women in the play contributes to their characters but they remain undefined along the sexual spectrum the way that the men are. There are no variations to the female gender (i.e., femininity). The women also avoid being typified by any fixed identity based on a desired object. Wycherley's women represent a lag in the separating out of gender identity from biological, sexual identity. And in that lag, women are the site where biological natural difference meets "the alterability of socioeconomic situation."<sup>32</sup> They enable the definition of men's gender identities while remaining sexually identified but gender undetermined. Although it may seem like their feminine gender is fixed to their female sexuality, ambiguous female characters and their actions imply otherwise or at least imply the potential for fluid feminine gender as separate from fixed female sexual identity. Their potentially ambiguous identities are part of what makes them potentially labile and dangerous to a male homosocial system.



Sedgwick claims that the women in *The Country Wife* operate on a continuum “from truthful to mendacious” and are defined by their places on that continuum: “Alithea is exactly defined by her exact truthfulness, and the Fidget/Squeamish women by their exact... hypocrisy.” Whether honest or dishonest, the female characters always operate within the heterosexual/homosocial schema.<sup>33</sup> For most of the female characters in the play, these claims apply. Harcourt’s desire matters in his attraction to Alithea and hers is subordinate, if it is expressive at all. Despite her actions imploring him to leave her alone, Harcourt persists:

Alit. I tell you [Sparkish] then plainly, [Harcourt] pursues me to marry me...

Harc. Come, madam, you see you strive in vain to make him jealous of me; my dear friend is the kindest creature in the world to me... But his kindness only is not enough for me, without your favor; your good opinion, dear madam, ‘tis that must perfect my happiness...

Spark. Look you there; hear him, hear him, and do not walk away so...

Alith. Me thinks he speaks impudently of yourself, since—before yourself too; insomuch that I can no longer suffer his scurrious abusiveness to you, no more than his love to me...

Harc. [I] Who loves you more than women titles, or fortune fools.... Who can only match your faith and constancy in love.... Who knows, if it be possible, how to value so much beauty and virtue...

Alith. Pray let me go, sir; I have said and suffered enough already.

Harc. Then you will not look upon, nor pity, my sufferings? (III.ii.249-311, 492-93)

Alithea is relentlessly honest in her engagement to Sparkish. She disregards her own love for Harcourt because of her commitment and because, as her brother, Pinchwife, makes apparent, she is “yet under his care” (III.ii.361)—an object subjected to what and whom he thinks best for her. In the above exchange, Alithea cannot leave the uncomfortable situation because Sparkish wants her to witness the kindness he believes he and Harcourt share, and because Harcourt wants her to hear him out. Her action—her desire to leave—is negligible. Furthermore, the writing in the scene makes her desire subordinate. Alithea emphasizes her commitment to Sparkish over any desire she has for Harcourt; she talks about what Harcourt wants and its implications for Sparkish. When she speaks plainly about her suffering, Harcourt transforms her expression of a subjective state of being into a concern about his own suffering.

The focal point of the scene is the kindness that Harcourt claims is not enough for him. He keeps Alithea listening by rivaling Sparkish. He and Sparkish do not listen to Alithea because both are caught up in a game with each other—a game that makes Alithea a piece rather than a gamester. Alithea’s honesty, which “at least has the potential for subverting the [homosocial] system,”<sup>34</sup> becomes part of the system. She can say whatever she likes—express a desire to leave, a distaste for her future husband, and so on—but she will never be a subject in said social structures. Her desire is not important, in part because it is effectively inexpressible, and because Alithea understands her place. Notice: she does not leave the above scene until her brother ushers her away. In a later scene with Lucy, her maid, Alithea articulates her position as an object of exchange between men: “marry Mr. Horner! My brother does not intend it, sure; if I thought he did, I would take thy advice, and Mr. Harcourt for my husband” (V.iii.80-82).

Again, Alithea's desire is muted by what others intend and her brother's right to give her to whom he sees fit. She does not say that she wants to marry Harcourt, only that such a match would be preferable to an arranged match with Horner. Her hypothetical statement weakens any potential subversive qualities her honesty may have in a system structured on misunderstanding and deceit. She implies that she is a token not a subject in the marital exchange between her brother and another man. Moreover, the tenor of Alithea's statement suggests her faith in the homosocial exchange; she hopes and believes that Pinchwife will be a wise owner and distributor of her person. Alithea does not pose a potential threat to the homosocial scheme. Instead, her honesty works within such a regime.

Neither does the coterie of mendacious ladies pose any real menace to the heterosexual/homosocial dynamic in *The Country Wife*. It is tempting to see the sorority of Lady Fidget, Mrs. Squeamish, and Mrs. Dainty Fidget as a rival system of desire and kinship to that of the wits.<sup>35</sup> They travel together and take the same care to protect their honorable reputations and see themselves as different and better in terms of status than common women. Although they can be grouped together through common interests and they, unlike Alithea, express and pursue their desires, their desires have no social impact and always operate within the perimeters of sexual difference. They possess enough knowledge of their positions as wives in the homosocial exchange to recognize that they must deceive their husbands and the public. Lady Fidget tells Horner that "people eat most heartily of another man's meat, that is, what they do not pay for" (V.iv. 83-84), and disparages any idea that they are in need of their lovers' money: "We bribed for our love? Foh!" (V.iv.134).

Seemingly, the ladies are free of the economic restrictions most women face under patriarchal ownership. However, when they find out that they are all participating in affairs with the same man, Horner, the leader of the pack, Lady Fidget, explains their honor in economic terms: “we are savers of our honor, the jewel of most value and use, which shines yet to the world unsuspected, though it be counterfeit” (V.iv.164-166). Thus, the deceit they practice to save their reputations may in fact hearken back to Horner’s early perception of wives as kept whores. When Lady Fidget decides to enter into a sexual relationship with Horner, it is at her husband’s persuasion. The whole hand-off of Lady Fidget to Horner by Sir Jasper Fidget is riddled with monetary/business jargon. Most importantly Horner points out that when a woman has “lost [her] money to a man, [she’ll] lose anything [she has], all [she has]... and he may use you as he pleases” (II.i.503-505). In order to maintain a modicum of control over their affairs, the women must be party to duping their husbands into believing that the counterfeit shine of their sterling reputations is real. If they do not, they are liable to lose the economic support of their husbands and fall into destitution and become the whores of less affluent men, such as Horner, who contribute nothing (directly) to their lavish lifestyles (V.iv.163-64). Their abilities to deceive are limited by their dependency on men. Thus even with the knowledge of the system and everything that is going on—that they share Horner, that Horner is virile—the fact that they are reliant on Horner and their husbands for social and economic survival makes them ineffectual as subverting agents. In a system that links transcendence to economic worth and gender status, they can thus only further the men’s or, more precisely, Horner’s homosocial cuckoldry.

However, within the pliant dynamic of power differentiation there is the potential for agents to subvert and shape stratified social definitions. The women in the play who represent a true potential for the disruption of the socio-economic system of male rivalry/camaraderie are Margery Pinchwife and Alithea's servant, Lucy. Although, in the end, both of these characters function within the system, they do not fit easily into the truthful/dishonest continuum; they are not merely literal or simply mendacious.<sup>36</sup>

Sedgwick claims that "The status of the women in this transaction is determiningly [sic] a problem in the play: not their status in a general political sense, but their status within the particular ambiguity of being at the same time objects of symbolic exchange also, at least potentially, users of symbols and subjects in themselves."<sup>37</sup> Lucy, a relatively inconspicuous character, who has neither money nor status, has knowledge and agency. While Lucy dresses Alithea for her wedding to Sparkish, she elicits one of the rare straightforward confessions from Alithea that she loves Harcourt. But, the formality of Alithea's honesty does not impress Lucy. Instead of understanding Alithea's social commitment as honesty, Lucy interprets it as dishonesty. In an attempt to dissuade Alithea from marrying Sparkish, Lucy suggests that Alithea act on subjective impulses rather than a commitment to her brother, or Sparkish:

Alit. I would see him [Harcourt] no more because I love him.

Lucy. Hey-day, a very pretty reason!

Alit. You do not understand me.

Lucy. I wish you may yourself.

Alit. I was engaged to marry, you see, another man, whom my justice will not suffer me to deceive or injure.

Lucy. Can there be a greater cheat or wrong done to a man than to give him your person without your heart? (IV.i.13-19)

Apparently, Lucy's common social status and her freedom from the circulation of men give her insight into the faults of the system. Alithea's denial of her love will give her nothing more than a seat in "Lincoln's Inn Fields, St. James Fields, or the Pall." Short shrift, according to Lucy, for quelling one's love, when such action once gained "great estate, a fine seat, or the like" (IV.i.69-71). Lucy argues with Alithea that if there is no longer a good trade for acting honorably, then one ought to act as a complete subjective being, and give oneself away wholly, rather than allowing oneself to be traded in part.

After this scene, Lucy aids Harcourt in deceiving Sparkish and convinces Alithea of Sparkish's faults. Lucy also enables Margery's desires. When Margery deceives her husband so that she can be with Horner, she does so with Lucy's help (V.i.60). Later in the play, when all of the couples and cuckolds are together, Lucy saves Margery and Alithea from disgrace, recognizing that, because she is an author of the deception and the subsequent problem, she must also help in the solution (V.iv. 244-45). While it is interesting that she sees herself as an agent and that she is working on the side of the women, she is also Horner's counterpart. Lucy's agency, which in itself suggests the great potential for a kind of woman that is not party to patriarchal exchange and, perhaps, is subversive to homosocial heteronormativity, works within Horner's larger plot.

