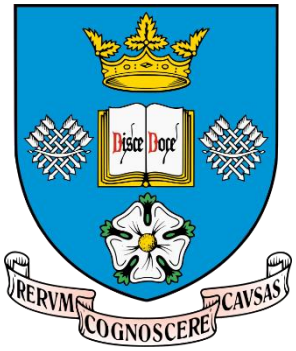
Women's Work and Women's Writing in the Late-Seventeenth Century: Female Labour in Aphra Behn and her Contemporaries



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Abstract

This thesis explores Aphra Behn's representation of women's work. In her comedies and her prose fiction, Behn depicted a necessarily limited range of forms of work performed by women, and these both reflected and were used to express criticism of the conventional and alienating inequalities of a patriarchal society. These working roles – that of the landlady, the housewife and the female servant – are primarily united by the social reality to which their interrogation, and usefulness, tends: women must undertake both physical and emotional work in order to navigate relationships to men, and to negotiate and often mitigate the prerogatives that such men claim concerning the material, financial, sexual and affective resources of women. This work is undertaken both in alliance with, and in isolation from or in opposition to, other women, and in locations that are both ostensibly private and indisputably public. Behn's concern with the way in which labour and property relations maintain a systematic imbalance between men and woman remains, invariably, in view. I read Behn's texts in dialogue with contemporary authors who also represented and interrogated women's occupational identities and activities: Behn both shared in and challenged literary and cultural commonplaces about gendered labour in the seventeenth century, but her critical perspective marks out adversarial relations between men and women with a particular visibility.

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For the rest, the invisible ones -- you know who you are.

Introduction

In the preface to the 1687 publication of her comedy *The Lucky Chance*, Aphra Behn let it be known that she was annoyed: her latest play, and one of the last staged in her lifetime, had been criticised on the grounds of lewdness – 'the old never-failing scandal – that 'tis not fit for the ladies'– and Behn found the accusation offensive for several reasons.[1] One senses the playwright rolling her eyes as she addresses the attack on her experience and her professionalism: 'And I must want common sense, and all the degrees of good manners – renouncing my fame, all modesty and interest for a silly saucy fruitless jest, to make fools laugh, and women blush, and wise men ashamed.'[2] She would never have been so unwise as to include any humour that would decrease the possibility of her play being staged, nor to imperil her own 'interest' by doing so. And nor could she. A certain residual pride echoes through Behn's description of her play passing through the (masculine) regulatory structures of the Restoration theatre: it was 'nicely looked over' by 'Dr [Charles] Davenant', co-proprietor of the United Company which was responsible for its staging, along with Charles Killigrew, fellow co-proprietor and Master of the Revels, 'who, more severe than any, from the strict order he had, perused it with great circumspection.' Sir Roger L'Estrange, licenser of publications, also, clearly, had 'read it and licensed it, and found no such faults as 'tis charged with.'[3] Behn thought, too, that she had covered all bases, offering her play up willingly to unofficial as well as official arbiters of morality: 'the first copy of this play was read by several ladies of very great quality and unquestioned fame, and received their most favourable opinion.'[4] Worst of all, and at the very core of her anger about her inequitable treatment, is that Behn's 'sex' limits her 'freedom' as a writer: the nature of the criticisms levelled at (the person of) Behn are simply different from those aimed at (the work of) male playwrights – 'they find faults of

[1] '*The Lucky Chance, or An Alderman's Bargain*', in *The Rover and Other Plays*, ed.by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Preface, p.188.
[2] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.191.
[3] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.189. Behn evokes Dr Davenant's editorial eye as scrupulous ('nicely'), rather than kind.
[4] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.190.

another kind for the men writers'– because 'the woman damns the poet.'[5] The indecencies in a number of 'celebrated plays' are 'never taken notice of, because a man writ them, and they may hear that from them they blush at from a woman.'[6] Male playwrights, so Behn argues, have a monopoly on chastisement-free indecency.[7]

Behn's defence of her right to write, however, is slippery, self-conscious and curiously limiting. She stresses, seemingly both intentionally and inadvertently, that neutrality of treatment as a writer is impossible, for she fetishizes poetic skill as masculine while remaining sceptical that there is anything special about the creative faculties of the male mind. 'All I ask', she claims 'is the privilege for my masculine part the poet in me (if any such you will allow me) to tread those successful paths my predecessors have so long thrived in, to take those measures that both the ancient and modern writers have set me, and by which they have pleased the world so well.'[8] Being treated equitably means being treated as one of the boys: her 'brothers of the pen' resist her admittance to their fraternity of writers ancient and modern but Behn makes no claim for any sisters. Her desire to achieve renown for her writing, moreover, takes the shape of a romantic, masculine heroism: 'for I am not content to write for a third day only. I value fame as much as if I had been born a hero.'[9] Though Behn earlier stated proudly that she was 'forced to write for Bread and not ashamed to owne it', she is, by the time that *The Lucky Chance* is published, avowedly interested in something beyond the mere financial value of authorship.[10] When she is not being treated fairly, she is being victimised as 'a defenceless woman', a half-sardonic reiteration of her critics' gendering of her work that is at once disingenuous and true.[11] Her defence in this preface is fierce, able and authoritative, and her self-confidence is not misplaced, for the play did well, 'as I found by my receipts.'[12] Yet, her access to the approbation of socially elevated individuals, the shelter of the regulatory structures of the theatre, and the immediate commercial success of the play, did not necessarily make any difference to either the most determined, or casual, of critics. There were always spaces and discourses unavailable to her: as a woman, Behn could not respectably attend a post-

[5] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.190.
[6] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.188.
[7] Behn lists contemporaneous plays, as well as earlier examples which continued to enjoy an afterlife in the Restoration e.g., Edward Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* (1682; performed in 1681) and George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), as well as Shakespeare's *Othello, The Moor of Venice* (staged in 1685, perhaps a year or so prior to that of *The Lucky Chance*) and the ever popular Beaumont and Fletcher, whose *The Maid's Tragedy* was staged in 1661 or -2 and in 1666. See *The London Stage, 1660-1800, Volume 1*, ed, by William Van Lennep (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960-1963), and *The Rover and Other Plays* (2008) p.365. That Behn has been charged, as she states, 'with all the plays that have ever been offensive' by some of her more excessive critics only underlines the point that texts themselves do not display ineffable signs of their author's gender (Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.188)
[8] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.191.
[9] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.191. In the Restoration theatre, a playwright who offered a new work would receive profits if the play was successful enough to merit a third performance. See Edward Langhans, 'The Theatre', *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre* ed. by Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp.1-18.
[10] 'To The Reader', *Sir Patient Fancy* (London, 1678), sig.A1^{v}.
[11] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.191.
[12] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.190.

play discussion at 'Will's coffee house', where one 'friend' ridiculed her play behind her back after complimenting it to her face.[13]

In experiencing gendered criticism, and in seeming to affirm the default setting of poetic skill as male, Behn's adoption of the euphemistic 'masculine part' nevertheless points mockingly to the perceived importance of an essential maleness to the authorial identity and professional success of her brother writers. If one of her plays had 'come forth under any man's name, and never known to have been mine', no one, she asserts, would know the difference.[14] Playwriting was a trade that, as all other forms of work in the early modern period, was understood in gendered terms: in defending her authorship, there seemed to be no available language through which Behn could discuss it without reverting to conventional, and somewhat quaint, images of masculinity and femininity. (The language of the professionalisation and regulation of acting as apprentice-based work forms another masculinising prop for her argument, as well as making her assertion of a heroic identity seem rather outmoded: 'the master players, who you will, I hope, in some measure esteem judges of decency and their own interest, having been so many years prentice to the trade of judging.')[15] The frustration in this preface is tangible: for Behn, talking about the fruits of her labour, and knowing that it would be perceived as the product of a *woman's* work, placed her in a position of both complicity and opposition. She seems to have felt obliged to take up an adversarial stance in order to suggest that neither she nor her texts were different, but struggled to articulate her sameness without reifying that contrariety at the heart of her distinct status (wanted or not). Feminine helplessness was, at least, a useful location from which to project her irritation about the critical reception of her writing, even if insisting on such difference hardly bolstered her argument that her work deserved to stand or fall on its merits. Behn had been rudely reminded that writing for the theatre was men's work – or, at least, that someone thought that an accusation of indecency against a woman writer remained a credible if rather careworn means of detraction, even for an author of Behn's professional experience.

This thesis explores Behn's representation of the work of other women, an undertaking that has come with its own difficulties: reading work in her texts feels much like labour itself, for Behn is, it must be owned, not a natural candidate for a study on the topic of work. Given her general lack of interest in depicting characters who exist below (at the very least) a comfortable middling life in material terms, or individuals who do not embody and endorse what one might loosely term an aristocratic outlook, drawing together the threads of Behn's engagement with this topic has required persistence in going against the grain. An interest in what has been ignored, erased or been difficult to define is a common feature of literary scholarship that seeks to uncover and to interrogate women's work in the period.

[13] Janet Todd suggests that this 'friend' probably ran in the same coffee-house circle as her colleague John Dryden, if it was not Dryden himself. *Aphra Behn: A Secret Life* (London: Fentum Press, 2017) n.31, p.351.
[14] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.190.
[15] Behn, Preface to *The Lucky Chance*, p.189.

Finding fresh perspectives from which to talk about the work that women performed, and the ways in which they were depicted performing it, is therefore often couched in a language of discovery or retrieval from isolation. This study is intended to begin that retrieval work, to address a gap in Behn scholarship, to recognise that she did think and write about work in gendered terms beyond her own intimate familiarity with the difficulties of public female authorship, and that her understanding of labour as a gendered phenomenon did matter to her persistent interest in inequality between men and women. The three forms of work under discussion in this thesis – that of the landlady, the housewife, and the female servant – all connect with the idea of "work" in slightly different ways, and it is useful at this stage to be clear about precisely how this term is being defined in each case. The landlady's work is, at its most basic, the exchange of a service for money, and it is in respect to the landlady that the idea of work is perhaps at its most familiar: she provides houseroom in exchange for the payment of rent by a lodger or lodgers, and it is in this way that she earns a living, either solely for herself and any dependents she may have or as a contribution to the household economy. As the dramatic literature suggests, however, there is much humorous material to be reliably derived from the representation of this exchange: it is never simply a case of a straightforward transaction between she who provides a service and he who requires it, and the landlady's work comes to be understood as reliant on close interpersonal and social relationships and on sexual connections, as much as an act of management that concerns materials and money.

The performance of service by female servants, too, is more complex than a simple exchange of labour for a wage: Behn's representation of an intimate and generally loyal service bond between women complicates the idea of service as merely remunerative labour. In this way, the term work, when understood as an economic activity undertaken for the purpose of earning a living, does not map neatly onto the term service: the prospect of wages or of material reward only rarely occurs to or is mentioned by the female servant in Behn's comedies. Reading service work in these texts will require us, therefore, to consider the efforts of the servant in light of discourses about duty and loyalty, and to remain attentive to that which Behn emphasises. For Behn, the idea of service largely refers to an interpersonal albeit hierarchical relationship, in which a language of labour can sometimes seem barely justified. Didactic material on service, widely available and popular in the seventeenth century, throws into relief Behn's selective representation of service: in such texts, as we will see, the servant is to understand herself as bound by a sense of duty once employed, but also as a labourer who sells her skills. The work performed by the wife within the home is, in the early modern period as now, unpaid, and such work as represented by Behn will also be considered as implicated in exchanges beyond the economic, while nevertheless understood as materially valuable. Behn's genteel housewife does not produce or help to produce any physical items that enter into circulation in the market, but her emotional labour is exchanged, at certain key points, for the material necessities of life and for the social credit required to maintain a sound reputation for virtue.

What these three forms of work do have in common, however, is that they are, for Behn, primarily united by the social reality to which their interrogation, and usefulness, repeatedly tends. Behn draws women's work back, time and again, to the inequalities of a patriarchal society. The sexual and material realities of women's lives as Behn perceived them necessarily dictate the types of work that women perform and why they perform it: women's work across Behn's drama and in her prose fiction does, as I have suggested, concern the business of surviving in the most basic sense – engaging in activity that supports physical existence – but this business of survival is never not implicated in larger patriarchal structures. Women's work in Behn's oeuvre can, I think, be condensed down to a key concern: such work is about enduring and navigating one's experiences with men, and about negotiating one's relationship to the prior claims that various male characters – husbands and potential spouses, fathers, lovers, guardians, and political leaders – make upon the physical, financial, sexual and emotional resources of women**.**

In her representation of women's work, I am keen to suggest (like Behn herself) that her gender as author should not necessarily precede consideration of her writing. Lara Dodds and Michelle M. Dowd have recently outlined the 'belatedness' of the field of early modern women's writing, in that it 'remains an area of study that is interesting rather than essential, intrinsically rather than extrinsically significant', and this 'in part because "women's writing" is still often considered to be about women first and writing second.' As they observe of the earliest studies of the writing of women in the period – Elaine Beilin's *Redeeming Eve*, Elaine Hobby's *Virtue of Necessity*, and Barbara Lewalski's *Writing Women in Jacobean England* – such scholarship viewed the gender of the author as of paramount importance to the construction and defence of that authorship, and framed women's writing 'as difficult, rare, and oppositional.'[16] I want to stress that Behn was (as the preface to *The Lucky Chance* suggests) both oppositional and conventional: she was involved in reiterating literary and cultural commonplaces about women's work and she participated in the same representative strategies, and engaged with the same narrative and generic tools, as her contemporaries and her forbears on the matter of gendered labour. Maintaining connection between Behn and contemporary authors of other literary texts is vital, for she was neither alone nor unique in discussing the performance of certain forms of labour by women within particular paradigms and frameworks. Such discourses described female service, for instance, as forming an early life stage within a trajectory that led to the reward of upward social mobility through marriage; they also repeatedly asserted that the provision of lodging by women in particular was adjacent to or heavily implicated in sex work; the maintenance of ideal wifehood was also associated with gendered emotion management by other writers besides Behn. The other authors in this study are both men and women, and they produced texts of a tone and form that is sometimes quite at odds with those written by Behn: these include contemporary playwrights like John Dryden, and those of an earlier

[16] Lara Dodds, Michelle M. Dowd, 'Happy Accidents: Critical Belatedness, Feminist Formalism, and Early Modern Women's Writing', *Criticism,* Volume 62, Number 2 (Spring 2020), pp.171-2.

generation like Robert Chamberlaine, as well as writers of conduct and didactic material, like Hannah Woolley, Richard Lucas and Gervase Markham, and writers of prose fiction, like Margaret Cavendish.

Each of these texts and authors has connected with Behn in enlightening and occasionally surprising ways: the interaction between Behn's comedies and the instructional material that deals with the performance of service and with service relationships fascinates because of the way in which these diverse types of material tessellate. We cannot know that Behn read or engaged with such material herself, and nor does it seem to me likely that she intentionally set out to satirise or play with the more excessive pieties and demands of prescriptive material, but, as we will see, the comparison allows us to consider how these very different texts may have coexisted in the same literary and cultural context. Behn's comic vision of service is, in some ways, a representation of service work "by the book": at the same time, Behn's presentation of such work on the stage could hardly look less like that intended by the moralising prescriptive material. As a playwright, Chamberlaine is separated from Dryden and Behn by some forty years or so, a turbulent period of time in which the theatre and, of course, national life, experienced profound disruption.[17] Chamberlaine's vision of the landlady, nevertheless, shares obvious continuities with those of Behn and her fellow playwrights of the 1670s and 80s: the landlady as a comic type did not spring onto the Restoration stage out of nowhere, and while each playwright focuses on slightly different facets of the character, she is, as I will argue, recognisably the same comic type in the 1640s as she is in the 1680s. Cavendish and Behn have shared a natural kinship in scholarship on early modern women writers, particularly as authors of prose fiction influenced by a European romance tradition: that which brings Cavendish and Behn together in this thesis is an interest in the work of wifely pretence, and the difficult balance to be struck between rational self-interest, submissive duty, and a sense of the importance of feminine social reputation to continued survival. In reading two romance texts by Behn and Cavendish in dialogue, I aim to bring together these two women writers in a way which illuminates an as yet unmapped common ground: both are interested in the affective and physical labour of managing appearances, feelings, selves, and relationships in a domestic marital setting and, most unusually for Behn though less remarkably for Cavendish, through the narrativization of the life of a woman who earnestly strives to be a conventionally good wife.

[17] The fact of continued albeit altered public theatrical performance during the late 1640s and the 1650s has long since been established: Paula R. Backscheider has detailed the activities of members of the Drapers' Company in maintaining those performances within and around the City of London during that period in what is 'a story of continuity and radical relocation.' One aspect of this continuity was the performance and publication of 'drolls', designed to skirt around official bans: of those published in *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport* (first published 1652, then -62, -72 and -73), a number were, as she notes, scenes lifted from Beaumont and Fletcher plays. 'The Landlady' droll which appears in *The Wits*, and is lifted from Fletcher's *The Chances* (first published 1647 in the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio), is one example. When *The Chances* is updated for performance in 1682, the landlady is recognisably the same type but for some small additions of dialogue that add emphasis to her dubious sexual character. See Paula R. Backscheider, 'Behind City Walls: Restoration Actors in the Drapers' Company', *Theatre Survey*, 45.1 (2004), pp.75–87.

At the same time, it remains crucial to recognise Behn's antagonistic and non-conventional impulses, and her investments in a proto-feminist perspective (however narrow and contestable it often seems to be) where gender, labour and property relations are concerned. Her critical approach to the sexual and material realties of women's existences, and how their labour is implicated in managing and negotiating these realities in the face of patriarchal prerogatives, marks out adversarial relations between men and women with a particular visibility. Tracing the contours of this labour, and the vulnerabilities that are made visible in the process, has provided a new angle on Behn's critical antagonism with systems, customs, ideologies and forms of relations which benefit men and which place women at a disadvantage. The question of Behn's feminist perspective is therefore a significant one in relation to the subject of work: debate about whether Behn deserves the label of "feminist" or how to qualify it has hinged around her Tory and royalist feminism, has recognised her slender focus on a small contingent of socially elevated women, and has considered how her 'protofeminist skepticism' about the painfully obvious inequities of love and marriage might relate to her complicity in the repeated deployment of fantasy solutions that never resolve the problems they sugar over.[18] To expect systematic feminism from Behn is, as some critics have warned, to expect too much.[19] Behn does, as I suggest in my section on the housewife, comprehend that women as well as men are implicated in the reproduction of patriarchal inequalities: both consciously and intentionally, as well as in a manner which suggests an inculcated, helpless compulsion, women are complicit in the thoroughgoing systems of custom which ensure the laborious, life-long production of perfect wife- and womanhood. Behn also, I argue, does at least recognise the shared, cross-class vulnerabilities of women in the face of men who are able to exploit them sexually and economically. It is less straightforward, however, to state that Behn posits an alliance between women of different social classes in which each woman is weighed equally. As has been recognised, Behn can be cruel to low-class women on the grounds of their economic and sexual agency,

[18] On Behn's ideological conflicts and accommodations: Anita Pacheco, "Reading Toryism in Aphra Behn's Cit-Cuckolding Comedies," *Review of English Studies* 55 (2004) pp. 690–708; Donald R. Wehrs, 'Eros, Ethics, Identity: Royalist Feminism and the Politics of Desire in Aphra Behn's *Love Letters*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol.32 (3) (1992), pp.461-478; Robert Markley, "'Be Impudent, Be Saucy, Forward, Bold, Touzing, and Leud': The Politics of Masculine Sexuality and Feminine Desire in Behn's Tory Comedies," in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theater*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne (Athens, GA.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1995), pp.114-40; Melissa Mowry**,** 'Irreconcilable Differences: Royalism, Personal Politics and History in Aphra Behn's '*The Roundheads*'', *Women's Writing* 23:3 (2016), pp.286-297; Hero Chalmers, *Royalist Women Writers*, 1650–1689 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). On Behn's narrow social focus: Susan Staves, 'Behn, Women, and Society', *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, eds. Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On Behn's 'protofeminist skepticism' and reluctance to proffer solutions, see Robert Markley, 'Aphra Behn's *The City Heiress*: Feminism and the Dynamics of Popular Success on the Late Seventeenth-Century Stage', *Comparative Drama*, Volume 41, Number 2 (Summer 2007), p.142, and Denys Van Renen, *The Other Exchange: Women, Servants, and the Urban Underclass in Early Modern English Literature* (Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 2017) pp.85-6.

[19] Pat Gill, 'Aphra Behn Desiring Women II', in *Interpreting Ladies: Women, Wit and Morality in the Restoration Comedy of Manners* (Athens, GA.: University of Georgia Press, 1994) pp.138-9.

a cruelty which has been bound up in her royalist politics.[20] In a similar vein, Behn's representation of labour – which deploys, in the case of the landlady, commonplace and derogatory conceptions about the moral character of poverty and of work – conduces to a denigration of the body, reputability and worthiness of such a woman in a manner which seems to make a value judgement about and to hierarchise the labouring and the leisured. Behn's rather savage classism can, however, make legible a patriarchal logic whereby class is not the fullest guarantor of exploitation, but gender: in the end, a woman's social and economic authority may not make any real difference to a man's belief in his right to take advantage of her**.** The only difference, perhaps, is that one instance of exploitation is implicitly more acceptable than the other**.** The nature of the relationship between the female servant and the mistress provokes a similar concern about the way in which class and gender dovetail for Behn: if female alliance is produced through the labour of one woman for another, what kind of alliance is this? How "equal" might this alliance be, and is it possible (or, indeed, does Behn think it matters) to speak of this relationship in terms of volition, loyalty or material recompense? The association of mistress to servant – and the way in which this is overlaid by the common disprivilege of gender – necessarily raises questions about the nature of the affective, physical and economic connections between two characters who are considered both interchangeable and yet socially different. The difficulties of maintaining equitable relationships with men is a problem that is a perdurable one for women of all classes, an observation that puts labour relations on a footing which, in one way, minimises the inequality implied thereby. At the same time, Behn makes available for scrutiny the social and economic differences between mistress and maid in order to establish why the substitutability of women may be construed as offensive. Class is a useful node of vulnerability from which, and through which, to express dissatisfaction about the indifference of men to the sexualised bodies and individual identities of women.

Women's work in early modern literature

In the literary scholarship on Behn, studies of forms of work have focused, naturally enough, on the sex worker – otherwise, "work" is not a common area of study. There is plentiful critical examination of the place of the sex worker – and her sexual, economic, and cultural authority – in Behn's comedies in particular.[21] There is also strong debate about the nature and significance of the figure of the whore

[20] On Behn's endorsement of 'politically expedient' female desire, and her cruel treatment of other forms, see Loring Pfeiffer**,** "Some for this Faction cry, others for that": Royalist Politics, Courtesanship, and Bawdry in Aphra Behn's "*The Rover", Part II*', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*,Vol. 37, No. 2 (Fall 2013), pp. 3-19.

[21] On the prostitute in Behn's plays: Anita Pacheco**,** 'Rape and the Female Subject in Aphra Behn's "*The Rover*"', *ELH*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 323-345; Pilar Cuder Domínguez, "'Pretty Contradictions": the Virgin Prostitutes of Aphra Behn's "*The Feigned Courtesans*"', *SEDERI. Sociedad Española de Studios Renacentistas Ingleses*, Vol.8 (8) (1997), pp.129-133.

regarding Behn's gendered authorial identity: the persona of the 'poetess-punk' is, as some critics argue, embraced by Behn as a means to negotiate her public presence in a context that is apt, as we have seen, to malign it.[22] I have largely avoided this well-trod ground in order to concentrate my energies on the gaps that currently exist in the Behn scholarship concerning those forms of work (performed by the landlady, the servant, and the wife) which will be the focus of my thesis. I have therefore not dedicated a chapter to the sex worker, though there is certainly overlap between the forms of women's work under discussion, and the cultural freight of sex work and of the authority available in the act of trading sex for money or other materials. There are, of course, other forms of work commonly performed by women in the period that I have also chosen not to interrogate. I have not dedicated any time to the discussion of childbirth or of motherhood as labour simply because Behn's interest in these forms of work is negligible. Her dramatic heroines do not find themselves in the position of caring for an infant or young children: if there is a play in which there is sufficient material for only a brief contemplation of motherhood, it is her sole tragedy *Abdelazer* (1677), in which the maternal becomes murderous and monstrous through the transformative power of unchecked sexual desire. The birth of an illegitimate child to the titular heroine of the prose tale *The Adventure of the Black Lady* (1698) is described without much elaboration. Silvia, the central female character of the three-part novel *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (three parts published in 1684, -85, and -87 respectively) does also become a mother in the course of the story but, as Janet Todd points out, one might be forgiven for forgetting that fact.[23] Behn does not seem to find motherhood valuable to discussion of women's lives.[24] While Behn was keenly interested in women whose religious vows come to clash with their human frailties, I have not taken the institutionalisation of female religious devotion as fit to be discussed as an occupational category or as a form of work, and in this I also take my lead from Behn: though she does point out that the physical experience of a life of religious devotion might be wearisome for the body, the nun is primarily a figure through which romantic and sexual desires (rather than questions about vocation, occupation and labour) are mediated and explored.[25] In thinking about women, work, and the period

[22] On the whore as authorial figure, see Catherine Gallagher, 'Who was that Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn', in *Rereading Aphra Behn : history, theory, and criticism* ed. Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville, VA. ; London : University Press of Virginia, 1993); Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642-1737* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1988); Derek Hughes, 'The masked woman revealed; or, the prostitute and the playwright in Aphra Behn criticism', *Women's Writing*, 7:2 (2000), pp.149-164; Maureen Bell, '"Literary pimping" or Business as Usual? Aphra Behn and the Book Trade', *Women's Writing*, 27:3 (2020), pp.275-293.

[23] Todd, *A Secret Life* (2017), p.350.

[24] Imoinda, the beloved of the eponymous African prince *Oroonoko* (1688), becomes pregnant but never gets the chance to give birth, being willingly murdered by her husband towards the end of the story. Thomas Southerne introduces a child in his tragi-comic adaptation of Behn's *History of the Nun*: Southerne's Isabella has a son by her first husband, whose pathetic responses to his mother's misfortune occasions a sickly sentimentality in a way that Behn's text does not. Behn's Isabella suffers a miscarriage, and has no living children. See Thomas Southerne, *The Fatal Marriage or, The Innocent Adultery* (London, 1694).

[25] In *The History of the Nun*, Isabella's father seeks to make her aware of the privations of religious life, describing 'hard lodging, coarse diet, and homely habit, with a thousand other things of labour and work used among the nuns.' Aphra Behn, 'The History of the Nun, or, The Fair Vow Breaker', in *Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. Paul Salzman (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009) p.145.

after 1660, the professional actress naturally springs to mind: Behn does, I argue, find the actress's skill fascinating, though I have chosen to examine the ideas of pretence, role playing, dissembling, and consciousness of performance in light of the affective, moral and material burdens of wifehood, rather than in the context of professional stage work. Behn is undoubtedly aware of the behavioural efforts made by women in order to mould themselves into forms acceptable to men: at the conclusion of *The Feigned Courtesans* (1679), the flighty rake Galliard must be persuaded to take up 'a dull wife' through a promise of titillating 'mistress-like' behaviour from his new spouse, and he is mollified by the idea that he will be able to experience the thrill of 'keeping' an 'expensive, insolent, vain, extravagant, and inconstant' woman, while trusting to her 'good nature' that she will not follow through on such a performance and actually cuckold him.[26] As we will see in Behn's romantic prose fiction, the requirement to pretend can be a destabilising sort of work which finds a woman outwardly performing that which does not necessarily correspond to her understanding of her interior emotions, nor is necessarily conducive to allowing her her own desires.

There has been some small and therefore important discussion of forms of women's work (besides sex work) in Behn's oeuvre, and this has been extremely useful in helping me to navigate such a difficult topic: Margaret Ferguson's reading of *The Adventure of the Black Lady* identifies this posthumously printed prose tale as a site of query about Behn's 'classism' and her 'economic politics', and about the porosity of the barrier between gentility and commonness on the grounds of the performance of illicit work. The running of a bawdy house/lodging house, the fencing of stolen goods, and the fixing of a marriage for an unwed mother – all undertaken by a gentlewoman – provides material for a reconsideration of Behn's apparent snobbery towards 'common people': the low-class work undertaken by the apparently genteel proprietor in this story, Ferguson argues, drives towards the restoration of conventional property relations (the uncontested intergenerational transfer of inheritable estate), but also stands in the way of its own light.[27] The gentlewoman's assumed authority to pervert those relations through theft, blackmail, traffic with criminal networks and in tinkering around the edges of sex work, is also a comic denigration of such illicit work, and functions as an exposure of these common labours as inimical to a general (and to Behn's own uncertain) royalist preoccupation with the right ordering of property and economic relations. Ferguson – whose insights have been especially helpful to my own engagement with disreputable work in Behn's comedies – had begun to map out this query about the topic of work in Behn's oeuvre some fifteen years ago: beyond this there has been no sustained discussion of the representation of women's work by Behn. This thesis is also, fortuitously, a timely foray into Behn studies just at the moment that *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn* is beginning to appear and to provoke 'radical reimaginings' of her work from various perspectives –

[26] '*The Feigned Courtesans, or A Night's Intrigue*', in *The Rover and Other Plays*, ed.by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.4, p.179.
[27] Margaret Ferguson, 'Conning the "Overseers": Women's Illicit Work in Behn's "*The Adventure of the Black Lady*"', *Early Modern Culture: An Electronic Seminar*, Issue 5 (Spring 2006) pp.7; 9.

computational studies of authorship, new interpretations of her texts based on early modern medical frameworks, and on the place of emotion and its excess across the generic breadth of her oeuvre, as well as a fresh attention to Behn's connections to her literary predecessors in her farcical comedy, and her engagement with wider cultural debates about contact with foreign cultures and questions of religion and science.[28] My hope is that this thesis also provokes some generative readings about an aspect of Behn's writings – the overlap with contemporary ideas and anxieties about work and gender – that has gone under-recognised.

The existing literary scholarship on early modern women's work more broadly has approached the issue from a number of perspectives, though drama has loomed large in the corpus of texts on which scholars have drawn: Natasha Korda, Wendy Wall and Michelle M. Dowd have all produced important readings of late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century drama which take the work of women as their focus. Korda's *Labors Lost: Womens' Work and the Early Modern English Stage* looks at the public theatre during Shakespeare's time as a gendered workplace, and examines the labours of ordinary women both behind the scenes and in their representation on the stage: 'the rise of the professional stage', as Korda argues, 'relied on the labor, wares, ingenuity, and capital of women of all stripes, including ordinary crafts and tradeswomen who supplied costumes, properties, and comestibles; wealthy heiresses and widows who provided much-needed capital and credit; wives, daughters, and widows of theater people who worked actively alongside their male kin; and immigrant women who fueled the fashion-driven stage with a range of newfangled skills and commodities.' Korda's attention to the informal, the unregulated and the unacknowledged – as well as her interest in 'the language of labor', which 'divides the social world into hierarchies — male/female, skilled/unskilled, paid/unpaid, licit/illicit, and so forth' – has, alongside Ferguson, provided me with some starting points for thinking about the presence of women's work in Behn's texts and how definitional parameters might be both helpful and restrictive.[29] My study of the work of the landlady, the housewife and the servant embraces forms of labour that potentially trouble divisions of paid and unpaid, licit and illicit, skilled and unskilled. The provision of lodging, for instance, might be considered work that requires skill (a certain material and financial literacy considered orthodox for the early modern woman in charge of the domestic concerns of her household) but which nevertheless retains a largely illicit and unregulated character in comic drama as in a broader cultural context. The labours heaped upon the housewife which, as I will argue, includes the performance of emotional labour, is, from a critical perspective, an underrecognised form of work within discussions of early modern housewifery. Though unpaid because rather a duty than employment, and performed by a woman in Behn's prose fiction who is defined rather by her elevated

[28] Claire Bowditch & Elaine Hobby, 'Aphra Behn's 350th Anniversary and Some Radical Re-imaginings', *Women's Writing*, 27:3 (2020), pp.265-274. See *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn. Volume IV, Plays 1682-1696* eds. Rachel Adcock, Kate Aughterson, Claire Bowditch, Elaine Hobby, Alan James Hogarth, Anita Pacheco, Margarete Rubik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).
[29] Natasha Korda**,** *Labors Lost: Womens' Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) p.1; 5.

social status than her marginality, such work pertains, nonetheless, to her material survival and places a labour whose invisibility is its very essence at the centre of her physical and social existence.

Wall's *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* finds common ground with Korda's study in suggesting that there is something lurking beneath, something to be discerned and to be teased out concerning, in this instance, the representation of domestic labours. Housewifery, a term under which a wide variety of tasks were adumbrated in household guides, cookbooks and treatises, forms the focus of Wall's interrogation of the 'bizarre', the 'disquieting' and the 'disorienting' as it is depicted in those instructional and prescriptive texts, and in pre-1640s drama. The compelling and often very bodily performances of domesticity staged in these plays proffer sites of labour in which the domestic order enabled and constituted by these forms of work suggested that 'disorderly lived practice' might, paradoxically, be at the heart of that domestic orderliness commonly endorsed in prescriptive material.[30] Wall's insights about the mundane strangeness at the heart of domestic order – the housewife's (extra)ordinary access to and capabilities with the bloody violence of domestic butchery and with the wasteful creativity of feasts, for instance, or the erotic dependence marked out between that housewife and those whom she insists on medicating and penetrating in performances of homely physic – have proved to be a fruitful way of thinking about the disorder that characterises the lives of the women in Behn's comedies. Behn's heroines form alliances with their female servants, in which both women work towards the common purpose of reordering and renegotiating what is, for women, an always already disordered and alienating state of affairs – the status quo. The conventional state of affairs at the beginning of a comedy offers conditions which are antithetical to the desires and autonomy of women who hope to dispose of themselves in marriage, rather than be disposed of. It is the labours of female servants that are key to renegotiating these conditions, work which appears to (selectively) affirm and draw on the exemplarity of servant behaviour found in prescriptive ideologies of servitude. The fissures and inconsistencies in prescriptive and instructional literature allow for such a free and comical interpretation of normative ideals about servant behaviour, and suggest the ways in which transgression might be allowed for by the lacunae in such texts.

Dowd's study – *Women's Work in Early Modern Literature and Culture* – has been of particular use and inspiration, given that her own framing of the place of broad cultural narratives about women's work in relation to literary texts in the period has given a methodological shape to my own approach: my own articulation of relationships between the representations of women's work in drama, prose fiction, prescriptive material, and in wider commonplaces and ideologies about gendered labour, has meant explicating a certain mutual dependence between texts whose genres, forms and intentions are various. Dowd's central argument is based 'on the premise that the act of storytelling, the literary

[30] Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity*: *Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.2; 5.

process of relating early modern women's work in narrative form, is rooted in part in the desire to represent, explain, or clarify' women as working subjects, 'even if that attempt is predetermined to fail.' Moreover, the 'fantasies', 'solutions' and 'dangers' that accumulate around ideologies of work and gender in the period can be tracked in narratives across diverse textual sources which support, feed into and sometimes query each other: Dowd insists on not privileging certain types of texts as more valuable points of access into early modern culture (her study blends drama with prescriptive material, as does that of Wall, but also examines poetry and women's private diaries**)** and she therefore differentiates between 'women's writing' and other literary examples (largely plays) *not authored by women* as providing a usefully broad range of cross-genre, cross-gender texts.[31] I share in Dowd's perspective that providing an extensive basis for the interrogation of early modern narratives about women's work is important to understanding the nature of Behn's intervention in, contestation of, and, sometimes, regurgitation of, ideas about work and gender. Contextualising Behn's representation of women's work both within contemporary cultural models of gendered labour, and within the historical landscape of women's work across the seventeenth century, has therefore required cross-disciplinary work – that is, a necessary attention to material, social, economic and cultural histories of women's labour.

Women's work in historical scholarship

Since Alice Clark's seminal study in the early twentieth century, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (1919), historical scholarship on women's work has dramatically expanded, re-addressing and reframing Clark's central and contentious assertion that women's opportunities to work – that is, the variety of the types of labour they might undertake and the personal authority and economic clout that that might bring with it – declined over the course of the century as women were ejected from certain industries, through monopolisation, professionalisation and the development of capitalistic production, and pushed back into the "home".[32] Recent and ongoing research has sought to look again at the forms of work that women (and men) performed (and continued to perform) during this period of apparent decline. The work undertaken in and around the physical space of the household, the extent to which women contributed financially to their households and to local economies, and the gendered definition(s) and parameters of apparently feminine domestic work, have all been scrutinised anew. The ongoing project *Forms of Labour: Gender, Freedom and Experience of Work in the Preindustrial Economy* (2019-2024) based at the University of Exeter and led by Jane Whittle and Mark Hailwood – and which has dedicated a strand of the project to 'Rethinking Women's Work in the Preindustrial

[31] Michelle M. Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (New York, NY.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) pp.9-10.
[32] Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* ed, by Amy Louise Erickson (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 1992). Hilda L. Smith, 'The Legacy of Alice Clark', *Early Modern Women*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Fall 2015), pp.94-104.

Economy' – has been at the forefront in reconsidering traditional histories and narratives of work. The project continues to argue for a renewed focus both on the lived gender division of labour in light of the specificity of region and type of industry, and on the linguistic and institutional regulation that has (both in contemporary documents and in scholarship) confined women's contributions to the realm of unremunerated duty.[33] Post-Clark scholarship has also been concerned with rethinking separate spheres ideology – the contention that men and women, as the eighteenth century approached, gradually came to experience a segregation of forms of labour and of the spaces in which these tasks occurred – and has shifted instead towards notions of shared and negotiated spaces of work, to the idea that occupational identities connected in complex ways with gendered social identities, and with interrogating and uncovering the occlusions of economic and social authority inherent to the documentary language used by institutions (like church courts) to record the incidental details of people's lives.[34]

These material, social and economic histories of women's work have kept the physical acts, institutional and linguistic traces, and an awareness of the materiality of such labour, in the foreground, and this strand of historical scholarship has corresponded with and supported my reading of the things, processes, profits, spaces, material valuation and impact, and discursive construction, of the act of providing lodgings, of housewifery and of service in literary texts. The issue of women's emotional labour – the subject of my study of Behn's *The History of the Nun* (1689) – offers an illuminating

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[33] https://formsoflabour.exeter.ac.uk/ [accessed 26/11/2021] The *Forms of Labour* project develops an earlier project, *Women's Work in Rural England, 1500-1700* (2015-18) https://earlymodernwomenswork.wordpress.com/ [accessed 26/11/2021] Related articles have emerged from both projects: Jane Whittle, 'A Critique of Approaches to 'Domestic Work': Women, Work and the Pre-Industrial Economy', *Past & Present*, Vol. 243(1) (2019), pp.35-70; Jane Whittle and Mark Hailwood, 'The gender division of labour in early modern England', *Economic History Review*, 73. 1 (2020), pp.3-32.

[34] A very recent example of scholarship on women's work and its underrepresentation and minimisation in institutional records is Laura Gowing's *Ingenious Trade: Women and Work in Seventeenth Century London* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2022), which examines the details of young 'women's occupational training' and the 'artisanal life cycle' within the apprentice system, an aspect of the early modern working landscape which is 'under-recorded both in formal archives and in the historiography.' (p.1). On separate spheres and gendered spaces: Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (June 1993), pp. 383-414; on gender and space: Amanda J. Flather, 'Space, Place, And Gender: The Sexual And Spatial Division Of Labor In The Early Modern Household', *History and Theory* 52 (October 2013), pp.344-360, and *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011); Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Danielle van den Heuvel, 'Gender in the Streets of the Premodern City', *Journal of Urban History*, Vol.45 (4) (2019), pp.693-710; Laura Gowing, ''The freedom of the streets': women and social space, 1560-1640', in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, ed. by Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp.130-151. On women's economic and social authority: Alexandra Shephard, 'Crediting Women in the Early Modern English Economy', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol.79 (79) (2015), pp.1-24; Amy Louise Erickson, 'Possession—and the other one-tenth of the law: assessing women's ownership and economic roles in early modern England', *Women's History Review*, 16:3 (2007), pp.369-385; Judith Spicksley, "'Fly with a duck in thy mouth': English Women as Sources of Credit in Seventeenth-Century England," *Social History* 32.2 (May 2007), pp.187–209.

example of the way in which historical scholarship on the material realities of women's working lives might be brought to bear on the broad cultural discourses which have literarily and rhetorically constructed and debated women's work. Daniel M. Gross' reading of the emotional economies of early modern English society has been crucial to my generation of a cohesive concept about the performance and value of emotional labour undertaken by women in the period: while Gross' philosophical study has supplied a historically appropriate set of terms concerning unequal distribution and economic scarcity in order to model the circulation and social and political value of emotion, his theorisations prompted but did not unveil an investigation of *gendered* power and material relations on the grounds of emotion.[35] The historical scholarship performed by Whittle, Hailwood and their team has been pushing forward a re-evaluation of the unremunerated work performed by women, and has proffered a basis for my reading of married women's emotional labour as both effortful in itself and materially accountable. Methodologically, as Whittle and Hailwood have argued, one might account for the unremunerated work of women by attaching to it monetary value on the basis that that work could be delegated to and performed by a third party for a wage. There are few forms of work performed by early modern women (and even fewer undertaken by modern women) that could not be performed by someone else for pay: emotional labour within the marital relationship is, perhaps, one of those few, given the apparent intangibility of the process, the perceived primacy and intimacy of the relationship, and the lack of a quantifiable end product. The methodological approach of the 'third-party criterion', rooted in twentieth century feminist economics and which has historically pressed for and continues to urge that women's unpaid work be accounted for monetarily and politically, has given both conceptual clarity and a rationale to my own reading of emotional labour as part of a materially and socially valuable suite of endeavours included within the purview of gendered domestic labour for early modern women.[36]

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[35] Daniel M. Gross, *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle's Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[36] Whittle and Hailwood outline the rationale for quantifying women's labour through the third party criterion in 'The Gender Division of Labour in Early Modern England' (2020) pp.6-7. Histories of women's work and lives that were published after the term 'emotional labour' was first explicated by the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in 1983 have generally not included emotional labour as a discrete category of work: Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women In Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); *Women And Work In Pre Industrial England* ed. by Lindsay Charles & Lorna Duffin (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 2013); Sara Read, *Maids, Wives, Widows: Exploring Early Modern Women's Lives 1540-1714* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2015). See Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization Of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983; 2012). However, there is an emerging willingness to read affect as a crucial aspect of intimate and hierarchical relationships in the period, and an interest in the histories of emotion is gaining ground. *Authority, gender and emotions in late medieval and early modern England* ed. by Susan Broomhall (Basingstoke, England; New York, NY.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); *The Youth of Early Modern Women*, ed. by Elizabeth S. Cohen and Margaret Reeves (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), esp. chapter 4, pp. 97-116; *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction* ed. by Susan Broomhall (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 2017); Jeroen J. H. Dekker & Inge J. M. Wichgers, 'The embodiment of teaching the regulation of emotions in early modern Europe', *Paedagogica Historica*, 54:1-2 (2018), pp.48-65; Leah Astbury, 'When a Woman Hates Her Husband: Love, Sex and Fruitful Marriages in Early Modern England', *Gender & History*, Vol.32 (3) (2020),

Behn's literary and cultural environment: the production of "work"

The literary representation of women's domestic labour is also a useful way into discussing the correspondence between the textual and ideological environment in which Behn writes, the types of work which she depicts, and the forms and genres which are available to her as representative strategies. While the literary material in this study includes long-form prose fiction, as well as a less easily definable mixed-form romantic *novelle*, conduct manuals and didactic literature, and some few examples of cheap print items, the larger part of this thesis is concerned with dramatic texts. What the studies by Korda, Wall and Dowd have in common, besides their interest in women's work, is that their dramatic purview stops at 1642: this is my principal point of departure from these earlier approaches, and a crucial one in terms of the possibilities available to the writer who depicts work.[37] The Restoration stage is not a prepossessing place to go looking for sustained or detailed engagement with the topic of work or with a concern for the domestic. Representations of labour are liable to be unfavourable or pejorative (not, in itself, a fact inimical to attempts to read such representations) but depictions of work tend to remain a background issue. Given the ideological and generic investments of Restoration comedies in particular, either the idea of or the representation of work is a thing of less concern than the preferred means by which central characters might access social, political and economic authority, or find a way to reclaim this. Across three decades or so from the 1660s to the early 1690s, the idea of "work" in Restoration comedy generally conjures associations with trade, the middling orders, City knights and aldermen, and their encroachment on the estates and privileges of their "betters"; with non-conformism, political radicalism, Puritanism and social climbing; and with manual labour, the lower orders and the vulgarity of the common mob. (While Restoration *drama* – including various forms of tragedy, heroic plays, and the development of oppositional drama around certain political crisis points – certainly is not ideologically monolithic, a focus on "work" within *comedy* leaves a broadly deprecatory and socially conservative impression).[38] Where a taste for Jonsonian punitive comedy is maintained into the 1660s, those characters who are associated with work or trade commonly overlap with those who are gulled, fooled and cuckolded (witty servants, descendants of the type from classical comedy, being the general exception). A preference for wit in comedy, and 'the pleasure of listening to "the conversation of Gentlemen" and observing the behaviour of high society' might rather be an expression of playwright-erly intention than an indication either of the desires of the audience or of the

pp.523-541. The *Sources of Early Modern Emotion in English, 1500-1700* (SEMEE) online collaborative project run by Bradley J. Irish (Arizona State University) has recently begun to compile editable bibliographies of primary and secondary sources on early modern emotion. https://www.earlymodernemotion.net/ [accessed 21/06/2021].

[37] For other studies of early-seventeenth-century drama and domestic spaces, see also Ann C. Christensen *Separation Scenes: Domestic Drama in Early Modern England* (Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 2017) and Iman Sheeha, *Household Servants in Early Modern Domestic Tragedy* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

[38] See Aparna Dharwadker, 'Restoration Drama and Social Class', in *A Companion to Restoration Drama* ed. by Susan J. Owen (Oxford, U.K.; Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) pp.140-160.

possible attitudes of the playgoers based on their social composition.[39] As Harold Love's fascinating work has suggested, it is very difficult to develop a detailed sense of the social make-up of the Restoration audience or a reliable understanding of the proportions of any groups within it on a long-term view: it was, however, undoubtedly not a homogenous coterie of men and hangers-on associated with the court.[40] Nevertheless, the milieu depicted in comedies is largely leisured, without desire, ability or need to pursue livelihood through work, and who are financially supported by hidden labour.

Working spaces and working roles – whether in the household as a site of wifely domestic labour or shared industry, consumer spaces like shops and workshops, or non-metropolitan locales as places of agricultural work – are not valuable to explorations and negotiations of authority, nationality and subjectivity in the way that labour has been identified as significant in the middling and labouring contexts of early city and citizen comedies, and in domestic tragedies. A '"positive sense of vocation"' – with its implications of honesty, dignity and social credit through labour – makes very little sense for the gentlemen and women of Restoration comedy.[41] The social focus of these plays is skewed, comparatively, upwards, and its sympathies and interests shifted likewise: an aristocratic preoccupation with political and material dispossession, and of dwindling and threatened estates, means that, for the central characters of comedies, the thrust of the narrative involves the finagling, adventuring and seducing one's way back to solvency by overcoming whatever barriers (sequestration, a shortage of prudent behaviour, the lack of a wealthy spouse) prevented their access to ready money and a secure inheritance. And, if the basis of an aristocratic (and sometimes very explicitly Stuart) ideology of orderly rule is the organisation and concentration of inheritable wealth in the right hands, one cannot *work* to retrieve it: Behn's satirical design in *The Lucky Chance*, in which she sets one of her cashless and credit-less heroes to participate unwillingly in sex work, indicates (amongst other things) that dispossession cannot (or should not) be resolved through ones' own labour. The hero is given an eleventh-hour reprieve by an inheritance windfall, and all is (apparently) right again. There is no honesty or dignity in performing work in order to maintain a veneer of genteel status, and such desperate exploits only draw attention to a breach where, ideally, there should be none: that is, between the self-evidently superior external appearance, and the innately "better" internal character of the landed elite.[42]

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[39] Brian Corman, 'Comedy', *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, ed. Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.53.
[40] Harold Love, 'Who Were the Restoration Audience?', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 10 (1980), pp.21–44.
[41] *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), p.2. Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, defines the temporal parameters of her study as partly due to the lack of interest in the domestic and housewifery in the dramatic output of the private playhouses of the Restoration (p.16).
[42] J. Douglas Canfield, *Tricksters and Estates: On the Ideology of Restoration Comedy* (Lexington, KY.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997). Jessica Munns, 'Change, Skepticism and Uncertainty', *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre* ed. Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.142-157.

Ideological strictures on the value of representing work dovetails, consequently, with genre and with Behn's critical perspective on women's work: it is women who commonly form the targets of those comic seductions and plots to acquire or stabilise access to wealth, and who are to be disposed of along with their resources and *as* resources in the movement of property between generations of fathers, guardians and husbands. Women's work, as far as Behn makes it visible, is about, as I have suggested, the methods by which women negotiate their relationships with men who make claims on their physical, financial, sexual and emotional assets. However déclassé it might be to admit the importance of and to linger over labour in such a textual and ideological environment, Behn makes conspicuous the necessity of women's work in a number of ways. For the landlady in Behn's comedy, the performance of work in order to earn a livelihood implicates necessity in quite an obvious, material sense, and it is the nature and context of her labours – disreputable, impecunious, disorderly – that in itself provides an unusually detailed glimpse of a working existence in Behn's oeuvre. Such work also provides a lens for reading other material, and sexual, relationships in the play. The wealthy, genteel housewife – a figure of interest to Behn in her prose fiction, though rarely one in her comedies – finds that her access to the materials and resources necessary for her survival is mediated by the authority of her husband even when he is absent. The integrity of her social reputation – an aspect of her existence no less important than the physical stuff of life – is also bound up in the consistent performance of emotional labour. The female servant in Behn's stage comedy displays perhaps the most troubled relationship to the personal necessity of work: Behn's endorsement of a model of intimate loyalty and of disinterest in the servants who aid her heroines tends to obfuscate both the financial aspect of the service relationship and the sense that there may be some substantive social difference between mistress and maid that makes the labours of the latter integral to an imputed existence beyond the confines of the service bond. Nevertheless, Behn's representation of the restoration work undertaken by female servants – the righting of disorder inherent to the patriarchal status quo – points to both the benefits of such work (the reward of marriage for the servant, the assurance of the heroine's autonomy in romantic matters), as well as its risks (the cross-class indistinguishability of women, the complicity of servants in the self-damaging romantic subjection of their mistresses).

This thesis is shaped into three sections, which deal with these three types of workers – the landlady, the housewife and the female servant – and is divided into chapters within these sections that examine the representation of their labours. The first section – the landlady – explores Behn's depiction of this character as comic type in dialogue with her representation by other dramatists. In *The Kind Keeper* (published 1680; performed 1678) by John Dryden and *The Swaggering Damsell* (1640) by Robert Chamberlaine, the intertwining of financial and sexual economies is established as characteristic of the lodging space and of the relationships between landladies and lodgers. Behn, like her fellow playwrights, represents lodging practices as spilling over with domestic disorder, and defined by topsy-turvy marital hierarchies, opportunistic spatial politics and uncertainty about the categorical, gendered

parameters through which the landlady's labour might be understood. In *The Lucky Chance,* anything and everything is purchasable, and such an ethos in turn sets the terms for wider sexual and financial exchanges: the continuities between poor locations (the lodging space) and wealthy environs (the households of aldermen) within the City are marked out by the economic practices, and the very body of the landlady – or, more precisely, the rakish hero's view of her body. The conceptual production of women's sexual and economic agency as depraved and demonic – in the landlady's case, her authority to insist on the running of her domestic economy to her liking, and in the heroine's case, to choose the terms on which she disposes of her own body in marriage and within the bounds of a romantic extra-marital relationship – derives from the hero's deployment of a self-conscious and entitled lovers' rhetoric, and its verification by a mercantile ethos (embodied by the ghastly City-knights) which is always ready to profiteer.[43] The hero, conventionally enough, believes he has a right to sex from the woman he loves, and believes purchasing it is a valid means of acquisition. This conviction is bodied forth by the landlady's own corporeal form – thematised as disgustingly hellish and constituted, pejoratively in Behn's estimation, by manual labour – for which the hero retains a disgusted fascination: he finds he cannot distinguish between the bodies and identities of his physically unappealing landlady and his beauteous beloved, and continues to read the body of the former into the latter. The genteel heroine and the poor landlady in *The Lucky Chance* form the opposite ends of a network of bodies, cash, material resources and sex, in which the latter directly underwrites and funds (though unknowingly) the purchase of the former by the hero. Worse still, both women separately finance their own exploitation by this same man.

The social and economic processes that are shown up in the filthy, working spaces of the City – the lodging site above a blacksmith's workshop – are shown to dovetail with the profiteering ethos of the rich City knights whose wealth derives from trade: the urban site of the City is a place of contested agency, risk and abuse for both a genteel woman and a penurious landlady**.** Differently from her contemporary playwrights, then, Behn, puts to work the sexual and financial disreputability of the landlady as a means to make legible a critical feminist aim: to suggest a general exploitation that is certainly inflected by class but, ultimately, is not, as I have suggested, impeded by the apparent preferment of one class of woman over another. As modes of dispossession, gender and class (the latter implying a working existence) are collapsed into one another through the reflexive and self-regarding gaze of the desperate, merchant-libertine. He who believes he can transact with one woman can transact

[43] The City-knights in this play are Sir Feeble Fainwould, an old alderman, and Sir Cautious Fulbank, an old banker. These citizens of London, or 'cits', are frequently deployed as comic butts in Restoration comedies. They are typically represented as old men, sexually jealous and financially greedy, and, as representatives of a rising middle class, are commonly tarred with the brush of Whig politics and/or dissenting religion by playwrights with Tory sympathies. See Pacheco, 'Reading Toryism' (2004), and J. Douglas Canfield, 'Tupping Your Rival's Women: Cit-Cuckolding as Class Warfare in Restoration Comedy' in *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama* ed. by Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington, KY.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

with (or for) any – regardless of her claims to a higher rate of appreciation. In *The Lucky Chance*, Behn appears weary of pretending that an aristocratic ideology which enables men to conceptualise women as property to be bought and sold is anything but a performance which requires the scrutiny of being dismantled. The landlady's labours, and her body, are key to that scrutiny. The absent presence of the landlady's grotesquely sexualised physical form – she is actually onstage for only one short scene – both structures the comedy and enables a critical perspective on a broad system of oppression. Behn manages, in the way of Restoration comedies, to reduce a character associated with work to a low comic state, at the same time as suggesting that there is something to be taken seriously about the interdependence of different forms of social and economic existences, and that that must implicate the lives and labours of the poorer sort.

The second section considers the unremunerated employments of the housewife through an engagement with the romance mode. While stage comedy is a natural location to find servants, as much of the scholarship on service in early modern literature attests, it is a less propitious location, given the narrative trajectory of most Restoration stage comedies, to find a sustained engagement with the presence of the housewife. The driving towards a marital conclusion amongst a set of urbane gentlemen and women who enjoy the thrill of the chase leaves very little room for consideration of what happens once hands have been joined in matrimony. Prose fiction, on the other hand, offers plenty of room for a developed and lengthy interrogation of the conditions of marriage in action. I examine one of Behn's lengthier prose narratives, *The History of the Nun* (1689), and the emotional labour performed by its heroine, in dialogue with the erotic work recommended for wives with wavering husbands in Margaret Cavendish's mixed-form romantic novella *The She-Anchoret* (1656). These two chapters consider the way in which the romance mode is used differently in order to explore roughly the same thematic terrain – the centrality of women's working activities and identities to the balanced and proper state of gender order in the marital household**.** Behn and Cavendish take the cultural construction of womanhood and of wifehood as a key concern, using the romance mode – one long associated with women for its amorous and implicitly trivial topicality – to interrogate the systematic fact of emotional labour within marriage, and to shakily endorse the courtesan as a working figure by which the wife might deal with husbandly infidelity. In *The She-Anchoret*, the representation of the narrator's gender and of her authoritative status as knowledge producer is of particular importance to the depiction of the courtesan's work and the uneasiness with which such a figure is resettled into a domestic context. An intellectual but virginal female heroism is a curious position from which to be offering advice about erotic roleplay, and it is both the flexibility of the language of work and the representational possibilities of a mixed-form romantic novella which allows Cavendish (through her narratorial anchoret) to proffer the 'arts' of the courtesan as a source of wifely influence without submitting to prurience by actually describing them. The morally confrontational courtesan – a woman whose soft power Cavendish appears abashed to describe – is nevertheless embraced within a model of virtuous housewifeliness, expanding our

understanding of Cavendish's engagement with the domestic. *Anchoret* also allows us to rethink the uses of the romance mode as a textual site which, in Cavendish's hands, struggles with eroticism and with female sexual agency rather than embraces it, and in which a conservative view of gender hierarchy within marriage – which delimits the purview of wives to defending the sexual reputation of the household – experiences tension with a model of feminine heroism as independence.

In Behn's *The History of the Nun*, an interrogation of the gendered division of labour coheres around the figure of the heroine-as-wife, an elision of these two figures of womanhood which permits an examination of the conflict that is caused by identifying one woman as both. The heroine's suppression and management of the passions – the work of emotional labour – is the structural backbone of a narrative of escalating tension, as the promises of romance within marriage give way to the increasingly high-stakes performance of feminine 'tranquillity'. This deferential suppression of emotion – of performing the internally voyeuristic and self-conscious work of outwardly exuding apathy in exchange for a solid reputation for virtue – develops a stringent irony through repetition, a marker which chronicles a progressive breakdown of usual meaning**.** Though this narrative in its terrible denouement – a spectacular double murder and an execution – is closer to domestic tragedy than comedy, it continues to share in Behn's basic critical assumption that a heroine's material security remains ineffably dependent upon her relationships to usually male authority figures, and that her wealth constitutes an attraction for young men who deploy seductive and romantic rhetoric in order to achieve possession. Differently from those comedies in which Behn registers and satirises the inequities of love and marriage but pulls away from the radicalism of solutions, there is, in *The History of the Nun*, no sugaring over of the repressive custom of inculcating girls and young women into a system of material and behavioural relations which demands lifelong emotional labour. Marriage, requiring such work, is not (contrary to the usual marital teleology of romance narratives) its own reward.

The final section concerns the dramatic presence of the female servant. The construction of marriage as a reward for faithful service is the focus of my reading of *The Dutch Lover* (1673), one of the two plays which I examine in this section. Service on the Restoration stage is much understudied, and the two comedies by Behn which I explore in the last two chapters are contextualised within contemporary ideas and narratives about gendered servitude: the representation of service in conduct literature in the period – texts which offer advice and instruction to both servants and potential employers – provide a means of reading service relationships in Behn's comedies that enable us to move beyond the taking of servants as a given in the genre, as pieces of comic furniture that have more to do with older models of comedy than current ideas about the institution of service in a marketized economy. Both *The Dutch Lover* and *The Town Fopp* (1677) take up a variety of contemporary ideas and narratives about servitude: a female servant, for instance, is seen to typically represent a risk of sexual disorder to the household, and her behaviour requires policing; a servant in a pedagogical role is under particular pressure to be exemplary in behaviour, and she must be fitted with practical (not merely theoretical) knowledge; going in to

service should be the beginning of a trajectory of acquired skill and eventual reward. In reorienting these ideas towards her own comic and critical purposes, Behn acknowledges tensions and gaps in existing models of service and reinterprets them for her use. The primary animus of Behn's rather elastic reinterpretation of ideals about service is, once more, her critical view on the vulnerabilities of women regarding their sexual, physical and financial relationships with male authority figures. Behn's exculpatory model of servant fidelity endorses a loyalty-unto-disorder approach: this points to a configuration of the relationship between the servant and mistress, and to idealisations about servant behaviour, which skews the skills of the servant away from normative definitions of desirable qualities (humility, forbearance, lack of self-interest) and towards a restorative form of work which prizes female agency. The servant's lauded ability to deceive, thieve, educate, plot and manipulate are crucial to the defensive alliance that the mistress and the female servant present against impositions of authority.

