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STATUTORY DECLARATION

I declare that I have authored this thesis independently, that I have not used other than the declared sources / resources and that I have explicitly marked all material which has been quoted either literally or by content from the used sources.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations of the Plays

BD.....	The Beau Defeated (Mary Pix)*
CP.....	The Convent of Pleasure (Margaret Cavendish)*
LLS.....	Love's Last Shift (Colley Cibber)
MALM.....	Marriage a-la-Mode (John Dryden)
MG.....	The Mulberry Garden (Charles Sedley)*
R.....	The Rover (Aphra Behn)
Re.....	The Relapse (Sir John Vanbrugh)
W.....	The Wonder (Susanna Centlivre)*

* The versions used do not feature line numbers. When quoted, the act, the scene and the page number are given.

Table of Content

1. Introduction	9
2. Restoration Period	11
2.1 <i>Historical and Political Background</i>	11
2.2 <i>Charles II – Merry Times or Political Fiasco?</i>	14
2.3 <i>Customs and Rites</i>	17
3. Restoration Theatre	21
3.1 <i>Audience and Playhouses</i>	21
3.2 <i>The People on and Behind the Stage</i>	23
3.3 <i>Restoration Comedy</i>	25
3.3.1 <i>Upper Class Entertainment</i>	27
3.3.2 <i>Language-centred Plays</i>	29
3.3.3 <i>Turn Towards Sentimental Comedy</i>	32
4. Women in the Restoration Period	34
4.1 <i>Women's Position in Restoration Society</i>	34
4.2 <i>Becoming Independent: Women and Work</i>	36
4.2.1 <i>First Actresses</i>	37
4.2.2 <i>First Playwrights</i>	39
5. The Plays	42
5.1 <i>Early Plays</i>	42
5.1.1 <i>The Convent of Pleasure (1668)</i>	42
5.1.2 <i>The Mulberry Garden (1668)</i>	43
5.1.3 <i>Marriage a-la-Mode (1673)</i>	44
5.1.4 <i>The Rover (1677)</i>	44
5.2 <i>Later Plays</i>	45
5.2.1 <i>Love's Last Shift (1696)</i>	45
5.2.2 <i>The Relapse (1696)</i>	46
5.2.3 <i>The Beau Defeated (1700)</i>	46
5.2.4 <i>The Wonder (1714)</i>	47
6. Character Analysis	48
6.1 <i>Preliminary Remarks About the Power of Discourse</i>	48

7. Male Characters	50
7.1 <i>For Rakes it is all About Wit and Women</i>	50
7.2 <i>Fashion-obsessed Fops and Fraudulent Fools</i>	57
7.3 <i>Truly and Utterly in Love</i>	62
7.4 <i>Do Friends Stick Together?</i>	64
7.5 <i>The Helping Hand</i>	67
7.6 <i>Fathers-in-law-to-be</i>	68
8. Analysis of Female Characters	71
8.1 <i>The Witty Heroine</i>	71
8.1.2 <i>Sisters by Blood or by Choice</i>	80
8.2 <i>The Damsel in Distress</i>	83
8.3 <i>The Scheming Maid</i>	88
8.4 <i>Foppish and Foolish Women</i>	91
9. Conclusion	94
10. Bibliography	99
Appendix	106
Abstract: English	107
Abstract: German	108
Curriculum Vitae	109

1. Introduction

Up to the 1660s, plays in England were written by men and all characters were impersonated by male actors. As a consequence, the figures on stage portrayed features that the dominant male discourse thought fitting for the respective sex.

However, things changed in the Restoration period, when King Charles II returned to England and the strict puritanism of Cromwell's regime came to an end. Theatres, which had been closed during the Interregnum, reopened – and showed one considerable difference: women were allowed to enter this sphere in a professional function. Female roles were now performed by actresses and the first plays of female playwrights were staged.

The Restoration Period was a time of great political, cultural and social change. As playwright Colley Cibber lets his character Amanda explain in the play *Love's Last Shift*: “[...] ‘tis as hard a matter, now-/ adays, for a Woman to know how to converse/ with Men, as for a Man to know when to draw/ his Sword” (LLS III.I.33-35).

It is this time of men and women writing and acting side by side for the first time in England that will be looked at in detail. This paper analyses the way selected male and female Restoration playwrights treated gender in their work. It shall be explored to what extent the reappearing stock characters are different from one another. The rake, for instance, is known for his libertine lifestyle and his womanising. In Aphra Behn's *The Rover* the rake is called Willmore; his equivalent in Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* is Loveless – but what character features do these two figures really share and in what way do they differ? For this endeavour, eight plays are analysed and the appearing characters compared. Furthermore, the thesis examines what impact the playwright's own sex as well as the time of the play's creation had on the depiction of gender in the plays.

For the analysis, a representative sample of eight Restoration plays was compiled. On the one hand, plays by well-known Restoration playwrights such

as Aphra Behn or John Dryden were chosen. On the other hand, the thesis also analyses comedies that are discussed less frequently like Mary Pix's *The Beau Defeated* or Charles Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden* as well as comedies that do not fit all the stereotypical features of Restoration Comedy such as Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*.

The earliest play discussed was written in 1668, the youngest one in 1714. Roughly speaking, the Restoration era extends over a period of 50 years. The first part of the period saw more indecent and immoral action on stage. In the latter part of the period, morality became more important again. For this reason, four of the analysed plays were chosen from the early phase, four from the later phase. Furthermore, of the four plays of each phase, two comedies were written by female and two by male playwrights.

In order to have a better understanding of the characters and issues appearing in the plays, the thesis starts with a historical background of the Restoration Period (Chapter 2). This is followed by a discussion of Restoration Comedy (Chapter 3). Moreover, as this thesis focuses on the differences (and similarities) of women and men, Chapter 4 focuses on alterations the Restoration Period saw for women. The practical part of the thesis, then, starts with an overview of the eight plays analysed (Chapter 5). After that, the different manifestations of the stock characters are discussed and compared (Chapter 6, 7 and 8).

In the conclusion, the question will be answered, whether the gender of the playwright plays a decisive role in the depiction of the characters, whether the attitude towards gender roles changed in the course of time or whether the individual attitude of the writer most influence his or her depiction of gender.

2. Restoration Period

The date 1660 was a year of great importance in English history. It marked the end of the Commonwealth of England and, consequently, the accession of Charles II to the throne, an event that is referred to as *Restoration*. In addition, this term does not only stand for re-establishing the monarchy, but also for the reign of Charles II altogether.

While the return of the king is generally agreed on as being the starting point of the Restoration age, historians have different opinions about the period's ending. Some scholars link the Restoration period only to Charles II and, thus, see his death in 1685 as the endpoint (e.g. Miller). Others also include the reign of his successor, James II. According to this theory, the Restoration period lasts until 1688, when William of Orange and Mary take over in the course of the Glorious Revolution (e.g. Haan). Still other scholars stretch the age until 1714, when the accession of George I marks the end of the Stuart period (e.g. Maurer).

2.1 Historical and Political Background

While it was no exceptional occurrence that a king was overthrown and sent into exile, it was indeed unusual that a monarch was called back to the throne after his father had been beheaded about a decade earlier.

After the execution of Charles I in 1649, England was declared a Commonwealth, or "Free State" (Firth 227), and was to stay so for the next eleven years. The House of Lords was abolished along with the sovereign; the Anglican Church lost its status as National Church. Allegedly, power now lay with the Council of State; however, the real person in power was Oliver Cromwell, backed up by the army. Ironically, it was to be this man who spoke thus vehemently against monarchy that would eventually act like a king himself, under the deceptive name of Lord Protector.

At the beginning of the Commonwealth, Cromwell proved an eager and ambitious general for the English parliament. He conquered first Ireland and

then Scotland, where Charles's son, Charles II, had retreated to and was recognised as proper king (Haan 183). In both attacks, Cromwell proceeded with brutal strength. A year after Cromwell had defeated the Scots in the Battle of Dunbar, Charles, who did not want to surrender thus quickly, moved one more time against Cromwell and the English. However, when he was beaten in Worcester, he escaped to France (see Haan 183).

Impatient and animated with religious spirit, Cromwell returned to England with his triumphant army. He became more and more dissatisfied with the parliament. He was only able to work with them by restricting their authority. His issue, according to Edmund Ludlow, was thus 'simple': "I am [...] as much for a government by consent as any man, but where shall we find that consent?" (Ludlow 217). The Lord Protector merely accepted consent to his opinion. As a result, he entered the parliament violently in 1653 and dissolved it (Haan 184). He slowly seized power and started calling himself "Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland" (Maurer 158). Yet, as he did not want to govern solely without any representatives from the common people, he called a new parliament into being; the so-called Nominated Parliament or Parliament of the Saints that only consisted of members who Cromwell approved of (see Concise Encyclopaedia 43).

Being a strict Puritan, Cromwell slowly eradicated almost all means of pleasure and entertainment from the public sphere. He aimed at a "Reformation of Manners" (Firth 342) and tried to achieve this by banning things and actions, which were much enjoyed by the people of that time. That way, horseracing, cock-fighting or swearing were forbidden (Hausser 699). Additionally, he also forbade any kind of work, action, indeed nearly any kind of movement on Sunday, the holy day of the week (Firth 344) and even closed down the theatres. Cromwell took particularly radical actions against supporters of the king. Royalists were banished and "many of them were ruined by fine" (Ogg 10).

The situation became even worse when Oliver Cromwell died in September 1658 and his son Richard turned out not to be able to follow in his father's footsteps. Richard's insufficiency soon led to a loss of support from the army. The generals Lambert and Fleetwood eventually forced Richard Cromwell to abdicate and summoned the Rump Parliament again (Maurer 160). In a next

step, the parliament decided to restore monarchy and ask Charles to resume office as king, if he agreed to the Declaration of Breda, whereby enemies of his father, Charles I, would be pardoned (exceptions would only be made with those that had committed regicide) and religious tolerance would be assured (Pastoor & Johnson 100). Accepting these constraints, Charles II returned to the throne, the royalists found their way back and the Church of England became National Church again.

The majority of the public welcomed the king. Despite their differences, Royalists and Parliamentarians stood side by side, greeting him “with a degree of unanimity and joy which had not been seen in living memory” (Miller 13). In his famous diary, Samuel Pepys, a naval administrator and later member of parliament (MP), wrote that on that day “[t]he Shouting and joy expressed by all [was] past imagination” (Pepys, vol.1: 66). Pepys also gave an account of the king’s birthday that took place four days later: “the people [were] going to make a bonfire for the joy of the day [...] and had some guns which they [gave] fire to at my Lord’s coming by” (Pepys, vol.1: 68). It appears that a large majority of the English saw the return of the king as the starting point for a new, more tolerant era. Ogg even claims that Charles II took English kingship to its greatest moment of power; he returned to England “on the crest of a great wave[,] which [swept] away every vestige of republicanism or political experiment” (Ogg 139).

Charles II had high expectations to live up to. The parliament wanted a king who was “strong enough to fulfil his responsibilities to his people, but not strong enough to oppress them” (Miller 58). At the same time, Charles was “a stranger to his kingdom” (Miller 14), when he ascended the throne. He had neither knowledge nor experience about the institution he was going to direct. He had been only twelve years of age, when the Civil War broke out; the following years were riddled with the commotion of the war, the death of his father and the hardship of flight. Miller assumes that the “ill-tempered disputes and criticism in Parliament” (Miller 64) were probably not helpful to alter his attitude.

At the same time, Charles was confronted with two major crises quite at the beginning of his career. In 1665, the Great Plague killed about 70.000 to 100.000 people (Wright 234). In the following year, another tragedy took place:

On September 2nd 1666, a fire started in Thomas Farriner's bakery in Pudding Lane that spread rapidly and eventually become known as the Great Fire of London that destroyed large parts of the city (Encyclopaedia Britannica 536a).

Notwithstanding, Charles accession to the throne was accompanied by a few positive occurrences. To begin with, economic conditions turned out to be rather advantageous. The population number reached a plateau and, thus, the crop supply seemed assured (Miller 56); nourishment even became a little cheaper (Haan 191). Concurrently, real wages began to increase and no "permanent tax on land" was imposed (Miller 56f). At the same time, the capitalistic system slowly found its way into the country and London turned into a commercial city.

When Charles II died in 1684, he did not have a legitimate son. Hence, his brother James II became king. James, however, managed to quickly incur the hatred of parliament and the common people. Due to his inability to collaborate with parliament and, worse, his being a devout Catholic, he was not tolerated for a long time. The parliament intervened once again and turned to his daughter Mary's husband, the Dutch governor William, for help. The parliament made it clear to William that "no more time [must be] lost", since there was great dissatisfaction with "religion, liberties and properties" (Williams 8ff) and the whole population – gentry as well as nobility – would call for a change.

Thus, in November 1688, after thorough preparations, William set sail and anchored at Torbay. James did not realise the danger at first; and when he realised it, it was already too late (see Maurer 174f). In a desperate attempt James tried to confront his son-in-law, but he did not succeed. Soldiers deserted him, and James, who started negotiations, did not finish them, but fled (Maurer 175). As a consequence, Mary and William of Orange took over as joint regents.

2.2 Charles II – Merry Times or Political Fiasco?

In her introduction to Christopher Falkus' book about Charles II, British historian Antonia Fraser raises the question whether the king possibly had "too good a press from the English public" (Falkus 7). She starts the discussion whether the golden days of king Charles's reign should be called into question and "sterner

judgements” (Falkus 7) applied. At the end of the very same introduction, however, she adds for consideration that the harsh evaluations by some historians do not do Charles justice either, for – according to Fraser – “they allow too little for the healing balm of this affable monarch at a most difficult period in our history” (Falkus 8).

Opinions about king Charles II differ significantly. While the general public appears to have a high opinion of him, historians often take the king to pieces. This considerable difference can be explained by the fact that the first group analyses Charles with regard to his social skills, while the others scrutinise his political actions. Socially speaking, Charles was generally thought of as successful, witty and charming; politically, however, he failed to deal with state business in a similarly successful manner.

On the one hand, Charles II is described as likeable, good fun, even “the source of life in the State” (Ogg 139) or “a very wild gallant on the throne” (Krutch 28). Correspondingly, the playwright Samuel Tuke emphasised Charles’s open and merry attitude. He describes him as

somewhat taller than the middle stature of Englishmen; so exactly formed that the most curious eye cannot find any error in his shape. [...] His motions are so easy and graceful that they do very much recommend his person when he either walks, dances, plays at pall mall, at tennis, or rides the great horse, which are his usual exercises. To the gracefulness of his deportment may be joined his easiness of access, his patience in attention, and the gentleness both in the tune and style of his speech; [...] (Sir Samuel Tuke qtd. in Ogg 149).

These and other testimonies give the impression that England went from being a ‘dried up country’ under Cromwell to a ‘blossoming garden’ of joy under Charles. Indeed, his reign provided great changes and stood in sharp contrast to Cromwell’s austere Puritan commands. Where Cromwell was abstinent, Charles wallowed in vice, especially with regard to his sexual desires. Already on his first night as restored king he is said to have taken a mistress – the first of many (Young 7); that also led to his having more than a dozen illegitimate children. Backscheider observes that from his pompous entrance onwards, Charles took advantage of every occasion for open self-display and “these events deliberately reached toward all levels of society and carefully included frivolous amusements” (Backscheider 9).

Additionally, Charles II brought entertainment back. He encouraged playwriting; he made it fashionable again.

He led fashion, danced, and was an enthusiastic sportsman and regular theatregoer. He encouraged his musicians to introduce more gaiety into church services and his churchmen to adopt the vestments and rituals so abhorrent to the Puritans. [...] Under his patronage all the arts flourished; [...]. (Falkus 72)

Being a great patron of the arts in general and theatre in particular, he re-opened theatres and, furthermore, introduced women onto the stage.

Especially after the arid years of the interregnum, people indulged in this new era of pleasure and fun. For the restored royalists, “sexual licence – and drunkenness and blasphemous oaths – almost became a political duty” (Bateson 28); illegitimate children were by no means an exception. However, not everyone had the possibility to wallow in vice, as Rubik argues, “[t]he sexual freedom so often taken as typical of the time was, in fact, very much limited to Court circles” (Rubik 17).

Having said that, Charles might have been successful as king of the hearts, but he clearly was not efficient with regard to politics. Time would show that Charles was not able to “fulfil the manifold and often contradictory expectations which his return aroused” (Miller 12-13). For the society of that time expected a king to “achieve glory for his nation, defend true religion [...], and protect the secular well-being of his subjects” (Harris par 7). Charles II did not prove very successful in either of those requirements.

For one thing, there was a lot of tension between Charles and parliament. The Members of Parliament might have put a lot of commitment into restoring the monarchy; but they had their own agenda. Charles, however, did not want to obtain a subordinate role. He accepted the *Act of Uniformity* that would “impos[e] conformity” (Miller 49), i.e. the sole-reign of the Anglican Church, only at the beginning. According to Miller, Charles did not have a problem with dissenters; in his opinion, they were theoretically peaceful, “but goaded into revolt by persecution” (Miller 49). Much to the displeasure of the parliament he issued a *Declaration of Indulgence* in 1672, whereby Catholics as well as other dissenters would be exempted from penalty. However, Tim Harris points out that another aim of this act could have been “to enhance the authority of the Crown by [...] making dissenters dependent upon royal grace for relief” (Harris pars. 5).

Also in the matter of foreign policy, Charles II soon proved infamous and inglorious. Harris describes Charles's war against the Dutch (1664-1667) as going "humiliatingly badly" (Harris pars. 7). Even when allied with the French, the war from 1672 to 1674 "scarcely went any better" (Harris pars. 7). This Third Anglo-Dutch war was a consequence of the Secret Treaty of Dover, where Charles II promised the French to help defeat the Dutch. In return, England received subsidies and military help in case of need from France (see Ogg 346ff, Miller 69). However, the majority of the people were not particularly fond of this close relationship. Especially France's strict Catholicism was a *bête noire* to the English. It has further been argued that Charles tried to introduce absolutism, taking Louis XIV as an example. Some critics view the England of that time as mere appendage to the Sun King (Maurer 169), while other scholars doubt that Charles "seriously intended to make England's government like that of France" (Miller 64). At any rate, a general tendency towards France cannot be denied. Charles's conversion to Catholicism on his deathbed typifies the relationship.

Charles II was not only a fan of France as regards the regime, but also on a more personal level: He had a partiality for French mistresses. One of them was Louise de K roualle, who was – to make matters worse – also Catholic. Although Harris sees no evidence that Charles's mistresses „exercise[d] an undue influence on royal policy“ (Harris par 7), statements like the Earl of Rochester's poem *A Satyr on Charles II*, where he writes that "[h]is sceptre and his prick are of a length / But she may sway the one that plays th'other" (Rochester 10-11) ¹ illustrate the general dislike of Charles's choice of mistresses.

2.3 Customs and Rites

The Restoration Period was a time of great disparities. Essentially, it "reinforced the social order that had existed before the civil war, in which wealth was very unequally distributed and the wealthy few ruled the many" (Miller 52). Along with that, there was a big gap between the city and countryside. London, on the one

¹ Apparently due to this poem, Rochester had to flee from court in 1674, when he accidentally delivered it to the king.

hand, was seen as the place *en vogue*, and rated highly, especially among upper-class circles. The countryside, on the other hand, was thought of as dull and insipid. However, the majority of the people lived in the countryside, in small villages or little market towns and were not properly educated. Additionally, due to poor ways of transportation, the major parts of society had to rely on “local self-sufficiency” (Miller 52).

Likewise, there was a large disparity between the north and the south of England. The south included the capital, the Court and the two big universities, Oxford and Cambridge, as well as the houses of the more important amongst the peers. Simply put, it united money, prestige and knowledge. The north, on the other hand, was poorer, less important and generally uneducated. It is quite representative that “[f]ew Englishmen of the south ever paid a voluntary visit to the north [...],indeed, that] Northern England was for long denied even sight of her kings” (Ogg 52).

The London of the seventeenth century can be described as a “densely packed community” (Ogg 94) that was divided into twenty-six wards. It was growing very quickly. Not even fifty years later, the “population numbered a million, and the houses stretched from Blackwall to Chelsea” (Bryant 13). The Thames was regarded as the main route for transportation and it is said that in 1676 there were “2,000 men plying their wherries on the Thames” (Ogg 95). However, in spite of a quick rise of trade and overseas shipping, the economy largely stayed agricultural (Miller 52).

The city was loud and smelly. Merchants were advertising their products while footmen were calling on the public to clear space for their masters. Even at night, the city was exposed to extremely high noise levels. Along with the ever-present din, there was also the issue of dirt and stench. “Rivers of filth coursed down the centre of each street” (Bryant 16). It did not help the city’s cleanliness that there were no public toilets. While the polite “would step aside to an alehouse, those less so to the street wall” (Bryant 17). The streets were only roughly paved, which now and then lead to pedestrians being knocked down and killed by drays or coaches (Ogg 96).

Yet, the aristocracy preferred this busy and eventful scenery of the city. Nevertheless, they also enjoyed nature and fresh air and, thus, a common

leisure time amusement consisted in walking in the parks, “green places to which the Londoners repaired whenever their occasions allowed them” (Bryant 38).

As already mentioned, London was the city to be; the place of money and nobility and also the place where “fashion was dictated” (Ogg 97). What was the fashion in London, on the other hand, was often imported from France. For, despite the general antipathy towards the French, there was also a certain appeal. Be it clothes, perfumes or furniture; Paris dictated what was en vogue in London. Ogg adds for consideration that “Charles’s Court was much more French than English” (97). Also Pepys noted that “my wife this day put on first her French gown, called a Sac, which becomes her very well” (Pepys vol.2: 637). Concerning men, wigs became fashionable. Charles (who also had the nickname *masquerading monarch*) is said to have worn a wig as soon as he discovered his first grey hair. The Duke followed the lead (see Pepys vol.1: 420). Funnily enough, the following day, Pepys wrote that he had the “perrywigg-maker [...] cut off my haire”, which all his maids thought did “become me; though Jane was mightily troubled for my parting of my own haire” (Pepys vol.1: 421). The antiquary Anthony Wood, a contemporary of Pepys, on the other hand, was rather amused by the fact that he seemed to live in “a strange effeminate age when men strive to imitate women in their apparell” (qtd. in Ribeiro 89).