Essentially, Lucy's actions maintain the system. Horner's deceit remains intact at the play's end, and she has provided him with the potential for yet another homosocial cuckolding relationship by placing Alithea in the arms of Harcourt. Nevertheless, Lucy's devalued social status as a servant gives her the ability to form an understanding of her

subjectivity and agency within a system that offers little room for subjectivity in women. She demonstrates an understanding of her ability to use symbols, rather than simply being a symbol manipulated by others.

The power and subjectivity she has, however, reinforce her social status as a servant and also help to cast the other women in the play in the same social role. At the end of the play, Horner is entirely dependent on Lucy's wit to maintain control over his identity and social manipulations. And Lucy's cunning partially facilitates Margery stealing off from her husband to see Horner. In these ways, Lucy has more authority than the play overtly credits her. Unlike the social fluidity available to Horner as author of events, however, Lucy's part in the execution of the scheme offers her little reward. In fact, silence, which Margery employs to meet with Horner at Lucy's behest, is the only option that seems available to all of the women, regardless of their social status. In Margery's case, Lucy instructs her to disguise herself and remain silent so that Pinchwife will escort her from her home to Horner (V.i. 59-61). Horner also institutes silence in another scene with the Fidget group. Horner tells Lady Fidget that he will "lie with 'em all [other women], make the secret their own, and they'll keep it...the devil take me if censorious women are to be silenced in any other way" (IV.iii. 63-69).

Lucy, Margery, and the other women act—an act of silence—only to operate within Horner's cuckoldry. Their authorship or active participation is to hold their tongues. Furthermore, their silence depends on them existing as a group. That is, Lucy and Horner execute his plan by making the women dependent on each other's silence. At the end of the play, when Margery tries to reveal her desire for Horner, she is met with a resounding "Oh, hold!" from Lucy, who is asked by Mrs. Squeamish to "Stop her

mouth!” (V.iv. 365-366). The women act as a group to maintain outward appearances and maintain themselves as Horner’s lovers. Unlike the men in the play, their participation in the homosocial order results in the maintenance of their status rather than the execution of any social mobility. They remain Horner’s servants and the control Lucy has over them, combined with her position, suggests that as a group the women in the play are servile. Lucy’s decision to remain silent about Horner’s plot when she is capable of revealing him further establishes that her mobility in wit does little to effect her status. Her joint authority in the execution of Horner’s plan casts her as author/servant within a group of female servants. However, that there are two distinct authors of wit in the execution of Horner’s plan (author/servant, Lucy, and author/director, Horner) implies their interdependence. In such an asymmetrical paradigm of authorship, Horner’s dependence on group silence and servitude offers the possibility of subversion by someone who operates from outside the group—someone, unlike Lucy, who is not part of the silent pool; someone who does not recognize the developing subservient gendered social status of women in a homosocial patriarchy.

Margery Pinchwife is such a character. At the onset of the play, Margery is naïve. She is from the country and does not know the customs or rules of the town. In addition, no one in the town knows anything about her—she has no reputation. These qualities figure heavily in Margery’s abilities to act uncommonly and potentially disrupt the dominant patriarchal order. In the last scene of *The Country Wife*, it may be Lucy that has the agency to reorder the threatened social dynamics of the play, but it is Margery who has the true potential to disrupt the system. Pinchwife often refers to Margery as a



changeling. He calls her writing style “very soft” (IV.ii.132). Before meeting Margery Pinchwife, Horner argues that she can learn the customs of the town (I.i.369).

These images and ideas of Margery reflect a sense of her as malleable and flexible. Horner and Pinchwife each believes that Margery is his personal tabula rasa. Horner implies that he will teach her how to be a London Lady. In a very violent exchange, Pinchwife threatens to carve the rubric ‘whore’ onto Margery’s forehead. However, although Margery does learn about the town and how to deceive, she does so, for her sole gain, regardless of Pinchwife’s or Horner’s intentions and desires. Pinchwife attempts to put words into Margery’s mouth. He forces her to take a dictation of a cruel letter that he intends her to sign and send off to Horner. Through her own volition, Margery plots to switch the cruel letter for her own loving letter to Mr. Horner (IV.ii. 184). Margery uses language as a sign under her control when she switches one letter for the other. Thus, in a ploy that matches Horner’s double-identity deception, Margery uses her perceived ignorance and innocence to incite a romantic encounter with Horner. Margery plots her deceit while predominantly being locked up in her room away from other people. She learns how to deceive her husband with the limited knowledge she acquires from him and she manipulates it to her advantage; she is a quick study even if a bit naive.

In fact, her innocence, more often than not, allows the expression of her desire and the satisfaction of it. Margery’s first appearance on stage reveals her liking for male actors. No other female character in *The Country Wife* openly discusses her feelings of attraction. Initially, Margery gets into trouble with her husband for openly expressing her liking for the “playermen.” Because Pinchwife believes “she be so innocent,” he reveals

more about city life to her, “setting her agog upon them himself” and providing her an education she will later use to pursue her desire (II.i. 66, 81). Though innocent, Margery uses her wit to deceive her husband. To be closer to Horner, she manipulates her body as a sign; she dresses in disguise twice. When Margery dresses up as a boy, it forces her husband to leave her alone. With the new freedom, Margery privately encounters Horner. Horner easily recognizes Margery; he gives her a bunch of oranges, which are recognized symbols of prostitution in theatres, and kisses her repeatedly. The exchange suggests that Margery’s body reveals her within the heteronormative system of biological differentiation; that is, that “gender crossing [is] out of keeping with woman’s ‘nature’, which is written in a newly differentiated body that cannot carry out the cross-dressing subterfuge so common, and unquestioned, in early modern literature and lore.”<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the disguise still deceives her husband long enough so that Margery can do as she pleases. The ploy to dress her as a boy is her husband’s and so it is easy to argue that Margery is not manipulating her own identity. However, Margery disguises herself a second time later in the play as her sister-in-law, Alithea. The disguise fools her husband and he conducts Margery, under her instructions, to Horner. The disguise is difficult. Margery must ensure that the candles are out and that Pinchwife certainly cannot see her face, suggesting a correlation between her physicality and her particular identity. However, the switch from Margery to Alithea implies otherwise; Margery, dressed as Alithea and masked, “*gives her husband her hand, but when he lets go [to lock her up], she steals softly on t’other side of, and is led away by him for her sister Alithea*” (V.i.). Margery’s disguise works better this time because she is dressed as another woman, which operates within the male/female divide. Margery uses the lack of

differing identities in the female category dexterously; her body becomes a sign that she changes from innocent wife to unmarried potential object of exchange. Throughout the course of the play, Margery develops into a proficient user of mutable symbols.

Despite her abilities, Margery's desire falls within the system of homosocial cuckoldry. In the final scene of the play, Margery believes that she can make Horner her new husband. Interestingly, Margery has misunderstood the social signals of the London scene. Her first loves, the male actors, are marginal to masculinity because they are excluded from "positions of power and authority."<sup>39</sup> Because Margery learns about desire at the theatre and the theatre is a place of unusual power dynamics, she believes she can command Horner. It is as if, costumed as her sister, the character Margery is akin to the actress playing Margery; she understands herself as a "sexually autonomous actress."<sup>40</sup> The paradigm Margery operates under is false. Horner tells Margery that he cannot be her husband because she already has one (V.iv. 205-208). The whole cast quiets Margery, preventing her from revealing her love for Horner and subsequently his witty deceit, and Margery becomes no more than a pawn in a game of cuckoldry designed by Horner to bring him into closer alliance with her husband. Unlike Pinchwife or Sparkish and the other male characters in *The Country Wife*, Margery remains relatively undefined. Her thrusts towards a subjective femininity foster her learning to manipulate multifarious symbols of exchange: language and her femininity. Margery Pinchwife is only a temporarily potential threat to the overall schema the play dramatizes.

Surprisingly, so is the ringmaster, Horner. Despite Horner's mastery over many of the dynamics in the play, of language, and of the schism in relations between the sexes, Horner's performance as hermaphroditic eunuch/ultimate-straight-lover troubles

the very sexual/class system that he manipulates. Horner makes himself a commodity in the play. Sir Jasper Fidget uses him as a tool to satisfy his wife and subsequently the women use him or trade him at their will and pleasure. Of course, he has real control over these situations. Because he knows the truth, Horner has actually made Sir Jasper his tool for getting closer to the women of quality, whom he deceives and then manipulates into submissive silence. Horner poses as a commodity but is not really a commodity; he is, according to the plot of the play, the ultimate trader, cuckolding all men by pillaging their valuable wives.

However, his position is not so defined and clearly within his control. Despite the control he has over other characters and his identity, Horner is just as vulnerable to the fluidity of gender identity and wit. The “gap” between “appearance and reality, or, sign and signified” that is necessary to Horner’s ploy, is always likely to close in on Horner.<sup>41</sup> Firstly, Horner is an actor on stage. The subjective control of his wit is questionable; the lines he speaks are not his own, are not really within his control. Also, as an actor, Horner’s and the actor playing him, Mr. Hart, were regarded as public property. By 1740, public intrigue into actors as objects of interest and curiosity led to “English Publishers... packaging individual players in memoirs, histories, and ‘lives’.”<sup>42</sup> Actors’ lives were exchangeable information.

Even if the actor had control over his written life, as Colley Cibber did when he wrote his autobiographical apology, the position of the author was questionable in terms of trade control. As Sedgwick points out, Wycherley’s prologue to *The Country Wife* outlines the vulnerability of the playwrights to the appetites of the audience and the actors:

But we the actors humbly will submit  
 Now and at any time to a full pit;  
 Nay often we anticipate your rage,  
 And murder poets for you on stage.