Some servants, perhaps the most ethical according to models which value volitional service, require no reward: the Nurse in *The Town Fopp* performs service perfectly from the standpoint of personal loyalty and a faithful disinterest in helping her mistress to a man of her choice, as well as hewing closely to the methodological frameworks laid out in popular conduct literature which mark out the pedagogical role of the servant and expectations about her relationship to her charge. While the delimitation of the servant's performance of pedagogy aligns with the basic instructional paradigm endorsed by the conduct literature – that a tutor should be a figure of exemplarity, that her knowledge should be both experience-based and bolstered by her own didactic reading practices – it is also becomes clear that Behn's evocation of service as gendered alliance (one rather denuded of labour relations based on economic exchange) makes legible points of tension between those models which map out servile skill and conduct, and Behn's own critical aims. A comical performance of loyal female service which, for example, approaches instructive reading matter didactically as a source of useful verbal insults, becomes complicit in inducting the heroine into an order of masculinist, casual violence and homosocial bargaining over women, which it is the servant's job to first expose. The servant's piloting her charge into a romantic subject position – a romanticism critically registered as hollow, dangerous and self-centred – results in an equivocation over what, after all, might constitute the most ethical performance of service. The servant's disinterested loyalty facilitates a fantasy of female autonomy – Nurse is on the side of marriages of affect – but such work never helps the mistress to retain the critical distance from the lover's fictions that the Nurse herself perceives, nor from the patriarchal property relations recorded in the play's parallel marriage-for-money plot.

1. The landlady in Restoration stage comedy: Robert Chamberlaine's **The Swaggering Damsell (1640)** *and John Dryden's* **The Kind Keeper (1680)**

Sex, work, money, space: the literary and cultural presence of the landlady

In *The Second Part of The Rover* (1681), Behn's titular rake Willmore spends the play lambasting La Nuche –the courtesan whom he claims to desperately desire – for her mercenary motives. Plainly feeling chagrined that she will not consent to have sex with him without payment, Willmore converts his sexual frustration and his vexation at his own poverty into a criticism of the prostitute's prerogative: the combining of financial and sexual interests. La Nuche's one-time fancy for Willmore, so he argues, was really to his 'out-side; death, you made love to my Breeches, caress'd my Garniture and Feather…'Shart, I have known a Woman doat on Quality, tho he has stunk through all his Perfumes.' Her response is smilingly unabashed: 'But he was rich, good Captain, was he not?'[1] Willmore eventually succeeds in seducing her into bed *gratis* but is interrupted at the last moment by his rival, Beaumond. Though a competition ensues, La Nuche can convince neither man to remain with her. Willmore, who steadfastly refuses to lay out cash for sex on principle – 'my Purse shall never be my Pimp' – responds to La Nuche's attempt to detain him with a short verse from a song:

> No, no, I will not hire your Bed,
>
> Nor Tenant to your favours be;
>
> I will not farm your white and red,

[1] Aphra Behn, *The Second Part of the Rover* (London, 1681), 1.1, p.14.

You shall not let your love to me:

I Court a Mistris – not a Landlady.[2]

Given that the song first appears in a much cruder variation in 1656, Behn could later reliably draw upon the rather earthy, commonplace comparison between a mistress, a landlady and a prostitute: the figurative landlady causes monetary concerns to become entangled with sex, since she turns her body into a commodity to be purchased or rented. The prostitute La Nuche, as Willmore implies, does so too. It is genuine erotic connection (represented by the mistress in the song) that is deemed preferable. Courting a landlady rather than a mistress implies a temporary, partial and pecuniary arrangement: putting a sexual encounter on a financial footing (in which 'love' is 'let') is no different than hiring a bed in a lodging space. In such a space, the option for sexual contact seems to be implied in the price. The disconnection between the landlady and honest passion, and the assumed relationship between such a woman and monetary interest, suggests that (from the perspective of the man who is trying to avoid remunerating a woman for sexual services, at least) sexual disreputability really only coheres around financial motivation. The **s**ong from which Behn lifts Willmore's verse, and his purse-as-pimp metaphor, makes an unequivocal (and hypocritical) statement to that effect: ''Tis Money only makes the Whore.'[3] Since the rationale for *any* sort of intimacy with a lodger – merely even an innocent sociability – is to earn a living, the landlady (by the terms of Willmore's transparently self-interested "free love" model) can never not be implicated in an unacceptably mercenary exchange with those to whom she offers access to a bed. Behn returns to this figure – the sexually disreputable landlady – a few years later in her City-comedy *The Lucky Chance, or An Alderman's Bargain* (performed 1686, published 1687).[4] Behn is as unforgiving of the admixture of financial motive and sexual connection in this play as in *The Second Part of the Rover*, but more understanding of the economic necessities that underpin marital, romantic and sexual relationships. Gayman, the rake at the centre of *The Lucky Chance* is, like Willmore, made poor through lavish expenditure, though Behn does not make the same strenuous, royalist defence of his poverty: Gayman is, apparently, a romantic, but a sceptic and a profligate too, unwisely extracting capital from his inheritance and splurging it on courtship gifts for

[2] Behn, *Second Part of the Rover*, 5.1, p.70. The song first appears as a much cruder variation, 'To his Whore who askt money of him' in *Wit and Drollery, Jovial Poems. By Sir J. M. Ja: S. Sir W. D. J. D. And other admirable Wits.* (London, 1656). The landlady stanza is considerably more vulgar, for it is not 'love' that the speaker declines to rent from the landlady but the name of a particular body part that is blanked out: 'I will not farme your white and red,/You shall not let your --- to me,/ I court a Mistrisse, not a Landlady.' (p.109). Behn's version in *The Second Part of the Rover* seems to have been lifted, with small changes, from the less crass and more conciliatory version in *Westminster-drollery, or, A choice collection of the newest songs & poems both at court and theaters by a person of quality; with additions* (1671). The song has been misattributed to Behn because of its appearance in her play; see Mary Ann O'Donnell**,** *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography Of Primary And Secondary Sources* (London, England; New York, NY.: Routledge, 2016), p.265.

[3] Anon., *Westminster-drollery*, p.79.

[4] '*The Lucky Chance, or An Alderman's Bargain*', in *The Rover and Other Plays*, ed. by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.184-270.

the woman who repeatedly denies him and who is already married.[5] This woman, Julia, defends her own choices – marrying an old City knight for his money – by emphasising that love does not pay the bills: like La Nuche, Julia expresses concern about financial security and doubt about the pragmatism of love.[6] The landlady of the piece, Gammer Grime, also has an eye to her coffers: what money she has access to, either hard cash or credit, becomes a means of retaining the sexual interest (however obviously insincere) of her desperate lodger Gayman. This landlady, then, hires out her bed in precisely the way that Willmore describes.

In *The Lucky Chance*, Behn engages with a set of central, typifying concerns that relate to the landlady – money, sex, space, power, and working identity – in order to make visible a limited critique of the commodification of women and the normality of such treatment across different social environments. This is the primary difference between Behn's use of a series of dramatic commonplaces about the landlady, and their use by the two other plays in this section: in line with Behn, Robert Chamberlaine's *The Swaggering Damsell* (performance date unknown; published 1640) and John Dryden's *The Kind Keeper, or Mr Limberham* (performed 1678; published 1680) share assumptions about a connection between the landlady's work, the money that she gathers, spends and accounts for in the course of that work, the spaces that she inhabits and manages, and the possibility of sexual exchange.[7] These are the terms that help to define what Michelle Dowd describes as an 'imaginative space for the female worker': her study, *Women's Work in Early Modern Literature and Culture*, examines 'how popular texts shaped the cultural understanding of women's work in early modern England' and understands these texts as having 'an important social function.' By 'offering reassuring fantasies, posing potential solutions, and managing perceived dangers' such stories 'delimit the forms of cultural authority available to working

[5] Willmore states proudly that ''tis a Royal Cause I suffer for' (*Second Part of The Rover*, 1.1, p.15); Gayman has decayed his fortune with 'jewels, rings and presents' for Julia (*Lucky Chance*, 1.2, p.201).
[6] La Nuche: ''Twere a fine Trade indeed to keep Shop and give our Ware for Love, would it turn to account think ye, Captain, to trick and dress, to receive all wou'd enter.' (*Second Part of The Rover*, 1.1, p.15). Julia: 'Love's a thin diet, nor will keep out cold. You Cannot satisfy your dunning tailor, To cry, 'I am in love!' Though possible you may your seamstress.' (*Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.241).
[7] For Behn, I am using the Oxford World's Classics edition (see footnote 4 above). Act and scene divisions and page numbers for *The Lucky Chance* are those of that edition. For both Dryden and Chamberlaine, I am using the first quartos: John Dryden, *The Kind Keeper, or Mr. Limberham: A Comedy* (London, 1680); Robert Chamberlaine, *The Swaggering Damsell. A Comedy.* (London, 1640). Dryden's play was removed from the stage after three days owing to a now irretrievable controversy which also delayed the publication of the text. See, Susan Staves, 'Why was Dryden's "Mr. Limberham" Banned?: A Problem in Restoration Theatre History', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research,* Vol.13 (1) (1974), pp.1-11. There is little information about Chamberlaine's only known play: Gerald Eades Bentley conjectures, on the basis of addresses to ladies in the prologue and the licensing of the play alongside another Cockpit play, that it may have been written specifically for performance at that private theatre (i.e., the Cockpit at Drury Lane) and 'though it is likely enough that the comedy was acted', there 'is no external evidence concerning the play.' G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage, Vol. III.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956) pp.152-4. Act and scene divisions are those of the quartos, though I have rendered them into figures where necessary, i.e., '*Actus Quintus'* in Chamberlaine is given as '5'. I have used the page numbers where they are given in the quartos (Dryden) and signatures where they are not (Chamberlaine). All references to primary texts are cited in the footnotes.

women in seventeenth century England.'[8] My readings of the plays in this section will examine what this imaginative space for landladies looks like, why her work seems to be perceived as dangerous, and how each playwright handles and defuses this danger. That the landlady seems to represent a risk in the cultural and literary imagination primarily arises, I argue, from the difficulty of categorising her labours: her work is fundamentally troublesome to define within normative, gendered parameters. Sharing features of both commercial activity (i.e., retailing or trading from within the household) and housewifery (female labour focused in and around the home, and concerned with the management and provision of its materials, bodies, finances and reputation), the landlady's work seems to offer an extra layer of complication to pictures of dual-livelihood marital households in particular, and an especial intensification of query about the authority and independence of the married working woman. In Chamberlaine's *The Swaggering Damsell*, as we will see, the landlady's semi-independent financial activity allows for the perverse development of her sexual agency: her power to restrict the flow of sex as a resource develops in tandem with her capacity to reckon and exact debts.

There are a number of representative strategies held in common by comedies which feature a landlady, and one is that the place of lodging is one of disguise and concealment, as well as a site for debate about the meaning and uses of space. The landlady's association with notions of temporariness and anonymity (as suggested by the comic dramatists' habit of making the lodging space a bolthole for impecunious gentleman) links her both to wider social and more narrowly domestic disorder. Her means of earning a wage is implicated in the perceived dislocation of social harmony that arises in urban spaces during a period of population explosion and increased geographic and social mobility: this puts the landlady, as the dramatists appear to recognise, at the coalface of perhaps countless interactions with strangers, in which she is supposed to be able to make sound judgement about the respectability of prospective tenants and to be subjected to judgement in turn. In the comedies, she rarely seems capable of or desirous of pursuing this kind of prudent behaviour. The physical busyness and permeability of the early modern household – alongside the assumption that a household is accessible to community interest in a manner quite alien to our own sense of homely privacy – makes that concealment of lodgers problematic. Such a dynamic makes impropriety both possible and likely, and while the early modern household is not yet considered an inherently feminine, private "home", the limited expectation of physical privacy from the lodger plays off against the particularly housewifely responsibility of the landlady to manage and police spaces and behaviour. Her welcoming of risk (and opportunity) into her household draws upon both necessarily feminised notions of bodily penetration as well as normatively masculine associations with commercial acquisitiveness. The landlady, then, becomes a shorthand for disorderly sexual behaviour and financial interest.

[8] Michelle M. Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (New York, NY.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.6; p.2; 10.

In dramatic lodging spaces, sex is merchandise, prize, currency, and a means of accruing power and of withholding it from others. The relationship between sex and money allows of both exchange and substitution, and dramatists tend to represent the landlady's relationship to sex in a limited number of ways: she will either encourage or be content to accept sexual contact in lieu of payment for rent and other debts, she will engage in an incidental form of sex work (in which the landlady makes herself sexually available), or will be directly implicated in a more clearly structured type of sex work as a bawd. From a broader cultural perspective as within the drama, the language of lodging itself becomes inseparable from that of sex, and those moments at which discourses of sex and work display (a sometimes coded) mutual dependence are those in which we must be especially attentive in charting that imaginative space carved out for the landlady. Mario DiGangi has already marked out the interdependence of such discourses in the dramatic representation of the citizen's wife in early-seventeenth century comedy, a woman whose sexual and economic agency is subject to a form of 'social discipline' by being represented as a threat to household credit: as a dramatic type, this 'familiar cultural figure…renders sexual agency intelligible as a symptom of the transgression of gender, social, economic, or political order', a dubious form of agency of which the landlady as type also partakes.[9] As I will suggest, the landlady shares in many of the same deprecatory qualities as the citizen's wife from earlier city comedies, but with some important qualifications that concern the landlady's independent responsibility for a commercial venture all her own. Her occupational identity, separate from that of her tradesman husband, engenders considerable tension in the marital household – not simply between feminised domestic and masculinised commercial concerns, but between two forms of commercial activity, and each consequently becoming ill-defined by embroilment with each other.

The way in which comedy is used to delimit women's agency and to set up a site of discipline also brings to the forefront the question of the value of specifically dramatic texts in helping us to delineate and explore the work of a historically and literarily understudied form of labour. Tim Reinke-Williams consults some literary (non-dramatic) sources in his brief section on landladies in his *Women, Work and Sociability in Early Modern London*, but is slightly incautious about the way in which subtly pejorative depictions of the landlady's work can resemble 'positive' representations of 'domestic relationships' between landladies and lodgers within a comic literary tradition. The ballad which Reinke-Williams adduces as evidence, *The merry mans resolution: or, his last farewell to his former acquaintance* (London, 1650), is (mis)aligned with generous commendations of the landlady's 'pietie and goodness' in other textual sources identified in his study, despite the obviously sexual freight of the song: the evocation of fondness between the roving 'merry man' of the title (who sings of drifting between 'drabs', 'bouncing lasses' and 'smirking wenches') and his landlady, is presented as personally

[9] Mario DiGangi, *Sexual Types: Embodiment, Agency, and Dramatic Character from Shakespeare to Shirley* (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) p.123; -6. See chapter 2 especially, 'Calling Whore: The Citizen Wife and the Erotics of Open Work.'

desirable ('my land-lady whom I do love so well').[10] Given the erotic theme, this is plainly meant to suggest the landlady's sexual availability and therefore her disreputability. As Reinke-Williams suggests, this relationship is not 'antagonistic', but neither, given the coding of the landlady's work as sexual, is it as commendable as he proposes. What this brings into relief is the value of dramatic texts in helping us to imagine (though cautiously) what Reinke-Williams terms those difficult to recover 'social dynamics' of lodging spaces: defamation, social discipline, antagonism and disreputability can and do coexist in the plays with those 'positive' aspects of the lodger/landlady relationship – compassion, shared emotional and physical vulnerability, and strenuous efforts by the landlady to police and defend her reputation.[11] While Willmore's song, which comes, too, from a ballad tradition, assumes that the landlady is incapable of free, or disinterested, love, it does not necessarily follow that the entanglement of sexual and financial economies in the lodging space (an unwise expedient, the comedies seem to suggest) means that there is no room for romantic rhetoric within such a space, that the landlady is uninvested in the defence of her reputation or her creditworthiness, or that having the upper hand within her domestic economy does not leave her vulnerable to exploitation. Of the plays under consideration in this section, Behn's *The Lucky Chance* – the subject of the second chapter – takes the longest stride towards comprehending how and why the landlady's being left open (and indeed leaving herself open) to personal and financial risk is connected to the hazards that must coalesce around a *woman in particular*. The bank of cultural and literary knowledge on which Willmore draws when he rebuffs a prostitute by comparing her to a landlady takes on an especial urgency – a thematic and structural impetus – when Behn picks it up again in one of her last plays.

The landlady's work

Before exploring the literature in any depth, it is first necessary to flesh out what work may have meant for a landlady in this period. In her classic study *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century,* Alice Clark suggests that those women who were related to a skilled trade via their husband must have 'generally occupied themselves with some industry' if their personal involvement in their husband's industry was made somehow disadvantageous or not possible.[12] Letting out space within the household would have been just such a remunerative activity – the landlady Gammer Grime in Behn's *The Lucky*

[10] L.P., *The merry mans resolution: or, his last farewell to his former acquaintance* (London, 1650).
[11] Tim Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability in Early Modern London* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2014) p.73; 93-4. Reinke-Williams brings other forms of relationships within the purview of domesticity shared by the landlady – those between mistresses and maids – and looks to rectify 'the long history of problematic relations between servant and employer [which] has frequently been characterised by manipulation, loaded negotiation, tension and conflict.' He broadens out this concern with collaborative and compassionate domestic relationships to landladies and their lodgers in a chapter on 'Domestic Management.' pp.74-102.
[12] Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* ed, by Amy Louise Erickson (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 1992) p.197.

Chance, for instance, is the wife of a blacksmith, Mistress Welt in Chamberlaine's *The Swaggering Damsell* the wife of a shoemaker – though Clark has nothing specific to say about the sort of labour involved in the provision of temporary accommodation or of hospitality in general. (The imprecision of the language – 'some industry' – as well as the assumption that 'domestic drudgery' was a separate category of work that did not overlap with the skilled work in which wives may have partaken is a particularly pertinent issue to which I will return).[13] It is those women whose own primary or sole remunerative activities as a seller and regulator of space within an ostensibly domestic setting – as opposed to a provisioner of consumables within the overtly public space of the alehouse – with whom this chapter will be concerned. Within this context then, a lodger's basic expectations were a bed or part of one, consumables (food and drink) or access to cooking facilities, and in some cases the delivery of healthcare. Offering only board within her own household, as opposed to running and/or owning an establishment which sold alcohol (and which therefore was subject to government regulation), was an activity that 'did not require formal training or a licence' and might, as Reinke-Williams notes, form a 'relatively secure enterprise as long as an individual had the necessary capital.'[14] The landlady who rented property to tenants might be of humble means and seek to extract as much income from her household space as possible: a woman may rent out her spare room, a bed, or a share of a bed, alongside seeking out both paid employment (either brought into the home, or sought outside it) and undertaking unpaid labour as a housewife and caregiver to dependents.[15] 'Subletting and doubling up was commonplace', though for the purposes of this chapter, the comedies under discussion do not, unfortunately, offer enough detail to allow us to distinguish between the landlady as owner or landlady as manager or householder: it is the latter scenario in which the landlady would herself be a tenant who sub-lets space to other tenants. Neither Behn, Dryden nor Chamberlaine offer any explicit information

[13] Clark, *Working Life*, p.196; 157. Craftsmen's or tradesmen's wives as landladies are a commonplace in stage comedies. Rebecca Brittleware, whom I discuss below in connection with Chamberlaine's *The Swaggering Damsell*, is the wife of Jack Brittleware, a retailer of china and glass items in Richard Brome's *The sparagus garden a comedie. Acted in the yeare 1635* (London, 1640); Frances Bibber is the wife of a tailor in Dryden's *The Wild Gallant: A Comedy* (London, 1669). In Abraham Cowley's *The guardian, a comedie acted before Prince Charls, His Highness at Trinity-Colledg in Cambridge, upon the twelfth of March, 1641* (published 1650), Captain Blade describes the variety of tradespeople who provided temporary accommodation to (unreliable) lodgers: 'From a Water-mans house at the Banks side (marry, you stay'd there but a small while, because the fellow was jealous of his wife) passing o'er like great King Xerxes in a Sculler, you arriv'd at a Chandlers house in Thames-street, and there took up your lodging. The day before you should have paid, you walkt abroad, and were seen no more; for ever after the smell of the place offended you. Next, you appear'd at an Ale-house i'th' Covent-Garden, like a Duck that dives at one end of a pond and rises unexpectedly at the other. But that place (though there was Beer and Tobacco there) by no means pleas'd you; for there dwelt so many cheaters thereabouts; that you could not live by one another; they spoil'd your trade quite. Then from a Shoo-makers, (as you entitl'd him; marry some authors call him a Cobler) to a Basket-makers; from thence to the Counter; from thence, after much benevolence, to a Barbers; changing more lodgings than Pythagoras his soul did.' (1.3, sig. A4^{r}).

[14] Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability*, p.93. 'Landlady' also refers to something like the modern sense of female publican: see Clark's section in *Working Life* on provision trades and brewsters (pp.221-35).

[15] Women might also be involved in the provision of temporary accommodation through their roles as parish nurses within the poor relief system: see Diane Willen,'Women in the Public Sphere in Early Modern England: The Case of the Urban Working Poor', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 559-575.

on this - Behn describes Gammer Grime's household as properly headed by Gregory Grime, though this does not mean that husband and wife are not themselves tenants – but there are hints in other texts. John Fletcher's *The Chances* (first published in the Beaumont and Fletcher folio of 1647, and staged several times in the Restoration) features a landlady who is enraged that one of her lodgers has brought home a bastard child of mysterious origin: her right to know the about the (mis)behaviour of her lodgers is connected to her responsibility and authority as a primary tenant. As she states, 'I pay the rent, and I will know how my house Comes by these Inflamations.'[16] The provision of a lodging space might also be engineered by the subdivision of rooms or the repurposing of small structures such as outhouses, privies and sheds.[17] For the poorer sort, the fairly slapdash and potentially impermanent provision of such accommodation became implicated in the frustrations expressed about the state of the renewal of urban architecture post-1666: as Elaine Tierney states, 'the "temporary," as a material and structural category, came to have pejorative associations in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London' with one contemporary commentator conveying his disgust at the '"Chaos of Dirty Rotten Sheds, allways Tumbling or takeing fire, with winding Crooked passages"' that still comprised much of the city's building stock some few decades after the Great Fire. These spaces were precisely those which some women let out as dwellings, 'a wider social practice' that generally only came to light when these lodging spaces were 'directly or tangentially linked to disorderly or unlawful behavior.'[18]

The disorderliness of lodging practices was commonly associated with sexual misbehaviour, a social ill which had to do with that sense of temporariness as encouraging of transient relationships, but which nevertheless provided a permanent bedrock to the landscape of metropolitan living arrangements**.** Jeremy Boulton observes a range of survival strategies by which those who lived in lodgings might organise and straiten their finances in order to meet the payment of rent, an outlay which was disproportionately large for the poorest: individuals and families might pursue 'selective child abandonment, resort to available (and 'able') kin, reliance on credit and pawnbrokers, tactical changes in diet to cheaper foodstuffs, theft, prostitution, begging and the perks available at some (but not all) workplaces.'[19] Lena Cowen Orlin's study of impermanent housing in London also highlights the way in which 'temporary housing arrangements were associated', particularly in the eyes of local authorities, with 'debt, misbehavior, petty theft, and vice crimes.' The entwining of financial and sexual economies

[16] *The Chances,* in *Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher Gentlemen* (London, 1647) 3.1, p.11.
[17] Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability,* p.93.
[18] Elaine Tierney, '"Dirty Rotten Sheds": Exploring the Ephemeral City in Early Modern London', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* vol. 50, no. 2 (2017) pp.235-6; pp.237-8; p.245. For the hostile regulatory environment regarding the housing of the poor, see William C. Baer, 'Housing the Poor and Mechanick Class in Seventeenth-Century London', *London Journal,* Vol.25 (2) (2000), p.13-39.
[19] Jeremy Boulton, 'Turned into the Street with my Children Destitute of Everything': The Payment of Rent and the London Poor, 1600-1850', in *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c. 1600-1850,* ed. by Joanna McEwan and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) p.25.

in lodging spaces attracted considerable suspicion, for officials 'seemed always aware that the provision of houseroom could easily shade into the servicing of sex' and they 'were concerned to investigate the nature of any non-monetary compensation for lodgings.' The practices of lodging became so imbricated with the possibility of sexual activity that they became linguistically encoded in one another: a young woman might ask a man to help her find lodgings, and it be clear to both parties that 'this was a language of solicitation', and one 'that developed in populous conditions.'[20] (Well into the eighteenth century, too, landladies who interacted in a 'too friendly' manner with male lodgers came under suspicion: reciprocal financial arrangements in which a landlady and lodger 'shared' money 'suggested more complicated interactions than the straightforward and business-like exchange of money for space.')[21] In a densely packed urban context, offering lodgings provided an income stream both for the working poor and those of middling status, and questions about reputability and social credit also retained their urgency in wealthier households: 'for those who were not forced into lodging negotiations by financial necessity', as Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe observe, 'other considerations linked with choice, such as networking and sociability, influenced decisions about when, where, and indeed whether to lodge.' The possibility of accessing a sort of genteel masculinity through lodging in London as a young man – an 'exercise in freedom and independence' – might also entail careful debate about how to balance the financial and social aspects of lodging: McEwan and Sharpe adduce the observations of James Boswell (the diarist and biographer of Samuel Johnson) who, recording his thoughts on the intricacies of lodging practices in his *London Journal*, reflected that, '"Sometimes I considered that a fine lodging denoted a man of great fashion, but then I thought that few people would see it and therefore the expense would be hid, whereas my business was to make as much show as I could with my small allowance."'[22]

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[20] Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Temporary Lives in London Lodgings', *Huntington Library Quarterly,* Vol. 71, No. 1 (March 2008), pp.231-2; 234; 233.The association between sex and lodging is also observed in sixteenth century Venice. Though the political and social context differs from England – lodging houses in Venice were licensed, and Venetian authorities practiced the physical segregation of foreign sojourners – the provision of lodging 'was a markedly female business: an economic space that women could occupy, not monopolized by a guild nor requiring specialized training or equipment', and 'there were undoubtedly strong connections between Venice's booming sex industry and the lodging sector, which continually troubled the authorities.' See, Rosa Salzberg, 'Mobility, cohabitation and cultural exchange in the lodging houses of early modern Venice', *Urban History*, 46.3 (2019), pp.405-6.

[21] Joanne McEwan, 'The Lodging Exchange: Space, Authority and Knowledge in Eighteenth Century London', *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c. 1600-1850*, ed. by Joanna McEwan and Pamela Sharpe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) p.63. Gillian Williamson's recent research on landladies in the eighteenth-century observes a set of basic continuities with the *cultural attitude* towards these businesswomen as one finds in the literary texts and institutional records of the seventeenth, i.e., sexual disreputability and an assumption of personal availability, and insulting depictions that centered on the landlady's mercenary nature, gossipy disposition and un-feminine sense of personal authority. The *practice itself* was, too, financially risky and continued to involve theft, disputes over space, and the difficulties of ensuring one's tenants were solvent and respectable. Gillian Williamson, 'The Georgian Landlady: Surrogate Mother, Love Interest or Hard-Nosed Businesswoman?', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol.44 (4) (2021), pp.383-403.

[22] Joanne McEwan, Pamela Sharpe, "It Buys Me Freedom': Genteel Lodging in Late-Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century London', *Parergon,* Volume 24, Number 2 (2007), pp.139; 146;148. Boswell's *London*

While the historical scholarship on lodging activities is not extensive, and nor is there any sustained work on the landlady's presence in early modern literature, the plays under study here seem to have fostered an accord (intentionally or not) with the largely conservative and hostile institutional vision of lodging practices available to the historian in those sources where such practices hove into view. Both Boulton and Orlin emphasise that the representations available to us regarding, firstly the activities of paupers and the means by which they obtained, or failed to obtain accommodation, and, secondly, of lodging practices more broadly, are necessarily shaped by the nature and interest of the regulatory bodies through which these practices come to the attention of the researcher. As Boulton states, 'the incidence of destitution must reflect the effectiveness and vigour of local policing and detection as much as the incidence of homelessness among the examined poor. This last is a truism that could apply to most data generated by early modern regulative activity.'[23] Dramatists seem to have found this characteristically hostile institutional vision of the dubious and disorderly practice of lodging comedically useful. The dramatic landlady is indeed derided as a woman of questionable morals, and images of poverty, debt and dependency form a vivid backdrop to Behn's play in particular. The Grimes' household, located within the debtor's sanctuary of Whitefriars (also known as Alsatia), is just such the site of social ills about which city authorities were so concerned: Gayman has, in one sense, precisely the opposite experience of James Boswell, for being encumbered by debt and having resorted to the cheapest place he can find, the young gentleman's foray into temporary accommodation is emphatically not one of 'freedom and independence.' Nevertheless, Gayman's own route to a sufficiently impressive social status is to effect a similar sleight of hand as Boswell, by ensuring that his clothes and fashionable accoutrements form the centrepiece of his "show", while relying on the supposition that no one who matters will find him where he is hid. That he is tracked down to his humiliating bolthole by an emissary of his lover Julia is one way in which Behn links the very localised lodging space to a broader City environment, and which therefore places the landlady's work at the centre of her concern about sexual politics and the commodification of women. Gammer Grime's household forms the underbelly to an expensive and venal mercantile milieu, and provides a lens through which to look at the disorderliness of wider sexual and financial economies.

The plays under discussion here also insist that transience, chaos and vice are not particular to poorer locales, and wealthier households provide no guarantee of respectability: indeed, the difficulty of unsticking sexual impropriety from the landlady makes the lodging space (or, sometimes, multiple spaces) a credible site for a lewd farce. Though Saintly, the landlady in Dryden's *The Kind Keeper*, is sufficiently wealthy to be the householder (if not the actual owner) of a boarding house with at least five

Journal records his second stay in London during 1762-3: McEwan and Sharpe cite Frederick A. Pottle's edition, *Boswell's London Journal 1762–1763* (Melbourne: William Heinemann Ltd, 1950).

[23] Boulton, 'The payment of rent and the London poor', p.36. Orlin, 'Temporary Lives': 'A main source of anecdotal evidence about lodgings, thus, comes from institutions that surveilled and prosecuted social disorder: the ecclesiastical courts and the Bridewell.' (pp.231-2).

suites of lodgings, a garden house and an external still-room, the overwhelming spatial characteristic of the play's setting is a bawdy and unsettled claustrophobia. The apparent affluence of the fabric of the boarding house merely provides a more extensive set of spaces through which lodgers and landlady can manoeuvre themselves to their erotic satisfaction. Dryden's interrogation of space and authority in the play relies upon the landlady's energetic and profitable rejection of the boundaries between private (that is, apparently exclusive) spaces, and those that are legitimately accessible to multiple persons at once. Economically (at least in comparison to Gammer Grime) Saintly is not living on the margins, for her lodgers are wealthy and many in number. Socially, she may as well be in a "Dirty Rotten Shed."

Routine assertions of sexual immorality and financial malpractice in the landlady, however, do not always concern her direct sexual contact with lodgers. It becomes apparent in Chamberlaine's *The Swaggering Damsell* that lodging activities are not necessarily hazardous because the landlady personally embroils herself in illicit sexual contact, but that the presence of strangers in the home contributes to domestic disorder and the disturbance of a normative arrangement of household authority. The lack of 'shapely geometry or clear lines of command' within the lodging space is precisely the concern that underpins Chamberlaine's representation of a topsy-turvy household, in which Mistress Welt embarrasses and abuses her husband in the course of dealing with Valentine, a lodger who fails to honour his debts.[24] The lodger in comedies is often attracted to temporary accommodation because of its association with transience and anonymity: ease of flight (as Valentine and Gayman attest) can be relied upon, and one might easily enter a boarding house (as Dryden's Young Aldo/Woodall demonstrates) under a pseudonym. However, pinpointing why dramatists choose lodging spaces as particularly rich sites of contest produces the same sense of a circular, mutual dependence as attempting to scrutinise the arrangement of power and of reputation within those dramatic lodging spaces. The comic landlady attracts unreliable and disreputable lodgers because there are, of necessity, already suspicions about her own moral probity; the landlady's social and financial reputation is imperilled because she is obliged to deal with lodgers who expect to produce the kind of household conflict upon which they rely in order to achieve their own aims.

Contests within the dramatic lodging spaces over spatial authority, working identities, financial influence, definitions of masculinity and femininity, and over sexual agency, draw upon a rich stock of cultural images and conceptions about the landlady and her work, but these plays must also feed back into those commonly held ideas.[25] The provision of lodgings might, in theory, seem a 'natural extension'

[24] Orlin, 'Temporary Lives', p.236.

[25] Cheap print items that rely on sensationalism and ribald humour offer unsurprisingly unflattering visions of the landlady. See *An Exact relation of the barbarous murder committed on Lawrence Corddel a butcher* (London, 1661), and its related ballad *Misery to bee lamented, or, A Doleful relation of the sad accident which befell Lawrence Cawthorn a journey-man- butcher* (London, 1661). The former describes the real incident of a landlady murdering her lodger by means of her intentionally premature burial of his body; the later text suggests genuine error, and is absent of derogatory epithets like 'Mris Impudence his fat Land-lady' (*An Exact Relation*, p.2). See also, *The Character of a quack doctor, or, The Abusive practices of impudent illiterate pretenders to*

of a range of duties largely pertinent to middling and gentry female householders – 'delivering hospitality and civil entertainment with kindness, gravity and sobriety, including providing commensality and accommodation, as well as tending the sick' – but comic representations of the landlady's work tend to presume that such endeavours fit ill with a "natural" model of a gendered division of labour, and make troublesome any attempts at access to reputational credit that is contingent upon good, moral, effective and sociable household management.[26] Accommodating strangers in one's home is not, as *The Swaggering Damsell* indicates, a straightforward performance of something akin to housewifery, nor precisely a direct bargain between a landlady who requires remuneration and a lodger who requires somewhere to live: the process of the landlady attempting to exact debts makes visible a series of conflicts over domestic gendered authority within Mistress Welt's household, transforming Master Welt from the key contributor to the household's economy into, effectively, just another lodger.

Accounting for her work: the sexual economy of the lodging house in Chamberlaine's The Swaggering Damsell (1640)

Though little written upon, Robert Chamberlaine's only known play offers a representation of the landlady as a sexual and economic agent whose importance is primarily registered in the *dissociation* of her work from sexual incontinence with strangers.[27] A contemporaneous comedy, William Davenant's *The Witts* (first performed in 1633; published in 1636), offers a landlady whose characteristics supply the other face of this comic type: Mistress Queasie's mismanagement of business is the natural corollary of her sexual impropriety, but Chamberlaine's Mistress Welt is, differently, characterised by managerial competence and a similarly tight control of sexual behaviour.[28] Rather than attempting to pursue sexual contact with her lodger or involving herself in prostitution at some level, she instead links financial solvency with marital chastity: Mistress Welt threatens to withdraw sex from her husband if he cannot recoup the debts owed by their lodger. The sexual relationship between Mistress Welt and her husband is, therefore, the means by which the economic success of the household

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physick exposed (London, 1676), pp.2-3, and *The Complaisant companion, or, New jests, witty reparties, bulls, rhodomontado's, and pleasant novels* (London, 1674), pp.34-5, concerning the landlady's financial greed, and sexual appetite respectively. For a less ephemeral example, see Margaret Cavendish's 'The Vulgar Fights' in her *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life* (London,1656), in which the landlady is also discriminated as a sexual type (sig. A2^{r}-3^{v}).

[26] Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability*, p.92;102.

[27] Chamberlaine was known to have published poetry, and compiled joke compendia, though there are no other dramatic texts attached to his name: see "Chamberlain, Robert (bap. 1607) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004 https://doi-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5049 [accessed 01/01/2022].

[28] William Davenant, *The Witts. A Comedie* (London, 1636). Mistress Queasie is an uncouth, immodest and inept proprietor long associated with sexually suspect forms of wage earning. She lets a house to a bawd and her coterie of whores who flee without paying rent, and was formerly a 'Dowgate corner' fruit seller (3.1. sig. E3^{v}). Only a subtle hint at the connection between female financial agency and prostitution is made in *The Swaggering Damsell*: the servant Rowland agrees sardonically with Mistress Welt that ''tis fit a gentleman shud pay you before, that's the truth of it.' (sig.H4^{r}).

and of their joint labour is measured: profitless work leads to a loveless bed. As the arbiter of value in the household – it is at Mistress Welt's discretion to decide how much sexual contact her husband is permitted as an equivalent to the particular value of the lodger's debts – the landlady also represents the broader struggle to comfortably locate her work within a prescriptive model of gendered labour. The entanglement of the financial, material and sexual economies of the dual-livelihood marital household suggests the difficulty of categorising the landlady's work as either purely domestic, and therefore adumbrated under housewifery, or purely commercial.

The play, briefly, centres around the mismatched couple, Valentine Crambagge, the romantic and somewhat diffident son of 'an old usurer', and Sabina Testy, the forthright and combative daughter of 'an old decayed knight.'[29] The usurer's son goes to ground in 'A Shoomakers house in the Strand', having been gripped by a hypocritical fit of disgust in the aftermath of bedding his beloved Sabina and then abandoning her.[30] In order to effect a solution to Sabina's disgrace, Valentine's cousin Fairefaith concocts a marriage plot: Valentine is obliged to take disguise as a woman and finds himself unwillingly taking vows (apparently a mere jest) with a cross-dressed Sabina, throughout which ceremony Valentine remains unaware of the identity of his new "husband." Having spent the night with a person he subsequently understands to be a woman, but of whose individual identity he is still ignorant, Valentine determines to flee, and without paying his dues to his landlady. To his clown-servant Trash, he gives direction, 'But dee heare, let not my Landlady, nor her husband have so much as a glimpse of it, for I have no money for'em.'[31] The respective responses of landlord and landlady to being short-changed by such an untrustworthy lodger point both to the elasticity of gender roles in the Welt household, and emphasise the importance of marital status as a means of construing the social identity of the landlady, over and above a sense of her working identity as potentially separate. Master Welt's intervention is merely a request, expressed with extraordinary tentativeness, that Valentine's debts be settled**: '**There is a little money due to me from him, I wish he wud take the payment of it into consideration, I have extraordinary occasion to use the money, if he please to let me have but some of it, it will doe mee a courtesie, he shall finde me reasonable.'[32] Mistress Welt evidently understands something different by 'reasonable': 'How idlely you talke husband? Is that a way to live in the world, doe you thinke it is for my ease to have gentlemen come, and lie in my house, and goe away and pay nothing – ha?'[33] The scene subsequently dissolves into an argument between Mistress Welt and Rowland (servant to Valentine's father, who has remained in attendance on his young master) in which the landlady delves assertively into the minutiae of the debts for which Valentine is in the red but upon which her reputation is staked within local systems of credit. She unloads her irritation on her husband: 'Eate my meate,

[29] Robert Chamberlaine, *The Swaggering Damsell. A Comedy* (London, 1640) 'The Actors', sig. A4^{r}.
[30] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, 3, sig. F2^{v}.
[31] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, 5, sig.H3^{v}.
[32] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, sig.H4^{r}.
[33] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, sig.H4^{r}.

drinke my drinke, burne my wood, foule my roomes, weare my sheets, make use of my servants, and yet I must be reasonable.' She draws breath to scold her husband – 'if ye can talke no wiselier before folks, pray hold your peace and let your wife speake' – and continues to pour out her complaints:

> Besides, yee know he owes me both for bootes, shooes, and pantables, and I shall give him that too shall not I? no indeede forsooth, I wud have your Master to know that I do not buy my lether so cheape, Ile assure ye – be reasonable quoth a? besides, I have promis'd to pay Mr. Sugerbox the Chandler, nutmegges and sugar for his mornings draughts, and Mr. Dash the Vintener for wine in's chamber.[34]

She concludes that she cannot and will not pay these tradesmen before Valentine first settles with her, a point both of principle and practicality. In prefacing Mistress Welt's outburst with some companionable and jocular small talk between Rowland and Master Welt, Chamberlaine's introduction of Mistress Welt's forceful interruption takes on the unpleasant tone of the nit-picking scold, but Chamberlaine does hint at the genuine difficulties faced by the landlady whose lodger hopes to evade all responsibilities, romantic and financial. The playwright evokes the material conditions of the landlady's work through a semi-serious depiction of mundane financial matters and credit networks, locating Mistress Welt within wider circles of commerce. These include local tradesmen (chandlers and vintners) and the demands of which are both personal, being actioned within communal networks of credit and reputation ('I have promis'd'), as well as impersonal or disinterested, being expressed as financial obligations that are simply a matter of survival ('Is that a way to live in the world').

As Craig Muldrew's study of credit networks in early modern England has emphasised, the importance of these connections in an economy that was ill furnished with actual coinage cannot be overstated. 'The simple fact that there was a continual shortage of cash throughout the period, and also that the quality of much of the existing coinage was poor, had a tremendous effect on the way money was used by contemporaries': this meant that 'the vast majority of exchanges were transacted on credit, which was also largely oral and informal' and trust was therefore 'a central factor in economic exchange. Because of this, reputation for honesty became a type of cultural currency which had an enormous value in terms of social estimation.'[35] This was why rent was supposed to be paid in coin ('pocket mettle' as Rowland calls it) and why Mistress Welt's aggravation is so considerable: in letting out space to a stranger, the landlady has only the word of the lodger himself as a testimony of his good character and she cannot look to her own local credit networks (since he may well be unknown to them) for affirmation.[36] For the landlady's own credit to retain a high value amongst her connections, it must be anchored, as Muldrew's metaphor has it, by hard cash: the debts that she cannot pay to the vintner, the

[34] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell,* sig.H4^{r}.
[35] Craig Muldrew, ''Hard Food for Midas': Cash and Its Social Value in Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, No. 170 (Feb. 2001), p.79; p.83.
[36] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, sig. I1^{r}.

chandler and numerous other tradesmen trickle down through that network, and the currency of her reputation suffers accordingly.[37] Neither the landlady, nor indeed Valentine's lover Sabina, Chamberlaine seems to suggest, should be obliged to suffer because of his bankruptcy of both courage and coin.

However, the landlady's rigorous competence concerning the household's solvency is broadly characterised by Chamberlaine as unsettling. Mistress Welt is rendered figuratively by Rowland as the 'devill' with whom her unfortunate witch-husband has 'contracted', and, as Kathryn Dezur observes, a metonymic account book who 'knows every expenditure and every balance': it is, however, the explicit intertwining of the sexual and monetary economies of the household that makes Mistress Welt's economic agency such a discomfiting prospect.[38] Where the landlady is represented as wielding this authority (through her confidence, competence and sense of entitlement in financial transactions), the drama assumes that it must, of necessity, be robbed from her husband. There appears to be a finite amount of economic (and sexual) mastery within the Welt household, and Mistress Welt is purloining it. Rowland observes that, in pursuing 'reasonable' demands, the landlady is in fact creating an unbearable fuss and claims that he will counsel Valentine against remunerating her at all: 'Why dee keepe all this stirre, my Master's not running away woman…if hee will be ruled by me, he shall not give you one farthing, because you keepe such a coile.'[39] Rowland's response is dismissive, and it is also dishonest: running away is precisely what Valentine is attempting to do. Mistress Welt's indignant retort, nevertheless, confirms the performance of her gender as a travesty of womanhood: 'How keepe such a coile ye jack sawce? how now? such a coile? dee thinke ye are talking to your companions sirra? such a coile? and in my owne house too sirra?' In accusing Rowland of speaking to her with disrespect, addressing her as though she were a fellow servant and a man, the landlady enacts precisely the incivility, and lack of decorum in respect to gendered conduct, with which she charges her interlocutor. Chamberlain exerts this irony wonderfully: having already commanded her husband to be silent and obedient – 'if ye can talke no wiselier before folks, pray ye hold your peace and let your wife speake' – Welt's wife then accuses of him standing silent and useless as he fails to protect her from Rowland. 'And you must stand by forsooth like John a Noakes, and see every Servingman runne upon me in this manner; remember this', she threatens, 'when ye come to bed.'[40]

Welt's reluctance to make a manly defence of his wife will be punished, so it is implied, by a denial of sexual pleasure later on. Sex becomes a means of measuring value, a way, ultimately, of measuring the lodger's creditworthiness, and of the masculinity of the husband within the sexual economy of the

[37] Muldrew, 'Hard Food for Midas', p.84.
[38] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, sig. I1^{r}. Kathryn Dezur, 'Prodigal Daughter, Usurer's Son: Sexual, Rhetorical, and Monetary Economies in Robert Chamberlain's "*The Swaggering Damsel*" (1640)', *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (2009), p.12.
[39] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, sig.H4^{r}.
[40] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, sig.H4^{v}.

household. Mistress Welt embodies a basic fear of the domineering woman – that she-devil who assumes unwonted power over her husband – but she also points to a concern about alternative means of measuring the value of things. Muldrew asserts that there is no such thing 'as a neutral means of exchange independent of both social meaning and social division': the use of sex as a way of measuring the value (of debt) points to this social meaning, for while Mistress Welt might be read as a miserly hoarder of sex, the fact that the play encourages us to consider sexual contact as part of an economy at all tells us something about the perception of the combined economic and sexual agency of women whose work requires the exercise of that economic agency, but which risks developing an apparently correlative sexual authority.[41] Such women are culturally positioned to be tight-fisted, tyrannical, determiners of value. Mistress Welt's authority in controlling and negotiating the creditworthiness of her household extends, then, to the creation of her own economy in which she is, in effect, her own husband's creditor. Welt's inability to present his wife with the hard cash that is now missing from the material inventory of the household saddles him with debt: as Boulton explains, 'distraining the goods of defaulting tenants was the standard method whereby a landlord could recover rent arrears' and 'it was understood by both landlords and tenants that such distraint had to be done according to prescribed legal forms.'[42] (Hence, Mistress Welt's strenuous insistence on her right to take Valentine's clothes and moveables: 'I tooke 'em indeede, and Ile justifie it; and more than so sir, I have lock't 'em up, and Ile justifie that too.')[43] Mistress Welt has confiscated a valuable commodity – sex – from her husband, and he will remain effectively neutered until he can settle up.

Mistress Welt's strict guardianship of *all* resources creates an analogous connection between money and sex – where one is found in plenitude, so is the other, and so the same with their lack – and the unquestioned authority with which the landlady shapes the household economy around her sexual agency also points to well-worn anxieties about the role and power of wives within the domestic economies of tradesmen's households. That Chamberlaine bothers to specify that Welt is a 'Shoomaker' gestures back to earlier citizen comedy in which, Ann Christensen has observed, dramatists in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries 'represented the matrix of women, work, and money' in 'ambivalent (and often simply negative) ways.'[44] The wives of the merchants and tradesmen in these plays are involved in the businesses of their husbands in a manner which emphasises shared responsibility but which participation, as Christensen argues, is depicted in terms of competition between the obligations of trade and of domestic concerns. The plays which she examines place these

[41] Muldrew, 'Hard Food for Midas', p.99.
[42] Boulton, 'The payment of rent and the London poor', p.28.
[43] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, sig.H4^{v}
[44] Welt is described as a 'Shoomaker' in the character list (The Actors, sig. A4^{r}). Ann Christensen, 'Merchant Wives, Agency, and Ambivalence in Early Modern Studies', *Early Modern Women,* Vol. 3 (Fall 2008), p.217. Christensen examines *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599), Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1600), Thomas Middleton and John Webster's *Anything for a Quiet Life* (c. 1621), and Thomas Deloney's *The Gentle Craft* (c.1597).

masculine and feminine obligations in conflict: 'wives could be a hindrance to the labour of merchants and craftsmen through their own domestic agendas – their need to be savers' and by this threaten 'to undermine not only domestic hierarchy, but also domestic economy through their deployment of… "Convenient Carefulness" over household goods.'[45] In later city comedies published and staged in the 1620s and 30s, the ability of the citizen's wife to impact on her husband's financial activities and on his social credit remains a concern: in Richard Brome's Caroline city comedy *The Sparagus Garden* (performed 1635; published 1640), Brittleware (a tradesman in fashionable China and glass items) expresses the familiar anxiety about the connection between financial and social credit and sexual reputation. The local curate counsels Brittleware that it is fruitless to 'break your weighty braines in seeking wayes after your wives heeles, which are so light by your owne report, they cannot crack an egge.', to which Brittleware's downcast response is 'Her credit yet they may and mine.'[46] His wife Rebecca Brittleware exhibits the alternative characteristics of her type, those by which the landlady/tradesman's wife displays not parsimony and carefulness but her extravagance and her appetite. As a woman of expensive tastes and unmet desires, Rebecca's sexual greed and material and social ambitions are conflated in a crude innuendo about her wish to be carried around in a sedan chair: she yearns to have 'a couple of lusty able bodied men, to take me up, one before and another behind, as the new fashion is, and carry mee in a Man-litter.'[47] As a landlady in particular, Rebecca Brittleware readily exposes marital vulnerabilities to the lodger, Sir Hugh Moneylacks, whose mediating authority is consulted on the matter of both her impractical material 'longings' and her desire for a child, and in order to amplify and benefit from the sexual jealousy of her apparently impotent husband: Sir Hugh recommends that his landlord and landlady visit the titular 'Garden of delight' in order to partake of the 'provocative' properties of the asparagus, and as a 'Gather guest' in the pay of the gardener and his wife, the knight's recommendation sees the Brittlewares indirectly putting money into the pocket of their lodger.[48]

The contemporaneous Mistress Welt, differently, is a parsimonious and cautious landlady, a wife who is represented as overly careful with the household economy and who monopolises authority over all occupants in the household. Both types of landlady are construed as women who cause domestic conflict – whether as greedy consumers or as penny-pinchers – but it is the latter sort, the acquisitive and scrupulous kind of wife identified by Christensen, that raises questions about the balance of authority and responsibility, and the boundaries between the domestic and the commercial, in a household where

[45] Christensen, 'Merchant Wives', pp.217-8.
[46] Richard Brome, *The Sparagus Garden: A Comedie* (London, 1640). 5.4, sig.K4^{r}.
[47] Brome, *The Sparagus Garden*, 2.2, sig.C4^{v}. On the importance of fashionable locales (like public gardens) and social mobility in the comedies of 1630s London, see Christine Moyrer, 'London, England and Beyond: Social Transformations in Richard Brome's "*The Sparagus Garden*"', *Studia Historyczne*, Vol.60.2 (238) (2018), p.31-46.
[48] Brome, *The Sparagus Garden*, 2.2, sig. D1^{r}; 1.3, sig.B4^{v}. Brittleware is also one of the 'Confederates' in Sir Hugh's scam to defraud young men from the country, in which he promises to transform them into London gentleman at considerable expense (5.13, sig.L4^{v}). The scam, of course, causes Brittleware nothing but trouble.

the married landlady is so active in superintending a particular financial activity all her own. As a site of female economic agency, the management of lodging activities redounds directly upon *the landlady's own* creditworthiness and corresponds to her understanding of her own economic authority. Her responsibility for that income stream – the soundness of her judgement, and the value of her credit as a form of currency in connection with it – suggests, in *The Swaggering Damsell*, less a competition between trade and domestic concerns than a comprehensive enveloping of one by the other. Mistress Welt subsumes the purchasing of raw materials for the shoemaking trade ('I do not buy my lether so cheape') into her list of lodging-related outgoings, and also indicates that she considers having 'gentlemen come, and lie in *my* house' (emphasis mine) a remunerative activity proper only to her. (She seems, therefore, to more closely resemble a *femme sole* trader – managing not one but two streams of business independently of a husband – than a wife who supports her spouse's trade and only supplements the household income with what Clark desultorily termed 'some industry').[49] The landlady's work, then, is not fully a domestic concern, and her agenda not comprehensively defined by normative ideas about the wifely role in managing and supervising what the husband is supposed to acquire through his work.

Chamberlaine draws upon the link between prescriptive ideas of masculinity, a working identity, and economic autonomy as he struggles to accommodate Mistress Welt's work to a single interpretive paradigm – domestic, or commercial. The latter concerns provision and exchange, and the former supervision and management, a simplifying dichotomy described and exhorted in conduct manuals and which arranges gendered labour within the household in a way that, as Alexandra Shepard recognises, comes closer to 'fantasy' than reality for early modern households.[50] Nevertheless, this prescriptive, interpretive ground is the basis which informs the representation of the relationship between the landlady's work and that of her shoemaking husband. The landlady's work is bound up with her husband's trade in a number of ways – through the mingling of financial and sexual economies, through an invocation of domestic disorder attendant upon this interdependence, through a representation of the landlady's ability to sexually embarrass and financially dominate her husband, and through the

[49] In *Ingenious Trade*, Laura Gowing explains that 'the custom of London, as in other borough towns, allowed married women to trade as if they were single, as 'feme sole traders'. It was on this basis that married women ran their own businesses, their husbands' credit protected against their debts and vice versa.' *Ingenious Trade: Women and Work in Seventeenth Century London* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY.: Cambridge University Press, 2022), p.103. Lodging activities were not regulated by guild or company, and women who engaged in them could not partake of the legal and economic protection of the *femme sole* status: Mistress Welt's attitude suggests, speculatively, an awareness of the occupational authority available to wives who could practise a 'sole art', with personal and sole responsibility for goods and debts. Master Welt claims (fallaciously within the context of their particular domestic economy) that the money from lodging activities is owed to him; Mistress Welt, that the consumables and debts that pertain to these activities (as well as the right to claim economic authority in the matter of provisioning her husband's shoemaking) as hers. The clarification about spousal autonomy offered by the *femme sole* status might indeed have helped to organise the domestic-economic chaos like that of the Welt couple.

[50] Alexandra Shephard, 'Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c. 1580-1640', *Past & Present*, No. 167 (May 2000), p.76.

subsequent implication that stricter separation of forms of industry might better conduce to domestic harmony. The dramatic depiction of such work concerns, therefore, the difficulty of finding the best fit for the landlady's labours within that model of gendered household work. Mistress Welt hopes to make the best of both worlds – acting as acquisitor (of bodies, things and risk), agent of distraint, creditor, account keeper and manager, while drawing upon a normative model of masculine financial worth and gendered conduct in pushing her husband to recoup debts and to defend her – and in doing so makes of herself not a competent partner but a tyrant. The metaphorical ship of her domestic-commercial industry is as watertight (or so her endeavours would have it) as the transgressive mastery of her spouse is absolute.

Even when illicit sexual contact between landlady and lodger(s) is not assumed, therefore, anxieties about her economic agency are retained and she remains readable as a sexual subject: financial literacy is masculinised, the possibility of debt linked to a diminished masculinity, and the distribution of property within the Welt marriage ('my meate…my drinke..my roomes' set against the debts Welt has not the courage to collect) is characterised as a means of implicitly abusive manipulation. (The name 'Welt' suggests more than merely a verbal lashing, as well as punning on a component part of a shoe). As Dezur further notes, while Mistress Welt's methods of managing her household and dealing with both husband and lodger are 'economically efficacious, they come at the social cost of harmony within her marriage.'[51] Female economic agency, and marital or romantic harmony, are practically inimical where the landlady is concerned – indeed, the temporariness of lodging practices were, as Orlin reminds us, completely hostile to social harmony from the perspective of contemporary attempts to police such lives.[52] Nevertheless, this aspect of the landlady's dramatic presence – that, according to Chamberlaine's characterisation, she can only provoke domestic and wider social disruption – probably rather overstates the detrimental effect of such an economic arrangement for households in which husbands and wives provided joint labour. Married women could and did pursue independent trades and also contributed a significant degree of labour and resources to a husband's economic activities, where need and opportunity dictated, and not necessarily with a sense that such actions required defending. Alexandra Shephard's study of the economic activities of married women between the mid-sixteenth and early-eighteenth centuries and their contributions to domestic economies, and Amanda J. Flather's research into the spatial division of household labour, both suggest rather a workaday and necessitous set of negotiations about economic and spatial authority in households where the wife, as most did, contributed financially. 'Marriage was the point at which women undertook more varied and independent forms of commercial activity', as Shephard notes, and though women 'only rarely assumed occupational titles' in the depositional statements in her study, it also remained the case that the term

[51] Dezur, 'Prodigal Daughter, Usurer's Son', p.13.
[52] Orlin, 'Temporary Lives', pp.231-2.

'wife' had its own 'occupational connotations' and that this very likely implied the contribution of the wife's labour to their husband's trade.[53]

For Chamberlaine, however, the negotiation of power through occupational titles (i.e., shoemaker/landlady) and social identifiers (i.e., husband/wife) fails to conduce to a profitable, harmonious domestic economy. Mistress Welt as wife comes to be implicated in the trade and occupational identity of her husband through her assumption of prior financial power and of domestic authority: the almost independent trades of husband and wife stand in uneasy relation to each other, which makes Mistress Welt, primarily, a bad wife. While separate economic tasks carried out by husbands and wives within the home did not, as Flather points out, have to mean separate spaces, and while relationships between men and women within a context of work were 'variable, changing, and continually negotiated and reconstructed', the sharing of working space within the Welt household imagines a deleterious overlap: their commercial dispute is set to follow them into the space of the marital bed.[54] Keeping the marital household afloat partly by the means of the landlady's labours sees husband and wife pulling in different directions, even if the research of economic and social historians suggests something less fraught and less conservative regarding the everyday running of a household. The presence of domestic disruption and of wifely tyranny in the comic drama suggests that the comedy finds useful the tensions implied in normative configurations of social and working identities (Mistress Welt's unwillingness to relegate her economic activities to ancillary status sits at the heart of the domestic disorder) even if the reality of the situation that the drama goes some way to representing actually points towards other, less straitened, models of space, gender and labour. The play of social and occupational identities in the Welt household is at the heart of the comic confusions that define it – a space of domestic life and of economic activity that drags marital sexuality into the realm of transaction, debt and profit – and which points towards an incompatibility between "good wife" and "businesswoman". Dryden's *The Kind Keeper,* coming to the same point by a different route, suggests that marriage might propose a solution to a woman's economic independence (as if it needed resolving), rather than marriage being the battlefield upon which conflict about domestic and financial authority is played out (and largely lost by the husband). The marriage of the landlady Saintly (a widow) to the servant Gervase becomes a means of foreclosing, and appropriating, both her social and occupational identities, and the agency that they represent throughout the play.

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[53] Alexandra Shephard, 'Crediting Women in the Early Modern English Economy', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol.79 (79) (2015), p.5; 10; 15; 13

[54] Amanda J. Flather, 'Space, Place, And Gender: The Sexual And Spatial Division Of Labor In The Early Modern Household', *History and Theory* 52 (October 2013), p.358-9. Interestingly, Flather also cites the example of a Colchester couple, Mary and Thomas Ansell, who seem to have negotiated working spaces and different occupations more successfully than the Welts: 'Thomas was a shoemaker, and Mary ran a lodging house.' (p.359). Household guides explicitly cautioned husband and wife against the behaviour displayed by the Welts in this instance, i.e., going to bed on an argument: a husband should 'neuer suffer himself nor his wife to sleepe in displeasure.' Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government* (London, 1598) p.164. The advice remains the same in the 'newly perused, amended, and augmented' 1630 edition (sig.K8^{v}-L1^{r}).