Next to the theatre, men frequently visited the pubs. A good deal of the time was spent drinking. Indeed, the English of that time were “[d]rinking so much, [that they] usually ate fewer meals than [the English people do nowadays]” (Bryant 104). Another popular locality was the coffeehouse. In his *Collection for the improvement of husbandry and trade*, John Houghton explains that

“Coffee houses [...] make all sorts of people sociable; the rich and the poor meet together [...]. It improves arts, merchandize and all other knowledge [...]. Indeed he thought that] coffee-houses had improved useful knowledge as much as the universities have” (Houghton 132 qtd. in Ogg 101).

Especially if one was part of the upper ten thousand (and ideally also male), one had manifold ways of spending one’s time. For at that time, pastime activities very much depended on one’s social status and background. There were “endless parties” (Stone; Stone 218), music and dancing. Trips to Bath to

enjoy the Spa also became more popular. Generally speaking, in the course of the century, the English moved “from grassroots folk culture to commercial based popular culture” (Forgeng 169).

3. Restoration Theatre

Drama is a matter of seeing and being seen. Like painting, theatre posits a subject viewer and an object seen. Like painting, it gives the artist power to organize his perceptions into 'sights' and to impose them on the second viewer, the audience. It is this power which our culture traditionally reserves for men. (Burns 123)

3.1 Audience and Playhouses

It is said that at Charles's return, "no one shouted louder than the theatre folk" (Bevis 25) – who could finally pursue their passion again. In 1660, after being shunned for about eighteen years, theatres officially resumed their activity.² In the fifty years after the Restoration, about 400 new theatrical productions were staged in London (Kewes 13). Nancy Klein Maguire claims that the re-opening resonated with an "unmitigated victory yell for the Royalists" (Klein Maguire 3), since the Restoration theatre was mainly aimed at the wealthy class. Yet, despite the regular presence of the king, the theatre was a friendly and informal place. Often, to the appal of foreigners, men and women sat next to each other in the box, "sometimes [even] on one another's knees" (Bryant 36). According to Thomas & Hare, diarist Samuel Pepys found the Restoration audience "was often fractious and noisy, deeply aware of social rank, but generally warm-hearted and well informed" (Hare & Thomas 175).

The plays performed on stage were by no means the only reason for attending the playhouse (also because many theatregoers saw one play several times); it was about seeing and being seen, for going to the theatre primarily constituted a social event. Conveniently, the seating was arranged in such a way that each person had a "splendid view of other playgoers" (Langhans 12). Moreover, the auditoriums, as Marvin Carlson noted, were "better illuminated than the stages", so that quite absurdly it was easier for the actors to see the audience than the other way round (Carlson 140 qtd. in Payne 30). Aphra Behn in her prologue to *The Rover*, quite fittingly described the situation:

As for the Author of this Coming Play,
I ask't him what he thought fit I shou'd say

² There was no total standstill during the interregnum theatre-wise, theatrical performances just had to take place in very small and very private circles. Besides these highly secretive presentations, even masques were held at the Inner Temple (Braun 37).

In thanks for your good Company today:
He call'd me Fool, And said it was well known,
You came not here for our sakes, but your own. (Behn 36-40)

Shortly after the re-opening of the theatres, a couple of companies emerged as well, like Beeston (Salisbury Court), Rhodes (Cockpit), and Mohun (Red Bull). However, the two leading playhouses were the King's and the Duke's Company, who were lead by Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant. Thomas Killigrew was manager of the King's Company that had the king himself as a patron and was based in Drury Lane. Sir William Davenant was the manager of the Duke's Company, which had the Duke of York, the later King James II as a patron and was based in Covent Garden. Sir William Davenant proved to be a very "competent and energetic manager, living at his theatre and running it personally until his death in 1668" (Braun 48). Through clever tactics³ Killigrew and Davenant managed to "gain control of the entire theatre world" (Braun 40): they were granted two royal patents.

Although Davenant and Killigrew were in charge of the theatres, they did not own the troupes (just as it had been the case in Shakespearean times); each of the two companies "had a permanent cadre of performers who were engaged for the theatrical season", that lasted from September until June (Langhans 4).

From the beginning onwards, there was a strong rivalry between the two companies. Younger actors, like Thomas Betterton or Elizabeth Barry, usually decided to join Davenant's theatre; the more experienced ones generally chose the King's company (Roach 32). Eventually it turned out that the Duke's company had established itself as the better one (Braun 50). In 1682, they merged into the United Company, which was then led by lawyer Christopher Rich together with the entrepreneur Thomas Skipwith. Some actors were dissatisfied with the existence of only one company and the incompetence of Rick and Skipwith and, hence, formed their own Cooperative Company (Brunkhorst 42). This company had its theatre in Lincoln's Inn Field and was led by the famous actor Thomas Betterton, and – for the first time – included female shareholders, namely, Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle (Mann & Mann 2).

The theatres of these times were indoor theatres. They featured an apron stage, which refers to "an acting area forward of the curtain, thrusting well into

³ Allegedly both Killigrew and Davenant used the fact that they were on good terms with the king for their own use (see Braun).

the audience space, with permanent proscenium entrance doors on each side” (Langhans 7f). Thus, the stage was situated in the midst of the audience, being surrounded by the spectators from three sides. Through its physical closeness, this new stage suggested an emotional proximity. Langhans adds that this kind of forestage “was ideal for plays where words were important”, and that for playwrights writing drama that was “highly verbal and full of wit” (Langhans 8). At that time, scenery was not constructed three-dimensionally, but “painted in perspective, giving the illusion of depth” (Langhans 9). Furthermore, theatres did not only use scenery, but also machines in order to enable aerial flight, simulate ocean waves, allow appearances from below as well as above and other effects (Langhans 10). Critic John Dennis claimed that there were two particular novelties in Restoration theatre; namely, “Scenes and Women; which added probability to the Dramatick Actions and made everything look more naturally” (Dennis qtd. in Payne 27). The consequences of the appearance of the latter will be discussed in the following chapter (see Chapter 4).

3.2 The People on and Behind the Stage

Acting in Restoration England was a hard job and offered only little safety. According to Joseph Roach, actors and actresses worked about two hundred days a year per season, which was approximately eight or nine months long (Roach 19). It was further expected that an actor be capable of portraying a large variety of tragic and comic roles (Thomas & Hare 127). Generally speaking, actors earned about fifty shillings⁴ a week; actresses, on the other hand, only thirty (Payne 17).

In the course of the Restoration period, actors and actresses gained some kind of celebrity status. For the first time, not only royals became “popularly recognized public figures” (Roach 20). Quoting satirist Thomas Brown, the theatre became an “Enchanted Island”, where the people on stage were transformed into “Demi-Gods, and Goddesses” (Brown, 1700, qtd. in Roach 19). As a result, playwrights developed characters “with the aptitudes and attitudes of particular actors and actresses” already in mind (Roach 33). Furthermore, it has been argued that Restoration theatre was not a literary one,

⁴ 20 shillings were a pound (see Bloy pars.2)

but one focused on actors, due to the “intimate and complex relationship between the human beings on stage and in the house” (Jones 133).

As already mentioned, during the reign of Charles II, women were allowed on stage for the first time. This had an impact on the plays as well as on the atmosphere in the theatre houses. The playhouses were now filled with titillation and eroticism. Fiona Ritchie sees “[t]he fixation of female sexuality found in theatrical prologues and epilogues of the period 1660 to 1700” as a logical consequence of this shift in gender roles (Ritchie 1988: 133).

The presence of female actors also entailed the creation and rise of certain theatrical features. Thus, bed scenes became more popular, just as the cross-dressing or so-called ‘breeches-roles’, where women appear in trousers. The well-known actresses Nell Gwynn or Anne Bracegirdle are said to have received “popular acclaim” in early versions of these roles (Bush-Bailey 82a). According to Ritchie, these parts were used to “objectify the actress and pander to the audience’s voyeurism” (Ritchie 2014: 12). Gilly Bush-Bailey interprets this technique quite differently. By referring to Aphra Behn’s comedy *The Rover* she claims that the device was used “to disrupt conventional representations of female behaviour and challenge attitudes to female sexual desire” (Bush-Bailey 82a).

The Restoration period did not only feature the first actresses but also the first female playwrights whose work was to be performed in a theatre⁵. At first, it might seem surprising that women’s plays were not riddled with emancipatory speeches and unusual plots that would hint at their unfair treatment in real life. However, as Samuel Johnson wrote for the opening of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, London, in 1747, one must bear in mind that

the stage but echoes back the public voice;
the drama’s law the drama’s patron give,
For we that live to please, must please to live. (Chalmers 578a)

Drama is a type of literature that tendentially is the least rebellious for it hinges largely on the acceptance of the theatre directors or patrons in order to be performed. However, female writers like Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre

⁵ Naturally, women had been writing plays before. But up until the Restoration period their plays were only staged in private circles, or they used a male pseudonym.

tended to address the topic of male supremacy and the inequality of the sexes in their prefaces and prologues (see Rubik 36, 94).

Kewes argues that the general situation of playwrights after the Restoration was worse than before the interregnum. To begin with, there were fewer theatrical venues – with first the Duke’s and the King’s, from 1682 onwards, the United Company only (see Kewes 18). Moreover, there was the custom of the third night benefit. Companies were under no obligation to buy the script with cash on hand, but the author obtained the revenue (deducting house charges) of the third night, the so-called “benefit night” (see Kewes 19). If, however, the play did not make it until the third night, the author would go away empty-handed.

Roach points out that quite a few plays actually were only staged for a few performances due to the “demands of audiences for novelty and variety” (Roach 33). Thus, despite the fact that tragedy was the more distinguished form, playwrights were motivated to try their luck with comedies, since the comical plays were preferred by large parts of the theatregoers and, thus, a longer run of the play was to be expected (Corman 2013: x)

In *The Revels History of Drama in English*, Marion Jones argues that Restoration drama was “extrovert and volatile”, satisfied with itself and life in general, and “relishing a heightened picture of both – even nobler in tragedy, even glossier in comedy” (Jones 133). Since this thesis focuses on the portrayal of characters in various Restoration comedies, other dramatic forms of that period will not be described in more detail.

3.3 Restoration Comedy

With the term *Restoration Comedy*, an immediate link is made between an historical event and a cultural phenomenon. This designation indicates that this specific genre is tightly knit with social and political developments of the respective time. The period predominantly featured a comic genre that was later often referred to as the *Comedy of Manners*. However, as Robert Hume emphasises, “this oversimplification will not do”; since playwrights in the Restoration period did “not work to a tidy formula” (Hume 1973: 302b). This era,

indeed, features various forms of comedy, including wit comedies, comedies of intrigue, farce or satire.

Furthermore, the playwrights themselves had different opinions about what comedy was and/ or should achieve: the main debate circled around humour versus wit. On the one hand, Thomas Shadwell, who thought in line with Ben Jonson, claimed in his preface to *The Humourists* that “[f]igures of Vice and Folly [should be rendered] so ugly and detestable” that the theatregoer would “hate and despise them” (Shadwell 184). On the other hand, Dryden, according to Brian Corman, retorted that causing laughter through folly is “the lowest of human emotions” and that wit comedy, by contrast, “teaches by positive example” and should thus be preferred (Corman 53).

In addition, the positions of critics regarding the quality of this type of comedy differ greatly, too. While L. C. Knight calls Restoration comedy “trivial, gross and dull” (Knights 19), Joseph Wood Krutch describes it as “as immoral, as it was brilliant” (Krutch 1). Due to its sexual innuendos, it raises the temper of the audience as well as of the critics. In contrast to its predecessors of the Elizabethan age, Henry George Nettleton calls Restoration drama “artificial and imitative” (Nettleton 3) and says that it “lacks the spontaneity and originality of Elizabethan drama” (4).

Restoration Comedy was influenced by Carolean and Jacobean stage plays; particularly by the Fletcherian plays and Ben Jonson’s *Comedy of Humour*. Although John Dryden saw Jonson as “the greatest man of the last age” (Ker 42f) as well as “the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had” (Ker 81), he regarded the best of Jonson’s comic personae as “mechanic people” and, in fact, regarded Shakespeare as “the greater wit” (Ker 82). Edward Burns analyses the situation as follows: “Jonson was admired, but his ‘school’ was at an end” (Burns 2). Bonamy Dobrée further contends that the *Comedy of Manners* – as the main representative of the Restoration period – handled personalities in a lighter, defter way than the *Comedy of Humours* (Dobrée 31) and Joseph Wood Krutch adds that Restoration Comedy took its realism from the *Comedy of Humours* and “hints in the handling of dialogue” from the romantic plays of the time (Krutch 7). Additionally, Restoration comedy was influenced by the Spanish and French stage, especially Molière’s

comedies. Burns sees the differences of Restoration comedy in contrast to its two competing forms, the Spanish play and tragi-comic romance, not only in its “contemporary London setting”, but also in “the social and psychological contingencies that accrue from this limited and apparently contradictory claim on the real” (Burns 15).

The comic plays of Restoration age “had a vogue of approximately fifty years” (Burns 1) – from 1660 until about 1710. Often, when talking about Restoration comedy-playwrights, a few famous men are mentioned, like George Etherege, William Wycherley, William Congreve, John Vanbrugh and George Farquhar. By deliberately choosing also plays from other authors (like Mary Pix, Margaret Lucas Cavendish and Charles Sedley), this paper tests the canon that was established by earlier (male) critics.

In simplified terms, this type of comedy is made up of wit and intrigue. It is usually written in prose and often features multiple plots. The scene is usually set in contemporary London and takes place in parks, playhouses or bed chambers. It further makes excessive use of masks, disguises and cross-dressing. The *dramatis personae* are people from the upper class. The Restoration Comedy features certain stock characters; a witty, licentious rake that usually falls for a charming and also witty young heroine, a cuckolded husband, a naïve damsel in distress and – not to be forgotten – a fop; a smug yet stupid man, often conversing in French to show off his worldliness that is continuously ridiculed by the rake. Critics tend to divide Restoration comedy in an early and a later part, due to a change in tone by the turn of the century; generally speaking, the later plays feature less wit and milder rakes (e.g. Corman 57).

3.3.1 Upper Class Entertainment

Sarup Singh contends that the appearance of high society is a feature of the new comedy. Restoration comedy relates to “the gallantries, intrigues and affectations of fashionable men and women”, and its major goal “is to underline the distinctive features of the culture it reflects” (Singh 195). Lionel Charles Knights adds that in the years that followed the Restoration, “English literature, English culture, was ‘upper-class’ to an extent that it had never been before”

(Knights 4). However, it has to be noted that the audience was not entirely made up of high society; also servants and middle-class members attended the plays.

Nettleton states that “[u]nder the Merry Monarch drama found its most characteristic expression in comedy” (Nettleton 72). As previously stated, the licentious way of life of Charles’s court was a natural reaction to the preceding strict regime of Oliver Cromwell. While a few years earlier, every play, however harmless, was prohibited, Charles now encouraged them, however naughty they might be.

Restoration comedy was a form of entertainment not only from the upper class, but also for the upper class. For a start, the audience consisted mainly of people from high society; also the playwrights themselves very often were such “men of fashion” (Krutch 39), who were some of the most frivolous people from the era. Writers like George Etherege and Charles Sedley were known as notorious libertines; together with people such as John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, or Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, they formed the so-called “Merry Gang” (see Dickie 143, Barker-Benfield 38), a group of rakish courtiers that combined intellectual ambition with heavy drinking. According to Erin Mackie, this synergy of “the illicit and the illustrious, the criminal and the gentleman” (Mackie 39) marked the mentality of the Restoration court.

The most popular one of those writers was the Earl of Rochester; whose scandalous behaviour even led to his being exiled from court several times (Ballaster 205). John Dryden, in his dedication to the play *Marriage a-la-Mode*, explicitly stated that he as well as “the best comic authors of that age [... had] copied the gallantries of courts, the delicacy of expression, and the decencies of behaviour, from [his, Rochester’s] Lordship” (Dryden 3).

According to David Daiches, the development of Restoration comedy illustrates the rise and fall of a “deliberately induced pseudo-courtly ideal” that was present in London at that time, and that was far off from the “true courtly ideal of the Elizabethans” (Daiches 553). Furthermore, Montgomery argues that the plays portray the lifestyle of an upper class society, which was “struggling for adjustment in a newly discovered world” (Montgomery 39). Dobrée also notes that great comic eras are usually times of “rapid social readjustment and

general instability, when policy is insecure, religion doubted and being revised, and morality in a state of chaos" (Dobrée 9). The hitherto established "analogical, semi-magical habit of thought" (Munns 143), namely, that God had created the world and placed the human in its midst, was cracking. This was partly a result of the failure of "the traditional modes of government", partly due to "a new confidence in the potential of scientific forms of explanations" (Munns 143). Hence, even male supremacy was no longer taken as indubitable.

The uncertainty of that time, thus, found expression in the drunken and whoring rakes of the plays. Love was displayed in a very down-to-earth way, chivalry was treated as "hypocritical and/ or as a mark of [...] formality practiced by the older generation" (Munns 146). Rakish men, but also women, were usually merely interested in sensual pleasure and marriage was only an option if money was needed. Especially at the beginning of Restoration Comedy, metaphors that compared matrimony to prison and husbands to slaves were very common. Faithfulness in love, particularly in matrimony, was considered a bore; the rakes' appetite was in need of constant new stimulus (Knights 11f). It was all about sex and affairs; the more the merrier. In fact, the more licentiously a hero behaved, "the more completely he was a hero" (Krutch 17). The rakes enjoyed bragging about their philandery and joking about their boring spouses. In his preface to *The Sullen Lovers*, Thomas Shadwell describes the main character as "a Swearing, Drinking, Whoring Ruffian for a Lover, and an impudent ill-bred tomrig for a Mistress" (Shadwell 11). Moreover, in his prologue to *The Relapse*, Sir John Vanbrugh summarises the common feeling about sexual relationships:

This is an Age, where all things we improve,
But most of all, the Art of making Love.
In former days, Women were only won
By Merit, Truth, and constant Service done,
But Lovers now are much more expert grown. [...]
Quick are their Sieges, furious are their Fires,
Fierce their Attacks, and boundless their Desires. (Vanbrugh, 11-19)

3.3.2. Language-centred Plays

Restoration comedy puts a great emphasis on language. This fact can already be seen in the speaking names of the characters. Rakes are called Willmore or Wildish (*The Rover*, *The Mulberry Garden*), fashion-obsessed fops are called

Sir Novelty Fashion or Harry Modish (*Love's Last Shift*, *The Mulberry Garden*) and the woman that enjoys the countryside is called Lady Landsworth (*The Beau Defeated*).

As already mentioned, it can be argued that in Restoration Comedy the witty repartee was even more important than the actual plot. In the Restoration plays, as opposed to the Comedy of Humours, fun is mainly established verbally. Personages are as much characterised by their words as by their actions. While the rake always has a biting remark at hand, the fop of the play makes himself ridiculous – amongst other things – by his excessive use of French vocabulary.

According to the playwright John Dryden, the craftiness of Restoration language was owed to the “improvement of our Wit, Language and Conversation” (Ker 164). After the return of Charles II, the lives of the people – or at least those belonging to the upper class – became freer, and as a consequence thereof, so did the conversation;

the fire of the English wit, which was before stifled under a constrained, melancholy way of breeding, began first to display its force; by mixing the solidity of our nation with the air and gaiety of our neighbours (Ker 176).

Thus, the portrayal of wit is the reigning feature in this kind of play. Wit can be understood as a specific kind of dialogue, a type of witty repartee that aims at evoking laughter on the part of the audience: It consists of original and funny remarks that – according to Wilkinson – are unique in Restoration Comedy. Wilkinson further claims that this kind of exchange does not exist “in the same concentration before 1660 nor after 1700” (497), although he acknowledges some “relics of this type of wit” (498) in the eighteenth century.

In the late seventeenth century, it was quite fashionable to be “vile in language” (Krutch 32). Especially the utterances of the heroes and heroines brimmed with irony and cynicism. Wit overrode decorum; “the intellectual faculties are exalted above the emotional” (Nettleton 4). The wittier a character, the more successful he proved to be in the course of the play.

It is quite clear that people who were able to produce witty remarks and, thus, display some amount of language proficiency were the people in power. Wit was used as a device to establish social superiority. Since it was commonly acknowledged that in order to be able to come up and get away with such utterances, one was in need of a certain amount of intellect, prestige and

contempt for social norms; attributes that were usually reserved for the educated upper class. One needed to know the code, the way wit worked. Bergslund argued that “[a]ny character who attempts to influence, attack, or join the society of the wits, but does not speak its language, cannot possibly succeed.” (371).

Around the 1670s, at the peak of boldness in Restoration times, the plays were riddled with reckless remarks. According to Cecil, the predominant type of raillery was a quick exchange, similar to a contest, whereby one speaker „ruffles slightly the surface of another’s composure, to test his *honnêteté* [his respectability]“ (Cecil 148). In the plays, wit was used by men to compete with their fellow men, but also to woo women – as well as by women to flirt with men.