The playwright is in the hands of the actors and thus in the hands of the audience. The wit he exercises is dependent on the interpretations of actors and his audience; he lacks complete control over the objects of his knowledge. Rather, an author's words are the property of the audience. They have after all paid for the performance. Thus, Horner's positions as an actor/author, made evident by his delivery of the prologue, and as the actor in and author of events within the plot render him a commodity. As a subject, he is also an object. In addition, Horner's position as author of events and servant to the audience resembles Lucy's author/servant position, aligning Horner with femininity in the play. The construction of Horner as a man in control of his performance as a castrated man is questioned by his position within and without the play. What makes him masculine, according to Sedgwick's interpretation—his control of the equivocal wit and knowledge—is very likely without his control. To master the homosocial economic structure, in this case to circulate wit well, disturbs the hierarchy of wit because to do so, according to Wycherley's assumptions in *The Country Wife*, necessitates one's subjugation to others.

Also, Horner's special relationship with the audience disturbs the separating of people based on their relationships to knowledge, cognitive power and the assumed masculinity of that power. For most of the play, the audience is aligned with Horner: what Horner knows is the same as what the audience knows and *vice versa*. The

audience is privy to his scheme to pose as a eunuch so that he can gain access to London's women and any twist or turn that the plot takes and the audience sees, Horner either knows about or figures out. In terms of knowledge and power, the audience is on the same level or in the same category as Horner. It is masculine but a marginal and troubled masculinity. This is demonstrated when Horner's control over the exchange of knowledge and the exchange of objects in the play is undermined in the final scene. Pinchwife confronts Horner with a piece of information that Horner has neither orchestrated nor has any knowledge about. Pinchwife believes that Horner wants to marry Alithea. Without knowing why Pinchwife believes this, Horner admits that he is having an affair with Alithea to protect himself against Pinchwife finding out that he is actually having an affair with his wife (V.iv. 216-240). This moment troubles Horner's position as the ultimate masculine libertine hero because his ability to know what is going on and control the events in his life using that knowledge proves to be subject to other knowledge and other plots.

Furthermore, that Pinchwife's mistaken conclusion is a residual effect of Margery's plan to make Horner her lover suggests that Margery has, for a brief moment, cognitive control over Horner. It would be easy to say that the audience who, unlike Horner, has total knowledge of all of the action and its motivations in the play, represents a body that has knowledge and power that does not succumb to the fluctuations of power dynamics the way that Horner does; the audience knows the details of Horner's plan and is not tricked by Margery's plan the way that Horner is. However, the audience's perspective shifts from that of sharing in Horner's plan to sharing in Margery's and understanding the trick of her exercise in wit. Thus, the masculine position the audience

occupies in its relationship to Horner and his knowledge axis is thrown into question by the blip in his control and the feminization of its knowledge position through the audience's brief association with Margery.

And, although Horner's control and omniscience is recuperated and the audience is drawn again into alignment with him, the very ability of cognitive control to distinguish and separate classes and genders is troubled because the play treats the audience as a unified public. That is, although *The Country Wife* demonstrates how what one knows defines one's power position, it also demonstrates how the pliancy of wit puts knowledge and power up for grabs. Regardless of class or gender, the audience members access the same knowledge in the play and are always aligned with the most knowledgeable and powerful character in the play. The system that equates knowledge with power and stipulates cognitive transcendence as its goal demonstrates not only its flexibility but also its availability to everyone, masculine or feminine, through undefined and marginal spaces.

Even though Horner recuperates his power position by the end of the play it is difficult to definitively claim, as Sedgwick does, that he recuperates his masculinity after his intentional and brief feminization.<sup>43</sup> His claim on knowledge may secretly align Horner with the men, but it more clearly aligns him with the women. Because he is neither obviously heterosexual, like Pinchwife (or Harcourt who rivals Sparkish more for Alithea's love than for sport with Sparkish) nor prototypically homosexual like Sparkish, Horner is gender ambiguous—male, yes, but of undetermined kind. His position, therefore, is more like a woman's—Margery's. He is autonomous—a subject—capable of using signs but always in danger of being used... by women. Horner's manipulation

of gender and power within the homosocial/heteronormative system requires that, if "he... aims by women to be priz'd, / first by men... must be despised" (V.iv. 410-11).

Horner's position among other males is confrontational. His bonds with women are filial. After all, it is the women who know Horner's secret and he is dependent on their silence for his masquerade and success in cuckolding. Furthermore, he must allow for his trade among men and women to execute his plot successfully. In fact, Horner's position ultimately relies on the women in the play: Lucy ensures his secret is kept and Margery must employ her wit to enable the execution of Horner's ploy both in her manipulation of signs and in her final and reluctant agreement to remain silent. In these ways, he seems more kindred with the ladies than the gentlemen.

Of course, Horner's control is restored and, one assumes at the ending, maintained, suggesting his masculinity. But the potential threat to his control and his example, to the women of the play, such as Margery who demonstrates her capacity for learning, that the trading subject and the traded object are mutable classifications, present a problem to patriarchal systems of trade and object based desire classification. Horner presents a class and gender identity that reveals the vicissitudes of power. His effeminate masculine identity is like a loophole in the homosocial/ heterosexual categorization of identity, allowing for the multiplication of identities through the manipulation of pliant wit and gender.

Horner's position of power in the play depends on the compliance of others, manipulated and voluntary, the ambiguity of his gender identity, and his wits. His wit allows him to categorize the men in his company while maintaining secrecy about his own identity. Because Horner performs as a eunuch but in fact is as heterosexual as



Pinchwife and performing as homosocial as Sparkish, he is a sign, “no man” (II.i. 527) and the user of his sign. In this way, Horner has subjective knowledge and control. When he applies the pliancy of wit, he exposes others’ identities but his panoramic understanding of definitions ensures his concealment. Thus, Horner pushes his gender identity apart from his sexual identity.

Margery Pinchwife is also ambiguous. No one in town is aware of her character. But her access to wit differs greatly from Horner’s. Regardless of her learning how to be witty, Margery has no subjective control. Her autonomy is limited to her sexual identity. Her gender and sex collapse. Margery is a woman and a wife. Since heterosexuality was the dominant norm inside of a male homosocial system of exchange, there was little flexibility or importance to the distinction between female sexual identity and feminine gender identity. Margery could employ her wit to move through class, as Nell Gwynn did, but any attempts to choose husbands or use men within the system or create an alternative feminine identity through association to women seems impossible within the heterosexual/homosocial system in *The Country Wife*.

Of course, alternative feminine identities did develop. The existence of the female wits certainly attest to a variety of feminine identities as does Samuel Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, in which appears a mannish figure named Miss Barnevelt who is spoken of as a young fellow who makes passes at the heroine.<sup>44</sup> Wycherley anticipates the emergence of gender difference in women as well as men in *The Country Wife*. As much as the play recognizes and illustrates the interdependence of homosociality and heteronormativity, it problematizes it. Part of the satire of the play lies in the fact that the man most in control of the system is effeminate

(at least in the sense of being too easily aligned with women, but also as a eunuch) and that the women in the play, especially Lucy and Margery, are perpetually a threat to Horner's manipulations and masculine control. Wycherley deliberately calls attention to the actors and actresses to illustrate the commodification of autonomous characters.

The very subjectivity that Horner is supposed to represent actually illustrates the weakness in the heterosexual/homosocial system. For one thing, he illustrates that men and women are part of the "stream of exchange" so that even masculine subjectivities are effeminate. Furthermore, even though men subject themselves to exchange and women in the play do not have the subjectivity to make themselves subject of anything, the potential for the emergence of their subjective gender identities is apparent. The determining and pliant qualities of wit emphasize the framework of a system that separates, defines, is flexible, and mutable. Horner manipulates his ambiguous identity by defining himself falsely through the use of wit. Women, operating from ambiguity, attempt to do the same thing. Though unsuccessful because of their economic reliance on patriarchal exchange, the autonomy of the actress foreshadowed the appearance of feminine identities rather than female identity. In this light, *The Country Wife* suggests that a system that reduces the relationship of subjects and signs by attempting to polarize them is problematic. In the flexible system, in which worth is removed from birth and gender and sexuality began to slip apart, categorization became crucial for order. However, the birth and early development of the system during the early seventeenth-century did not foster the concretization of those categories. Ambiguous identities represent the potential for multiple identities in the variables of the emergent system. *The*

*Country Wife* reveals the heteronormative/homosocial system and anticipates problems within the system due to resolute, separate subjectivities.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, (New York: Colombia UP, 1985), 49.

<sup>2</sup> Michael McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1700," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 300-306.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 300-306.

<sup>5</sup> Edward A. Langhans, "The Post-1660 Theatres as Performance Spaces," in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. Sue Owen, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Alvin Goldfarb and Edwin Wilson, *Living Theatre: a history*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Montreal: McGraw Hill, 2004), 157.

<sup>8</sup> McKeon, 305.

<sup>9</sup> Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830*, (London: GMP, 1992), 35.

<sup>10</sup> Sir John Vanbrugh, "The Relapse," in *Restoration Drama*, ed. David Womersley, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 595-645.

<sup>11</sup> Goldfarb and Wilson, 156.

<sup>12</sup> John Dryden, "Defence of the Epilogue: Or an Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age," in *Dramatic Works*, ed. Montague Summers (London: Nonesuch, 1932), 3:175.

<sup>13</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981), 66-68. See Robert Markley's *Two Edg's Weapons: Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve* and Peggy Knapp's *The "Plyant" Discourse of Wycherley's The Country Wife*, for the application of Bakhtin's theory of language to the study of drama in the Restoration.

<sup>14</sup> Sedgwick, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Goldfarb and Wilson, 156.

<sup>16</sup> Peggy A. Knapp, "The "Plyant" Discourse of Wycherley's *The Country Wife*," *SEL* 40, no.3 (2000): 454.