The old woman in the oven: the landlady's depraved spatial politics in Dryden's **The Kind Keeper (1680)**

Like Mistress Welt, Saintly is a domestic tyrant. Her high-handed superintendence of her boarding house manifests, however, in a considerably more extreme approach to household space, in which she sets the terms for the use, restriction and production of private (that is, supposedly inaccessible) and non-private space. Dryden's *The Kind Keeper*, a 'roaring, dirty farce' whose action is entirely set within a boarding house and its outside spaces, explicitly invokes the sexual impropriety assumed to be associated with lodging, and elides sex work with the provision of space and materials by the landlady.[55] Within this boarding/bawdy house, spatial politics are sexual politics, and the playing with, policing and re-purposing of spaces by the landlady defines Dryden's approach to the relationship between sex, work and space within the context of women's remunerative activities. The landlady need not acquire risk by gadding abroad – as Mistress Welt has also indicated – but even gathers it to herself and welcomes it into her own home. In doing so, she can attempt to produce and define spaces and relationships to her liking. A certain entrepreneurial independence animates Saintly's proprietorship, an occupational characteristic that, in combination with her association with urban geographic mobility, aligns her with anxieties about female use of space and sexual immorality. In much the same way that other women who worked in and moved through outdoor, public spaces provoked anxieties about 'sexual immorality and economic disorder', the landlady collects to herself the opprobrium (and the benefits) attached to a mobile urban population – though the landlady need not be shown traversing London's streets in the course of the play in order to be associated with the stigma of such movement.[56] Her lodgers, geographically mobile and highly sexed**,** come to her, and they can be assured of the convenient permeability of her house and the spaces marked out within it.

Mrs. Saintly is 'an Hypocritical Fanatick' and landlady of a 'Boarding House' in which the pandemonium of the play takes place: in a text in which practically all of the characters are bound to one another along an axis of sexual connection, a collection of strangers living together and sharing houseroom amid the strange claustrophobia of the spatially restricted setting gives the landlady an unusual centrality.[57] Living 'lovingly' among the intimate, pious community – the 'Company of ourselves' – over which Saintly presides requires an understanding that sexual depravity is the *mode de*

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[55] Robert D. Hume, *The Development Of English Drama In The Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) p.329.

[56] Dowd, *Women's Work*, p.61. Dowd refers to Laura Gowing's work on female street sellers, 'The freedom of the streets': Women and Social Space, 1560– 1640," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, ed. Paul Griffiths and Mark S.R. Jenner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp.131-150. Saintly indicates that she does 'go abroad, upon some business' (1.1, p.5) but she is not represented in the street.

[57] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, sig. A4^{v}

vie but that it goes unarticulated except by diversionary language. That is, by religious cant, by coy expressions of insincere resistance, by the utterance of proverbial knowledge and of the language of civility and, where Saintly herself is concerned, by a discourse of sickness. All civil discourse, for example, is sexual discourse: the disguised Woodall's first meeting with his oblivious father Aldo is couched in the language of 'civility' and 'acquaintance', for being 'befriended' in the 'acquaintance' of fellow lodgers in this particular house requires an assurance that any new lodger has a taste for sexual impropriety and understands its linguistic circumlocution.[58] Pleasance, Saintly's "daughter", explicates this code most clearly: when she expresses her vexation that Woodall has not yet offered her a sexual proposition, she grumbles that 'he shou'd not think me worth a civil question.'[59] Saintly's canting language and her religious character, moreover, are of particular importance to Dryden's pointed satire about the sexual hypocrisy of dissenters like Saintly: the pious jargon that liberally peppers her speech is sardonically overwritten by the obviously sexual import of the familial terms that she uses. The 'Father' of her 'family' of lodgers – putatively fellow dissenters – is Aldo, an old and largely impotent pimp who manages disputes between his 'Daughters' and the wealthy lovers he procures for them, and who is embraced as a 'Daddy' and 'Deputy-Fumbler' by Woodall.[60]

Peggy Thompson has already identified Dryden's dramatic interest in the growing religious and political threats to church and king of the late 1670s, and that Saintly's sexual freedom (and her hypocrisy) stand as an indictment of her, and all, religious dissent: certainly, the satirical value of Saintly's 'Fanatick' character is made immediately clear in the opening scene, for newly returned to London from his continental misadventures, Woodall complains to his man Gervase that a 'Pious Boarding house' makes for an unappealing set of lodgings for a young man on the make. Gervase reassures him that 'there are pious Baudy-houses in the World, or Conventicles wou'd not be so much frequented: Neither is it impossible, but a Devout Fanatick-Landlady of a Boarding-House may be a Baud.'[61] The synonymity of religious nonconformity and sexual freedom are, for Gervase, a given: no one would willingly attend a 'Conventicle', he supposes, were worship the only thing on offer. I wish instead to centralise a reading of Saintly that brings into view her working role as a landlady, rather than her religious affiliation *per se*, and therefore to bring to the forefront Saintly's exercise of authority over household spaces. In accepting Dryden's embodiment of those political, religious and social threats in the 'treacherous, carnal, consuming, and incontinent' women of the play, there is also a reason that he selected the lodging space, and the landlady, as the grounds for localising and embodying his satire.[62]

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[58] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 1.1, p.5.
[59] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 3.1, p.24
[60] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 1.1, p.5-6; 4.1, pp.37-40.
[61] Dryden, *Kind Keeper* ,1.1, p.1.
[62] Peggy Thompson, 'Unruly Women and Patriarchal Control in Dryden's '*The Kind Keeper*'', in *Coyness and Crime in Restoration Comedy: Women's Desire, Deception, and Agency* (Lanham, MD.: Bucknell University Press, 2012) p.42. Clement Hawes identifies Dryden's guiding principle in this play as the exploitation of the 'satirical topos of perversity', a project for which the landlady is perfectly fitted. 'Acephalous

While Saintly's pretensions to religious belief are certainly interdependent with her roles as bawd and landlady, I want to emphasise the highly social manner and insistently material nature of the landlady's livelihood: this revolves around stuff (money, moveables, bodies) and spaces (the localisation of eating, drinking, keeping company, sleeping and sex) within the fabric structure and the bodily and discursively shaped territories of the household.

Flather's discussion of space and work becomes, once more, pertinent to the comic representation of the landlady, though in this case the fundamentally social constitution of space concerns not the sharing of marital occupational territory, but the production of space by the shared behaviour of strangers. The unspoken encoding of these spaces as non-private occurs beneath a superficial regulation of spatial boundaries which mark out supposedly private areas in the boarding house. Flather has affirmed the importance of setting aside descriptions of spaces within and around the early modern household as static spheres, as well as remaining conscientious about meanings of the term "private": spaces are social and performative, a 'place is transformed into a space by the social actors who constitute it through everyday use' and 'social actors attribute different meanings to space at different times.'[63] Saintly's boarding house is a place which contains a variety of spaces in which meaning is made by social actors, and over which there is also debate – even if, of course, the underlying assumption of all those in the know is that all spaces can be read and inhabited in the same way (as accessible, optimistically, for unobserved acts). In that way, the construction of space in the play depends upon the constitution of the company within a given location at any one moment: Woodall, just arrived at the boarding house, waits at his leisure within the 'garden-house' in companionable, and socially unobjectionable, single sex company (his servant Gervase and his father Aldo), while the same location is transformed into a place of forbidden assignation when Woodall encourages the kept mistress Tricksy down from her balcony into the garden. When company threatens, Woodall must hastily exchange the hoped-for physical privacy of the literarily conventional outdoor erotic encounter, for the anonymity of a hurriedly adopted pseudonymous identity: as Mary Thomas Crane observes, in respect of the association of outdoor spaces with the possibility of privacy for sexual contact, 'literary convention and social practice seem to have coincided in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.'[64] Woodall is obliged to pretend to be an Italian merchant selling 'essences', lest Limberham (Tricksy's keeper) find her in the garden-house alone with a male fellow lodger, and he justifies his transformation of the garden space from one of innocent sociability to one of illicit sexual contact through the unnecessary mediation

Authority: Satire in Butler, Marvell, and Dryden', *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution* ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.11-2.

[63] Flather, 'Space, Place and Gender', p.345. In *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), Flather also emphasises that "private", over the course of the seventeenth century, had not yet come to imply a feminised domestic space: see chapter 2, 'Domestic Space', pp.39-74.

[64] Mary Thomas Crane, 'Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Volume 9, Number 1 (2009), p.10.

of a seductive history. Tricksy, just as conversant in such a convention and equally aware of the erotic potential of outdoor privacy, hardly requires the regurgitated 'Love-Adventure' of a French gentleman in an exotic seraglio to understand Woodall's re-constitution of space: 'If', as Tricksy drily notes, 'the Sultana lik'd him well enough to come down into the Garden to him, I suppose she came not thither to gather Nosegays.'[65]

The tension in other scenes of hasty concealment or of sudden fear of discovery also make clear the importance of the composition (in number and gender) of the company being represented in a given space.[66] However, it is the landlady – a woman of bustling, ludicrous omnipresence – who is the most committed purveyor of the fiction that certain spaces within her household can and should be construed as locales of privacy (that is, of an exclusive character) and that some are ordinarily and permissibly social or open. (From the perspective of dramatic propriety, it is, ironically, the access-all-areas ethos that prevents sex from being represented on stage – no one is ever alone for long enough). Her boarding/bawdy house is a place which operates on the assumption that privacy can theoretically be found – such that illicit sexual activity and property crime can take place away from prying eyes – but that no one ever actually finds it: she strategically disallows solitude for her lodgers when it suits her and attempts to force others to conform to her own constructions of space. Gervase gestures towards the landlady's cultural presence as a woman of suspect sexual reputation – which reputation is contingent upon her practice of embracing and welcoming strangers into ostensibly private spaces – in that reassurance that he offers his master concerning the likelihood of sexual antics under Saintly's roof: the echo of the near homophones, and even nearer synonyms, 'Baudy-house' and 'Boarding-House', suggest that, religious nonconformity notwithstanding, it remains as likely that Saintly 'may be a Baud' simply because she is a landlady.[67]

This contiguity between the landlady and illicit sex – achieved through an evocation of the spaces of the boarding house – occurs immediately she appears. Gervase and Woodall's first interaction with Saintly sees her proposition Woodall without hesitation. In appearing to perform her role judiciously as a circumspect landlady, Saintly questions her new tenant about his living habits and through this draws Woodall into offering her the prospect of a pretend sexual assault. She hopes that he is 'no keeper of

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[65] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 1.1, p.9.

[66] Woodall is repeatedly forced to conceal himself, flung into closets, inner chambers and chests (Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 2.1, p.19; 3.1, p.28; 4.1, p.44). Characters frequently appear grouped – with an implicit acceptability - in or near the ostensibly inaccessible bedchambers of others, when one or two persons found in the same location is not appropriate: Mrs Brainsick and her maid Judith draw suspicion in attempting to prevent her husband from gaining access to their chamber (given Woodall's concealment within) but such suspicion is diverted when Aldo, then Limberham, then Woodall enter the vicinity of the Brainsicks' chamber at different doors (3.1. pp.29-30). Judith's room, in an appropriately suspicious manner, also shares a door with Father Aldo's. (p.30)

[67] Likewise, the term 'lodging' itself is understood to refer to bedsharing: Limberham relates his disturbed night to his mistress Tricksy, in which 'I did nothing but dream of thee al night; and then I was so troublesome to Father Aldo (for you must know, he and I were lodg'd together) that, in my conscience, I did so kiss him, and so hug him in my sleep! (Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 1.1, p.10)

late hours', nor likely to be 'overtaken' by drink and insists, delightedly, on policing the comings and goings of her household late at night: 'to remedy the inconvenience' of his impractical and uncivil time-keeping, Saintly states 'I will my self sit up for you.' She continues, 'I hope you wou'd not offer violence to me?' Woodall, much to his chagrin, cannot help but acknowledge her further intimation ('you may do your filthy part, and I am blameless') about his performance of sexual violence towards her when inebriated:

> Woodall: (*Aside*.) I think the Devil's in her; she has given me the hint again.
>
> Well, it shall go hard, but I will offer violence sometimes; will that content you?
>
> Saintly: I have a Cup of Cordial Water in my Closet, which will help to strengthen Nature, and to carry off a Debauch: I do not invite you thither; but the House will be safe a Bed, and Scandal will be avoided.[68]

Woodall's casual offer of rape – suggested as though it were an inoffensive sexual peccadillo – leads to a coded invitation for him to do just that. In the boarding/bawdy house, spatial relationships are sexual ones: Saintly's provocative non-invitation ('I do not invite you thither') functions as a safeguard against disgrace, an effect achieved through her invocation of 'a very public sign of privacy.'[69] Saintly hastily draws the attention of a man she barely knows to her closet – a space in which personal privacy, or secrecy of action, was understood to be possible, and which she claims to construe as an inappropriate space for, at least, mixed sex company. The implication is that scandal may be avoided if the house is asleep and no one *sees* Woodall enter Saintly's closet: she sets a dimensional boundary ('my Closet', as against 'the House') expressly in order to ensure that it is confounded. For Saintly to achieve her aims, moreover, her "invitation" cannot be perceived as a *consensual* display of sociability. For a "rape" to take place, and for her plausible deniability to retain its credibility, the landlady must pretend to police the spaces within her boarding house according to respectable constructions of private (secret, unobservable, inaccessible) and non-private territories: the sense that Saintly's closet is only legitimately accessible by her, but that she wishes to avoid the possibility of anyone witnessing Woodall entering this "private" space, only underlines the point that this location in fact exhibits the character of a community space, a place that is not separate from the "public" interest of the house at large. Both her own and the collective reputation of the household relies, as Saintly obliquely recognises through her

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[68] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 1.1, p.4.

[69] Alan Stewart, 'The Early Modern Closet Discovered', *Representations*, No. 50 (Spring, 1995), p.81. Jeremy W. Webster notes that the terms 'chamber' and 'closet' were used interchangeably by later seventeenth-century writers and dramatists, though they were separate if conceptually related physical constructions: the closet was usually attached to and led on from the bedchamber. 'Physically, the bedchamber and closet thus formed a conjoined area of relative intimacy.' See, 'In and Out of the Bed-chamber: Staging Libertine Desire in Restoration Comedy', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Volume 12, Number 2 (Spring 2012), n.1, pp.93-4.

fear of observation, on the secret behaviour of all of its inhabitants.[70] That there might be collectively occupied and respectably sociable portions of her boarding house, and those that are off-limits to anyone but their proper occupier, is, in any case, patently fallacious. Pleasance, later in the play, articulates the generally unspoken liberties of the lodger's agreement: ''Tis unconscionably done of me, to debar you the Freedom and Civilities of the House. Alas, poor Gentleman! to take a Lodging at so dear a rate, and not to have the benefit of his Bargain!'[71]

Avoiding the possibility of a clinch in Saintly's closet for the time being, Woodall nevertheless finds himself leaping into her arms during her attempted theft of the possessions of another lodger. Absent any representation of the administrative aspects of proprietorship, of accosting her lodgers for rent, or of a sense of Saintly's livelihood as labour, Dryden's representation of the boarding house instead features scenes of transaction that are almost exclusively characterised as deceptions, and a perverse interpretation of space by the landlady which renders all bodies, possessions and money freely available to her through mere greed.[72] Woodall is obliged to hastily conceal himself inside a chest when his second flirtatious encounter with Tricksy in the vicinity of her bedchamber is interrupted by the unexpected return of Limberham and Aldo: Tricksy's successful but noisy prevention of the chest being forcefully opened draws Saintly to the scene, who, importantly, lingers when the rest of the characters have exited the stage. Wondering aloud for the benefit of the audience, she states

> there is a certain motion put into my mind, and it is of good; I have Keys here, which a precious Brother, a devout Black-smith, made me; and which will open any Lock of the same bore: verily, it can be no sin to unlock this Chest therewith, and take from thence the spoils of the ungodly. I will satisfie my Conscience, by giving part thereof to the Hungry, and Needy; some to our Pastor, that he may prove it lawful; and some I will sanctify to my own use.[73]

As important to Saintly's access to property on the grounds of religious belief, is her confidence in ignoring the requests of her lodgers regarding the authorisation of space as proper to that particular lodger. While Chamberlaine's Mistress Welt may have made a small case for the importance of her labour and the stability of her credit networks, and defended the expedient of extracting cash value from a lodger against their will (by confiscating clothes), justified access to a lodger's personal effects is

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[70] See Erica Longfellow, who discusses sexual non-privacy as a constituent feature of early modern communities: 'Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 2006), pp. 313-334.
[71] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 4.1, p.42.
[72] Of deceptive transactions: Woodall's selling of 'essences' sees Limberham forced to part with twelve guineas (Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 1.1, p.12); Aldo pimps out young women to gullible men who believe they have purchased a virgin (4.1, p.37); Tricksy and Aldo engineer an argument with an uxorious Limberham in order to push up the price of her financial settlement (2.1, pp.14-7); Pleasance warns Woodall off the other female lodgers by discussing sex in terms of trade, in the language of gross, retail, shop and ware-house (4.1, p.43).
[73] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 2.1, p.22.

instead framed as religious hypocrisy by Dryden, an assumption of access to valuable property that is explained though not excused by the nonconformist's selfish pretensions to piety through charity. Saintly's purloining of what she believes are Tricksy's 'spoils' is plain theft, and that of the fruits of prostitution carried on beneath Saintly's roof. What I would underline here is Tricksy's attempts to enforce spatial boundaries ('in the mean time, let the Chest remain where it now stands, and let every one depart the Chamber'), and Saintly's denial of them: certainly, Tricksy has her own reasons for enforcing a general *exeunt*, but the fact of Saintly's possession of master keys (presumably unknown to any of her lodgers) both affirms and stands metonymically for her perverse spatial politics as landlady.[74] There is no way in which Saintly can reasonably argue that Tricksy's locked chest represents an 'ambiguous household space.'[75] Less an assurance of privacy, security, or restriction of access than an establishment of an unfettered and unperceived power of ingress, Saintly's use of her keys – a barefaced contravention of her own representation of private and non-private territories within the household – leads directly to the exposure of her misuse of spatial authority. The result of Woodall's shocking appearance as he leaps out of the chest and into Saintly's arms is a stalemate of mutually assured destruction. Saintly threatens to 'testifie' against Woodall for 'adultery' (i.e., sexual impropriety), and Woodall rejoinders with blackmail: 'Nay, since you are so revengeful, you shall suffer your part of the disgrace; if you testifie against me for Adultery, I shall testifie against you for Theft: there's an Eighth for your Seventh.'[76]

Woodall and Saintly's agreement to resist undermining one another stands only briefly, and unable to lure him to her closet, she makes a final attempt to force Woodall to conform to her constructions of space through the repurposing of his bedchamber as a site for the sick.[77] Disturbing the stalemate by forcing her way into his room in order to finagle a further concession, she insists that it is within his power to 'attone this difference betwixt us' by acquiescing to her demands for sex. He responds, with no little irony, 'Now thou art tempting me again. Well, if I had not the gift of Continency, what might become of me?'[78] At that very moment, Woodall has the kept mistress Tricksy hiding in his bed and

[74] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 2.1, p.21.
[75] Much of the 'mobile London population' would 'store their personal possessions within locked boxes and chests', though these caused conflict too, 'especially when they occupied ambiguous household space.' Lodgers might leave locked chests in storage in former places of residence when they moved on, a 'customary' behaviour which meant that such chests and the valuables within might be left 'in storage under good faith arrangements.' MacEwan, 'The Lodging Exchange: Space, Authority and Knowledge in Eighteenth Century London' (p.61).
[76] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 2.1, p.22. Woodall refers to the seventh and eighth of the ten commandments – 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' and 'Thou shalt not steal' – and his intention to accuse Saintly of theft (the eighth) if she makes a case against him for sexual impropriety (the seventh). *KJV* (1611) Exod. 20.14 and .15.
[77] Saintly continues to exercise power by setting her "daughter" Pleasance to spy on Woodall, though this spirals out of her control when Pleasance takes the initiative to 'satisfie' her 'revenge' upon her rivals for Woodall's attention, Tricksy and Mrs Brainsick. (Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 3.1, p.23; 5.1., p.57). Tricksy is a much more effective manipulator of space and bodies: in the still-room scene, she hands Limberham the key to open the still-room in which Woodall and Gervase are hiding but talks him out of using it (4.1, p.48-50).
[78] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 3.2, p.36.

the married Mrs. Brainsick underneath it. He is forced, nevertheless, to respond to her threat by giving a reluctant half-assurance that he may be able to satisfy her: 'let me have time to consider on't; I may mollifie, for flesh is frail.' Having set her foot, literally, in the door, Saintly exploits his lukewarm concession by faking a precipitate fit of sickness such that she is obliged to fling '*her self suddenly down upon the Bed*.' By this, we are brought back to Saintly's closet, that private space that she had defined according to its (in)accessibility by strangers. As she threatens to collapse, Woodall exclaims, 'Get you to your Closet, and fall to your *Mirabilis*; this is no place for sick people. Be gone, be gone.'[79] Dryden closes the circle that he had begun in Saintly and Woodall's first meeting, reiterating the figuration of Saintly's sexual desire as sickness by referring back to her strengthening 'Cordial Water' in Woodall's panicked exhortation that she remove herself and return to her *aqua mirabilis.*[80] Woodall construes the landlady's closet as a space for the unwell, not the sexually desirable; Saintly nevertheless insists on attempting to transplant the discursive space of her closet (and theoretical, too, since it is never represented) into Woodall's own chamber. Though resourceful in their attempts to impose differing meanings on the space of Woodall's chamber, these two social actors fail to come to a compromise: the dispute is resolved by the particularly apt means of an expression of proverbial knowledge, a strategy that makes unambiguous what Saintly had sought to maintain as implicit and unspoken (though broadly known) through a reference to common knowledge or a shorthand. Saintly's physical collapse disturbs Tricksy, hidden within the bed, and Mrs Brainsick, concealed beneath it, and as both emerge shrieking she is obliged to relinquish any attempt to force Woodall either to confession of his crimes or into bedding her:

> Saintly: So, so; if Providence had not sent me hither, what folly had been this day committed!
>
> Tricksy: Oh the Old Woman in the Oven! we both overheard your pious documents: did we not Mrs Brainsick?[81]

The truncated proverbial saying expressed by an exasperated Tricksy is an adage that concerns sexual knowledge, domestic authority and, crucially, the misuse of space: 'the Old Woman in the Oven!' is more fully 'The old woman had never Look'd in the Oven for her Daughter had she not been there her selfe.' [82] The proverbial old woman, requiring her daughter's presence and unable to find her, searches

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[79] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 3.2, p.36.
[80] Amongst other things, *aqua mirabilis* balances the humours, 'preserveth a good colour, the visage, memory and youth' and 'destroyeth the Palsie' – suitable medicine to fortify an older woman. *A choice manual, or Rare secrets in physick and chirurgery: collected, & practised by the Right Honourable the Countesse of Kent, late deceased.* (London, 1687) p.5.
[81] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 3.2, p.36.
[82] The proverb was familiar to an early modern audience, and has existed in some form since 1520. See, W353: 'The good wife would not (No woman would) seek her daughter in the oven if she had not been there before.' Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan Press, 1950) p.723. The proverb also featured as a lewd engraving on illustrated playing cards in the 1690s: see Malcolm Jones, 'Lively Representing the Proverbs: A Pack of Late

inside the bread oven – whereupon the daughter is discovered enjoying a tryst with a lover. The sense of the proverb is that only a woman of some sexual experience, and evidently an adventurous spirit, would have the foreknowledge to look in such an unusual place for her absent daughter. Saintly, as Tricksy points out, cannot pretend ignorance of sexual matters, nor, since overheard by two witnesses, conceal her religious hypocrisy any longer. It is also, aptly, a proverb whose power to amuse partly rests on the humorous image of the inventive exploitation of a space certainly not designed for sexual activity. As the proverbial young lovers repurpose a presumably dirty and uncomfortable space for their desperate rendezvous, so Saintly, seeking to put herself in a position of bodily weakness, aims to enact physical vulnerability within Woodall's 'own chamber' by means of illness. All four of those present in this scene – Saintly, Woodall, Tricksy, Mrs Brainsick – have secretly converged on Woodall's chamber for the same reason (sex): the simultaneous conflict and consensus of interpretation regarding purpose of space that arises from this hitherto unexpressed motivation thereby engenders the amusing display of an open secret being rendered explicit through, effectively, a shorthand of a shorthand. As herself a shorthand in stage comedy for a distinctly disreputable association with domestic space and its uses, the landlady is, more narrowly within Dryden's play, represented by the "old woman in the oven." Dryden could safely have assumed that his audience were conversant with both evocations of sexually suspect old ladies.

The woman who has laboured the hardest to furtively benefit from the implicit denial of private, inaccessible space within her own household finally finds, in the end, that such a practice might be the death knell for her trade. Her hypocritical misuse of spatial authority is flung back in her face when Woodall admonishes her for disallowing him solitude in his own room: both Tricksy and Mrs Brainsick threaten to testify against Saintly, and Woodall has 'nothing to say for her. Nay, I told her her own; you can both bear me witness. If a sober man cannot be quiet in his own Chamber for her-'. Tricksy and Mrs Brainsick 'both conclude to cast an Infamy upon her House, and leave it.' Saintly's reply to her favoured lodger is desperate: 'Sweet Mr. Woodall, intercede for me, or I shall be ruin'd.'[83] An intimation is offered, finally, that Saintly's actions might be read through the lens of remunerative work, and that she should be understood as a proprietor concerned for her livelihood. Being 'ruin'd' would constitute an insupportable social and economic blow to Saintly: 'infamy', which represents a damage to reputation, and the loss of tenants, which in turn deprives her of a source of income, prompts recognition that it is the fragile independence of the unmarried landlady that underpins her ability to engage in sexual hi-jinks at all. Woodall's highly ironic protest about being unable to access quietude in his own room censures Saintly specifically as a manager of domestic space: there is an implied bargain (howsoever the occupants of the house rely upon its failure) which balances an expectation of some privacy against the purchase of space within a stranger's household, and it is an agreement that she has not met. Her

Seventeenth-Century English Playing Cards Engraved with Proverb Representations', in *The Proverbial "Pied Piper"* ed. Kevin J Mckenna (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang US, 2009).

[83] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 3.2, p.36.

non-invitation to her closet reminds us that Saintly's house in its entirety, and her body, are access-all-areas – whether her lodgers like it or not.

Dryden's punishment for Saintly's abuse of authority is to rob her of it at the very close of the play. Amongst the variety of solemnised romantic matches that constitute the comic conclusion is the offstage marriage of Saintly to Woodall's long-suffering servant Gervase. The structures of authority within the lodging house are shifted, for Saintly is tellingly silent in the last scene, standing on stage and given almost no dialogue but to confirm that she is indeed married to Gervase: 'Verily, the good work is accomplish'd.'[84] The erstwhile loquacious landlady is subordinated to her new husband, whose pernickety insistence on the 'good words' of proper terms of address – not 'sirrah' but 'your Landlord, and Mr. Saintly, if you please' – reflects the new regime of spatial and gender politics in the Saintly household. The quotidian impact of patriarchal right makes itself felt as Gervase, formerly a servant prone to all the potential physical and verbal degradations of his station, is, in the final few lines, asked to 'lead the way, as becomes you, in your own house.'[85] When a landlady, like Chamberlaine's Mistress Welt, is married, her own household becomes a microcosm of disorder in which entwined sexual and financial economies lead to a topsy-turvy gender hierarchy. Economic and sexual agency become likewise entangled, and develop into sites of contested power between husband and wife in dramatized scenes of domestic conflict. When she is not married, like Saintly, her punishment for wielding such agency to her liking is to be wed, and to be subject to a drastic diminution of her authority. One might imagine, nevertheless, that Saintly, like Mistress Welt, may not consent to be so subdued for long, and an indefinite domestic farce within the Saintly household beckons. 'Mr. Saintly', now the master of his own house, has replaced Saintly's former husband in fact and in name, and as Woodall earlier observed, Saintly's house has likely always been, and therefore may always be, a place of depravity. Saintly's daughter Pleasance is so unlike the 'sanctifi'd Sister' that Woodall expected to find her that he suspects 'that if your Mother kept a Pension in your Father's time, there might be some Gentleman-Lodger in the house; for I humbly conceive, you are of the half-strain at least.'[86] There is little reason to imagine that the new landlord might expect better, or more faithful, treatment than the last. In Behn's play, which I turn to in the next chapter, the landlady does not merely condense and emblematise the fears about general social disorder that female economic authority appears to dredge up: Behn's Gammer Grime becomes the locus for a more precise criticism of the way in which such authority is reconfigured as a means to profiteer – financially and sexually – from women who are conscious of an ethos of exchange and circulation, but who can never expect a fair deal from the men with whom they transact.

[84] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 5.1, p.64.
[85] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 5.1, p.65.
[86] Dryden, *Kind Keeper*, 3.1, p.25.

2. Lodging in the City: economies of exploitation in Aphra Behn's **The Lucky Chance (1687)**

The landlady's work and bodying inequality

In *The Lucky Chance*, Behn's version of the landlady draws on much the same set of representative strategies as those of Chamberlaine and Dryden. She offers a detailed focus on the landlady's economic activity, on the material conditions of her work, and on her financial authority; she displays an interest in the use and importance of space, which takes on a particular significance in the depiction of a debtor's sanctuary as the site of the landlady's dwelling. Like Dryden's Saintly, Behn's Gammer Grime presides over a space of disreputability, one which she uses to her own liking by permitting it to become a location in which sexual contact takes place. It is also one in which access to a lodger's material wealth becomes a point of conflict: the entanglement of financial, material and sexual economies means that the landlady may both exploit, and be exploited in, the drive to recoup debts in whatever way possible. Behn also represents the landlady's work as an ordinary social fact, as necessary labour: by this, she gestures towards concerns about gendered domestic authority and the division of labour that takes place within the marital home, and towards the difficulty of definitively distinguishing the landlady's labours as either domestic or commercial activity. Like Mistress Welt, Gammer Grime manages the domestic economy in the teeth of, rather than in harmony with, her husband: she acts as if her husband's domestic authority within a shared working space both does and does not matter, at once recognising and dismissing his prior claim as the occupational identifier of the household.[87] Where Behn differs from,

[87] Gammer Grime acknowledges her husband as head of household, 'Gregory Grime's house', but dismisses his personal influence on her management of the domestic economy or his authority as her spouse: 'What, do you think to fright me with my husband? I'd have you to know I'm an honest woman and care not this – for my husband.' (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.212; 211).

and develops, these representative strategies is in the connection of the landlady's labours to broader systems of commerce, to other forms of labour, and in marking out a clear relationship between the sexual and economic agency of the landlady and the much wider physical and financial exploitation of women within a marketplace of commodified female bodies. An unusual, hidden alliance emerges between the landlady and one of the heroines, each of whom find themselves financing their own exploitation by the same man.

The basis of the play's action is quite usual for a Cit-cuckolding comedy: ghastly old men are punished for their presumption and selfishness in taking to themselves beautiful young women as wives – women whose love and respect they do not merit – and that punishment is the loss of these women to witty and resourceful young rakes. Behn's agitation with convention, however, is very visible: 'revisionary acts', as Paula Backscheider observes in *Spectacular Politics*, 'always require deliberate devices that frustrate readers' natural tendencies to see familiar plot patterns or archetypes.'[88] Behn's conclusion notably fails to impart a sense of comic fullness usual in a genre that prefers neat closure: of the three couples to be manoeuvred together over the course of the play, only two unequivocally achieve a successful match. The high romance of the lovers Belmour and Leticia receives its improbable reward, and the quietly intelligent match-making efforts of Bredwell and Diana do so too.[89] The ardent force that draws together the hopeful Gayman and the already wed Julia, conversely, is stymied by social convention, by miscommunication and misperception, and by Gayman's irretrievable propensity to view romantic connections in financial terms: the 'lucky chance' of the title refers to the game of dice between Gayman and Julia's husband Sir Cautious Fulbank, in which the latter is persuaded to stake not cash but 'a small parcel of ware', his wife's body.[90] Gayman's prize – a longed for sexual union with Julia – is achieved through a bed-trick and without her consent. This plot is heavily indebted to an earlier comedy of Dryden's, *The Wild Gallant* (1669), the reconstitution of which sees Behn make a significant change to the nature of the relationship between Gayman and Julia (Loveby and Constance in the Dryden): Behn shifts the burden of romantic irresponsibility firmly onto her central male character, and implicates him in the kind of predatory financial behaviour of which Dryden's doltish young gallant does not seem capable.[91] The robbing of Julia's 'quiet' by means of what is essentially a bought-and-paid-for rape

[88] Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, MD.; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.85.
[89] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.7, p.267.
[90] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.252.
[91] Behn takes up several aspects of imagery, language, thematic resonances and the outlines of certain characters from John Dryden's *The Wild Gallant* (1669): Dryden's Loveby is anonymously gifted gold by his beloved Constance (stolen from her father), and takes receipt of it unawares when Setstone the jeweller (deputised by Constance) sneaks into his room while Loveby sleeps. The basis of this action echoes Julia, Gayman and Sir Cautious very closely. The description of Setstone's intermediary role (1.1) is transformed into Bredwell's analogous trip up into the Alsatian enchanted castle. Loveby, like Gayman, is associated with devilry: unlike Gayman, he genuinely believes this to be the source of his mysterious windfalls (2.1). Loveby also has an implicitly, rather than explicitly, sexual relationship with his landlady (1.1); he is maligned, as Gayman is, by two gulls who describe him as a criminal and cheat (3.1); Loveby and Constance are reconciled through a marriage ceremony that begins as a staged trick (5.1), and which is strongly redolent, in much condensed form,

leaves her in uneasy estrangement from both husband and lover as the play closes: she vows 'to separate forever' (perhaps rather opportunistically) from her husband's bed, but also makes an ambiguous rejection of a projected match with Gayman.[92] The conniving enterprise shared by husband and lover forces the bitter realisation that, as Pat Gill puts it, Julia 'has nothing to bestow that her lover does not already feel free to take.'[93]

Catherine Gallagher's influential analysis of the play observes the importance of hard cash as both an exchangeable and a symbolic item, for 'money in the plot often represents bodies or their sexual use' and the nub of the comedy in moments of exchange is the extremely visible difference between the desirability of the sexualised bodies in question and 'the precious metals they can be made to yield.' Gammer Grime, the repugnant landlady with whom Gayman spends one short scene and to whom he prostitutes himself both in lieu of paying debts and in order to leverage further ready money from her, is 'stroked into metals of increasing value as she yields 'postle spoons and caudle cups that then exchange for gold.'[94] My approach to this play is interested in the origins and circulation of those metals and money: the money for which Gayman performs sexual contact does not simply appear when the landlady's body is 'stroked', as if he were performing a magic trick, but is earned through the undertaking of labour. The work that Gammer Grime performs on his behalf involves acts of exchange that make that money in its physical form accessible to the impoverished gentleman, and her labours implicate her in local networks of financial and social credit from which he indirectly benefits. Norman Simms has recognised that Behn insists on a more literal focus on the 'basic qualities of life, such as money, domestic and bodily needs, manual labour and labourers' in this play, and paying attention to where this money comes from and where it goes helps to illuminate complicated lines of connection and dependence throughout: Gammer Grime's money and labour both subsidise and undermine Gayman's ability to reroute his path back to a rakish masculinity, dependent upon economic autonomy, material profligacy, sexual liberality and the performance of a rather self-conscious romantic identity.[95]

This connection between the labouring, the leisured, and the representatives of a middling order that are somewhere between the two, is at the centre of my reading of Gammer Grime's work and its place in the play. The way in which the landlady's working existence binds together sex, labour and money is not simply about her own given disreputability but also about that of everyone else. Certainly, a focus

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of the masque that Julia stages for Gayman (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 3.3, 3.4); a number of other remarks (about usury and alderman, gamesters and gambling, individually marked coins, a game of bowls, and supernatural creatures) also resonate between the two plays.

[92] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.7, p.264; 268.

[93] Pat Gill, *Interpreting Ladies: Women, Wit and Morality in the Restoration Comedy of Manners* (Athens, GA.: University of Georgia Press, 1994), p.149.

[94] Catherine Gallagher, 'Who was that Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn', in *Rereading Aphra Behn: history, theory, and criticism* (Charlottesville, VA.; London: University Press of Virginia, 1993) p.79.

[95] Norman Simms, 'A Dark Cynical Conceit: The Masque In Aphra Behn's *The Lucky Chance*', *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*, 88:1 (1997), p.85.

on the landlady widens out relatively narrow readings concerning Behn's 'anxieties' about the 'humiliations' and 'violations' of female bodies that have revolved around the heroines, but what a focus on Gammer Grime's work also makes visible is the play-wide universality of those representative strategies used to typify the landlady as a character (her avarice, her shrewish personality, her energetic economic agency, her self-assured assumption of sexual autonomy) as well as the particular vulnerability of women in the face of such behaviours when these are turned back upon them.[96] My emphasis on the cultural and literary meanings of the location of the landlady's household (the debtor's sanctuary of Alsatia) draws a literal, monetary connection between the site and nature of her labours and the economic activities of the usurer Sir Cautious Fulbank, and marks out a further link to Gayman's assumption of a profiteering mercantile ethos in harness with Julia's repulsively greedy husband. The connection between the landlady and her lodger – who are exhibited together in a shifting permutation of debtor and creditor, exploiter and exploited – also points to other congruencies between a space of labouring poverty and the wealthier environs of the City in which Gayman nevertheless struggles to belong. The landlady's direct interaction with Gayman and indirect connection with Julia reveals sites of financial, sexual and emotional power that are multiple and unstable. As the social dynamic of the lodging space gestures to compassion, antagonism and vulnerability between landlady and lodger, so the relationship between hero and heroine is analogously disordered: they desire each other but remain at loggerheads concerning the appropriate expression of that desire. Focusing on the release and circulation of wealth that is shown to be part of the landlady's work also helps to reorient readings of the play that bridles the landlady within taxonomies of Restoration comedy types: less a 'major constraining figure' than a facilitator and a funder, it is not *Gammer Grime's* 'insatiable' sexual interest that really constitutes an obstruction.[97] The landlady's structural role, in which she supplies a lingering bodily representation of the sexual and economic exploitation of women, marks out Gayman's role as his own hindrance to romantic and sexual fulfilment.

'Is this a place to trust in?': the material and social conditions of Gammer Grime's work

Key to reading Behn's depiction of the landlady in *The Lucky Chance* is the particular area of London in which she is shown to live. The blacksmith's premises in which her husband works and above which Gammer Grime rents out lodging space is in Whitefriars, known colloquially in the later-seventeenth-century as Alsatia. Behn's double focus on the specifics of London geography, and on the material and social conditions of Gammer Grime's work, are important both of themselves and for what they enable

[96] J.H. Fawcett, 'Unmapping London: Urbanization and the performance of personal space in Aphra Behn's *The Lucky Chance', Eighteenth-Century Studies,* Vol.50(2) (2017), p.162; p159.
[97] Robert A. Erickson, 'Lady Fulbank and the Poet's Dream in Behn's '*The Lucky Chance*'', in *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama* ed. by Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington, KY.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), p.98.

us to see more broadly in the play: as a by-word for criminality and poverty, Alsatia provides a physical and cultural context for the complex connection upon which Behn draws between money (or its lack thereof) and moral failure. Like the hero Gayman, and the rich old aldermen Sir Cautious Fullbank and Sir Feeble Fainwould, Gammer Grime's moral depravity is encoded in her material circumstances. Relatedly, the conditions of Gammer Grime's labouring existence set the terms for the sexual and financial exchanges in which Gayman is involved throughout the play. Poverty and profligacy enjoy close kinship in Behn's vision of a commercial London, and through a 'somewhat rare' and 'chilling' description of one of the 'nether spaces' of the city, we can read work on a literal register – as a significant depiction of necessary remunerative activity in an unusual milieu – as well as a lens through which to view the cynical exchanges of bodies for cash throughout the play.[98]

Running from Fleet Street down to the Thames and sandwiched between Inner Temple to the west and the Bridewell prison to the east, Alsatia was an 'anomalous territory' which, like other liberties, enjoyed a legal jurisdiction that had become 'unclear' post-Reformation. The residual 'entitlements' of the Carmelite monastery that had previously occupied the site of Whitefriars remained in force, and to some legal confusion: John Levin's online project *Alsatia: The Debtor Sanctuaries of London* collects a variety of literary and historical texts and legal statutes pertaining to such territories and as he explains, 'the right of 'sanctuary' was still a part of the law.' Alsatia could 'still apparently grant immunity from arrest', a fact of which 'the criminalised, especially debtors seeking refuge from bailiffs' took advantage.[99] The Alsatian attic which Gayman is obliged to rent is, as Cynthia L. Caywood recognises, a depiction of the living conditions of the 'traditionally disenfranchised poor' to which Behn rarely treats her audience, and the playwright places her self-consciousness about the cultural freight of this locale in the mouth of Gammer Grime herself. In the conventional scene of confrontation between landlady and lodger over unpaid bills, Gayman implores Gammer Grime for patience but she simply retorts, 'is this a place to trust in?'[100] Behn draws here upon reputation in two ways, pointing both to a cultural and literary awareness of Alsatia as a criminally dangerous and insalubrious part of the city where good character was understood to be in short supply, and to the idea of trust as social reputation, that crucial component of a local credit economy in which this landlady is enmeshed. Behn's attention to the

[98] Cynthia L. Caywood, 'The Geography of Aphra Behn's City Comedies', *Literary London*, Vol.5 (2) (2007), p.14 <http://literarylondon.org/the-literary-london-journal/archive-of-the-literary-london-journal/issue-5-2/the-geography-of-aphra-behns-city-comedies/> [accessed 13/10/2021].
[99] http://alsatia.org.uk/site/ [accessed 17/11/2021] Additionally, *The Map of Early Modern London Online Project* has digitised the *Civitas Londinum*, a 1633 modified version of the 1561 woodblock "Agas" map of London. Though representing a pre-Fire configuration of London, the various liberties that lay outside the jurisdiction of the City can be seen: Whitefriars is on the north bank of the Thames. https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/map.htm [accessed 17/11/2021]. Janet Todd observes that *The Lucky Chance* particularly 'breathed the localised London [Behn] knew', with references to Holborn and Lincoln's Inn Fields to be found, in addition to Alsatia. See *Aphra Behn: A Secret Life* (London: Fentum Press, 2017) p.367. Erickson also notes that London topography seems to have seeped into this piece of Behn's work ('Lady Fulbank and the Poet's Dream', *Broken Boundaries*, ed. Quinsey, p.97).
[100] Caywood, 'Geography', p.14. Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.212.

minutiae of Gammer Grime's financial transactions with Gayman, and with those who form part of a localised economy within Alsatia, at once underwrites Gayman and Gammer Grime's twinned humiliations as profligate pauper and poor working woman in a graphically circumscribed environment, while supplying a context through which to approach broader financial and sexual relationships. Trust is in as short supply in the wealthier areas of the City as in Alsatia, and the poorer locale acts as both counterpoint to the other world of wealthy alderman – a prosperous place in which old men in affluent households find new ways to commodify women – and as a site of continuity.

Alsatia is also of contemporaneous dramatic interest to Thomas Shadwell, whose 1688 comedy *The Squire of Alsatia* explicitly focuses on the sanctuary as a legal and political anomaly, and as a place of criminality. The concluding observation of the mild-mannered City gentleman Sir Edmund Belfond that there are, shamefully, 'some few spots of Ground in London, just in the face of the Government, unconquer'd yet, that hold in Rebellion still', and the playwright's preoccupation with the criminal 'sociolect' (cant) of Whitefriars, marks out the district as morally, legally and linguistically distinct.[101] Behn, however, confines neither criminality nor morally dubious behaviour to Alsatia. As a locale of a particular dramatic and cultural flavour, Alsatia/Whitefriars represented, as Mary Bly states, a specific 'axis of cultural activity.' Bly's study of the liberties of London, which 'attempts to reconstruct a mental cartography' of the early modern City, identifies Whitefriars as a 'densely evocative' and 'metaphoric space' which had been drawn upon by playwrights for its association with 'debtors, escaped felons, illegal foreigners, and sex workers' since at least 1600. Behn, along with Thomas Dekker and John Webster, and Ben Jonson, was plainly aware of the 'distinct brew of disorder' produced in and 'sanctioned' by the liberty of Whitefriars**.** A landlady who lives and works there is (to draw on Bly's identification of Whitefriars as a particularly dense qualifier) an especially intense instantiation of this comic figure.[102] For Behn, nevertheless, Alsatia is as anomalous and as special a locale as it is applicable to other areas of London's social topography. There are no rogues, bullies, sharpers or scammers in Behn's Alsatia: if one can say that there are any cheats or swindlers in *The Lucky Chance,* the City knights and Gayman, who cheat each other, themselves and Julia out of resources each considers valuable, are the nearest we come to such characters.[103] However, one way in which Behn does render

[101] Thomas Shadwell, *The Squire of Alsatia* (London, 1688). Paula Schintu, '"The Mobile Shall Worship Thee": Cant language in Thomas Shadwell's '*The Squire of Alsatia'* (1688)', SEDERI. *Sociedad Española de Estudios Renacentistas Ingleses*, Vol.26 (26) (2016), p.177.

[102] Mary Bly, 'Playing the Tourist in Early Modern London: Selling the Liberties Onstage', *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol.122 (1) (2007), p.65;61;63;62. Bly discusses the 'geographic tag' provided by Whitefriars, observing that 'mentioning location adds something to *puncke*. But is the pleasure merely that of sly urban recognition of a vice district, or does the word somehow double the phrase's intensity, creating a *punckier puncke*?' (p.64). Shadwell's *Squire* (1688) features just such a typical landlady Mrs Hackum, 'one that lets Lodgings, sells Cherry-brandy, and is a Bawd.' The prostitutes she manages are used to deceive and entrap wealthy targets. (sig. A4^{v}).

[103] *Squire* contains a number of scammers described at length in the *dramatis personae* list, who in the course of the play work together on swindling the naïve Belfond Senior out of his inheritance. In *Tricksters and Estates: On the Ideology of Restoration Comedy*, (Lexington, KY.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), J. Douglas Canfield also notes that Gayman's culpability for financial mismanagement, alone of his inexcusable

the location of the lodging space as distinctive is to mark out the meanness – the permanent cheapness – of its material conditions: labouring poverty is cast as punishment, an aesthetic and moral failure and a degradation for both the landlady and the lodger who finds himself in such a place.[104] Behn draws on the commonplace relationship between money and good character, and the extent to which, as Alexandra Shephard indicates, 'honesty and its related moral authority was assumed to reflect wealth and social status rather than understood in meritocratic terms.'[105] An experience of material hardship was likely to be construed as a deficiency of character, especially given that 'poverty was also readily associated with idleness and dissolute living.'[106]

Gammer Grime's petty financial grievances make clear that this is a place for those embarrassed by debts, whose social reputation is at a low ebb, and whose lack of material independence suggests a concomitant lack of rectitude: 'Dear me no dears, sir', Gammer Grime begins, 'but let me have my money: eight weeks' rent last Friday. Besides taverns, ale-houses, chandlers, laundresses' scores, and ready money out of my purse; you know it, sir.' She continues to browbeat Gayman with the 'patching, borrowing, and shifting' undertaken for him, the pawning of her 'best petticoat', her 'new Norwich mantua' and her ''postle spoons.' She has also staked her name for credit on his behalf 'at the George Tavern', at her 'neighbour Squab's for ale' and at 'mother Suds for washing' to the tune of various specified amounts, totalling a calculable four pounds and thirteen shillings.[107] The scene of the landlady's labouring poverty is also rendered deliberately unattractive – a multi-sensory experience that is dirty, ugly, malodorous, loud, cramped and threadbare. Bredwell (Julia's nephew by marriage), explaining to her the state to which Gayman has fallen, offers a 'lewd description' of the attic in which Gayman lodges: ''Tis a pretty convenient tub, madam. He may lie along in't; there's just room for an old joined stool beside the bed…and nothing left to save his eyes from the light, but my landlady's blue apron, tied by the strings before the window.'[108] Living and working in a location beyond the restrictions of the law, Gammer Grime likewise exists without the limits of well-to-do sensibilities about manual

victimisation of Julia, does not pass Behn by either, for the name Wasteall 'suggests satire on such improvident aristocrats.' (p.228).

[104] The term 'labouring poverty' here indicates a general lack of wealth in relation to those individuals in the play who do not perform work to meet the requirements of existence. Gammer Grime, according to the textual evidence, is not poor in the specific early modern sense that she requires aid, either from the parish or other charitable source, to survive; nor is she dependent, which is to say that she and her husband live by the work of their own hands and do not labour for a wage that is paid by an employer. Clearly, however, Gammer Grime is not wealthy.

[105] Alexandra Shephard, 'Poverty, Labour, and the Language of Social Description in Early Modern England', *Past & Present,* Vol.201 (1) (2008), p.90.

[106] Shephard, 'Poverty', p.94.

[107] *The Lucky Chance,* 2.1. p.211. The total of 4 pounds and thirteen shillings arises from the specific amounts of money that she mentions in this scene concerning contracted debts; the five pounds that she subsequently leverages for Gayman makes the calculable debt 9 pounds thirteen shillings.

[108] Behn, *Lucky Chance,* 1.2, p.203. The attic was understood to be a particularly undesirable category of lodging space: 'Garrets or attic rooms when not occupied by servants or apprentices, were also let out as mean lodgings.' (McEwan, 'The Lodging Exchange', p.54). Loveby in *The Wild Gallant* is threatened with being downgraded into the garret if he does not meet his debts (Dryden, *Wild Gallant,* 1.1, p.7).

labour: Bredwell (despite himself being an apprentice) evinces a snobbish shock about the conditions of such work when he describes 'the beastly thing [Gayman] calls a landlady, who looked as if she'd been of her own husband's making, composed of moulded smith's dust.'[109] (Julia too expresses distaste and confusion at the prospect of Gayman having lowered himself to such a position: 'forgive me – you went to a blacksmith's -' is her perturbed response to Bredwell's report of Gayman's lodgings).[110] Gayman's own complaint about the 'perpetual music' of trade – the unbearable hammering of hammer on anvil – that jolts through the building from the workshop below him reinforces Bredwell's rather literal identification of Gammer Grime with labour: she is constituted bodily by it, for Behn reverts to mythologies of creation as work when she identifies Gregory Grime with mechanical powers that, in the underbelly location of Alsatia, are exercised in the manufacture of a wife from waste material ('dust', or, indeed, grime).[111] Delimited by meanness of purpose and place, a penurious labouring trade in a debtor's sanctuary is the metal/mettle of which the landlady is made: Behn's preoccupation with the landlady's derogatory origins in trade, the ugliness of her hard-bitten living conditions and the embarrassment of her social class is, however, only a partial picture of work in the text.[112]

As squalid and as vulgar as such a penny-pinching existence may be, Gammer Grime's labour is shown as labour, as necessary and remunerative work: the landlady has her own reasonable economic needs and must juggle the demands of household economy. She is, moreover, a highly financially literate economic agent, albeit an irresponsible one: Gammer Grime has evidently been keeping a tally of debts, and can make a snap estimate about the pawn value (five pounds) of the 'caudle cup', a sentimentally valuable item often made of silver, 'that Molly's grandmother left her.'[113] (Gayman, conversely, displays the dissipating gentleman's sense of disproportion about money: he hypocritically rails at his servant Rag, 'you gourmandising vermin', for having already spent 'the threepence I gave you a fortnight ago.')[114] Margarete Rubik has observed 'Behn's obsession with precise sums of money' across several texts in the playwright's oeuvre, and that *The Lucky Chance* is an especially rich example: the

[109] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 1.2, p.202.
[110] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 1.2, p.202.
[111] Behn makes oblique biblical reference to the forming of Adam from 'the dust of the ground', and 'the breath of life' which brought him to the state of 'a living soule' (*KJV* (1611) Genesis 2:7), and to Classical imagery of creation, i.e., Prometheus' act of moulding the first human from clay and giving to him the fire of life; the Roman Vulcan/Greek Hephaestus, the divine metalsmith. Shakespeare's *Othello* is one well-known example of the use of the Promethean figure in drama of the seventeenth-century, an edition of which happened to be printed the same year as *The Lucky Chance*. Othello avers that there is no replacing the 'Prometian heat' that he is about to smother out of Desdemona, an image in the tragic register that, reused in a comic form, produces the amusing metaphor of Gregory Grime blowing heat and life into his wife with the bellows of the smith. *Othello, the Moor of Venice. A Tragedy* (London, 1687) p.68.
[112] The online project *Middling Culture* suggests that a household of this sort might be described as 'precarious household middling', those 'who are of some independent means, run their house, and have some skilled trade but whose financial status is not stable.' https://middlingculture.com/status-calculator/ [accessed 17/11/2021]. Baer's assessment of numbers of hearths as indicators of housing quality, which cross-references occupational information to build a picture of wealth, places blacksmiths and shoemakers, in the 'mechanick' class (between poor and lower middling). ('Housing the Poor and Mechanick Class', pp.24-5).
[113] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.213.
[114] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.210.

play contains 'minute information about jointures and dowries**,** borrowings and stakes, with figures ranging from several thousand pounds to as little as a few pence.'[115] It is the slightness of the conceptual gap (though certainly the numerical one is not insignificant) between those thousands of pounds and the few pence to which I wish to draw attention: that the sums of money which Gammer Grime is able to command are so paltry compared to, for instance, the five hundred pounds that Julia liberates for Gayman's benefit, unnoticed, from her husband's counting house, does indeed emphasise the precarious nature of Gammer Grime's livelihood, and Gayman's ability to endanger it. The ready circulation of, and access to, the smallest amounts of money embedded in the smallest items and acts of service – buying candles, washing clothes, obtaining credit – are taken cumulatively to demonstrate the landlady's busy sort of poverty, as well as her certain difference from Julia in terms of class. These relatively piffling amounts of money, are, however, but one half of Behn's vision of dearth and surfeit in the play, for Behn does not so much confine un-creditworthiness to the sphere of poverty as make it plain that the parameters of such a judgement extend as high and wide as the gentry (represented by Gayman) and the middling men of the City (embodied by the old aldermen). Behn declines any straightforward relationship between money and honesty: a lack of ready cash and of credit makes for disreputable behaviour and permits (or enforces) questionable choices, but so too does a surfeit of wealth. Behn's horror of the sordidness of labouring poverty – personified by the landlady – is qualified by her awareness that advocation of other forms of economic existence – either a splendid monied lifestyle based on landed wealth, and which abhors manual labour and wage earning, or a miserly but affluent mercantilist lifestyle which, in this play, leaches capital from those young aristocrats in the form of mortgages – cannot be endorsed either.

One particular aspect of Gayman's interaction with his landlady illuminates Behn's concern with the moral vacuousness of the hero's preferred form of obtaining (what he considers to be) the necessaries of life. Gayman has sold, pawned and mortgaged practically everything he has in order to maintain the illusion of being a gentleman, and one who can afford the expensive rituals of courtship. He confesses to his friend Belmour that he has 'treated lavishly, and presented high [to Julia], till between you and I, Harry, I have presented the best part of eight hundred a year into her husband's hands, in mortgage.'[116] Now, he cannot meet his urgent debts. While Gammer Grime's managerial abilities are turned to the disreputable purpose of financing her adulterous sexual relationship with Gayman, it is Gayman who, when being castigated by Gammer Grime for the evidently discouraging image he presents when dressed in 'a pair of piss burned shammy breeches', supposes her reference to his 'badge of manhood' to be a penis joke. She intends, rather, to point out what a pitiable tenant he is, and how poor is the prospect of receiving any rent from a man whose 'silver sword' has already been 'transmogrified' into

[115] Margarete Rubik, 'Love's Merchandise: Metaphors of Trade and Commerce in the Plays of Aphra Behn', *Women's Writing*, 19:2 (2012) p.233; 232.
[116] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 1.1, p.197.

(that is, traded in for) an outmoded 'two-handed basket hilt'. She then repeats an earlier threat of eviction: 'In fine, I'll have my money sir, or i-faith, Alsatia shall not shelter you.'[117] This cross-purposes conversation about the phallic sword – in which Gayman imagines that the landlady objects to the degraded state of his sexualised body, while she actually refers to material goods from the perspective of retrievable value – both makes a point about the loss of Gayman's gentlemanly status and demonstrates the mutability of sex and money in the sexualised economy of the lodging space. Backscheider and Simms read (as the latter puts it) 'the scene of hellish poverty' in Alsatia as a 'prologue', a part of the text that is preparatory to and separate from the later masque and bed trick scenes, which two points of action Backscheider couples together in a near 'true dialogism' of romantic/pastoral and historicised/mercantilist modes.[118] It is, rather, within the context of the lodging relationship that a revealing dialogism first emerges, between the urgency of maintaining a gentlemanly, masculine ideal of the tame libertine, doing his utmost to attain his lover's bed and spinning out a physical and rhetorical performance of romantic courtship as he does so, and the equally pressing need to fund the basics of existence.[119] Gayman's profligacy, and his failure to maintain standards of appearance, are a metaphorization of the poverty of this ideal which he attempts to represent. It is, as becomes clear through (and to) the landlady, a bankrupt ideology whose protestations of romantic high feeling cannot conceal its cynical aims – the exaction of sex, or indeed of money, from women.

A central dispute of the play – whether some things (honour, love, mutual desire) may be priceless, or whether anything and everything can be made to bear a monetary value – is exemplified in Gayman's financial and emotional exploitation of his landlady. He manipulatively praises and admonishes her when she tries to exact his debts: 'I know you are the best of landladies, as such I drink your health. *(Drinks)* But to upbraid a man in tribulation, fie, 'tis not done like a woman of honour – a man that loves you, too.'[120] Gayman's identification of the disjoint between the possibility of the landlady's honourable behaviour, and Gammer Grime's status as tradeswoman, only draws attention to the swingeing irony of his current situation. Gayman's pawning of his clothes – a further sign, as Shephard indicates, of an individual's rock-bottom poverty and lack of social credit – sees the external trappings of the gentleman utterly surrendered in the course of attempting to convince others of the security and extravagance of his status.[121] Gayman hopes to retrieve 'my last suit that was laid in lavender, with the appurtenances thereunto belonging, as periwig, cravat, and so forth', the loss of which impairs any

[117] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.212.
[118] Simms, 'A Dark Cynical Conceit', p.84; Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics*, p.89. The pseudo-marriage ceremony masque in *Lucky Chance* is at 3.4; the bed-trick scenes at 5.5 and 5.7.
[119] Gayman's abrupt switching from one mode to the other at the top of the scene demonstrates his dual identity and the self-consciousness of his performance of the lover: he pings between elevated poetising about his 'faithless fortune' and the 'soft smiling god' of love, and low banter with his servant ('How now, Rag, what's o'clock?') about the gustatory character of poverty (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1., p.210).
[120] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.212.
[121] See Shephard 'Poverty', pp.61-2, for the possession and pawning of clothes as a signifier of limited means in church court testimony.

similitude between the hero and the stable and publicly visible social performance of a gentleman.[122] Unavoidable conclusions emerge about the kind of monied lifestyle that Gayman desires and represents: such a manner of living requires *someone's* labour; everything, even 'honour', can be embedded with a financial value; the social and ideological cachet of being an individual of inherited wealth is not without price**.**

The landlady's work (made manifest in the most basic and degrading conditions) is, then, a form of illicit labour that, recognising the thinness of the boundary between gentility and a "lower" form of socioeconomic existence, demonstrates that no one is immune from the risks and possibilities that such porosity enables. This illicit labour – which elides sexual and financial transactions – becomes a framework for reading other such exchanges and bargains in the play, especially at those moments where the rhetoric of romance and of trade are used to obscure or to focalise the transaction of sexualised bodies. Gammer Grime's labours therefore do double duty, supporting Gayman in his claims to genteel, romantic masculinity at the same time as undercutting them (by providing a precise material context for the demeaning acts to which he stoops). What Margaret Ferguson terms Behn's ambiguity about what distinguishes 'gentility' from commonness (or, indeed, whether that distinction is finally relevant) also connects Gammer Grime to Julia in particular: the two characters in the play who bear the heaviest proportional costs of Gayman's attempts to regain and maintain an elevated social and economic status, and to seize the 'right of love' which he believes his due, are (not coincidentally) these two women.[123] Behn's evocation of the disgusting and disreputable environs of Alsatia, and the labours that occur there, is as much about a cohesion with the wealthier environs within the City, and those who occupy those spaces, as about the differences between them. Behn is, to use Bly's phrase, staging and 'selling' Whitefriars/Alsatia as a particular cultural product, while also indicating why its characteristics are not unique: for Behn, it is not so self-contained and distinct an urban space, given that she conscientiously fails to maintain 'key Restoration distinctions between the crude and the refined' by spreading these qualities across locales and class lines.[124] What happens in Whitefriars – what attitudes towards bodies, sex, money and material items are displayed by its inhabitants – make as much cultural sense in wealthier environs and when demonstrated by more privileged individuals.