Furthermore, Wilkinson differentiates between three types of wit. In descending order of their complexity and elaboration, he introduces Railing, Dissembling and Plain Dealing (Wilkinson 498f). Railing, in his understanding, includes all “verbal attempts to establish superiority”, which suggests a kind of battle and competition. Dissembling, on the other hand, would be the deception of others to one’s personal advantage. An example of this kind of wit would be Willmore’s statement in *The Rover*, when he tries to assure Angellica that she does not need to be worried about the other woman, Hellena: “[...] that Gipsy thing, thou mayst as well be Jealous of thy Monkey or Parrot, as of her [...]” (R IV.III.402-404). Thirdly, Plain Dealing is the conveyance of honest sentiments in plain language, for instance, when the witty heroine Olivia in *The Mulberry Garden* tells the rake Wildish: “the first / Time thou anger’st me, I’ll have a Gallant; and the next, make thee a Cuckold” (MG 70).

This feature underlines once more the fact that this kind of drama was from and for an upper class, since humour portrayed through language needs a certain amount of education – on the part of the playwright as well as on the part of the audience. As Singh puts it: In the Restoration period, wit was “cultivated as [...] the most important of social graces” (Singh 202). The dramatist Nathaniel Lee quite fittingly described the situation in his prologue of the play *Gloriana*: “Wit, which was formerly but Recreation / Is now become the Business of a Nation” (Lee 135). Also Dryden in his dedication to *Marriage A La Mode* stated that

“[w]it seems to have lodged itself more nobly in this age than in any of the former” (Dryden 6).

3.3.3 Turn Towards Sentimental Comedy

The end of the seventeenth century proved a difficult situation for theatres in London. This was partly due to events like the Popish Plot or the fact that the new king, William III, was not interested in theatres (see Rubik 57). Furthermore, there was a growing dissatisfaction about the licentiousness of Restoration Comedy amongst the general public. In his play *Country Conversations*, the poet James Wright pointed out that “[p]lays should be [...] Moral Representations, but now most of our New Comedies are become the very Picture of Immorality” (Wright 1694 qtd. in Corder 210).

It was the theologian Jeremy Collier⁶ who initiated a momentous discussion. In 1698, he published the pamphlet *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*. In this writing, he attacked the immorality of Restoration theatre. Collier held the opinion that “[t]he business of Plays [was] to recommend Virtue, and discountenance Vice” (Collier par 2). Contemporary playwrights, however, did not behave accordingly, Collier argued. He then listed the wrong-doings of the literary men:

Their Liberties [...] are intolerable. viz. Their Smuttiness of Expression; Their Swearing, Profainness, and Lewd Application of Scripture; Their Abuse of the Clergy; Their making their Top Characters Libertines, and giving them Success in their Debauchery. This Charge, with some other Irregularities, I shall make good against the Stage, and shew both the Novelty and Scandal of the Practise. (Collier par 2)

Collier’s pamphlet found favour amongst English society; he seemed not to be the only one disliking the current situation. Even William III, whom Collier stood on worst terms with, since the theologian did not acknowledge him as new king, “granted Collier a *nolle prosequi* which rendered him immune from further prosecution” (Corder 210).

In addition, societies for the ‘Reformation of Manners’ that Krutch described as “organizations of enthusiasts” (159) aimed at suppressing the prevailing

⁶ Jeremy Collier was a theologian, to be more precise, a nonjuring clergyman, who refused to “acknowledge the legitimacy of the monarchy of William III and Mary”; he wrote against the new regime and was imprisoned twice (Corder 209).

immorality and profaneness. It was again Collier, however, who showed them how to come up with a “list of charges” against the theatres (Cordner 212). The use of blasphemous language, for instance, became “a criminal offense” (Cordner 213).

In order to please the annoyed moralists, playwrights learned to withhold their biting witticism and the jokes got milder. These more virtuous plays of the early eighteenth century will eventually lead to *Sentimental Comedies*. Early versions of such sentimentalised comedy feature benevolence instead of self-interest and reformed rakes. The heroes were “overtaken by remorse or prevented by scruples” (Krutch 208). Corman observes that the “decline of the rake” is paralleled by “the decline of wit” and further states that the *dramatis personae* possibly are “duller” now, but, on the other hand, “more human and real” (Corman 65). In the *McGraw-Hill Encyclopaedia of World Drama*, Sentimental Comedy is described as a sort of theatre where ordinary human beings are “beset by misfortune, caught up in distressful situations, but ultimately triumphing [...] due to their virtue” (Hochman 254b). The characters should not only be laughed at, but evoke sympathy on the side of the audience (see Krutch 192).

Colley Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift* is regarded as the first sentimentalised Restoration comedy. The change in tone is already noticeable in the prologue, where Cibber wrote:

Wit bears so thin a Crop, this duller Age
We’re forc’d to glean it from the barren Stage:
E’en Players, fledg’d by nobler Pens, take wing
Themselves, and their own rude Composure sing. (Cibber 1-4)

Nettleton further remarks that sentimentality was “carried into comedy by Cibber and Steele” (Nettleton 264), but he sees the origins of sentimental comedy “in the somewhat sentimentalized tragedy of Otway and Southerne” (Nettleton 155). In the *McGraw-Hill Encyclopaedia of World Drama* Richard Steele’s *The Conscious Lover* is mentioned as the “finest example of the type” (Hochman 254b).

The attack on the amorality of Restoration Comedy was accompanied by a rise of the English middle class (see Hochman 254b). The aristocracy did not have a monopoly on theatre and books anymore.

4. Women in the Restoration Period

4.1 Women's Position in Restoration Society

In seventeenth century England, the general opinion prevailed that “men and women had separate functions because God had made men and women differently” (Crawford 6). At the beginning of the Restoration period, women who pursued a profession were risking their honour, since women who published their writing or worked on stage were thought of as immodest. Furthermore, “an immodest woman was considered an unchaste one” (Crawford 216). At that time, religion had a strong bearing on society and, thus, also influenced the way the public saw the female body and the chores attributed to women. Women were not admitted to having a proper education; their curriculum was limited to “the domestic arts, with perhaps a smattering of reading, French and music” (Young 13). A woman was the “nursing mother” (Crawford 8), and, thus, responsible for the household; work outside the house was not only hard to get, but also not regarded decent for her. Indeed, virtue and modesty were seen as characteristics “more befitting their sex” (Ogg 116). In the introduction to *The Whole Duty of A Woman* (1707), the anonymous female author explains that “Chastity is consistent in either Abstinency or Constancy. Abstinency is properly attributed to Virgins and Widows; Constancy to Married Women” (12). She argued further that “[a]n Unchaste Woman is look'd upon as a kind of Monster” (15).

Women were dependent on a male chaperone. In their youth, this was usually their father or the next close relative in case of the absence or death of the father. Even marriage was no ticket to freedom; for then the woman would be subject to her husband⁷. Not finding a husband, however, was no alternative, since spinsters had little to no rights and possibilities. As the fop Harry Modish in Charles Sedley's play *Mulberry Garden* points out aptly: “The Minute you marry, Widow, you are Not worth a Groat, all is your Husbands” (MG 31).

⁷ Matrimony – at least for the upper class – was also a “process of financial bargaining” where “vast wealth was exchanged” (Young 11). Thus, the purpose of marriage was to accumulate power and estate. The romantic interests of the spouses-to-be were given little or no thought. Some of the men and women, who were married “were as young as twelve or fourteen years old, and many were virtual strangers” (Young 14).

Legally, women were regarded as “feme covert”, as persons who could not own anything themselves (Crawford 8). Everything that might have belonged to a woman prior her matrimony, “automatically became her husband’s” (Young 12). The only possibility for women to gain some independence, as Charles Sedley remarks in the aforementioned play, was widowhood, for “widows were by common law entitled to one-third or sometimes one-half of their husband’s property” (Ashley 11). Critic Albert Bryant concluded in 1934 that it was, thus, understandable that young women “often present a somewhat pathetic picture: nervously anxious to marry and doomed to a life of dependence as companion to some rich relative if they should fail” (Bryant 46).

However, as already mentioned, the Restoration period – figuratively as well as literally – led to dramatic changes for women: they were now officially allowed as actresses on stage and also behind the stage – as playwrights. While, overall, men remained the people in power and women were still seen as subordinate, Douglas M. Young argues that in the second half of the seventeenth century, the situation of English women improved to a certain degree, as they were slowly granted more liberties; “many parents began leaving their daughters their portions free from any future commitments in terms of a marriage partner” (Young 15).

In addition, women started questioning their position and their boundaries in society. Already in the early seventeenth century, the English Catholic Religious Sister Mary Ward challenged the prevailing belief that women were subordinate to men:

I would to God that all men understood this verity, that women, if they will, may be perfect, and if they would not make us believe we can do nothing and that we are ‘but women’, we might do great matters (Ward qtd. in Crawford 8)

Mary Ward, a pioneer of female education, was not the only woman who published her thoughts on that matter. Another important step was done by the Dutch teacher Anna Maria van Schurmann, who argued in her work *The Learned Maid, Or Whether a Maid May be a Scholar* (1659) that a maid should be encouraged to “give her self to Learning”; she should further be encouraged by “wise Men” and “illustrious women” to do so (Schurmann 32). Subsequently, linguist Bathsua Makin, erstwhile Princess Elizabeth’s governess, took up the

thread and put her ideas into print. In *Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manners, Arts and Tongues* (1673) she claimed that

[...] Persons that God hath blessed with the things of this World [...] ought to be educated in Knowledge; That is, it is much better they should spend the time of their Youth, to be competently instructed in those things usually taught to Gentlewoman at Schools, and the overplus of their time to be spent in gaining Arts, and Tongues, and useful Knowledge, rather than to trifle away so many precious minutes meerly to polish their Hands and Feet, to curl their Locks, to dress and trim their Bodies [...] (Makin np.)

Makin adds that “[w]e cannot be so stupid as to imagine, that God gives Ladies great Estates, merely that they may Eat, Drink, Sleep, and rise up to Play” (Makin np.)

In a next step, teacher Hannah Woolley wrote a book in 1675 called *A Gentlewoman’s Companion, Or a Guide to the Female Sex*, wherein she vents her dissatisfaction with regard to female education:

I cannot but complain of, and must condemn the great negligence of Parents, in letting the fertile ground of their daughters lie fallow, yet send the barren Noodles of their sons to the University, where they stay for no purpose than to fill their empty sconces with idle notions (Wolley 2 qtd. in Young 13).

After centuries of inequality, women slowly mustered courage to talk about their thoughts and worries and, thereby, realised that they were not the only ones thinking that way.

4.2 Becoming Independent: Women and Work

It cannot be expected that these first denunciations of male supremacy were taken up immediately by society. Shifts in gender relations are slow to bring about. It has to be born in mind that ambitious women’s opponents were not only men, but also other women. When Margaret Cavendish published her first book *Poems and Fancies* in 1653, she stated:

I image I shall be censured by my own sex; and men will cast a smile of scorn upon my book, because they think thereby women encroach too much upon their prerogatives; for they hold books as their crown, and the sword as their sceptre, by which they rule and govern. (Cavendish qtd. in Whitaker xiii)

Despite these prospects, Cavendish could not restrain herself and pursued her passion – as many others were to do in the following years.

Nevertheless, in the late seventeenth century, working women were still regarded as immoral and unusual. In case they found work, they were paid less than their male colleagues (Crawford 8). On the other hand, Rosenthal argues that “the employment of women actors [...] made a significant institutional difference” (Rosenthal 9). Being allowed to work in the theatre presented a way to earn money. This enabled them to change their life and be more autonomous.

4.2.1 First Actresses

On 12 February 1661 Samuel Pepys wrote about his seeing *The Scornful Lady* “now done by a woman, who makes the play appear much better than ever it did to me” (Pepys 1671: 35). Thus, it can be seen that the general public appreciated the addition of women on stage. However, this did not imply that actresses were treated as equals to actors. When playwright Colley Cibber stated that “[t]he additional Objects then of real, beautiful Women, could not but draw a proportion of new Admirers to the Theatre” (Cibber 1968: 55), he asserted the dominant opinion that women are not on equal terms with men but mere ‘objects’.

David Thomas and Arnold Hare claim that the appearance of women on stage was a result of a shift in society due to women working during the Civil War, when “they had been called on to fight, plead at law and argue as vigorously as their menfolk” (Thomas & Hare 127). Felicity Nussbaum further argues that the reason why actresses were prevented from mounting the stage in earlier times was that “actors feared the economic competition which actresses would bring to the commercial theater” (Nussbaum 33). This fear could have been an impetus for established actors and playwrights to work against their female colleagues.

In addition, Elizabeth Howe states that Restoration society believed that “a woman who displayed herself on the public stage was probably a whore” (Howe 32); a circumstance that soon proved to be true. Before long, actresses like Nell Gwyn or Elizabeth Barry were not only known for their acting talent, but also for

their activity off-stage. As a matter of fact, sexual harassment – before and after the play – was prevailing; since any “regulations against backstage visitors were ineffectual” (Howe 33). As satirist Thomas Brown quite fittingly described:

’tis as hard a matter for a pretty Woman to keep herself Honest in a Theatre, as ’tis is for an Apothecary to keep his Treacle from the Flies in hot Weather, for every Libertine in the Audience will be buzzing about her Honey-Pot (Brown 1702: 166 qtd. in Howe 33).

If an actress became pregnant, she lost her job (Payne 17). Moreover, in spite of the inequality in payment (as already mentioned, actors earned about fifty shillings, actresses only thirty⁸), actresses (as well as actors) got no financial support for the clothes they needed on stage (Adam 99). According to Payne, however, theatre manager Sir William Davenant trained his first actresses in speaking, elocution, dancing as well as movement (Payne 32).

In his biography of Nell Gwyn, British historian Charles Beauclerk states that she was “the first and the most celebrated to make the transition from orange wench to actress” (Beauclerk 67). She further was (acknowledged) mistress of king Charles II⁹, who let her live in a grand house in Pall Mall and who provided for her with an annual amount of 5,000 pounds (Moore 409). According to Elizabeth Howe, the highest-earning actresses were Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle (Howe 27). Elizabeth Barry became an important crowd puller for the Duke’s Company. Her first appearance on stage, however, was “a failure”; it was due to the Earl of Rochester and his theatrical training that Barry became one of the greatest actresses of the Restoration period (Murdoch 72). While she performed well in comedy as well as tragedy, English prompter John Downes claimed that she gained “the Name of Famous Mrs. Barry, both at Court and City” due to her appearances in tragedies¹⁰ (Downes 38). Once, due to the outstanding acclamations after her performance, a rendering was arranged whose earnings solely went to her – a benefit that no other actress or actor has ever been granted (Howe 27f). As already mentioned, Barry had numerous affairs, not least, one with her mentor, the Earl of Rochester, as well as with Georg Etherege (see e.g. Howe 31). However, Howe stresses that while she

⁸Even the famous actress Elizabeth Barry only got 50 shillings, while her theatre-partner Thomas Betterton was eventually paid five pounds (see Howe 33).

⁹ Apparently Nell Gwyn called king Charles II, „Charles the Third“, since he was the third Charles that kept her for a mistress (Eisaman Maus 609).

¹⁰ To be more precise, John Downes listed three characters: Monimia and Belvidera in Thomas Otway’s play *Venice Preserved, or a Plot Discover’d* and Isabella in Thomas Southerne’s *The Fatal Marriage* (Downes 37f).

definitely had various affairs, she most certainly did not have a “lucrative career as a prostitute”, for hard-working as she was, “Barry hardly would have had time for a career on the streets” (Howe 31). Barry as well as Bracegirdle never married.

4.2.2 First Playwrights

In 1941, Felix Emanuel Shelling mused that it was curious “that the first woman to write professionally for the English stage [Aphra Behn] began her career, when the morality of the English drama was at its lowest” (Shelling 351). Arguably, it was exactly due to this reason. In any case, female writers were not greeted enthusiastically.

I hate these Petticoat Authors; 'tis false Grammar, there's no Feminine for the Latin word, 'tis entirely for the Masculine Gender, and the Language won't bear such a thing as a She-Author. (Gildon qtd. in Bateson 1929: 61)

In Charles Gildon's book *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* published in 1702, Chagrin, the critic, expresses his annoyance with the emerging female authors. Indeed, Chagrin was not the only man who had difficulties accepting women entering a chauvinist world. While male playwrights gained star-status, writing women put their reputation at risk by pursuing their ambition. Rubik argues that society was not against female playwrights in general; however, they were regarded as “eccentrics”, whose accomplishments were thought of as something unnatural by some and marvelled at by others (Rubik 26). However, as Straznicky claims, “[f]or female dramatists, the pleasure-for-money exchange acquired sexual undertones”; thus, in turn, playwrighting got associated with whoring (Straznicky 709). Female playwrights also were ridiculed and degraded by men. One example is the satirical play *The Female Wits* that mocks the three playwrights Mary Pix, Catharine Trotter and Delarivier Manley.

There was one exception, however, namely the so-called ‘learned ladies’, as Young calls them, a “select few women of upper-class seventeenth century society who chose and were allowed to pursue intellectual pursuits” (Young 17f). One of them was Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, and author of closet drama, such as *The Convent of Pleasure*. Margarete Rubik points out that Cavendish's plays were not intended for the public stage, as “she

feared they would be booed”; but that, nevertheless, contrary to her predecessors, she wrote “with the avowed hope of achieving lasting fame” (Rubik 22).

Another representative was Katherine Philips, also known as “matchless Orinda” (see e.g. Rubik 26, Young 18). Interestingly, Philips – unlike Cavendish – did not have the merit of belonging to the upper class, but she was tolerated due to her own protest against her work being published (Young 18). Rubik, however, queries “the sincerity of these protests” and further adds that due to “her pose of amateurism and domesticity [she] presented no threat to men” (Rubik 26).

The first female playwright that “made a regular income from writing for the theatre” was Aphra Behn (Rubik 32); she was also the first female writer buried in Westminster Abbey (Rubik 33). Behn was very productive as a playwright; in fact, there were few authors who wrote more plays, apart from her colleague and friend John Dryden (Mann & Mann 1). Young claims that Behn “entered her vocation with an aggressiveness uncharacteristic for her sex” and, as a result, “found herself increasingly under attack from both wits and playwrights” (21). In her prologues and prefaces she responds and addresses the existing double standards (see Rubik 36). In her preface to *The Lucky Chance*, for instance, she states:

All I ask, is the Priviledge for my Masculine Part the Poet in me, [...] to tread in those successful Paths my Predecessors have so long thriv'd in [...] If I must not, because of my Sex, have this Freedom [...] I lay down my Quill (Summers 187)

Clearly, many men thought that there was a difference between male and female writing. Even more than a hundred years later, author William Hazlitt commented on Susanna Centlivre’s comedies *The Wonder* and *The Busie Body* that

[t]hey are plays evidently written by a very clever woman, but still by a woman: for I hold, in spite of any fanciful theories to the contrary, that there is a distinction discernible in the mind of women as well as in their faces (Hazlitt 315).

But not all men steadfastly refused to accept women within their midst. John Dryden can be seen as a “key figure” for Manley, Trotter or Behn as he supplied them not only “with a model for critical discourse but also with access to the

classical texts” (Frank 11). Rubik further states that Aphra Behn not only rated the Earl of Rochester or Thomas Otway amongst her friends, but also “gained the patronage of James II” (Rubik 33).

Although she is nowadays known as one of the most popular female British dramatists, only very little is known about the life of Susanna Centlivre. It appears that she “lived a life of adventure and romance”; she was married three times and once even had an affair with a Cambridge undergraduate and lived on campus disguised as his cousin Jack come to visit (Womersely 778a). Susanna Centlivre can be seen as the last female representative of proper Restoration comedy. She was a “strolling player” before she turned to playwriting for London theatres in 1700 (Womersley 778a). Similar to her forerunner Aphra Behn, Centlivre broaches the subject of misogynist prejudices in her prologue and prefaces. The last line of the prologue to *The Busie Body* says “And none but Woman-Haters damn this play” (Centlivre 780a).

After her death in 1723, plays written by women became rare again (Mann & Mann 2). At the same time, it should not be forgotten, as Rubik states, that “drama went into a long decline in the course of the eighteenth century” (Rubik 118) – to finally give rise to the novel.

5. The Plays

The eight analysed plays cover a timespan of about 50 years, being written between 1668 and 1714. Thus, these dramas can be divided into two categories according to their date of publication. In very simplified terms, the earlier examples exhibit more immoral and illicit scenes than the later ones. Due to the rise of the middle class in the audience and the consequential increase of morality, the scandalous actions – particularly on the part of the rake – become less extreme, likewise the number of adultery scenes declines by the turn of the century.

The eight plays were chosen so as to render the analysis as representative as possible. Thus, four of the comedies stem from the earlier period, four from the latter one. Two plays of each period were written by a male and two by a female playwright. In the following, the plays will be introduced.

5.1 Early Plays

5.1.1 The Convent of Pleasure (1668)

Margaret Lucas Cavendish's play *The Convent of Pleasure* is a so-called closet drama, a play that was not intended for being staged but for reading. The play centres on Lady Happy, a "handsome, young, rich, and virtuous" (Cavendish 221) woman, who has many suitors, whom she is not interested in in the least. Lady Happy regards men as "Obstructers" (Cavendish 223). In order to be left alone, she decides to "incloister" herself together with a group of women in a Convent of Pleasure, where, at first, she is very happy being just amongst people of her own sex. When her suitors find out about her endeavour, they are desperate and try to figure out a way to get the women out or themselves inside. They fail. In the meantime, a prince disguised as a princess actually enters the cloister and wins Lady Happy's heart. Having secured the heroine's heart, the prince states that he is only willing to return to his country with Lady Happy as his wife. Lady Happy's opinion that men merely destroy women's happiness appears to have changed, for the prince and she marry.

Additionally, the third act features a play within a play. Nine short sketches are staged that address the then-current situation of women. The sketches tell stories of married women, pregnant women or sad mothers.

Being a closet drama, this play does not feature all the stereotypes and stock characters of the Restoration Comedy. It also shows less of the typical witty repartee. Since it was not intended for the public stage, the playwright did not need to please the audience. As Karen Raber noted, “closet drama traditionally represented women’s only access to discourse of and about theater” (Raber 238). As this thesis focuses on the depiction of gender and the female voice in Restoration Comedy this play was chosen despite its lack of certain typical features.