<sup>17</sup> All references to *The Country Wife* come from Thomas *The Country Wife*, H Fujimura ed. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> James Thompson, *Language in Wycherley's Plays: Seventeenth-Century Language Theory and Drama*, (University: U of Alabama P, 1984), 115.

<sup>19</sup> Knapp, 452.

<sup>20</sup> Sedgwick, 50.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>22</sup> McKeon, 313.

<sup>23</sup> Sedgwick, 51.

<sup>24</sup> I will trouble Horner's controlled masculine identity later in my paper.

<sup>25</sup> Sedgwick, 54.

<sup>26</sup> McKeon 308.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>28</sup> Randolph Trumbach, "Sex Gender, and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female prostitution in Enlightenment London," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no.2 (1991), 189, 193.

<sup>29</sup> Kristina Straub, "Actors and Homophobia," in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Theatre*, eds. J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne, (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1995), 259.

<sup>30</sup> McKeon, 308.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>32</sup> McKeon 307, 302.

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<sup>33</sup> Sedgwick, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>35</sup> Helen Burke, "Wycherley's 'Tendentious Joke': The Discourse of Alterity in *The Country Wife*," *Ecent* 29, no. 3 (1988): 227-241.

<sup>36</sup> Sedgwick refers to Margery Pinchwife as shifting, throughout the course of the play, from "a truthful extreme of simplicity and literal-mindedness to an equally simple mendacity" (59).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>38</sup> Susan S. Lancer, "Sapphic Picaresque, Sexual Difference and the Challenge of Homo-adventuring," *Textual Practice* 15, no. 2 (2001): 260.

<sup>39</sup> Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1992), 26.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>41</sup> Sedgwick, 59.

<sup>42</sup> Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> Sedgwick, 60.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (New York: Oxford UP, 1972), 1: 43.

## Chapter 3

Prose Fiction and the Public Female in *Fantomina*

In the *Country Wife*, William Wycherley uses the trope of actor and writer as prostitute to explore the potential for negotiating social definitions of gender and power among men and women. While the male actor or author of the Restoration and eighteenth-century was subject to apprehension regarding his dependence on patronage and public support, the gender ambiguity of his position proffered social manipulation and mobility. Wycherley depicts the benefits of the emasculated male artist in Horner's ability to move fluidly in disguise through public and private, masculine and feminine spaces while maintaining a sense of integral identity beneath the public persona. Wycherley also touches on the potential for female characters, particularly Margery Pinchwife, to temporarily explore the social and sexual liberty deceit and disguise affords. However, Wycherley's exploration of potential female social flexibility through the pliancy of wit is limited. Part of the problem with exploring feminine manipulation of public persona for private freedom, is that throughout the Restoration, femininity proceeded toward privacy. As Michael McKeon claims, the domestic and the private progressively became female domains during the Restoration and into the eighteenth-century.<sup>1</sup> Any woman operative in the public sphere, such as writers and actresses, was a whore with no alternate, private identity. Margery's efforts to manipulate language and her body to fulfill her desires is thwarted by the lack of public identities, and so credit, available to her; she must adhere to Horner's plot and desires because in the public sphere amongst other men his are the only that matter. Even women who successfully exploited perceptions of the public female as whore were unable to establish the distance

between their public selves and their private lives. Aphra Behn, one of the most accomplished writer/whores of the Restoration, apologizes for her public recognition: "[Behn] who is forced to write for Bread... and consequently ought to write to please (if she can) an Age which has given severall proofs it was by this way of writing to be obliged."<sup>2</sup> Behn explains her profession as a way to survive, and in so doing aligns herself directly with her textual representation and thus herself as public woman as a prostitute, because "Behn shares with the ladies she addresses... a lack of independent property that obliges all women to earn their livelihood by pleasing men."<sup>3</sup> George Anne Bellamy, an eighteenth-century actress, also cannot escape the paradigm of the female public figure as public property. Her private self is made public by her acting and in the fictionalized writing of her memoirs.<sup>4</sup> The female public presence articulated through the theatre, either through writing or acting, and the autonomy it proffered these women was a threat to male public authority, but only an incidental one. As Catherine Gallagher points out, women, as represented by Margery in *The Country Wife*, elicit anxieties about female promiscuity and its potential threat to male homosocial economic structures dependant on the privatization of women, but their public appearances or promiscuity cannot escape the social code of its context.<sup>5</sup> The ability to manipulate identity through public speech acts is a masculine trait and the height of femininity is "inexpressibility as... the essentially female moment."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the woman that speaks aloud inserts herself into the male sphere. She makes herself vulnerable to male opinion and must then please men. Margery falls prey to her circumstance; she is unable to express and effect her desire publicly and so her attempt to execute feminine desire and autonomy the way that women of the theatre do becomes a part of Horner's larger plan. She represents a private

woman operating in a public sphere, the theatre; she is ineffectual, and returned to her husband's restrictive ownership at the end of the play.

In Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze*, Margery's predicament is fleshed out. Fantomina, the unnamed, disembodied heroine of Haywood's early eighteenth-century amatory fiction, addresses the potential and the problems of performative deceit and manipulation for the private lady. Fantomina employs the art of the theatre to execute her desires, effectively multiplying and shifting her public identity. However, Fantomina's masquerade ends when her public personae collapse into her private life. In this way, Haywood seems to follow the prescribed social pattern of the public female identity as prostitute in which public women become public property. It is as if Haywood understands performance, even potentially subversive performance, as an inadvertent site that eroticizes social codes.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the ending of Fantomina's story as well as the ambiguity of her true identity suggest that Haywood envisions a way to bring female autonomy and expression of desire together with public appeal. In *Fantomina*, the heroine's attempts to gain power and autonomy are limited. Through the complex masquerade adventure of Fantomina's foray into public theatrical life and then into a variety of domestic scenarios, Haywood further defines femininity (against masculinity) and proposes fiction rather than theatre as a site for the expression of feminine desire and female (economic) autonomy.

Kristina Straub points out that "while actors' resistance to the new lines between the genders reinforces some form of masculine dominance, the actresses' transgression... [represents] the site of an excessive sexuality" that challenges the notions of feminine desire as private and passive opposites to the masculine public execution of desire.<sup>8</sup> By

entering a male dominated sphere, one marked by exchange of goods and women as goods, a woman displayed a want or need that was not in keeping with the image of women as demure and kept. The abundant desire of the actress was believed to be catching.<sup>9</sup> The theatre, because of its public nature, fostered the spread of unladylike sexual behavior in other women. Haywood establishes the relationship between the public theatre and masculinity at the outset of her novella. Haywood's epithet evokes the male dominated libertine language of the theatrical world. The lines, "In love the Victors from the Vanquish'd fly, / They fly that wound, and they pursue that dye," were originally written by Edmund Waller, who was the favorite poet of the libertine extraordinaire, the Earl of Rochester, and the lines also appear in George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* in the mouth of the libertine Dorimant.<sup>10</sup> In *Fantomina*, the theatre is a sexually charged space. Haywood establishes early on that, when *Fantomina* begins at the theatre and the heroine mingles in a masculine context, she is susceptible to catching the abundant sexual appetites of the actress.

Haywood further establishes women as solely sexual objects in a masculine sphere by making the first thing *Fantomina* notices a whore. While at a playhouse, *Fantomina* notices a woman circulating in the pit among the men and receiving much attention. Despite her initial disgust at the woman's easy and depraved association with the gentlemen, *Fantomina* develops a great curiosity "to know in what Manner these Creatures [prostitutes] were addressed." *Fantomina* decides to dress "herself as near as she could in the Fashion of those Women who make sale of their Favours" and descend into the Pit (227).<sup>11</sup> *Fantomina*'s contamination is thorough and quick. Her first adventure into the public sphere spurs a desire in *Fantomina*—one she acts on. After a



very brief period of narrative introduction, Fantomina changes from an idealized feminine figure to a transgressive one. Her shift is marked by her descent from the box where she sits safely with other women and effeminate men into the predominately male pit, renowned for its vocal judgement of the plays and fellow audience members.<sup>12</sup> Fantomina moves from the boxed, silent, and private feminine space to the vocal and masculine public sphere. Because she chooses to enter the masculine pit to satisfy her curiosity, Fantomina initially threatens the social distinctions between masculine and feminine. Her decision to pose as a prostitute aligns the fulfillment of her innocent curiosity about the men in the pit and their attention to prostitutes with the desire of the actress. Fantomina's desire, which operates within the masculine public arena, troubles the growing dependence of the Restoration and early eighteenth-century economy on masculine dominance of the domesticated private feminine sphere, and the stability and distinctions between masculine and feminine. Her actions—her decision to disguise herself to gain public access—afford her a degree of social mobility and so are transgressive.