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[122] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.210. That gentlemen are proverbially bad at paying their bills only deepens the irony of Gayman's accusation: when Loveby's landlady Frances Bibber expresses a hope that he 'will deal by my Husband like a Gentleman, as they say?', Loveby' jokingly gestures to the commonplace financial irresponsibility of the gentleman: 'Then I should beat him most unmercifully, and not pay him neither.' (Dryden, *The Wild Gallant*, 1.1., p.5).

[123] Margaret Ferguson, 'Conning the "Overseers": Women's Illicit Work in Behn's "*The Adventure of the Black Lady*"', *Early Modern Culture: An Electronic Seminar*, Issue 5 (Spring 2006) para. 3. Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.7, p.263.

[124] Bly, 'Playing the Tourist in Early Modern London', p.69. Laura J. Rosenthal, 'Staging London in the Restoration and the Eighteenth-Century', *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of London*, ed. by Lawrence Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p.93.

The logic of the lodging space and the mercantile ethos: bartering for trifles in the City

The overlapping of sexual and financial economies within that Alsatian context takes on its most immediate, and ironic, form for Gayman when he prostitutes himself to his landlady: Gayman is obliged, essentially, to work – to enter into the circulation of money, labour and credit in Alsatia – in order to maintain the superficial impression that he is indeed one of those privileged individuals. Critics have noted the significance of Behn's satisfying 'satiric project' of the hero being put 'through the experience of what a destitute woman might suffer' and the implication, certainly, is that Gayman is humiliated by providing sexual contact for particularly small amounts of money.[125] I want to approach the sexual and financial exchange between Gammer Grime and Gayman less as an act of male prostitution than as an accounting, and a disaggregation, of the landlady's body, and to reassert the point that there *is* a woman in this play who, if not precisely destitute, lives on the margins in labouring poverty and, in her own minimised way, suffers. The nature of the landlady's work as Behn depicts it makes, as we have seen, many of the same derogatory assumptions as other playwrights about the landlady's role as an economic and sexual agent, but Behn does not entirely obfuscate the landlady's labour behind the screen of typification. J. Douglas Canfield observes such an occlusion of labour in Shadwell's *Squire of Alsatia*: 'the luxury' of 'fashionable sentiments of ennui' that are expressed by the idle gentry youths who are the play's central characters, and the material advantages of their land-based inheritances, are guaranteed by but obstruct from view the labour that makes a splendid Town-based existence possible.[126] Behn, if not advocating class conflict by imagining or endorsing a different socioeconomic order, at least marks out the way in which one person's labour can underwrite and make possible another individual's (implicitly undeserved) pretensions to property – whether that property is money, material items or bodies (or indeed, all three). Behn's setting out of the sexualised economy of the lodging space is a window onto this issue: the relationship between sex and money in such a context is, importantly, not simply one of exchange but of substitution. Sex becomes currency itself, substitutable when one transactor has no money with which to purchase his requirements. As the landlady's labour (renting out space, selling, purchasing, pawning, accruing debt and gifting money and materials to her lodger) is given value and context by Behn's detailing of her economic and social transactions, so these items and actions essentially act as an account, setting the processes and fruits of Gammer Grime's work against acts of sexual contact.

The listing of Gammer Grime's financial grievances might be construed as small sympathy for the landlady's penurious conditions of labour, or snobbish distaste at such inconsequential amounts, but it also offers a cold, hard indication of precisely at what value Gayman places her body. Behn, like

[125] Erickson, 'Lady Fulbank and the Poet's Dream', *Broken Boundaries*, ed. Quinsey, p.97. Backscheider makes much the same observation in *Spectacular Politics*, p.86.
[126] J. Douglas Canfield, 'Late Shadwell and Early Bourgeois Comedy', *The Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2005), pp.110-11.

Chamberlaine, assumes a sexual-financial connection between the lodger, the landlady and her husband: Behn, however, rearranges the direction of the exchange and resituates the transactors by evoking marital disloyalty through sexual infidelity, misuse of money and materials, and the withholding of knowledge. Gammer Grime's misappropriation of household goods and of money in the lodging space embraces material concerns, but we are also asked to consider, as McEwan states, 'the extent to which knowledge within that space was to be shared.'[127] Gayman is worried about the power that knowledge would confer upon Master Grime – 'Aye, but your husband does not [know about the nature of Gayman's debts]; speak softly' – and Gammer Grime's betrayal of her husband through secret-keeping, prioritisation of personal desires, and theft, is manifested in an appropriately innocuous domestic item. The pawned apostle spoons, which 'dropped, and dropped, till I had only Judas left for my husband', are an especially crass materialisation of Gammer Grime's wifely disloyalty.[128] Judas Iscariot, the archetypal betrayer of trust, forms the dregs of a household inventory depleted by the demands of sexual infidelity.[129] Gayman's own response to engaging on sexual terms with his landlady carefully suspends certainty about whether he has already begun such a relationship with Gammer Grime or how far it has developed: his disgusted exclamation, 'A sight of her is a vomit, but he's a bold hero that dares venture on her for a kiss, and all beyond that, sure, is hell itself' simultaneously implies both experience based knowledge and merely imagined horror, but such uncertainty only encourages inventive speculation in the audience**.** Behn's energetic focus on the landlady's sexualised but hellishly un-erotic body – its appearance, its smell, its texture – is almost an anatomisation: her imminent arrival is preceded by her stench ('I smell her up'), and attention is drawn to her mouth ('her slabber chops').[130] Gayman must clasp her body to his when he would clearly rather not ('*embracing her*'), and as she exits the scene he reiterates how malodorous she is ('how she stunk!').[131] From a readerly perspective, too, a stage direction provides a rather coarse sexual euphemism: when doling out money to Gayman, she *(Opens a great greasy purse).*[132] We know that Gayman is willing to endure a kiss for 'five pounds', but which particular acts has he performed for the rest? The price for whatever other sexual contact is both shown

[127] McEwan, 'The Lodging Exchange', p.64.
[128] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.211.
[129] The attribute through which the Judas spoon was commonly identified was a bag of money. Since apostle spoons – a set of twelve pewter or silver spoons with a likeness of each of the apostles forming the handle – were a common baptismal gift and were often handed down as heirlooms, they would also have emotional and familial-historical value. Lady Barter in Thomas Scott's *The Mock Marriage* (London, 1696) lists the inherited paraphernalia associated with dreary parental domesticity: 'an old Cradel for the first Child, Heir apparent to all her Apostle spoons and Diaper Napkins.' (Scott, *Mock Marriage*, 4.2, p.50). The rule of coverture means that Gammer Grime is technically stealing from her husband, but the quotidian treatment of household items as solely that of the husband was, as Amy Louise Erickson suggests, unlikely: see 'Possession—and the other one-tenth of the law: assessing women's ownership and economic roles in early modern England', *Women's History Review*, 16:3 (2007), p.379;370.
[130] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.211.
[131] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.212-3.
[132] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.210-3. 'Purse' is a punning term used both for vagina and scrotum, an apt double meaning given the two-way sexual/financial relationship in play. Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature : Three Volume Set Volume I A-F Volume II G-P Volume III Q-Z.*, 1st ed. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000) pp.1116-1119.

onstage – and implied to have taken place in the play-world beyond it – is the sum of those remaining amounts for which she accosts him. (One thinks back, at this point, to *The Rover*, and Willmore's similar disaggregation of Angellica Bianca's body in his cynical pursuit of the logic of commodification. Though Gayman is the one utilising sex as currency, it is the landlady's body that nevertheless remains, like Angellica's, spectacular, partible and financially generative, leading to the production of caudle cups, spoons and shillings aplenty).[133]

Even this, however, is an oversimplification of the transaction between lodger and landlady. The exchange of money for sexual contact is inflected by risk calculation, withholding of information, manipulation of compassionate feeling and an attempt to force a desired response: in short, by seduction. The song with which he succeeds in cementing his allurement plays on the constituent elements of coyness: the first of these is a mutual understanding that the value of any scolding or 'railing' inheres only in its ability to signal its opposite meaning. 'If rightly understood', as Gammer Grime says, her 'eyes' and 'tongue' only convey 'warmth' and an attractive 'fire', rather than a disdainful 'cold.'[134] The kiss is accompanied by a disingenuous command to Gammer Grime to desist from providing him further financial aid – 'but you shall not'– at which Gayman knows she will bristle; he withholds the amount of money he desires in order to disincentivise refusal ('alas, dear landlady, a sum, a sum') and to allow himself a hasty speculation about whether the foulness of her kiss is a sufficient risk for the reward of the desired amount, as well as a moment to calculate whether she will determine the act to have as much financial value as he. An instance of manipulative bartering (seduction) has happened under the landlady's nose, and she acquiesces ('shall not? That's a good one') to his literal and metaphorical handling of her.

If a material cost can conventionally be placed on the stuff of life (the exchange either of sex or money for candles, ale, laundry, clothes and rent), and an immaterial cost can be laid against the material (what deeply felt disgust is Gayman willing to endure in order to pay for the things that he cannot afford?), then a pecuniary value can also be attached to those things that ought not necessarily be commodified: affection, reciprocated desire, civility, honour, virility or respect, all are subject to cash bargains. This commodifying ethos underpins all of Gayman's sexual connections: the mapping onto, and blending into, each other of financial and sexual relationships (within the Alsatian lodging space and then without it) positions Julia and Gammer Grime analogously to Gayman, whose own attachments to him are both

[133] Willmore's study of 'how to purchase' Angellica Bianca concerns his metaphorization of himself as a shareholder and her body as dividable stock: as a 'Chapman' or trader, Willmore cannot afford 'the whole Cargo' on his own, and so proposes to 'put in for a Share' with his friends, 'Merchants of Love.' That which they 'have no use for', they will retail 'upon the *Frydays* Mart at – *Who gives more*?' *The rover, or, The banish't cavaliers* (London, 1677) 2.1, pp.25-6.

[134] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.212.. Thompson construes Gayman's behaviour towards his landlady as an anticipatory exploitation, which 'points to his controversial decision to wager for a night with Julia and then secretly take Sir Fulbank's place in her bed' – a 'masculine manipulation' that 'aligns the lover and the cit on the basis of gendered economic agency.' (Thompson, *Coyness and Crime in Restoration Comedy*, pp.65-6).

fundamentally constituted and undermined by economic concerns. An argument about 'borrowings and stakes' prefaces the successful leveraging of money from Gammer Grime, a disagreement that exemplifies what Rubik identifies as Gayman's advantage over his City counterparts – his comprehension 'that the value of goods is subjective.'[135] A battle about the subjectivity of valuation is initially hard fought: when Gayman makes his first attempt to cajole his landlady into liberality, his charms initially appear of little worth. There is, at first, no consensus about the monetary value that inheres in Gayman's display of 'civility', and she flatly denies any equivalence between his amusingly ill-placed *politesse* and the sum owed: 'more of your money and less of your civility, good Mr Wasteall.'[136] Transformed, via a well-timed application of alcohol into a "seductive" encounter – Gammer Grime is forcibly soused with sack wine in order to bring her tenderness for Gayman to the surface – the impasse is broken and Gammer Grime's full loss of an ultimately unspecified sum (relatively paltry but no doubt one she can ill afford) is exacted from her through the subtle use of that manipulative bargain in which her lodger reads resistance, baits refusal and then discourages it.[137]

Gayman, finds, nevertheless, that a more or less forceful persuasion is of limited use where Julia is concerned. Gammer Grime might be "seduced" – her integrity sufficiently lacking such that she is ripe for a sexual bargain, her vulnerable body available for manhandling, and her antagonism with her husband setting her up for emotional exploitation – but Julia will not be led. Instead, Gayman develops an approach that reckons on a basic continuity between the commodifying logic of the Alsatian lodging space, and the mercantile ethos of the wealthy City knights: that is, that sexual and financial economies remain entangled**.** Importantly, he also departs from a context of a labouring, impoverished need, in favour of a local ethos of usurious profiteering. This ethos – impatient, opportunistic, cynical, profit-led – overtakes Gayman's attempts to blend the language of trade and romantic persuasion ('the tempting hope of means to conquer you,/ Would put me upon any dangerous enterprise') and precludes any efforts at seduction or negotiation.[138] Where Julia is concerned, he opts for purchase: 'moveables sir, goods; commodities.'[139] That continuity between the commodifying logic of the lodging space and the mercantile ethos of profit marks, in the first instance, a significant flattening of difference between the landlady as a type, and everyone else: her finicky prepossession with the details of financial matters – a typifying feature in other comedies – is a collective behaviour in Behn's mercantilist London. The pervasive language of commodity demonstrates that such a characteristic is generalised rather than specific. Sir Cautious Fulbank and Sir Feeble Fainwould explicitly conceptualise their respective spouses as property, the latter anticipating taking 'livery and seisin' of Leticia's body, and the former

[135] Rubik, 'Love's Merchandise', p.228.
[136] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.211.
[137] Gayman and Rag's forcible opening of Gammer Grime's body in this instance also foreshadows his later rape of Julia. The stage directions indicate the '*[Landlady] refusing to drink, [Gayman] holds open her jaws; Rag throws a glass of wine into her mouth'*. Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.212.
[138] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.242.
[139] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.250.

even speaking of a particular part of Gayman's anatomy as a 'fine knick-knack'; Sir Cautious' witless nephew Mr Bearjest takes his cue from his uncle, participating dumbly in the 'bargain' struck on his behalf for a 'wench' (i.e., Diana), 'three thousand pounds present' and an entail on Sir Feeble's death; Gayman, seeking to defend his conduct in the final gamble for Julia's body through deflection of blame onto her husband – 'twas he exposed this treasure; Like silly Indian's bartered thee for trifles' – only draws attention to his own hypocrisy.[140] The connection between these two arenas of exchange is also determined, appropriately enough for a play so concerned with financial networks, by flow, by the movement of a particular body, and the money, goods and ethos that travels with him. The logic of the lodging house – that anything and everything has cash value, that sex and money are exchangeable and substitutable – is first exemplified in Gammer Grime's attic, and is subsequently transported with and by Gayman (embodied in his person, his clothes saved from the pawnbroker, and the shillings in his pocket given him by her on his departure) as he migrates through the City and into different, wealthier spaces.[141]

This continuity makes itself known in other, important ways: the descriptive production of space and its relationship to sex and money, for instance, is carried through from one locale to another. The specification of the bed in which Gayman lies in his lodgings as 'about the largeness…of a usurer's trunk' looks forward precisely to the mode of entry (agreed upon by Gayman and Sir Cautious) by which the former will be granted concealed access to Julia's bedchamber: when the trunk arrives in Julia's chamber, Sir Cautious is obliged to pretend it is 'prohibited goods' from his friend 'Sir Nicholas Smuggle', and the trunk in turn resonates doubly as both a symbol of stealthy mercantile profiteering and of the transience and instability of the lodger's life.[142] There is also a proximity between middling vulgarity and the 'Billingsgate' crudeness of the poor: Sir Feeble's tawdry obsession with expensive jewellery only draws attention to his crass performance of prosperity, much as the relationship of the landlady to materiality – characterised by the cheapness and age of her second-hand furniture – substantiates her sordid existence.[143] Sir Cautious himself takes up the characterisation of the lodging space as an inescapably sexual location, contextualising the exchange of sex for money within a

[140] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 3.1, p.224; 5.4, p.261; 1.3, p.207; 5.7. p.264.
[141] The text lacks sufficient detail to indicate precisely where in the City either Sir Cautious or Sir Feeble's households are located; it is implied only that they are not in Alsatia.
[142] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.4, p.260. Lodgers 'habitually kept their possessions in a moveable box or trunk.' McEwan and Sharpe, *Accommodating Poverty*, p.7.
[143] Bredwell describes Gammer Grime's loud and impolite manner of speaking as 'Billingsgate' (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 1.2, p.202). Sir Feeble makes a 'nauseous' display of decking out Leticia in 'fine playthings' rather than the 'counterfeit gear' of 'Saint Martin's trumpery.' (1.3, p.205). Gammer Grime's 'broken sixpenny glass', old joined stool, and ancient bed once furnished with 'dornex curtains' in 'the days of yore', points to a market of recycled, second-hand items (1.2, p.203). Dornex, or 'Dorneck' was 'an inferior kind of damask wrought of silk, wool, linen thread and gold, in Flanders.' It was used for canopies in religious ceremonies and ecclesiastical vestments. See, *The Renaissance Tailor* <http://www.renaissancetailor.com/research_vocabulary.htm#d> ; Daniel Rock, *Textile Fabrics* (Piccadilly: Chapman and Hall 1876) < https://www.gutenberg.org/files/60015/60015-h/60015-h.htm > [accessed 18/11/2021]

wealthier merchant household: simultaneously horrified and delighted at the thought of renting out his wife to avoid the loss of three hundred pounds, Sir Cautious muses,

> could all
>
> Who of this city-privilege are free,
>
> Hope to be paid for cuckoldom like me,
>
> Th'unthriving merchant, whom grey adorns,
>
> Before all ventures would insure his horns;
>
> For thus while he but lets spare rooms to hire,
>
> His wife's cracked credit keeps his own entire.[144]

What is striking here, and this is precisely Behn's point, is the ordinariness of the vulnerability and exploitative treatment of women across both social environments.

Importantly, however, a distinction needs to be made between the mercantile ethos that Behn finds so execrable, and that of the working poor, of the landlady's necessary exchanges of survival in an economy of small sums and intimate, street-level credit networks. As Martha Howell indicates, merchants in the mediaeval and early modern periods endeavoured to fend off associations with usury, duplicity and greed, by representing themselves as pious, civic-minded, perspicacious, effective patriarchs and as skilled managers of a difficult and dangerous activity.[145] In a more literary vein, Ann Christensen draws a relationship between the tragedy of household disorder and the absence of sea-faring and adventuring merchant husbands in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century domestic drama: the separation of business and domesticity in these plays is staged and imagined in actions of mobility, as husbands are 'kept continually in motion' at quays, along roads, at fairs, at the Exchange and offstage on ships at sea or in foreign ports.[146] Behn's City knights, by comical contrast, are altogether too geriatric and too indolent for such pursuits (it is, of course, her young heroes who are characteristically the wanderers), and the presence of the old Cits at home is no bar to domestic disorder. Her depiction of an old banker who buys up the mortgages of young and reckless members of the gentry and then forecloses on them isolates her banker-usurer from any attempts at masculine self-fashioning reliant on integrity or a taste for heroic risk. A tremulous Sir Cautious suffers from paranoid insomnia

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[144] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.252.
[145] Martha Howell, 'Merchant Masculinity in Early Modern Northern Europe', *Cultural and Social History*, 18:3 (2021), 275-296. Behn also draws on conventional anti-Semitic associations with usury: Gayman calls Sir Cautious 'worse than a brokering Jew: not all the twelve tribes harbours such a damned extortioner.' (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.243). Where Sir Feeble is represented engaging in traffic with continental affairs, it is only to forge the letter from the Hague that falsely informs Leticia of Belmour's fate at the noose (3.1, p.224).
[146] Ann C Christensen, *Separation Scenes: Domestic Drama in Early Modern England* (Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 2017) p.10.

at the thought of the theft of the 'five hundred guineas' stolen from him by Julia, and sits up at night contemplating further losses.[147] Both of her City knights also, of course, are as lacking in virility as they are honesty.[148] Where the mercantile ethos simultaneously dovetails with and differs from the commodifying logic of the lodging house is in the drive to gain, and the nature of profit. Such a logic in a poorer milieu approaches every daily interaction in a potentially pecuniary light, is necessarily inventive about what might be substituted for currency, and must wring every drop of cash out of every material item (bodies included). For Gammer Grime, this is, as Simms recognises, about adopting 'comic strategies in order to survive tedious poverty.'[149] 'The last degree of poverty', as Bredwell describes it, *appears* more spectacularly demeaning (because rendered visibly disgusting by Behn) than the miserly activities of greedy merchants. While both forms of economic existence imply a lack of integrity, only one physically permits hoarding and profiteering: Muldrew's observation that there was a serious lack of specie in circulation in the later seventeenth century, as well as his description of the mercantile practice of hoarding the highest value and most remarkable coins for international use, points precisely to the insistent materiality of money in *The Lucky Chance*.[150] Sir Cautious, in encouraging everyone to partake in some gambling, remarks, for instance, that he will 'go near to know my own gold, by some remarkable pieces amongst it.'[151] The contrast between the largely credit based economy of the landlady and the abundant coinage in which Sir Cautious deals substantially differentiates the old banker's economic character (and, to some extent, his moral character) from that of the landlady. Behn's representation of Gammer Grime's work as necessary and largely cashless labour categorises it as, essentially, needful.

This crucial difference allows us to map out the way in which Gayman's approach to transactional relationships becomes (once he has left Alsatia behind) more rigidly concerned with gain and less inclusive of female sexual agency: unable to conciliate or compose differences with Julia and unwilling to accept the concept of pricelessness, Gayman attempts what is in effect direct purchase and marks out the concurrence of his aims with the mercantile drive to profit. In his infamous dealings with Sir Cautious over Julia, he finally dispenses with the manipulation of her consent or with the dallying about required in the reading of and response to apparently insincere resistance. He opts, instead, for a venture: having demonstrated in the Alsatian attic his understanding that the financial value of items or actions can be made subject to negotiation and manipulation**,** he then declines to accept that fluidity of value is itself a subjective notion. Julia's body is, from her perspective, an inalienable thing, an entity not

[147] He confesses to his servant that 'this last night's misfortune of mine, Dick, has kept me waking, and methought I heard a kind of a silent noise. I am still afraid of thieves.' (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 3.5, p.232).
[148] Sir Cautious implies that he may not have consummated his union with Julia on their wedding night, having fallen asleep almost instantly (2.2, p.218); the possibility of Sir Feeble's potency is never put to the test given Belmour's success at persistently diverting it, but the spectacle of his half-naked aging body at 3.2 diffuses any masculine threat he might pose (p.226).
[149] Simms, 'A Dark Cynical Conceit', p.89.
[150] See Muldrew, 'Hard Food for Midas', pp.96-9.
[151] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.246.

partible and to be split between two men nor subject to haggling. She refuses to have her 'virtue' – the public circulation of which is literalised in the 'filthy verses' she suggests Gayman would disseminate about their hypothetical sexual activity – negotiated down to such a 'low ebb' that she might then 'submit' it, almost valueless, to Gayman. She insists, in the language of property ownership, on a 'lease' of love (an ongoing promise of devotion), not a physical demonstration of possession (sex). Gayman, in the same idiom, wants complete freehold, not leasehold or the option to rent.[152] (As Willmore would not stoop to leasing love from a landlady, so too does Gayman appear to have had enough of such business). The transaction for Julia's body happens literally under her nose but passes, metaphorically speaking, over her head: the 'small piece of ware' is valued at and gambled for three hundred pounds while that piece of ware stands onstage.[153] As with his one-sided bartering over the cost of a kiss with Gammer Grime, the amount of money at stake is concealed from the woman in question until the bargain is in play or until after it has been completed and, made partible and countable like Gammer Grime, Julia is distilled down to 'some part', a 'nothing' that is a pun on her genitalia.[154]

While the other characters wonder at Gayman's infernal luck, this is not, from his perspective, actually a gamble: there is no way for him to lose. As it falls out, the dice are not on Sir Cautious' side, and he must resign himself to procuring Julia, on pain of losing three hundred pounds for 'non-performance'; had Gayman lost, he would have had to part with the 'Three hundred pound!' that he has just cumulatively won from Sir Cautious, Sir Feeble, Julia, Leticia and Captain Noisy in some offstage gambling.[155] Even had he not so comprehensively cleaned out his fellow players at dice, he retains precisely the amount required to offset that loss: Rubik notes that of the eight hundred pounds which Gayman has mortgaged to Sir Cautious, only '£200 are due immediately, otherwise he will lose his estate.'[156] Even if he subtracts this pressing debt from the five hundred pounds Julia has already gifted him, he would be sufficiently provided to pay back the three hundred pounds to Sir Cautious 'in his own coin.'[157] Julia is subsequently raped by Gayman in the bed-trick engineered by her husband and

[152] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.2, p.220.
[153] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, pp.251-2
[154] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.250.
[155] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.249. This scene of gambling might also be read in the light of the cultural encoding of Whitefriars as a locale for swindlers: Bearjest and Noisy confirm that they have gambled with Gayman in the 'George in Whitefriars' (where Gayman has gone disguised as Wasteall) and that he 'cullies in prentices and cashiers to play.' (4.1, p.244). Gayman may well habitually play with loaded dice.
[156] Rubik, 'Love's Merchandise', p.232. Anita Pacheco also observes that Gayman 'has already been given the money he needs' to discharge pressing debts, such that his 'freely choosing to meet with his benefactress' in the masque scene is very difficult to justify. See 'Consent and Female Honour in *The Lucky Chance'* in *Aphra Behn: Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity* eds. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Bernard Dhuicq and Guyonne Leduc (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000) n.21, p.153. There is no evidence in the play that Gayman uses the gifted money to satisfy those immediate debts. The urgency is the fault of Sir Cautious, who scoffs at "Wasteall" (Gayman), 'the mortgage of two hundred pound a year is this day out, and I'll not bate him an hour, sir.' (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.243).
[157] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 1.2, p.203.

her lover as a means of settling a gambling debt that was, in fact, never really a 'venture' at all.[158] No one but Julia, as Behn bitterly concludes, construes her bodily autonomy as priceless.

By cleaving to the notion that all things are purchasable, but dispensing with barter through a direct "seduction", Gayman's exaction of sex from Julia is not just brought into an analogous relation to his exaction of money from his landlady (by which analogy the continued substitutability of these two items in his mind remains visible), and nor are the two women just 'secret sharers' of Gayman.[159] They are also directly connected by the landlady's work, a series of labours which, in their limited way, subsidizes Gayman's rehearsal of his jaded and yet callow expressions of romantic devotion to Julia. Gammer Grime's work finances the retrieval of Gayman's clothes and gentlemanly paraphernalia, which allows him to continue his 'business' of performing the tame rake (and the swindler) in a public forum. Expressions of romantic feeling are fully reinforced by financial concerns: the landlady's own household economy underwrites the claims that Gayman makes to a certain status, that suspicious figure identified by Lady Julia – the rakish gentleman up to his eyeballs in debt, with his carapace of fine clothes and sword, and a penchant for bragging about sexual conquests that he is incapable of understanding from the perspective of the woman he has seduced.[160] The labour of sustaining Gammer Grime's own reputation, moreover, is put at the disposal of maintaining Gayman's: to ensure at least the appearance of being a gentleman of independent wealth, Gammer Grime's credit-worthiness is imperilled. She is also never repaid. Both women, in the end, also finance their own exploitation. Gammer Grime provides Gayman with the means to keep him in her attic, rather than leave him to his destitution: Julia, gallingly, part finances her own rape, providing the money that enables the risk of his stake (three hundred pounds) to be offset, as well as a portion of the money that he wins in the collective gamble with the whole group. The continuity of the landlady's economic activity with the production and circulation of City wealth implicates her in far wider circles of commerce than the bounds of the debtor's sanctuary, and connects her household economy to far richer industries than lodging. This, perhaps, registers Behn's ambivalence about the moral failure of poverty. Her highly arresting representation of the landlady's labouring poverty is not just its own engagement with the pejorative character of penury (its cultural association with servility, dependence, and dissolution) but also a

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[158] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.249. Certain critics have construed this act as rape, while others have been more tentative on the matter, or avoided a verdict altogether. Canfield (*Tricksters and Estates*) proffers that Gayman 'virtually raped her' (p.228). Todd (*Secret Life*) elects not to significantly differentiate the two instances of sexual contact, with her husband and then her lover, by stating Julia 'slept with two men against her will.' (p.370). Anita Pacheco is more exacting than Todd but more reticent than Canfield, describing the bed trick as an 'act of fraudulent sexual intercourse': 'Reading Toryism in Aphra Behn's Cit-Cuckolding Comedies', *The Review of English Studies*, Vol.55(222) (2004), p.706. Erickson ('Lady Fulbank and the Poet's Dream', *Broken Boundaries*, ed. Quinsey) describes it as 'her victimisation in a crude scenario', p.105.

[159] Erickson, 'Lady Fulbank and the Poet's Dream', *Broken Boundaries*, ed. Quinsey, p.99.

[160] Julia repeatedly critiques Gayman's attempts to 'show yourself a coxcomb': his performance of adoration through the paradigm of the adoring, prostrate courtier draws only a 'faith, Charles, you lie.' (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.240; 1.2, p.201). She needles him about the fond seducer's habitual lack of discretion in boasting of conquests (2.2, p.220), and banters him about his facility with 'intrigues' but his inability to quickly come up with excuses (4.1, p.242).

materialisation of lack, which mirrors and registers the particular moral deficiency at the heart of the outwardly respectable nouveau-riche networks of influence and cash elsewhere in the City. The landlady's vulgar depravity is, at least, quite clear to see, marked upon her body in dirt and grime. As the City knights and Gayman are well aware, one can readily purchase the expensive material items required to produce a convincing external creditworthiness.

The possibility of devils: (mis)reading the landlady

The hand-in-glove protrusion of one locale, and ethos, into another produces a collapse of identity, both for the women who take the place of commodities and for the men who deal in them. At the same time, the occupational and social identity of the landlady continues to be centralised: Gayman's cynical figuration of women who display sexual and financial agency as female devils comes to make Gammer Grime and Julia indistinguishable, and it is the classed embodiment of a low, pecuniary, grotesque but authoritative female sexuality that serves, in Gayman's eyes, for women besides Gammer Grime. This figuration of the landlady by Gayman relies on Behn's engagement with a fluid combination of later seventeenth-century ideas about witchcraft and a particularly English emphasis on the devil, as well as conventional misogynist tropes from popular print that concern the ugliness and sexualisation of older women who are associated with diabolic traffic : the issue of work is folded into these layers of meaning by the characterising of Gammer Grime's sexual-financial activities as devilish, and by bodying her work-inflected physical form as hellishly unattractive.[161] The landlady's ugliness and dirtiness – conditions of her working existence – are, indeed, 'shorthand for marginality, disempowerment, helplessness, or lack', but it is Gayman's insistence on applying that shorthand to Julia that finally ensures her powerlessness.[162] In the same way that the two women begin to lose their individuating shapes, so the rakish lover also partakes of the role of his rival Sir Cautious, the usurer who gets something for nothing. Gayman's demarcation and demonisation of desiring women as devilish remains consistent with this profiteering ethos: put off and embarrassed by unpleasant physical experiences and irritated that his desires are not being met, he imaginatively produces female devils, of which Gammer Grime – the epitome of the comic landlady – is the prototype.

As a type, Behn's landlady is, like that of Chamberlaine, a misogynistically overdetermined character: both Mistress Welt and Gammer Grime are described in derogatory terms that associate them with witchcraft and devilry. As Rowland expresses his distaste at Mistress Welt's garrulity ('sure I doe not

[161] For the importance of physical ugliness and disability in the representation of female witches, see Scott Eaton, 'Witchcraft and Deformity in Early Modern England', *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol.35 (6) (2020), p.815-828. For the centrality of the devil to English witchcraft belief, and which unites representations of male and female witches, see Charlotte-Rose Millar, 'Diabolical men: reintegrating male witches into English witchcraft', *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol.36 (5) (2021), p.693-713.
[162] Susannah B. Mintz, 'Freak Space: Aphra Behn's Strange Bodies', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall 2006), p.2.

thinke but this Shoomaker's a witch, he wud never a contracted himselfe to the devill else'), so Rag, Gayman's cheeky servant, encourages his master to make use of 'the black art' in dealing with Gammer Grime.[163] Behn resolutely continues to develop this imagery: the stylisation of both Gammer Grime and her working world is insistently infernal. The landlady is, as already established by Bredwell, forged in a realm of fire; her name suggests, more obviously still, that her skin and clothes are darkened with grime or soot; her body is 'hell itself'; there is 'fire' in her angry, slavering mouth; the landlady herself puns unintentionally when she threatens that 'Gregory Grime's house shall be too hot to hold you'; she is described as 'beastly', 'old Nasty', 'fulsome' and as malodorous, and Gayman equates her with that 'female devil' whom he supposes to have taken a fancy to him and to whom he has agreed to prostitute himself for a bag of gold.[164] While both playwrights imagine male characters as witches who either marry or engage in sexual contact with the devil in female form, it is Behn's irresponsible gentleman who, *as a lodger*, is compelled by destitution to form a sexual/financial connection with his diabolical landlady. 'Primed for temptation by the miseries of poverty or a desire for revenge', Gayman, like other witches, engages in traffic with his the devilish Gammer Grime (and indeed his other clients) in order to alleviate his pressing material needs: this stylisation of the landlady's disreputable working poverty pejoratively delimits her labours in a manner that, firstly, associates the filthy scene of penurious work with the diabolical imagery that appears to cling both to Gammer Grime and to Gayman, and, secondly, makes particularly visible his masculine inadequacies.[165]

These deficiencies are *not*, ultimately or entirely, his lack of money or creditworthiness. Behn is ambivalent about the extent of Gayman's culpability, as much preyed upon (by Sir Cautious) as predator, but the discourse of devilry does lend credence to Gayman's social and economic subordination by permitting him to contemplate and justify his mercenary behaviour, and to externalise blame for engaging in humiliating sexual transactions. His obsession with what he considers an unorthodox female body – one so dreadful that it causes feelings of nausea – blinds him to other, conventionally desirable female forms. The landlady both presages and confirms Gayman's dedication to construing sexual contact in financial terms, but also dislodges his certainty in his own philosophy and bodily marks out its failure. He doubles down on pursuing Julia monetarily, but comes to find that the idea of purchasing delight is faulty: approaching all woman as purchasable renders them all

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[163] Chamberlaine, *Swaggering Damsell*, I1[r]. Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.210.
[164] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1., pp.210-215.
[165] Julia M. Garrett, 'Witchcraft and Sexual Knowledge in Early Modern England ', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Volume 13, Number 1 (Winter 2013), p.51. Witchcraft, which assumed some traffic or contract with the devil, was particularly associated with poverty: Susan Dwyer Amussen observes that 'perhaps the most familiar aspect of witchcraft is its relation to poverty and the failure of charity.' The devil's promise of wealth was considered a plausible motivation, particularly for socially and economically marginalised women. Amussen, 'Punishment, Discipline, and Power: The Social Meanings of Violence in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Jan 1995), p.30. Erika Gasser also observes that dependence and financial difficulty increased the reach of accusations of traffic with the devil, in cases of male witchcraft as much as in those aimed at women. See chapters 2 and 4 in *Vexed with Devils: Manhood and Witchcraft in Old and New England* (New York, NY.: New York University Press, 2017).

substitutable, a desirable state of affairs for no one. Gayman's real shortcoming, then, is his belief that financial liberality – setting down and spending cash – is the only way to turn his desire for Julia to account. He chooses to pursue a profiteering ethos to the bitter end, his means of conceptualising what he believes is his due in his romantic relationship with Julia enforcing a relational connection to infernal women who (he thinks) drive satanically steep bargains. Put upon, disallowed and forced to wait, he palliates his own lack of agency by presuming to force unpropitious deals with the female devils with whom he transacts.

Gayman is, of course, hypocritical about financial and sexual exchange: he is, in the first instance, displeased at Julia's apparently having married for economic interest, but he is, in the end, willing to set money down to gain access to her body. He is, moreover, explicitly sceptical about the supernatural, and about witchcraft and devilry. His initial response to Bredwell's mysterious appearance with five hundred pounds and an anonymous proposition (from Julia) is to seek for supernatural explanation, but he swiftly disavows folkloric superstition in favour of 'common sense.' As he states, 'Spirits, ghosts, hobgoblins, furies, fiends and devils' are merely a means for 'old wives' to 'fright fools and children with', and 'once arrived to common sense', such things are laughed at. What passes for 'common sense' is a belief in 'things possible and natural', which for Gayman points to a mundane explanation: 'Some female devil, old, and damned to ugliness', and who is desperately desirous of his body, must be responsible for the proposition.[166] Herself conversant in the language of natural philosophy, Behn as rationalist nevertheless asks us to be critical of what Gayman claims to see and understand as 'possible and natural': his specious reasoning about the origin of his solicitation – which encodes as common and rational knowledge a classist and misogynistic understanding of sexual and financial authority – also reveals and characterises the selfish moral vacuity at the heart of Gayman's view of women.[167] He pejoratively delimits women as diabolical for displaying the very sexual agency and financial authority of which he has already taken (and goes on to take) advantage – and which set of privileges, as a matter of course, men have always claimed. Gayman's metaphorization of sexualised women as devils, therefore, is a wilful, and rather self-righteous, misconstruction of female sexuality and transactional relationships.[168] His sensuous experience with Gammer Grime therefore provides the discursive field with which he subsequently approaches sexual connections as ripe for gain and the women who participate in such exchanges as unnaturally and unfairly powerful female devils: Gayman's resentment about his own lack of leverage – both in terms of his inability to persuade Julia, and of the uncomfortable lengths to which he is obliged to go with Gammer Grime – rather suggests that his insistence on

[166] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.215.
[167] On Behn as a 'knower-of-science', and a critic of the prioritisation of sensory apparatus over the rational process of reasoning, see Vivian Appler, '"Shuffled together under the name of a farce": Finding Nature in Aphra Behn's *The Emperor of the Moon*', *Theatre History Studies*, Vol.37 (1) (2018), p.27-51.
[168] Gayman's rational approach to the supernatural is further underlined by his tricking of Noisy and Bearjest into believing they are to have an audience with some 'fiends' sent by the 'prince of hell': Gayman observes 'any gibberish' will do to convince them (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.3, pp.256-8).

monstrous female sexuality performs both deflective and defensive actions. Scrutinising the female body draws attention away from the fact that his own sexual desires are made irrelevant, and his masculinity is (in more ways than one) suffering a diminution. This diminution is externalised, displaced, feminised and made grotesque – indeed, it is devilish. As a 'self-parodying' vision of 'masculine desirability', moreover, Gayman's own physical appeal is self-reflexive, derived, ultimately, from his own gaze, refracted through what he imagines is the viewpoint of ugly old women wishing to purchase sexual contact.[169] When justifying his own prostitution, he reasons that that 'female devil' who used Bredwell as an intermediary has 'seen this face, this shape, this youth, /And thinks it worth her hire.'[170]

Given her bodily constitution by work (both her own and that of her husband), Gammer Grime's infernal ugliness seems to be rendered inescapably self-evident by Behn. Critically, however, it is encountered and refracted through Gayman, whose apprehensions about the power and lowness of bargaining women evinces a belief in demoniacal female sexuality that he not only never throws off but that he deploys in order that he might claw back his own sexual and economic agency. His approach to women who have the audacity to assume a role in financial-sexual exchange, and his means of ensuring that he does not fail to profit – whether, ultimately, that exchange be with the wife of a City knight or that of a skilled labourer – is to insist on seeing greedy female devils everywhere. By this, he may justify the rejection of propositions whose deferred benefit will be free, disinterested, reciprocal love, and instead readily accepts, and indeed, engineers, deals whose basis is only the conscious dissimulation or facsimile of free love in order to gain something merely material. In this regard, Julia and Gammer Grime are fellow targets, rescuers and creditors, but also interchangeable as women: howsoever Behn has laboured to emphasise a substantive difference between the two (in terms of the constitution and presentation of their bodies) Gayman's approach to sexual transaction composes and resettles those differences in the search for the one-sided pleasure of profit, and leads him, in the end, to encode the body of the leisured lady as that of the working woman.

Gayman, we recall, had played Gammer Grime at the game of coy resistance, manipulating her into a losing bargain by reading her insincere refusal and in turn denying it: by this "seduction", he made his material gains. In seeking to capitalise on his self-regarding desirability – that is, hoping to dash off to that female devil who he believes to be his new client – Gayman then dismisses the opportunity for a

[169] When faced with a disguised Pert – who is dressed '*as an old woman, with a staff*' – Gayman continues to show himself myopic and obsessed with diabolic female sexuality. Gayman makes the commonplace association between age, gender, ugliness and sexualisation by implying that Pert must be a witch: 'If this be she, I must rival the devil, that's certain.' (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 3.2, p.228).

[170] Robert Markley, 'Aphra Behn's *The City Heiress*: Feminism and the Dynamics of Popular Success on the Late Seventeenth-Century Stage', *Comparative Drama*, Volume 41, Number 2 (Summer 2007), p.142. Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.1, p.215. Julia herself is not immune to the pull of the self-reflexive gaze, however: her complicity with her own objectification in the wake of Gayman's misrecognition of her body (''Slife, after all, to seem deformed, old, ugly-') jars against her anger that she has been objectified as ware by Gayman and her husband (4.1, p.242).

sincere (albeit brief) expression of sexual desire from Julia as merely unprofitable coyness. In doing so, he rejects the woman he desires for one that (he believes) he does not. Unable to tolerate the wait for Julia's body and hand in marriage, Gayman is unwilling to accept a goodwill gesture in the meantime. 'Can you deny me?', Julia asks as Gayman makes to leave for the masque-assignation. 'Will you not give me one lone hour i'th'garden?' He dismisses Julia's apparent candour as an act of simultaneous tantalisation and refusal, as, on this occasion, unprofitable: 'Where we shall only tantalise each other with dull kissing, and part with the same appetite we met. No, madam; besides, I have business.' As she leaves, he reassures himself that he was correct to reject such a skimpy reward: 'if I stay the most I shall gain/ Is but a reconciling look, or kiss.'[171] Making a precipitate exit for his assignation with the demonically depraved old lady of his imagination, he fools himself that she cannot be worse than a woman who asks forbearance of him: 'No, my kind goblin, I'll keep my word with thee, as the least evil;/ A tantalising woman's worse than devil.'[172]

That 'kind goblin' is Julia: identities and bodies collapse into one another as Gayman's inclusive categorisation of one erotically incredible body with another – he 'must moil on in the damned dirty road', must continue ploughing his way through the same beastly female body in one instance as the next – and his condemnation of female economic and sexual agency as avaricious, leads him to confuse and to read as a single form both Julia and Gammer Grime's bodies.[173] (More ironically still, he declines what he sees as Julia's seductive games for the sake of that five hundred pounds entered into circulation by Julia as a concealed expression of her desire for him, and which he intends to use to 'purchase new and fresh delight', i.e., Julia herself.)[174] In the aftermath of his strange experience 'in the devil's clutches', Julia quizzes Gayman about the origins of her own jewelled ring (gifted to him in the masque scene) with which he has just presented her: he is obliged to explain the peculiar ceremony with the 'silent devil', and assures her that the body he was forced to embrace was 'so rivelled, lean, and rough; a canvas bag of wooden ladles were a better bedfellow.'[175] In the final moments of the play, enraged and hurt by the betrayal of both her husband and her lover, Julia flings Gayman's words back at him, seeming to indefinitely defer her consent to any further dealings with him: she reminds him that his assessment of her body was that 'a canvas bag of wooden ladles were a better bedfellow.'[176] Here, the landlady arises in grotesque form, present when absent – she is the only woman in the play who could answer that description, the one for whom Gayman evidently retains a disgusted fascination, and the reminder of his failure to distinguish one woman from another.

[171] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.2, pp.221-2.
[172] 2.2, p.222.
[173] 2.1, p.215.
[174] 2.1, p.215.
[175] 3.2, p.228; 4.1, p.242.
[176] 5.7, p.268.

The thematization of the landlady's dirty, labouring body as hellish and as physically disgusting allows us, then, to track Gayman's figuration of female economic and sexual agency, and its verification by the mercantile ethos of which he has quickly become an enthusiastic member. As the comparison between Gammer Grime and Julia is clear, so too is that between Gayman and Sir Cautious. The former's replacement of the latter in the bed-trick renders the two men (temporarily) substitutable in the dark, but it also emphasises their connection as merchant-explorers: while the trick proceeds, Sir Cautious dithers in the antechamber, feeling 'as restless as a merchant in stormy weather, that has ventured all his wealth in one bottom.'[177] After the 'cheat' is betrayed, Gayman tries to displace blame: Sir Cautious, 'like silly Indians, bartered thee for trifles.' Gayman clings to lover's rhetoric – 'And with my impatient love, /A thousand mad and wild desires are burning!' – but betrays himself with the language of adventurous trade: 'I have discovered now new worlds of charms.'[178] The silly Indian had to have bartered with someone, and the profit has all been Gayman's. And this reminds us, crucially, of that which has been brought to our attention by Behn's emphasis on the landlady's work and on her financial activity: Gammer Grime never gets something for nothing, is never able to profiteer, and never receives anything in return but through the exchange of her very limited material and credit-based wealth.

Profit and loss in this play, however, does not necessarily map onto the prominence, influence or longevity of character, either thematically or structurally: in the vision of mercantile London offered up in *The Lucky Chance*, the physically abhorrent landlady might be understood as the lowest form of life that the City has to offer, and her unappealing presence on the stage is (for Gayman at least) mercifully short-lived. Importantly, though, her absent presence does continue to make itself known. Structurally, she performs the role of the canary in the coal mine, forewarning of Gayman's inculcation of a commodifying logic with the manipulative use of insincere romantic rhetoric, and retrospectively offers an early site at which the gentility and integrity of the hero (a man putatively far superior to her in rank and morality) can be questioned. Gayman never engages sexually with a partner on an equal footing – of full knowledge, mutual consent, and reciprocated desire – and his method of handling the landlady represents only a starting point in a play-long escalation of his mistreatment of his sexual partners. Behn encourages us to consider, then, how this behaviour towards Gammer Grime and Lady Julia is shaped by Gayman's apprehension of an overlap between assumed sexual availability, financial autonomy, lowness of class, and occupational identity: the vulgar, dirty, diabolical working body of the landlady is deployed (somewhat complicitly, perhaps, by the playwright) as a type to model financial and sexual self-interest, but, critically, it also marks out the useful mutability of such a set of qualities from a patriarchal perspective. By the end of the play, Gayman's collusion in the rape of Julia assures that he presents the very worst of qualities culled from the familiar figures of the presumptuous libertine and

[177] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.7, p.263.
[178] 5.7, p.264.

the acquisitive middling Cit: Gayman's misogynistic and classist approach to the landlady's occupational identity, and the familiar, comical, hellish collection of qualities associated with it, finally renders transparent his approach to all women.

While the sexual character of women's classed presence in Behn's work has been noted (that is, that sexual promiscuity by women is always implicitly common or low), the relationship between Gammer Grime and Julia points towards a permeability of class characteristics that does not ineluctably segregate a "low" woman from a woman of elevated social status, and confine her to a position of inherent moral inferiority.[179] The play already contains a sub-plot of class-passing by dressing *up* (in the action of Pert Julia's maid, who claims her reward in Bearjest), but it also indicates that a gentlewoman's approach to financial and sexual relationships can be read – *cynically, by the hero* – as of a pejorative, common character and treated accordingly. Behn's women characteristically have hard choices to make and these choices are not always beyond reproach, but Gayman's cynicism about the integrity of a woman's autonomy – and most particularly the belief that working women who combine financial and sexual agency must necessarily be ready for exploitation – exposes both the depth of his hypocrisy and the danger that he represents to women and, indeed, to a conservative social outlook. In *The Lucky Chance*, Behn seems concerned that the gap between inferiors and superiors has never been narrower: that gap seems at its slimmest when men fail to physically distinguish between one woman and another, but most particularly when men seek to turn that reproachable (because classed) combination of financial and sexual interests back against women, and thereby to unfairly enjoy personal profit at their expense.

Conclusions

In the 'reviv'd' prologue to *The Wild Gallant*, a deprecating albeit light-hearted reassessment is made of Dryden's first attempt at writing comedy. When first staged in February 1663, the play had not been well received, and Dryden is equated with 'some raw squire' (the imputed gallant of the title) who, unsophisticated and rustic, knows neither how to engage in debauchery nor write it:

> By such degrees, while knowledge he did want,
> Our unfletch'd Author, writ a Wild Gallant.
> He thought him monstrous leud (I'll lay my life)
> Because suspected with his Landlords Wife:
> But since his knowledge of the Town began,

[179] On the connection between a woman's sexual experience and her class character, see Valerie Wayne, 'Assuming Gentility: Thomas Middleton, Mary Carleton, and Aphra Behn', *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed, by James Daybell (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004) pp. 243-256.

He thinks him now a very civil man[180]

On the scale of urban pleasures, suspicious sexual contact with a landlady figures as a low-stakes, amateurish performance of metropolitan vice: the disreputable landlady – representing merely entry-level debauchery whose greater potential Dryden seems to have realised much later in *The Kind Keeper* – is an easy character type to reach for, and apparently an easy one for even the fledgling comedian to write. This ease proceeds from cultural familiarity, and from a self-fulfilling certainty about the landlady's social and literary presence. Comedies that derive their humour from the overturning or emptying out of recognisable fantasies about domestic order – the fantasy, for instance, that husbands and wives who share in contributing to the domestic economy subscribe to normative limitations of their roles and stick to them – might be thought to register something of reality about the way in which such households really rubbed along on a quotidian basis. Certainly, the representation of shared work space points away from an idealistic model of separate spheres, but the way in which the landlady's own labours become negatively bound up in those of her husband (through the stain of trade, through the detrimental entanglement of financial and sexual economies) suggests a conservatism potentially at odds with the reality of gendered work practices and patterns. Yet, that "reality", represented in some small measure in the comedies and available to us within the limitations, we recall, of those institutions that police and record disorder, must also reflect a certain partiality. The depiction of disorderly lodging spaces and practices in the drama both echoes and sustains those hostile institutional visions of such work and the places in which it happens.

Behn, Dryden and Chamberlaine all participate in delimiting the cultural authority of the landlady by partaking in the reiterating of such an unfavourable image of her labours: from the perspective of the desire to police disorder, Dryden, through his use of farce, offers a nightmare vision of raucous spatial politics in which all forms of regulation about the uses and definitions of private and non-private spaces, and access to personal property, are disturbed or denied. Chamberlaine offers a less crude, but nonetheless discomforting, representation of the impact of a wife's economic independence on the constitution of marital hierarchy, and points up the fundamental difficulty of defining (and confining) the general domestic authority available to the married landlady. The drama, like the institutional evidence from which our understanding of lodging practices largely derives, provides its own sort of regulatory power, maintaining a circular dependence between disreputability and the impossibility of an alternative: the landlady's notoriety is a foregone conclusion if she is obliged to enter into conflict with lodgers merely to extract her dues, but her lack of respectability is the reason such shifty gentlemen

[180] Dryden, 'Prologue to the Wild-Gallant Reviv'd', *The Wild Gallant*, sig. A4[r]. As Paul Hammond notes, 'Dryden's naivety in matters of dissipation was apparent': Samuel Pepys commented 'that from beginning to end I could not, nor can at this time, tell certainly which was the wild gallant.' "Dryden, John (1631–1700), poet, playwright, and critic." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004. https://www-oxforddnb-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8108. [accessed 17/11/2021].

are attracted to her as a woman whose marginality is of use and whose authority they need not recognise. Literary and cultural images of lodging practices and spaces are sustained in stasis, as inescapably disorderly**.** Behn, through her critical perspective on the exploitative possibilities made available by the ethos of the lodging space, renders the circularity of that stasis particularly visible, and links this to a broader dissatisfaction about women's straitened access to their own financial and sexual agency. She dramatizes the aggregated homogeneity of the landlady – that reiteration of commonplaces about her character and her labour – by integrating her into a generalised economy of exploitation with Gayman, Julia and Sir Cautious. Behn exposes Gammer Grime to the self-same physical and financial manipulation meted out by the hero to the heroine, but also points to the landlady's own place in a society-wide circuit of commodification. Willing to use sex as currency, she is herself a commodifier, and targeted by Gayman because it is a given that she will have a poor sexual reputation, she is also the commodified. This circularity in turn offers an analogy to the impossible situation faced by other women in the play, Julia and also Leticia: these must commodify themselves by combining sexual and financial economies (pursuing 'wretched' marriages) in order to survive, but in doing so are subjected to accusations (very familiar ones, in respect of the landlady) of being uncaring, avaricious, and unreasonable.[181]

Behn's determined spectacularisation of the landlady's body, moreover, sets her interest in this figure apart from Chamberlaine and Dryden. Gammer Grime becomes visible as a labourer because of Behn's heavy-handed manner of drawing attention to her unappealing physical form and the material conditions of her livelihood: this scrutiny brings to the fore a certain invisible labour performed by the landlady, and the highly visible physical form of the landlady herself structures the play as an embodiment of Gayman's opportunistic mercantile libertinism. The many tasks involved in providing both material and immaterial support to her lodger are put into service maintaining not just his physical manifestation of masculine gentility, but also the discourse with which he supports and argues that claim. In mobilising and imperilling her own credit in order to buoy the social reputation of Gayman, Gammer Grime undergirds the patriarchal model of land-based wealth, of masculine assumption of access to the commodified female body, from which Gayman hopes to benefit. In that way, and only in that way, is Gammer Grime – a low class woman – a valuable patriarchal commodity. The connection that is drawn between the working underclass, the wealthy City milieu and the dwindling gentry by the landlady's body nevertheless makes legible the crude and mercenary attitude of the apparently tame rake, a swindling libertine who has been unwillingly dragged into but quickly adapted to the disintegration of traditional class barriers. Behn's 'regressive skepticism' – her dissatisfied observation of the uncertainties of social transformation but her 'doubt over the possibility of positive change' – is

[181] Belmour's understanding of 'simple love' struggles to accommodate the idea of Leticia's materially necessary 'wretched marriage' to Sir Feeble (Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 2.2, p.216); Gayman lumps both Leticia and Julia in together as financially interested (1.1, p.196-7), and Julia in particular he criticises as 'unreasonable' for her lack of sexual generosity (2.2, p.220).

registered through Gayman's conspicuous last-minute rescue from an order of commercialism, work and profit: the revelation that Sir Thomas Gayman has died, leaving Gayman 'two thousand pounds a year' and that Gayman 'heard the news before' satisfies, on the one hand, the generic requirement that his socioeconomic limbo be resolved.[182] It also suggests that what has been dislodged and brought to the surface by the landlady's work cannot be sunk out of view once more. The social and economic processes in the play which both retrench and justify aristocratic property relations, and which conservatively disparage new money by means of unfavourable comparison to the old, offer disproportionate risk to *all* women. Julia remains on the outside of both systems, the older aristocratic and the newer middling, having been exploited by and for both. The City is a place of contested agency, and of risk and abuse for her; this is equally true of Gammer Grime. Gayman's resumption of inheritable estate reshapes him into a more recognisable social form but what has been brought to our attention – Gammer Grime's spectacularly disgusting body, Gayman's reflexive conception of his own desirability and self-sanctioned sexual and financial authority, Julia's troublesome and unfixed resolution – cannot be easily put away.[183]

The next section – which first discusses the erotic work, and secondly, the emotional labour, required of the genteel housewife – examines Behn's determined pulling at the thread of harmful cultural customs. In *The History of the Nun*, Behn takes advantage of the formally more capacious romantic prose narrative to assure the sustained visibility of a repressive system of acculturation, which teaches young women to perform emotional labour from childhood and which makes this a precondition of their social and material survival. Where Behn retreats from a radical (re)solution to the attenuation of women's bodily autonomy and social authority in *The Lucky Chance*, she steps up in *The History of the Nun*. She sets her heroine to a more uncompromising and illicit form of work than imagined either for her low-class landlady, or for the wife in Margaret Cavendish's *The She Anchoret*, who, as I will discuss in the next chapter, is exhorted to undertake the erotic work of roleplaying a courtesan in order to remedy marital disharmony.

[182] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.7, p.268.
[183] Jessica Munns, 'Change, Skepticism and Uncertainty', *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, ed. Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.154.

3. The Erotic Work of the Housewife in Margaret Cavendish's The She-Anchoret (1656)

Indefinite labours: gendered work and new romance

This section will consider two main texts, *The She-Anchoret* from Margaret Cavendish's *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life* (1656) and Aphra Behn's *The History of the Nun* (1689).[1] In my analysis of each of these texts, I will be considering two different (though not unrelated) types of feminised labour which are performed by wives: in this chapter, I will explore erotic work in Cavendish's *Anchoret,* and in the next chapter, emotional labour in Behn's *History*. My reading of both texts concerns the authors' shared focus on the centrality of women's working activities and identities to the proper state of gender order in the marital household. Less often considered in light of domestic themes than approached as an autobiographical text or as a 'fictionalised scientific treatise', *Anchoret* offers an underappreciated opportunity for discussion of domesticity, housewifery and the household, and I intend to narrow this focus further by exploring Cavendish's uneasy engagement with erotic relationships in the domestic realm.[2] For neither Cavendish nor Behn is marriage self-evidently its own

[1] For *The She Anchoret*, I have used the first edition of *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life. Written by the thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle*. (London, 1656). For *The History of the Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker*, I have used the edition found in *Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. by Paul Salzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), taken from the first edition of 1689. See, Mary Ann O'Donnell, *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography Of Primary And Secondary Sources, Second Edition* (London, England; New York, NY.: Routledge, 2016) pp.137-9.

[2] James Fitzmaurice, 'Front Matter and the Physical Make-up of 'Natures Pictures'', *Women's Writing*, Vol.4(3) (1997), p.360. On *Natures Pictures* as autobiographical, see Rebecca Bullard, 'Gatherings in Exile: Interpreting the Bibliographical Structure of Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life (1656)', *English Studies: Special Issue: Margaret Cavendish's Mythopoetics*, Vol.92(7) (2011), 786–805; Margaret Reeves, 'Writing to Posterity: Margaret Cavendish's "*A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding and Life*" (1656) as an "autobiographical relazione"', *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, Vol.34(1/2) (2011), pp.183-206. On the imbrication of science and natural magic: Lisa Walters, '" Not subject to our Sense"

reward, given that matrimony requires work of women that is unasked of their husbands. When the household begins to suffer disharmony because of errant sexual behaviour, Cavendish asks, what might one do about this? The answer is a call to work to which the wife must respond: marital disharmony might be rebalanced through the erotic work of the courtesan, a somewhat disquieting form of roleplay recommended for the troubled wife, and one which straddles definitions of physical and intellectual labour, and strides over the distinction between women's unpaid endeavours and remunerated work. I use the term roleplay in order to capture the sense of limitation, and of mutual consciousness between husband and wife, in the scenario that Cavendish describes: as we will see, she does not explicitly advise that a wife seduce her husband to the point of offering physical sexual contact, though the implication is certainly there. Cavendish cannot have thought of bringing up the figure of the courtesan without having considered that her readers would make their own conclusions about the preparedness of a wife to imitate the supposed sexual capacities of such a figure. Nevertheless, Cavendish does not permit herself to address this plainly. The sense that the husband must be at least semi-aware that his wife is attempting to exert influence is also captured in the idea of roleplay as a reciprocal and conscious activity: as I will go on to discuss, Cavendish's advice about the manipulation of the husband through some well-placed verbal persuasion suggests that the effectiveness of such a stratagem must rely to some extent on the apprehension that his wife is acting out of the ordinary. Such labour recognises a pragmatic approach to wifehood and the sexual problems of marriage – albeit the way in which these problems are framed is always already prejudicial to the even distribution of power within a marital household. The courtesan, a figure at once vulnerable and disruptive, hardly proposes a straightforward remedy to disorder.