5.1.2 The Mulberry Garden (1668)

The Mulberry Garden was and is far less popular than *The Rover*, despite being written by a person well-known at that time, for Charles Sedley, indeed, was a member of the aforementioned “merry gang” himself. In his diary Samuel Pepys expressed his disappointment with the “so long expected” comedy of someone “so reputed a wit”; Pepys even left in the middle of the performance and let a boy take his seat (Pepys pepys.info 1668, May 18th). However, it should be borne in mind that this was Sedley's first comedy.

The play takes place in London and displays the typical multi-plot structure. It deals with the relationships of the daughters of open-minded, fashion-oriented John Everyyoung and careful, rather uptight Samuel Forecraft. Drawing on George Etherege (see Shelling 351), Charles Sedley used a mixture of prose and heroic couplets to separate the comic and the more tragic love-plot¹¹. On the one hand, there is the witty plot around Olivia (daughter of Everyyoung) and the rake Jack Wildish. Olivia as well as her sister Victoria generally lives a carefree life - quite in contrast to their (heroic) cousins Althea and Diana (Forecraft’s daughters), who are desperately in love with the cavaliers Eugenio and Philander, but their father does not approve of their choice. This

¹¹Traditionally, prose was used for comedy; while tragedies, or heroic dramas, were written in rhymed couplets, also called heroic couplets.

juxtaposition between the four daughters illustrates the different ways of how women dealt with their constricted scope.

5.1.3 Marriage a-la-Mode (1673)

Just like Charles Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden*, in *Marriage a-la-Mode* John Dryden designed a „half-comic and half-serious“ (MALM xiii) play by combining prose with rhymed couplets. The title refers to the comic plot of the drama, namely to the love-quadruple between the two couples Rhodophil-Doralice and Palamede-Melantha. Courtier Palamede returns to court after years of travelling. On his arrival in Sicily, he casts an eye on witty and intelligent Doralice, the wife of his acquaintance Rhodophil. Rhodophil, on the other hand, has an affair with Melantha, the girl that Palamede is to marry if he wants to inherit his father's money. Eventually, both men settle for their respective girls. In contrast to that, the heroic plot portrays the noble love between Leonidas, the unknown, rightful prince, and Palmyra, daughter of the usurper Polydamas. These two have been brought up away from court. Upon their return it is first believed that Leonidas is Polydamas' son. In the end, the truth is revealed and Leonidas and Palmyra marry – and live happily ever after.

5.1.4 The Rover (1677)

In contrast to Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn intended her plays to be staged. In her going public, she encouraged many women to believe in their talent and make their writing public as well.

Her play *The Rover or the Banish'd Cavaliers* was so popular that Behn even wrote a sequel in 1681. The comedy is full of wit, disguises and mistaken identities. The story is set in Naples during Carnival times. The main plot circles around the witty couple between the rake Willmore and Hellena. She is destined by her father to go to a convent, but is determined to take life into her own hands. Secondly, there is the (more) heroic strand between Florinda and Belvile. Florinda, Hellena's sister, is promised to Sir Antonio and very desperate, since she is truly in love with Belvile. Thirdly, the fop Blunt is neither witty nor in love, but behaves foolishly and aggressively throughout the play.

The ending (as was to be expected) is happy: both girls marry the man they want to and their brother gives his consent.

5.2 Later Plays

5.2.1. Love's Last Shift (1696)

While earlier plays like *The Rover* or *Marriage a-la-Mode* teem with sly rakes, adventurous heroines and adultery, Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (despite being written two years before Jeremy Collier published his pamphlet on the profaneness of the stage) generally portrays milder and more moral characters. The one exception is the rake Loveless, who acts quite egocentrically – at least throughout the first four acts.

At the beginning of the play, Loveless returns to London, without money or an estate and in the belief that his wife, whom he never appreciated, is dead. Amanda, however, is not dead at all, but desperate, lovesick and determined to get her husband back. Her friend Young Worthy helps Amanda come up with a plan: she is to act as his mistress. Sly Young Worthy, on the other hand, tries to marry Narcissa, the girl he loves, but who is actually intended for his brother Elder Worthy. Luckily for him, Elder Worthy has fallen for Narcissa's cousin, Hillaria. Although the characters very often show their jealousy and doubt about true love, the play lacks the quick and witty repartee of earlier plays. In the end, the two couples end up married and guilt-ridden Loveless is very much in love with his wife again.

This play further shows one of the most prototypical fops, Sir Novelty Fashion, who was acted by playwright Colley Cibber himself (see Womersley 554a), for Cibber had a great interest in drama and frequented theatres a lot, first as part of the audience then as a playwright and an actor himself. However, he was disappointed with the roles he was given. His play *Love's Last Shift, or the Fool in Fashion* was a result of his dissatisfaction: he wanted to write an attractive role for himself.

5.2.2 The Relapse (1696)

Sir John Vanbrugh – amongst others – did not agree with Colley Cibber's moral reformation of the stage in *Love's Last Shift*. Hence, Vanbrugh wrote a riposte to this play called *The Relapse*¹² (where Cibber again played the fop). In fact, however, *The Relapse* does not prove to be particularly libertine either.

The play takes place five years after *Love's Last Shift*. Loveless and Amanda live in the countryside, happily in love. When Loveless has to go to London for business, Amanda accompanies him for fear of his having a relapse (which indeed he will have). While Loveless ends up in Berinthia's bedchamber, also Amanda finds herself addressed by a suitor: Mr. Worthy. However, Amanda stays true to her virtues and is not to be seduced.

In a second plot, Lord Foppington (former Sir Novelty Fashion) is defrauded of his future wife by his brother, Younger Fashion. The woman in question, Miss Hoyden, cannot decide which brother to choose, illegally marries both, but eventually settles for Younger Fashion.

5.2.3 The Beau Defeated (1700)

In *The Beau Defeated*, Mary Pix grants women a very active part. Already her opening the play with two women can be seen as an indicator for that (a feature that also appears in Behn's *The Rover*). It starts with the wealthy widow Mrs. Rich expressing her wish to break with her old relation. She further plans on finding a new husband who will secure her a title. She believes to have found this man in Sir John Roverhead. In the meantime, her clever maid Betty wants to help Lady Landsworth to get the man she has fallen in love with: Younger Clerimont. This man, however, is drowning in self-pity, since his elder brother managed to annex all of their father's wealth.

In the end, it turns out that Sir John Roverhead did not only cheat on Mrs. Rich by flirting with her niece Lucinda, but in fact is not Sir John Roverhead at all but his servant, dressed up by sly Lady La Basset in order to get at Mrs. Rich's money. Thus, Mrs. Rich settles for Elder Clerimont, who, in turn, returns the part of the estate that their father had intended for him to Younger Clerimont.

¹²Due to this writing, moraliser Jeremy Collier made Vanbrugh his prime target in his pamphlet *Vindication* (see Womersley 596a).

Furthermore, Younger Clerimont and Lady Landsworth declare their love for each other.

5.2.4 The Wonder (1714)

Similarly strong (if indeed not stronger) women can be observed in Susanna Centlivre's *The Wonder, or a Woman keeps a Secret*. Already throughout her lifetime, Susanna Centlivre established quite a reputation in the theatre world. Indeed, many actors and actresses came to fame by playing roles in her plays. After Centlivre's death, David Garrick was so successful as the jealous lover Don Felix in *The Wonder* that he chose this role "to close his acting career" (Bowyer v).

The Wonder is a comedy that takes place in Lisbon. The strict and conservative Don Lopez wants to marry his daughter Isabella to a rich and well-born man. Isabella, however, does not endorse this plan and, thus, decides to run away. She jumps out of her window – and into the arms of Colonel Briton, who immediately falls in love with the girl. He takes Isabella to her friend Violante (Don Pedro's daughter), whom Isabella asks for help; she is to hide her from her father. Violante agrees – without conjecturing what confusion and misunderstandings this secret will generate. For Violante – despite her father's intention of making her a nun – is secretly in love with Felix, who gets suspicious when he finds out Violante is hiding someone from him. He even accuses her of loving Colonel Briton, who only comes to Violante's house in search of Isabella. Despite all the trouble, Violante stays true to her promise and does not reveal Isabella.

In the end, Violante marries Don Felix and Isabella marries Colonel Briton – without their fathers' approval.

6. Character Analysis

6.1 Preliminary Remarks About the Power of Discourse

Language constructs the world around us. It gives means and ways to talk about things. Furthermore, language exerts a great amount of power. The way one phrases what one wants to say has a direct effect on the person one is talking to. By using appropriate words and applying the right intonation one can influence the recipient profoundly. Language can manipulate and even harm other people. Words can, in fact, wound someone as severely as physical actions. Yet, the power of language goes beyond the influential power of rhetoric. Naturally, by applying certain language devices people can manipulate the ones they are talking to. For already the underlying meanings of utterances are not God-given; words are not initially linked to any kind of meaning. As Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure stipulated, the relationship between words and meaning, the signifier and the signified, is totally arbitrary. It is merely a matter of social convention. Hence, language can be seen as a mere “labelling what we think we want to believe” (Stone Peters 145).

In addition, the French linguist Michel Foucault argued that cultures were built via discourse. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, discourse refers to “a spoken or written treatment of a subject, in which it is discussed at length” (OED). The English linguist Michael Halliday defined discourse as “a unit of language larger than a sentence, which is firmly rooted in a specific context” (Bronwen & Ringham 51). Foucault, on the other hand, saw discourse in a very broad sense; he did not limit it to the linguistic field. For him, discourse referred to “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about [...] a particular topic at a particular historical moment [...] Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language” (Foucault qtd. in Hall 44). Thus, he believed that discourse produced meaning(ful practices).

Having said that, discourse does not only shape the world around us; it also generates knowledge and even truth. Foucault contended that knowledge was not something that existed outside of language. In fact, he claimed that knowledge was something built and shaped by people in power. Knowledge

and truth as such, he emphasised, would not exist; these terms were always connected to a certain context and point in time.

Thus, discourse – and with it knowledge and truth – are always governed by people who are in power, and reflect their view of the world. So, while there are always several discourses existing simultaneously next to each other, it is the dominant one that dictates the beliefs and so-called truths of the masses. People who are in command of language are powerful people, and vice versa. In the Restoration Comedies, the rake is the best example for a strong eloquent man. He usually wins in discussions as well as in duels.

However, it is still possible for the subordinate discourses to challenge the hegemonic notions. For “language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested.” At the same time it is also the place where the understanding of our identity and subjectivity is constructed (Weedon 21).

The subsequent chapters will have a closer look at the way characters and consequently gender roles are established and dealt with in the eight aforementioned plays. The analysis will focus on the way a character treats the other sex, as well as how he or she talks about the other sex with his friends or family. Thus, the various character types (like the witty heroine or the fop) will be analysed by comparing their different appearances in the eight plays. For, as will be seen, even within one stock character, the range of behaviour and remarks is very wide.

7. Male Characters

7.1 For Rakes it is all About Wit and Women

“[O]ld Wine, young Whores, and the Conversation of brave Fellows” (LLS I.I. 152-154) – These things are the dearest amusements of Loveless, the rake in *Love’s Last Shift*. According to David Berkeley, the key parameters of the rake are “sexual irregularities, drunkenness, wasting of money, and riotous living” (Berkeley 223b).

To begin with, the rake is known as a womaniser and charmer – and is usually successful, due to his wit. “What small Petticoat do you come from?” asks (foppish) Ned Estridge upon the rake’s, Jack Wildish’s, first appearance in *The Mulberry Garden*. This remark illustrates the rake’s reputation quite fittingly. His friends and acquaintances assume that he sees women – *a lot*. Also “dear mad Willmore” (as his friend Belvile describes him) in *The Rover* (R I.II 82) is a very prototypical representative of this stock character: usually witty, often drunk and always in the mood for sexual intercourse, Willmore sees no reason why he should be ashamed of any of these attributes. He himself compares his behaviour with that of “cheerful Birds” that “sing in all Groves, And perch on every Bough” (R V.I.370f), which, again, reinforces his reputation of being sexually very active. Not only his friends, also women are often impressed by the rake’s self-confidence and experience. Here is an example from *The Rover*: The courtesan Angellica Bianca is so impressed by Willmore that she takes him to her bedchamber without him having to pay. “His words go through me to the very Soul” (R II.II.91), she says about Willmore. While Angellica’s maid Moretta is quite aware of the danger of loving “the only Enemy to our Trade” (II.II.181f), the courtesan cannot help herself, for Willmore “hast a Pow’r too strong to be / resisted” (R II.II.178f). Willmore triumphs, as is usual for him.

However, the profligate lifestyle of the rake usually does not provide for a lot of money in his pockets. Loveless, when returning from the trip through Europe for London, for instance, does not even have enough money to buy himself and his servant Snap a proper dinner – not that Loveless cares too much about the latter. In fact, when Snaps complains about his not having had proper dinner in the last three days, Loveless replies: “Ungrateful / Rouge! to murmur at a little

fasting with me,/ when thou hast been an equal Partner of my good Fortune” (LLS I.I.20-23).

Loveless’s ignorance regarding his servant’s needs is very typical of the rake, since this person usually only cares about himself. Moreover, due to his self-centredness, the rake sees no need to keep promises he once made. Again, Willmore illustrates this feature fittingly. Despite his assurance to Hellena “never to think – to see – to Love – nor Lye – with any but thyself” (R III.I.348), he sees no harm done in trying to get himself a prostitute (for whom he mistakes Florinda) or wooing courtesan Angellica Bianca again. When Angellica blames Willmore for his egocentric behaviour, Willmore even defends his lying: “I never heard of mortal Man, That has not broke a Thousand Vows” (R V.I 326-328). Thereby, he positions himself above morality or social conventions; he regards his vicious behaviour as legitimate. Willmore’s egoism can be further witnessed, when he nearly rapes his friend’s (Belvile’s) girl Florinda, when mistaking her for a prostitute.

Belvile, being masked after a duel, (where he fights against Stephano and acts the part of Antonio) is on the verge of being married to his love Florinda, since her brother Pedro mistook him for her aforementioned suitor Antonio, when Willmore accidentally uncovers his friend Belvile and thus endangers his happiness. The fact that Willmore reveals Belvile's true identity in front of the other man without thinking first that this could bring harm to his friend, emphasises that fact that – despite the rake’s witty reputation –his self-absorbedness makes him act rather foolishly.

Nevertheless, the rake thinks himself superior – to mankind in general and women in particular. In order to manifest his view about the world and gender relations, the rake compares women with certain objects that cast a slur on them. For instance, in *The Mulberry Garden*, Wildish uses a simile that illustrates this behaviour clearly. He argues that

[...] fine Women, like great
Tables, though they are maintain'd by men
Of Fortune, are ever open to men of parts (MG III.I p.37).

A table is an object used by humans. It is always at their disposal and command. By comparing women to this household item, a hierarchy between men and women is established that portrays the female as inferior to the male.

It gives the impression that women were made in order to be used by men. It is similes like these that confirm the then-existing gender roles and lock women in a subordinate position.

However, not all rakes behave thus misogynistically. With regard to the rake's patronising attitude, Palamede in *Marriage a-la-Mode* (who arguably is the most rakish of the men appearing in this play) shows quite a different attitude towards women than, for instance, Willmore or Loveless. His friend Rhodophil even describes Palamede as "the most kind-hearted, doting, prodigal, humble servant in Europe" (I.I 113). This stands in a sharp contrast to *The Rover*, where his alleged friend Belvile challenges Willmore a few times with his sword, due to the rake's ignorant or brutal behaviour towards Belvile himself or his love Florinda. For Palamede once acknowledges: "Let women alone to contrive their means; I find we are but dunces to them" (MALM II.I 238f). Here, a man admits to being inferior to women. When thinking about masquerading Palamede also says that "No, it must be the invention of a woman; it has too much of subtlety and love in it" (IV.I.127f). Again, Palamede grants women certain features that men do not have; positive attributes that put a different, strong and active complexion on them. As can thus be seen, it was not only women that worked on changing the prevailing thoughts about gender; these words were penned by John Dryden.

Having said that, Palamede rather stands out with his women-friendly attitude. The majority of the rakes think themselves superior not only to women but also to love. Despite the rake's frequent encounter with women, he usually does not fall in love (or, at least, had never fallen in love before the beginning of the play). When asked whether he has ever been in love, Jack Wildish replies:

No faith, I never let the Disease run so far
I always took it in time, and then a Bottle
of Wine or two, and a She friend is an approv'd
Remedy (MG I.II p.8).

For Wildish, love is an illness that needs to be treated accordingly. Comparing love with an object or a condition that usually has negative connotations is typical of the rake and helps him form a distance to these romantic emotions, which clearly would hinder his libertine behaviour.

In a further step, the rake generally rails against matrimony, for this type of man does not approve of the monotony of monogamy. He continuously seeks entertainment and new encounters. Thus, in *Love's Last Shift*, Loveless compares a wife to an "Eternal Apple-tree, after a pull or two, you are sure to set your Teeth on Edge" (LLS I.I.62f). The rake prefers sex with no strings attached, as Willmore explains in *The Rover*: "Marriage is a certain bane to Love, as lending Money is to Friendship" (R V.I.550-552). This utterance illustrates that the rake sees the bond of marriage as a strain. The simple fact of being married annoys the rake so much that he falls out of love very quickly. The rake's contempt for marriage is illustrated in Willmore's remark when he returns from his adventure with Angellica Bianca. He brags that he had "[a]ll the honey of Matrimony, but none of the sting Friend" (R III.I 155f). Sex with no strings attached is the rake's ideal pastime.

However, a lot of the rakes in the end consent to being married. Bearing the anti-marriage phrases in mind, this sudden turn often comes as a surprise, as it is the case in *The Rover*. When Willmore promises to marry Hellena, the reader does not really believe his change of mind, even though Willmore justifies his action by telling Hellena that they "are so of one Humour" (R V.I 582). Similarly, in *The Mulberry Garden*, Jack Wildish does not only give his girl Olivia the promise of matrimony but even marries her secretly. It is equally not credible that Loveless, who had had no problems to leave his wife at home with a broken heart because he had grown weary of her, repents in the end and tells her, he "will labour, dig, beg, or starve to give new Proofs of [his] unfeign'd Affection" (LLS V.II 264-266). David S. Berkeley argues that in Restoration comedy, the reason for the rake's inversion lies in the "'platonic' idea that virtuous and beautiful women have within themselves a 'charm' [...] by which savages might be civilised and evil men reclaimed to virtue" (Berkeley 227a). Arguably, the rake's repentance and the consequential marriage are part of the audience's expectations that playwrights could not get around.

The repentance of the rake always takes place in the fifth act. Furthermore, the reader usually has no possibility of finding out whether the rake really sticks to his promise. However, this is exactly what can be observed in *The Relapse*. There, Loveless, who swore his "unfeign'd Affection" in *Love's Last Shift* (LLS V.II.266), is indeed eager to start a new affair. Thus, Vanbrugh's sequel can be

regarded as a reminder to the reader that simply because the rake swears faithfulness, this does not mean that he is really sticking to his promise.

As has already been touched upon, not all rakes fit the stereotypical criterion. At first glance, the Prince in *The Convent of Pleasure* appears as an atypical rake. He only beguiles one woman (Lady Happy); he does not brag about his behaviour to other men; he is determined in carrying out his plan. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that he proves to be the only man that is able to sneak into the female convent and is, thus, heads and shoulders above all the others. Although he might not woo other women or talk negatively about the other sex, it is obvious that he is a pleasure-seeker, when he states: “what is Kingdom in comparison to a Beautiful Mistress?” (CP IV.I p.239). Additionally, in the end, the Prince acts in a rather demanding, even aggressive way after all, when he states that he will “marry this Lady; otherwise, tell them I will have her by force of Arms” (V.I p.244).

Another character that falls into the category of the “wanna-be rake” is Young Worthy in *Love’s Last Shift*. Amanda describes him as “A wild young Fellow, that loves every thing / he sees” (LLS I.I.487f) and indeed he likes to scheme for his own advantage (for instance, outwitting Sir William Wisewoud, who wants to marry his daughter Narcissa to Young Worthy’s brother). But he also likes to intrigue – and here an unusual altruism can be observed – for others. Young Worthy helps Amanda win back Loveless for the mere sake of helping a friend. Young Worthy also does not come across as the big womaniser like Willmore or Wildish: he does not really manage to charm Narcissa (although she does consent to marry him eventually) let alone any other woman. When he suggests matrimony, Narcissa replies: “Marry me! Who put that in your Head?” (LLS I.I. 671). However, Young Worthy immediately makes it clear that it is not up to her to make this decision. When she further wonders whether she could be moved to love a man, to kiss and toy with him, Young Worthy declares: “’tis the Man must kiss, and toy with you” (LLS I.I.679f). Thus, Young Worthy might not be the greatest womaniser; yet, he shares Willmore’s or Loveless’s inferior view of women. At the same time, Young Worthy outdoes some of the more extreme rakes with regard to their intelligence, a feature that arguably is of great importance for the leading male character. It is due to his scheming that Amanda can win Loveless back.

If he wants to win the battles of wit and schemes (that the rake is always eager on playing), he needs to top the others with his intellect. Like The Prince, who manages to trick a whole convent into believing he is a woman while simultaneously making Lady Happy fall in love with him. Like Wildish, who manages that the two suitors of Victoria and Olivia ridicule themselves while the two girls are within hearing distance. Or Willmore, who still recognises Hellena in her male clothing ("Ha! do I not know that face – By Heaven my little Gipsie, what a dull Dog was I" [R IV.II.376f].). At the same time, the rake can be deceived as well. Willmore does not detect Belvile, when he is disguised as Antonio, another suitor of Florinda's. Similarly, Palamede (*Marriage a-la-Mode*) does not see it is Doralice in men clothes who is talking to him ("Damn this kindness! Now I must be troubled with this / young rogue, and miss my opportunity with Doralice" [MALM IV.I.210f].).