Fantomina's crossing and her potential adoption of the masculine trait of publicly expressing desire can be read into the serializing of her experience of desire. Lust, typically associated with male figures, permeates Fantomina's experience of the world once she expresses her desire. Upon entering the pit, Fantomina realizes the bifurcation of her self. On the one hand she is a lady, and on the other an expressive prostitute. In trying to purchase Fantomina's embraces, some of the men exclaim, "*Gad, she is mighty like my fine Lady Such-a-one*" (227). Hearing her own name be praised, Fantomina responds with proud vanity but recognizes that she is, at that moment, enjoying the praise

of herself only because she is “in the Person of another, and supposed a Prostitute” (227). Much like the private knowledge Horner has of his true identity and the power it affords him in *The Country Wife*, Fantomina seemingly has a modicum of control and advantage over her many potential lovers because of the distance she has created between her public self and her private self. Fantomina has created a safe space to express desire; her private identity is protected and she receives and is exposed to a “great Number of celebrated toasts” and sexual allusions in conversation of a “free and unrestrained Manner” from the desiring men in the pit (228). Because the men are not aware of Fantomina’s identity or of her performance, she accesses different identities. Haywood illustrates this clearly when Fantomina receives two different and tonally differing love letters from Beauplaisir. In one, addressed to Fantomina’s original public persona, Beauplaisir is cold and expresses reticent disappointment that he cannot see her until the next day. In another letter to Fantomina’s other persona, Mrs. Bloomer, Beauplaisir writes, “Since yesterday we parted, I have seemed a Body without a Soul... I will be with you this Evening about Five:---O, ‘tis an Age till then!” (239). Fantomina uses the two different letters as evidence of male inconstancy.<sup>13</sup>

However, she also recognizes herself as atypical of feminine constancy due to her own inconstancy: “ ‘tis [badly] our silly, fond, believing Sex are served when they put faith in man: So had I been deceived and cheated, had I like the rest believed, and sat down mourning in Absence” (239). Shortly after this admonition of feminine passivity, Fantomina plans another active adventure in disguise to maintain her affair with Beauplaisir. Unlike the women around her, Fantomina acts to achieve the ends of her desire and splinters her identities to do so. She distinguishes herself from those passive

and constant characteristics of femininity and executes her desire in a more masculine fashion. Her relationship to Beauplaisir is marked by masculine seriality. The repeated self-reconstruction pursuit of Fantomina's desire makes Beauplaisir's feigned constancy to Fantomina overtly serial through the two distinct letters and she seems masculine (in the way that Beauplaisir is in his letters) due to the seriality of her performed selves. Though her seriality is really aimed at one constant object: Beauplaisir.

The actress also sustains an ambiguous position between masculinity and femininity due to her ambition. As Straub argues, and perhaps still holden, the actress is regarded as the archetypal figure who sleeps her way to the top.<sup>14</sup> The actress' ambition and near economic self-sufficiency made her eccentric to the usual understandings of femininity and revealed her as excessively sexual. The drive with which Fantomina pursues Beauplaisir is enough to align her with the actress, but it is also the social climbing facilitated by her employment of disguise that directly link her ambition to the theatrical practices of the actress. Haywood blatantly attributes Fantomina's ability to falsify other identities to her performance skills:

[B]esides the Alteration which the change in Dress made in her, she [Fantomina] was so admirably skilled at the Art of feigning, that she had the Power of putting on almost what face she pleased, and knew so exactly how to form her Behavior to the Character she represented that all the comedians at both Playhouses are infinitely short of her Performances. (238)

The professionalism with which Haywood outlines Fantomina's various performances—that she “tunes her voice” or employs “the Wiles of [her] Art” (238)—contributes to her seemingly ambiguous gender. Professionalism in acting was much more readily accepted

in and gave credence to male actors; it detracted from the perception of them as sexual items for sale. But the same professionalism in actresses was directly linked with wanting to put oneself on display to attract a male lover or patron. Nell Gwyn, a social climber herself who started as a prostitute and moved through the ranks of society to eventually land in King Charles' bed, gained such success from her position as an actress. An actress who was truly good at her art, was adept at getting money from theatre patrons who were predominantly men. Benefit nights originated for actresses. Feminine professionalism was "couched in terms of sexual excess, as if desire—even professional desire—in a woman could take no other form."<sup>15</sup> And, as Haywood explains it through Fantomina's circumstance, her acting is directly related to her sexual desire and perhaps even an excessive sexual desire. After all, Fantomina chases Beauplaisir throughout the countryside posing as different women in order to recapture the passion of their first encounter. Furthermore, each new character Fantomina invents after her initial descent and subsequent pursuit of Beauplaisir represents an ascent in her social status. Fantomina first disguises herself as a prostitute. Her second disguise is as a house servant, which is followed quickly by a widow. Fantomina's final disguise is as a wealthy lady. The trajectory of Fantomina's characters and the sexual relationship with Beauplaisir that she achieves with each, and her acting to attain such ends, exemplify Fantomina's ambition and social control and success as overtly sexual. More than just simply being like the actress, the satisfaction of Fantomina's desires through the prostitute/actress trope implies the usefulness of such an ambiguous public feminine position. The cost, however, of overt feminine desire places the desiring subject in precarious social positions that pose limitations to her expressive freedom.

While Fantomina does represent the possible success of employing the actress's fashion of attaining ambitious satisfaction, her split situation between public sexual figure(s) and her private and decorous lady identity pose a problem to her theatrical femininity. Fantomina, while planning madly to satisfy her cravings for Beauplaisir, is always in danger of having her secret discovered. The plot propels Fantomina towards such a discovery and her consequent inability to execute her will in the public male sphere. In her initial disguise, Fantomina is the least physically identifiable. Although many men at the theatre believe that she physically looks like the lady she really is, the narrator is certain that there is no hope of Fantomina's true identity being revealed: "the vast Disparity there appeared between their characters prevented him [Beauplaisir] from entertaining even the most distant Thought that they [the lady and the whore] could be the same" (238). However, the disguise gets thin when Fantomina has sex with Beauplaisir and then refuses his money:

[H]e pulled out of his Pocket a Purse of Gold.... This Treatment made her quite forget the Part she had assumed, and throwing it from her... Beauplaisir enquir[ed]... wherefore she had feigned her self to be of a Profession which he was now convinced she was not. (231)

In this moment, Haywood addresses one of the main problems of the actress' autonomous femininity and her public identity. The acceptance of "Actresses from the working, servant or peasant classes [as] often represented as the most actively sexual" explains the social pattern and practice of their "possession by upper-class males."<sup>16</sup> When Fantomina poses as a whore, Beauplaisir is aware of the script. He follows the conduct expected from an upper-class male with a whore he has picked up at the theatre.

Ultimately it is Fantomina's rejection of his money that interrupts her performance. Initially, the interaction between Beauplaisir and Fantomina as a whore suggests that there may be a possible variation between public female who has or does not have money. Haywood, however, deconstructs this possibility. Very shortly after Beauplaisir accepts that Fantomina is not what she had seemed and promises his love to her, he predicts that "by the Beginning of her Conduct, but that in the End she would be in Reality the Thing she so artfully had counterfeited" (231). By presenting her body to Beauplaisir and operating in the public sphere, Fantomina, regardless of her good economic position, is susceptible to a title and character of whore.

Therefore, the figurative trajectory of Fantomina's social climb is just that—figurative. Fantomina's final disguise scenario is no less perilous than the first; her private identity may easily be revealed, thus bringing together her excessive sexuality with her domesticated "virginal" identity. Furthermore, the closer the narrative moves towards its finale, the greater the association between physicality and identity. Fantomina's final strategy begins with her searching for help to execute her plot. She spies two men in a park that she "by their Physiognomy... thought most proper for her purpose" (240-241). Interestingly, Fantomina, the proclaimed master of altered character, believes she can judge character based on the bones and the features of the face. In planning what will become her final entrapment of Beauplaisir to fulfill her lust, Fantomina creates an identity that is closest to her own. She poses as a moneyed respectable lady. The only thing preventing Beauplaisir from discovering her true identity in the final scene is a mask. Of course, Fantomina does not just wear a mask; she wears a vizard—the mask of a prostitute. The connotations are clear. The thing she will

appear to Beauplaisir as is a prostitute. The mask marking her as a prostitute is only a thin shield to her other, private self. And, although Fantomina goes to great effort to maintain this disguise (she blacks out the windows so that Beauplaisir cannot see her face in daylight) the effort stresses the faltering of her ability to keep whore and lady apart since her descent into the pit (244-245). Beauplaisir's prediction for Fantomina—that she would soon prove to be what she originally had only pretended at—is true. Whether an actress/whore or a lady, Fantomina is either a chaste and private woman or a public and promiscuous one. What at first seem like options in feminine performance only operate within the whore/public and virgin/private feminine paradigm.

Despite Fantomina's repeated protestations throughout the text that she is unlike other women—that she is smarter and that her practices in attaining love are superior—she differs very little from the other women that she criticizes. The seriality that Fantomina experiences suggests her masculinity; however, in terms of the heart, where it really counts in amatory fiction, Fantomina is as singular as the next girl. Although Helen Thompson argues that Haywood brings seriality and singularity together in *Fantomina* to produce a “renovated romantic economy, whereby ruined women might indefinitely reconstitute themselves,” many of Fantomina's comments and gestures imply a limitation to seriality due to its secondary status to the naturally singular in women.<sup>17</sup> Haywood presents the public art of feigning as serial throughout the text—a trait common to the stereotypical male libertine. In this way, as was already established, Fantomina certainly is serial. However, Fantomina is serial only superficially. She may play many different roles, but beyond the surface, Fantomina's exercises in sexual expression are singular in aim.

Not only do her disguises reveal the very limited possibilities of identity to women, they also demonstrate a singularity to her lust. Unlike rakes who employ their wit to seduce many women, all of Fantomina's efforts are employed to ensnare one love object. Fantomina cannot get enough of Beauplaisir. Moreover, her traps are meant to hold him to his promise of constancy, which is clearly set up in the text as a feminine attribute. Fantomina ridicules other women for waiting "for all the Sweets of Love" that she easily has access to and pities them for putting faith in any man (240). And, while she often recommends her tactics as a means for other women to defend against male inconstancy and subsequent love-pains in women, Fantomina cries out "Traitor!" when she receives letters from Beauplaisir intended for two women—her personae (239). She also cries after her first sexual encounter with Beauplaisir because "had he been acquainted with who and what she really was [and] the Knowledge of her Birth [it] would not have influenced him with Respect sufficient to have curbed the wild Exuberance of his luxurious Wishes" (230). And, although Beauplaisir is "far from imagining that they [Fantomina's personae] were the same," Fantomina has a "private Vexation of knowing [she has] lost him" as every false new intrigue winds to a close (232). After posing as Incognita, the masked rich lady, Fantomina grows "as weary of receiving his now insipid Caresses as he was offering them [to Fantomina and the widow]: She was beginning to think in what Manner she should drop these two characters" (245). When Fantomina does drop the characters of Fantomina and the widow Bloomer, she is left with the disguise that is the closest to her real identity; she is left with a near singular identity. Moreover, her many complaints and protestations about Beauplaisir's seriality indicate her dislike of seriality. Her own attempts to make him constant and her devotion to her



lover indicate Fantomina's preference for singular love. All of her plots emphasize her constancy and Beauplaisir's inconstancy. He believes he has more than one lover and enjoys each at different times. Fantomina, on the other hand, craves only Beauplaisir, wishes his constancy to her and so grows weary of her many masquerades. Haywood portrays Fantomina as involuntarily moving toward absolute femininity. Her desires to hold on to one lover and for that lover to love and know her indicate that Fantomina is arrested in her gender.