My exploration of *History* in the second chapter of this section will examine the efforts made by, and the cost that redounds upon, the heroine Isabella as a result of the requirement that she perform emotional labour, particularly within and on the cusp of marriage. *History* has already been recognised as a text whose significance can be found in its depiction of emotion, and of feminised domestic tasks: I will consider these themes together by approaching emotional labour as feminised domestic work**.** Behn's dogged antagonism to the assertion that there are any inherent virtues of the female subject that are not taught by example, inculcated by exhortation or forcibly made practice by a mixture of indictments and permissions is demonstrated by her bedevilment of two particular ideas. The first is the trope of feminine 'tranquillity', the performance of which is the main objective of Isabella's emotional labour, and which becomes increasingly ironical as the imagined rewards of such labour are outweighed by the risk and effort required to attain them. The second, is the naturalisation of emotional labour as a gendered form of work, which Behn denatures by gender-swapping the labouring subject. She indicates,

Margaret Cavendish's Fusion of Renaissance Science, Magic and Fairy Lore', *Women's Writing*, 17:3 (2010), 413-431. On the connection between Cavendish's natural philosophy and domestic subject matter, see Lisa T. Sarasohn, *The Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish Reason and Fancy During the Scientific Revolution* (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) pp.76-99.

consequently, how a husband might prop up his own authority through the adoption of conventionally feminised techniques of emotion management.

The mode through which Cavendish and Behn explore gendered domestic roles is broadly the same, though their methods differ. Both engage in what James Grantham Turner has termed 'new romance', a turn towards 'historical probability' in seventeenth-century prose fiction which sets aside the 'giants, dragons, and enchanted castles' of 'old romance': a 'pseudo-mediaeval' world of supernatural occurrences and quixotic knights was one which continued to hold an appeal to readers well into the late-seventeenth century, but it was a mode that competed with and was eventually overtaken by new romance, a mode which valued some sort of claim to truth (however heavily mediated this might be).[3] A taste both for 'verisimilitude', and for some element of excess or of heightened event or feeling, would have, as Victoria Kahn puts it, 'satisfied the reader's desire both for "strange actions" and for the analysis of the passions and development of character.'[4] New romance, 'neither fantastical nor (pseudo)factual' but an indefinite both, offers spacious ground in which Cavendish and Behn are able to imagine different purposes for truth claims, for forms of excess, for asserting a basis of likelihood, and, therefore, readerly identification or applicability.[5] For Cavendish, the generous interpretive ground of new romance is used to throw into relief the work of the wife, expectations about what forms of work she should be undertaking, for whom and under what conditions. Cavendish's mixed format romance is, formally and generically, rather difficult to define: in structurally encasing didactic dialogue within a fictional narrative frame, Cavendish takes advantage of the overlap between a broadly fictional mode and its potential for including multiple and diverse types of subject matter.[6] Cavendish's formal decisions matter, therefore, to our ability to read "work" in her text. Her fantasy of the rejection of marriage – the central character of the anchoret abjures the possibility of ever taking up the duties of wifehood for herself, and the reader is consequently positioned to be vigilant about her pronouncements on the subject – survives because Cavendish channels unlikelihood and verisimilitude into different formal and structural elements of the text. Her 'philosophical romance' encloses, in a formal and structural sense, a present and identifiable social world within the frame of an intentionally unlikely fiction, superficially severing narrative story-telling from the didactic bent of knowledge production and dissemination.[7] What this achieves in terms of the presentation of the erotic work of the courtesan

[3] James Grantham Turner, '"Romance" and the Novel in Restoration England', *Review of English Studies*, Vol. 63(258) (2012), p.58. As Turner indicates, this mediation might take the form of fairly contrived structural rules – 'neoclassical literary values: unity of place, the emulation of classical models… and strict propriety' – and/or a strained relationship to older forms of romance (pp.63-4).
[4] Victoria Kahn's 'Margaret Cavendish and the Romance of Contract', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), p.543, is quoted by Turner, '"Romance" and the Novel in Restoration England', p.65.
[5] Turner, '"Romance" and the Novel in Restoration England', p.67.
[6] On the variety of subject matter and styles enclosed by mid-century English romance, see Amelia Zurcher, 'Serious Extravagance: Romance Writing in Seventeenth-Century England', *Literature Compass*, Vol.8(6) (2011), p.380; 383, and Turner, '"Romance" and the Novel in Restoration England', pp.68-9.
[7] Kahn, 'Margaret Cavendish and the Romance of Contract', p.560.

is to suggest that the adoption of such a role by the troubled wife is not *intended* to be construed as unlikely or fanciful. The effect is perhaps different. *Anchoret* wraps truth claims in a conspicuously fantastic narrative – Cavendish prefers to describe the text as a 'feigned' story – and this does some significant work in undermining the credibility of that knowledge.[8] The courtesan's work – apparently a solution to heading off husbandly infidelity – and the anchoret – a repository of heroic feminist fantasies of independence and intellectual freedom – become similarly unimitable figures. That which is 'feigned' comes to display an indiscrete relationship with that which is supposed to hew closely to "real" life.

Behn's long form prose fiction, differently, makes the verisimilar world in which her heroine lives the ground on which she paints her story, encouraging both a coherency between readers and the heroine – as Jacqueline Pearson states, Behn's heroine is 'Everywoman', while Cavendish's is conscientiously not – and fitting narrative form to function in a way which indicates Behn's interest in connection and consequence.[9] *History* insists that the insurmountable influence of normative custom will irretrievably crystallise life trajectories**.** The intimate and exploratory detailing of passions, and the contextualisation of their ebb and flow within the material and social structures which give them impetus and shape, are what make it possible to read those cumulative and hardening processes of emotional labour performed by Isabella. The narrative of *History* – a story of marriage, obligation and custom – also suggests that such "work" is a manifestation of a woman's lack of choice: Behn can only eschew the idea of happy endings given such conditions. Amelia Zurcher, discussing the dual view of early modern romance as both 'end-directed' and endless, points to 'romance's failure to close, or its insistence that closure is simply authorial imposition' as having 'the power to register ethical objection': in the case of *History*, the neat pleasure of a sure and happy ending is repeatedly deferred and undermined, until it is clear that such narrative pleasures are illusory. Isabella's continuous emotional labour – mobilising and suppressing feeling throughout her life – registers that 'ethical objection' against 'the wish-fulfilling closure of romance [which] expresses a view that everything is as it should be.'[10] In this way, *History* at once embodies endlessness, and the assurance of the foregone conclusion: Behn is concerned with likelihood and verisimilitude – 'the ground' as Cavendish herself says of romance, 'is true, but the elevation false' – while averring that the romantic teleology of marriage (the narrative expression of the notion of "as it should be") is only a trap.[11] Pieces of romantic furniture – convents, nuns, flights, battles, separation and struggle, and a mannered affective speech by lovers – provide elevation, but the reasons for such occurrences (the underlying power structures which oblige the heroine to encounter such

[8] Cavendish, *Natures Pictures*, 'To My Readers', sig.c4^{v}.
[9] Jacqueline Pearson, 'The History of '*The History of the Nun*'', in *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, ed. Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville, VA.; London: University Press of Virginia, 1993) p.246.
[10] Amelia Zurcher, 'Serious Extravagance', p.378.
[11] Cavendish, Letter LXIV, *CCXI Sociable Letters, Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princess, The lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1664), p.135.

scenarios and experiences at all) speak to the contingent "truth" of women's lives. While Cavendish and Behn take different approaches – as Eun Kyung Min states, Cavendish's romances are essentially 'imaginative' and Behn's 'ironic' – both *Anchoret* and *History* indicate that wifely work is an indefinite effort. Marriage is not a reward, but a wearingly reiterative experience in which erotic and emotional labour are performed and potentially reperformed endlessly.[12]

Reconsidering domesticity in Cavendish: the wife's erotic employment

In the prefatory material to *Sociable Letters* (1664), Margaret Cavendish offers a rather frank image of her own domestic incompetence:

> the truth is, My Lord, I cannot Work, I mean such Works as Ladies use to pass their Time withall, and if I could, the Materials of such Works would cost more than the Work would be worth, besides all the Time and Pains bestow'd upon it. You may ask me, what Works I mean; I answer, Needle-works, Spinning-works, Preserving-works, as also Baking, and Cooking-works, as making Cakes, Pyes, Puddings, and the like, all which I am Ignorant of.[13]

Given this admission, it is difficult, as often with Cavendish's fiction, to avoid the impression that the text is in some sense autobiographical. At the very least, the posture which Cavendish strikes in the prefatory material – that of an aversion for the type of household tasks expected of her – corresponds very closely with the epistolary voice in the main text.[14] In Letter CL, an indulgent 'governess' chides the unnamed writer for entertaining fancies about spending time 'Unprofitably' in skilled work (needlecraft and spinning) for which she has no aptitude. Rather, she endorses intellectual activity by women, mistress and servants alike: 'therefore they [female servants] cannot Employ their Time better, than to Read, nor your Ladiship better than to Write, for any other Course of Life would be as Unpleasing and Unnatural to you, as Writing is Delightful to you.'[15] If Cavendish experienced any real compunction about her lack of interest in performing her 'duty' as a housewife, she nevertheless appears to have felt justified in resisting this duty both intellectually and rhetorically on a number of occasions. Cavendish's expressions of discomfort with housewifery, even at a point in her life when, no longer in exile, she may

[12] Eun Kyung Min, 'Fictions of Obligation: Contract and Romance in Margaret Cavendish and Aphra Behn', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Volume 32, Number 2 (Winter 2020), p.269.
[13] Cavendish, *CCXI Sociable Letters, Written by the Thrice Noble. Illustrious, and Excellent Princess, The Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1664) sig. B1^{r}.
[14] In 'The Preface' to *Sociable Letters*, Cavendish states that her intention is to present material that is imitative and therefore instructive, but nevertheless not avowedly auto-biographical: 'As for the present book of Letters…they are rather scenes than Letters, for I have Endeavoured under the Cover of Letters to express the Humors of Mankind, and the Actions of Man's Life by the Correspondence of two Ladies…so that these Letters are an Imitation of a Personal Visitation and Conversation.' (*Sociable Letters*, sig. C2^{r}).
[15] Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, p.313-4.

have been better physically situated to attempt its practice, is well attested by critics.[16] Her means of engaging the domestic and the intellectual on more comfortable terms has been demonstrated by, for instance, Emma L. E Rees, who has tracked the development of the image of the archetypal spinning woman – 'the paradigmatic Penelope' – and 'its fullest expression' in *Sociable Letters,* in which Cavendish posits that 'feminine virtue is not, as traditionally expected, tied up in the domestic activity of needlework, but, rather, in writing.'[17] Megan J. Fung, likewise, has explored Cavendish's use of domesticity as 'a critical metaphor' for artistic authority in *Poems and Fancies* (1653), and concludes that, largely, the association of poetry and housework is a positive and lasting one in which both realms of labour – the artistic and the domestic – are imbued with 'feminine authority.'[18] In *The She-Anchoret,* one of a number of longer prose tales within *Natures Pictures,* it is the link drawn between the erotic, the domestic, and feminine authority that is of interest. Less well remarked upon in Cavendish scholarship than her combination of the domestic and the intellectual is her engagement with the figure of the courtesan, a model of feminine power and of dependence whose presence within the household complicates this location as the scene of industrious labour.

Certainly, the framing of the entire volume of *Natures Pictures* as itself a production of idleness must remind us that any evocation of domestic industry is both class contingent and, given the exile of the Cavendishes at the time of publication, politically inflected.[19] The conceit of idleness, to which I will return in greater detail later, is heavily promoted in the prefatory material. The entire volume is dedicated to 'pastime', and Cavendish encourages recourse to her text in moments of idleness: 'When idle, then

[16] See Pollock for an overview of the educative experience of women in Cavendish's social class, who were taught that housewifery and estate management was a 'duty': Linda Pollock, 'Teach her to live under obedience': the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England', *Continuity and Change*, Vol.4(2) (1989), pp.231-58. See Clairhout, relatedly, for Cavendish's deep ambivalence in this regard: Isabelle Clairhout, 'Erring from Good Huswifry? The Author as Witness in Margaret Cavendish and Mary Trye'**,** *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, Vol.37(2) (2014), pp.81-114.

[17] Emma L. E Rees, 'A Well Spun Yarn: Margaret Cavendish and Homer's Penelope', *A princely brave woman: essays on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle* ed. Stephen Clucas (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), p.178;176. For further work on the domestic in *Poems and Fancies*, see also, Katherine Capshaw Smith, '"Bisket of Love, which crumbles all away": The Failure Of Domestic Metaphor In Margaret Cavendish's Poetic Fancies', in *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England*, ed. Kari Boyd McBride (Pittsburgh, PA.: Duquesne University Press, 2002).

[18] Megan J. Fung, 'Art, Authority, and Domesticity in Margaret Cavendish's *Poems and Fancies*', *Early Modern Women,* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Fall 2015), p.28.

[19] For exilic and royalist verse, see Alan Rudrum, 'Royalist Lyric', in *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.181-197. See also Bullard, ('Gatherings in Exile') who links Cavendish's physical isolation from England at the time of publication to the bibliographical structure of the volume. As an exilic text, *Natures Pictures* has been read as a volume which, in its depiction of a kinship group that has been isolated by conflict, makes a self-conscious effort to represent a united familial front and to knit together the politically and personally frayed ends of an extended family. See Ann Hughes and Julie Sanders, 'Disruptions and Evocations of Family amongst Royalist Exiles' in, *Literatures of Exile in the English Revolution and its Aftermath, 1640-1690* ed. by Philip Major (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2010) p.52. Hughes and Sanders draw on Fitzmaurice's discussion of the frontmatter to the 1656 edition of *Natures Pictures* ('Front Matter'), and on Hero Chalmers' understanding of Margaret's role as a public surrogate for her disenfranchised husband in *Royalist Women Writers: 1650-1689* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p.22.

my Readers may in't look, And yet be idle still.'[20] Her husband William likewise endorses a mode of engagement with the text that connects communal merry-making, artistic activity, and politically and religiously partisan Cavalier poetics: his contribution to the prefatory material suggests that the contents of the text should be redeployed by the reader to 'wast a Tedious Winters night' 'when you want discourse', and metaphorizes the reading of the text itself as consumption within an imagined (and Royalist coded) evening of leisure, feasting, drinking, and pleasant company. The reader should 'think Of melting Sweet-meats, dissolv'd Wine your drink' between the 'feast' of tales.[21] Further on, Cavendish takes the opportunity to remind her audience once again of the theme of recreation, and to disavow herself from any suspicion of hard work: 'I Desire my Readers to judge this Book of mine according to the harmless Recreations of my idle time, and not as a laborious, learned, studious, or a Methodical work.'[22] Thematically, discussion of work – whether we understand "work" as intellectual activity, as a description of more conventional female household tasks, or as the erotic endeavours of the courtesan – sits awkwardly with this overarching discourse. As I will suggest, the courtesan is a productively idle figure whose similarity of profile to a woman of Cavendish's class (in terms of education, accomplishments, and relationship to the idea of labour) makes it difficult for Cavendish to safely transplant such a figure into a domestic context. The courtesan is, as Cavendish and indeed Behn were aware, a challenging figure: Cavendish's attempts to describe the courtesan's labour are evasive, and it is the flexibility of the language of work, as we will see, that allows for this obliqueness.[23] This failure to nail down precisely what the courtesan's "work" is also means that her labour is difficult to imitate: while the character of the exceptionally well-read heroine lends a certain intellectual authority to her advice, the nature of her role as defender of virginal chastity must draw attention to the quality and ideological intent of that advice. Her disavowal of knowledge of the courtesan's methodology of seduction, and the prioritisation of instruction by experienced practitioners as a means of acquiring knowledge – 'to learn those Arts you must be Instructed by such as have practised or seen them, for I have not, nor cannot guesse, or devise Arts' - renders suspect the theoretical bases of all of the knowledge that she offers.[24]

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[20] Cavendish, *Natures Pictures*, 'The Dedication'.
[21] William Cavendish, 'To the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, on her Book of Tales', *Natures Pictures*, sig. b1^{r-v}. William Cavendish's evocation of pleasure and languor is consonant with Robert Herrick's slightly earlier partisan poetics, which models public, political duty as private, pleasurable behaviour. In 'When he would have his verses read', the poetic voice urges that the verse 'be sung, or read' when men 'have both well drunke and fed' – which is to say, on one of those tedious evenings invoked by William Cavendish and not 'in sober mornings.' Robert Herrick, *Hesperides* (London, 1648) p.3.
[22] Cavendish, *Natures Pictures,* 'An Epistle to my Readers', p.103.
[23] *The Rover* (1677) is Behn's most well-known engagement with the difficult subject position of the courtesan; she takes up this concern again in *The Feigned Courtesans* (1679). This play about women of quality assuming the identity of, but eventually distancing themselves from the working role of, common courtesans, is dedicated (rather boldly) to former actress turned royal mistress Nell Gwyn.
[24] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, pp.339-40.

Tonally, this makes for a disorienting reading experience, and this correlates with Cavendish's noticeable unease with the figure of the courtesan. It is as difficult to know how to interpret Cavendish's coy engagement with the courtesan's work as it is to judge the nature of *Anchoret* as a text that aims at knowledge production. *Natures Pictures* is, apparently, not to be considered 'learned' or 'studious', but *Anchoret* is described by Cavendish as 'solid and edifying': Jacqueline Pearson is unequivocal about Cavendish's motivation for shaping *Anchoret* as a prose tale that is both serious and slight, stating that the text is only provided with 'a thin narrative line' – of the anchoret's superior education, her renunciation of the world, her isolation, fame and death – and thence given licence to be described as a 'feigned' story simply in order 'to allow inclusion of her speeches.'[25] (Cavendish herself supports this impression, stating that her restless ambition 'made that little wit I have to run upon every subject I can think of, or is fit for me to write on.')[26] Rebecca Dorman conjectures that Cavendish may have considered *Natures Pictures*, amongst her published works up to that point, 'a less academic effort because of its elements of romance', and we might also foreground the forgiving nature of romance when we consider the problems of tone, meaning and authority that Cavendish's difficulty with the courtesan raises.[27] The wonder of Cavendish's feminine fantasy – that both female intellectual endeavour without the coverture of marriage (in the form of the character of the anchoret), and the approval of a husband for such endeavours (William's for Margaret herself) is not just possible but praiseworthy – takes precedence over her imperfect ability to make some subject matter as edifying or accurate as possible. It is, moreover, *only because* the anchoret is the remarkable heroine of a 'feigned story' that she has been permitted to take up the role of a feminine 'Diogenes in his tub' and has therefore turned her back on a destiny of domestic problems and concerns about housewifery.[28] It is, then, not that the fictional basis of this story should be rendered practically disposable since its only function is to offer the flimsiest of pretexts for autobiographical intellectual display, but rather that the fictional narrative frame is both meaningful and significant to the content of the anchoret's proclamations on domestic subject matter particularly. Cavendish's exploration of the role of the housewife through the voice of the fictional anchoret – what work a wife is encouraged to perform, what obliged to undertake, what explicitly forbade – exists in dialogic relation with the reputational burden, thematic investments and narrative style of romance writing.

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[25] 'solid and edifying': 'To my Readers', Cavendish, *Natures Pictures*, sig.c4^{v}. Jacqueline Pearson, '"Women May Discourse...as Well as Men": Speaking and Silent Women in the Plays of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 1985), p.39.

[26] Cavendish ,'An Epistle to my Readers', *Natures Pictures*, sig.c1^{r}.

[27] Cavendish's published works up to this point were *Poems and Fancies* (1653), *Philosophical Fancies* (1653), *The Worlds Olio* (1655), and *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655). Dorman also emphasises that Cavendish appears to have been in an especially ebullient state when hastily publishing *Natures Pictures* but removed certain of the texts (her autobiography principle amongst them) from the volume when it is republished in 1671. Rebecca Dorman, 'Margaret Cavendish's *Natures Pictures*', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield; School of English; 2018 (p.21). Fitzmaurice also opines that Cavendish 'may have been worried that because the book contained romances, she would not be taken to be a serious person.' ('Front Matter', p.361).

[28] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.289.

Romance writing and the "virtuous employments" of the wife

In her amusingly contradictory account of her personal acquaintance with romance writing, Cavendish appears at pains to disavow the undesirable potential of this mode to incite 'Amorous thoughts' and to distance herself from that aspect of its reputation:

> Neither do I know the rule or method of Romancy writing; for I never read a Romancy Book throughout in all my life, I mean such as I take to be Romances…The most I ever read of Romances was but part of three Books, as the three parts of one, and the half of two others, otherwise I never read any; unless I might by chance, as when I see a Book, not knowing of what it treats, I may take and read some half dozen lines, where perceiving it a Romance, throw it straight from me, as an unprofitable study.[29]

This rather anxious, if not entirely straight-faced, address to her readership is generally understood by critics to refer to the two lengthy prose tales – *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* and *The Contract* – that come prior to *The She Anchoret* within *Natures Pictures*.[30] In *Erotic Subjects : the Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature*, Melissa E. Sanchez focuses on the former two romances, and suggests that they are particularly evocative of a period in which 'writers habitually conflated the problems of sexuality with those of sovereignty': she identifies *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* and *The Contract*, and not, notably, *Anchoret*, as part of the intellectually fraught period of Cavendish's exile in which she experienced difficulty with the idea of the voluntary submission (both political and erotic) of the subject.[31] Helen Hackett, similarly, overlooks *Anchoret* in her survey of Cavendish's romances: the liberating possibilities of romance that Hackett identifies - erotic freedoms for women, the potential for female self-determination, and the enterprising scope of literal and/or intellectual cross-dressing – are all aspects of the mode that *Anchoret* engages with to varying extents.[32] To briefly summarise the text, *Anchoret* concerns the short life of an unnamed female hermit: upon the death of her father, she retreats into 'solitary habitation' in compliance with his desperate exhortation that she never engage in a romantic relationship. 'If you marry', he warns in gloomy couplets, 'troubles will you finde,/Pains, griefs and cares to vex a quiet minde.'[33] The anchoret's inability to tolerate a full isolation soon leads to renown: 'she had not been long inclosed, but she grew as famous, as *Diogenes* in his tub, all sorts of people resorted to her, to hear her speak.'[34] The anchoret offers her 'knowledge' and 'wisedom' to her

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[29] Cavendish, *Natures Pictures*, 'To the Reader', sig.c2[r].
[30] 'Assaulted and Pursued Chastity', p.220, and 'The Contract', p.183, in *Natures Pictures*.
[31] Melissa E Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects: the Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (New York, NY.: Oxford University Press, 2011) p.26
[32] Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p.184;186.
[33] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.289; 288.
[34] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.289.

visitors on subjects as diverse as the humoral implications of eating 'white-meats and pulse[s]', the bodily mechanism by which 'passions' are externalised in displays of laughter, trembling and tears, the counterproductive nature of physical torture, and the composition of the 'best' possible Privy Council.[35] Eventually, the anchoret attracts the wrong sort of attention. Cavendish's insistence on the danger of romantic relationships reaches its final expression in the threat of a foreign king who, taking the anchoret's refusal of his overtures with a tyrannical sense of entitlement, threatens 'Warrs, unless the State would deliver the Lady into his power.' To prevent her nation's destruction, already 'in a weak condition, caused by former warrs', the anchoret takes 'poyson'.[36]

Reading *Anchoret* as a text that participates in the romance tradition, I want to suggest, opens up new ways of understanding it: critics have already observed that *Natures Pictures* has antecedents in the European tradition of women's vernacular prose literature, and that it owes a particular debt to Marguerite de Navarre's *L' Heptaméron* (published posthumously 1558; available in English since 1597; translated in 1654, just prior to the publication of *Natures Pictures*).[37] The frame narrative format used by Navarre and re-used by Cavendish – in which story-tellers make their offerings in turn and then comment upon those stories – is deployed inconsistently by Cavendish in *Natures Pictures*. This format is abandoned in the longer second section of the volume, and the prose tales thereafter (of which *Anchoret* is one) are no longer part of an explicit dialogue with the concerns and prejudices of a group of fictional interlocutors.[38] Instead, *Anchoret* is limned by its own framing device, the brief narrative trajectory of the anchoret's life. Josephine Donovan has identified Cavendish's contribution to the development of the framed-novelle format as part of an evolutionary process whereby English writers – Delarivier Manley and Jane Barker among them – began to compose what Donovan instead terms 'novellas.' These texts, whose unifying frame was no longer the symphony of story-telling voices who commented critically on women's subordination, instead used 'the life history as case.'[39] Such novellas are 'extensive treatments of one individual's life story, unified by feminist explanatory theses', moving towards the novel form by virtue of this intensive focus on a singular organising principle of a fictional

[35] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.301; p.315; p.321; p.327.
[36] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.356.
[37] *Heptameron or the history of the fortunate lovers; written by the most excellent and most virtuous princess, Margaret de Valoys, Queen of Navarre; published in French by the privilege and immediate approbation of the King; now made English by Robert Codrington, Master of Arts.* (London, 1654). See James Fitzmaurice, 'Front Matter', p.356, and Josephine Donovan, 'Women and the Framed-Novelle: A Tradition of Their Own', *Signs*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer, 1997), p.947-980.
[38] The frame narrative format is abandoned from 'Her Excellencies Comical Tales in Prose' onwards (*Natures Pictures*, p.105). Cavendish, does, however, retain small sections of verse speech in the frame tale of *Anchoret*, a small gesture of consistency, perhaps, with the earlier tales in the volume and with *L' Heptaméron.* (*Anchoret*, pp.287-9).
[39] Donovan, 'Women and the Framed Novelle', p.969. As other critics, Donovan does not explicitly include or analyse *Anchoret* as part of Cavendish's engagement with the romance tradition: the three autonomous frame-breakers of the collection as Donovan identifies them are the novellas *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* and *The Contract*, and the autobiographical *A True Relation*.

heroine's narrative trajectory.[40] *Anchoret* relies upon the narrative trajectory, and the character, of a fictional heroine in order both to justify and to qualify the bulk of the textual content, as well as to mark out a feminist explanatory thesis that endorses the intellectual and sexual agency of women. This narrative trajectory is the improbable life story of a prodigal hermit whose seemingly oracular talents have no credible basis even within the bounds of the narrative, and it is her exceptionality that is of import to reading the knowledge – mediated through her voice – that is proffered on the subject of marriage and a wife's domestic labours in particular. What this 'moral giant' has to say on the matter of household sexual politics concerns, in a distanced way, that analysis of the passions so important to new romance, though it is not the passions of the anchoret that are under scrutiny: the guidance which the anchoret proffers to 'married Men and their Wives' is heavily concerned with sexual behaviour within marriage, and Cavendish, summarising female household tasks as 'virtuous employments', includes within this remit the erotic endeavours of the wife.[41] The anchoret recommends that the wife legitimately use the 'arts of the Courtison' in order to distract, manipulate the feelings, and secure the attentions of her husband.[42] Dipping her toe into the domestic conduct genre, Cavendish is able both to offer such practical guidance to "real" women troubled with their husband's wandering eye, while also idealising and separating out the anchoret's heroic autonomy-even-unto-death approach to female chastity. The heroine's trajectory, and her behaviour within it, can be endorsed without suggesting that this (a model of virtuous behaviour which cuts unacceptably across a wife's primary loyalty to her husband) is a realistic course to pursue for women not so blessed with the freedom available to unmarried heroines.

While the anchoret outwardly eschews the 'adventure and love' tradition of mid- to late-seventeenth-century romance, Cavendish does demonstrate a preoccupation with what Deborah Ross explains is literally denoted by this term "adventure" (that is, 'events that come to one from without') as well as with love, with the eroticised (but legitimate) physical and emotional connection between husband and wife.[43] Adventure comes to the anchoret in the form of interlocutors who visit her, as the narrative frame has it, in order to 'get knowledge', and love – its difficulties, pleasures and negotiation – is teased out by the heroine in her exploration of the marital relationship in its context of domestic (dis)harmony.[44] The anchoret's solution to this disharmony is the model of the courtesan. Anxieties about the impropriety associated with romance taken on board, Cavendish aligns, as we will see, the anti-domestic heroine with the similarly unsettling, barely-domesticated courtesan. Both of these figures embody a response

[40] Donovan, 'Women and the Framed Novelle', p.969.
[41] 'moral giant': Turner, '"Romance" and the Novel in Restoration England', p.69. Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333.
[42] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.339.
[43] Deborah Ross, *The Excellence of Falsehood: Romance, Realism, and Women's Contribution to the Novel* (Lexington, KY.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), p.4. See also Christine S. Lee, who underscores the point that the twin ideas 'that romance was a woman's genre, for example, or a genre centered on love…are late seventeenth-century assumptions' in 'The Meanings of Romance: Rethinking Early Modern Fiction', *Modern Philology*, Vol.112(2) (2014), p.299. It is partly this assumption with which Cavendish is concerned in her fidgety address 'To the Reader.'
[44] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.289.

to male sexual tyranny. The anchoret herself militates against the romance trajectory which would conventionally take a heroine into conjugal union as well as against erotic relationships of any sort: the anchoret advocates and defends virginal (as opposed to marital) chastity, and dissociates herself entirely from physical heterosexual desire. The courtesan, who is proposed as a solution to heterosexual desire gone awry, disturbs the idea (perhaps not altogether intentionally) of marriage itself. Marriage is effectively exposed as a practical experience of inequities, double standards and occluded labour by the uneasy intercession of the courtesan into the domestic hierarchy of the conjugal household. While the anchoret and the courtesan represent very different approaches to male sexual tyranny – the former proposes that female autonomy and intellectual leg-room can only be achieved through absolute independence, and the latter that fostering and taking advantage of dependence is key to managing sexual virtue and accruing some power – both positions are designed to mitigate the difficulties and negative aspects of marriage (either through plain avoidance or through the necessary assumption of some soft power). Marriage itself appears at best a compromise. The wife's performance of erotic work through her roleplaying of the courtesan – a tantalisingly opaque form of labour that Cavendish struggles to describe – points towards a trade-off: the wife's labour, a given and a duty which makes assumptions upon her time and freedom, for the small measure of influence available to the courtesan, a persuasive, clever, even callous woman, whose labour *seems* effortless.

Defining the "work" of the wife

For Cavendish, the role of the housewife implies some traditional, and some less conventional, definitions of "work", and these are important to understanding the connection that is drawn between the expectations of domestic duty laid upon the wife, and the work of the courtesan that she is encouraged by the anchoret to emulate. Cavendish, perhaps feeling that her meaning was self-evident, declined to enumerate exactly which tasks and activities come under the remit of 'virtuous employments' for housewives.[45] The married men who have come to ask the anchoret about a variety of subjects desire to know, 'what was the best course to keep their wives honest.' Her response is not particularly expansive: 'tender regard, civil respects, wise instructions, honourable examples, and virtuous employments.'[46] Elsewhere in the volume, Cavendish does expand on the kinds of employments deemed suitable for women: in *The Dialogue of the Wise Lady, the Learned Lady and the Witty Lady*, found in the fifth book of *Natures Pictures*, Lady Wisdom, Lady Wit and Lady Learning hold forth in a series of set piece speeches in order to demonstrate and to justify their respective attributes. In denying 'Lady Wit' more credit than is her due for the splendid and varied range of 'arts'

[45] We can infer, in a limited way, what is *not* considered the purview of the housewife in this instance: the particulars of rearing infants are laid out in the advice offered to 'The twelfth sort', who are 'Nurses with their Nurse-children.' (*Anchoret*, pp.340-2).
[46] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333.

that result rather from education than an inherent creativity, 'Lady Learning' insists on explicating an extensive list of 'Arts' of 'several kinds', some of which are implicitly feminine, some not so. 'Distilling, Extracting, Pounding, Mixing, Sifting, Grinding, as Maulting, Brewing, Baking, Cooking…Carding, Spinning, Weaving…Writing, Printing' are described as 'Profitable Arts' (as against, for instance, 'Expensive Arts', which include 'Feasting, Masquing' and 'Balling').[47]

The qualifying status of profitability points us both to the morally laden quality of '*virtuous* employments' (emphasis mine), and the theoretically materially rewarding 'work' that we saw Cavendish describe in the prefatory material to *Sociable Letters*. Returning to that revealing address, we see that Cavendish is, at least here, clear about what constitutes women's work, and what does not. She defines writing as expressly not 'work': 'It may be said to me, as one said to a Lady, *Work, Lady, Work, let writing Books alone.*'[48] Sara Mendelson suggests that, generally, 'women's traditional household routine was taken for granted' by early moderns and 'not usually distinguished with the term 'work': the governing and/or performance of a large and potentially complex set of specialised household tasks by women of Cavendish's class is something that Cavendish herself nevertheless describes as 'work' and understands in financial terms.[49] She is self-congratulatory on the point of never having been obliged to perform housewifery, and 'such Works as Ladies use to pass their Time withall' she dismisses as personally unsuitable on several grounds. She objects to the cost of materials in relation to the imagined price that such 'Work' (the end product that results from baking, preserving and needlework in this case) is imagined to command, finds the idea of effortful labour, 'Time and Pains', personally unappealing and makes ignorance of female domestic activity an excuse that prevents her from making any attempts.[50]

Her self-exceptionalism does coexist, however, with the advocation of the traditional 'huswifely' woman as a positive and desirable entity. Hearkening to the adjective 'virtuous', which Cavendish understands in a normative way ('as of feminine virtues', rather than merely upright in a general sense), directs us towards certain behaviours and values which Cavendish appears ready to endorse. Deborah Boyle, interrogating Cavendish's philosophical views on the differences between men and women,

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[47] Cavendish, *The Dialogue of the Wise Lady, the Learned Lady and the Witty Lady* in *Natures Pictures*, pp.179-80.

[48] Cavendish, 'To His Excellency The Lord Marquess of Newcastle', *Sociable Letters*, sig. B1^{r}. Here Cavendish quotes the famous example of the verse attack offered by Edward Denny to Mary Wroth on the publication of her *Urania* (1621). Denny sought to defend himself from what he understood to be personal satire, criticising Wroth for (amongst other things) her unfeminine assumption of authorship: 'Work o th' works, leave idle books alone,/ For wise and worthier women have writ none.' Cavendish also invokes Denny's vituperative criticism of female literary activity in the prefatory material to her 1653 publication *Poems and Fancies*, in which she uses it to defend her own intellectual work. Helen Hackett discusses Cavendish's awareness of the Denny/Wroth incident and her reuse of the Denny verse in *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (2009), pp.183-193.

[49] Sara H. Mendelson, 'Women and Work', in *A Companion To Early Modern Women's Writing* ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002) p.63.

[50] Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, sig. B1^{r}.

concludes that, despite spasms of criticism concerning men's abuse of power in marital relationships, Cavendish endorses inequality between men and women in a broad fashion, and advocates for gender hierarchy within the context of marriage specifically. 'Women' in Boyle's summary of Cavendish's views, 'are by nature different from, and inferior to, men; seeking to imitate men will not benefit women; women should cultivate the virtues appropriate to them. Women may be superior to men in certain respects, but in ways that do not give them real power or success in the world.'[51] It is Cavendish's recommendation of aspirational feminine virtues in the 1662 text *Orations of Divers Sorts* in which we see an ideal state of womanhood described, and which partly underpins Boyle's reading of Cavendish as no kind of feminist, proto- or otherwise: '"Modest, Chast, Temperate, Humble, Patient, and Pious; also to be Huswifely, Cleanly, and of few Words."'[52] To be "huswifely" is, by Cavendish's definition elsewhere in *Orations,* to exist in a state oppositional to personal liberty: being limited to heavily circumscribed social interaction causes (ideally) 'Moderation, Sobriety, and Silence amongst them; also it would Cause them to be Huswifely in their Families, Obedient to their Husbands, and Carefull of their Children.'[53] If to be huswifely is to enact a gendered form of virtue, Cavendish nevertheless implies that the responsibilities usually ascribed to a housewife, and the qualities with which she is associated, might be transferred if necessary. The anchoret states that when a wife 'is a slut' (i.e., negligent in personal and household tidiness), the husband 'must keep servants that are cleanly, if he be able.' If this is beyond his power or his financial means, 'he must do his work himself.' If a further clash arises between the duties of a husband's 'publick employments' that keep him from home, and the need for huswifely labour that is left lacking by a sluttish wife, it is his responsibility to mend her 'with good counsel.'[54] The slippage of language demonstrates the cascading, but not chaotic, order of responsibility in the household; what was her (the wife's) duty, becomes their (the servant's) burden, becomes, shifted once more, 'his' (the husband's) obligation. In this less than ideal scenario, he must perform the housework himself, or advise her how to perform it. 'Arts', 'employments' and 'work' are, therefore, all functionally synonymous in respect of traditional feminine household tasks – and might be construed as relevant to the irregular domestic duties of husbands in a case of negligence.

'Employment'/'imployment' as a term, however, operates in other contexts for Cavendish. Given her investment in female intellectual activity, it is of no surprise to see that the act of reading Classical

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[51] Deborah Boyle, 'Margaret Cavendish on Gender, Nature, and Freedom', *Hypatia,* vol. 28, no. 3 (Summer 2013) p.526.
[52] Cavendish, *Orations,* p.230, quoted by Boyle, 'Gender, Nature, Freedom', p.525.
[53] Cavendish, *Orations,* p.222. Cavendish also averred that marriage could be an uncomfortable circumscription of personal freedom/ambition for women – or, at least, she felt able to intimate such an opinion in print. In 'Ambition preferr'd before Love' (*Natures Pictures*, p.120), husbands are imagined to keep wives 'fast lock'd in their Arms, or tye them to Houshold-Employments' in order to deny the wife the possibility of climbing to 'Fame's high Tower.' In *The World's Olio* (1655), a general sense of marriage as a universal burden is upheld: 'Marriage most commonly knocks all quick Spirits on the Head, and buries all Wit and Mirth, giving Life only to Care and Trouble.' (pp.77-8).
[54] Cavendish, *Anchoret,* p.333.

biography is described in precisely this way. Letter CLXXXVII begins with 'Madam, My imployment continues as yet, which is, to read Plutarch's Lives', the discussion of which work goes on to offer a show of support for monarchical (as against republican) government by way of a thinly veiled discussion about the envy, ignobility and short sightedness of Julius Caesar's (read, Charles I's) murderers.[55] Cavendish's insistence on her own literary and intellectual efforts – she will not 'let writing Books alone' – is further supported by the link that she draws in *Anchoret* between the rational operation of reason, the importance of mental exercise and the requirement that women avoid idleness.[56] We might reasonably infer, then, that Cavendish understood the activity of reading and writing books as 'virtuous' employment for wives. 'Imployment', finally, also denotes activity disconnected from material production, remunerated labour or intellectually productive work. It can instead be an activity of an imaginative, fanciful variety, construed in negative, self-deluding, and romantic terms:

> and it is to be observed, that the chiefest Imployment of the most part of Men is to make Love, not that they are Really in Love, but Feignedly make themselves so, and Amorous Courtships are the most general Actions in the World, and the most general Imployments of the Thoughts in mens Minds; and the same is also amongst Women.[57]

In short, writing may not be work as such, but it may be thought of as a 'virtuous employment.' Work' and 'employment', meanwhile, are both used in reference to the same set of traditional female household activities, while the latter term is also given a somewhat sardonic charge when used to describe the implicitly foolish activities of would-be lovers.[58] The romantic excesses of courtship performed by either men or women are not, apparently, a 'virtuous' employment in Cavendish's eyes, though, perhaps in a show of un-restraint deemed characteristic of her earliest publications, Cavendish does look to explore the connection between the virtuous and the erotic in *Anchoret.* She uses the structural, formal and thematic elements of the developing romance form of the novella to probe at the relationship between sexuality and domesticity, between household sexual politics and her vision of a genteel housewife, and pushes at the definition of virtuous work undertaken by this housewife in the maintenance of a conjugal and household hierarchy.

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[55] Cavendish, *Sociable Letters,* p.389.
[56] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333. See also Lara Dodds, who considers *Poems and Fancies,* published three years before *Natures Pictures*, as evidence of Cavendish's early engagement with the notion that writing can and should be considered women's work, either alongside or instead of traditional housewifery. See, 'Margaret Cavendish's Domestic Experiment', *Genre and Women's Life Writing In Early Modern England*, eds. Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle (London and New York: Routledge, 2016) pp.151-168.
[57] Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter LVI, p.115.
[58] Fung, taking note of the use of "imploy" in the address to 'Noble and Worthy Ladies' that prefaces *Poems and Fancies,* observes, similarly, that this term 'may mean busywork, a task to pass the time (a didactic echo of conduct books), but contemporary meanings include effort, skill, and dedication.' (Fung, 'Art, Authority, and Domesticity', p.32).

The idleness of erotic work: the wife, the bawd and the courtesan

Cavendish uses the romance mode to discuss the erotic (the role of the courtesan) while carefully avoiding the prurient, for she sets aside the potentially inappropriate face of romance writing by crafting a heroine who is disengaged entirely from matters of desire. Cavendish, moreover, aligns romance with a venal, bawdy femininity in some of her texts as if in order to disprove such an association with her invocation of romance in *Anchoret.* The commonplace connection of romance with women – it was, as Hackett points out, paradoxically associated closely with women while understood by moralists as inappropriate reading matter for them – is therefore simultaneously accepted and refuted by Cavendish.[59] In *The World's Olio* (published only a year before *Natures Pictures*) Cavendish defines 'romancy' writing, in a vaguely disparaging way, as 'an *adulterate Issue*, begot twixt History and Poetry; for Romancy is as it were poetical fancies; put into a Historical stile.'[60] In a different section of the same text, Cavendish offers a more obviously condemnatory characterisation of 'Amorous Romancy': 'Writings that are set forth in books and other wayes, are of several and different natures; For some, as Magistrates and Fathers, do reprove and endeavour to reclaim the world and men, as moral philosophers do…some as Bawds to intice the mindes, as Amorous Romancy.'[61] 'Bawd' may technically refer to either a man or a woman – William Shakespeare's *The historie of Troylus and Cresseida* (1609) offers the most famous example of the term as a masculine referent in Cressida's exclamation, 'By the same token you are a Bawde', to her uncle Pandarus – but retains a far stronger and far more common association with women by the mid-seventeenth century.[62] In John Taylor's satirical piece *A Bawd* we find a colourful but conventional evocation of this type as an equivocator, an enticer (to use Cavendish's term), as infectious, gross and a skilled glosser of 'rotten decayed drosse': the particular skills of the female bawd are deceit and provocation, expert as she is in having herself passed through 'long service' from a 'younge prettie Girle' to an 'over-worne Age' and having been, as Taylor's euphemistic phrase

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[59] Helen Hackett**,** *Women and Romance Fiction*, p.10. Emily Griffiths Jones and Kathryn Schwarz have also discussed Cavendish's critical uses of romance: see, Jones, 'Historical Romance and *Fin Amour* in Margaret Cavendish's *Life of William Cavendish', English Studies,* 92:7 (2011), 756-770, and Schwarz, 'Chastity, Militant and Married: Cavendish's Romance, Milton's Masque', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol.118(2) (2003), pp. 270-285.

[60] Cavendish, *The World's Olio, Written by the Right Honorable, the lady Margaret Newcastle.* (London, 1655) p.9, emphasis mine.

[61] Cavendish, 'Of Several Writings' in *World's Olio*, p.4.

[62] William Shakespeare, *The historie of Troylus and Cresseida* (London, 1609) sig. B2^{v}. The 1650 *Act For suppressing The Detestable sins of Incest, Adultery and Fornication* sets out the prosecutable offence (inclusive of both genders) of 'being a common Bawd, be it man or woman, or wittingly keeping a common Brothel or Bawdy-house.' (London, 1650). For the association between bawdry and women specifically, see Chapter 5, 'Making Common: Familiar Knowledge and the Bawd's Seductions', of DiGangi's *Sexual Types*, who observes that there is a 'preponderance of professional female bawds on the stage' and a disproportionate lack of male procurers: Mario DiGangi, *Sexual Types: Embodiment, Agency, and Dramatic Character from Shakespeare to Shirley* (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) pp.162-3. There are plentiful print items in the middle decades of the century – joke compendia, satires, character works, stage comedies – which labour upon the image of the older woman as a facilitator of prostitution, though Cavendish does not consistently gender the bawd. Her 'Of Bawds' only metaphorizes the bawd as an idolater whose 'Pope, or Head of their Church, is Mammon, the God of Money.' (Cavendish, *World's Olio*, p.73).

has it, 'a creature of much use.'[63] In *The World's Olio,* the subject of bawdry surfaces, then, as we find Cavendish strengthening the general affiliation between the illicit, the feminine and the romantic.

Bawdry retains its fascination and its generative character for Cavendish as she calls upon the bawd's characteristic slothfulness in regard to women's industrious activity.[64] In warning the reader of the risks attendant upon a wife's lack of profitable employment, *Anchoret* explicitly metaphorizes idleness in the figure of the procuress: 'let me warn you, said she, of idleness, for it is the great Bawd of the World.'[65] Taylor likewise draws on this association, making rich work of the lewdly evocative, figurative discontinuity between the labour that the bawd actually performs and the association with various forms of work that cluster about her as a tradeswoman: 'There is scarce any Art, Mystery, Trade or Manuall Occupation, but a Bawd hath a reference or allusion to it, or it to her.' She 'differs from the Goldsmith in the Touch, the Test, and the Weight, yet she puts the best side of her ware outward; she casts and hammers her wenches into all fashions', and 'though she live after the flesh, all is Fish that comes to the Net with her; she is a cunning Angler…A great Lord is her Groneland Whale, a Countrey Gentleman is her Cods-head.'[66] Taylor's casuistical (dis)praise of the bawd's industrious behaviour reminds the reader that her labour is not profitable in the widest sense, i.e., it is not honest work of financial benefit, and does not conduce to the common good. To call her 'the true Embleme or image of security' is only a sardonic reminder of the bawd's affiliation with disorder, instability and criminality; to insist that she is 'vigilant' and 'carefully watcheth while others sleepe' is simply to say that she keeps a close eye on her lewd transactions and merely for her own pecuniary profit.[67]

The bawd is, then, both a broad, figurative evocation of romance writing for Cavendish, and a metaphor for indolence in *Anchoret* specifically. Anticipating and disproving any associations between her own writing and charges of amorousness is complicated, nevertheless, by Cavendish's use of the bawd as a contact point with the figure of the wife. The bawd as a model of feminine industriousness (albeit a negative one) is used to establish a connection with the wife within the realm of sexual behaviour, and then to develop an understanding of female industry which subsequently implicates the figure of the courtesan. The complication about where and how any associations of amorousness or eroticism are situated (and endorsed or reviled) arises from the indistinction of these three women as figures of female

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[63] John Taylor, *A Bawd. A vertuous Bawd, a modest Bawd: as shee Deserves, reproove, or else applaud* (London, 1635) sig. B1^{v}-B2.

[64] Anticipating such an association, Cavendish makes assurance in one of *Natures Pictures*' prefatory texts that 'if I could think that any of my writings should create Amorous thoughts in idle brains, I would make blots instead of letters.' (*Natures Pictures*, sig.C2^{v}).

[65] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333.

[66] Taylor, *A Bawd*, sig. B5^{v}-B6^{r}.

[67] Taylor, *A Bawd*, sig.C7r. Taylor does not reserve his critical gaze for bawds alone in respect of idleness, however: 'Sloth is the last of the list, (and wel may it come last, because it is the laziest), yet it is a Gentleman-like quality, and a Lady-like disposition to be idle and live upon the sweat of others; Manuall trades or handicrafts are counted base and mercenary, and good industry is contemptible; laudable endevours Mechanicall, and to take pains and labour, is drudgery and meere slavery.' (sig. B7^{v}).

industriousness/idleness. Cavendish appears to recognise, in the first instance, that the complicity of the bawd in matters of sexual misbehaviour is the other face of the vulnerability of the wife: when the wives who have come to ask advice of the anchoret are eventually permitted to put their questions to her, they air only one area of enquiry – the sexual politics of marriage. They ask 'what they should do, if their Husbands whoors did inslave them, by being as mistresses to command, and they, as a drudge, and slave to obey, making them as a Bawd, or witness to their lascivious acts?'[68] Whether Cavendish imagines a literal imposition of servitude upon the wife by the husband's mistress, or merely a fear that a husband's preference for another woman will produce domestic instability, Cavendish suggests the ease with which one role (the wife) may shade into the other (the bawd), an acknowledgement which only makes more fraught the use of the bawd as a figure to delimit and negotiate the adjacent role of the housewife. While Cavendish reviles the bawd as a model for wifely behaviour, and suggests that there should be a limit to a wife's passivity in marriage – 'a noble mind cannot play the Bawd nor live with impudent vices' – the uncertain demarcation of wifely authority in the case of husbandly infidelity in fact makes of this troubled wife an intermediary figure remarkably redolent of the watchful, manipulative procuress.[69] Further, the transformative abilities of the bawd – that skill she harbours with which she disguises and re-presents dross – makes visible important congruencies between the "wrong" kind of idleness and the "right" kind: it is the courtesan's own skill in transforming surface, and by this to persuade, entice and humiliate, which Cavendish both denigrates as intellectually idle and yet recommends as suitable for the wife to emulate. The cluster of meanings around idleness and work – ideas which are first set up in the paratextual material of *Natures Pictures* – are therefore sufficiently malleable to make it unclear where the boundaries of acceptability and of imitability lie between the self-pleasuring and self-interested indolence of the courtesan, the productive, leisured idleness of the genteel wife, and that curiously idle industriousness of the bawd. The result is an uncertain and troubled denial of that pejorative understanding of idleness in *Anchoret,* and some linguistic difficulty (or reluctance) in defining the work of the courtesan that Cavendish attempts to endorse as a solution to marital disharmony.

Natures Pictures, we recall, is both a product of and designed for 'innocent' inactivity: 'When idle, then my Readers may in't look, And yet be idle still.' It is, nevertheless, an adulterated form of inactivity, for Cavendish's notion of idleness remains an accumulative and active form of behaviour: readers can still expect to 'learn Something to lay up in mem'ries Treasure.'[70] Brian Vickers' discussion of the

[68] Cavendish, *Anchoret,* p.339.
[69] Cavendish, *Anchoret,* p.339.
[70] The image of the gathered Lucases and Cavendishes opposite the title page in *Natures Pictures* is coupled with a short verse that justifies the pastime activities of the 'Semy-Circle', since their 'Tales of pleasure & of witt' will instruct the reader how to 'innocently pass your tyme.' 'The Dedication' then urges the reader to 'mix Profit with your Pleasure': the profit is the gathering of what Cavendish intends should be edifying and stored in 'mem'ries Treasure' (i.e., treasury).

ambivalence of *otium*, of a productive and worthwhile form of leisure, points up the humanist anxiety about the fine distinction to be made between this and simple laziness:

> the fear of idleness in Europe up to the eighteenth century was so strong that *otium* could only be accepted if strongly qualified as *honestum,* a leisure which yielded 'fruits' in works of literature, poetry, philosophy or history. The dominant ideology of work and employment was so strong that 'ease' could only be countenanced as an incidental phase of rest, in order for work to be resumed with renewed energy.[71]

The length and detail of the knowledge presented in *Anchoret*, amongst other of the texts in the volume, nevertheless suggests something more sustained than the reader's dipping in and out of the book for recreative purposes.[72] The breadth of information which Cavendish offers through the anchoret indicates that idleness is less of an instruction than a conceit in the discursive construction of this volume, the social class of its imagined readership and the posture of expertise offered by the narrator. The disinterested authority of the anchoret's oracle-like posture shows particular strain under the burden of this central term 'idleness', which Cavendish deploys unevenly: in the section '*The tenth sort that visited her were House-keepers, and Masters of Families, &c.*' the anchoret addresses anxieties about estate management, prominent amongst them the trouble of lazy servants. The ruination of estates might be attributed to various forms of negligent behaviour (disproportionate hospitality, personal profligacy) but 'when there are more servants than work, they grow lazy and proud, thinking themselves Masters by their little employment, forgetting at whose cost they live at. Besides the factions idleness brings, by hearkening after tales, and reporting them worse than they were meant; so they rather serve to eat than to work, to command than obey.'[73] Idleness is considered in the light proper to its social actors; it is more an accusation of laziness amongst waged workers than an excuse that limns and gives justification to genteel recreational activities. When inflected by class, idleness is a failing (though it still provokes the same desire to promulgate 'tales' that cuts across lines of social distinction). Cavendish intends the reader to understand tall tales, fibs and gossip amongst indolent and underworked servants as following on from laziness, and means to gesture in a different direction when she dedicates *Natures Pictures* to 'pastime', where she both justifies idleness and lightly suggests it ought not preclude some knowledge

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[71] Brian Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance: the ambivalence of otium', *Renaissance Studies,* Vol. 4, No. 2 (June 1990), p.153.

[72] Cavendish appears to desire an orderly engagement from her readers: she is anxious that they should approach her text seriously in light of its generic composition rather than in page number sequence. The first part of the volume contains 'Comicall and Tragicall discourse mixt together', which mixture, she fears, 'will so disunite the thoughts and disturbe the passions, as my Readers will hardly fix their Minds seriously on either.' (*Natures Pictures,* 'To my Readers', sig. D1^{r}). Cavendish also states that she does 'not strive, as many do, to put the choice pieces in the first place, to invite or rather intice the Readers to read their following works, but endeavour to place my works properly and not subtilly.' Cavendish does not place *The She-Anchoret* first, but she informs the reader that it is one of two most important works in the volume and where to find it (*Natures Pictures,* 'To my Readers, sig.C4^{v}).

[73] Cavendish, *Anchoret,* p.332.

gained. The right kind of idleness is one which is more than merely financially profitable, which is self-consciously intellectual, genteelly polite (superficially, at least), and a precondition for real artistic accomplishment. The wrong kind cleaves to self-interest at the cost of conflict, to personal acquisition or pleasure, and which is, like the bawd, intentionally careless of established hierarchies.

The productively idle accomplishments of the courtesan overlap with the right kind of idleness, while also sharing qualities with the wrong kind. This latter form of indolence seeks, like the bawd, after personal profit, though is not content to pursue this indiscriminately ('all is Fish that comes to the Net with her') but finds advantage in publicly, and often, politically, moving close to power.[74] Later on in *Sociable Letters*, Cavendish disparages the courtesan's particular ability to inveigle herself with influential men: 'Courtesans are often assisted by the Powerful' and 'Such Power and Favour hath Concupiscence, as to corrupt Magistrates, bribe Judges, fee Lawyers, flatter Courtiers, and the truth is, intice, allure, and perswade most of Mankind.'[75] The intellectual and artistic attainments of the courtesan are, moreover, troublingly similar to those of leisured women like Cavendish herself, and are the basis of the self-conscious sophistication upon which those operations of personal and sometimes political power in high class sex work rely. Cavendish complains that 'for the most part Women are not Educated as they should be, I mean those of Quality, for their Education is onely to Dance, Sing, and Fiddle, to write Complemental Letters, to read Romances, to speak some Language that is not their Native, which Education, is an Education of the Body, and not of the Mind.'[76] She expresses surprise, moreover, that parents would suffer

> to teach their [children's] Bodies *Arts*, and not to Instruct their Minds with Understanding; for this Education is more for *outward Shew*, than inward Worth, it makes the Body a Courtier, and the Mind a Clown, and oftentimes it makes their Body a Baud, and their Mind a Courtesan, for though the Body procures Lovers, yet it is the Mind that is the Adulteress.[77]

Cavendish's own education, as she describes it in her autobiographical text *A True Relation*, has something of this cosmetic character, and is only narrowly differentiated from this 'education of the

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[74] Taylor, *A Bawd*, sig b5^{v}. She also continues to recognise the proximity of bawd and courtesan when, in Letter XXX, she disgustedly folds one into the other in lewdly suggesting that a courtesan's tongue is 'a Bawd for the other end.' (*Sociable Letters*, p.63). Cavendish seems generally to keep within the English tradition of denigrating and trivialising the courtesan, a perspective which emphasises avarice, ambition, deceit and disease, and downplays the courtesan's intellect, ability and refinement – despite the necessary political and literary skill of the most successful examples. See, Melissa M. Mowry, *The Bawdy Politic in Stuart England, 1660-1714: Political Pornography and Prostitution.* (Florence : Taylor & Francis Group, 2004) chapter 5, 'Jades at Livery and Other Prostitutes', pp.105-126; Margaret F. Rosenthal, 'Veronica Franco's Terze Rime: the Venetian Courtesan's Defense', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Summer, 1989), pp. 227- 257; Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing In Early Modern England* (Oxford and New York, NY.: Oxford University Press) chapter 3, "Courtesan Politic": The Erotic Writing and Cultural Significance of Pietro Aretino', pp.119-157.

[75] Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter XXXVI, p.76.

[76] *Sociable Letters*, Letter XXVI, p.51.

[77] *Sociable Letters*, Letter XXVI, emphasis mine, p.51.

body' by her careful suggestion that her study of many of the same subjects were undertaken 'rather for formalitie than benefit': her mother was not overly concerned that Margaret and her siblings should be accomplished – allowing them to study music, dancing, and languages for form's sake – so much as bred 'on honest principles.'[78] The outwardness of the courtesan's character – her education is undertaken for the sake of its 'outward Shew' in a public forum – becomes especially important to Cavendish's struggle to contextualise the courtesan within the domestic sphere, an endeavour which, we recall, she attempts under the authoritative guise of female intellectual freedom. The romantic licence which Cavendish grants herself in enabling knowledge production (i.e., through the voice of an independent, exceptional heroine) becomes a self-limiting strategy: while the superficial educational accomplishments of the courtesan come under critique as a sign of her intellectual idleness, Cavendish (inadvertently, I suspect) draws attention to an ironic congruence between the courtesan's all-surface intellectual attainments and the anchoret's own perfunctory learning on the subject of the courtesan's role – as well as Cavendish's own rather conventional education in performative arts as a matter of conventional propriety. The courtesan's 'arts' are read pejoratively – the antithesis of genuine intellectual endeavour which shapes and instructs the mind – but Cavendish seems bound to recognise that they may be valuable in a domestic context. They can, then, confer 'benefit', even as Cavendish struggles to explicate how those arts may be deployed.

Domesticating the courtesan

It is the flexibility of the language of work that allows Cavendish to make no more than a cursory brush with the figure of the courtesan, and to locate her within the marital household without being obliged to describe her person or the specifics of her 'arts.' The anchoret refrains from explaining precisely how the courtesan may function in such a context, even as she is co-opted as a resource of skilled albeit dishonestly deployed labour, and a potentially remedial resource for rebalancing power in a marriage.[79] The anchoret's recommendation that the courtesan's 'arts' are suitable for emulation follows on from a

[78] 'As for tutors, although we had all sorts of Vertues, as singing, dancing, playing on Musick, reading, writing, working, and the like, yet we were not kept strictly thereto, they were rather for formalitie than benefit, for my Mother cared not so much for our dancing and fiddling, singing and prating of several languages; as that we should be bred virtuously, modestly, civilly, honourably, and on honest principles.' Cavendish, *A true Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life,* in *Natures Pictures*, pp.370-1.