In this regard, it can even be discussed to what extent Loveless actually is a proper rake, for he clearly lacks wit and cleverness very much. He fails to detect his wife's trap to win him back; a trap that Amanda designs with the help of Young Worthy (a fact that again emphasises the rakish attributes of Young Worthy). Also in the sequel, *The Relapse*, Loveless does not find out about Berinthia and Worthy's plan to toy with him and his wife. When Loveless realises that Berinthia intrigues him, he is at odds with himself. Moreover, his being intrigued by Berinthia does not appear as a triumph (while Willmore or Wildish usually come off as the winner no matter how indecent their behaviour), but he is rather portrayed as a man who is an involuntary subject to his instincts: "Did she [Amanda] not rescue me, a grov'ing Slave, (III.II 13), Why do I not love her then?" (III.II 26) he asks and, further, "What is't I feel in favour of Berinthia" (III.II 32). Furthermore, his wife proves to be the stronger one, as she manages to withstand Worthy's seduction, while Loveless is having a relapse. Thus, also in the sequel of *Love's Last Shift*, the question arises whether Loveless is a proper rake-hero at all.

If we have a closer look at the play, Vanbrugh proved to be very imaginative with regard to male intrigues and immoral behaviour. However, not all the intrigues (or rather just one) are accomplished by Loveless: He cheats on his wife with Berinthia. Then, there is Worthy who tries to seduce Amanda (but Amanda stays strong); and Young Fashion, who ends up with the girl that was

intended for his brother, Lord Foppington. Therefore, it could be argued that Vanbrugh did not design one proper rake but attributed rakish attached to a few of his male characters.

In line with that, neither Mary Pix nor Susanna Centlivre produced a prototypical rakish stock character in their plays. In *The Beau Defeated*, apart from the trickster John Roverhead, there is no male leading figure displaying an active, libertine life but it is rather the women who go about and choose their partner. Younger Clerimont acts like a very soft, passive and helpless character. He is bowed down with grief after his father's death – and also because his elder brother is in possession of all the family's wealth. Yet, Younger Clerimont does not feel it incumbent on himself to do anything to change his position. His passiveness leads Lady Landsworth to tell him that "[g]rieving for the dead would spoil us for the living" (BD III.II p.36). Younger Clerimont does not feature the typical male self-confidence. He rather despairs than doing something. While John Roverhead makes all kinds of promises to Mrs. Rich as well as her niece, Younger Clerimont does not even dare to fight for the one he truly loves and does not want his friends to help him either. "Did you fully know me, you would know there scarce is left a room for hope for me", (BD V.I. p.81) he remarks self-pityingly. It is also quite telling when Lady Landsworth sends some of her money to Younger Clerimont. The distribution of wealth as such is nothing particularly unusual; young men very often marry women to obtain some wealth. However, the fact that the woman freely sends a man that she is not yet bonded with money shows her ambition to look after this man. Indeed, it appears that Lady Landsworth takes on a somewhat motherly role.

Younger Clerimont seems to be torn inside about his feelings for Lady Landsworth. "[T]here's something in thee I so love and hate [...]" (BD III.II p.35). It appears he is afraid that he cannot handle his own feelings. To himself he says that "I shall be fooled at last: believe her, love her, trust her, and be undone!" (BD III.II p.35). In this episode, Mary Pix displays life's complexity; she does not pigeonhole people according to their gender. For a man in love encounters the same feelings as a woman: he is nervous, maybe even anxious yet afraid to lose control. However, as hard as it was for a woman to assert herself in male society, as hard it was for a man to vent his feelings.

Similarly, in *The Wonder*, neither Felix nor Colonel Briton can be regarded as proper rakes. However, Colonel Briton tunes in with the dominant male discourse when stating that “women are the prettiest playthings in nature” (I.I. p.8). The self-centredness and self-confidence of these characters emphasise the fact that such a behaviour and attitude towards women was regarded as natural at that time. Centlivre, it further appears, mocks this behaviour, when she lets Colonel Briton remark: “We are kept so sharp at home what we feed like cannibals abroad” (W I.I. p.8). At the same time, she allows Briton to describe Isabella as a “philosophical wench; this is the first time I ever knew a woman had any business with the mind of a man” (W II.I. p. 21).

Moreover, in his relationship with Violante, Felix appears to be the inferior one. In general, Violante is calm and patient; Felix is quick-tempered and afraid. Violante might be truly in love with Felix (“a letter from a faithful lover can never be read too often” [W II.I p.11]), yet she does not shrink back from criticising him when he does not “behave [...] like that man of honour you would be taken for” (W III.III. p. 28). When Violante gets angry after getting a glimpse of a woman in Felix’s room (who is in fact the hiding maid Flora), Felix, in consequence, is anxious that he might lose her:

Felix O, how irresolute is a lover’s heart!
How absolute is a woman’s power!
In vain we strive their tyranny to quit;
in vain we struggle, for we must submit. (W III.III p.28)

Thereby, Centlivre portrays an unusually soft man, struggling to find a balance between his own wishes and those that he has because he is in love with a woman. While women were slowly rising from invisibility and gaining strength, men, on the other hand, were confronted with the problem of their own weakness, their emotions and feelings. Especially for those men that thought power and dominance to be inevitable components of their sex, this change would prove to be a challenge.

7.2 Fashion-obsessed Fops and Fraudulent Fools

At least as important as the rake – if indeed not even more vital – for a proper Restoration Comedy is the fop; a man that unintentionally yet perpetually ridicules himself through his talk, his action as well as his fashion. He is a man

that – as Moira E. Casey argues – has taken “gentlemanly breeding [...] too far” (Casey 211). Furthermore, Brean Hammond defines the very prototypical fop Sir Novelty Fashion (who appears in *Love’s Last Shift* as well as in its sequel *The Relapse*) as

the ultimate narcissist: heterosexual, but so artificial and self-regarding as to lose sight of other-directed sexuality altogether; male, but so dandified [...] that he has lost touch not only with gender but with humanity (Hammond xii).

Novelty’s fashion obsession is also observed – and consequently mocked – by the other characters in the play. Elder Worthy says about him that

I can’t say he’s a Slave to any
new Fashion, for he pretends to be Master
of it; and is ever reviving some old, or advancing
some piece of Foppery. (LLS I.I.341-344)
He’s so fond of publick Reputation, that
he is more extravagant in his Attempts to gain
it, than the Fool that fir’d Diana’s Temple to
immortalize his Name (LLS I.I.347-350)

This narcissistic attribute is even more pronounced in *The Relapse*. In this play, Sir Novelty Fashion (who is then called Lord Foppington, which already speaks for itself) tells Amanda that he does not have books for reading but merely for looking at them. He explains that he has “furnish’d [his gallery] with nothing but / Books and Looking-Glasses [...] it is the most entertaining thing in the / World to walk and look upon ‘em” (Re II.I.254-259). As already mentioned, he changed his name to Lord Foppington, for he “bought a Barony in order to marry a great Fortune” (Re II.I.181f). His deeds make him appear stupid and lead him to be patronised by the other characters. When Amanda is informed about his actions, she is not – as he would have liked it – impressed, she rather finds it amazing “to see a Man whom Nature has made / no Fool, be so very industrious to pass for an / Ass” (Re II.I.194-196).

The rake very often finds his number one girl amongst the “flames” of his friends. In *Love’s Last Shift*, Narcissa accuses Sir Novelty Fashion of doing this:

I vow, Sir Novelty, you
Men of Armour are strange Creatures: You think
no Woman worth your while, unless you walk
over a Rival’s ruin to her Heart (LLS II.I.9-12)

This behaviour also emphasises the fact that the fop is not a person who is able to act on his own – he merely reacts to what he perceives around himself. He

needs people to guide him through the world. This does not only mean that he strives for recognition and confirmation, he also takes others as role models.

Having said that, the fop (similarly to the rake) is mainly concerned with himself. The substantial difference between these two characters, however, is that the rake usually gets what he wants, while the fop does not. Since the fop generally cares a lot about other people's opinions, he does not dare to admit his defeats but rather boasts about his alleged triumphs. In *The Mulberry Garden*, when asked by his (also foppish) friend Ned Estridge why he stole away thus secretly the night before, Harry Modish brags: "Faith, I had so many Irons in the fire for /To day, I durst not run the hazard of/ A disorder last night" (MG I.II p.5). However, the other characters do not buy his showing-off. The rake Jack Wildish has no scruple telling him that "you by your Feathers are known to be Birds/ Of Prey, and though you catch nothing, you/ Scare all" (MG I.I p.6). As can thus be seen, the fop might use the rake's phrases but he is not believed. Additionally, in the fourth act of this play, Modish's boasting (together with Wildish's scheming) will lead to his own undoing. Wildish manages to catch Modish and his friend Estridge within earshot of the sisters Olivia and Victoria, two ladies with whom the two men are eager to become better acquainted. However, also Wildish has cast a covetous eye on Olivia. Thus, Wildish wants to damage the reputation of Modish and Ned Estridge. He lets the two men boast about the girls and lie about how much Olivia and Victoria adore them – while the girls can listen to every word the fops are saying: Estridge even passes off his sister's coil of hair as Olivia's, while Modish, on the other hand, tells Wildish that "if he cou'd but see Victoria's reservedness/ A little mollifi'd, and brought to hand with a good supper" (MG IV.I. p.48). Having listened to all this talk, Olivia and Victoria are very annoyed. The sisters approach the three men and make fun of Modish and Estridge, while Wildish comes off as the winner. Victoria calls Wildish "so worthy a/ Person" (IV.I. p.54) and the girls walk away with Wildish, leaving the two fops behind. This scene illustrates that the rake and the fop do not so much differ in the opinion they have about themselves, since both regard themselves rather highly. The difference between these two stock characters, however, is their intellect and fortune. The fop blunders, the rake wins.

A fop's scheme seldom if ever proves to be successful. This can be seen in Estridge's attempt to score Wildish off. In revenge for being ridiculed, Ned Estridge decides to marry the widow that rake Wildish intends for Sir Samuel Forecraft. However, the lady is not as rich as Wildish says. It is not the real widow that Estridge forces into the carriage; it is just the housekeeper. Wildish does not intend to let Forecraft marry the rich widow at all; he is also playing a trick on him; putting up a trap into which Estridge falls as well.

In contrast to the aforementioned fops, Aphra Behn portrays Blunt as a very brutal man. This feature is visible throughout the whole play. While Sir Novelty Fashion or Harry Modish can be described as narcissistic, Francophone, flamboyant birds of paradise, who put their feet in their mouths, but merely by accident and who do not mean to do much harm; Blunt wants revenge and will stop at nothing (but will usually be stopped by others). Similarly to the rake Willmore, Blunt does not show a large amount of respect to women. When Belville talks about his love to Florinda, Blunt retorts that "we cannot be thus concern'd for a Wench" (I.II.43f). His behaviour towards women becomes even more negative and actually aggressive after his being robbed by the prostitute Lucetta. He swears that "I'll use all woman-kind hereafter" (R IV.IV. 17). When he then comes upon Florinda, and mistakes her – just like Willmore – for a prostitute, he tells her he "will kiss and beat thee all over" (IV.IV.65f). When usually friendly Frederick walks by, Blunt suggests that "we'l both lye with her, and then let me alone to bang her" (R IV.IV.138-140). It is quite telling that the rake as well as the fool tries to rape the same girl (Florinda). Thus, men are not only illustrated as the dazzling womanisers, but also as savage egocentrics who will stop at (nearly) nothing in order to get what they want – which usually means sex. Aphra Behn, furthermore, puts the rake and fop on the same level, which sheds a new, disillusioned light on the sometimes very much-idolised rake.

In line with that, in *The Beau Defeated*, Mary Pix portrays the trickster John Roverhead as a very egocentric, ignorant and pretentious man. For one thing, Roverhead brags that "the universality of women die for [him]" (BD III.II. p.43f). At the same time, he has no qualms about using women. While making advances to Mrs. Rich (although he actually hates "her as the devil – but has she not five thousand a year?" BD III.II. p.41), he is also seeing her daughter.

When he finds out this daughter Lucinda is worth 20,000 pounds once she comes of age, he hatches an evil plot: "Gad, I'll marry her. By the time I shall have spent it, broke her heart, and be ready for another" (BD III.II. p.43). Clearly, Roverhead regards women not as independent beings but as objects he can play around with.

However, Mary Pix does not let him get away with this attitude. When his cover is blown, everybody turns against him. "I hate you and all mankind", Mrs. Rich cries in front of her friends and family; "So do I" her daughter Lucinda adds (BD V.III. p.85); and friendly Belvoir summarises the situation as follows: "Sir John, I perceive you must search for new gallantries. Here the ladies are provided for" (BD V.III. p.86). By ridiculing Sir John in the end, the playwright appears to make clear that she does not approve of such behaviour.

While Sir Novelty Fashion and later Lord Foppington or Harry Modish can be regarded as proper fops, Blunt as well as Sir John Roverhead can be seen as true fools. The other plays do not portray such typical stock characters.

To begin with, the play written most early, *The Convent of Pleasure*, does not feature any such character. With the Prince portraying quite an unusual rake, this play also lacks a proper fop. Nevertheless, it could be argued that all men apart from the Prince are, indeed, fops. Monsieur Take-Pleasure, Facil and Adviser all boast about their knowledge about women. Take-Pleasure knows that "Women never think themselves happy until they be Married" (CP II.I.222). In addition, when they find out that Lady Happy is planning on "incloistering" herself and other women, these men work out various plans to get the women out or themselves inside, like setting the convent on fire. However, and in contrast to the rakish Prince and in line with the fops of the other plays, the plans of these three gentlemen do not work out. They do not manage to get inside.

Also in *Marriage a-la-Mode* there is no proper fop. There is, however, a cuckolded husband, who comes very close to a fop: Rhodophil. Married to witty Doralice, Rhodophil wants (as all married men in these plays tend to) get himself a mistress; namely, the rather gullible, Frenchified (which, in these plays, can be seen as an indicator for a foppish person) Melantha, who is destined to be married to Palamede. Yet, he does not grasp that his wife is also

cheating on him, with aforementioned Palamede, allegedly a good friend of his, who has no problem calling him a “dull resty husband” (MALM IV.I.182). When Doralice says that she is “so obedient a wife, Sir, that my husband’s commands shall ever be a law to me” (MALM II.I.168), he does not get suspicious, at least at first. Nevertheless, when the affairs are revealed at last, Rhodophil is not ridiculed but stays on top.

In conclusion, one could argue that the fops portrayed by male playwrights (Sir Novelty Fashion a.k.a. Lord Foppington, Harry Modish) might behave rather foolishly and ridiculously, while the fops portrayed by female playwrights (Blunt, Sir John Roverhead) behave more viciously.

7.3 Truly and Utterly in Love

Apart from the witty, sparkling relationships of the rakes and the heroines, there also occur deeper, more serious relationships. With regard to what may be called “real lovers”, we must distinguish between true lovers in a heroic sense, such as Leonidas in *Marriage a-la-Mode* or Eugenio and Philander in *The Mulberry Garden*, and men who despite their comic nature show real interest in one particular woman, such as Belvile in *The Rover* or Elder Worthy in *Love’s Last Shift*.

As has already been touched upon, in *Marriage a-la-Mode* a comic and a heroic plot are juxtaposed. This becomes particularly apparent when Leonidas (who is in desperation upon finding out that Polydamas wants to maroon Palmyra) declares: “let me die” (MALM III.I.313). This exact phrase was already uttered before in the play; namely, by gullible Melantha (e.g. MALM II.I.3). While for Melantha, however, this remark is just an empty catch-phrase to attract attention, for Leonidas it expresses his absolute devotion to the love of his life, Palmyra.

For Leonidas, love is not just some funny feeling about any woman he might come across, it is about the completion of his soul. While the rake and fop deliberately look for women who they can adorn themselves with, for Leonidas, Palmyra is not a person he wants to show off. He even does not care whether Palmyra has the same social status as himself: “Love either finds equality, or

makes it" (MALM III.I.276). In contrast to egocentric Palamede, who only marries Melantha because he is afraid of being disinherited, Leonidas constitutes a downright unselfish man. His noblesse even goes so far that in the end he chooses to spare his former enemies Polydamas and Argaleon.

Similar to Leonidas, Eugenio in *The Mulberry Garden* loves a woman, whose father does not support their relationship. He is in love with Althea, and she is in love with him, but she is to marry another man. While the rake would not let these prospects hinder his trying to enjoy some happy moments with the chosen girl, Eugenio wallows in self-pity; the information that Althea is to be married "More wound[s] my Soul, than can the world beside" (MG III.I. p33); he is not able to live without Althea. He cries that "I with more ease all other harms cou'd bear, /Than of Althea's loss but simply hear" (III.I. 34). The true lover is not happy on his own; he needs the woman he loves to be with him. This makes him dependent on a woman. However, as it is the case with Leonidas as well as Eugenio, it is not within the women's power to change anything about their desperate situation. It is up to the girls' fathers' to give their consent. (Which, in the end, they give.)

Compared to these men, Belvile's and Elder Worthy's love appears very moderate and superficial. Yet, in contrast to the behaviour of the rake or the fop, these men act a lot more sensibly. To his friend Frederick, Belvile declares that he has "Int'rest enough / in that lovely Virgins [sic] heart, to make me proud / and vain" (R I.II.27-29) and when Florinda names Belvile a time and place where to meet the next time, Belvile cannot help but exclaim: "I might be made the / happiest Man the Sun shines on" (R I.II 323f). Thus, similarly to Eugenio or Leonidas, Belvile has chosen this one woman to be in love with and he is not ashamed that his friends know about his feelings. In this respect, this character might actually be stronger than the rake, for he does not need other people's envy or admiration. Belvile appears to be more realistic and down-to-earth than his heroic pendants. At the same time, Belvile continues to work within the realm of the dominant male of that time, when he demands Florinda from her brother.

Belvile Nay touch her not, she's mine by Conquest Sir,
I won her by my Sword. (R IV.II. 107f)

Similarly, Elder Worthy is in love with Hillaria – and very jealous, when he believes that Hillary is flirting with Sir Novelty Fashion.

I have Wound and Cure from the
same Person, I'll assure you; the one from
Hillaria's Wit and Beauty, and the other from
her Pride and Vanity (LLS I.I.318-321),

he admits. However, Elder Worthy does not prove to be a fighter; he does not confront Hillaria. He rather thinks about writing her a letter that will end whatever is between the two of them. Elder Worthy would rather “bite off [his tongue] e'er it shall seek a Reconciliation” (LLS II.I.128). In fact, however, even if these two are very much in love with each other, but they are too proud to admit it. The couple needs Elder Worthy's brother, Young Worthy, to surmount their stubbornness. It is Younger Worthy who manages to bring the two together (although, as will be discussed in the following chapter, he does not act out of sheer selflessness). When Young Worthy warns Hillaria that her toying around with Sir Novelty might backfire for he might “tell the World another Story” (LLS II.I.226f), he hits a spot. Hillaria realises the danger she might bring herself into. Consequently, she apologises to Elder Worthy.

El. Worthy Now you vanquish me! I blush to be out-
done in generous Love! I am your Slave, dis-
pose of me as you please.

Hillaria No more, from this Hour be you're the Master
of my Actions, and my Heart. (LLS II.I.245-249)

7.4 Do Friends Stick Together?

While the previous chapters focused particularly on the relationship of the rake, the fop or the lover to people of the other sex, this chapter will have a closer look at brotherhood – by blood or by choice. For as shall now be elaborated on, this connection is no prerequisite for loyal or respectful behaviour. One pair of brothers where the one actually tries to harm the other is Lord Foppington and Young Fashion in *The Relapse*. Young Fashion is superior to his brother in wit and intellect; yet, he depends on him because Young Fashion is out of money. Already in their first encounter, the antipathy for the other sibling is obvious – to the reader and the characters themselves. To his servant Lory, Young Fashion complains:

Y. Fashion Well, Lory, What dost think on't? A very
friendly Reception from a Brother after 3
Years of absence!

Lory Why, Sir 'tis your own Fault, we seldom
care for those that don't love what we love; [...] (Re I.III.143-147)

The attentive servant Lory points out that these two brothers are too different on various levels to like each other. As Lord Foppington explains to his brother, he himself is a "Running Horse", while Young Fashion is only a "Coach-Horse"; "Nature has made some difference 'twixt you and I" (Re III.I.136-138). The one is embarrassed by the other. Lord Foppington rejects his brother's wish of joining the fancy dinner that night. He does not think it proper to bring his brother for "the Lards I commonly eat with, are a People of a nice Conversation, and you know, Tam, your Education has been a little at large" (Re I.III.204f). Young Fashion is hurt and disappointed. He is even willing to form an alliance with anybody that might help him to hurt his brother in return. Thus, when Coupler arrives he tells him "I stand in need of Any Body's Assistance that will help me cut my elder Brother's Throat" (Re I.III.251-253). When Coupler has the answer to Fashion's request, namely, taking the girl that was intended for Lord Foppington, Young Fashion hesitates at first. He is too intelligent for pulling this off without second thoughts. However, after being offended again (when Lord Foppington refuses to help him money-wise), Young Fashion defies his conscience and tells Coupler that "his Lordship has given me a Pill has purg'd off all my Scruples" (Re III.I.173f).

While, the two brothers boast of their aversion due to their differences, it could be argued that their repugnance stems from certain character traits they share. Both men turn out to be narcissistic, egocentric and resentful. Lord Foppington does not bring along his brother because he fears that this might make him look stupid. Young Fashion, on the other hand, marries a girl just to spite his brother.