Fantomina's pregnancy reiterates the impossibility of her continued theatricality. Haywood situates the problem of feminine seriality of desire in the body. Seriality in the expression of sexual desire is limiting for most women. Not only did repeated sexual encounters in healthy, fertile females necessarily end in pregnancy but "patriarchal mechanics" also allowed women "to participate one time only."<sup>18</sup> When Fantomina tries to hide her pregnancy, it is a failure. Her plan was that "By eating little, lacing prodigious strait, and the Advantage of a great Hoop-Petticoat... [and] her Bigness... not taken notice of" she could go "into the country" and "make her escape to some Place where she might be delivered with Secrecy." This plan is foiled in a grotesque display of labor pains. Instead of escape from her situation, Fantomina

was seized with those Pangs, which none from her condition are exempt from:--

She could not conceal the sudden Rack which all at once invaded her; or, had her Tongue been mute, her wildly rolling Eyes, the Distortion of her Features, and the Convulsions which shook her whole Frame, in spite of her... revealed she labored under some terrible Shock of Nature. (246)

Her body spoils all of the art that Fantomina puts into the execution of her desire. As Ros Ballaster points out, the moment of Fantomina's labor is a grotesque representation of orgasm.<sup>19</sup> Fantomina's sexual relations with Beauplaisir are revealed in her labor, both through the birth of a child and the exaggerated sexual references of her body. It is as if her first time with Beauplaisir is on display for everyone at the ball (where Fantomina goes into labor), her public promiscuity converging with her disguised privacy. The moment of Fantomina's labor reduces her to the singular. Her body dictates her circumstance and there is no contrivance left to conceal the truth of her situation and identity. The gestures and character Fantomina once had control of elude her, suggesting that a woman, no matter how clever, cannot make use of masculine dissembling. In fact, Fantomina's situation implies that the social perception of women in a patriarchal system is essentialized in the body as biologically reproductive.

No sooner is Fantomina in labor than her mother whisks her into a darkened room (246). Right after Fantomina's inauguration into the world of desire the places she executes her desires become more and more private. She begins her plot in the theatre and from there she moves to a hotel, a stage coach, a private home and finally ends up pregnant and in a closet. The closer Fantomina gets to pregnancy and the realization of the natural potential of her body, the more domesticated and private the spaces she operates in become. Fantomina's characteristics of singularity and the plot's drive towards her discretion or closeting are necessitated and exemplified by her body. The narrative also brings together female and feminine in the small detail that Fantomina gives birth to a girl. For most of the story Fantomina operates as varying signs of the public and private woman—as feminine—but her pregnancy, labor, and delivery put a

female body within her many feminine disguises. Fantomina's body has been "renaturalized" because "Pregnancy is the irrefutable sign of female difference that calls a halt to... woman's 'mimicry'" and outward expression of sexual curiosity and appetite.<sup>20</sup>

Although Haywood reduces Fantomina's character to her body and demonstrates the limited potential of the acting technique to effect her desire, nowhere does Haywood admonish female desire; indeed, quite the opposite. *Fantomina* is constructed by piling one titillating intrigue on top of another to such a degree that some scholars, such as Melissa Mowry, discuss it as an example of early pornography.<sup>21</sup> The problem that Haywood outlines for the expression of female desire is the entry of the female body into the public, masculine sphere. At the outset of Fantomina's sexual adventures, Haywood subtly foreshadows the problem of the body for women in theatrical techniques of sexual expression. The narrator describes Fantomina's dismissal of suitors in the pit as dispatching "all that had hitherto attacked her" (228). The issue of violence towards and, in particular, rape of the actress was a common one during the Restoration and eighteenth-century. It was often a trope for her relationship with the audience. As time wore on, there was "increasingly regulated violence in the containment of feminine sexuality as it appears in the public realm" in an attempt to "exclude the idea of feminine control from the spectacle of feminine desire."<sup>22</sup> Haywood's problem with the outward expression of female desire is not merely that there is a body to be attacked when a woman attempts to disguise herself to put herself into the public as a sexual individual, but also that she is likely to lose the very authority of her desire. Fantomina's first affair with Beauplaisir is a good example of the double threat to the female desiring body once

it is in the public sphere, disguised or otherwise. Fantomina has sex against her will the first time she is alone with Beauplaisir:

[S]he struggled all she could... when the Thoughts of the Liberty he had taken with her, and those he continued to prosecute, prevented her with representing the Danger of being exposed, and the whole Affair made a Theme for public Ridicule.—Thus much, indeed, she told him, that she was a Virgin.... But that he little regarded... [or made him] change the Form of his Addresses. (230)

That Fantomina “endeavored to delay” is of little importance in the situation (230). Once she has entered the public sphere as an actress, she is public property. The imagined threat of social retribution and the very real physical harm transform Fantomina’s desires into Beauplaisir’s. Fantomina ceases to have a say in her public persona. The attack on her undoes her. While the story continues through many sexual escapades before Fantomina is again susceptible to the a-priori female body, Haywood clearly takes issue with the presence of the female body in the execution of female desire in the masculine public sphere. Moreover, Fantomina’s story implies that control of public sexual expression involving a female figure is impossible due to the vulnerability of the female body.

However, neither rape nor pregnancy is the focus or ending of Fantomina’s story. A large part of the narrative around these two poignant moments in *Fantomina* and in the overall narrative is Fantomina’s unknown identity. After Fantomina goes into labor, her mother forces her to confront Beauplaisir with the truth and then Fantomina is whisked off to a convent in France (247-248). Beauplaisir and Fantomina’s mother are privy to Fantomina’s identity but Haywood never reveals or even hints at Fantomina’s real

identity. The audience that reads about Fantomina's disguises growing thinner and thinner and has anticipated a body because of the many elaborate descriptions of Fantomina's various physical representations and contortions is deprived of an object to fill its curiosity. In this way, Haywood relieves Fantomina of the public punishment she so fears. While Fantomina is forced to reveal herself to Beauplaisir and in so doing is deprived of a husband for her child and is sent away, she is not socially ruined. The reputation she had so hoped to guard through the masking of her body is not damaged, not because of her performative technique, but because her naturalized identity is protected by fiction. Fantomina elides discovery because there is no female body in fiction and so there is no (real) character to account for her actions.

Fantomina's successful disguise through fiction marks the potential benefits to writers provided by a shift in understandings of the public during the early years of the eighteenth-century. Ballaster and Catherine Ingrassia both consider Haywood's writing within its social context. Ballaster looks at Haywood's writing to demonstrate how it promoted the private and modest female by suggesting fictional romance in the place of real romantic experience and Ingrassia reads Haywood's work in relationship to emerging notions about the novel and ways in which Haywood managed her own reputation in the eighteenth-century (sexual) economy and print trade.<sup>23</sup> The oppositional definitions of male and female that *Fantomina* represents and Haywood experienced are congruent with and related to the sexing of the novel and the shifts in the social significance of the theatre to the significance of print. Although one cannot claim that there was a simple shift from the importance of theatre to the predominant importance of print through the eighteenth century, these arts helped form distinctions between the

“theatre public” and the “print public.” According to Julie Stone Peters, publication, a term used in the early Restoration to refer to theatrical or printed representations, had come “to be identified nearly exclusively with printing in the eighteenth century.” With the new understanding of publication—putting something into the public sphere—as almost exclusive to print, notions of the public changed from a masculine pit in the theatre, where “heterogeneous spectators transformed into a united body” to the “acknowledged... disunity and multiplicity of the actual public—made up of particular individuals and of divisive subgroups.”<sup>24</sup> Haywood, who had written for and acted in the theatre and who knew the difficulties of pleasing the rowdy unified theatre public, was well aware of the potential benefits of print because of its broader reach into a diversified public.

Haywood needed to make a living from her pen and print provided her another medium to establish a living.<sup>25</sup> As Ingrassia points out, Haywood’s career was marked by her lack of status and her subsequent lack of access to power via powerful men.<sup>26</sup> As such, Haywood had a hit and miss relationship with theatrical success because the pit was predominantly filled with and controlled by powerful theatre patrons. Within a diversified print public, however, Haywood could have more success. The newly figured public is one that could potentially replace the system of patronage. Readers bought books and, in this way, the public began to replace the patron.<sup>27</sup> Unlike her experience in theatre, where her writing fell prey to the unforgiving and vociferous critics in the pit, in fiction, Haywood could target members of the public that the pit effectively swayed or silenced. For example, the overwhelming success of Samuel Richardson’s novel *Pamela* met with public criticism, such as Haywood’s parody entitled *Anti-Pamela*. This

demonstrates that a text like *Pamela* was not guaranteed the safety of unanimous success. Moreover, the contradicting texts written for different audiences (*Pamela* appeals to a female public and *Anti-Pamela* to a male public) demonstrate the potential power of the members of the female public.<sup>28</sup> The huge success of *Pamela* illustrates that although women were typified by illustrations portraying them “sneak[ing] [books] into their closets,”<sup>29</sup> they were still a diversified and considerable market with purchasing power. In addition, Haywood writing for men exemplifies her belief and determination that she could interest and influence the public from the private space of the female writer. The social redefinition of public as “not court or state” but associations in “coffee-houses, salons and” particularly for women “the private spaces of the home,”<sup>30</sup> enabled a domesticated population a modicum of effectiveness in the system even from their private spaces. Fantomina’s successful operation in a divided system in which she becomes part of the domesticated feminine sphere, exemplifies Haywood’s hopes for her own success in fictional writing for a diversified and female public.