[79] Behn, differently, has less difficulty with the prospect of locating something like erotic work within marriage. In *The Feigned Courtesans*, Cornelia assures Galliard that she will be content to play-act the expensive mistress after they are married, but without the prospect of actual infidelity: 'And to encourage a young setter-up, I do here promise to be the most mistress-like wife. You know, signor, I have learnt the trade, though I had stock to practise, and will be as expensive, insolent, vain, extravagant, and inconstant, as if you only had the keeping part, and another the amorous assignations; what think ye, sir?' '*The Feigned Courtesans, or A Night's Intrigue*', in *The Rover, and Other Plays,* ed.by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.4, pp.179-80.

recognition that wifely qualities (being 'honestly modest, cleanly, patient, prudent, and discreet') are likely to be detrimental to erotic feeling:

> A man may love dearly and tenderly his wife, and yet desire to kisse his maid, wherefore to keep him constant, said she, a wife must act the arts of a Courtison to him which is very lawfull, since it is to an honest end; For the Arts are honest, and lawfull, but the design and end is wicked, but said she, to learn those Arts you must be instructed by such as have practiced or seen them, for I have not, nor cannot guesse, or devise Arts.[80]

The anchoret's scanty advice directs the reader to the 'arts' of the courtesan but denies usable knowledge of them. Chao, following Sarasohn and Leslie, points to the androgyny of the anchoret, a queer balance of 'masculine traits, such as rationality and eloquence' with the supreme feminine virtue of 'virginity': sexual innocence, nevertheless, heralds a lack of the practical experience required to validate learning.[81] The anchoret effectively recommends experiential knowledge, but must admit an absence of it. (It is clear, likewise, that Cavendish herself is frequently constrained to produce merely second-hand knowledge: her suspiciously reductive and literary image of the shop-keepers wife accords exactly with what Mario DiGangi identifies as the sexual type of the 'citizen-wife' in early city comedies.)[82] The limits of respectable subject matter for the anchoret are a hindrance to understanding, especially when placed next to the fuller, later rumination of the matter in *Sociable Letters*. What emerges from the comparison between the slenderest advice possible given in *Anchoret,* and the much enlarged regurgitation of it in Letter LVII of *Sociable Letters*, is an important indeterminacy of language regarding 'art':

> when Beauty is attended with Insinuating Arts, as Behaviour of Person, Pleasant Speech, and Harmonious Voice, as also the Arts of Musick, Dancing, Dressing, and the like, it becomes Victorious, and makes its Triumphs in many Hearts, like as in many Nations…Indeed Women Skilful in these Arts are like Juglers, which Deceive Sense and Reason, making an Appearance of that which is not Really so; and thus most of our Sex Juggle with Men, they Delude them with Artificial Shews and Insinuating Flattery.[83]

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[80] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.339.
[81] Tien-yi Chao, 'Representations of Female Sainthood and Voluntary Death in Margaret Cavendish's "*The She-Anchoret*" (1656)', *English Studies*, 92:7 (2011) p.748.
[82] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.331; see DiGangi, *Sexual Types*, pp.122-56. The anchoret's 'wisedom' can also be remarkably inane, the evidently contingent nature of which necessarily urges caution about truth claims: she advises tradesmen, for example, that they should 'not set too great a price on their ware, for those that sell deare will have but few customers.' (*Anchoret*, p.330).
[83] Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter LVII, p.117

It is concluded that 'it would be well if Wives had more of that Art to keep their Husband's Affections, or at least to keep them from seeking after Variety; and for Courtesans to have less, that they might not Draw and Intice Husbands from their Honest Wives.'[84]

Here, 'arts' concern transformation, of language into power, of skilled accomplishments into mere jugglery. Such work is at once insubstantial – all surface – and yet authoritative, enabling the deception of reason. 'Artificial shews' and 'allurements' occasion the transfiguration of 'rational men' into variations of man emptied of ideal masculine virtues, 'Beastly Adulterers, Simple Asses, and Prodigal Fools.'[85] (The bawd's ability to present something foul as something beautiful – dressing up dross – only differs, perhaps, from the courtesan's own skill by the latter's socially refined character). A discourse of outward show and real substance – the 'Sense' (senses) of an entranced victim is alienated from the underlying truth 'of that which is not really so' – helpfully expands the range of meaning attached to 'work', 'employments', and 'arts.' To say that 'if Wives had more of that Art' and courtesans were 'to have less' of that same art defines this range of transformative skills as the same single resource: as with Cavendish's class-contingent understanding of idleness, work is given a social identity. The same task or series of tasks (arts) signifies differently (arousing either compassion or prejudicial feeling) when performed by, alternately, one woman (a courtesan) who undertakes remunerated labour for personal gain and one (a wife) whose labours are apparently without self-interest. (One recalls, at this point, Cavendish's ease with the 'profitable arts' of housewifery in *The Dialogue of the Wise Lady, the Learned Lady and the Witty Lady*. The instability of the term 'arts' – and the need to make plain the difference between 'benefit' and 'profit' – causes Cavendish considerable anxiety). The separability of work from worker, and the understanding that 'art' (here, pejorative) can be applied in other contexts, severs this work, momentarily, from the possibility of its being judged according to normative standards of acceptability concerning women's virtuous employments. Cavendish may transplant the courtesan's skills into the marital household, but the derisive valence of deception around 'arts' remains in suspense until it is made clear that these are being performed 'to an honest end' and are therefore 'lawfull.' While the putative distance between the housewife and the courtesan in *Sociable Letters* is measured through a political metaphor ('But for the most part Courtesans with their Arts Usurp the Wives Rights and Maids hopes') that clearly identifies an impostor and, against her, the genuine article, the proximity between the same two figures in *Anchoret* becomes, differently, a potential intimacy.[86] The wife must somehow 'act' the utterly undefined role of the courtesan, a mystifying proposition given Cavendish's unwillingness to be definitive.

Though not frank, Cavendish's evocation of the courtesan is nevertheless culturally legible. She draws upon the vision of the quintessential 'Plump, Smooth, Smiling Venetian Courtisan' herself in *Orations*

[84] *Sociable Letters*, Letter LVII, p.118.
[85] *Sociable Letters*, Letter LVII, p.117.
[86] Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter LVII, p.118.

(1662), and the suggestion that the courtesan is worth emulating in order to allow a wife to compete with other women for the sexual attention of her husband may be read as a recontextualization of what Andrew Fleck terms the Venetian courtesan's 'perverse social function', in which she acts as a release valve for male erotic energy outside marriage.[87] Considering Thomas Coryat's well-known section on Venice in his *Crudities*, Fleck underlines Coryat's resignedly utilitarian attitude to sex workers: 'their services may be morally reprehensible, but they ultimately protect the bonds, if not the sanctity, of marriage.'[88] Coryat explains the Venetian logic on the matter of tolerating courtesans, 'for they thinke that the chastity of their wives would be the sooner assaulted, and so consequently they should be capricornified (which of all the indignities in the world the Venetian cannot patiently endure) were it not for these places of evacuation.'[89] Valuing fidelity as a principle of marital and domestic harmony, and unwilling to sacrifice the sanctity of the conjugal union for the sake of the broader dynastic and social bonds implicated in a successful marriage, Cavendish relocates the 'arts' of the courtesan – though, notably, not quite her person – within the marital household. Cavendish seems determined to deny readers the scopophilic thrill of looking at the courtesan by declining to describe her in *Anchoret*: Coryat, conversely, offers an anxiously fascinated detailing of the courtesan's opulent physical appearance, allowing the reader to gaze in lieu of the possibility of touching. At the same time, however, Coryat's uncomfortably indeterminate phrase 'places of evacuation' exhibits an insecurity about the soundness of these places, and it is an anxiety that Cavendish shares: it is not clear whether it is the bodies of the courtesans or the 'Palaces' which they inhabit that are used as dumping grounds for that excess of desire which cannot be off-loaded onto wives.

For Cavendish, a husband kissing maids, 'neighbors maids, daughters, or wives' is a trivial 'infirmity' compared to the introduction of the anarchic physical presence of the prostitute (even the well-heeled professional) into the household, for what is poured into this leaky receptacle may well not remain there. As Coryat implies that courtesans have deep financial influence in the Venetian state, Cavendish worries, as we have seen, about the balance of power within the household and the potential of the sex worker – 'whoors' and 'courtisons' – to upend all.[90] In place of allowing 'Falshood' incarnate into the home – a creature who insinuates herself 'to all mens good liking' – the anchoret instead suggests a careful emulation.[91] This emulation of the courtesan becomes, when considered through the lens of

[87] Cavendish, *Orations of divers sorts*, p.299. Andrew Fleck, 'The Custom of Courtesans and John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan', ANQ* (Lexington, KY.), Vol.21 (3) (2008), p.13.
[88] Fleck, 'The Custom of Courtesans', p.13.
[89] Thomas Coryat, *Coryats crudities hastily gobled up in five moneths trauells in France, Sauoy, Italy, Rhetia comonly called the Grisons country, Heluetia aliàs Switzerland, some parts of high Germany, and the Netherlands; newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe in the county of Somerset, & now dispersed to the nourishment of the trauelling members of this kingdome* (London, 1611) pp.264-5.
[90] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.339.
[91] In *The Female Academy*, Cavendish personifies 'Falshood' as 'a Curtezan', who though 'filthy of her self, yet by artificial Paint, she makes herself appear as fair, and pure as Truth; but the deservingly Wife can soon see the difference between the artificial fair of Falshood, and the true, natural, fair complexion of Truth, although fools do admire, and are sooner catch'd, so, for the most part deceived with the deceiving Arts of Falshood, than the

work, a performance of imperceptible labour. Michael McKeon suggests that Cavendish discloses the possibility of some agency for women in the compensatory "insensible power" of the wife, this "power" being that which is made available to politically disenfranchised women through their exercise of a specifically sexual allure. 'The literally disempowered acquire strategic volition' through an operation of eroticised influence, an act which helps to delimit a space of apparent mutuality within marriage in which subjection is assumed not to be detrimentally felt as subjugation.[92] By reframing a discourse of strategy and power as, instead, one of labour, a new window is opened onto this scene of domestic hierarchy: in articulating the exercise of domestic influence through the language of work – the 'arts' of the morally challenging courtesan – we are prompted to consider the way in which such 'insensible power' is not in the least insensible to she who must labour, physically and linguistically, to conjure it up. The very condition and essence of this labour, after all, is its skill in *seeming* imperceptible (that power to deceive the senses). The call for wives to perform this erotic work also underwrites, in its own way, the advice aimed at husbands on suppressing 'wanton' wifely behaviour: the wife must perforce take the role of intermediary figure between a husband and his sexual appetites (made object in another woman, i.e., a mistress, the maid, the neighbour's daughter) when the wife herself subscribes to an inegalitarian distribution of sexual desire which designs the husband as 'a Tower and Champion to keep and defend a Womans chastity and reputation', while she is implicated in preventing him from 'seeking after Variety.'[93] The courtesan is a logical figure for which Cavendish could reach when thinking about the policing of sexual virtue – she is recognised as a culturally valuable sexual release valve for men, and the proximate intellectual idleness of courtesans and upper class women like Cavendish might make guessing at those 'arts' easier than the anchoret claims – but the centrality of the wife's responsibility to police sexual behaviour and to maintain household reputation nevertheless seems difficult for Cavendish to articulate in a manner helpful for her readers.

natural Verity of Truth: for Falshood makes a glaring shew at the first sight, but the more she is viewed, the worse she appears.' *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and excellent Princess, The lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London, 1662) 2.12, p.663.

[92] Michael McKeon, *The secret history of domesticity: public, private, and the division of knowledge* (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp.150-51. McKeon bases this discussion on Letter XVI in *Sociable Letters,* in which Cavendish also recognises the non-sexual influence of other women – 'Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, Aunts' - to a given man. (pp.27-8).

[93] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333;347. Cavendish's views on adultery as a gendered phenomenon are summarised by her lexical choices in *The World's Olio*: the adultery of a husband is 'liberty'; that of a wife, 'disobedience.' (*World's Olio,* pp.75-7) As Laura Gowing states in her study of the language of sexual insult, 'it seems that sexual honesty is so distinctly gendered as to allow no space for effective comparison of male and female honesty.' Cavendish's language is differential, and deferential to men, an approach regurgitated in *Anchoret*. See, Laura Gowing, 'Gender and the Language of Insult in Early Modern London', *History Workshop*, No. 35 (Spring, 1993), p.9.

Provocative pragmatism: the limited fidelity of the courtesan/wife

Read in isolation from Cavendish's later texts (like *Sociable Letters*), it is not clear *how* the wife is supposed to emulate the courtesan's arts: the anchoret's project of knowledge production and dissemination is frustratingly consonant with the limits of the heroine's subject position. This reticence to explain the courtesan's erotic work therefore becomes an issue of epistemological authority and of credibility. What is the effect of the anchoret coaching husbands and wives on matters sexual and domestic when her expertise is clearly theoretical? What can be the state of the anchoret's authority on marriage when her intellectualism resists wholesale the marital teleology of romance narratives? The anchoret's framing narrative (as scant as it is) actively agitates, we recall, against making romantic connections (that is, of love and desire) and thence domestic union: her advice to wives to take up the work of the courtesan in order to maintain conjugal harmony addresses the very marital miseries of which the anchoret's father offers warning at the beginning of the text. That the anchoret's chaste character must maintain a certain sense of squeamish ignorance is perhaps a partial explanation for the knowledge gap about the sexual politics of infidelity. But, while the heroine's unapplied knowledge of conjugal relationships retains a theoretical bent, it is also true that the anchoret does have direct experience of the sexual tyranny of the presumptuous patriarch. The anchoret chooses a noble suicide instead of succumbing to 'the raging lust of a wicked Tyrant', rejecting the sexual threat, and the assumption of access to her person that it represents, from the monarch 'whose Kingdom was neighbouring to the Country she was borne, bred, and lived in.'[94]

If we posit an analogous relationship between the power of the lustful king and of the philandering husband, then, we may see a feminist explanatory thesis hove in to view: the figures of the heroine, the wife and the courtesan may be positively reconciled on the matter of male sexual tyranny (rather than set uncomfortably against one another as opposing models of feminine influence), for these women are integrated in an exclusively female knowledge system which militates against the husband's/king's presumption of primary authority and unlimited access to the bodies of other women. Through a reading of feminine virtue, moreover, which sees both virginal *and* marital chastity as a strength, Cavendish points to a particularly womanly ability to pursue autonomy, and to seize and reroute power within marriage in order to govern sexual relationships. Jessica C. Murphy has emphasised the 'many-sidedness' of behavioural prescriptions for women in the period – communicated in conduct literature as in more plainly 'literary' texts – and has argued for critical approaches to models of conduct that can accept negotiation, multivalence and potential subversion as guiding principles in understanding such prescriptions.[95] Cavendish recognises, quite obviously, the negotiability of models of virtuous feminine

[94] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.356; 355.

[95] Jessica C. Murphy, *Virtuous Necessity: Conduct Literature and the Making of the Virtuous Woman in Early Modern England* (Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan Press, 2015), p.7. It is worth noting, however, that the anchoret's "defiance" of authority complies wholly with the wishes and approbation of her marriage-averse father.

conduct: the anchoret is a consummate show-off, unwilling to be quiet and willing to stage a spectacular suicide in public. Such a political and personal gesture denies any broad expectations that she should be silent and obedient. The courtesan, too, represents negotiability, an ongoing and potentially recursive borrowing of power and of skill that sets itself against the teleology of romance and the implied circumscription of female agency – a settling down to appropriate roles – that comes with narrative closure. Victoria Kahn's suggestion that 'it is not good for women to have romances end, for romantic closure is antithetical to female independence' is an observation that she makes of Cavendish's *The Contract*, a text which, as she notes, 'is taken up with the dilatory space of debating the conditions of contract rather than with married life itself.'[96] *Anchoret* is a more developed interrogation of concerns about power, loyalty and interest within lived marriage. Romantic closure (that is, marriage) need not be an end to female independence altogether; or, at the very least, not an end to a wife's power of renegotiation. 'Arts', understood as work, point to the wife's opportunity to exert rhetorical influence, and to enjoy (as much as merely carry out) some manipulative politicking, as a lawful type of courtesan.

This role embodies a response to sexual tyranny that insists on strategizing in the face of disorder, rather than just weathering it; the courtesan's role also proposes that alternative relations to power can be sought, rather than merely (as the martyred romance heroine, or the oppressed political subject) suffering patiently. Such power is, in any case, tacitly validated: the authority invested in the husband to assume a willing coercion in the wife – for the anchoret endorses eroticised force in a precarious denial of explicit violence – is imperfect because he imperils his own authority with his own immoderate passions.[97] The wife is justified, therefore, in deploying her own (or an adopted) influence in order to recalibrate the husband's relationship to his own authority – and to his wife.[98] Where the anchoret does offer explicit advice about the best course of action for a wife to take in the face of her husband's desire to 'kisse their maids', she suggests manipulation disguised as praise: undercutting the husband's feelings towards his mistress, the wife should 'praise their mistris more than they deserved, and to cause them to be as jealous as they could be', a tactic which she reiterates when she suggests that 'a superlative praise will abate the truth, and out-reach the admiration.'[99] The wife, with all the persuasive facility of the courtesan, rhetorically gazumps the husband, over-valuing the assets of the mistress in order to cause him to see that his own estimation of her is excessive. Underpinning this, moreover, and, perhaps, should

[96] Kahn, 'Margaret Cavendish and the Romance of Contract', p.559.
[97] The anchoret suggests that a husband 'may restrain a wife, although not beat her; for if she be an unsufferable scold, or a vixen, he may binde her hands with kinde embraces, and stop her mouth with kisses.' (Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333).
[98] There is therefore some irony to Cavendish's conventional association of reason with the male, and the passions with the female in the opening section of this address to husbands and wives: 'Reason, said she, should govern as King in the Brain, and Temperancy as Queen in the Heart.' (Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333)
[99] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.339. As often, there is a noticeable contradiction in Cavendish's writing, wherein she suggests the wife ought to both draw attention to the couple and, as we have already seen, to ignore them. What is consistent across both of these methods, however, is the underlying principle of the wife's power to righteously trump the interests of her husband – whether she more closely resembles bawd or courtesan.

the tactic of excessive praise misfire, she ensures that jealousy should begin to fester in the bond, such as it is, between husband and mistress. As the wife over-praises, and causes the husband to experience jealousy (if she is so attractive, surely others will want her), so she also denigrates 'by discoursing that no woman is to be trusted or relyed upon for their constancyes in Love, when they have forsaken their own honour.'[100] The wife may rhetorically transform the mistress – in a manner quite the reverse of the deceptive bawd, who disguises foulness rather than reveals it – into dross, into, as she later puts it in *Sociable Letters*, 'the Dregs and Leavings of other men.'[101] If the mistress is so lubricious, surely she has already let others have her.

The suggestion, then, that a bilateral flow of power within marriage might admit of some wifely politicking – some subtle persuasion, some knowing manipulation of sentiment, some exertion of influence that denies the prospect of a unilateral relationship of authority – encourages us to map the provocative work of the courtesan onto a pragmatic model of wifehood. This is a vision of fidelity-at-some-limited-cost (the wife should accept sexual infidelity as a fact, but can and should work against it) that recognises dependence and loyalty, and which cannot accept a heroic chastity-at-all-costs model of feminine behaviour (that is, the anchoret's zero tolerance approach to sexual impropriety). The self-transformation of the wife into the courtesan – an assumption of her ability to make things seem other than they are – recasts the courtesan's intellectual and moral idleness as an acceptable form of industry. Within the domestic realm, dependence might rather be read as mutuality: the work required to answer the complexities of "real" married life (the work of the courtesan) may certainly induce anxiety about propriety and the mutability of performance, but it is a workable response to the intricacies of desire and power that both energise and trouble the conjugal bond. While the anchoret's advice presumes a masculine lack of self-control concerning sexual desire, it also assumes that the husband is respectful enough of his wife's authority and sufficiently heedful of her opinion that her manipulation of him will strike home. A model of unconditional spousal loyalty, and of complete, suffering subjugation, cannot accommodate such power play.

Adventure without end: the wife's interminable labours

On the other hand, we might consider the discourse of the bodily, persuasive, superficially accomplished "employments" (or 'arts') of the courtesan as an occlusion of wifely labour and of a sexual double standard. Appraising the role of the courtesan in a domestic context by returning to those 'virtuous employments' with which Cavendish began her domestic advice to husbands, reminds us that such work by the wife may be perceived as part of the same suite of repressive measures designed to police her intellectual and emotional state, her moral character, her physical condition and diet, her social

[100] Cavendish, *Anchoret,* p.339.
[101] Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, Letter XXX, p.63.

behaviour and deportment, her sexual conduct, her sartorial choices and her productive activities. The anchoret advises husbands that if his wife is not 'honest' or 'discreet', 'he may restrain her from going abroad', and that 'she must be kept to a spare dry diet…she must study much and sleep little…she must have moral lectures preached to her very often…she must be maintained thriftily…which will keep her from wandring or gadding abroad.'[102] There is no analogous response that the wife may make to her husband's libidinous excess. Her work, in taking up the courtesan's 'arts', is only reactive, not pre-emptive: on such a reading, this work might be understood less as transformative or energised by a frisson of erotic power play, than as simple housekeeping. The wife is obliged to follow quietly behind her husband with a metaphorical mop and bucket, and therefore to take upon herself the conventional burden of the household's virtue entire. The broad apparatus of power available to him is, conversely, forcefully preventive, a primary shaping mechanism. While the anchoret roundly rejects sexual tyranny, and, like the wife, defiantly sets a hard limit on the ability of a man to imperil or soil her chaste virtue, the wife also remains subject to a regime of near absolute power of which she appears uncritical and under which she must accept her husband's sexual indiscretions as a given. Such indiscretions are never a question of his self-management or a precautionary moulding of his body and mind, but a question of his wife's labour.

Replacing one erotic figure with another as a means of sexual distraction must, after all, register a certain damning faith in satiation: the wife's erotic work, which requires that she replicate the thrill of illicit sexual pursuit by diverting her husband's attention from maids and acquaintances, makes explicit the sexual irresponsibility of men while failing to discourage it. Her mimicry of the courtesan would also be unnecessary were sexual desire made equally available to man and wife. In recognising the courtesan's position in that dubious space between idleness and activity – between intellectually superficial accomplishments and 'shews', and her effective rhetorical and physical power – one acknowledges too that such power might the more easily be appropriated by (or such responsibility foisted upon) a woman already primed with the 'formalitie' of such trivial educational attainments. Alison Conway has suggested that the combined appeal and revulsion attendant upon the courtesan can be condensed into two ideas – consternation, and greed. She 'shocks precisely because she exceeds the limits of need.'[103] Cavendish's whittling down of the courtesan to a figure of 'need' rather than one which exceeds this limit through mere greed is semi-convincing, and the maintenance of domestic hierarchy is its own justification, but the line between obligation and opportunity in a context which understands women's domestic labours as duty is difficult to define with any confidence. The courtesan is, finally, such a troubling intermediary figure because opportunity may actively obscure ideological obligation: as a figure who interposes between the supremely self-assured heroine (intellectually and

[102] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333.
[103] Alison Conway, *The Protestant Whore: Courtesan Narrative and Religious Controversy in England, 1680-1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016) p.9. Cavendish herself sends up the courtesan's desire for, and implicitly undeserved attainment of, material extravagance in Letter XXXVI of *Sociable Letters* (p.76).

physically independent), and the wife (heavily circumscribed in terms of physical experience, of sexual morality and of opportunities for the exercise of power), the courtesan helps to occlude the fact of the impossible, impassable paradox of chastity.[104] Chastity is (as the character of the anchoret suggests) a woman's supreme virtue, an expression of strength and her best defence; it is also (as the character of the wife suggests) so weak as to require both repressive policing and consistent defence through diversion of lust on to others. This logic undergirds both the anchoret's chosen subject position and that (perhaps less volitional) of the wife: whatever allure the courtesan's own position offers, she becomes a self-policing mechanism with a glamourous outside, making sense of the seeming difference between the heroine's and the wife's self-same subjection to the imposition of masculine sexual tyranny. Suicide (the anchoret's response), and erotic work (that of the wife) may be understood as two sides of the same coin: the anchoret may not take her own advice, disallowing for herself the kind of forbearance that she counsels for the wives of unfaithful husbands (and suggesting thereby the imitability of one and not the other), but female heroism and female pragmatism flow from and reinscribe the same patriarchal logic.

A heroine can, however, only die once. Cavendish formalises the repeatability of the courtesan-wife's work in a non-narrative mode, and, differently, allows for a consciously controversial form of closure for the anchoret through narrativization. Consequently, that integrative vision of exclusively female knowledge shared between heroine, wife and courtesan is imperilled by Cavendish's formal and structural choices: the fantastic falsehood of the anchoret's' fictive trajectory is that she has the option to duck out of domestic work, and her intellectual ambitions and her sexual integrity are permitted to take precedence over marriage. While the anchoret's "adventure" is somewhat atypical, it does achieve closure. The non-narrative, non-romantic textual existence of the wife, differently, has no defined endpoint. While Cavendish posits that the curb on the wife's work within marriage may be the act of bawdry – and she may justify the revocability of her labour and her loyalty when cornered into such a position – what then might be the limit that is set on her emulation of the courtesan's erotic work? When might the courtesan's almost magical powers of transformation begin to wear thin, and the replicability of her 'arts' begin to produce a longing for narrative closure? How many times will she have to intervene when her husband shows sexual interest in 'their maids; or their neighbour's maids, daughters, or wives?'[105] Her work – an understanding of virtuous huswifely-ness which has now expanded to include the courtesan's erotic arts – is potentially interminable. It is this sense of reiterative and unending effort that Cavendish's evocation of erotic work shares with Behn's interrogation of wifely emotional labour: the point at which the wife might achieve stability within marriage (expressed through sexual fidelity, material security, or as freedom from the burden of emotion management) is illusory, a fact which Behn explicitly recognises in her prose tale *The History of the Nun*.

[104] See Jessica C. Murphy, *Virtuous Necessity*, on the paradox of chastity, chapter one: pp.14-33.
[105] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.339.

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4. The Wife's Emotional Labour in Aphra Behn's The History of the Nun (1689)

Life after marriage: writing the housewife's romance

On the matter of the work of the housewife, the points of contact between *Anchoret* and *History* are multiple. Both texts are interested in a genteel form of housewifery which imbues certain non-market tasks with moral value; both bring this into discussion with sexual politics and gender order in the household; both use their proverbially perfect heroine as a means to interrogate the gender division of labour in the household and the ways in which a broad understanding of female agency is thereby circumscribed. Behn is, however, more critical of the balance and movement of power in the domestic setting than Cavendish; she is less impressed, likewise, with the inadequacies of certain romance tropes in respect of the wife's seemingly unending labours as she attempts to juggle social, legal and sexual identities. Cavendish, in a more equivocal style, advocates a conventional view of feminine and feminised housewifery within a household hierarchy, while also tentatively proposing a dynamic of erotic work that admits of power flowing in multiple directions.

Cavendish's vision of eroticised household politics is also an ostensibly more playful excursion into domestic disorder than is the case for *The History of the Nun*, which ultimately tends towards domestic tragedy. Behn asserts that this tragedy finds its origin in what she describes in the expository section of the text as 'a bad market' – that is, an exploitative marriage market in which young women, severely undervalued, are obliged to put themselves out to sale. The story is broadly concerned with the subtle inadequacies of concomitantly bad marriages, what pressures and conditions lead women into them, and what expectations and circumstances constitute, for women, a quietly objectionable state of

matrimony.[106] The nuptial relationships that Behn depicts and interrogates are not unfavourable because of immediately obvious problems like infidelity or abusive conduct: the trajectory of the heroine, Isabella, into and out of first one marriage of affection, and then one of financial interest, is at once a mundane and sensational story. Isabella begins life in a convent after being effectively orphaned ('whose mother dying when she was about two years old', her father entering 'the monastery of Jesuits'), escapes the cloistered life after falling in love with her first husband Henault and promptly becomes (or so she believes) a war widow. In dire straits, she remarries to Villenoys, a suitor whom she initially rejected, and lives peacefully until the return of Henault, imagined dead but merely a prisoner of war. Unable to reconcile herself to being branded a bigamist and 'an adulteress', Isabella murders both husbands and ends her life on the scaffold.[107]

In the way of romances, the narrative of Isabella's life from infancy through to death witnesses a variety of transformations, adventures, difficulties and reversals but the basic structure of Isabella's history and the principal themes of the story might answer to the lived experience of almost any woman in the period: a series of "choices" effectively emptied of consent; a limiting education; the desperation of seeking a materially secure existence and the necessity, therefore, of remarriage; social pressure to behave, speak and feel within certain normative bounds; and, a critical if helpless reflection upon these regulations and expectations. As sensational as the denouement of the story is – Isabella smothers one husband, contrives to have the other help her dispose of the body in the river and sends them both to a watery grave by sewing Villenoys' collar to the sack containing Henault's corpse – I want to focus on this moment, and other important instances in the story, as performances of labour.[108] *History* is full of acts of obviously effortful industriousness, and sometimes of intense, invisible, and naturalised work. Stepping back to consider the gendered division of labour in *History*, we see a conventional picture: men are soldiers, hunters, and farmers; they are fathers, husbands, and judges. Women are nuns, maids and laundry women; they are housewives and widows, and performers of needlework and of charity. Behn's self-consciousness about what constitutes the unremarkable (unremarkable because typical, and unremarkable as in unspeakable, because internalised) allows us to think about work in *The History of the Nun* as a contentious category which comes within the compass of a central term, 'custom'. In the expository section, the narrator, 'once designed an humble votary in the house of devotion' like Isabella, but who, unlike the heroine, declines to take up that path, laments her inability to 'alter custom': she shall never 'be allowed to make new laws or rectify old ones' in respect of the conscription of young

[106] Aphra Behn, 'The History of the Nun, or, The Fair Vow Breaker', in *Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. Paul Salzman (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009) p.141.
[107] Behn, *History*, p.141; 181.
[108] Behn's extravagant version of mariticide shares a sensationalist tendency with contemporary cheap print items which deal less sensitively with the same themes (marital conflict and violence) but, unlike Behn, consider spousal violence or murder to be the symptom of the wife's unacceptable behaviour. See, for instance, the anonymous *Advice to Batchelors Or, A Caution to be careful in their Choice* (London, 1685-88), and John Taylor's *A Juniper Lecture* (1639). The balladeer of *The Bloody Butcher, And the two wicked and cruel bawds* (1667) apportions partial blame for her own murder to a pregnant woman who was stabbed by her husband.

women who are, morally speaking, children, into 'nunneries and marriages.'[109] Incumbent upon the young women who are swallowed up by a systematically exploitative marriage market are duties unimagined and unlooked for: this "work" is an important theme of dispute in the story (who is conventionally expected to perform this or that form of labour, and who benefits by this?), and is also a performed action in the course of the narrative itself which quietly undermines prescriptive notions about appropriate wifely labour.

In respect of scholarship on the text, Behn's engagement with gendered activity or work in *The History of the Nun* has been overlooked. The diversity of responses to it include a reading of the text as an example of crime fiction in which Behn promotes a thoroughgoing gendered epistemology, an examination of Isabella's simplifying and inadequate textual afterlives through the use of adaptation theory, and an assertion that the story is published as a sort of guide book to female anti-behaviour, which unmoors the concept of loyalty from notions of social responsibility and the common good, and recasts it as a gendered self-interest.[110] Most critics also discuss the shocking conclusion of the story in which Isabella weaponises that most feminine of domestic skills, a facility with needle and thread. The play upon gender, work and power in this deadly needlework device should oblige the critical reader to move back over the breadth of the text, and to think again about performances of gendered labour: this reconsideration should prompt us to think about what feminised work Isabella may be performing in particular, but, just as importantly, who she performs it with, for, or, indeed, against in any given circumstance. Feminised labour in this text can come to confer authority in unexpected ways. Some responses to *The History of the Nun* have given gender and work a glancing blow: this chapter will examine the gendered division of labour in this text at certain key moments, and explore Behn's interrogation of wifely work, the expectations and customs that underpin it, and her frustration with a system that sets married women on a lifelong trajectory of quiet and seemingly necessary labour, however harmful the eventual consequences.[111]

To consider *The She Anchoret* in this same light – to attend to instances of dissatisfaction about the burden of labour placed on the housewife – is, indeed, to be frustrated by Cavendish's comparative lack of frustration. As we have seen, she hesitantly interrogates the possibility of a wife employing a measure of power within the household through her adoption of the role of the courtesan, and which role necessarily cuts across the husband's performance of stewardship over his wife. She nevertheless leaves

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[109] Behn, *History*, p.141.

[110] Rashmi Sahni, "Almost Certain: The Problem of Knowledge in Aphra Behn's *The History of the Nun*." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2015), pp. 213-238. Aleksondra Hultquist, 'Adapting Desires in Aphra Behn's *The History of the Nun'*, *Eighteenth Century-Theory And Interpretation*, Vol.56(4) (2015), pp. 485-506. Juan De Dios Torralbo Caballero, "'Murderess of Two Husbands': Female Agency as Female Loyalty in '*The History of the Nun*.'", *Gender Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2018, pp.20-44.

[111] Jacqueline Pearson, for instance, addresses the subversive intent behind the needlework device and, separately, the transgressive potentialities of disturbed gender roles in the story, but goes no further in linking them up ('The History of '*The History of the Nun*'', in *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, ed. by Hutner, pp.247-8).

intact the premise that the courtesan herself is a troubling and almost unspeakable figure on which to model such power. For Cavendish, therefore, there is space available within marriage in which a housewife may negotiate and enact authority through a sort of reparative, marriage-saving work that is on the very edge of "virtue", though she never questions the assumptions that underpin the necessity for such work. Behn explicitly interrogates such assumptions: marriage is never imagined to be its own reward, nor are its inequities transformed by sleight of hand into "opportunities" for the wife to prove her skill and industry in acts of labour whose value is in a demonstration of virtue and loyalty. In this way, the feminised emotional labour performed by Isabella within, and on the threshold of marriage, does not merely concern reformation of incompatibility or resolution of immediate problems, but is about the systemic fact of such work in marriage. As Rachel K. Carnell states, Behn 'could not countenance arbitrary hierarchy in the household', and nor could she leave unspoken the underappreciated reality that it is in that 'private space' that 'true tragedies often occur.'[112] The apogee, and the only logical conclusion, of Isabella's labours is a personal tragedy, the undoing of everything she has done up to that point: "work" is not simply a way of negotiating a limited measure of power and of managing expectations from within a marriage, as with Cavendish, but, rather, the series of processes by which marriage undercuts and destroys itself.

An early modern emotional economy: the luxury of feeling

Behn's amatory fiction has been recognised as particularly concerned with emotion and with excess. Margarete Rubik, for instance, casting backwards to seventeenth-century prose fiction, has written about the stylistic artifice of intense emotion in language in Behn's longer narratives, and Laura Linker, looking forwards to the novels of sensibility of the eighteenth century, has focused on the emotional and psychological pain of Isabella as a post-libertine heroine.[113] *History* is particularly apt for a study of emotion: Behn's heroine experiences two marriages that are substantially different in character, and two opportunities are offered in which Behn is able to demonstrate the nature of the emotional labour required of a wife, and to excavate the basis of Isabella's own understanding about how she is or should be managing feeling within domestic and romantic contexts. That there is a substantial gap (eventually developing into an almighty rupture) between what is prescribed and what is sustainable is at the crux of Behn's critique of expected wifely endeavour. The management of feeling is a concept which first requires anchorage in its sociological discipline before I seek to consider how this "work" manifests as a theme in *The History of the Nun.* The idea of emotion management, in both domestic and commercial

[112] Rachel K. Carnell, 'Subverting Tragic Conventions: Aphra Behn's Turn to the Novel', *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1999), p.137;147.
[113] Margarete Rubik**,** 'Excess and Artifice: The Depiction of the Emotions in Aphra Behn's Amatory Fiction', *Women's Writing*, 27:3, (2020) 377-392. Laura Linker, *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, And The Rise Of Sensibility, 1670-1730* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2011).

contexts, was first described and explored by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in the late-twentieth century. Her sociological study of, principally, the emotion management undertaken by air stewardesses in the course of their job in *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* undertook to clearly demarcate the difference between "emotional labour" and "emotion work" by situating them within a Marxist theoretical framework. As Hochschild states, 'I use the term emotional labor to mean the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value. I use the synonymous terms emotion work or emotion management to refer to these same acts done in a private context where they have use value.'[114] The management of feeling in either context, nevertheless requires, as she states, 'one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others.'[115] Acts of emotion management even in private spaces – that is, for Hochschild, a domestic space where notions of remunerated labour, profit and loss are not consciously conjured – take on the metaphorical language of and the operative function implied by an economic model:

> Acts of emotion management are not simply private acts; they are used in exchanges under the guidance of feeling rules. Feeling rules are standards used in emotional conversation to determine what is rightly owed and owing in the currency of feeling. Through them, we tell what is "due" in each relation, each role. We pay tribute to each other in the currency of the managing act. In interaction we pay, overpay, underpay, play with paying, acknowledge our dues, pretend to pay, or acknowledge what is emotionally due another person.[116]

One salient point here in respect of the heroine of *The History of the Nun* is the idea of playing at paying: Isabella shows herself a skilled performer of counterfeit emotion and an adept manager of personal feeling, and has been recognised as such in the available critical material.[117] So too, as Behn demonstrates, does she conform to the custom of overpaying, as a woman, in the 'currency of feeling': Isabella's management of emotion is, at times, a conspicuously burdensome endeavour in line with the circumscription of both her choices and her agency. More broadly, the concept of a circulatory system of emotion – an economy that admits of valuation, possession, exchange, exaction, and expense – is not inappropriate to attempts to understand specifically *early modern* emotions (or more properly, passions).

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[114] Arlie Russell Hochschild**,** *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), p.30. Also, see Julie Beck, 'The Concept Creep of 'Emotional Labor,' for Hochschild's recent discussion about misapplication of the term emotional labour in relation to gendered labour in the modern household. https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/11/arlie-hochschild-housework-isnt-emotional-labor/576637/ [accessed December 2019].

[115] Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, p.20.

[116] Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, p.27.

[117] Elizabeth Mathews, ''A Strange Sympathy': The Rhetoric of Emotion in *The History of the Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker', ABO* (Spring 2012), pp.1-12.

Daniel M. Gross's *The Secret History of Emotion* offers a critical intellectual history of the passions in Western society, the central premise of which is that emotions are, and always have been, 'irreducibly social.'[118] Their biological expression – blushing, panting, weeping and the like – does not fully describe their origins and certainly not their expression and distribution in a deeply inegalitarian society. A history of human passions in seventeenth-century England is, for Gross, an exploration of the logic of emotion in the *civic-political* realm: his analysis of primary material draws on political science and on the rhetorical construction and use of emotion within the domain of public office holding during the turbulent 1640s.[119] In turning to Gross's thesis I am therefore instituting slight modifications regarding my own critical purposes: much of what concerns Gross about the rhetorical construction of the early modern passionate subject revolves around *implicitly male* political citizenship, but his model of an early modern emotional economy of scarcity can also apply to the specifically *gendered* (read, feminine) subject within the marital home.

The basic principle of this emotional economy is that 'passions are inequitably distributed, exchanged, and monopolized where social difference is most extreme.'[120] The feeling and expression of, for instance, anger, shame or embarrassment is contingent upon certain 'enabling conditions': 'where one's reputation really matters, where the opinions of others are valued, where social rank is effective, where credit can be given and debts owed, where honor can be realized or lost, where there are fragile bonds of intimacy.'[121] A perceived insult of status might give rise to anger, and Gross adduces a Senecan example of a hypothetical collision with a clumsy slave in the street: 'the higher one's social status, the more frequently one is subject to the offensive behavior of others and, therefore, the more often one can become angry…for Seneca, getting one's toes stepped on or overtures ignored does not necessarily provoke anger (or its inverse, studied detachment). However, getting one's toes stepped on or overtures ignored *undeservedly* does.'[122] The 'scope of anger' afforded to various social agents 'varies dramatically, and, structurally speaking, the anger afforded one will come at the expense of another.'[123] Anger, then, is socially constituted, contingent upon status, and is a scarce resource. It is not inappropriate to draw analogy between the 'fragile bonds of intimacy' and the importance of 'reputation' – as we see them strained in a public space between those of wildly different social rank (a slave and a full citizen) – and those same conditions within an early modern household.

Antoine de Courtin's *A Treatise of Jealousie* (1684), for instance, essentially recognises that jealousy is a socially constituted passion, inasmuch as he contends that it only properly obtains between a man and

[118] Daniel M. Gross, *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle's Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science*, (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p.28.
[119] See Gross, chapter three on 'Virtues of Passivity in the English Civil War', pp 85-112.
[120] Gross, *Secret History*, p.42.
[121] Gross, *Secret History*, p.42.
[122] Gross, *Secret History*, p.70.
[123] Gross, *Secret History*, p.70.

wife. Since dependent upon the heterosexual marital bond, jealousy is, as Courtin understands it, unevenly distributed. In that it hinges upon a form of societal organisation that itself relies upon the principle of 'lawful possession' – jealousy 'cannot have place, but between Persons that Love one another, & are as it were in lawful Possession one of another' – it is a passion that inherently admits, whatever diversions or circumlocutions Courtin undertakes, of inequality: 'Wives, saith Plutarch, deserve Praises when they Submit to their Husbands.'[124] Jealousy, moreover, is explicitly understood as less permissible in the wife than the husband: the 'Virulent Jealousie' of a man, 'which may well be term'd a Savage Beast', is to be contrasted with 'another of a clear differing Character, and which is strange, is yet infinitely more dangerous and insupportable than the other.' This is 'the Jealousie of Women', which is as 'terrible' and as 'dangerous' as a 'secret Enemie.'[125]

A scarcity of emotion is also visible in advice literature specifically aimed at housewives: Gervase Markham's *The English House-Wife, Containing The inward and outward Vertues which ought to be in a Compleat Woman* (first published in 1615; last print publication 1683) which continued to disseminate enduringly popular ideas about wifehood long after its last appearance in print, prefaces discussion of the housewife's practical duties and abilities with instruction concerning her *inward* efforts. The rationale for such efforts is, conventionally, to place herself second in a hierarchy of affect. As Markham subtly suggests, a wife's outward behaviour and inward feelings may well be at odds:

> Inwardly, as in her behaviour and carriage towards her Husband, wherein she shall shun all violence of rage, passion and humour, coveting less to direct than be directed, appearing ever unto him pleasant, amiable and delightful; And, tho'occasion of mishaps, or the mis-government of his will may induce her to contrary thoughts, yet vertuously to suppress them, and with a mild sufferance rather to call him home from his error, than with the strength of anger to abate the least spark of his evil, calling into her mind, that evil and uncomely language is deformed, though uttered even to Servants; but most monstrous and ugly, when it appears before the presence of a Husband.[126]

The likelihood is that a wife will *feel* these passions, but she simply must not display them in gesture or language. She should *appear* ever 'pleasant, amiable and delightful', whatever the nature of her inward emotional state. There is also an inverse relationship between the availability of emotion to the social agent and the direct clarity of the language used to describe it: Markham's instructions are clear, for the wife must comprehensively 'shun all violence of rage, passion and humour'. The rather more euphemistic 'misgovernment of his will' and 'occasion of mishaps' instead provides a cosmetic gloss

[124] Antoine Courtin, *A Treatise of Jealousie, or, Means to Preserve Peace in Marriage …Written in French, and Faithfully Translated* (London, 1684) p.37;42.
[125] Courtin, *Treatise of Jealousie*, p.88.
[126] Gervase Markham, *The English House-Wife, Containing The inward and outward Vertues which ought to be in a Compleat Woman* (1683), p.3. I have referred to the latest edition, others having been issued at great frequency in 1615, 1623, 1631, 1637, 1649, 1653, 1656, 1660 and 1664.

(and perhaps, a hint as to the tenor of the language the wife *should* use in respect of her spouse) to a range of husbandly emotional excesses that might result in a variety of more and less dangerous behaviours or abuses.

Emotion as expressed in language is, crucially, contingent on status. Markham's explanation of the consequences of excess passion in language is a version of the classical Senecan slave example, modified by the understanding of the early modern spousal emotional economy as expressed by Courtin: language that is 'deformed' by anger in a housewife is 'uncomely', even when that anger is directed towards her social inferior, the servant. It is, however, not merely 'deformed', but 'most monstrous and ugly, when it appears before the presence of the Husband.' The status (here, gender) of the emoting subject always qualifies the perception of that emotion – anger is unacceptable regardless of her recipient – but the status of the target seriously modifies Markham's judgement about the nature and impact of the emotive act. Even the very 'presence' of the husband makes a monster of the (nevertheless implicitly justified) anger that he has conjured up in his wife. It is an incredible balancing act on the part of the 'English Housewife': the emotion management expected of her does indeed require that she be 'patient, untired, watchful' and 'diligent.' Such a wife cannot afford to be angry, especially when faced with the anger of her husband; she does not have the luxury of performing jealousy in the same way or to the same degree as her spouse, lest she find that her display of excess and impermissible emotion lead to punishment, or, perhaps, loss, through what Hochschild describes as the 'underlying system of recompense' of an emotional economy.[127]

This suppression of *outward* passion and consciousness of scarcity is what Gross terms the operation of apathy. Apathy in this context is not a lack of feeling but a super-perception both of felt emotion and the value of it in social relations that are necessarily imbalanced: 'For in the *a* that signifies a marked non-presence of emotion, we intuitively read not an arithmetic zero point but rather a node of special density in a dynamic social field, where the very possibility of emotion is at issue.'[128] The very term 'possibility' brings to our attention the potentially vast chasm between prescription and adoption: Gross reads apathy, like anger, as a scarce resource, since the rare man truly in control of his passions will not strike the slave for bumping into him (even if it is deserved) and will instead display, as we have seen, an 'inverse' of enthusiastic passion, 'studied detachment.'[129] Or, as Cavendish puts it in *Natures Pictures*, 'we are more easily perswaded to pardon the injuries or wrongs we receive from our Superiours, but seldome are pacified without a high revenge for the wrongs we have received from Inferiours.'[130] It is an admirably apathetic and unusual man who, as Cavendish gently implies, might forgo 'high revenge' or deny himself anger for a status offence. The possibility of such effortful apathy

[127] Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, p.23.
[128] Gross, *Secret History*, p.54.
[129] Gross, *Secret History*, p.69.
[130] Cavendish, *Natures Pictures*, pp.314-5.

– that 'node of special density' that requires much awareness and restraint – depends entirely on the composition of the social field in which emotion is circulating. In the encounter between prose fiction like Behn's *History* and the reading of passions as both social and political phenomena like Gross, lies the difficulty of framing apathy – in both cases, the performance of a femininized outward passivity – in a positive and/or subversive way for those who, firstly, do not have political subjecthood (unlike the citizen in the Senecan slave example, or Gross' rebellious parliamentarians) and those young women whom, to Behn's anger, are hardly considered ethical subjects either.

In charting the whole life of her heroine Isabella – from infant, to nun, to lover and then wife – Behn suggests that there is both opportunity and obligation implicated in the operation of apathy. The ability to recognise appropriate contexts for the outward suppression of passion might confer benefit and make space for radicalism: as a nun, erotic and romantic satisfaction might be had by performing indifference and manipulating sentiment in others, and as a wife, at the end of her life, a radical utilisation of aptitude as an emotional labourer allows Isabella to reward herself, briefly, with freedom by murdering both husbands while convincingly maintaining innocence. As Isabella first becomes a wife, and in the fraught period of transition between marriages in which the operation of apathy becomes implicated in her access to the material necessities of survival, Isabella seems to have internalised the precept of feminine passivity and the outward suppression of feeling. Duty, and the *desire* to be thought dutiful, always remain proximate, and the performance of emotional labour becomes internally accepted as a necessity. For an early modern housewife – like Isabella, like the unnamed wives who address their queries to the anchoret – a variety of forms of recompense make this necessity seem a gratifying duty. This recompense, in the way of unpaid domestic labour, is not, strictly speaking, remuneration, though a wife may be entrusted with the household's finances.[131] Rather, it is an imputed sense of self-satisfaction (derived from obeyance of external rules), tender and approving treatment from a husband, a peaceful home, secure access to material resources, and, crucially, her public reputation, for which emotional labour is exchanged. In short, the wife's profit is to be thought of as that selling point with which Markham emblazons his title page, a 'Compleat Woman.'

Throughout my analysis of *The History of the Nun*, I will use the terms "labour", "work" and "management" fluidly, but with the understanding that the emotional labour Isabella performs is indeed

[131] Wives were expected to be able to manage the household budget, if not engage in anything more financially complex. Amy M. Froide offers evidence of a range of financial activities by women in 'Learning to Invest: Women's Education in Arithmetic and Accounting in Early Modern England', *Early Modern Women*, Vol.10 (1) (2015), pp.3-26. See also, Anne L. Murphy, ''You do manage it so well that I cannot do better': the working life of Elizabeth Jeake of Rye (1667–1736)', *Women's History Review*, vol. 27, no. 7 (2018), pp.1190–1208, a case history of the highly skilled but unpaid work in contributing to and managing the marital economy that was performed by the wife of a Sussex merchant. Jane Whittle, 'Enterprising widows and active wives: women's unpaid work in the household economy of early modern England', *The History of the Family*, 19:3 (2014), pp.283-300, offers an important reminder, however, that while women generally performed more unpaid domestic labour than men, husbands did also routinely perform unremunerated work for the household.

labour with exchange value, even though unremunerated. This use of "labour" and "work" as synonymous is an elision of the two terms that Hochschild considers separate – the former to refer to market labour, and the latter to work not exchanged for a wage – but in light of Isabella's relationship to material property, to the authority of her husbands, and to the affective burdens of wifehood, I want to argue for her non-market work as materially and economically accountable. Isabella spends a significant portion of the story under conditions which see her exchange emotional labour for the economic security provided by a male figure. I also share the principle outlined by feminist sociologists and economists, and social historians of women's work, that usually unpaid labour should be ascribed economic value, but that feminised domestic tasks in particular ought to be understood as valuable simply because of the actual effort, unremittingly condensed into acceptable performance, by women in an early modern domestic context.[132] Isabella's emotion work, undertaken within domestic (though not, per se, "private") spaces, retains exchange value within an economy of emotion and of reputation, and it is, just as money, materially necessary to Isabella. Isabella's reputation as a prodigy of perfect womanhood, and her fear of being a 'town-discourse' (a cost, in the terms of the currency metaphor, that she fears paying) demonstrates Behn's critical investment in the concept of the currency of emotion as it circulates both within the space of the marital household and in the more nebulous realm of public gossip.[133] In *Anchoret,* Cavendish warns against restraining the physical freedom of wives by locking them up: 'it is not a secure remedy, for women will finde a thousand inventions to get liberty.'[134] The personal cost of Isabella's effort is told in the story of a woman who finds a way out – physically, if not ultimately emotionally – by utilising the very strictures placed on her, and destroying all in the process.

An education in virtue: the production of tranquillity

Inscribed within Behn's vision of marriage are the very conditions for its failure: in the first instance, the narrator regrets that parents fail to recognise their female children as ethical subjects – as capable of reflective thought, of uncoerced decision and wielding a right to self-protection – regarding either matrimony or the taking of holy orders. Wishing for 'the prevention of abundance of mischiefs and miseries' attendant upon the forcing of girl children into inappropriately adult circumstances, the narrator would prefer 'that parents would not make use of their *justly assumed* authority to compel their children.'[135] On the verge of self-contradiction (does the narrator approve of parental authority or not?),

[132] For the economic value of unpaid women's work see, Jane Whittle and Mark Hailwood, 'The gender division of labour in early modern England', *Economic History Review*, 73.1 (2018), pp. 1–30. For feminist-economic critique of definitions of economic activity in the household, see Cynthia A. Wood, 'The First World/Third Party Criterion: A Feminist Critique of Production Boundaries in Economics', *Feminist Economics*, 3:3 (1997), pp.47-68.
[133] Behn, *History*, p.160. 'Town-discourse' is invoked at various points in the story: pp.142;146;178.
[134] Cavendish, *Anchoret*, p.333.
[135] Behn, *History*, p.141, emphasis mine.

a half-spoken idea about the difference between a right to assume authority and a right to wield it with impunity is left to percolate. The ruling interest in whose benefit authority over young women is yielded is embodied in several characters in the story – some male, such as fathers, fathers-in-law, lovers, husbands; some female, such as an aunt and abbess, and, also, through a general evocation of society, i.e., the town. Each fails, ultimately, to exhibit self-consciousness about the demands they place on Isabella. The heroine, hardly ceasing to perform one form of labour or another throughout the narrative, is defined in large part by these demands: while Cavendish characterises female heroism as contingent on independence and as divorced from the restraints of pragmatic domestic concerns, Behn elides the heroine and the wife in order to interrogate the conflict that is caused by identifying one woman as both. Isabella's eventual embodiment of wifely perfection in *History* is arrived at by a damaging process of customisation, a system of education, acculturation, performance and reperformance which, as Behn suggests, is unending.

In line with domestic conduct texts which observe that a wife 'must be temperate', the peak of feminine excellence for the heroine in *History* is indifference.[136] Isabella learns this through an early-life educational regime whereby she is exposed to physical luxury and to the "choice" of an existence outside a convent, and therefore denied the capacity to fantasise about unknown and unglimpsed material desires. At the same time, she is being acculturated to an emotional economy in which suppression of feeling is rewarded. Before Isabella reaches the stage at which, as Elizabeth Mathews states, 'she seems to transcend the reality of the circumscribed body she inhabits with her ability to counterfeit and control her emotions', the reader discovers the heroine in a state of perfect congruence, her emotions appearing to tally exactly with the circumscription of her body and will by others.[137] Relentless emphasis is placed on Isabella's exceptional feminine virtue from an early age: when still a child, she is described as 'prodigious throughout the Christian world', 'one whose virtues were the discourse of all the world', a 'maid of immortal fame', when a nun 'a proverb and a precedent', 'rather an angel than a mortal creature', and 'the fairest maid in the world.'[138] She is also moulded into a young woman of deep self-ignorance by her father but, more uncomfortably still, by her aunt the abbess. The aunt, with a financial interest in retaining her niece as a nun ('being very loathe to part with her considerable fortune, which she must resign if she returned into the world'), manufactures what Behn equivocally terms Isabella's 'inclination' to the cloister:

> She used all her arts and stratagems to make her become a nun, to which all the fair sisterhood contributed their cunning; but it was altogether needless; her inclination, the strictness of her devotion, her early prayers, and those continual and innate steadfastness and calm she was mistress of, her ignorance of the world's vanities, and those that

[136] Markham, *The English House-Wife*, p.2.
[137] Mathews, 'A Strange Sympathy', p.9.
[138] Behn, *History*, p.142; 144; 145;148;156;164.

> unenclosed young ladies count pleasures and diversions being all unknown to her, she thought there was no joy out of a nunnery, and no satisfaction on the other side of a grate.[139]

Each argument for the abbess's connivance is initially balanced by a claim for Isabella's natural predisposition; stratagems are met with inclination, arts (that pejorative term, once more) with devotion, cunning with innate steadfastness. The narrator's opinion about Isabella's enforced ignorance is, however, only shoddily concealed. The reader recalls the narrator's naked distaste for the premature decision making made on behalf of girls by those protectors who ought to defend a child from adversity and turmoil, rather than to ensure it: the narrator's subtle scepticism only adds weight to the impression that Isabella's presence in the convent has always been the result of an unethical approach to guardianship and that her 'inclination' is simply an enforced habit.

A parenthetical interjection by the narrator cuts across the idea that Isabella's entry into the custody of her aunt might merely have been one of practicality for a widowed father: 'the little Isabella was carried immediately (in her mourning for her dead mother) into the nunnery and was received as a very diverting companion.'[140] The reader is already apprised of the fact of Isabella's mother's death, 'when she was about two years old', in the previous paragraph: the narrator, then, provides a factually unnecessary parenthesis such that the reader's attention is drawn to the unsavoury haste with which a grieving toddler is bundled off to be placed in the company of strangers. Isabella's father, hardly behindhand in his manipulation of his daughter once of an age to respond intelligently to his superintendence, stages a faux debut into society in order to rectify Isabella's incomprehension of those 'pleasures and diversions' found on 'the other side of a grate'. Richly dressed and placed in the company of 'those ladies of quality that were her relations, and her mother's acquaintance', Isabella is paraded on 'the Toor (that is, the Hyde Park there).' Her response to the diverting experience and to the attention of admiring onlookers is precisely what is expected from a young woman who has been intentionally denied the possibility of ignorant fancy being allowed to transform into excessive fascination.[141] As the narrator tells us, 'whatever [Isabella] saw, she beheld with no admiration, and nothing created wonder in her, though never so strange and novel. She surveyed all things with an indifference that, though it was not sullen, was far from transport, so that her evenness of mind was infinitely admired and praised.'[142] Isabella's indifference, however, and the faultlessness of her character, predictably begins to show strain. She takes to convent life with the dedication and rigour intended by her father and aunt, but as a nun barely out of childhood, Isabella's immature passion for Henault (the brother of her fellow nun Katteriena), and the way in which the environment of the convent shapes her response to shameful feeling, comes to illustrate both the fragility and unethicality of the regime of reputational and emotional circumscription under

[139] Behn, *History*, p.143.
[140] Behn, *History*, p.142.
[141] The suppression of Isabella's ability to form a 'fancy', nevertheless, backfires: 'charming ideas' are precisely the form that Isabella's lustful fascination with Henault takes (*History*, p.155).
[142] Behn, *History*, p.144.

which she has been placed. (The convent is a locale which immediately encourages doubt about emotional performance: upon the cusp of taking her vow, she weathers the temptation thrown in her path by a besotted Villenoys by at once suppressing 'tender' feeling for him and fretting that the externalisation of her emotional state – 'something in her looks' – is beyond her control).[143] Having been denied the possibility of developing or uncovering self-knowledge, the indispensability of *consciously* undertaking the emotional labour of outward suppression becomes clearest to Isabella when she must learn to deal with the new sensation of an intense sexual desire largely unaided, and comes to understand that she might entertain forbidden desire by doing so. The convent, a physical and emotional context in which desire is allied to shame and punishment, proffers the perfect conditions in which to practice the management of emotions – the outward repression of feeling and conscious *externalisation* of tranquillity – as a means to convincingly manipulate belief and sentiment in others. A further point of terminology arises here: Behn comes to use the term 'dissembling'/'dissembler' of Isabella, a concept with a significantly negative, as well as feminine, moral load in the period.[144] It is important to note that I understand Behn's term 'dissembling' as essentially concurrent with the obviously anachronistic term emotional labour, and that I want to approach Isabella's performance of what is essentially deception through a lens that allows us to understand the gendered nature of such a performance while rethinking the implied moral judgement at its heart. Emotional labour is a useful way of attempting to read the gap between authenticity and fabrication of emotion, and allows for the operation of both at once: as I will go on to suggest, the narrator suspends certainty that what Isabella appears to be feeling on particular occasions is genuine, and it is, moreover, unclear to the reader how far the emotion that Isabella seems to be conjuring up for the view of others actually affects and helps to construct her internal experience of feeling.

In this earlier section of the story, what aid Isabella receives from fellow characters in giving language and form to her feelings is offered by her companion, the nun Katteriena: she is sister to the object of Isabella's desire – the beautiful young Henault who makes frequent social visits to the convent – and it

[143] Behn, *History*, p.147. The convent is a site of much interest to Behn, as to other contemporaries. In her comedies, nunneries – prison-like and boring – are invoked as threats for unmarried daughters or as barely preferable alternatives to marriage; in prose, their possibilities are less repressive and more radical. See, Frances E. Dolan, 'Why Are Nuns Funny?' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (December 2007), pp. 509-535. On Behn's use of nuns across her prose as a coherent, subordinate group, see Susan Goulding, 'Aphra Behn's "Stories of Nuns": Narrative Diversion and "Sister Books"', *Literary Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Fall 2008), pp. 38-55. On epistolary nun fiction as inspiration for Behn's *Love Letters Between a Noble-Man And his Sister* (first volume 1684), see Judith Kegan Gardiner, 'The First English Novel: Aphra Behn's *Love Letters*, The Canon, and Women's Tastes', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 201-222.