Y. Fash. Your Lordship may keep up your Spirits
with your Grimace if you please, I shall support
mine with this Lady, and two Thousand
Pound a year. (Re V.V.312-315)

Thus, despite his complaining about his brother's narcissism, Young Fashion shows that he is not better himself.

Quite in contrast to this pair of brothers, Younger and Elder Worthy evince a much more loving relationship. While Young Fashion steals his brother's wife,

Young Worthy makes sure that his brother gets the woman he is in love with. However, Young Worthy's ambition to unite Elder Worthy with Hillaria is not utterly selfless.

Y.Wor. Ha! Gone! I don't like that! I am sorry to
find so resolute: But I hope Hillaria has
taken too fast hold of his Heart, to let this Fit
shake him off: I must to her, and make up this
Breach; for while his Amour stands still, I have
no hopes of advancing my own. (Re I.I.403-405)

For, Elder Worthy is promised to the very girl that he has fallen for, Narcissa. As can thus be seen, the true motivations for Young Worthy are not sympathy for his brother but his own love for a woman. In this respect, Younger Worthy is not so very different from Young Fashion; both strive after their own happiness, and their relationship to their brothers is a consequence of that. With this situation in mind, it could be argued that the reason why Younger Worthy comes across as much kinder than his older brother is not only due to Young Worthy's noble heart but also due to outer circumstances.

There are similar egocentric relationships not only between brothers but also between male friends, such as Rhodophil and Palamede in *Marriage a-la-Mode*, where one has an affair with the wife (or the wife-to-be) of the other. When Palamede finds out that the married woman he chose to have an affair with is actually Rhodophil's wife, he merely blames the circumstances ("Husband, quoth a! I have cut out a fine piece of work for myself" [MALM II.I.133f]), but does not plan on holding back just because it is a friend's wife. However, when the two men both find out that the other chose "his" woman to have an affair with, they are willing to fight each other (and are only just held back by Doralice). At the same time, they seem to value each other's opinion. When, in the end, everybody returns to the woman he belongs to, Rhodophil tells Doralice that "God, I am afraid there's something else in it; for Palamede has wit, and if he loves you there's something more in ye than I have found." (MALM V.I.324-326). Despite their cheating on each other, the two friends still regard each other highly.

Similarly, Belvile and Willmore might appear like friends at the beginning; yet Willmore's egoism manages to drive a wedge between the two and Belvile has no scruples fighting his friend. When Belvile can just save Florinda from being

raped, he attacks Willmore: “Ah plague of your Ignorance! if it had not been Florinda, must you be a Beast? – a Brute? a senseless Swine” (R III.III.129-131). He further does not shrink back from fighting: “Sdeath, I have no patience – draw, or I’ll kill you” (R III.III.165f). Yet, Belvile stays loyal to his womaniser-friend. When in the following episode, Willmore attacks Antonio, Belvile returns to make sure he is all right. Once again, however, his helping does not end well for Belvile: the officer temporarily detains him. Also when Willmore unmasks Belvile, when the latter is on the verge of being married, he might threaten Willmore with his sword, but he does him no harm. Just as Belvile is loyal to his loved one, Florinda, he appears to be loyal to his friend Willmore, who arguably does not even deserve it, being only self-absorbed.

In conclusion, it can be said that there does not exist a lot of true male friendship in the eight plays analysed. Some so-called friends do not really care for each other (Willmore and Frederick, Palamede and Rhodophil) and some brothers even try harm each other (Young Fashion and Lord Foppington). The only two brothers who stick together are Younger and Elder Worthy.

7.5 The Helping Hand

In order to get properly dressed or have the horses ready on time, men employed servants. In *The Relapse*, Young Fashion’s man, Lory, appears only to exist in order to help his master; he pursues no tasks of his own but gives hints (like advising to flatter his brother, when he needs money from him) and supports him. Apart from the more official tasks, servants also have to deliver secret love letters or spy on their master’s woman of desire. These are some of the things Lissardo does for his master Felix in *The Wonder*. He is also used by the people to find out about the goings-on of other people; like by Frederick, who takes the letter that Lissardo was carrying from Felix to Violante to find out what his friend had written.

At times, the servant’s meddling character can lead to misunderstandings and irritation. When Gibby confuses Violante with Isabella, he sets his master, Colonel Briton, on the wrong track to believe that he is looking for Violante. Moreover, when Lissardo sees Colonel Briton with Violante, he tells his master Felix that he believes that these two people are having an affair, when in fact

Colonel Briton is merely on a quest for Isabella. Hence, the servant's figure can be seen as fuel that helps ignite fire, where before there has just been a spark.

Furthermore, servants are also used as confidantes of their gentlemen, so that in their conversations the audience is presented with vital background information. Such is the case with Loveless and his man Snap, who open the scene in *Love's Last Shift*, where the audience is informed about Loveless's history. Moreover, while it is the servant's aim to please his master, it is rarely within the gentleman to support his man. When, at the beginning of *Love's Last Shift*, Snap complains he has not had proper food for quite some time; Loveless only mocks him. The arrogant and rude behaviour towards his servant already exemplifies Loveless's ruthless character. Also in *The Beau Defeated*, Sir John Roverhead shows no sign of acknowledging his servant's wish:

Chris With all my heart. Secure you the mistress, and let me alone
for the maid. (BD I.I. p.12)

Sir John Roverhead ignores Chris and continues charming the maid Betty. Roverhead, like Loveless, merely thinks about himself.

Some servants appear to copy their masters in their love life. Like Loveless, Snap makes no compromises in order to get what he wants. He follows the maid into her house, where he manages to grab her and take her by force. Like Loveless, Snap is even rewarded for his malicious behaviour: the maid is to marry him.

In contrast to that, in *The Wonder*, Don Felix's servant Lissardo does not need such brutal methods to get a girl. In fact, Don Felix's servant has two women who are mad about him and he even thinks that he can satisfy "both [their] demands" (W II.I. p.22). Like Felix, who is confused and jealous due to Violante's behaviour, Lissardo appears to react to what the two women do. In this play, it appears to be the women who take the first step.

7.6 Fathers-in-law-to-be

Be it the witty heroine or the damsel in distress – the women – apart from various servants – who are not married (yet) depend on their parents, or rather, their father. In addition, also the young men of the plays often depend on their

fathers. In *Marriage a-la-Mode*, for instance, Palamede has to marry Melantha because he would be disinherited if he did not.

The different influences a father figure might have on their daughters can be seen in *The Mulberry Garden*, where fashion-conscious, carefree John Everyyoung is juxtaposed to Samuel Forecraft. Forecraft disapproves of his brother's appearance, "thus powder'd, and trim'd, like an old Player" (MG I.I. p.2)¹³. Neither does he approve of his educational methods: "[N]o body will be very fond of a / Hide-Park Filly for a Wife" (MG I.I. p.2). Everyyoung retorts that "you / Think your Daughters like your Money, / Never safe, but under Lock and Key" (MG I.I. p.4). This discussion illustrates quite aptly the two standpoints a father could have towards his daughters: On the one hand, a father can keep his daughters locked up until the proper gentleman comes along to whom he marries his daughter, whereby he gains status and/or money; on the other hand, a father could spoil his daughters and let them have their way, with the danger of having their reputation destroyed.

However, despite their differences and in contrast to various pairs of brothers or friends, Forecraft and Everyyoung stick together if need be: "though / We fall out now and then about trifles, we are / Brothers, and ought to serve one another" (MG V.I. p.68).

While Charles Sedley depicted two rather opposite father figures in his play, in *The Wonder* the two old men are more of a kind. Don Lopez and Don Pedro both have certain plans for the future of their children in mind. Don Lopez wants to marry his daughter Isabella to Don Guzman because "he is rich and well-born" (I.I. p.6). When he is asked whether he has no consideration for his daughter's needs, he replies: "Is a husband of twenty thousand a year no consideration?" (I.I. p.6); a remark that stresses the then-prevailing notion that a rich man must be the highest and only goal for a woman.

Furthermore and in contrast to Everyyoung and Forecraft, who give their consent in the end, Don Lopez and Don Pedro are shocked when they find out that their children have married in secret. Don Pedro is so annoyed that he wants to hold back the twenty thousand pounds that Violante would get for her marriage: "I'll not part with a shilling" (V.III. p.51). In line with Don Pedro, in *The Relapse* Sir

¹³ Absurdly, he shall be criticised for his exaggerated clothing later in the play, when he dresses up for the widow.

Tunbelly Clumsey does not give his consent, when his daughter Miss Hoyden marries Young Fashion in the end: “may all go and be damn’d together” (Re V.V.296). The fact that the young people marry without their parents’ consent suggests that times were changing; the young people are taking over control; they decide to rather do what they want and live with less money than to live a life according to their parents’ wishes.

In *The Rover*, Hellena and Florinda are known to have a strict father – but he does not appear at all throughout the play. His commands are communicated via his son, Don Pedro. However, Don Pedro has his own thoughts about whom his sister should be married to. While their father wants Florinda married to Vincentio; Don Pedro wants her to tie the knot with Don Antonio. When Florinda marries Belville in the end, Don Pedro is the one who gives his consent. This illustrates the fact that in the absence of a father (even if, as it is the case here, the absence is only accidental) the brother takes on the role of a male guardian.

While in all of the eight plays (apart from *The Convent of Pleasure*) there is talk of fathers or other male guardians; in none of the eight plays a mother appears. This hints again at the little power and influence a married woman could exert. However, when at one time a mother is mentioned, she, again, appears in a strong and dominant way: In *The Relapse*, Berinthia confesses that she married a man whom she did not love, since her mother would have whipped her, if she had refused (see Re II.I.768). Elizabeth Debold, Marie Wilson and Idelisse Malava analysed the difficult mother-daughter-relationship as follows:

Mothers have been placed in a no-win situation with their daughters: if they teach their daughters simply how to get along in a world that has been shaped by men and male desires, then they betray their daughter’s potential. But, if they do not, they leave their daughters adrift in a hostile world without survival strategies.
(Debold, Wilson, Malava xv)

Thus, a mother’s action was very much guided by the prevailing social standards. They had to make compromises between what they wanted for their children and what was actually possible for them.

The dilemma of women finding their way in a patriarchal society will be further elaborated in the following chapter.

8. Analysis of Female Characters

8.1 The Witty Heroine

As already discussed in the preceding chapters, women did not have much power in the Restoration period. They were told what to do by the various men around them. Yet, some of the women found their means to get what they wanted. In Restoration comedy, these subversive women are called “witty heroines”. Some critics argue that in a male society there is only a certain amount of power a woman can achieve. Accordingly, Douglas Canfield believes that these protagonists are not truly able to break out of the patriarchal system but merely inhabit “the margins of patriarchal society as parasites unable to establish their own order of counter-estates” (Canfield 3). On the contrary, Sarup Singh reasons that the “fine raillery” that is typical of Restoration Comedy supported a further “emancipation of women” (Singh 207). Thus, women might still be inferior to men; but in speech, the heroine had the same freedom as the hero (Singh 207). Additionally, as Misty G. Anderson points out, the heroine’s comic rhetoric not only enables her to “make contrast and secure places in the community” but “bribes the audience with their own pleasure to take the heroine’s side” (Anderson 3).

Generally speaking, the gender roles prevailing in Restoration times were slowly beginning to totter, a fact that becomes apparent in Amanda’s speech in *Love’s Last Shift*:

Amanda [...] and ‘tis as hard a matter, now-
adays, for a Woman to know how to converse
with Men, as for a Man to know when to draw
his Sword (LLS III.I.33-35)

Arguably, the plays of the Restoration period can be seen as the characters’ negotiating of their position in society and, consequently, their drive for more freedom.

It is this freedom that the audience can witness right at the beginning of *The Convent of Pleasure*, when the female protagonist Lady Happy expresses her negative opinion about men. She believes that “[m]en are the only troublers of Women; for they only cross and oppose their sweet delights, and peacable life; they cause their pains, but not their pleasure” (I.I. p.220). As Lady Happy has

no intention of being “enslaved” (CP I.I p.220) by these men, but is aware that male supremacy is too strong for her to fight, she sees but one escape: retreating into a convent where men are not allowed to enter, into an ‘inner exile’.

Yet, her anger against men does not withstand temptation for long. When one man (the prince) manages to sneak into her convent, she cannot help falling in love. She prays to the Gods to

Suffer me not to fall in Love;
O strike me dead here in this place
Rather then fall into disgrace (CP IV.I. p.239).

However, she cannot help being smitten by the disguised prince, whom she even marries in the end. Her rebellious force is lost. In the final scene, the prince asks her to dance “to please Madame Mediator” (CP V.III. p.245) and Lady Happy does his bidding. She adopts the position predestined for her by male supremacy and thereby accepts the prevailing social standards. At the same time, one has to bear in mind that marriage was part of the traditional, dominant discourse. It can be regarded as the inevitable part of the story. Thus, this thesis will not focus particularly on this rite of passage, but rather on the interaction leading up to this event. Here, the characters have room to outline their beliefs about relationships; and can attempt to negotiate their rules.

In line with Lady Happy, also Hellena, in *The Rover*, believes that a convent is the only place for women to be removed from male tyranny or oppression, as can be seen in her remark that she “had rather be a Nun, than be / oblig’d to Marry as you wou’d have me, if I were design’d for it” (R I.I.185-187). The difference between Hellena and Lady Happy is, however, that Lady Happy wants to lead a peaceful, man-free life, while Hellena very much enjoys male company, but only if she can choose the man she spends time with herself.

Indeed, Hellena is eager to find such a suitable companion herself and hopes that her sister’s suitor Belvile “has some mad Companion or other, that will spoil my devotion” (R I.I.44f). At the same time, she still does not “intend every he that likes me shall have me, but he that I like” (R II.I 53f). Thereby, Aphra Behn addresses the subject of love marriage rather than a marriage of convenience. Furthermore, Pat Gill argues that Aphra Behn does not define her (strong) women by contrast. There is no clear-cut dichotomy between weak and strong,

stupid and intelligent women. Thus, a heroine could be “kind, forthright and, yet, proper adulterous” (Gill 141).

In any case, Hellena knows what she is worth and what she is able to do. She says to her sister Florinda: “We’ll outwit Twenty Brothers, if you’ll be rul’d by me” (R I.I.236f). It is exactly this kind of self-assuredness that makes Hellena stand out from the other women of the play. Even her brother Pedro calls her a „Wild Cat“, when Hellena jumps in to defend her sister’s wish to marry for love (R I.I 197); the rake Willmore calls her “some damn’d honest Person of Quality I’m sure, she was so very free and witty” (R I.II.401-403). When Hellena tells Willmore that “a handsome Woman has a great deal to do whilst her Face is good” (R III.I.238-240), she lets him know that he is by no means her only lover. Willmore is intrigued because he is challenged.

A woman in power does not only desperately cling to one man, but she looks around what the (relationship) market has to offer. Accordingly, Nancy Lyn Tippetts argues that “Behn gives her heroine [Hellena] increased power by resisting the tradition of locking Hellena into a subordinate position”, as she “manages to attach herself to a fictitious mistress (herself) rather than to an actual master” (Tippetts 175). This is also what sharp-tongued, sarcastic Olivia in *The Mulberry Garden* does. When the rake Wildish makes his advances, she tells him that

Olivia Whatever you think Sir, I shall contribute
No more to the keeping you my Servant,
Then I did to the making you so (MG II.I p.22).

Olivia, thereby, illustrates that her actions are not driven by the wish to secure or attract a man. She has no scruples telling what she thinks about the men that court her. While her sister Victoria is shocked about her blunt remark, Olivia is of the opinion that this will give the men “an Opinion of our wit” (MG I.III p.10). She further explains that “the great pleasure Of Gaming were lost, if we saw one Anothers [sic] hands; and of Love, if we knew one Anothers [sic] Hearts” (MG I.III p.10). She rebels against the nice and dull picture that women tend to be reduced to. Olivia wants to scheme and flirt and play with the other sex, just as men do. Why can she not enjoy them as well? Thus, despite her being smitten by Wildish, she sees no harm done in playing with Estridge.

Olivia [...] I am resolv’d to allow

All innocent liberty; this Matrimony is a
Pill will scarce down with a young man
Without gliding; let Estridge believe I am
In love with him, and when he leaves me,
He'll find I am not (MG I.III p.36)

Olivia wants to beat men at their own game. She is aware of the negative connotations marriage has and wants to use them for her own good.

Furthermore, Olivia lays some ground rules. She tells Wildish that “the first / Time thou anger'st me, I'll have a Gallant; and the next, make thee a Cuckold” (MG V.I p.70). Olivia phrases her viewpoint in a very clear-cut way. She is also not afraid to touch upon sensitive topics. In fact, her remark comes across in a very manly way. Arguably, however, for a woman to be heard and respected in this patriarchal society, it calls for the woman to acquire these manly means. Furthermore, when in the final scene, Olivia makes clear that Wildish is not to see the widow again (see MG V.I. p.75), Wildish tells her not to be afraid. Obviously, the spectator will never know, whether Wildish keeps his promise. However, his added comment that “Estridge will take order for that” (MG V.I p.75) implies – if only due to other factors – that he indeed will not see the widow again. Consequently, it is very likely that Olivia's request will indeed be obeyed.

Doralice in *Marriage a-la-Mode* also enjoys toying around with men: she is about to start an affair with her husband's friend Rhodophil. In fact, Doralice proves to be successful in her scheming. She manages to outwit her husband. When she disguises as a man, she is not even discovered by her lover Palamede, who boasted quite confidently before that he would recognise Doralice “in any shape” (MALM IV.III.54)

In addition, the witty heroine resembles her male counterpart insofar as she has a sharp tongue and does not mince her words. Doralice has no scruple pulling the people from the countryside to pieces. She declares in a very rakish manner that “[t]heir entertainment / of wit is only the remembrance of what they had when they / were last in town!” (MALM III.I.123-125). Doralice also gives her husband a piece of her mind: “I see you are in the husband's fashion. You reserve all your / good humours for you mistresses, and keep your ill for / your wives” (MALM III.I.47-49). Like Hellena and Olivia, she is not afraid to address sensitive topics. She further compares men to cocks, as they “[...] never make

love but you clap your wings and crow when you have done" (MALM III.II.50-52). Doralice calls her lover Palamede a "poor animal" that she "brought [...] hither only for [her] diversion" (MALM III.II.31f). Arguably, John Dryden puts her in a dominant position.

Doralice's dominant role is possibly best portrayed by her complaining that "[b]ecause they [men]/ cannot feed on one dish, therefore we must be starved" (MALM III.I.89f). While it is not unusual for men to compare sex to food, here a woman uses such a metaphor for her own sexuality. This remark is particularly interesting because Doralice hints at the fact that not only men enjoy sexual intercourse – women do as well, and she then blames her husband for not getting enough of her share as a spouse.

Interestingly, when Doralice finds out that Palamede is to marry Melantha, she makes it clear that the affair is over. She tells him that "A married man is but a mistress's/ half-servant; as a clergyman is but a king's half-subject" (V.I.230f). Thus, with Doralice Dryden creates a strong woman that sticks to her beliefs. She tells Palamede that "[t]he only way to keep us new to one another is never to enjoy" (MALM V.I.272f). She is the one who puts an end to the flirtation, and since, arguably, the person who ends a relationship is the one in control, Doralice appears to be the stronger person in this relationship.

However, in the end it becomes apparent that the woman just cannot be the dominant person in this social system. It is Rhodophil and Palamede that make a pact:

Rhodophil Then I think, Palamede, we had as good make a firm
league not to invade each other's property
Palamede Content say I. (MALM V.I.361-363).

As can thus be seen, it is the men who make the contracts and it is them that choose to stay with their respective wives(-to-be). Arguably, however, – and similarly to Lady Happy marrying the Prince – in a world where women could not even own their own money (except widows) a playwright could not possibly let them win in such a situation. Thus, as has already been discussed, the final decisions, such as the repentance of the rake and the triumph of Rhodophil and Palamede, have to be seen in the light of the current social norms. Similarly, In *Love's Last Shift*, when Hillaria is accused by Young Worthy of having flirted with Sir Novelty Fashion, she retorts: "That may be; but I'm resolv'd to be

Mistress / of my Actions before Marriage, and no Man shall usurp my Power over me, 'till I give it him" (LLS I.I.611-614). While this remark, on the one hand, shows Hillaria's wish for independence, at the same time, even she has to acknowledge that this independence is limited. After her being married, she becomes subject to her husband. Interestingly, also Hillaria's sister Narcissa, despite her more damsel-like nature, uses words evincing her independence. "Love him? Prithee, Cousin, no more of that old Stuff " (LLS I.I.506f), she tells Amanda, when she wants to know about Narcissa and her suitor Young Fashion. When her suitor proposes later on, Narcissa replies: "Marry me! Who put that in your Head?" (LLS I.I.671). She further regards it an insolence that he thinks that she might be moved to kiss and toy with him. However, Young Worthy does not let her get away with this dominant demeanour; he retorts that: "No, Madam, 'tis the Man must kiss, and toy with you, and so forth!" (LLS I.I.678-680). Thereby, Young Worthy stresses his superior position. He is the one to take the lead – in courting, and later on in marriage.

Amanda, on the other hand, is one of the few women in the eight plays (along with Doralice) who is already married at the beginning of the play, namely to a greedy, egocentric husband who has turned away from her. Even on his return, he is still appalled by the thought of his wife. Yet, Amanda is determined to win him back. As she is a decent woman, a husband is the only way for her to have fun with a man. Her friend Hillaria describes her as "the most constant Wife" (LLS I.I.409f). This very socially subordinate line of thought is rather atypical for a heroine. In addition, Amanda does not take part in the witty repartee like Hellena or Doralice. Thus, the question arises to what extent Amanda can actually be regarded as a witty heroine. It is her willpower and scheming that help win back her husband that suggest a very strong woman indeed.