Haywood, most often concerned with writing to instruct women in their economic opportunities, in *Fantomina* considers the different kinds of mobility available to women in the theatre and in print.<sup>31</sup> *Fantomina* represents a shift from writing for the male critics of the pit to writing for a specific print audience. The fictional elision of the body and the lack of social repercussions to *Fantomina* are represented in *Fantomina*’s sentence to France, in the last lines of the story and in *Fantomina*’s mother’s belief in fictional deceit. Beauplaisir fades from the story and *Fantomina*’s, her mother’s and her daughter’s life, and *Fantomina* ends up in France exclusively among other women and isolated from men (248). The ending of the story, thus, represents the separating out of the sexes. This

combined with the very last lines of the text implies the sexing of amatory fiction: "And thus ended an Intrigue, which, considering the Time it lasted, was as full of Variety as any, perhaps, that many Ages has produced" (248). The last line is a deliberate insertion of amatory form. Though it lacks the moralizing tenor of Richardson's last lines in *Pamela*, the imposition of an ending on the part of an author in an abrupt and grand fashion aligns *Fantomina*'s ending with romance fiction.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the lack of a moralizing tone is part of how Haywood understood her new female readership. While other authors strove to moralize through romance fiction, Haywood offers counsel in the "circulation, and distribution of the currency available to women."<sup>33</sup>

Not only is her writing a shift away from an emerging preference for moral propriety in women, but it also demonstrates an uncommon understanding of women as potentially economically different, if not distinct, from men. Rather than offering examples of how to fit easily into the male economy of desire by instructing women to remain chaste and so valuable to men in a homosocial economy, Haywood illustrates ways of manipulating the system of private and public spheres, masculine and feminine domains, to women's advantage. For example, just after Beauplaisir listens to *Fantomina* recount her deceit and just before he disappears from the story, the narrator reveals that he sat "in a profound reverie." The silence is only broken by *Fantomina*'s mother, who controls the outcome of the story from that point on. *Fantomina* ends with singularly female concerns and control, having eliminated, not only Beauplaisir from the story, but also any effectiveness of his desire; he asks for the charge of their daughter and *Fantomina* and her mother refuse his request (248). Clearly, Haywood "interrogates the existing sexual economy" and "revise[s] the boundaries of represented female sexuality,



traditionally theorized within masculine parameters.”<sup>34</sup> The coincidence of Fantomina’s new female realm with the sentimental end is part and parcel of what Ballaster claims “mark the beginnings of ... a tradition in romantic fiction, primarily addressed to and authored by women.”<sup>35</sup> The lack of moralizing in such a fictive form suggests that Haywood understands the amatory form as a route for the insertion of female desire into the public sphere. That is, through separating the elements of the public, female desire is not only subjected to a publicly powerful masculine pit for scrutiny, but also to other, less overt, sectors of society open to Haywood’s written material. Unlike some of her contemporaries, such as Richardson, who used fiction written for private women as spaces to promote feminine virtue and domesticity, Haywood’s presentation of female authorship exemplifies a safe space for controlled public female sexual expression—in fiction—where the private body is distinct from the public text.

Finally, the question that marks the ending of Fantomina’s licentious journey implies the possible improvement of fiction over theatrical technique for feminine expression of desire and dissembling: “have you deceived me by a fictitious Tale?” asks Fantomina’s mother. Here, Haywood tantalizes her reader. There was a growing desire to know the actor/actress behind the act. Throughout the eighteenth-century, the actor or actress and his/her roles drew closer together. An actor or actress was expected to play roles that s/he was already like.<sup>36</sup> This left the performer entirely vulnerable to immediate and overt public opinion of his/her character. An actress was particularly vulnerable because as a woman her value was determined by her apparent purity, while her profession almost always worked against her virginal value even if the character she performed were an innocent type. Fiction provided a space where character could still be

distinguished from (writing) subject and the currency of women remained protected regardless of their textual, sexual performances. In *Fantomina*, the mother's question highlights this effect of fiction on femininity. The question begs one to look at the text and wonder if there was an identity behind *Fantomina*'s sexual escapades at all.

Whoever the elusive *Fantomina* may be or refer to is out of the reading public's reach.

Thus, the fictional world that Haywood imagines for women and women writers allows for illicit sexual discourse with little (economic) retribution to an embodied person.

Fiction enables the insertion of femininity and increasingly impinged feminine desire into the public sphere, resisting and troubling the distinction between male/public and female/private.

Haywood's idea for such a fiction is mirrored in her own authorship. She does this by representing her fictional subjects dealing with the economic and social forces that she experienced in the London theatrical and print marketplace.<sup>37</sup> The actress and the female writer for the theatre were susceptible to physical harm and slander. Whole biographical confessions were written about actresses, rendering their private lives public and increasing their status as vulnerable whores. Margaret Woffington, a prominent actress, is described in her biography at once as "a gallant Heroine toiling for Perfection in the Dramatic Mines" and "a frail Girl sinking into the arms of unbridled Lust." In Ireland a 1746 pamphlet discusses the desire to violate Woffington publicly: "because this Man will not tamely give up Actresses to be ravish'd on the stage... He must never appear upon Stage more?"<sup>38</sup> The body and identity of the female playwright was no less a subject to public regulation of her perceived excessive sexuality, regardless of her replacement of a real identity with a textual one. Behn cleverly manipulates the

whore/writer paradigm to ensure the popularity of her productions. In an early play, Behn writes her renewed success in sexual terms. An actor warns the gallants in the audience that after enjoying Behn's writing they will no longer want to enjoy any other mistresses:

You'll never know the bliss of change; this art

Retrieves (when beauty fades) the wandering of the heart.

Here Behn equates her body with the text—an equation “repeatedly made with respect to women writers.”<sup>39</sup> The lines also imply that she desires the repeated attention to her text/body from the men in the audience because her financial and artistic success depends upon filling the pit. Although Behn is clearly manipulating an image of herself as whore, she is not free from the personal attacks warranted by performing whore. In fact, Behn fabricates an identity through her creation of a “continuous but mysterious authorial identity never actually embodied on stage but persisting... from play to play... and aligned... with... female sex.”<sup>40</sup> Her persistent whore identity, render Behn vulnerable to relegation to a common public feminine identity. Because the written author-self refers to an Aphra Behn that is not wholly distinct from herself, when critics attack her texts for their bawdiness or feminine looseness, Aphra Behn herself is a referent for those criticisms.

Haywood, however, attempts to control her public personae through a variety of different literary maneuvers.<sup>41</sup> Through the shifting and layering of her public identity she aims to avoid attack on her private self. Like the elusive body and identity of Fantomina, Haywood ensured that her private life remained private by shunning to “reveal the facts of her life.”<sup>42</sup> While Haywood made use of her reputation as a writer to

further her career as both an actress and an author, she always curbed her representation of herself to accommodate social trends. In *The Female Spectator*, for example, she manipulates her reputation for inappropriate behavior and writing in a way that enables her to meet the demand for discreet moral discourse in fiction for women: "I have run through as many Scenes of Vanity and Folly... [in] a continued Round of what I then called Pleasure," but it consoles her "to think that the Publick may reap some Benefit from it."<sup>43</sup>

Just as the language describing Fantomina's pursuit of her desire is often couched in terms of feminine modesty to provide her with "seeming Innocence" by which her blush of desire can be read as the "blushing Beauties" of a silly country girl (235), Haywood veils her unfeminine public pursuits in acceptably feminine conceits. Haywood excuses her behavior at the same time describing her behavior and offering her promiscuity, authorial and otherwise, as authoritative instruction to other women. Essentially, she advertises her established reputation as public woman to reproduce herself as private lady. This may look like regret but it is, in fact, careful manipulation of her identity to make herself more available and desirable to her shifting reading public; she is still a woman for purchase but in more control of her identity and market. What Haywood does with her reputation in *The Female Spectator* is not much different from what Henry Fielding does with it in *The Author's Farce*. Fielding uses Haywood's easily recognizable literary type as whore to profit from a public that was (perhaps reluctantly) fascinated with female sexual experience.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Haywood's only presents a shifting identity that will allow her to sell to the public; one would be mistaken to think that they had access to the private and real Haywood:

She provides the calculated version of her life that attempts to supplant other, less flattering portraits. Her later efforts to obfuscate intentionally her personal history similarly deny others the opportunity for interpretation. (Indeed, in *Biographia Dramatica* [1764] David Erskine Baker recounts that Haywood, ‘from a supposition of some improper liberties being taken with her character after death, by the intermixture of truth and falsehood with her history ... laid a solemn injunction on a person, who was well acquainted with all the particulars of it, not to communicate to any one the least circumstances of Mrs. Heywood’s [sic] life, very little light seems to appear,’ largely through her own efforts.)<sup>45</sup>

Haywood understands that her identity as a literary construction and the marketing of her performed identity are facilitated by the privatization of her real identity. Haywood the author is, therefore, like a fictional character in that she is (very nearly) understood to have “no particular, embodied, referent in the material world for the proper name” Eliza Haywood.<sup>46</sup> Unlike Behn or the actresses of her time, it was only “[Haywood’s] textual promiscuity... that became the brunt of satirical attacks.”<sup>47</sup> The control that theatrical women attempted to gain over their sexual expression and lost due to systemic rape or literary criticism<sup>48</sup> and dependence on male support, Haywood attained and kept. By manipulating the distinction between private and public and making her body and real identity private and scarce in public, Haywood heightened her audience’s curiosity and gained readership through sexual expression without social retribution to her person. Like Fantomina, the real Haywood is absent and the textual Haywood is the only thing revealed.