[144] Perhaps Behn's most skilled and self-damning dissembler is Miranda, the enticingly indecent heroine of *The Fair Jilt* (1688); most of the principal characters in *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (parts one, two and three published in 1684, -85, and -87 respectively) intentionally deceive each other and seek to dissemble their feelings to personal advantage, though Silvia is the focus of the story. Dissembling is also associated with the skill of acting and with cosmetic practices: see Laura Linker on the satirical attacks on Charles II's mistresses in 1670s in *Dangerous Women, Libertine Epicures, And The Rise Of Sensibility* (2011), esp. chapter one.

is Isabella's apparent inability 'to make use of fraud in anything' that leads Katteriena to intuit the nature of Isabella's feelings. Isabella requires guidance on the handling of sexual desire, and Katteriena gives it: the latter explains her own short-lived relationship with her father's servant Arnaldo, a scenario which explicitly links erotic relationships, punishment of women through religious confinement and, importantly, the deadening effect of time on love. Katteriena's explanation of her own love-cure for unanswerable passion is 'absence': 'that was mine, for Arnaldo, having by chance lost one of my billets, discovered the amour, and was sent to travel and myself forced into this monastery, *where at last time convinced me* I had loved below my quality, and that shamed me into holy orders.'[145] By this, Isabella receives a less formal but no less formative educative precept about the management of feeling, a process of knowledge acquisition and of reasoning that both helps to explain the difference between her own reading of the erotic space of the convent and that of Katteriena, and presages Isabella's newly discovered ability to consciously externalise appropriate feeling in order to deceptively induce a feeling of security in others.[146] As Isabella wrestles with and nurtures her feelings for Henault in secret, she resolves 'to dissemble with Katteriena so far as to make her believe she had subdued that passion she was really ashamed to own.'[147] After two months of 'indifference', Isabella is able to attain an unsupervised audience with Henault, and offers to him a coy explanation of her conduct:

> 'Sir', said she, 'perhaps you will wonder where I, a maid, brought up in the simplicity of virtue, should learn the confidence not only to hear of love from you, but to confess I am sensible of the most violent of its pain myself, and I wonder, and am amazed at my own daring, that I should have the courage to speak.'[148]

It is not difficult to discern from whence Isabella has derived both knowledge and 'confidence' in matters of love: her explicitly deceitful response to Katteriena's enquiry about her apparently dwindling passion for Henault is a regurgitation of the nun's own wisdom about absence as love-cure. Isabella assures Katteriena that she 'had resolved things great and *time would work the cure.*'[149] An education in the 'simplicity of virtue' within the convent evidently belies much complication about the substance of this instructive experience: by Katteriena's example, Isabella is exposed to several related ideas that significantly colour the heroine's response to her own romantic predicament. Lust is a feeling hedged about with interdictions for women; the sincerity of a religious calling may be problematised by its punitive relationship to forfeiture of freedom and erotic transgression; shame and erotic feeling dwell

[145] Behn, *History*, p.153, emphasis mine.
[146] Isabella's education is a conventionally genteel if indulgent and not precisely housewifely scheme of 'diversions' in 'all that was advantageous to her sex'; dancing, singing, musical instruments, languages, deportment, and dress (*History*, p.142).
[147] Behn, *History*, p.157.
[148] Behn, *History*, p.163.
[149] Behn, *History*, p.158, emphasis mine.

together, and a convent is the place in which lust is both punished and housed.[150] (One thinks back, at this point, to Cavendish's domesticated courtesan, and her unease with the prospect of one woman learning from and imitating another in matters of desire. Behn is altogether less anxious, less surprised, about such sources and forms of knowledge). Isabella, in another echo of language between sister nuns, comes to associate disgrace with the space of the convent and the seclusion that it enforces: her paltering self-justification for her forward behaviour to Henault ascribes the blame to her isolation, for as she suggests, 'perhaps, had I not been confined, and, as it were, utterly forbid by my vow, as well as my modesty, to tell you this, I should not have been so miserable to have fallen thus low as to have confessed my shame.'[151] Katteriena, punished for erotic feeling by religious enclosure, has learnt that shame is a precondition for taking holy orders; Isabella, having experienced little but the restrictions of the convent since a very young child, argues that such seclusion is the root and cause of such shame rather than its consequence.

On a reading which hopes for Isabella's freedom of choice, and the continuation of a narrative seemingly set to pursue and strengthen her agency in a romantic career, the reader might begin to foresee such a possibility: having seemed to have internalised the educative aims of her father – to concur that exposure to luxury and the outside world would prevent her being able to long after its attractions and vanities – Isabella has cleaved to the logical corollary of this position, and now argues that seclusion *produces* longing and effects its verbal expression. Though it can hardly have been her father's intention, the precept of a feminine indifference has become the means by which Isabella intentionally creates erotic reward for herself: as if to demonstrate how tenuous is the achievement of 'perfect peace and tranquillity within', Isabella has developed a raw, juvenile passion for Henault and consciously used her ability to perform that tranquillity in order to subvert its very purpose.[152] Such an emotional regime is not just unethical, but, naturally, has begun to backfire: this resistance, as I will suggest, does not immediately prefigure the rejection of such a regime, but its internalisation. The hope that Isabella might have found a space for dissidence subsequently dissolves as she enters into marriage. One of the most onerous burdens which the heroine assimilates is that it is incumbent upon her, as a woman, to perform emotional labour, and the management and repression of her passions takes on the force of an obligation rather than remaining an apparently strategic *choice*. The call to strenuous emotion work in *History* is never louder than when Isabella crosses the threshold and attempts to mould herself into a perfect example of wifehood: as a wife, Isabella must induce appropriate feeling in her husbands, even (and perhaps most significantly) when they themselves can or will not. Behn's resonant description of the delicate internal balance of Isabella's emotions when still a nun – 'she carried herself before people as if no pressures

[150] See Sonia Villegas-López, 'Seraglios and Convents: Aphra Behn's Heroines in the House(s) of Love', *Revista canaria de estudios ingleses*, 79 (2019), pp.55-70 for Katteriena's role in instructing Isabella in 'patterns of behaviour.' (p.67).
[151] Behn, *History*, p.163.
[152] Behn, *History*, p.148.

had lain upon her heart' – encapsulates precisely the often furtive, anxious, and effortful nature of this labour, and exemplifies the simultaneously surface-and-subterranean quality of emotion work.[153]

The act of reading emotional labour in *History* is made, then, strenuous and doubtful by the nature of the labour itself and its representation in language, mediated by the narratorial voice. Hochschild notes that observability is a key component of emotional labour, but, in *History*, how do we know what we are observing? How can we discern what is "genuine" emotion and what may be consciously manufactured? While the insistent heteroglossia of the text makes it 'easy to read but difficult to assimilate' – for proliferations of formal and thematic resonances make it possible to read *History* as crime fiction, as early novel of sensibility, with strains of satire, anti-pastoral, and domestic tragedy – the narratorial arrangement in particular troubles interpretative efforts concerning Isabella's character, and, crucially, formalises that increasingly difficult-to-interpret quality of her emotional labour.[154] The "truth" of Isabella's emotions is only made discernible inasmuch as we trust the narrator's epistemological credibility, and as the narrator is able (or seems to choose) to explicate Isabella's emotional performances *as conscious performances.* Isabella's emotional state in the nunnery is habitually rendered as an apparently intentional performance of suppression and projection, innocent and perhaps otherwise, and her coy conduct with Henault in that first unchaperoned visit is only one example: when Isabella eavesdrops on a private meeting in which Henault confesses his love for her to Katteriena, she resolves to 'dissemble her own passion, and make him the first aggressor, the first that loved, or, at least, that should seem to do so.'[155] When the opportunity arises for Isabella to oblige Henault to take the role of aggressor, that is just what happens: Isabella's disingenuous speech about her simplicity of virtue is prefaced, importantly, by Henault's tearful declaration of his 'violent ardour.'[156] Isabella offers no verbal provocation to this outburst, but, the narrator informs us somewhat equivocally, Isabella, 'not the most a lover, perhaps, not being able to contain her love any longer within the bounds of dissimulation or discretion, being by nature innocent, burst out into tears.' Are we to read her non-verbal expression of emotion here as deceptive or leading? How much work is that "perhaps" performing? At the climax of the story – at which point Isabella comes to understand that repression of

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[153] Behn, *History*, p.161.

[154] Janet Todd, *Aphra Behn: A Secret Life* (London: Fentum Press, 2017), p.408. On *History*'s formal and thematic variety, see Paul Salzman, 'Prose Fiction', in *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Anita Pacheco, (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002) pp.303-316; Joanna Fowler, 'Dramatic and Narrative Techniques in the Novellas of Aphra Behn', *Women's Writing*, 22:1 (2015), pp.97-113; Jacqueline Pearson, 'Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn', *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 165 (Feb 1991), pp. 40-56. The narrator, bafflingly for the reader, describes Isabella as 'by nature innocent' and as a 'cunning' dissembler of some 'fortitude' (Behn, *History*, p.163; 157;159); she also insists that 'in the whole course of her life' Isabella 'never could be charged with an untruth or equivocation' while she dissembles (justifiably?) to Katteriena (p.158).

[155] Behn, *History*, p.157. Isabella's piety, for instance, involves the adoption and deposal of certain emotional states, as when she 'laid by all her severe looks and mortified discourse', and subsequently becomes 'outwardly all gay, spritely and entertaining' (p.148); her dissimulation of 'no concern' at Henault's reciprocated feelings is the 'masterpiece of this young maid's art', a performance which 'subdued Katteriena.' (pp.158-9).

[156] Behn, *History*, p.163.

emotion is a way not simply to achieve reward but to avoid punishment, and to evade the circumscription of her own agency – it becomes exponentially more urgent that Isabella perform emotional labour in a manner completely convincing to fellow characters. It is at such a moment that the reader experiences an even greater difficulty in discerning that that is what she is doing. In the meantime, the incorporation of the feminised injunction to suppress and manage emotion becomes manifested in her first marriage, a deeply disappointing diversion into domestic hardship that demonstrates the inherently unequal distribution of emotion within even a desired marriage of choice.

The failure of the pastoral: feminised emotional labour and property relations in Isabella's first marriage

Isabella elopes from the convent with Henault, and in doing so enters an affective order in which the performance of emotional labour comes to mediate her access to the materials of survival – rather than to mark out a further development of the cunning management of sentiment she displayed as a nun. This first marriage, one of mutual desire and of choice, becomes, effectively, just like any other match of material interest: it is through the lens of emotional labour that we see the absolute importance of emotion as having material/financial value, at the same time as we see a devaluation of mutual feeling as a viable or even the most important criterion for a marital match. This is not because genuine shared feeling is not desirable, but because the performance and circulation of feeling in an emotional economy necessarily maps on to patriarchal property relations. *Because*, within the context of the romance mode, the experience of high feeling and the expression and management of passions in *not* innate to women, *and because men also* continue to maintain relationships to property in which they mediate between women and their access to material resources, the emotional labour of men reifies patriarchal property arrangements.

We have seen Isabella turn the precept of feminine tranquillity to her own advantage, which modification, in being performed by a woman, is necessarily a contravention of 'custom' in the utilisation of its own tools of repression against it. In the section of the story which deals with Isabella's first marriage, this is replaced by a focus on Henault's own performance of the emotional labour of outwardly suppressing feeling, an unstable display of the feminised romantic swain and property owning husband. This marriage is, undoubtedly, a proposition based in property ownership, a fact made plain by Isabella and Henault's material hardship**,** and by their attempts (whatever their naïve fantasy of a charming retirement) to reknit the network of social and financial relations that they had sundered in their elopement.[157] Isabella's mastery of the performance of externalising tranquillity notwithstanding, this first marriage makes clear that it is not, nor has it ever been, within Isabella's own and entire means

[157] Both Isabella and Henault write to their relatives for pardons and, in Isabella's case, to beg for money (Behn, *History*, p.170; 171).

to guarantee that the unrelenting effort of emotional labour leads to the desirable outcome of the putatively profitable state of tranquillity. As Janet Todd has suggested, the 'overwhelming message that emerges' from *History* is 'Behn's conviction that inclinations change: Isabella's suffering follows from feelings pent up by a culture that refuses to acknowledge the Lucretian truth, that change is the only constant in human nature', an assertion which militates unavoidably against the wild goose chase of pursuing tranquillity.[158] The possibility of achieving it is revealed to be largely dependent upon property relations, and a discourse of labour (physical and emotional) illuminates what a "bad" marriage – rich in mutual affect, but bad, nevertheless – looks like under such terms. Henault, despite falling in line with the pastoral dream, remains materially and socially ambitious: as a young man he continues to nurse self-interest, is prone to profligacy and impacts mundanely therefore on the household economy. While husband and wife are obliged to endure unlooked for hardship together, it is Henault who controls, mismanages and circumscribes Isabella's material security, her options for survival, and the narrow moral framework within which that survival might be managed. Isabella has hitherto consciously undertaken emotional labour in order to acquire and develop agency, and continues to do so in order to maintain access to the resources on which she must depend as a wife; Henault performs emotional labour in order to conceal his relationship to property – to play the deferential lover when he ought not – but as husband he also continues to mediate his wife's access to it.

The material and emotional context in which Isabella and Henault find themselves once they have entered into matrimony is not the pastoral fancy of Isabella's imagination. As she transitions from nun to wife, we are falsely prepared for the entry of the story into a mode that might allow for the freer expression of affect and desire. After her realisation of intense infatuation and carnal sensation – 'she was now another woman than what she had hitherto been' – we are led, instead, away from the pleasures of an erotic relationship, fresh in its power, and into a domestic space, a spousal household where property and labour relations come to reiterate the enduring power of the system into which Isabella was entered prematurely as a child.[159] Unlike Cavendish's hypothetical marriage problems in *Anchoret,* which manifest as sexual disorder (adultery) and which are militated against by the wife's emulation of the courtesan's work, Behn suggests that a wife's "virtuous employments", both physical and emotional, are themselves of questionable value, given that their worth and effectiveness might be so readily undercut. Henault and Isabella's marriage – a picture of domestic disharmony – narratively subsumes the erotic and affective potential of pastoral romance into the prior system of the 'bad market', the relations of labour, interest, wealth and authority which precede and define Isabella's status as nun, lover and wife at every step. Upon elopement from the convent, the practical matter of the couple's straitened economic circumstances (as with many a hero of Behn's, the denial of inheritance is an obstacle) is

[158] Todd, *A Secret Life*, p.408.
[159] Behn, *History*, p.154.

swept away by the collusion of the lovers in a pastoral daydream, a vision of natural splendour conspicuously denuded of money, labour, or labourers:

> I never thought of living but by love and, if I considered at all, it was that grandeur and magnificence were useless trifles to lovers, wholly needless and troublesome. I thought of living in some lonely cottage far from the noise of crowded busy cities, to walk with thee in groves and silent shades where I might hear no voice but thine, and when we had been tired, to sit us down by some cool, murmuring rivulet and be to each a world, my monarch thou, and I thy sovereign queen, while wreaths of flowers shall crown our happy heads, some fragrant bank our throne and Heaven our canopy.[160]

As already noted by Jessica Munns, Isabella's 'proper' and 'cliched' sentiments augur the almost immediate miscarriage of the pastoral in *History*: the heroine's fantasy of isolated splendour relies on an absolutist romantic devotion and a concomitant blindness to the vast chasm between simply rejecting expensive fripperies on some aesthetic principle and actually surviving without a social and financial network of support.[161] (Behn promptly deflates the notion of 'living but by love' through Isabella's immediate and unwarranted theft of 'some three of four hundred pounds in gold' from the convent).[162] Perplexingly, Henault agrees that the currency of 'love' – ironically now debased by its transformation into a commodity – is sufficient for them both to thrive. But what, Behn, asks, can be the practical use of 'perfect loving'?[163] (The unhelpful answer, to return to the sardonic Julia in *The Lucky Chance*, is that 'love's but a thin diet, nor will keep out cold.').[164] Solidly underwhelmed by the glowing promises of a naturally splendid pastoral intimacy – in place of a 'fragrant bank', 'wreaths of flowers' or 'silent shades', there are dying cattle, 'mildewed or blasted' crops, coach horses embroiled in internecine conflict, and 'fired' barns – Behn transforms the pastoral lover's dream into the shabby reality of rustic poverty.[165] This is not the golden age, unploughed, unpropertied, and a place without self-interest: Behn throws up the shaky edifice of a pastoral idyll in order to draw attention to its obvious inadequacy as a context for a marriage, and demonstrates that what structures Isabella and Henault's relationship is, instead, the unequal distribution of authority, resources, and emotion.

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[160] Behn, *History*, p.168.
[161] Jessica Munns, 'Pastoral and lyric: Astrea in Arcadia', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.211. See also Sonia Villegas-López, for the failure of the pastoral and the prioritisation of 'sentiments of interest and convenience.' '"The Conscious Grove": Generic Experimentation in Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684–87)', *Women's Writing*, 22:1, (2015) p.78. Heidi Laudien, also discusses Behn's use of the pastoral in verse as a vehicle for the exploration of sexual and social relations and of masculine ambition: 'Aphra Behn: pastoral poet', *Women's Writing: the Elizabethan to Victorian Period*, Vol.12.1 (2005), pp.43-58.
[162] Behn, *History*, p.168;169.
[163] Behn, *History*, p.171.
[164] '*The Lucky Chance, or An Alderman's Bargain', The Rover, and Other Plays*, ed.by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.1, p.241.
[165] Behn, *History*, p.171.

It is with this inequality of distribution in mind that we can read emotional labour in this particular section of *History*, in the tense space between the high sentiment of the romance mode, and its drive towards verisimilitude: extreme passions, equally available to men and women, must co-exist with the banality of property and labour relations. And while a sensitivity to extreme emotion is apt to a pastoral romance, Henault's feminised passivity has consequences: his validation as a tender deferential lover, who places himself second in a hierarchy of affect, competes with the usefulness of this subject position as an obfuscatory instrument of patriarchal property relations. Henault's immaturity undercuts his ability to respond to the duties of being a husband – he is lazy, immoderate and cannot do without physical luxuries – but the authentication of the lover's posture is shallow and short-lived. There is no space within the pastoral romance for a husband's responsibilities and authority. Henault's management of sentiment comes not to signify his adaptability – as Isabella's had carved out, when a nun, a small space of dissidence within seeming conformity – but an inflexibility, an assumption of access both to apathy *and* to authority, to the pretence of living on love, *and* to the right to property, to squandering money that might have formed an adequate income carefully managed (implicitly, by Isabella). As Kirsten Saxton observes in her queer reading of *History*, it is at this moment in the story that 'Henault's hazy feminine and imaginary status collapses into failed heteromasculinity': this failure is, specifically, an imperfect performance of gendered emotional labour, in which Henault actively takes up a feminised emotional subjectivity.[166] When misfortune first strikes, he declines to prioritise his own emotional state in order to manage that of his spouse, and performs the management of feeling that is necessary to conceal his own sentiments from Isabella. He thereby seeks to produce a desirable (or prevent an undesirable) state of feeling in her. Henault chooses not to inform Isabella that he has suffered the loss of 'five thousand pounds a year' through his father's spite, and

> when he reflected he should have children by her, and these should come to want (he having been magnificently educated, and impatient of scanty fortune), he laid it to heart and it gave him a thousand uneasinessses in the midst of unspeakable joys, and the more he strove to hide his sentiments from Isabella, the more tormenting it was within. He durst not name it to her, so insuperable a grief it would cause her, to hear him complain.[167]

Henault finds, however, that he cannot match his external suppression of feeling with either the physical industry required in the situation that he has sought, or fully meet the demands of a passive pastoral posture: the repression of uneasy sentiment chafes against his maladaptation to live within his means. Behn heavily implies that his willingness to defy power ('I'll think no more what my angry parent may do when he shall hear how I have disposed of myself against his will and pleasure') is seriously undercut

[166] Kirsten T. Saxton, '"[T]Hat Where One Was, There Was The Other": Dreams Of Queer Stories In Aphra Behn's *The History Of The Nun, Or, The Fair Vow-Breaker* (1689)', *Women's Writing*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2021), p.169.
[167] Behn, *History*, pp.170-1.

by an immoderate attachment to its trappings, and his seeming desire 'to be retired' is significantly adulterated by his yearning to retain his magnificent status, and social and financial influence, as the son of an earl.[168] Isabella, we are told, 'could live hardly, as being bred to a devout and severe life, he could not, but must let the man of quality show itself even in the disguise of an humbler farmer.'[169] Henault's improvidence is not appeased by the modest amounts of money that Isabella is able to squeeze out of her aunt: these gifts were sufficient to have 'lived very decently', but 'that would not satisfy the great heart of Henault.'[170] Certainly, Henault's affective behaviour and his willingness to perform traditionally feminised emotional labour is narratively logical – Behn emphasises that Henault is provided with an upbringing inimical to masculine vigour but which makes him of 'a melancholy temper and fit for soft impressions' – and, moreover, the key items of the collusive pastoral vision (retirement from society, a non-materialistic existence, reciprocity and equality in both authority and love) could be placed within an exculpatory literary context.[171] Differently situated – in an imaginative *locus amoenus* where a feeling young man like Henault could flourish – his passivity towards his spouse might be thought attractively deferential.[172] His continued investment in codes of publicly performed manhood, however, suggests a self-aware suspension of roles, a failed negotiation between feminised passivity and suppression of feeling, and an interest in the circulation of reputation in a social field defined by masculine competition.

Behn's concern with Henault's imperfect performance of the emotionally passive, deferential swain also signals her interest in the use of feminised passivity as a camouflage for masculine authority within marriage. Henault's inappropriate passivity leads, tellingly, to a failure of industry, but it also does nothing to rearrange the fundamentally inegalitarian distribution of power and of resources within the marital relationship. Nature's response to Henault, atypically for the pastoral, is an active resistance, rather than a flourishing ahead of or with, his attempts at agricultural activity. It appears not merely to ignore his efforts but resolutely punishes them: the failure of the pastoral experiment in the realm of work is quite literal, for Henault 'found nothing of his industry thrive.'[173] His act of faith in the pleasing

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[168] Behn, *History*, p.169. Henault never seems to shake off this youthful sense of envy in respect of material possessions, even after undergoing war, imprisonment, and slavery; note his jealousy of Isabella's finery at pp.180-3.
[169] Behn, *History*, pp.170-1.
[170] Behn, *History*, p.171.
[171] Behn provides the reader with no explicit information about the type of literature either Henault or Isabella were exposed to in their respective educational experiences, but we might infer, given Isabella's grasp of the linguistic and conceptual furniture of the pastoral mode, that such romances were at least available to her in the convent. For Behn's use and abuse of pastoral in prose, see Pearson, 'Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn', pp.53-4, and Rubik, 'Excess and Artifice', p.388.
[172] Jennifer Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), for instance, offers a variety of examples of feminised passivity in male characters in sixteenth century pastoral romance that are positively construed. See chapters five, 'Crossdressers in Love: men of Feeling and Narrative Agency in Sidney's *New Arcadia',* and six*, "To sing like birds i'th'cage":* Lyrical, Private Expressions of Emotion in Book IV of Spenser's Faerie Queene.' (pp.117-135; 136-155). Bernard Capp opines that Behn, in drama and verse at least, found the 'whining humour' of a tearful, weak-spirited lover', as her Sir Charles Merriwill in *The City Heiress* (1682), distasteful and unappealing; see, ''Jesus wept' but did the Englishman? Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, Vol.224 (224) (2014), pp.103-5.
[173] Behn, *History*, p.171.

notion of a pastoral retirement is largely undone by the real requirement to labour for it, and even his employment of 'able and knowing' husbandman to manage his arable crops (while also revelatory of his self-recognition as an estate manager rather than a rustic swain) meets with decay and disease.[174] Critics have taken note of Henault's culpability for this failure of industry: Catherine A. Craft, hearkening to the 'silences, omissions, ironies, and textual subtleties' in 'otherwise conventional' female authored prose fiction, has observed that the reader may justifiably consider Henault's imputed idleness to be at fault for their agricultural and domestic failures, for readers may 'recall that the narrator described Henault as a man 'unus'd to Action, and of a temper Lazy, and given to Repose'.' As Craft points out, 'his ill success, it seems, is his own.'[175]

More importantly, the material effect of his hollow and unstable engagement with feminised passivity only reifies Isabella's physical vulnerability as wife. While the torments of Henault's concealed 'sentiments' are surely a sympathetic echo of those experienced by Isabella earlier in the story, and an exquisite susceptibility to passions is the bread and butter of the romance mode for both men and women, the fact remains that marriage is always already uneven ground – wives, like their emotional labour, are a commodity to be exchanged – and it therefore proposes inegalitarian relations of labour and of authority between husband and wife in the realm of affect.[176] He continues to arbitrate her access to material resources and to the pragmatics of survival, however passive he appears in private. As husband, he remains a guardian and accumulator of wealth, even as he both labours to conceal its absence (the five thousand pounds he dares not mention) and yearns for the reward of publicly recognised manhood. Henault conceals complaint – attempting to outwardly manage emotion – when the remedying of his own actions (his lazy temper) might resolve the issue about which he is concerned. Henault's performance of this labour ultimately retains a material and authoritative value that outweighs Isabella's, even when he makes an aberrative attempt at placing himself second in a hierarchy of affect. The relations of power implied in a necessarily material marriage are fundamentally too inegalitarian to be enclosed by pastoral fantasy, and by the postural effort of the charmed and passive lover. The state of his inheritance remains of more importance than anything else: the romantic fiction with which Isabella and Henault have been nourishing themselves competes with the ineffably material nature of their marriage. It is the threat of Henault's disinheritance by his father, Henault's seeming resolution to employ good sense in preserving estate and legacy by rejecting passion, and the final removal of that

[174] Behn, *History*, p.171.
[175] Catherine A. Craft, 'Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn's "*Fair Vow-Breaker*," Eliza Haywood's "*Fantomina*," and Charlotte Lennox's "*Female Quixote*"', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (Oct. 1991), p.826.
[176] See Rubik, 'Excess and Artifice', who points to Behn's even-handedness regarding affect and gender in her prose fiction (pp.383-4).

gift of birthright by the Grave van Henault which begins, modulates, and effectively curtails their courtship and marriage.[177]

When Henault is obliged to join the army as a means of earning income after the failure of all other attempts, and hopes thereby to regain his father's approbation, Isabella explains her desire to 'retire to the monastery' for her safety in his absence. Henault coerces Isabella into making a 'vow' that she will not seek safety or aid 'within the walls of a religious house', for 'fear they should never suffer her to come forth again.'[178] (The echo between this vow and the injustice of her first as a nun rings loud). He departs from her while, crucially, disallowing her preferred form of support in the meantime. In forcing her to imagine the material requirements of survival within an additional moral framework (that is, besides the broader moral schema of respectability that is socially constituted and hedged about with the threat of 'town-discourse'), the possibilities left to her, even *in extremis,* are limited by the promise to a husband who expects his implicitly shaky authority to continue to referee her relationship to material resources in his absence. Isabella's lack of regulatory influence as a wife is at once quietly undermined and supported by the subtle resumption of the heroine's role as a manager and suppressor of emotion in marriage. When Isabella gives her word that she will not take to a monastery for protection, the narrator's description of the pledge leans on the difference between Isabella's expression of feeling and Henault's interpretation (not merely his reception) of that expression, and leaves in suspension the possibility of managed sentiment: 'She promised and he believed.'[179] The subtle suggestion of emotional labour here reaffirms the conventionality of Isabella's role as wife – Henault has passed the baton of feminised passivity back – while the emotional work of wifehood is exposed as, and contextualised within a marital context of, constraint, obeisance and obligation. Having become unhitched from its usefulness as a tool of adaptability and of dissidence – it had been, but is no longer, a mechanism for erotic reward in the convent – the effect of Henault's management of his own emotions (and Isabella's) has been to prop up his authority as husband and his inflexible, domestically detrimental behaviour. Neither scenario – either his flawed attempt at feminised emotion work during the pastoral experiment, or his assumption of husbandly prerogative and the rendering conditional of Isabella's own authority – permits Isabella unmediated access to the necessities of survival. The monarchical analogy which had supplied Isabella's vision of equality – 'be to each a world, my monarch thou, and I thy sovereign queen' – was never sustainable, and Isabella's initial hope that loyalty and power might be reciprocal, mutual and balanced is shown, under the coverture of marriage, to be illusory. A truly equal marriage is as chimerical as the prospect of self-containment within the idyll of the lonely cottage provisioned, somehow, only with love.

[177] Behn, *History*, p.160;162;170.
[178] Behn, *History*, p.173.
[179] Behn, *History*, p.173.

Henault Redux: going throughstitch and radicalising custom in the second marriage

Behn continues to yoke emotional labour to material concerns – to property relations, and to physical domestic roles – as Isabella moves into her second marriage with Villenoys. Isabella's increasingly vital negotiation of her own relationship to her social reputation, through the performance of emotional labour, comes, moreover, to indicate the extent to which she has assimilated the lesson of suppression, as well as, crucially, the paradoxical sense of jeopardy in which Isabella finds herself. She is never in more danger, and never has more power, than when she deploys her skill in manipulating sentiment at the moment that she commits a double mariticide. What is made clear, even before Isabella arrives at such a calamitous moment, is that emotional labour is not simply a matter of reputational recompense, but an urgent matter of survival. It is stated plainly that Isabella has a pressing financial motive for remarriage: 'her aunt, the lady abbess, died and, with her, all the hopes and fortune of Isabella…and 'twas for interest she married again.'[180] Isabella's devolution of affection and devotion from Henault to Villenoys – a decision that she makes with great difficulty – is also described in the language of work. The narratorial voice is, sometimes, straightforward, rather than merely suggestive, about the performance of and motivation for emotional labour by Isabella: 'It was a great while before she could subdue her heart to that calmness; but she was prudent and wisely *bent all her endeavours* to please, oblige, and caress the deserving living, and to *strive* all she could to forget the unhappy dead, since it could not but redound to the disturbance of her repose to think of him.'[181] Isabella's suppression of her emotions is not a blank denial of them – just as Markham's 'contrary thoughts' are not denied their internal effect as they are their outward expression. It is a supreme effort to manage feeling as deftly as possible, and to apparently exercise her right reason in understanding that maintaining her passions in respect of one (dead) subject over another (living) is unapt to allow her to ensure her own 'calmness' and 'repose.' Isabella also justifies her choice (beyond the immediate problem of money) by claiming that she 'fancied the hand of Heaven had pointed out her destiny, which she could not avoid without a crime.'[182] Transference of loyalty to a new husband becomes a providential imperative, a 'crime' against 'Heaven' if avoided, but the fear of divine disapproval may be read as another manifestation of the force of custom: obliging women to rationalise obedience and fidelity by reference to some authoritative masculinised other, and to put one's entire being to the work of constituting one's own passions into an

[180] Behn, *History*, p.177.
[181] Behn, *History*, p.179, emphasis mine.
[182] Behn, *History*, p.177. 'Fancied' is, like 'tranquillity', a weighty term in *History*, and occurs within contexts of epistemological doubt, self-deception and intentional cunning. Villenoys 'fancied' Isabella more attractive, and more vulnerable, in her mourning: in his initially one-sided and quietly exploitative wooing of her, Villenoys is plainly aware that his military tales are a smokescreen for his intentions (p.176). When wrestling with her passion for Henault, Isabella deploys the excuse – 'she fancied it was resisting even divine providence' – that she later reuses in respect of her devolution of affection (p.166). The narrator rejects – doubtfully and with some regret – the cloister for which she was 'designed', 'fancying' herself (perhaps inaccurately, the text implies) unsuited to the strict physical and emotional requirements of nunnery life (pp.140-1).

acceptable form for that patriarchal figure, is so effective a prescription that a seeking after tranquillity is imagined by Isabella to be for her emotional and spiritual benefit.

Nor is the entirely unobjectionable character of Villenoys – neither abusive, unfaithful nor aggressive – a relief from, or a bar to, the requirement for Isabella to perform emotional labour. The Villenoys marriage is, unlike the match with Henault, a picture of conventional, harmonious domesticity, and is set up precisely in order to be ruptured: security and stability will remain out of reach. There is an orthodox siloing of domestic pursuits, for the wife busies herself with feminine accomplishments in private and with the management of the household while the husband hunts and socialises: 'Villenoys, of all diversions, loved hunting and kept at his country house a very famous pack of dogs' and he takes a long hunting trip with a neighbouring lord, leaving 'Isabella for a week to her devotion and her other innocent diversions of fine work, at which she was excellent.'[183] The insecurity of this vision of domestic peace, and the enriched sense of Isabella's pragmatic ability to weather difficulty, is demonstrated in the astonishing return of Henault and in Isabella's response to this. Isabella's reassertion of control over the set of circumstances which now threaten disorder – Henault's return from slavery and Villenoys' inopportune reappearance after his abridged hunting trip – is enacted, fittingly, through the utilisation of her domestic skills. (As if to hammer home the point about the precarity of this domestic paradise, and of Isabella's imperfect superintendence over household matters, instability is further figured through the work of other women: 'because it was washing day the next day, she ordered all her maids to go very early to bed that they might be up betimes' and on hearing a loud knocking in the early hours of the morning, 'the laundry maids, believing it to be the women that used to call them up, and help them to wash, rose, and opening the door, let in Villenoys' mere moments after Henault's murder and before Isabella is able to conceal the body.)[184]

Critics have already observed the radical import of Isabella's use of feminine domestic skill to 'serve her own, not her husband's ends', and which therefore 'dramatizes Behn's endeavour to make a traditional tale embody subversive feminine elements.'[185] Though generally overlooked, Isabella's compelling performance of feminine domestic competence in dispatching Henault is a pointedly practical performance of housewifely ability enacted for perverse ends: like any ideal housewife, she lacks neither the stomach nor ability to perform butchery but bristles at the dilemma of mess ('she knew not how to conceal the blood should she cut his throat' with a pen-knife) and settles for asphyxiation with a convenient item (a pillow).[186] In using needlework to murder Villenoys, by stitching his collar to

[183] Behn, *History*, p.179.
[184] Behn, *History*, p.179;184.
[185] Craft, 'Reworking Male Models', p.828.
[186] Caballero has noted that the pillow used to smother Henault is half of a pair of 'highly significant metaphors for the domestic, private sphere' (the other being needlework) and which 'eloquently illustrate Isabella's transgression against tradition female roles within society' ("'Murderess of Two Husbands"', p.35). See also Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity*: *Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama,* (Cambridge:

the sack containing Henault's body before he unwittingly flings them, bound together, into the river, 'the lynchpin of a repressive ideology of gender difference' is likewise transformed, as Pearson acknowledges, into 'a locus of female power.'[187] A crucial aspect of both murders, and which justifies the attempt, makes possible the enaction and almost leads to success in the endeavour, is Isabella's management of feeling both before and throughout. The combination of her radical physical work and the subversive emotional labour with which it is united is the apogee of what Sahni describes as a narrative of escalation, from 'minor lies and harmless transgressions' to the profound wrong of 'horrific murders.'[188] As a performer of emotional labour, Isabella graduates in skill, from a paragon of perfect young womanhood who can produce and maintain indifference however provoked, to a nun vibrant with ruminative cunning, becoming a patient and pragmatic marshal of emotions as a wife, and thence an effective and spontaneous manager and manufacturer of feeling in response to urgent, life-threatening problems.

By the time that Isabella's adoration of Henault has spent itself out in the face of necessity, she has better learned how to manage what Hochschild has termed the pinch, a feeling of distance or 'disjuncture' experienced by those who perform emotional labour and who have become aware of a difference 'between what they feel and what they think they should feel.'[189] Her ability to perform the emotional labour required to maintain tranquillity becomes more effective, if not ultimately more tenable, by the time that she is obliged to deal with the unwelcome reappearance of her first husband. When Henault returns from imprisonment after eight years' absence and seeks out Isabella to make a claim on her as her first husband, he is in a state of physical degradation. Isabella 'sees Henault poor, and knew she must fall from all the glory and tranquillity she had for five happy years triumphed in, in which time she had known no sorrow or care, though she had endured a thousand with Henault.'[190] She resolves to murder him, since 'she finds, by his return, she is not only exposed to all the shame imaginable, to all the upbraiding on his part when he shall know she is married to another, but all the fury and rage of Villenoys, and the scorn of the town, who will look on her as an adulteress.'[191] Henault's murder is rationalised through Isabella's contemplation of 'infamy', 'shame and miseries', which she believes would dog her should her bigamy become known.[192] We might recall, at this point,

Cambridge University Press, 2002), who observes that 'housewifery smacked of an aggressive yet licensed violence' given the ubiquity of domestic butchery as a chore amongst women. (p.4).

[187] Pearson, 'The History of '*The History of the Nun*'', *Rereading Aphra Behn*, ed. Hutner, pp. 247-8. Also see, Mary M. Brooks, who observes that needlework produced objects 'imbued with moral agency as evidence of "industry" and "piety"': 'Performing Curiosity: Re-Viewing Women's Domestic Embroidery in Seventeenth-Century England', *The Seventeenth-Century*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2017), p.1.

[188] Sahni, 'The Problem of Knowledge', p.219.

[189] Anita Ilta Garey and Karen V. Hansen, 'An eye on emotion in the study of families and the work', in *At the heart of work and family*: *engaging the ideas of Arlie Hochschild* eds. Anita Ilta Garey, Karen V. Hansen and Barbara Ehrenreich (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011) p.5.

[190] Behn, *History*, p.181.

[191] Behn, *History*, p.181.

[192] Behn, *History*, p.183.

Gross' thesis, that emotions are irreducibly social and that when social reputation is at stake – 'where the opinions of others are valued' and 'where honor can be realized or lost' – the 'series of subtle enabling conditions' that allows of the inequitable distribution of emotions gives anger, pride, vainglory (emotions that bespeak selfishness of a resource or chariness of status) to one party and not the other.[193] It is the narrator who draws attention to the fact that a difference of feeling obtains between Isabella and Henault – 'they had both thus silently wept, *with very different sentiments'* and 'they had talked over all they had a mind to say, all that was very endearing on his side, and *as much concern as she could force on hers'*– but it is what is implied in the production of Isabella's outward 'concern' that is most important for understanding her emotional labour as subversive.[194]

Mathews suggests that 'in *The History of the Nun*, the production and concealment of emotion are more central to the definition of Isabella's character than is her actual experience of emotion. Though the narrator illuminates her feelings at times, the text focuses overwhelmingly on her physicality, often preventing identification and sympathy.'[195] I would suggest, following Hochschild, that the production and concealment of emotion is not necessarily a different operation from the experience of emotion, but that production *is* experience. It is the disinclination of the narrator (and of Behn, therefore) to be clear about the difference between the two that obliges us to encounter Isabella's emotional labour through a fog of uncertainty – is it conscious production, "genuine" emotion, or both – and allows us to understand it as skilled, selfishly accumulative and radical. Feelings, as Hochschild states, 'are not stored "inside" us, and they are not independent of acts of management' and, moreover, 'in managing feeling, we contribute to the creation of it.'[196] Isabella's 'concern' for Henault – returned in a parlous state from slavery and set to make a claim on her as her first husband – is now incompatible with the prioritisation of her social reputation and her survival. The inequitable distribution of emotions between Henault and Isabella concerns this concept of production-as-experience: in the first instance, Isabella's outward production of solicitude for Henault leads to and conceals the experience of other emotion, 'very different sentiments' of resentment, fear, contempt, and pride (as in preferment of the self). Her self-regard and pride of status must come at the cost of his; indeed, the narrator describes Henault's 'thousand torments of jealousy' at the sight of Isabella's wealth, evident in her dress, but that in observing such a change in her circumstances, 'he durst not make any mention' of it.[197] Villenoys' precipitate return shortly after Henault's murder requires that Isabella hastily concoct an explanation: she offers a half-true, half-fabricated series of events about Henault's appearance and death, informing Villenoys that Henault seems to have died of shock upon hearing of Isabella's remarriage. 'After this', the narrator informs us, 'she wept so abundantly that all Villenoys could do could hardly calm her spirits.'[198] The

[193] Gross, *Secret History*, p.42.
[194] Behn, *History*, p.181; 183, emphases mine.
[195] Mathews, 'A Strange Sympathy', p.9.
[196] Hochschild, *Managed Heart*, p.26.
[197] Behn, *History*, p.182.
[198] Behn, *History*, p.185.

narrator is careful, withholding clarity on the nature of Isabella's inward feelings at this point: it is merely stated that 'she wept.' Not only does the reader not know whether this is merely outward production of emotion *as performance*, or whether it is what Mathews terms 'actual experience' – for whose benefit is she weeping? which emotion or set of emotions is causing her to weep? – but we also cannot say that it is not both. The untruths in Isabella's account (she did 'put him to bed' and did re-enter his chamber but did not confess that she was married to Villenoys, and he did not die naturally) renders her tearful outburst fundamentally illegible.[199]

As with Henault, Isabella refuses to place herself second in a hierarchy of affect with Villenoys, and by this means to preserve her social credit, her chaste reputation and her life. We may recollect, here, Margaret Cavendish's equivocal attribution of an 'insensible power' to wives as non-political subjects, and a rethinking of this power as something less like volition and more like an obligation to perform erotic work within marriage. Likewise, apathy – a recognition of orthodox gender and social relationships, in which a wife acknowledges by her outward behaviour that she does not rightly deserve her own anger, pride, covetousness etc. – is also, for Behn, an expression of patriarchal 'custom' and an exhortation for wives to undertake the burden of emotional labour. Without the context of political rebellion, and within the context of domestic relations, Behn comes to imagine how its performance is eventually reformulated as a radical gesture. Isabella's management of sentiment in the face of Henault's return, and her subsequent manipulation of Villenoys, takes on the appearance of a conventional performance of feminised apathy while concealing her own rerouting of power: as Isabella's internalisation of the value of female social credit deepens and her desire to defend it seems to emanate from a conventional esteem of its importance, her means of defence become more deviant.[200] This apathetic status – which refers to a wife's normative emotional position in reference to her social, material and political disadvantages, and not, we must remember, a lack of feeling – is, or should be, demonstrated through her performance of passivity. (Isabella feels *something* when she weeps, even if we are purposely prevented from understanding the nature of that emotion). This suppression and management of feeling by women for their own 'tranquillity' (and in the service of others) is explored in Leah Astbury's recent study of fruitfulness and marriage, which looks to reveal 'the ways women's bodies and minds were held disproportionately accountable for both the affective tone of a marriage and whether it was procreative.'[201] Astbury observes that prescriptive literature predominantly assumes that

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[199] Isabella smothers Henault at p.183. By contrast to this obfuscation about the nature of Isabella's weeping, the narrator makes a point of drawing attention to Isabella's grief at what she has done to both husbands and that her anguish is genuine: on being informed that Villenoys has certainly drowned and his body recovered alongside Henault's, Isabella 'almost swounded in her chair; nor did she feign it, but felt really all the pangs of killing grief.' (*History,* p.187).

[200] Upon casting in her lot with Henault, she idealistically declared love more valuable than 'all things', her 'honour, her vow, or reputation.' (Behn, *History*, p.167) Her priorities have changed in respect of her materially comfortable marriage to Villenoys.

[201] Leah Astbury, 'When a Woman Hates Her Husband: Love, Sex and Fruitful Marriages in Early Modern England', *Gender & History,* Vol.32 (3) (2020), p.3.

any incompatibility between the husband and wife is the latter's problem to address, and that though feeling ought ideally to be mutual between spouses, 'men's efforts to maintain marital harmony were static.'[202] Appearing to reject a masculinised inertness and to embrace the duty of an intensely sensitive and active apathy, Isabella nevertheless declines to subordinate herself or to accept that the availability of emotion must favour either husband rather than herself. In the terms of the economy of emotions, and the notion of luxury and scarcity, this is a piece of opulence Isabella believes she ought to be able to afford. As she defends her access to the comfortable material conditions of her second marriage, she comes to be defensive too of her access to feeling. Moreover, the emphasis on suppression of emotion in the early modern advice to wives – and that the production of tranquillity is apt to women in particular – is redeployed by Isabella who evinces, rather, that she is capable of manufacturing, alternately, demonstrative and potentially deceptive passion (weeping abundantly) and then great calm when she has considered that the situation and her own intentions require it.

Differently from Henault, Villenoys means to collude in the preservation of Isabella's social reputation, though only through the false understanding of the situation fed to him by Isabella: Villenoys resolves 'to save Isabella's honour' and endeavours 'to hide her shame' (i.e., that she is a bigamist; he is unaware that she is a murderer) but having been misled by Isabella about the nature of Henault's death, does not and cannot comprehend what is really implied in the defence of Isabella's 'honour.'[203] Ironically, 'the fond and passionate Villenoys' undercuts his own honour to prioritise and preserve hers, while failing to see that he is no guardian of 'their honour and tranquillity hereafter', but a hazard, in Isabella's eyes, to the sense of peace that she has been striving to achieve.[204] Disallowed a proprietary pride towards Isabella's reputation, Villenoys is eliminated with an astonishing *sang-froid.* While the means of disposing of Henault's body is Villenoys' idea ('Villenoys himself proposed the carrying him out to the bridge…he went himself into the stable and fetched a sack such as they use for oats'), Isabella's use of the 'great needle' and 'packthread' is raw opportunism.[205] Isabella's emotional labour at this moment – the play that she makes of paying Villenoys what he is owed as her husband and saviour – introduces an extraordinary tension when juxtaposed with the physical work of bagging up Henault's corpse and of arranging bodies both living and dead. There is a labouring of close, thorough detail in the actions of the carrying, arranging and sewing that is redolent of stage directions: Joanna Fowler has observed the ways in which Behn transplanted dramatic technique into her prose fiction, and the instructional nature of this scene offers an example of the narrator's prioritised descriptive liberties, which mimic and

[202] Astbury, 'When a Woman Hates Her Husband', p.9.
[203] Behn, *History*, p.185. Altogether, she crafts two different versions of events for two different people – Villenoys (p.185) and Maria, her maid (p.188) – and a third by omission, in pretending to be 'amazed' at the presence of the second body, to Villenoys' valet (p.188). It is only upon direct accusation that she cracks (p.189).
[204] Behn, *History*, pp.185-6.
[205] Behn, *History*, p.185.

effectively function as directions for physical movement.[206] Villenoys 'having put up the body and tied it fast, set it on a chair, turning his back towards it with the more conveniency to take it upon his back, bidding Isabella give him the two corners of the sack in his hands.'[207] It is a striking moment of harmonious physical work (particularly in contrast to the abject failure of domestic industry represented by the Henault marriage), emphasising the effort of hands and straining back in heaving, tying and positioning, and which is entirely undermined by the simultaneous operation of Isabella's emotional labour. When Villenoys

> had the sack on his back and ready to go out with it, she cried, 'Stay, my dear, some of his clothes hang out, which I will put in', and with that, taking the packneedle with the thread, sewed the sack with several strong stitches to the collar of Villenoys's coat without his perceiving it, and bid him go now.[208]

Isabella pretends to acknowledge what Villenoys is due – gratitude, sincerity, concern – by her language ('my dear') while performing physical work which flows into and makes sense of the gap between utterance and submerged feeling. Marriage-saving work (the murder of Henault) has developed into marriage-destroying work (the murder of Villenoys) through Isabella's drive to maintain reputation and to preserve tranquillity: the ironical stress on 'tranquillity' – she has brought complete disorder down upon her household in order to assure a conjugal peace in which Villenoys would not be 'reproaching her' – leads us back to Isabella's beginnings in the convent and the indifference that she was taught to assimilate and practice as a child.

This endless labouring after tranquillity, of Isabella's placing herself in a sensitive, though passive relation to provocations of all kinds, develops into the emotional work of the wife: she comes to understand that tranquillity is not achieved in spite of the attractions of a wealthy and privileged lifestyle (such seemed to be the logic of Isabella's father) but is manufactured precisely in order to manage one's involvement in social and material networks of power, and the demands that such involvement exacts. Reputation is both the condition and reward of taking oneself, successfully, into the marriage market, and the maintenance of one's virtuous reputation and one's future financial security is achieved through the management of tranquillity as a matter of custom.[209] At the moment that Isabella decides to murder Villenoys, the narrator intervenes with an arresting pun: they find Isabella's second 'wickedness' less excusable than the first, 'but when fate begins to afflict, she goes throughstitch with her blackwork.'[210] Though the murder of Villenoys is more difficult to justify than that of Henault, the needlework metaphor still somewhat diminishes Isabella's responsibility for the second crime: fate is an external

[206] Joanna Fowler, 'Dramatic and Narrative Techniques in the Novellas of Aphra Behn', *Women's Writing*, 22:1, (2015), p.97-113.
[207] Behn, *History*, p.186.
[208] Behn, *History*, p.186.
[209] Behn, *History*, p.143.
[210] Behn, *History*, p.186.

force which obliges Isabella to go 'throughstitch', to perform an action thoroughly and to its end, and it is a compelling mechanism with its own malevolent 'blackwork' design (blackwork is a form of fine embroidery). The effect of such language, besides offering a pleasing pun about the method of Villenoys' murder, is to leave room for interpretation regarding the reach and the nature of 'fate'. Rather than, as Pearson, reading the idea of 'throughstitch' as a fatal force – as a sewing woman seizing for herself some small power, or a guiding cosmic entity either Classical or Christian in sensibility – it is equally useful to read it as 'custom.'[211] Custom goes throughstitch, which is to say it is the complete system by which women's lives are understood to be circumscribed and the lessons that they are taught and retaught as young women; it is the obligatory 'bad market' to which women must take themselves; it is busy laundry days and devotion in isolation; it is the maintenance of a feminine tranquillity, and excellence of virtue and of reputation above all else**.** In the end, the suppression of feeling and a certain abnegation of self-interest required by the ideal wife clashes with the demand that she defend and maintain this reputation: going throughstitch means performing physical and emotional labour to a logical endpoint, as absurd or as transgressive as that might turn out to be.

Conclusions

Transgression in the domestic realm necessarily has its limits, and both Cavendish and Behn probe at the boundaries of wifely power within the conjugal household without necessarily agreeing what limits might be reached while maintaining a façade of virtue. This is in part a consequence of their differing approaches to exploring the subject of domestic life and the gendered roles of which it is comprised. Cavendish disengages female heroism from the wifely domestic role, suggesting that the heroine's exceptionality (characterised as intellectual freedom) is born out of subversion, out of a radical avoidance of conventional ideas about feminine virtue and where it would normally be exercised. For Cavendish, this means endorsing marriage, and the slender possibility of ideal wifehood, while also suggesting that female heroism takes a different, non-domestic form. For Behn, who casts Isabella as the heroine of her own domestic romance, the exceptional nature of the central female character arises not out of her ability or desire to infringe norms but out of an increasingly desperate adherence to them. This divergence of approach is indelibly linked to form: while Cavendish finds useful the thematic latitude of romance that is available through its mid-century modes, she abstains from telling a *story* of domestic life. She attempts to make a strong claim for the direct presentation of wisdom on conjugal relationships (rather than its representation in a fictional form) but the interplay of fictionality and verisimilitude risks the contamination of the "real" with the feigned. Using an anti-domestic, anti-erotic romance narrative to justify imparting intellectual content on sexual relationships is a strategy that imperils both credibility and clarity. Cavendish generally declines to discuss erotic themes by shielding

[211] Pearson observes that 'fate, more usually imagined spinning' is likened to 'a seamstress ironically like Isabella herself.' ('The History of '*The History of the Nun*'', p.248).

herself behind the flexibility of the language of work – the courtesan's 'arts' are never quite defined – but given that the anchoret's slim narrative plays out a rejection of eroticism and of marriage (but that she assumes that her married interlocutors have already failed to embrace an abstinent existence) neither the anchoret nor the courtesan provide fully practicable models for any women. Cavendish's double avoidance of the narrativization of the dilemmas of matrimony, and of the quotidian performance of gendered working roles, also has the effect of bypassing the possibility of closure. We do not know if the advice offered by the anchoret is ever successfully applied – a hopeful performance of labour that stays, perhaps, between the reader looking for some knowledge on the subject and the text that offers it – and the parade of maids and neighbours' maids available to the philandering husband is potentially endless. So, therefore, is the wife's erotic work in ensuring that the ship of domestic order continues to sail true.

Cavendish's mixed form romance is, then, both an apt mode and an unfit means for exploring what work is required of a wife: it allows Cavendish to occlude such labour beneath imprecise language – a strategy underpinned, perhaps, by the assumption that the reader will be conversant with the cultural figure of the courtesan – but the coy omission is so conspicuous that a provocation to probe both the gap and the rationale for it is all but assured. More effective in telling a story about and interrogating the development of obligation, custom and work is Behn's use of a longer form of prose fiction. The reader is able to trace the development of key terms like 'tranquillity', and that increasingly strained by the conditions under which it is deployed as an idea and an aim. Behn ensures that it becomes progressively more difficult to read this term without ironising scare quotes. Isabella's increasingly conscious and unorthodox performance of emotion management – registered through the escalating stress on 'tranquillity' – is also particularly well suited to a narrative that draws on romance tropes: romance offers a natural focus on the passions, as well as plentiful assumptions about female heroism, and the physical and emotional contexts in which this might be realised. Isabella's rather stagy performance of the role of the heroine in a pastoral fantasy must necessarily fall flat in order that the shape of a credible and self-destructive female heroism in *History* may be established: the pitch-perfect performance of emotional labour is what identifies the present potential of actual women, and demarcates the limits of this "real" heroism in the world of property and economically motivated marriage.

Such work is absolutely necessary for survival, and is therefore essentially performed under duress, but Behn is not timid about the reach of this labour. For Cavendish, the furthest liberty that can be enacted through the wife's erotic work is to persuade, connive and distract. Beyond that, lies the separation of the wife from husband and household, an extreme act not to be encouraged if reparative efforts can be sustained. For Behn, the potential of emotional labour leads up to and includes murder: Isabella moves beyond reparative work altogether, and while Cavendish catastrophises the breakdown of marriage, Behn catastrophises its maintenance. The very basis of gendered domestic roles within marriage is made subject to scrutiny by an exploration of both conventional performances of emotional labour – Isabella's

performance of tranquillity remains essentially validated by custom – and unconventional ones. Behn, unlike Cavendish, is interested in double standards, and experiments with applying the same sauce to goose and gander: Henault's aberrant performance of feminised emotion management disturbs spousal roles and helpfully denaturalises such work, but his own relationship to physical labour and to the material necessities of life makes hollow, and dangerous, his posture of passivity. Such an experiment suggests, nevertheless, that even if a normative hierarchy of affect can be reconfigured, the disclosure of the naturalisation of gendered emotional labour has disturbed, irreparably, the sense that what is orthodox cannot be turned on its head once more – or, indeed, that the prescriptive configuration of feminised emotional labour does not contain its own radical potential.

Reading *History* and *Anchoret* together through the lens of labour contributes, finally, both to a deeper understanding of early modern wifely work, which is inclusive of but goes beyond the realm of material domestic tasks, and of Cavendish and Behn as canonical writers. Having been compared and contrasted as utopian thinkers and philosophers, early eco-feminists, political observers, royalist writers, commentators on public female performance, radical revisers of patriarchal literary modes, and authors whose texts partake of scientific knowledge and discourse, reading "work" in Cavendish and Behn has drawn attention to an underappreciated link between these two much studied female authors, furthered understanding of ideas of gendered domestic labour in the period, and emphasised the place of these ideas in Cavendish and Behn's more and less romantic evocations of the institution of matrimony.[212] The next and final section will discuss Behn's representation of another form of gendered labour – female service – and the nature of this work in Behn's vision of the crucial defensive alliance between mistress and loyal maid in her comedies.

[212] Oddvar Holmesland, *Utopian Negotiation : Aphra Behn and Margaret Cavendish* (Syracuse, NY.: Syracuse University Press, 2013); Bill Phillips, 'The Rape of Mother Earth in Seventeenth Century English Poetry: An Ecofeminist Interpretation', *Atlantis* (Salamanca, Spain), Vol.26 (1) (2004), pp.49-60; Hero Chalmers, *Royalist Women Writers* 1650-1689 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); Sue Wiseman, 'Margaret Cavendish among the prophets: performance ideologies and gender in and after the English civil war', *Women's Writing: the Elizabethan to Victorian Period*, Vol.6 (1) (1999), pp.95-111; Eun Kyung Min, 'Fictions of Obligation: Contract and Romance in Margaret Cavendish and Aphra Behn', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Volume 32, Number 2 (Winter 2020), pp. 245-269; *English Literature And The Disciplines Of Knowledge, Early Modern To Eighteenth Century: A Trade for Light* ed. by Jorge Bastos da Silva and Miguel Ramalhete Gomes (Leiden, Netherlands ; Boston, MA.: Brill Rodopi, 2018).

5. Service on the stage and page: female servants in Behn's comedies and in conduct material

Behn's ideal servant: 'her love and duty'

In Behn's early tragi-comedy *The Forc'd Marriage* (1671), Alcippus attacks his wife Erminia, strangling her (though non-fatally, as it fortunately falls out) in a jealous Othello-like rage. Like the marriage of Othello and Desdemona, this match cannot proceed happily of itself, for forces internal and external have impaired it from its beginning. In Behn's play, Erminia, daughter to the king's once-favourite general Orgulious, is forced into matrimony with the king's new court intimate, the boastful young Alcippus. Orgulious, a one-time political exile who supports his daughter's enforced betrothal as a means of ingratiating himself with the dangerously splenetic king, bullies Erminia into the match: commentary on this play tends to proceed, therefore, in the vein of Behn's early politics regarding kingship and the actions of those willing to support it.[1] The fundamental opposition set up in the play – that between love and duty – embroils every individual in the court hierarchy at every service position: a critical appreciation of Behn's attitude towards servile intimacy, and the postures of neutrality, prudent silence and loyalty that servants may take, is as important to appreciating the political heft of the play as taking note of the behaviour of aspirants and tyrants. Alcippus is one such aspirant, a conceited young man with a quicksilver temper whose own display of power finds him in the crosshairs of his wife's loyal servant, Isillia. Though unaccustomed to being refused, he is not altogether insensible of the emotional difficulties with which his reluctant wife, who shares a requited love with the king's son Philander, has been burdened. Alcippus nevertheless succumbs wholesale to jealousy, even when

[1] Anita Pacheco, ''Where Lies this Power Divine?': The Representation of Kingship in Aphra Behn's Early Tragicomedies', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 38 No. 3 (2015), pp.317-334.

counselled otherwise by a friend: his new wife (unconsummated though the marriage is) he mistakenly believes to have been unfaithful. The scene of accusation proceeds, significantly for this chapter, on a footing of domestic disorder, and concerns both the mistress-servant relationship and servant sexuality.

> *Alcippus.* How now Erminia? How come it you are up so late?
>
> *Erminia.* I found my self not much inclin'd to sleep; I hope 'tis no offence. Why do you look so wildly round about you?
>
> *Alcippus*. Methinks Erminia you are much confus'd.
>
> *Erminia.* Alas you cannot blame me; Isillia tells me you were much inrag'd Against a Lover she was entertaining.
>
> *Alcippus*. A Lover – was that a time for Courtship? Such actions, Madam, will reflect on you.
>
> Isillia *goes to take the Hat and Sword and slide into her lap, which he sees, calls to her.*
>
> –What have you there, Isillia? Come back and let me what 'tis.
>
> [*He takes them from her.*
>
> - ha, – a Sword, and Hat – Erminia, whose be these?[2]

When Erminia makes the apparently implausible claim that they belong to her father, Alcippus knows that she is lying: on making his way into his wife's lodgings, Alcippus had an altercation with a masked Alcander (Prince Philander's friend). This gives rise to Alcippus' belief that something is afoot ('it may be 'tis his office to detain me'), though he has no proof to round out his suspicions. The hat and sword, which Isillia unintentionally draws attention to, belong (as the audience is well aware) to Philander. Philander's presence in Erminia's rooms – he is hiding behind the bed at this point – is made possible by a seeming act of disloyalty by Erminia's woman, Isillia. Unknown to the innocent Erminia, Philander had set in train a plot to sneak into Erminia's rooms (facilitated by Isillia, who willingly grants him access) in order to persuade Erminia to flee with him. Virtuous to a fault, Erminia makes no move to comply. Her quick-thinking displacement of blame for sexual impropriety onto Isillia is, in turn, a contingency made necessary by the servant's own exercise of discretion about the limits and nature of her fidelity to her mistress. Though the play eventually vindicates Isillia's assumption of authority as an ethical (that is, in Behn's eyes, loyal and disinterested) act of duty towards Erminia, the servant's judgement initially leads to disaster.[3] An habitual violence threatens to explode when Philander emerges from his hiding place and challenges Alcippus, but is inhibited, at this stage, by the press of political

[2] Aphra Behn, *The Forc'd Marriage, or The Jealous Bridegroom* (1671; 1688), 4.6, p.47. Though first printed in 1671, the edition available through Early Modern Books at this date was illegible in many places; I have used the 1688 instead.