Moreover, in *The Relapse*, the sequel of *Love's Last Shift*, Amanda displays a stronger character. Young Worthy is repeatedly trying to seduce her; yet, she stays strong. So while she has her doubts, when she believes herself falling in love with Young Worthy (for she thinks that "Of all my feeble Sex, sure I must be the / weakest" [Re V.IV.85f]); yet, when he draws nearer to her, takes her hand and kisses it eagerly, she leaves him ("Nay then, farewell" [Re V.V.151]). This is similar to Doralice refusing Palamede. This behaviour (even if it derives

from a traditional mindset that tells her to stay loyal to her husband) demonstrates that Amanda is a woman who can think and act on her own.

At the same time, Amanda's friend Berinthia (who wants to cheat on her with her husband) accuses her of building "Castles in the Air" (Re III.II.310), a remark that arguably refers to the fact that Amanda prefers living in her own world rather than confronting herself with reality. Also the retreat to the countryside suggests that Amanda and Loveless need special conditions for their marriage to work out; these conditions imply isolation from tempting London.

As has thus been demonstrated, Amanda does not represent the prototypical heroine; yet, she is a strong woman. A more devious character in this play is just-mentioned Berinthia, who cheats on her friend with her husband. Disguised as a friend Berinthia puts Amanda into misery without appearing to care too much. Yet, when she finally ends up with Loveless in her chamber and he makes advances, the audience sees her desperation about the whole situation. Even if her desperation is only feigned, she puts into words that she is "Ravish'd, ruin'd, undone. O Lord, I shall never be able to bear it" (Re IV.III.93f). Her contradictory behaviour shows that she is torn between morality and her craving. At the same time, the spectator comes to witness her limitations. When Worthy persuades Berinthia to toy with the married couple Loveless and Amanda, Berinthia consents to the plan. However, when she is alone again, we find out she does not really want to go through with this action, but she knows that "He'd have ruin'd me, if I had refus'd him" (III.I 276), for Worthy had seen Loveless kissing Berinthia. This episode once again underlines the fact that men are the ones in power.

In addition, Berinthia challenges the prevailing gender stereotypes in *The Relapse*. When talking about a "Modern Philosopher", she adds in a side note: "whose Works, tho' a Woman, I have read" (Re II.I.616f). Thereby, Berinthia does not only question the boundaries women are exposed to, she further alludes that she has no interest in doing the things that she as a woman is supposed to do, but acts according to her own intellect.

Similar to Berinthia, in *The Wonder*, Violante does not care about social conventions. She acts the way she believes is right. Arguably, she is the

strongest woman in the eight plays analysed. However, when looking at the author and the date of publishing, this is not very surprising. This play was written the latest and by a woman. As already discussed, Susanna Centlivre attacks the then-prevailing misogynist prejudices particularly in her prologue and prefaces. In her plays she is subtler (due to the need to please the audience). Yet, by creating such a strong and independent female character she questions contemporary social standards. Already her title toys with these beliefs in a very ironic way: *A Wonder! a Woman keeps a secret*. Due to the irony here, any misogynist spectator would feel vindicated at first because the title seems to confirm common prejudices about female gossip. At a closer look, however, this title actually mocks those people who regard women as incapable of keeping things to themselves.

Furthermore, Violante is the only one who puts somebody else's needs before of her own. The moment she hides Isabella, she takes over responsibility for her; and she is determined not to fail. She might be torn ("What shall I say? Nothing but the secret which I have sworn to keep can reconcile this quarrel" W V.I. p.38), but she stays strong. Even when her lover Felix gets suspicious and fears that Violante might have another suitor, she does not come forward with the truth. Violante might not be the one with the most power (for as a woman, she simply could not be), but it can be argued that she is the strongest-minded and most upright person in this play.

Another very strong and independent woman is Lady Landsworth in *The Beau Defeated* (despite the unusual name for a witty heroine, who was usually part of the city clique). Already in the first scene, she surprises with a very unusual remark:

L. Landsworth [...] Well, I am
resolved to indulge my inclinations, and rather than obtain the
person I like, I invert the order of nature and pursue though he flies.
(BD I.I. p.8)

This utterance is particularly interesting because it toys with the prevailing notion that the man is the hunter and the woman the one to be hunted. In addition, Landsworth concludes in the same sentence that this unusual behaviour might shock the men around her and make them withdraw – yet, she will still proceed because she regards it as her right to end up with the person

she likes. Thus, playwright Mary Pix broaches the universal problem that women did not have much possibility in getting the man they liked, if he had not, by chance, chosen to go after them.

As can be expected, Younger Clerimont is indeed taken aback by Lady Landsworth's bluntness:

Younger Clerimont The relation freezes up my youthful
blood and cheeks desire with horror! Does none tell thee what a
wretch you art?

L. Landsworth None. They call me Goddess, Angel, and
court me with dainties fit for queens' tables [...] (BD III.II p.35f).

Again, Landsworth demonstrates a witty tongue. Younger Clerimont is beguiled. He finds her "witty beyond her sex" (BD II.I. p.19). This utterance, again, underlines the general notion that women ought not to be smart and clever – or at least not cleverer than the common man. Moreover, Mary Pix lets Landsworth have "numerous lovers" (BD III.II p.35), which shows that men appreciate this independent and powerful character.

Lady Landsworth's dislike of the city (as can already be guessed from her name) is quite unusual for a witty heroine. Doralice, for instance, openly rails against the landed gentry. Also in *The Relapse*, for instance, the reader can still detect the anti-countryside-attitude. When Young Fashion finds out that Miss Hoyden has indeed married twice, he exclaims: "I think my Country Girl has play'd her part / as well, as if she had been born and bred in St. / James's Parish" [V.I.66f].) Landsworth, on the contrary, is very much annoyed by London. She declares that she has "seen it all, and despite it: at the theatre, I am tired with the double-acted farce, on the stage and in the side-boxes" (BD III.II p.39).

Furthermore, the maid Betty very much adores Lady Landsworth for being neither short- nor ill-tempered: "Had our sex but your forbearance, they might all be happy" (BD I.I p.8) This attitude and behaviour, however, could already indicate the change of society and the rise of the middle class at that time. As already mentioned, these people were appalled by the immoral behaviour of the upper class and idealised harmonic life in the countryside.

In conclusion, it can be said that the witty heroine enjoyed popularity throughout the Restoration period. All of the eight playwrights – female as well as male –

designed strong female protagonists. This is particularly interesting because not all playwrights created strong male protagonists. Additionally, as Misty G. Anderson argues the playwright's choice to form such a character could also stem from the fact that "audiences enjoyed these hopeful visions of female agency" (Anderson 3).

8.1.2 Sisters by Blood or by Choice

While the previous chapter focused on the heroine's relationship to her suitor or her lover (in any case to people of the other sex), this chapter will have a closer look at the way the heroine treats people of her own sex. As shall be seen, sisterhood – be it by blood or by choice – is no warranty for friendly behaviour.

For instance, Violante and Isabella (*The Wonder*) as well as Amanda and Berinthia (*Love's Last Shift*) are both friends. Yet, while on the one hand, there is a heroine helping her friend, on the other hand, there is a woman having an affair with her friend's husband. When having a closer look, one comes to the conclusion that the difference between the two female relationships is due to the distribution of power.

When Isabella is carried to Violante to ask for a hideout, she takes on the role of a suppliant. She is not able to help herself and, thus, turns to a friend she knows she can rely on. By taking on this subordinate position, Isabella automatically positions Violante to take on the superior role. This allocation of responsibility does not change throughout the play. Violante stays in the position of the protecting mother that would never betray her child. It is this stable role allocation that allows for the two of them to stay in a relation of sisterhood that is not affected by jealousy or rivalry.

Additionally, even when the budding love relationship between Felix and Violante is put at risk due to Isabella's hiding, Violante stays loyal to Isabella.

Isabella Then I am most unhappy. My brother was the only pledge
of faith betwixt us; if he has forfeited your favour, I have no title to
your friendship"

Violante You wrong my friend, Isabella; your own merit entitles
you to every thing within my power (W IV.I.p.32).

It is Isabella's fear of Violante's reaction that allows for Violante to stay benign. In her role as protecting mother she cannot punish her child.

A similar relationship can be observed not by sisters of choice, but sisters of blood: Hellena and Florinda. Again, they personify two types of women. Florinda is sensible and obedient; Hellena is wild and impetuous. It is this clear distribution of qualities that allows for Hellena to rejoice when Florinda shows a sign of insubordination herself.

Florinda With Indignation, and how near soever
my Father thinks I am to Marrying that hated
Object; I shall let him see, I understand better,
[...] than to obey those unjust commands
Hellena Now hang me, if I don't love thee for that
dear disobedience. (R I.I.25-32)

Hellena's unaffected joy about her sister acting in a more rebellious way shows that there is no rivalry between them.

At the same time, their relationship is more balanced. Florinda is not as helpless as Isabella; she does not rely on Hellena as much. Already in her first comment Florinda says "I have told thee more than thou understand'st already!" (R I.I.3f). This suggests superiority on Florinda's part. This superiority is further solidified in the following exchange, where Florinda is portrayed as a woman in love, while Hellena admits that she has never been in love before; Florinda is one up on her sister. With regard to love relationship, Hellena turns to her sister for help. Like a self-conscious girl she asks her experienced sister "what dost thou see about me that is unfit for Love?" (R I.I.53). Again, it is due to their established roles that Hellena can confess her weakness to her sister; weakness that she only shows in front of those that she can trust. When their brother Pedro enters, Hellena tries to defend not only her own wishes but also those of her sister. She openly criticises Pedro for choosing "that Old Sir Fifty" (R I.I.178). Florinda, on the other hand, as becomes her nature, tries to pour oil on troubled waters, when she assures her brother that she shall make a decision until tomorrow, "as shall become your sister" (R I.I.211f).

Very similar demeanour can be observed in *The Mulberry Garden*. When fun-loving Olivia tells her sister her opinion of her suitor Ned Estridge, Victoria is cautious. What if a man ever heard the way she talked about him behind his back? Olivia does not worry about that.

Olivia The only way to oblige most men
Is to use'um thus, a little now and then,
Even to their faces, it gives'um an

Opinion of our wit (MG I.III p.10)

By bragging thus about her carefreeness, Olivia puts Victoria in the role of the well-behaved, nice sister. As Victoria does not rebel against her subordinate position, these two women can get along in a very friendly way.

In *The Convent of Pleasure*, Lady Happy stands out as a strong and independent character. The other ladies who join her in the convent admire her. There is no rivalry; these women accept their subordinate position without questioning it. However, there is one woman that meets Lady Happy at eye level: Madame Mediator. She is the only woman that questions Lady Happy's idea about the convent (at least at the beginning): "In my opinion, your Doctrine, and your Intention do not agree together" (CP I.II p.220). She adds: "But if you incloister your self, How will you enjoy the company of Men, whose conversation is thought the greatest Pleasure?" (CP I.II p.220). By quoting the prevailing social standards, Madame Mediator takes on the dominant discourse and acts as an opponent. Later on, when Lady Happy is about to fall in love, it is again Madame Mediator who warns her that she has "become lean and pale" (CP IV.I. p.238), since the last time, she had seen her. Thus, Madame Mediator can be seen as an adviser to Lady Happy rather than a proper friend. There is no reason for Lady Happy to see her as a rival.

As already mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Amanda and Berinthia portray quite a different pair of friends. At their first encounter in the play, they greet each other enthusiastically, expressing their joy about seeing each other. They appear to be able to read the other. Relationship-wise Amanda looks up to the more-experienced Berinthia ("But, prithee, Berinthia, instruct me a little farther, for I am so great a Novice" [Re II.I.629f]). However, as the audience will soon find out, Amanda's reading of her cousin is a very naïve one. Amanda is even dallying with the idea to let Berinthia live with herself and her husband – while Berinthia is having an affair with him. While it has to be borne in mind that Loveless takes the initiative and Young Worthy pushes her further, Berinthia herself admits: "I begin to fancy there may be as much pleasure in carrying on another Bodies [sic] Intrigue, as one's own" (LLS III.II.277-280). Once she settles on her scheming, Berinthia even has no scruples using their alleged friendship to set Amanda on the evil track.

Aman. Yes, he has been Ogling.
Ber. And so you are jealous? Is that all?
Aman. That all! Is jealousie nothing?
Ber. It shou'd be nothing, if I were in your Case.
Aman. Why, what wou'd you do?
Ber. I'd cure myself. (Re III.II.299-304)

In contrast to Violante or Hellena, who choose to help the damsel that turns to them for help, Berinthia betrays her friend behind her back. A fundamental difference between those aforementioned strong women and Berinthia is that Berinthia and her damsel-friend are rivals for the same man. In short: they both love Loveless.

8.2 The Damsel in Distress

As was just pointed out, in contrast to the witty heroine who takes life into her own hands, the so-called damsel in distress depends on other people. Florinda in *The Rover* is a very prototypical female damsel. "Will no kind Pow'r protect me from his tyranny?" (R IV.III. 98), Florinda asks when nearly caught out by her brother. This remark exemplifies Florinda's character. When in danger or in distress, she expects someone to come and rescue her.

Florinda is very much in love with Belvile but her father and her brother want her to marry Don Vincentio. She even begs her brother not to "follow the ill Costumes of our Country, and make a slave of his sister" (R I.I.85-87). However, Pedro is not to be budged due to the money and property Florinda will obtain after her marriage. Florinda's dependency becomes apparent already in this first scene, when her sister Hellena jumps in to defend her and her dreams. So despite this being an argument about Florinda's future, it is Hellena that Pedro gets properly mad at. When Pedro offers another alternative, namely, his friend Antonio, Florinda is none the happier (for she loves Belvile), but all she manages to say is that she will think about it.

Two more incidents illustrate her helplessness. Indeed, Florinda is nearly raped twice. One time, stupidly drunk Willmore stumbles into Florinda's garden through the back-door that she left open for Belvile to find her. "[C]ome, come kiss me" (R III.III.31), Willmore orders, when he sees Florinda, mistaking her for a prostitute. She tries to get away from him, but Willmore insists. He even offers

her money (“a Pistol”, a gold coin) for doing her work. Luckily, Belvile appears in time to prevent any harm. She would not have been able to free herself or get rid of Willmore on her own. The second time, it is Blunt and Frederick that nearly do her harm. As already mentioned, after (the real prostitute) Lucetta has fooled and robbed Blunt, he is so annoyed that when seeing Florinda, he wants to “kiss and beat thee all over” (R IV.IV.65f). He rudely pulls her and deliberately wants to “strip [her] stark naked, then hang [her] out at [his] window by the heels” (R IV.IV.74f). When Frederick comes along, Blunt asks him to join in, whereupon Frederick is “ready to serve [Blunt] in matters of / Revenge that has a double pleasure in’t” (R IV.IV.141f). Also this time, the rape can only just be averted when Frederick hesitates upon Florinda referring to Belvile. Frederick, then, manages to talk Blunt out of doing Florinda harm. Again, Florinda needs someone else to rescue her.

Similar to Florinda, also Althea and Diana in *The Mulberry Garden* are confronted with a father who does not approve of their suitors. “Under what Tyranny are Women born!” exclaims Althea (MG II.II p.23), because

The Horse may shake the Rider from his back;
 The Dog his hated Master may forsake [...]
 But if a Virgin an Escape contrive,
 She must for ever in dishonour live,” (MG II.II p.23)

For her comparison to illustrate women’s poor situation, Althea uses creatures that mankind usually exert power over. By comparing herself to a horse and a dog, she wants to stress the absurd situation that one group of human beings suppresses another one. Furthermore, to show the utter absurdity of this behaviour, she demonstrates that in fact beasts are better off than she is. For if a woman decides to take one step that is against the prevailing social standards, there is no going back for her: she will be shunned. Althea fears this situation, and thus, rather obeys her father’s wish that keeps her away from her one true love, Eugenio. That she ends up with him in the end, after all, is not due to her fighting for her rights, but due to outer circumstances that make Eugenio more appealing to her father.

In line with Florinda and Althea, in *The Wonder*, Isabella rails against the prevailing social situation.

Isabella [...] The custom of our country enslaves us from our very

cradles – first to our parents, next to our husbands, and when
heaven

Is so kind to us of both these, or brothers still usurp authority,
and expect a blind obedience from us (W I.II p.9)

Isabella cannot and does not want to deal with the future that is laid out for her. Consequently, she decides to run away, but she cannot do it on her own. When she climbs out of her window, she conveniently falls into the arms of Colonel Briton, who then takes her to Violante. The fact that Isabella does not flee on her own but lets herself be carried, already suggests her dependence. Her asking Violante for a place to hide further stresses her inability to act and live on her own. She might feel guilty at times (for instance, when she is the reason for her brother Felix getting suspicious that his love, Violante, might see another man); yet, she does nothing to change the situation. She actually makes everything worse, when she invites the Colonel so that Violante can ‘check him out’. Since Violante “must assist [Isabella] in discovering whether he can like [her] or not “ (W IV.I. p.32); Isabella is obviously not able to find out on her own whether Colonel Briton is the right man for her. Like in all other aspects of life, she needs a person who takes her hand and shows her which way to go.

Another character that is dependent on guidance is Mrs. Rich’s niece Lucinda in *The Beau Defeated*. Lucinda believes herself in love with Sir John Roverhead. Additionally, she believes to have very good reasons to marry:

Lucinda: Now, my Lord, the reason why I have a mind to be
married is because I may have a little more freedom. I never go
anywhere no, but that old woman’s at my heels. And I have heard
‘em say, wives go where they will and do what they will
(BD III.II p.42)

This utterance stands in harsh contrast to what the strong women in the play think. However, later in the play, we learn that Lucinda, in fact, does not think herself “furiously in love”; rather, she wants to “run away only for more pleasure, more liberty” (BD V.I. p.74). Thus, it can be argued that her desire to free herself arises from her naivety. However, in her naïve search for freedom, she overlooks that she would put herself in a man’s care that does not have her freedom in mind at all. As can be seen in his side remark to the audience, Roverhead is merely doing it for the money.

Chris [to *Sir John*] Sir, twenty thousand pounds, when she is at age.
Sir John [aside] Very well! Gad, I’ll marry her. By that time I shall
have spent it, broke her heart, and be ready for another. – [to

Lucinda] My dear blossom, how happy am I to have gained your affections! Though 'tis no wonder, for the universality of women die for me.

Lucinda For my part, you spoke to me. For that I like ye. Else truly Mr – .pish, my Lord – I see as fine things walk here as you

Sir John Oh fie!

Chris A baby indeed. She has not yet learnt to dissemble. (BD III.II p.42f)

This episode reveals the characters of Roverhead and Lucinda. Roverhead is all calculation; he is not emotionally attached at all because he sees himself as a very superior person; Lucinda should feel honoured that he blesses her with his attention. In Lucinda's reply to his boasting, her naïve nature is revealed. Lucinda is not able to see behind his off-the-shelf phrases. Like a child blindly believing her mother, Lucinda does not reflect on Roverhead's statements. Moreover, as Roverhead's servant points out, Lucinda has not yet learnt that unveiling her inner thoughts makes her vulnerable like a baby and merely leads to other people exploiting her sincerity.

This episode further reveals a society that is used to exploit and being exploited. Thus, the wit that characters like the heroine and the rake use can be seen as instruments so as not to be exposed to ridicule. Those who are not able to use this device are the one that will lose.

Similar to Lucinda, Miss Hoyden in *The Relapse* hopes that matrimony leads to freedom. For, now, her father keeps her locked up; she is desperate: "Sure never no body was us'd as I am!" (Re III.IV.1). Miss Hoyden, whom her father considers a very naïve girl that "does not know a Man from a Woman" (Re III.V.8), is a well-behaved girl and tells Young Fashion upon his arrival that "I never disobey my father in any thing, but eating of green Gooseberries" (Re IV.I.46f). Thus, she might complain about her situation, yet does not think about breaking out of this prison. Hence, she sees her only possibility of change in marrying the gentleman her father set up for her and moving to London with him.

Her naivety also becomes apparent in her quickly marrying first Young Fashion and then his brother. Upon finding out that Young Fashion is not the rich gentleman she thought he was, she tells her nurse "I'll even marry this Lord too" (Re IV.VI.306f). Although her nurse lectures her that this is not right, Miss Hoyden sees no harm. She compares being married twice for the "Peace of

Spirit” with being “drunk by way of Physick” (Re IV.VI.316-318). However, when in the end Miss Hoyden finds out that the two gentlemen she just married are brothers, she cannot decide which one to take. Again, she turns to her nurse for help: “But which do you think you shou’d fancy most, Nurse?” (Re V.V.7f). She ends up with the one she married first. Not, however, because she decides it, but because Young Fashion declares himself her “lawful Husband” (Re V.V.224).

Being similarly in distress and similarly dependent on another person, yet quite different because her love for the man she loves outshines all her grief and sorrow, Palmyra can be regarded as a rather different woman in distress. Her lover Leonidas describes her as being “[l]ike a weak dove under the falcon’s grip” (MALM III.I.263f). While Florinda and Lucinda might also be desperate because there seems no way for them to get to their loved ones, Palmyra’s commitment goes deeper. She puts Leonidas’ life and happiness above her own. “O spare Leonidas, and punish me.” (MALM IV.IV.140), she cries when jealous Polydamas wants to take revenge.

However, what Palmyra ranks even higher than her loved one is her fate. She is “content to be what heaven has made me” (MALM I.I.436). (Incidentally, so is Althea in *The Mulberry Garden*, who states that “we must all obey Our Fortunes” (MG IV.I. p.56)). Thus, the possibility of changing a situation by taking life into one’s own hands does not dawn on Palmyra. It is, furthermore, this passiveness due to her trust in fate that makes her dependent on other people to save her. Even when – or due to the fact that – the two people closest to her, her father and her lover, fight in the final scene, she is not able to take action:

Palmyra [aside]

Duty and love by turns possess my soul,
And struggle for a fatal victory.