In another effort to control her public identity, Haywood took up the distribution of her texts. Rather than attempt to operate within a male sphere of publishing and selling, Haywood tried to take those responsibilities on herself and opened her own print shop for a short time.<sup>49</sup> This decision late in her career was most likely a response to a social need for greater conformity amongst women to adhere to non-transgressive feminine types. By taking on the distribution and printing of her text, Haywood had greater control over her identity and could pay closer attention to who her reading public was (i.e., who she circulated among) and their demands. Haywood's texts did not become, due to social pressures, bland prescriptions for decorous ladies. Instead, her later texts propose ways to subvert not only didactic genres, but also the domestication and repression of female subjects and desire prevalent in her time. That *Fantomina* uses the romance plot-line of a character falling into a series of romantic interactions, yet eschews the common marriage conclusion of the romantic novel, distinguishes Haywood's text from the growing narrative trends and also hints at her critique of the ideology implicit in that genre. Instead of portraying a female figure that succumbs to cultural negotiations of women as kept objects, *Fantomina* refuses marriage and disappears into a society of women. She is a subject "who negotiates... material and symbolic economies."<sup>50</sup> *Fantomina*'s identity remains her own and she can avoid male manipulations of her reputation through her fictional masking.

And, while the story depicts ways of circulating within patriarchal society and challenging heterosexual exchange and female positions in male homosocial relationships by taking advantage of the separation of female from male identities, Haywood's own experience in the market place demonstrates the failure of such efforts. Haywood made a

living by writing for women and circulating instructional texts for women on how to profit from social customs and definitions. In 1742 she opened a bookshop in Covent Garden in an effort to take control over the distribution of her writing and believing that she could survive off of her reputation and with her limited mostly female readership. Her success, however, was short-lived. The shop closed in less than a year. Her entrepreneurial ambitions were troubled by the “economic imbalance of economic power between the sexes.”<sup>51</sup> She did not enjoy a great deal of success because her appeal to female readers in the reconfigured and diverse public was to a community with increasingly limited power. Thus, although Haywood envisions a way for women to act outside of the prescribed gender roles but within the new gendered economy, *Fantomina* remains a hopeful dream rather than a real possibility. Haywood was unable to combine the production of literary texts and identities and feminine desire with female privatization.

Pope’s criticism of Eliza Haywood in *The Dunciad* exemplifies the troubling position of the public female. He portrays Haywood as a tyrannical artist who forces publishers to compete for her body of work. She asks them to “send on high/ ‘The salient spout, far streaming to the sky” to win the prize of fathering (i.e., publishing) her next book.<sup>52</sup> As Ballaster claims, the elision of “book and author acquires a particularly sexualized overtone” in *The Dunciad* “as Eliza’s ‘works’ represent both her writings and the result of illicit sexual liaisons.”<sup>53</sup> The fear that Haywood can choose with whom to (pro)create because her public position grants her many suitors is apparent in the grotesque imagery Pope uses to criticize her. The image also relies on oppositional understandings

of feminine and masculine social roles and bases these differences in the body. Male publishers are reduced to the image of the phallus and Haywood the awaiting uterus.

This is a far cry from Lyly's non-oppositional vision of love and his attempts to deal with heterosexual unions, which were coming to be understood as unions of different bodies, within a rhetoric that prefers likeness. Within such a paradigm, heterosexual sex is unrepresentable and unrepresented in *Gallathea*. In *The Country Wife*, the sex in the sexual intrigues takes place off-stage. In the famous china scene, china implies sex. On-stage, china stands in for the sex that happens off-stage. In this way, the play also foregrounds relationships of likeness: Horner's relationships with other men, the coterie of ladies, the relationships between Margery, Alithea and Lucy, and Sparkish's relationships with Harcourt and Pinchwife. All of these relationships, however, are set inside of a differentiating witty aesthetic that informs the relationships and their significance. Horner's relationship with Pinchwife through Margery represents the public importance of male homosociality as founded on secretive heterosexual relationships through cuckoldry. While *The Country Wife* distinguishes between public/masculine and private/feminine, it is also concerned with the pliancy of, and within, those definitions.

Haywood's public self-protection through fictional dissembling and Fantomina's parallel preservation of her reputation through fictional deceit illustrate an attempt at pliancy within a similar gender dichotomy. The great lengths Haywood goes to to protect herself from criticism for her public femininity and Fantomina's missing body from the text imply the recognition of the systemic threats to the expression of feminine desire as well as an acceptance of the system that perpetuates them. Haywood and *Fantomina*



represent a naturalization of gendered characteristics; private is a part of femaleness rather than femininity. Thus, Haywood adheres to the progression during the Restoration and into the eighteenth-century towards a dichotomous thinking about sexuality, structuring masculinity and femininity as part of male and female and corresponding parts that could not be the same; whatever is masculine cannot be feminine and vice versa.<sup>54</sup> Her turn from theatrical performance to print performance marks her acceptance of such a system, because her interpretation of the function of the emerging novel and its ability to appeal to the discrete interests of its audience relies on the domestication of the female in the diversified public. According to Haywood's writing in *Fantomina*, theatre is public is masculine and fiction is private is (at least in part) female. Although Haywood proposes a new way to express feminine desire by distinguishing text from naturalized identity, *Fantomina* is a resistance to the private/public and female/male differentiation that contains the ideology within itself.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Michael McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 313.

<sup>2</sup> Aphra Behn, "Sir Patient Fancy," in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Montague Summers, (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967), 4: 7.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Market Place, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1992), 110.

<sup>5</sup> Gallagher, xx.

<sup>6</sup> John Richetti, "Voice and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Haywood to Burney," *Studies in the Novel* 19 (1987): 267.

<sup>7</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discourse Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 97.

<sup>8</sup> Straub, 89.

<sup>9</sup> Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 163.

<sup>10</sup> Tiffany Potter, "The Language of Feminised Sexuality: gendered voice in Eliza Haywood's *Love in Excess* and *Fantomina*," *Women's Writing* 10, No. 1 (2003): 177.

- <sup>11</sup> All quotations from *Fantomina* come from Eliza Haywood, "Fantomina: or, Love in a Maze," in *Popular Fiction by Women 1660-1730: An Anthology*, eds. Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 226-248. All following references will appear as in-text parenthetical references.
- <sup>12</sup> Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (New York: Oxford UP, New York, 2000), 246.
- <sup>13</sup> Helen Thompson, "Plotting Materialism: W. Charleton's *The Ephesian Matron*, E. Haywood's *Fantomina*, and Feminine Consistency," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 2 (2002): 203.
- <sup>14</sup> Straub, 98.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 91, 92.
- <sup>17</sup> Thompson, 207.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.
- <sup>19</sup> Ballaster, 191.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.
- <sup>21</sup> Melissa Mowry, "Eliza Haywood's Defense of London's Body Politic," *SEL* 43, no. 3 (2003): 645-665.
- <sup>22</sup> Straub, 102.
- <sup>23</sup> See Catherine Ingrassia, *Authorship, Commerce and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century England: A Culture of Paper Credit*, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1998) and the Ballaster listed above—*Seductive Forms*.
- <sup>24</sup> Peters, 246.
- <sup>25</sup> Ingrassia, 105.
- <sup>26</sup> Ingrassia, 127.
- <sup>27</sup> Peters, 240, 245.
- <sup>28</sup> Eliza Haywood, "Anti-Pamela: Memoirs of the Life of a Lady," in *The Pamela Controversy: Criticisms and Adaptations of Samuel Richardson's Pamela, 1740-1750*, eds. Thomas Keymer and Peter Sabor, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001) 3:1.
- <sup>29</sup> Peters., 53.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.
- <sup>31</sup> Ingrassia, 84.
- <sup>32</sup> "And the Editor of these sheets will have his end, if it inspires a laudable emulation in the minds of any worthy persons, who may thereby entitle themselves to the rewards, the praises, and the blessings, by which PAMELA was so deservedly distinguished."
- <sup>33</sup> Ingrassia, 112.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.
- <sup>35</sup> Ballaster, 158.
- <sup>36</sup> Peters, 291.
- <sup>37</sup> Ingrassia, 86.
- <sup>38</sup> Straub 102, 99.
- <sup>39</sup> Ballaster, 158.
- <sup>40</sup> Gallagher, 9.
- <sup>41</sup> Ingrassia, 104.
- <sup>42</sup> Ballaster, 158.
- <sup>43</sup> Qtd. in Ingrassia, 108.
- <sup>44</sup> Ingrassia, 106-108.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-109.
- <sup>46</sup> Gallagher, xix.
- <sup>47</sup> Ballaster, 160.
- <sup>48</sup> Although this line may read as comical (placing rape beside literary criticism) it is meant to highlight the very serious importance of reputation for an author or actress. A damaged reputation could have severe consequences on a woman's future success and social acceptance.
- <sup>49</sup> Ingrassia, 104.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.
- <sup>52</sup> Alexander Pope, "The Dunciad," in *Poems of Alexander Pope*, vol. 5, ed. James Sutherland, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., (London: Yale UP, 1963), ln. 153-54.

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<sup>53</sup>Ballaster, 160.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 126.

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