I will discover he’s the king. Ah no

That will perhaps save him,

But then I am guilty of a father’s ruin.

What shall I do, or not do? Either way

I must destroy a parent, or a lover. (MALM V.I.428-434)

She is too weak to decide. Her body reacts in the only possible way: she swoons. Thus, she is in the most submissive condition; a condition, where she is more than ever in need of another person to look after her. The fainting at a

vital moment illustrates her inability to take decision; she needs – and wants – somebody to decide for her.

Generally speaking, the character of a damsel in distress can indeed be seen as a consequence of long-lasting suppression. This type of woman has indeed absorbed the established notion that a woman is weak and in need of a strong man to hold her. Her appearance in nearly all the plays emphasises the fact that this was a very typical person not only for Restoration comedy but Restoration times in general.

Women's dependence on men can also be seen in the play that is staged in the third act in *The Convent of Pleasure*. Nine short sketches outline the then-prevailing situation for women. There is, for instance, a married woman that would rather her husband ran away with the butcher's wife because now he beats her and is drunk all the time. In another sketch a married woman is desperate because her husband has gambled away all their estate. There is a woman who has just had a miscarriage and is desperate to bear an heir. Another sketch shows a mother who wanted to match her daughters well, yet one got with child and the other ran away with the butler. All of the sketches illustrate the impotent position women of the Restoration period were in and their dependence on the male sex.

8.3 The Scheming Maid

As every proper hero has a sidekick, many women in these plays have a scheming maid that helps them in a crisis. Sometimes, the maid is even slyer than the lady she works for. Yet, due to her limited social position she will never rise above her mistress.

One example of such a maid is Flora in *The Wonder*, a woman for whom an intrigue "is a business after my own heart" (W II.I p.6). "O invention, invention", Flora cries (W IV.I. p.36), when Violante's and her secret is about to be exposed and, indeed, she comes up with an idea just in time: she dresses Felix up as a woman and passes him off as her mother. It is particularly interesting that it is the maid who comes up with the plan to save Violante and Felix, two characters who usually are not short of wit themselves.

While the servants are usually the ones who are told off or told what to do, Flora has no scruple telling Violante's father Pedro what she thinks of him sending her daughter to a monastery. "If I had such a father, I know what I would do", she tells him. "I would tell him I had a good right and title to the law of nature, and the end of the creation, as he had" (W IV.I. p37). Even Violante is taken aback by her chambermaid's bluntness. "Fie, Flora; are you not ashamed to talk thus to my father?" (W IV.I.p37). Hence, the usually strong and brave Violante falters in front of her father, but Flora makes no difference in speaking her thoughts whether she is only with her mistress or with a "superior" man.

Despite Flora's trying every scheme she can think of to save Violante, she does not idolise her lady. Indeed, she appears to think her rather arrogant and selfish: "These ladies consider nobody's wants but their own" (W II.I p.14). This ambivalence illustrates that Flora is a very independent woman that does not need other people's approval to take actions. She does whatever she does because she believes it to be the right thing to do.

At the same time, Flora has her own love-problems to attend to, for the suspicion arises that her suitor Lissardo also flirts with another woman. As proof of his affection for her, she demands the ring he has, the one that Violante gave him to give to Felix. She remains demanding, even when Lissardo tries to talk her out of this: "If I mayn't keep your ring, I can keep my kisses." (W II.I. p.14). Thus, Flora does not truckle in order to win Lissardo back; she stands her ground. She knows what she is worth and she clearly is not to be intimidated by a rival. When Flora then walks in on Lissardo kissing Inis, she "gives him a box on the ear" (W III.II p.22). Inis, who was not aware of Lissardo's two-timing before, is very irritated at first. They start quarrelling, until Lissardo (who feels very uncomfortable, like "an acre of land") chips in that he could "satisfy both your demands" (W IIII.II p.22). It is this arrogance that then welds the two maids together. For the one thing that they appear to hate more than a rival is the patronising talk of a man who thinks he is potent enough for attending to two women.

Similar to Flora, in *The Beau Defeated*, maid Betty tells the gentlemen and - women around her what she thinks about them. She might be the maid of annoying Mrs. Rich, but she has decided to side with the intelligent Lady

Landsworth. With great irony, Betty plants her insults towards Mrs. Rich in a way that the woman does not even understand them all the time. When Mrs. Rich complains about the whole town loving her niece Lucinda, for instance, Betty mocks her lady as well as society in general by saying: “What a foolish town is this! Because she’s young and pretty they take more notice of her than you” (BD I.I. p.3). She also does not hide her antipathy towards Sir John Roverhead.

Sir John I protest thou art charmingly dressed, and pretty, I vow
What design have you today?

Betty Is it to me you speak, Sir?

Sir John To whom else?

Betty I thought like a poet you were repeating, and designed the
compliment for the next of quality you met. (BD I.I p.12)

Witty remarks put the person that makes them into a momentarily superior position. By allowing Betty to talk back like this, Mary Pix challenges not only the prevailing gender stereotypes but also the social ones. Even if only for a moment, Betty thereby takes on a superior position. When Sir John reacts with enthusiasm about this woman’s witticism, this again points to the fact that he regards her as equal enough to make advances.

Like the maid Betty appears to be wittier than her lady, Mrs. Rich, also the maid Moretta in *The Rover* shows more foresight and intelligence than her mistress, the courtesan Angellica Bianca. Already upon first meeting Willmore, Moretta thoroughly despises him: “Pox on him he’ll fret me to death: – abominable Fellow” (R II.II 52f), she says. She also tries to warn her mistress that he does not have her lady’s best interest in mind but just his own. Again, however, the lady does not pay attention to what her maid says. She does as she pleases – which turns to be her loss in the end.

The maid appearing in *Love’s Last Shift* is quite a different character. Here, she does not succeed in outwitting the men. When the servant Snap casts eyes on her and decides that he wants her, she tries to get rid of him, by letting him fall down a trap door. However, upon falling, Snap grabs the maid and pulls her towards him. The next time the audience sees her she is in tears. Despite her desperation, she is blamed for her action and is punished by being forced to marry Snap.

To sum up, it is interesting that the wittiest maids appear in those plays written by women. Particularly the two plays that were written the latest, namely *The Wonder* and *The Beau Defeated*, portray clever and sharp-tongued young women who do not only have their mistresses' lives in mind, but their own as well. By giving these persons of lower rank a history, an agenda on their own, they give them more recognition and, consequently, a stronger voice.

8.4 Foppish and Foolish Women

The foppish woman can be seen as female pendant to the fop. One attribute that exposes this character is her obsession with French – with the language as well as with the clothing. Melantha, in *Marriage a-la-Mode* is such a woman. When Palamede, her husband-to-be, meets her for the first time, he says to himself: „I find my mistress is one of those that run mad in new French words“ (MALM II.I.47f). Palamede appears to be thoroughly annoyed by her, since „she asks all, and will hear nothing“ (MALM II.I.61) and she talks in this „French gibberish“ (MALM II.I.83). His resolution is, thus, that „I must kiss all night“ to make her shut up (MALM II.I.86). As can easily be deduced from this episode, the foppish woman chases men away rather than making them chase after her.

Furthermore, like the fop, the foppish woman is a person that depends on the recognition from others. Thus, her love for the French derives from the desire to impress people. Like the fop, however, her plan backfires. That is the case with Melantha's endeavour to impress the people around her by telling that she is in the king's "good graces" (MALM II.I.180), although the people of court do not even like her. Court Lady Artemis tells Palmyra that Melantha is "[a]n impertinent lady, Madam, very ambitious of being known to your Highness." (v.i.95f). There is, however, one man that is impressed by Melantha's behaviour: Rhodophil. "The devil is in me, that I must love this woman" (MALM II.I.184), he says aside. The attraction between Melantha and Rhodophil shows that people alike understand and appreciate each other. With regard to Melantha and Rhodophil, this means people of no wit and little intellect.

This mechanism also explains why Sir Novelty Fashion is amazed by Flareit in *Love's Last Shift*. As can already be deduced from her name, Flareit is a very choleric person. Her catchphrase can also be seen as an indicator for her love

of exaggeration. "Let me die" she cries very often, when in fact there is no reason to be thus aroused. When Flareit (disguised as Narcissa) asks Sir Novelty Fashion whether he will see Flareit again and he negates, she boxes his ear and calls him a "miserable conceited Wench" (LLS IV.I.48). Upon recognising her, Novelty tries to save the situation, but Flareit is so affected that she is determined to leave. Secretly, however, she expects him to go after her. When he does not do so, her anger flares up again and she takes Young Worthy's sword to attack Fashion with it. Any attack, however, can be prevented. Flareit has made a laughing-stock of herself.

Love's Last Shift is not the only play in which a woman goes for the weapon. Also in *The Rover*, courtesan Angellica Bianca holds a pistol to Willmore's breast, when she is disappointed and enraged by his rakish behaviour: "I have vow'd thy death, by all that's Sacred" (R V.I 298). Yet, once again, she falls for Willmore and his charm. She is in love and cannot help herself, although she knows that he is a "False Man!" and "[...] see[s] my ruine in thy face" (R IV.II.224). She realises that he does not care whether she is well, he only flirts with her for his own benefit. Yet, she cannot help herself; she is smitten by him. In her despair, she sees violence as her only way to get him to do what she wants, but, as always, love cannot be forced.

Another violent attack takes place in the fifth act of *The Beau Defeated* between Lady La Basset and Mrs. Rich – again, a person for whom reputation is most vital, as can be seen in her ambition not to marry below a count: „And I had rather be the beggarliest countess in the town than the widow of the richest banker in Europe“ (BD I.I p.3). Lady La Basset believes that Mrs. Rich has enticed John Roverhead away from her, for it was her scheme to dress the servant as John Roverhead. La Basset demands that Mrs. Rich either "quits Sir John or buys him of me at a good round rate" (BD V.II. p.70). When Mrs. Rich does not take her demand seriously, La Basset draws not only the sword with one hand, but also a pistol with the other. Like a damsel in distress, Mrs. Rich is not able to manage this situation on her own; she needs her brother to save her.

In this episode, the two women take on quite an unusual discourse. Already the fact that women draw weapons can be seen as an indicator that traditional

stereotypes are turned upside down. While it is normally men that bargain about women, in this sequence it is a woman who wants money from another woman as compensation for her failed scheme. Thus, their violent argument can be seen as an attempt to point out that women wanted to clarify things on their own without a man stepping in to claim his right.

In conclusion, it can be said that these foppish and foolish women differ greatly with regard to their personality and temper. Yet, all of them strive for approval. They need external recognition.

9. Conclusion

In summary, it can be said that the eight plays analysed feature variable manifestations of the same stock characters. As has already been noted, the play that stands out the most is Margaret Cavendish's closet drama *The Convent of Pleasure*. This play differs in style and structure and shows less of the traditional witty repartee. Yet, being a comedy of the Restoration period, it draws on the same topics as the seven other plays: It features a scheming man who woos a woman, another man (or in this case, three men) who fail(s) in scheming as well as in flirting and a strong woman that wants to fight male supremacy – and, yet, ends up married in the end.

Additionally, there are differences in the portrayal of gender between male and female playwrights. Generally speaking, women wrote more female friendly and gave female characters more voice and power. It further appears that especially the female writers questioned the rake being portrayed as a hero. While Charles Sedley designed his rake Jack Wildish in *The Mulberry Garden* as a rather cool, clever and charming man, Willmore in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, for instance, comes off as a more brutal and ignorant rake. (He nearly rapes the interest of his friend Belville and he also blows Belville's cover when he is disguised as another man.) Moreover, the rakes of Mary Pix (Younger Clerimont) and Susanna Centlivre (Don Felix), who appeared in plays written twenty and forty years later, show softer and more sensitive features. Thus, it is questionable, whether these two protagonists can be considered as proper rakes at all.

Similar to the rake, also the various manifestations of the fop differ according to the sex of the playwright. Overall, the male playwrights created fops that behave foolishly but not nastily (Sir Novelty Fashion later Lord Foppington, Harry Modish), while the fops portrayed by female playwrights (Blunt, Sir John Roverhead) come across as more malicious.

At the same time, none of the plays – not even those written by women – feature endings that question the prevailing social standards. In seven of the plays (in all except *Marriage a-la-Mode*), the rake ends up with the woman he wants and the heroine, who has been witty and clever throughout the play, accepts her subordinate position. However, as has been noted throughout the

thesis, this was to be expected, as drama is a form of literature that aims to please the audience rather than shock it and men's supremacy was still ubiquitous at that time.

Regardless of the sex of the author, there are more real friendships portrayed between women than between men. In the case of Young Fashion and Lord Foppington (appearing in Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*) as well as in the case of Rhodophil and Palamede (appearing in John Dryden's *Marriage a-la-Mode*), none of the men shrink from hurting the other. Furthermore, in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, Belville might tolerate Willmore despite his egocentric behaviour; yet, they clearly cannot be regarded as proper friends. The only two men who are inclined to help each other are Younger and Elder Worthy in *Love's Last Shift*.

As opposed to that, there are various women who support and assist each other. Violante and Isabella (Susanna Centlivre) display the best example of a functioning relationship, for Violante puts Isabella's wellbeing before her own. She rather gets herself into trouble than giving her friend away. Also in the plays by Aphra Behn (Hellena and Florinda), Charles Sedley (Olivia and Victoria) or Colley Cibber (Narcissa and Hillaria) real female friendship can be observed. The only two women who betray each other appear in Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*. Bearing in mind that Vanbrugh wrote this play as a riposte to Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, a play that Vanbrugh criticised for its unrealistic depiction of human relations, it is not surprising that his own play depicted malfunctioning relationships.

Apart from the different features the playwrights attributed to the stock characters, also the opening of the play is of interest. Aphra Behn and Mary Pix both open their plays with two women talking. Having women appear in the first act puts a particular emphasise on the female voice, because the audience is confronted with their point of view first. However, also Sir John Vanbrugh and John Dryden feature women (talking with men) in their first scene: In *The Relapse*, Loveless and Amanda are conversing; in *Marriage a-la-Mode* Doralice meets her suitor-to-be Palamede.

Furthermore, it appears that not only the sex of the playwright but also the time of writing is of importance. For those two men who created tough and intelligent

female characters, namely John Dryden and Charles Sedley, both wrote at the beginning of the Restoration period. Consequently, it could be argued that with the rise of morality in the second half of the Restoration period, Colley Cibber and Sir John Vanbrugh focused again on traditional gender roles that saw women in a subordinate position, like Amanda in Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, who can only find happiness with her husband.

Likewise, there are also similarities between the two women who wrote either in the early or late part of the era. Aphra Behn and Margaret Cavendish, both writing at the beginning of the Restoration period, put a lot of emphasis on independent women (either by creating a strong, independent heroine or a women only convent). Mary Pix and Susanna Centlivre, who wrote twenty to forty years later, designed very strong women and rather weak and emotional men.

Having said that, even the plays that were written in the same phase by authors of the same sex showed differences with regard to the depiction of gender roles. Thus, it can be said that also the individual attitude towards gender has an influence on the way a playwright shapes his characters.

Of the four male authors whose plays were discussed in this thesis, John Dryden appears to be most women friendly. He created in Doralice a very strong and intelligent heroine (who outwits her husband and resists her lover's flirtation) and in Palamede a rather weak rake. Dryden even lets Palamede acknowledge: "Let women alone to contrive their means; I find we are but dunces to them" (MALM II.I 238f). Additionally, when thinking about masquerading Palamede states that "No, it must be the invention of a woman; it has too much of subtlety and love in it" (IV.I.127f).

Charles Sedley also gives women a lot of space and power in his plays. Even when his heroine Olivia is to be married, she tries to make the rules: She warns her husband-to-be that the first time he angered her "[she'll] have a Gallant; and the next, make [him, Wildish] a Cuckold" (MG V.I. p.70). Furthermore, Sedley refers to the discouraging position women were in, when he lets Althea complain: "Under what Tyranny are Women born! Here we are bid to love, and there to scorn; As if unfit to be allow'd a part in choosing him" (MG II.II. p. 23). By letting a woman voice her desperation, he raises the general awareness for

the situation and, thus, gives women more power. At the same time, Sedley created a very witty, sly and clever rake in Jack Wildish and also Harry Modish is not as ridiculous as some fops of the other plays. Thus, Sedley managed to push women without diminishing male power.

Colley Cibber can be regarded as the most conservative and traditional of the four male playwrights. He allows his heroine only little freedom and lets her find happiness only within her marriage. Cibber's heroine is not able to forge out a scheme on her own; she needs male assistance. Furthermore, he created in *Loveless* the stereotypical rake whose favourite pastimes include "old Wine, / young Whores, and the Conversation of brave Fellows" (LLS I.I 152-154).

Despite having more immorality and scheming in his play, Sir John Vanbrugh's portrayal of women is not very different from Cibber's; the female characters do not come across as particularly more intelligent: Amanda does not see through Berinthia's plan; Berinthia is forced into a scheme by Worthy; and Miss Hoyden's marrying twice is not owed to her scheming but to her naivety. At the latest when Berinthia utters that "He'd have ruin'd me, if I had refus'd him" (LLS III.I.276), it becomes apparent that Vanbrugh wanted men to stay in power.

The depiction of the female playwrights differs quite vastly from Cibber's or Vanbrugh's portrayal of women. All four women pushed female characters in their plays. Margaret Cavendish created a fictitious monastery for women, where men could not bother them. She also included a play within a play that addresses the various, desperate positions a woman could be in in the course of her life.

Aphra Behn is the playwright who is most critical towards the male characters. Her rake as well as her fop comes across as egocentric and brutal. However, it has to be borne in mind that Aphra Behn was the first professional female playwright. Thus, it can be argued that the aggression she attributed her male characters with stems from her desire to change the then-prevailing gender roles.

In contrast to Aphra Behn, Mary Pix and Susanna Centlivre created men who show their feelings: Younger Clerimont is continuously in despair and Felix often anxious. Thereby, the two playwrights address the topic that not only women should be featured with characteristics that were then thought to be

typically male, but that also men should be allowed to express feelings that were regarded feminine. At the same time, the heroines of both plays are not dependent on male guidance (any more): They can keep secrets, stand up for what they believe and make decisions on their own.

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Appendix

Abstract: English

This diploma thesis examines the role of gender in selected Restoration Comedies. The plays were written at a time when women were for the first time allowed to officially work as playwrights or actresses. It is the aim to find out to what extent the typical stock characters in the chosen plays are similar and in how far they differ.

The theoretical section begins with a detailed historical as well as political overview of the Restoration Period. This is followed by an account of the typical features of Restoration Comedies. Then, the situation of women in this era is discussed.

In the practical part, eight Restoration Comedies are analysed, namely Margaret Cavendish's *A Convent of Pleasure*, Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, Charles Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden*, John Dryden's *Marriage a-la-Mode*, Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*, Mary Pix's *The Beau Defeated* and Susanna Centlivre's *The Wonder*. As the Restoration period can be divided in an early, more extreme and a later, more moral phase, four of the eight plays were chosen from the early phase, four from the later phase. Furthermore, in each phase two plays were written by female playwrights, two by male playwrights.

The analysis shows that the various stock characters differ from one another. Generally speaking, the female playwrights tended to create stronger female characters and the male playwrights stronger male characters. However, also the plays written by men in the early half of the period support strong and active women. Thus, in conclusion, not only the sex of the author but also the time of writing as well as the individual attitude towards this matter has to be taken into account.

Abstract: German

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit analysiert die Darstellung von Männern und Frauen in Komödien aus der englischen Restaurationszeit.

Bis zum Jahr 1660 wurden Theaterstücke in England von Männern geschrieben und alle Charaktere – sowohl männliche als auch weibliche – von männlichen Schauspielern dargestellt. Das änderte sich unter König Karl dem Zweiten: Erstmals wurde es Frauen erlaubt, als Dramatikerinnen und Schauspielerinnen zu arbeiten. Die Zeit zwischen 1660 und 1710 war demnach nicht nur eine Zeit des politischen, sondern auch des kulturellen und sozialen Wandels.

Die Diplomarbeit beginnt mit einem theoretischen Teil. Eingangs wird ein historischer und politischer Überblick gegeben. Danach werden die unterschiedlichen Kriterien der Restaurationskomödien diskutiert. Abschließend wird die Situation der Frauen analysiert und Änderungen besprochen, die diese Zeit für Frauen mit sich brachte.

Im praktischen Teil werden die Charaktere von acht Theaterstücken analysiert, nämlich von Margaret Cavendishs *A Convent of Pleasure*, Aphra Behns *The Rover*, Charles Sedleys *The Mulberry Garden*, John Drydens *Marriage a-la-Mode*, Colley Cibbers *Love's Last Shift*, Sir John Vanbrughs *The Relapse*, Mary Pixs *The Beau Defeated* und Susanna Centlivres *The Wonder*.

Die Restaurationszeit teilte sich in eine frühe, ausgelassenere Phase und in späte, ruhigere Phase. Um einen möglichst guten Überblick über die verschiedenen Ansichten zu bekommen, wurden vier Komödien aus der frühen und vier aus der späteren Phase ausgewählt. Pro Phase wurden jeweils zwei Stücke von Theaterschreibern und zwei von Theaterschreiberinnen genommen.

Zunächst werden die acht Theaterstücke kurz vorgestellt. Danach werden die einzelnen Standardtypen analysiert und verglichen. Dabei zeigt sich, dass die Schriftstellerinnen zu stärkeren Frauenfiguren und schwächeren bzw. brutaleren Männerfiguren tendierten. Aber auch die Männer, die in der ersten Hälfte der Restaurationszeit schrieben, kreierten aktive, starke Heldinnen. Neben dem Geschlecht des Autors und der Zeit der Verfassung des Theaterstücks darf also auch die individuelle Neigung des Autors nicht außer Acht gelassen werden.

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