[3] Behn's awareness of the importance of Isillia's culpability is evidenced by the means of amends which the playwright ensures are available for her; we learn that Isillia, left weeping over Erminia's body, is the one who observes that her mistress is still alive. Through the servant's efforts, and guided by her 'love and duty' to her mistress, she effects Erminia's revival (Behn, *Forc'd Marriage*, 4.9, p.55).

duty: 'But you're my Prince, and that I own you so,/ Is all remains in me of sence or justice.'[4] His rage is diverted, tellingly, onto his wife: with a sense of threat not generally replicated in Behn's later plays, Erminia suffers (so Alcippus believes) mortally, by the honour, machismo and choler of the man who lays claim to her as husband.[5]

In a play which foregrounds the competing claims of duty and love, the calamitous intercession of a servant at this point is entirely apt: other employed servants are faced with this very conundrum in the course of the plot, but make different, more tactful, responses, and other courtiers, who understand themselves as located within an intricate hierarchy of rank, participate in forms of service which, equally, struggle to accommodate real feeling to political obeisance. Moving like an undercurrent beneath the surface of this scene about gendered violence and political duty, however, are a series of linked ideas, idealisations, and anxieties about domestic order, service, sexuality, and household reputation. Isillia's sexual or romantic relationships, or the possibility of pursuing them, are expected to be policed by her mistress. The public fame of the household depends upon, amongst other things, the effectiveness (or otherwise) of Erminia's control of her servant's behaviour. Alcippus' arch observation about the atypical hour of Isillia's alleged visitor is a loaded question: if Erminia has permitted a night-time rendezvous in her household, she proves herself an incapable mistress. The alternative explanation for Erminia's disquietude and the presence of the foreign items is, of course, infidelity, another display of poor authority. If she cannot control herself, she cannot expect to manage others and sets a notorious example to her servants. Alcippus' assumption that the origin of the sword and hat must have an explanation unconnected to Isillia also contains an implied consciousness of the fine degrees of social rank and the barrier of occupational identity: Isillia's status, as senior as she is within the service hierarchy of the household, nevertheless remains sufficiently inferior to make the idea of a gentleman's romantic interest quite incredible (the presence of the sword in particular marks out, or should do, the superior social status of its owner).[6] In the end, the ultimately unsuccessful displacement of sexual impropriety from the mistress on to the servant also marks a servant-employer relationship in which the servant finds her reputation at the mercy of the say-so of her mistress, and

[4] Behn, *Forc'd Marriage,* 4.6, p.48.

[5] Such masculine excess would, Alvin Snider suggests, seem especially crass given the play's investment in mockery of the feudal values its characters and setting embody: its performance at Lincoln's Inn Fields (a dangerous site in a déclassé area of London) only reinforces the humour. Alvin Snider, 'Aphra Behn's *The Forc'd Marriage* at Lincoln's Inn Fields', *Studies in Philology*, Volume 115, Number 1 (Winter 2018), pp. 193-217.

[6] At the Restoration, Charles II issued *A proclamation for the suppressing of disorderly and unseasonable meetings, in taverns and tipling-houses, and also forbidding footmen to wear swords, or other weapons, within London, Westminster, and their liberties*. (1660), which proclamation addressed servants and their employers. This proclamation did not have the desired effect, partly due to the propensity of employers to engage in servant livery one-upmanship: Samuel Pepys records (Sunday 4 May, 1662) 'Dined well, and after dinner, my arm tied up with a black ribbon, I walked with my wife to my brother Tom's; our boy waiting on us with his sword, which this day he begins to wear, to outdo Sir W. Pen's boy, who this day, and Sir W. Batten's too, begin to wear new livery; but I do take mine to be the neatest of them all.'
https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1662/05/04/

suggests that the household which she serves is as much a potential source of danger to the servant as she is to it. *The Forc'd Marriage* is typical of Behn's engagement with service work and servants in her drama: these characters are subsumed within plots of which they are usually a small part, and are used to work through themes that, as is suggested by the connection between Isillia and Erminia's sexual reputations, affect the represented society from top to bottom. The smallest of details can point to worlds beneath the surface movement of action: the agent of persuasion, for instance, that influenced Isillia to open the doors of her mistress's household to a trespasser was not Prince Philander himself but Aminta, a courtier bound in an informal service relationship with the prickly princess Gallatea. Aminta briskly assures Philander, 'Isillia, I have won to give you entrance.'[7] As will become more obvious in Behn's later plays (which are less generically mixed), servants are gateways, figures of mobility and access, usually for an ultimate good rather than ill effect.[8] Aminta's throwaway phrase about winning Isillia implies much – the ease with which a servant can be persuaded into disobedience, the susceptibility of a female servant in particular to the false front of companionable behaviour (attendant, perhaps, on a sense of isolation even within the intimate bounds of her contracted employment), and the casual assumption of a hierarchy amongst subordinates in different and parallel service relationships.

Elizabeth Rivlin and Jeanne Clegg's reviews of, respectively, the literary and cultural presence of servants before 1660, and the social and economic history of service between 1660 and 1750, have both emphasised the need to broaden the field, and particularly in respect of gender and sexuality: Clegg urges that we continue, crucially, to make efforts to 'read between the lines' in order to glean significant insights into the relations between employers and servants, and amongst servants themselves, in sources and texts that do not immediately appear prepossessing.[9] I intend this section, which concerns Aphra Behn's dramatic representations of female service relationships, to be part of that effort. This study will hinge around the discussion of two of Behn's plays in particular: in the second chapter of this section, I will be examining *The Dutch Lover* (1673) and *The Town Fopp* (1677), but I will also range across Behn's drama, from her earliest to her latest, in other, smaller ways.[10] The background hum of service work is ubiquitous, even in texts in which Behn's concerns are commonly understood to be elsewhere. I will discuss these plays in concert with examples of conduct literature, primarily those of Hannah

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[7] Behn, *The Forc'd Marriage*, 4.1, p.41.

[8] See Margarete Rubik, 'The house, the city, and the colony in the works of Aphra Behn: Gendered spaces and the freedoms and dangers they afford', *SEDERI. Sociedad Española de Estudios Renacentistas Ingleses*, Vol.28 (28) (2018), p.61; Amanda Flather, 'Gender, Space and Place: The Experience of Service in the Early Modern English Household c.1580–1720', *Home Cultures*, Vol.8 (2) (2011), which points to the limited agency made available to the servant through her 'knowledge of the layout and organization of the house.' (pp.181-2); on servants in liminal spaces, see Iman Sheeha, Matthew Steggle, 'Mistress, look out at window': Women, Servants and Liminal Domestic Spaces on the Early Modern Stage', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Vol.22 (2020), pp.1-18.

[9] Elizabeth Rivlin**,** 'Service and Servants in Early Modern English Culture to 1660', *Journal Of Early Modern Studies*, Vol.4 (4) (2015), pp.17-41; Jeanne Clegg, 'Good to Think with: Domestic Servants, England 1660-1750', *Journal Of Early Modern Studies*, 2015, Vol.4 (4) (2015), p.62.

[10] *The Dutch Lover: A Comedy* (London, 1673); *The Town-Fopp: or, Sir Timothy Tawdrey. A Comedy.* (London, 1677). Both are the first quartos.

Woolley – *The Gentlewoman's Companion* (1673) and *The Compleat Servant-Maid or, The Young Maiden's Tutor* (1677) – which are fully concerned with or else contain sections on the subject of service.[11] This first chapter will be concerned with setting out the groundwork for comparison between Behn's comedies and conduct material on service: it is necessary to consider, first of all, what it is that reading conduct material alongside Behn's drama might enable us to see. In what ways might these two forms – the didactic and the dramatic – be entangled, and what might be the effect of their relationship? In a basic way, conduct literature on the subject of service provides us with the language and concepts that allow us to read and to discuss service in these plays as something beyond an apparently natural feature of drama and of society in the period. The representation of service is as legible a phenomenon in Behn's drama as her political allegiances and interests, her critical stance on marriage or her obsession with the theme and lexicon of mercantile activities. Given that service (either the nature of actual experiences of service work, or its dramatic depiction) is never really the ostensible point of her plays, reading conduct literature on the subject of service and servant behaviour helps to make it more legible still. Reading this material also allows us to see the ways in which Behn deals in some conventional narratives and discourses about service, and that her wonted scepticism about a conventional, patriarchal orderliness means that she frequently departs from or reconfigures the terms of such discourses.

On the matter of order, the animus of Behn's comedies is fundamentally different to that of the conduct material. The ultimate purpose of the servant's labours in Behn's comedies is the restoration of what the playwright suggests is an inverted world, a working against the disorderliness of a society unjust to women and dismissive of their volition. Conduct material that is addressed to or is about servants broadly assumes that they themselves are a risk, and, at worst, such texts will catastrophise the potential disorder that servants offer at the heart of a household. From Behn's perspective at least, this misrecognises or underplays a more important source of derangement and of danger for that group in the household – her heroines – whose vulnerabilities are of such prime importance. This difference of focus does not mean that any dialogue between these texts can only be at cross-purposes. Considered alongside each other, it becomes clear that the demands of comedy have a way of infusing elasticity into didactic material, and of providing a forum for the theory of service to find practical application

[11] *The Compleat Servant-Maid* (London, 1677), and *The Gentlewoman's Companion* (London, 1673) which I discuss further in the section below, are understood to be unauthorised publications based on other of Woolley's works. Elaine Hobby lists these two texts, as well as *The Accomplish'd Ladies Delight* (1675) as erroneous or Woolley-adjacent publications; see *Virtue of Necessity: English women's writing, 1649–1688* (London: Virago, 1988) pp. 165-176; see also John Considine's *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for 'Hannah Wolley.' https://www-oxforddnb-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-29957 For the sake of neatness, I will continue to address the author of these texts as Woolley, in the understanding that her valid attributions (*The Ladies Directory* (1661, -62); *The Cooks Guide* (1664); *The Queen-Like Closet* (1670, -72, -75-6, -81, -84); *The Ladies Delight* (1672); *A Supplement to the Queen-Like Closet* (1674, -81, -84)) and her authorial identity informs the authoritative presumptions, and contributes to the content, of the anonymously compiled/authored volumes.

that is actually practicable (if not particularly moral). In the other direction, conduct material can allow us to see dramatic service not simply as acts of comic ease, of airy natural aptitude fitted, and subordinate, to the often frantic environment of the Restoration comedy: performances of service in Behn's comedies are grounded in contemporary ideas about what servants should (and should not) do. Certain discourses of service within these texts filter into, and mutually reinforce, ideas about service represented in the drama. Cultural assumptions about, for instance, the sexually connoted untidiness of the under cook-maid draws on common conceptions about this particular type of servant that, representative of their actual behaviour or not, sustains itself through reiteration in different literary sites.[12] Where the sexualisation of female servants is concerned, moreover, the fine gradations of rank within a service hierarchy tends to make little difference: under cook-maids are vulnerable to assumptions about their sexual propriety just as a 'woman' like Jacinta in *The False Count* (1682) may be targeted as a liability at the least hint of indecency. As the closest servant and companion to the heroine Julia, Jacinta is a senior servant in the household of the nouveau-riche Cit Francisco, but Behn acknowledges, somewhat drily, the particular sexual and economic vulnerability of a servant who (perhaps because of her seniority, rather than despite it) comes to the attention of the paranoid patriarch of the household. Concerned about her influence on his wife Julia, Francisco exclaims he wishes he could find grounds to dismiss the quick-witted and sharp-tongued Jacinta, an acceptable gesture 'wou'd thou hadst thy Bellyful.'[13]

Behn largely represents service, it must be noted at the outset, with a narrow focus: her female servants are those found at the upper end of the service hierarchy, and I will go on to discuss the socially limited picture of service that she and other Restoration dramatists offer. In *The Dutch Lover*, Behn is explicitly concerned with models of female service that rely on the empathy and likeness made possible by the proximity between a mistress and a senior female servant: the main plot interrogates ideas of reward and loyalty, and the marriage trajectory narrative which had been a commonplace in literary discussions of female service work for over a century – and which remained a mainstay proposition in the conduct manuals aimed at female servants towards the end of the seventeenth. *The Town Fopp*, a forerunner of *The Rover* (1677) in which the unpleasant titular "hero" bafflingly prevails, is, likewise, shot through with some central issues that are raised in the conduct literature, and which similarly requires that the female servant in question be in a position to offer physical closeness and emotional devotion. In this play, Behn is interested in the role of the servant as educator, in the powerful, almost maternal intimacy

[12] Woolley's The *Queen Like Closet* (1670): the under cook maid should be 'neat and cleanly in her own habit, and then we need not doubt of it in her Office; not to dress her self, especially her Head, in the Kitchin, for that is abominable sluttish, but in her Chamber, before she comes down.' (p.371). *The Debauchee, or The Credulous Cuckold* (1677) characterises Bess the under cook maid primarily by the congruence between her unclean dress and suspect sexual behaviour. O'Donnell lists this play as an attribution to Behn 'with some validity.' Perhaps a collaboration, it is a close revision of Richard Brome's *A Mad Couple Well Matcht* (1653). (See O'Donnell. *Annotated Bibliography*, pp.258-61).

[13] Aphra Behn, *The False Count, or, A New Way to Play an Old Game* (London, 1682), 2.1, p.17.

of such a pedagogical service relationship, as well as in the self-interest, the reputation and the self-representative strategies of servants themselves.

My reading of Behn's comedies in concert with the conduct material will handle three main themes or issues. The first is the service-to-marriage narrative trajectory. How is this observed, sustained, and manipulated by Behn in her depiction of marriage as reward for diligent service between women? The second is pedagogy in service. How is the practice of service informed by the theories of pedagogy in the conduct material that treats of the educative role of servants? Spanning across both of these, and always underpinning Behn's dramatic visions of service, is the issue of servant fidelity: what is the effect of Behn reinterpreting and narrowing this basic tenet of service relationships in line with her gender politics? What are the necessary conditions for proving fidelity in a gendered service alliance, and what limitations and difficulties might emerge in faulty performances of service? As I will argue, the engagement between the dramatic and didactic involves contradiction, amendment and rearrangement – a negotiation between Behn's own generic and thematic purposes and those of the conduct material. Much of what is communicated to servants in the conduct material naturally clusters around the notion of the ideal: how a model servant should behave generally, and within a variety of defined roles or in the course of certain skilled tasks; what means of arriving at a perfect state of submission and diligence should be used (an endless well of patience appears to be the main answer); what a servant should do when faced with a less than exemplary employer (again, forbearance), and so on. Sara Pennell and Natasha Glaisyer have observed the subtle categorical and pedagogical difference between didactic and conduct literature – the latter comes under the umbrella of the former, but not all educational texts are about conduct or behaviour – and while Behn's comedies do engage with the authority of the instructional and the replicable (the more straightforwardly "how-to" mode of didactic literature, which is the focus of Pennell and Glaisyer's volume), the pliability of the more descriptive conduct guidance found in categorically mixed publications meets, with comic and critical effect, the expediencies of Behn's drama.[14] The service relationships represented in her comedies offer their own vision of the ideal servant, but under the aegis of the playwright's exculpatory model of servant fidelity. The most ethical performance of female service to be found there is the carrying out of loyalty-unto-disorder, a model in which idealism about servant skills and behaviour means, in practice, a readiness to eschew patience, forbearance and humility, and the ability to plot, steal, deceive, manage, facilitate, and manipulate.

[14] Sara Pennell and Natasha Glaisyer, *Didactic Literature in England 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). The study concerns 'texts which were explicitly framed to instruct through the material they contained: amongst these are what we might today label as 'how-to' books. Such books made their claims to educate and inspire from the outset, and were constructed both textually and physically, to achieve those goals: the ideal didactic text of this sort was ideally 'a Manual, that shall neither burden the hands to hold, the Eyes in reading, nor the Mind in conceiving.'' (pp.2-3).

Service on the Restoration stage: an incomplete picture

The existing scholarship on Restoration stage servants remains thin on the ground, and nor does it significantly overlap with the wealth of feminist critical work on the drama of the period. Patricia A. Godsave's recent doctoral thesis, 'The Roles of Servant Characters in Restoration Comedy, 1660 – 1685', addresses, as she states, the 'void' that obtains on the subject: 'servant roles are not just under-represented in long eighteenth-century theatre scholarship but are virtually *un*-represented even though servants—both real and fictional—were ubiquitous during this period.'[15] Paddy Lyon's chapter in Catie Gill's *Theatre And Culture In Early Modern England, 1650-1737* goes some way to addressing this under-representation and his setting out of a protocol which governs the actions of servants within stage comedies provides a useful starting point for thinking through the complex set of (gendered) relations between mistresses and their servants as Behn depicted them in her drama.[16]

Godsave and Lyons, however, both offer criteria for their studies of servants which put the investigation of the life of a minor stage character at some disadvantage, and proffer results from their readings which are unapt to answer queries of service which, as contemporaries did, saw it as a gendered phenomenon. In the first instance, assumptions about the value of memorability and spectacle attached to certain servant roles, as well as the methodological choice to only investigate 'smash-hits', necessarily means that the critic is hamstrung if they wish to discuss texts that may have anything to offer on the subject of service from beyond an audience-based critical context of third-night success.[17] Enacting its own occlusion of service in a field of literature which already under-emphasises the fullest representation of such work, any exploration of service which relies upon those who 'steal the show' from their "betters" also undercuts the importance of intraclass aggravation: servants expose each other, as they do employers, and competition, difference and inversion do not only pertain to vertical social and economic relationships.[18] When Behn proffers differing models of service in the space of a single text, we are invited to make comparative critique of them. An approach which elides 'significant' with 'visible' or 'conspicuous' is likewise inadequate to reckon with a salient feature of the female servant role in comedy, which is her potential indistinction from or doubling of her mistress. Gendered narratives of

[15] Patricia A. Godsave, 'The Roles of Servant Characters in Restoration Comedy, 1660 – 1685', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2018, https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss/204 p.7. Godsave considers one Behn text, *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687), and appends her brief study of the license given to male *zanni* characters to her concluding section on 1680s comedy.
[16] Paddy Lyons, 'What do the Servants Know?', *Theatre And Culture In Early Modern England, 1650-1737* : *from Leviathan to Licensing Act*, ed. by Catie Gill (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2010) pp.11 - 32. Lyons relies heavily on last-decade playwrights (Pix, Farquhar, Centlivre, Congreve).
[17] Godsave, 'Roles of Servant Characters', pp.7-8. Those plays that Godsave so defines are, Sir Robert Howard's *The Committee, Or, The Faithful Irishman* (1663), Sir Samuel Tuke's *The Adventures of Five Hours* (1663), John Dryden's *Sir Martin Mar-all, Or, Feign'd Innocence* (1667), Thomas Betterton's *The Amorous Widow, Or, The Wanton Wife* (1670), John Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode* (1671), William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), Sir George Etherege's *The Man of Mode, Or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676), Edward Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds* (1681), John Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice, Or, It Cannot Be* (1683), Aphra Behn's *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687).
[18] Godsave, 'Roles of Servant Characters', p.2.

service in both the drama and conduct material endorse but display anxiety about the transformation of servant to mistress: on conduct writers' terms, this metamorphosis should be a gradual one of worthy labour and acquired skill. The visible iterations of class difference that we find in the dramatic representation of service – dress, language, the deportment and display of the gendered body, and the ramifications of both of these for reading social identity – means that what is often significant about such servants is their concurrent visibility and illegibility. Female servants do not necessarily steal the show from their betters, but suggest, rather, that what is worth paying attention to is the continuity – that which pertains to physical appearance, and shared values – between mistresses and maids.

Moreover, Lyons' prioritisation of sexuality as a means of identifying and limning the role of servants has its limits, as does placing servants within networks of desire of which they apparently cannot partake. His suggestion that servants are supremely sensitive to the 'entanglements of desire and its articulation' is surely accurate, but less certain is the notion that servant knowledge about, and expressions of, desire are more of a class issue than a gendered one. 'Servants', Lyons states, 'opt to remain onlookers on the love chases taking place all around them' and they 'are more or less unshakeable in their knowing awareness, and remain bystanders on these games. Just how well servants understand the laws of desire becomes evident once we consider how they speak of desire.'[19] This speaking of desire might be the tacit voicing of either attraction or disgust – in which case sexual interest may be communicated by servants with greater subtlety than personal physical involvement – or may be a circumlocution of the issue through acts of service work.[20] The setting up of a bridal chamber with symbolically and realistically impractical velvet bedclothes is its own 'articulation' of the rules of desire: who really wants a bridal bed that cannot immediately be made private use of, asks a maid with her own opinions about the urgency of desire. Howsoever laudably clever the comprehension of desire by the servant, or however moth-eaten her grasp of its laws, the ability of men to turn those laws to their own purpose may, in any case, undermine her epistemological authority. The erotic, furthermore, is not the only subject position that may implicate a servant in a relationship in which they have something personal at stake. A servant may intervene in the love games of peers for the sake of a cherished fraternal bond, an expression of earnest emotional character that substitutes those sensitive and sometimes tense negotiations of vertical class relations for frank discussion between women in service roles.[21]

[19] Lyons, 'What Do the Servants Know', p.17; 20.
[20] In Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), Maundy makes recognition of the sexual allure of her mistress's lover Wittmore, as well as her own latent desires ('had I been your Ladyship, I should have given him a more substantiall Proof [of constancy]' but maintains her fidelity in its proper place by acting as facilitator and encourager throughout. (2.1, p.13).
[21] In *The Forc'd Marriage*, Olinda, a maid of honour, makes a conspicuously straightforward and selfless plea for her brother Alcander ('You should not laugh at those you have undone…You'll kill him by this cruelty') to Aminta, a senior courtier: the earnest nature of Olinda's empathy strikes an unusual note in a tragicomedy well furnished with the postural rhetorical fireworks of the wretched lover (2.2, p.17).

R. C. Richardson and, separately, Tim Meldrum, briefly alight on the matter of servant-employer relationships on the post-1660 stage, and both studies observe that female service work, and therefore, the relationship between mistress and female servant in the plays, tends to imply something different from that between a male servant and his master. Neither critic elaborates on the dramatic conditions or the discursive traditions that underpin such an implication. Where there is a chamber maid, a 'woman', or a lady's maid, some sexual hi-jinks are surely forthcoming: as Richardson observes, 'for sexual gossip and frank down-to-earth views on making the burdens of marriage bearable, maidservants, indeed, had no equal,', and representations of 'mistress-maidservant complicity' were 'a commonplace in Restoration comedies.' (Meldrum notes likewise that the ubiquity of servants 'comes down to us most colourfully in the dramatic literature of the day' and that 'they were useful as confidantes and co-conspirators, particularly for the principal female characters.')[22] Certainly these generalisations are broadly correct, but the issue of gendered service relationships in the plays of this period requires a re-examination: Richardson suggests that 'it is rare in these plays to find an employer who does not simply take servants for granted and who, for better or worse, is conscious of the mutual dependence of master and man', but the implication that the performance of this tightly delimited female service role is anything inferior to the most overt expressions of servant-employer interdependence misses the connection between this role and the circumstances that make such a role necessary.[23]

These conditions are of unfailing interest to Behn, for she replicates them – queasy betrothals, unhappy marriages, coercive sexual situations – again and again in her plays. Such commonplace scenarios – the very baseline and rationale for representations of female service in the drama – have suffered from a certain critical illegibility themselves. When it is taken for granted that servant characters are, likewise, unthinkingly taken for granted by their mistresses, and when memorability through spectacle is prioritised over and above a careful consideration of what visibility may really signify in the context of service relationships, a certain misrecognition and critical undervaluation of female service work on the Restoration stage has been the result. Female servants are certainly no less ubiquitous than their male counterparts across the pages of Behn and her contemporary playwrights, and, for Behn's part, women perform service for other women in every attributed play – as waiting women (or, just 'women'/a 'woman'), maids of honour, companions and cousins and extended family, nurses, confidantes,

[22] R. C. Richardson, 'The Instabilities of Representation: Household Servants in Early Modern Drama', *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) p.30; 166. Richardson does identify Moretta in *The Rover* as partaking in 'frank exchanges' about love with her mistress, though he incautiously elides 'bawd' and 'servant' (p.29). Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender, 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000) pp.34-5. There is a comparative proliferation of scholarship on stage servants in the Shakespearean canon and in other drama of the early-seventeenth-century; see, Rivlin's review, 'Service and Servants', which places emphasis on literary and dramatic service pre-Civil War.

[23] Richardson, *Household Servants,* p.29.

governesses and maids.[24] Behn is, moreover, manifestly interested in the dynamics of female alliance and, though the available critical material currently fails to reflect this, female service bonds and the subtle varieties of relationship available within this grouping.[25] At present, there is no study of gendered service in Restoration drama of which I am aware, nor one which focuses on a single named playwright. Derek Hughes, who intermittently discusses service on the Restoration stage in his comprehensive study *English Drama 1660-1700* has attended to representations of service at moments where they herald a dramatic innovation, or the marked revival of an old phenomenon: he examines, for instance, the stereotypically faithful but bumbling Irish servant Teague – a well-worn servant role given its most memorable outing in Robert Howard's early Restoration play *The Committee* (first performed in 1662) – and interrogates service as a theme when it becomes apposite to express anxieties about social disarray found on a post-Restoration stage populated by penurious survivors of the civil wars.[26]

Michelle M. Dowd, who has made studies of the representation of specifically female service on the stage (in Shakespearean comedy, and in 1620s Jacobean tragedy) and, more recently, Iman Sheeha, who has looked at gendered service alliance in domestic tragedies, have illuminated continuities and consistencies concerning the female service role between the earlier part of the century and the latter, the focus of Hughes' work. Their overlapping observations about, for instance, the optimistic, and conservative, narrative of female servant social climbing through marriage that is represented on both the Jacobean and the Restoration stages makes it plain that Behn's deployment of female servant characters embroiled in much the same game is nothing innovative.[27] Behn's unease, however, with the

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[24] Looking at 97 plays between 1671-1682, 13 of which are by Behn, Juan A. Prieto-Pablos et al. offer this conclusion about "helper" characters: 'Very often, the protagonists of the comedies require the assistance of others to fulfil their plans. This happens in 66 comedies (84% of the plays in the corpus) and serves to define the role of 131 characters. They comprise a heterogeneous group in terms of social ascription, relationship with gallants and women of quality, and nature of their assistance. The list includes *servants (both male and female, the latter being twice more abundant),* friends and confidants of gallants and women of quality, benevolent parents, and advisors.' (emphasis mine, p.58). Jorge Figueroa Dorrego, Manuel J. Gómez-Lara, María José Mora, Paula de Pando, María Jesús Pérez-Jáuregui, Juan A. Prieto-Pablos, Nora Rodríguez-Loro, Antonio Rosso, Ángeles Tomé Rosales, and Rafael Vélez Núñez, *Restoration Comedy, 1671–1682: A Catalogue* (Teneo Press, 2020) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338825553_Restoration_Comedy_1671-1682_Character_types

[25] A character list and full-text key term search in Early Modern Books produces hits for named female servants in every play attributed to Behn, though this method produces its own problems. My attempt to search for a named "Nurse" character across drama published by or for both the first and second generations of post-Restoration playwrights gave results whereby the instability of naming and printing practices concealed or made uncertain the categorisation of servant roles. Two of Mary Pix's plays feature a nurse who does have some few lines: *The Different Widows* (1703) contains a nurse, but she is not named in the cast list with that particular label; *The Beau Defeated* (1700), similarly, lists a governess amongst the dramatis personae, but such is the relationship with her charge that she is once referred to as "Nurse". Behn, meanwhile, does have a named nurse with a significant presence in *The Town Fopp*, (1677); in *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), differently, a nurse with lines first appears midway through the play but does not appear at all in the character list; in *The Debauchee* (1677) (albeit a play only of partially valid attribution, and never owned by Behn), a character named as 'House-keeper' in the character list has, given the nature of her lifelong service, been a nurse for the principal female character and is (pejoratively) referred to as such.

[26] Derek Hughes, *English Drama, 1660-1700* (Oxford and New York, NY.: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[27] By the mid-1670s, as Hughes states, an upwardly mobile marriage as a reward for a witty maidservant is 'customary.' (Hughes, *English Drama*, p.134).

long term viability of such means of advancement – successful emulation of one's mistress is an accomplishment in itself, but ensuring that one's new husband desists from roving is a problem perennial to womanhood – indicates that Behn is not always willing to entertain commonplace fantasies about service, however useful they might seem to comic closure.[28] Aparna Dharwadker, writing about genre and class in the Restoration theatre, suggests that the response of the theatre to the heavy-handed criticisms of immorality which it faced in the 1690s was to reshape 'exemplary upper-class characters' and therefore to displace 'the verbal and sexual antagonisms characteristic of satiric comedy onto the servants': in Behn's 70s and 80s comedies, servants are not yet a reliable facility for displacing vulgarities and antagonisms, and exemplarity (in relation to any class of character) is rarely the point.[29] Servants are, amongst other things, a way to explore loyalty, authority, free affection, mimicry, desire, pseudo-maternal and fraternal love – and it is clear, as in the case of plays like *The Forc'd Marriage*, which are heavily inflected by political themes, that the demarcation of territory in the power conflicts of eminent individuals does not make the duties of servants either simple to perform or to bear. Above all, I appreciate Dowd's insistence on the basic critical courtesy of attention, of her urging to attend to the presence of female servants 'in the face of their own silence': these characters may have something to "say" to all of the above themes, even when they cannot or choose not to speak or when, as readers, we are persistently obliged to encounter these characters through the mediating influence of conventional, and conventionally pejorative, cultural ideas about servants.[30]

Indispensable loyalty: the restoration work of the female servant

Servants are very rarely principal characters in Restoration drama; they are, however, always essential. By "essential", I point not merely to their necessity to plot but, beyond that, to the personal, linguistic, physical, emotional and hierarchical relationship between a mistress and her female servant.[31] I intend to refocus, from "why does the plot need this servant?", to "why does the *mistress* need this servant?" (though of course these concerns are not necessarily independent). What requirements does the mistress

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[28] 'Desiring Subjects: Staging the Female Servant in Early Modern Tragedy', in *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011) pp.131-144; Michelle M. Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (New York, NY.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), chapter 1, pp.21-56. For servants in early seventeenth-century tragedy and gendered service alliance, Iman Sheeha's, 'Of counsel with [m]y mistress': The mistress–servant alliance in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622)', *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies*, 107.1 (2021), pp. 1–20, and *Household Servants in Early Modern Domestic Tragedy* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

[29] Aparna Dharwadker, 'Class, Authorship, and the Social Intertexture of Genre in Restoration Theater', *Studies in English literature, 1500-1900*, Vol.37 (3) (1997), p.478.

[30] Dowd, 'Desiring Subjects', p.139.

[31] A notable example of the necessitous intervention/action of servants is that of Alithea's maid Lucy in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, who stages a deception in order to shepherd her mistress to a man worthy of her (and is therefore the pilot of the Alithea/Harcourt/Sparkish sub-plot) and steps in in the final scene to save Mrs Pinchwife and Horner from the wrath of Mr Pinchwife (5.4). '*The Country Wife*', *The Country Wife and Other Plays* ed. by Peter Dixon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

have and what work does the servant perform to meet them? The answer to this implicates the main themes of Restoration drama – dispossession, marriage, money, loyalty, sexual desire, a shifting social order, contrasts between metropolitan and country life – that in turn affects the definitions of female service work available to us in the drama. How can we define this work, and why might it matter in regard to Behn's conscious engagement with the inequitable distribution of risk, reward and desire across gender lines in her plays? Female service work in Behn's plays almost invariably involves the efforts of the servant to help her mistress into enthralling liaisons, or to divert and manage unsuitable, unpalatable and oppressive relationships with men. This work, in turn, requires us to think about domestic disorder: whether servants in the drama are a cause (as they are often imagined to be in prescriptive texts) or a symptom of it, and the role of female service work in enabling a restoration of its own. This restoration of order – the achievement of the eventual equilibrium at the close of the play – cannot be managed without the servant, and nor can the values and decorum of the comedies be upheld without her. Whether male or female, leisured or labourer, the drama values those who are clever, courageous, kind, sprightly, capable of sympathy and emotionally honest, as against those who are cruel, boorish, vain, stupid, selfish and delusional. That most of Behn's comedies will begin with and develop a problem – namely that the latter group have already grasped or are on track to achieve their own desires – implicates female servants in acts of management required to rectify the already deranged order of things.[32]

A servant will sometimes aid her mistress in an immediately sticky situation, such as the sudden need for concealment or escape, and it is the quick-thinking acumen of the clever "woman" that prevents imminent catastrophe. Sometimes, it is the servant's mobility and practical abilities that are needed, and the possibility of both her unchaperoned movement and her command of a household is found essential to set up meetings, tricks and lines of communication. On occasion, she is a proxy or stand-in, replacing the mistress's body with her own or defending it as the context demands. As frequently, it is the less tangible aspects of service work that are significant, the good humour, encouragement, advice, affection, intimacy and loyalty that Behn commonly assumes in female/female service relationships in her drama. Not infrequently, the heroine, gathering to herself the deep loyalty of her closest female servant(s), also engenders a similar devotion in male dependents in the household, bringing them to her cause in more and less volitional ways: loyalty is sometimes diverted from master to mistress because, comically, it is clearly the "right" thing to do. Consonantly with the transgressive intimacies between mistresses and male servants found in domestic tragedies, however, Behn's helpful male servants are sometimes bound into service relationships animated by an uneasy *quid pro quo* arrangement. Roger in

[32] See Prieto-Pablos et al.; 'The crafty servant', as differentiated from the 'trusty servant' is 'typically a male character', with only four female exceptions identified by Prieto-Pablos. (*Restoration Comedy, 1671–1682: A Catalogue*, p.58) Taxonomies of dramatic character types should be approached with caution, however: Sham and Sharp in *The Town Fopp* are categorised under the sub-type of 'paired cheats', though their actual financial and social relationship with Sir Timothy suggests something closer to employed service.

Sir Patient Fancy (1678), for example, only acts in the interest of 'my Master' when he cannot immediately disobey a direct order, and is otherwise content to aid Lady Fancy in pursuing her adulterous liaisons because he is fully active in 'our design'; Bredwell in *The Lucky Chance*, differently, eagerly subjects himself to an expression of cringing servile dependence as the explicit condition for Julia's high-handed stipulation that he must serve her if he hopes to benefit from her intercession on his behalf in the matter of his love for Diana.[33] As Sheeha observes, the perverse mistress-male servant alliance was commonly deployed in domestic tragedies, in part because it was such an eminently pervertible relationship in respect of sexual and financial power.[34] While disrupting conventional lines of authority and dependence in the household is an appropriate aim in comedies rather than, as in tragedies, the most frightening and destructive of prospects, Behn attaches an especial urgency to the loyalty and interest shared between mistress and female servant, and a particular distaste for the potential perversion of the bond that is so crucial to an ethical, feminist performance of service. Pat Gill observes that Behn's distribution of 'gender attributes' amongst women in her plays enacts a particular valorisation of loyalty – 'their virtue lies in their faithfulness to their lover, not in their chastity' – and a corresponding reluctance to disproportionately punish them for sexually suspect behaviour characterises the playwright's attitude to vulnerable and desiring women.[35] The female servants who facilitate these desires and help to alleviate these vulnerabilities are, I would argue, treated similarly sympathetically insofar as they continue to uphold the value of loyalty (though this virtue in itself is not necessarily straightforward to perform). As it is an enabling condition for the extension of compassion for the heroines in *The Dutch Lover* and *The Town Fopp*, so it is for their female servants. As supports, tutors, and doubles of their mistresses, these women are implicated in the same acts of disorder, and the same system of "right" values, as their mistresses.

Behn's fantasies of disorderly service: "chaotic, threatening, playful, transgressive"

The historical picture of early modern service work, and that especially for women, is ill-aligned with that which we find in Behn's drama. Given that the largest proportion of the female working population

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[33] '*The Lucky Chance, or An Alderman's Bargain*', in *The Rover and Other Plays*, ed.by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.2, p.201; *Sir Patient Fancy* (London, 1678) 2.1, p.15; p.28. Petro in *The Feigned Courtesans* (1679) is only revealed to display any unequivocal loyalties at the end of the play. As a sort of fixer, he appears to be in the pay of at least four characters, but it is not clear that he is sincerely dedicated to any in the way of a volitional bond of service until the final moments. He reveals he has been bankrolling the survival of the two feigned courtesans Cornelia and Marcella by stealing from two of his other "masters", Tickletext and Sir Signal. '*The Feigned Courtesans, or A Night's Intrigue*', in *The Rover and Other Plays*, ed.by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.4, pp.180-1. Trusty in *The Town Fopp* (1677) indirectly, and unintentionally, gives his service to the heroine Celinda by removing Sir Timothy as an obstacle (see *Town Fopp* section below).

[34] Sheeha, 'Of counsel with [m]y mistress', pp.4-7 on Beatrice-Joanna's relationship with De Flores in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*.

[35] Pat Gill, 'Gender, Sexuality and Marriage', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, ed. by Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.193.

who laboured in service are not generally represented by any dramatist of the period, this is not surprising: the poorest service women – charwomen, laundry maids, cook-maids, scullery maids, maids of all work and general drudges – are almost entirely sidestepped by Behn.[36] As Susan Staves points out, Behn is largely uninterested in women of inferior social status: 'Behn's version of a maximally desirable woman simultaneously possesses beauty, the power to evoke desire in men, wealth, and wit', and finds 'modesty, housekeeping skill, charity, fertility, or self-control' uninspiring.'[37] Where servants of the lower ranks are mentioned, it is generally within the confines of a joke. Belvile, sending up Blunt as an unbearable and petted 'Elder Brother' in *The Rover* (1677), skewers him for his sexual immaturity and formative lack of masculine prowess in having been 'Educated in a Nursery, with a Maid to tend him till Fifteen [and] knows no pleasure beyond…making honourable Love to his Lady Mothers Landry-Maid.'[38] The drudgery of service work itself is also dispelled, and the prospect of domestic labour that is odious, isolating and punitively dull is generally attached to what is, for Behn, that deeply unappealing figure, the obedient housewife. In *The Town-Fopp* (1677), Behn finds the housewife a woman misused and exploited (the wealthy young wife targeted by unscrupulous fortune hunters will be 'sent down to the Country house, to learn Housewifery, and live without Mankind'), while in *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), Lady Knowell laments the care-taking role expected of the wife bound to an old hypochondriac: the practice of espousing 'so fair a person only to make a nurse of' her is quite disgusting to Lady Knowell, and she wonders aloud at the fate of a woman who is made 'a slave, a very household Drudg.'[39] The assumed elision here between housewifely duties and female domestic service is a significant one. In her illuminating study of depositional material in *The Experience of Domestic Service for Women in Early Modern London,* Paula Humfrey observes that when the word 'servant' was 'brought to bear in connection with women, it referred always and explicitly to the maintenance and provisioning chores that wives undertook in order to keep households physically intact**.** Female servants were therefore wifely proxies in name.'[40] Where Behn's wives are behindhand in their performance of an idealised, prescriptive form of housewifery, it follows that their female servants should be so too: Sir Patient's hypochondria is largely intended as a means to satirise the credulity, unsophistication and self-importance of the old alderman, but it also, as Lady Knowell's complaint implies, points to the shortcomings of Lady Fancy and her woman Maundy, as effective performers of housewifery. A facility with physic, as conduct manuals and receipt books repeatedly attest, was a linchpin of the domestic skills of both the housewife and the exemplary female servant: that Lady Fancy

[36] *The Debauchee* (1677) contains some material with the unpleasant Careless and 'greasie Bess' the under cook-maid, who is the subject of an unpalatable demonstration of the overlap of the fields of sexual vulnerability and economic authority for women in service (3.1).
[37] Susan Staves, 'Behn, Women, and Society', *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, eds. Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.23.
[38] Behn, *The Rover*, 1.2, p.14.
[39] Behn, *Town-Fopp*, (1.2, p.8); *Sir Patient Fancy* (3.1, pp.30-1).
[40] Paula Humfrey, *The Experience Of Domestic Service For Women In Early Modern London* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p.11.

and Maundy are unwilling, or incapable, of remedying Sir Patient alienates them both from a basic standard of traditional domestic competence and underlines the disorder of the Fancy household.

Behn's predominant vision of service, then, is of those at or near the top of a service hierarchy in an upper middling or gentry household, since it is these individuals – governesses, ladies' maids or *filles de chambre*, valets and nurses – who most immediately experience vicarious authority through, and suffer the risks of, close proximity to their mistress or master.[41] (Behn is also interested in the ambiguous status of the apprentice, neither precisely family member nor servant).[42] The tenor of these servant-employer relationships and the work implied by them, however, requires an acquisitive and often undifferentiated vision of service. Hannah Woolley enumerates the different tasks and expectations laid upon a diverse hierarchy of female servants in *The Compleat Servant-Maid or, The Young Maiden's Tutor* – waiting gentlewoman, housekeepers, chambermaids, nursery maids, cook- and under cook-maids, and laundry maids – but Behn's female servants (despite working within, at the least, wealthy middling households that would be able to maintain several employees) frequently perform a range of tasks with an almost entirely unhindered purview. In the service of the drama, they are required to perform actions that others cannot or will not. Materially, they are permitted to accrue and/or divert the power and responsibilities of those with whom, in a sharply delimited vision of a service hierarchy, they would not necessarily share specialisms or scope. Behn's female servants are to be found, for instance, assuming the authority of the housekeeper (sending all the servants to bed to avoid detection, which in turn assumes the negative presence of never-seen servants whose orderliness threatens the disorder of mistress and maid); the nightwatchman (permitting other persons into the house at late hours); a young gentleman's tutor (teaching a cross-dressed heroine how to comport herself, in language and gesture, as a young man and, it is implied, to wave a sword around); or, indeed, the mistress herself (acting as her stand-in in pseudo marriage or in courtship rituals). It is important to note, too, that the emphasis on management of relationships and persons, and that general impression of a domestic ineptitude (in respect, at least, of normative expectations) does not mean that Behn's servants perform an entirely rarefied form of work divorced from the "things" of everyday living. The materials and resources of the household are found in their hands and implicated in their very bodies: they come and go with ink, paper and bottles of physic, and the task of retrimming a hat with narrow ware in lieu of a milliner falls credibly into their lap (*Sir Patient Fancy*); they make up chambers and discuss the practicality of costly bedclothes; they drop cloth-bound keys from balconies (*The Dutch Lover*); and, in an interesting twist

[41] Godsave, 'The Roles of Servant Characters', also details the socio-economic and hierarchical composition of Restoration stage servants as a group, pp.41-3.

[42] In *The Lucky Chance*, one of the subplots concerns the match between Diana (the daughter of Sir Feeble Fainwoud), and Bredwell, brother to the romantic heroine Leticia, who is serving as apprentice (in the banking trade) in Sir Cautious Fulbank's household. Bredwell is partly a means by which a male ally to Lady Julia Fulbank may be inserted into the domestic space of the Fulbank household, but he is also the subject of an attempted humiliation by Bearjest (nephew to his master) who hopes to embarrass him by invoking his complex servile status. See section on the practice of cast-off clothing and servants below.

on their association with lewdness, they place (or are expected to place) themselves in bedchambers and at dressing tables to belay rather than facilitate imminent acts of unappealing sexual intimacy (*The Lucky Chance, The Rover*).

There is, moreover, a certain give-and-take between the requirements of the drama, and the possibility of representing something approaching the reality of service work. The depositionary evidence that Humfrey consults indicates a variety of intimacies in which female servants were implicated with the business and persons of the households they served.[43] These included familiarity with bodies (servants' confirmations and concealments of the presence of sexually transmitted disease, as well as bearing witness to the injuries of domestic violence on a mistress's body); awareness of the fraught emotional relations between husband and wife, and a general sympathy towards the mistress (counterbalanced, in more than one instance, with an irreconcilable set of loyalties that divide female servants over the separate characters of the spouses); and, involvement as witnesses and proxies in cases of slanderous gossip and accusations of sexual impropriety (as when one maid, memorably, refutes the claim that she helped her mistress 'sham a maidenhead' with a 'bladder of hog's blood.')[44] That female servants appear to be party to their mistress's sexual (mis)behaviour seems not merely to be a comic commonplace but a real possibility of service in households where the spousal relationship is in either open disorder or secretly suffering a breakdown: there is an uncannily theatrical feeling to two descriptions offered by separate servants of a mistress's lover hiding himself in a coal-hole at the husband's unexpected return home, and another vaguely self-pleasuring account of voyeurism in which a maid undertakes to dig a hole in the wall to watch the mistress of the neighbouring house tumble in bed with her apprentice.[45] The drama, of course, cleaves to a limiting comic agenda in certain practical ways: it would be very difficult, for instance, for a female servant to manage 'night-works' and other comic business relating to the management of space if, as was the case for some women, she did not board in the same house where she was employed.[46]

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[43] Humfrey, *Experience of Domestic Service*, uses the London Court of Arches Records, 1667-1675, and 1690-1706.

[44] Humfrey's evidence also demonstrates servant involvement in financial difficulties (as when a servant lends her neglected mistress some money, or undertakes to help pawn some plate), as well as consciousness of the material realities of urban spatial privacy (as in a neighbour dispute arising over water leakage, and another in a shared wash house). See chapters 1 and 2, pp.43-67; 69-112.

[45] Humfrey, *The Experience of Domestic Service*, p.56; p.92.

[46] Raffaella Sarti's study concludes that 'life-cycle service as live-ins' – whereby 'a large percentage of the young in any social group serve as live-ins before marrying but leave service at marriage to establish their own household' – was 'very common in North-Western and Central European regions.' In most of early modern Western Europe, including in London, a female servant was more likely to be young, unmarried and a live-in (rather than a live-out) domestic; live-out female domestics were likelier to be older, and there were fewer of them. A male servant was also likelier to be married than a female servant, and his time in service also likelier to be a 'lifelong profession rather than a life-cycle activity.' See '"All masters discourage the marrying of their male servants, and admit not by any means the marriage of the female": Domestic Service and Celibacy in Western Europe from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century', *European History Quarterly*, Vol.38 (3) (2008), p.439; 427-8; 435.

For Behn, the differentiation of the socially inferior from the superior in matters of epistemological authority can also be dramatically unhelpful: from a historical and literary perspective, Humfrey and Lyons concur that good character in a servant was crucial, for Humfrey's presentation of evidence in which the reputation of servants was necessary for the favourable reception of a given deposition falls into line with Lyon's assertion that the authorities 'heard and weighed evidence from servants at best with caginess and scruples, and with little readiness to rely on the observations or understanding of a subaltern class.'[47] For comic purposes, however, the authority of the servant must remain consistently credible, most particularly at those moments when their abilities are abruptly stress tested: simply, a variety of tricks and deceptions would be disabled for the playwright if no one ever trusted the judgement of or believed the waiting woman.[48] As is perhaps obvious by now, the representation of service in Behn's drama is also a top-down one (at least in the sense that these depictions are not self-representation), an essential fact of service on the Restoration stage: top-down need not always imply conservative, as we will see, but it can, as Wendy's Wall suggests, allow for fantasy, transgression and chaos.[49] Wall's remarkable *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama,* which reads sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century non-canonical drama within the context of cookery and housewifery manuals, takes as its central contention that there is a fundamental 'discrepancy between domestic ideals', as they are disseminated in conduct manuals and other prescriptive literature, 'and an often disorderly lived practice.'[50] A key example of this discrepancy is the performance of housewifery: 'in presenting the civilized and upwardly mobile housewife as someone who regularly had blood on her hands or mischief in her thoughts, the first cookbooks called attention to how her chores did not accord with the ideals of femininity articulated elsewhere in the culture.' Wall asks, 'When conduct books writers instructed *housewives and servants* to remain at home quietly learning subjection, for instance, did they have in mind these scenes of wit and dismemberment?'[51]

For my purposes, two important things emerge from this concern with the theory/practice gap. First is the situating of women and servants together within a realm of quietly disordered domestic performance, a central idea taken up by Behn's comedies. Never precisely a 'community' cemented by

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[47] Lyons, 'What Do The Servants Know', p.11.
[48] See *Sir Patient Fancy* (2.2), where Maundy's independent witness in a particularly ridiculous claim about Sir Patient's swelling body and too-small clothes is credited as convincing. Such authority is as often a function of the gullibility of various fops and fools, but the almost universal trust of the heroine also undergirds the material and knowledge-based clout of the female servant.
[49] Humfrey observes that the majority of surviving sources about service – most of which are prescriptive literature – originate with the employer class, but to partake of the labour of domestic servants need not imply great wealth or a wage contract (Humfrey, *The Experience of Domestic Service*, p.25). Meldrum points to evidence of casual and ambiguous service relationships, that occurs within a fairly informal commercial context (a lodger performing service for the householder) but which, he states, does not actually show any evidence of the servant/lodger being remunerated (Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p.31).
[50] Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity*: *Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p.5.
[51] Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, emphasis mine, p.5.

a positively defined, coherent group identity (Behn can be quite utilitarian about sexually scapegoating female servants, for instance), the heroines and their servants in Behn's comedies do nevertheless share in challenging ideals of femininity and to a common purpose. From this comes the second important point, which is the nature of the domestic disorder ('wit and dismemberment') that is sustained in the breach between ideals and reality when it comes to dramatic service. As Wall registers the 'chaotic, threatening, playful, transgressive' realities of housewifery, so, I suggest, service in Behn's comedies is also an inherently disorderly undertaking and this because disorder is a fact of existence for women: the principle fantasy of service entertained by Behn is that servants can successfully aid their mistresses (almost with impunity) in re/negotiating lived realities (that their husbands will be chosen for them, that they must put away hopes of genuine affect in marriage, that their bodies are property and exchangeable for material items) that are, for women, always already what Wall terms 'disturbing' and 'alienating' experiences.[52]

As scholarship on domestic prose has already indicated, processes of negotiation (and those openly acknowledged) between the theory espoused in domestic manuals and the difficulty of real life practice seem to be inherent to the genre – whether the material assumes, as Catherine Richardson observes of late-sixteenth/early-seventeenth-century examples, 'a kind of wisdom passed almost silently between generations and amongst communities' or, in the later part of the seventeenth century, what Wall terms a less 'indigenous' form of information, 'knowledge that has to be self-consciously reproduced within the market.'[53] That there is disagreement amongst conduct writers about the nature of service and service relationships, and that aspects of the service role within a single text are glossed over or unaddressed, points to a fraught and contentious understanding of service and to the tensions that the presence of servants can introduce into a household. There is ever a recognition that disorder waits in the wings – in the case of the inherently disturbing female servant, commonly in the form of a caution about the sexual disorderliness she offers – but, likewise, an acceptance that such servants are central to the running of a household and the hierarchical relationships that keep it afloat. This dual aspect – necessity and anxiety – is present in the three principal examples of conduct material which I will be discussing alongside Behn's comedies: these are, the two texts by Hannah Woolley – *Gentlewoman's Companion* and *Compleat Servant-Maid* – as well as Richard Lucas' *The Duty of Servants* (1685).[54]

[52] Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, p.7; p.5.
[53] Catherine Richardson, 'Domestic Manuals and the Power of Prose', *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p.494. Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, p.58.
[54] Richard Lucas, *The Duty of Servants, Containing First, Their Preparation for, and Choice of a Service. Secondly, Their Duty in Service. Together with Prayers suited to each Duty. To this is added A Discourse of the Sacrament suited peculiarly to Servants*. (London, 1685).

Service in Hannah Woolley and Richard Lucas: ideals, anxieties, omissions

These three texts by Woolley and Lucas are especially useful examples of descriptive guidance for servants and employers, given the manner in which their differing approaches to the subject of service may cast light on the comedies in slightly different ways. Woolley's texts, for example, make no excessive claims on the religious life of the servants she advises (general exhortations to piety are merely that, and not belaboured) and her interest in placing service within such a framework is scant. Lucas' advice, contrariwise, is explicitly religious in intent and comparatively paternalistic in tone, and each chapter concludes with prayers appropriate to a particular element of a servant's quotidian experiences.[55] Woolley, once more departing from Lucas, directly addresses her texts to and targets women (employers, employers' children and servants) who are to understand, as Woolley appears to, that service work is a marketized phenomenon: the 'Young Maidens' who are the target audience of *The Compleat Servant-Maid,* for instance, are directed to conceptualise their practice of domestic service as an experience within a competitive economic and reputational environment. Woolley aims to direct their ambitions towards gaining 'the esteem and reputation of a good Servant, and so procure to your self not only great Wages, but also great gifts and vales.'[56] In discussing the course of action to be taken in the dismissal of an incompetent or disobedient servant, Woolley maintains that a servant should neither be sent away with a bad reference nor bilked of wages owed, howsoever 'remediless' their faults or maladroitly performed their labour: 'Though a bad Servant, detain not the wages, nor any part that is justly due, *for the Labourer is worthy of his hire.*'[57] Lucas does not share Woolley's principled approach to the financial value of all labour. He points instead towards a merely nascent sense of employment as a wage contract, which is itself undercut by an assumption that the exchange value of servant labour, in contrast to the servant-master bond, is not sacrosanct. A disobedient servant is a 'downright contempt of God's revealed Will…and by consequence, the Disobedient Servant has no right to the Bread he eats, or to the Wages he receives, and he can expect nothing from God', and nor can the servant expect to have a right entire to their own skill and labour: the 'fruit' of the master's 'Care, Patience and Instruction' is 'due to him by a Tacit Pact and Contract.'[58] Lucas' text, moreover,

[55] Woolley prefaces new sections or thematic segments with routine expressions of piety (*The Compleat Servant-Maid*, p.1); Lucas dedicates full chapters to the religious practices of the servant ('The Servants Obligation to Religion' in *The Duty of Servants*, pp.31-46). The title page of *The Duty of Servants* explicitly informs the reader of the religious guidance they can expect to encounter inside. Unlike Woolley, Lucas does not make clear that he is addressing male servants in any of the prefatory material, but his comments on the disobedience of servants in relation to facilitating sexual or romantic liaison for an employer's children plainly assume a male audience.

[56] Woolley, 'General Directions to Young Maidens', *Compleat Servant-Maid*, p.1. On Woolley addressing particular cohorts, see the section headings in *Gentlewomans Companion* (e.g., *Of Womens behaviour to their Servants* (p.109); *Of a young Gentlewomans deportment to her Governess and Servants in the Family* (p.25); *The duty of Children to their Parents* (p.21).

[57] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.109. In *The Compleat Servant-Maid*, Woolley also directs cook-maids to be aware of their right to ask for adequate wages: 'do not covet to have the Kitching stuff for your Vales, but rather ask the more wages.' (p.114).

[58] Lucas, *Duty*, pp.88-9; pp.195-6.

does not openly assume a gendered audience – the prefatory material to *The Duty of Servants* prioritises the author's devoutness, while Woolley makes heavy weather of her own professional experience as a means of asserting authority on the subject of *female* service work – though it becomes clear that Lucas implicitly addresses male servants and excludes their female counterparts.[59] He discusses the risk of a servant becoming embroiled in a master's 'dishonourable affection, or it may be a Phantastick Passion, or it may be something worse than both, a dishonourable Lust' but declines to explicitly mention that bugbear of commentary on service work in the period – the sexually risqué maid-servant.[60]

Generally, however, these texts do tread common ground, and a broad set of normative expectations about the performance and pitfalls of service are shared across these examples, as across the breadth of the literature on the subject. The ease with which one may trace certain discourses of service across a number of texts points both to the formulaic nature of the genre itself and the consistency of concept and language when discussing service in its ideal, most moral form. Conventional positions on the preferable qualities of servants are commonly run through, often as a means of structuring the text*:* the anonymous *Instructions for apprentices and servants* (1699), for instance, organises chapters under the thematic headings of respect, fidelity and obedience, and Lucas too rehearses these desirable attributes throughout *Duty*.[61] The extent of servants' responsibilities towards the reputation of their household and their employer, both within and, more importantly still, without the space of the home, are also nervously reiterated. Woolley cautions that mistresses should 'look narrowly' to their servants lest they prove profligate or lavish, and thence the employer herself 'purchase the repute of a careless and indiscreet Woman' – likewise, *Instructions* expresses concern about the risk that the servant poses to the collective credit of the family when they move through and hold conversations in public spaces.[62] That servants might take advantage of the buoyant market for their labour by skipping from place to place is a further source of anxiety from the employer's perspective, a point worked over again by Woolley ('be not subject to change, but still remember that a rouling stone never getteth moss, and as you gain but little money, so if you rumble up and down you will but gain little credit'), as well as by Lucas in a section entitled (a little counterintuitively, given his argument) *The Servants duty towards*

[59] 'The Epistle to All Young Maidens' that opens *The Compleat Servant-Maid* makes a claim for the expertise and knowledge of the author, who has taken 'great pains' to bring together a 'Rich Store-house' for the reader (sig. A3^{v}); in *The Gentlewoman's Companion*, Woolley provides 'A Short account of the life and abilities of the Authoress of this Book' so as to fend off accusations that 'I pretend what I cannot perform.' (p.10).
[60] Lucas, *Duty*, p.152.
[61] *Instructions for apprentices and servants* (London, 1699) pp.3-11; 11-19; 20-27; Lucas, esp. p.63 onwards; likewise, Woolley's list of servant attributes in *Compleat Servant-Maid*, pp.2-3.
[62] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.110; *Instructions*, p.4. The author of *Instructions* does also indicate that the authority of speech in this context – the power to circulate gossip, to give or to withhold information – is not entirely one-sided. Servants are not without power or reason to abstain from divulging information about their fellow servants when faced with the 'indiscreet Curiosity' of their employer (p.35). On the influence and autonomy made possible for female servants who habitually moved beyond the confines of the employer-household, see Charmian Mansell, 'Beyond the Home: Space and Agency in the Experiences of Female Service in Early Modern England', *Gender & History*, Vol.33 (1) (2021), pp.24-49.

himself: 'the quitting a service wherein you have bin obliged upon shew of a very little gain, 'tis an action of extream folly and ingratitude.'[63]

This latter concern – the increasing marketisation of service work and the "problem" of mobility in servant employment – is an issue which Behn tends to occlude, and there are others which she likewise dispels or ignores. The subjects of wages and contract (as mentioned above), and the issue of 'vails' (financial perks) are generally avoided by Behn, as are the menial realities of the larger proportion of the female servant population. Certain tensions in the conduct material, however, do rise to the surface in the drama. The disjoint between the admirable desire to be socially upwardly mobile and the injunction to be submissive is made visible, for instance, as an issue of sartorial social performance. Conduct material, as well as critical commentary in the period, remarks, with some discomfort, upon the erosion of rank through aspirational dress. The late age of vanity, laments Woolley, is from whence 'proceeds the Babel or confusion of Habits, insomuch that of late there is neither order observed, nor distinction; a Chamber-maid finified on a Festival or Holiday, may be taken for her Mistress, and a Citizens Wife mistaken for a Court-lady.'[64] The source of such extravagant dress was often the mistress herself, and Behn comments upon the widespread practice of handing out cast-off clothes to usually senior female servant(s) in *The Lucky Chance*. A neat example of the way in which Behn finds flexibility in the prescriptive and sometimes censorious standards of conduct material, this play sees two cross-status relationships cemented, and a fool put in his place, through the means of that disordered sartorial practice about which Woolley and others are so uneasy.[65] The maid Pert is secretly contracted to Bearjest, the nephew of the City knight Sir Cautious Fulbank, an arrangement he has elected to ignore in favour of pursuing Diana, the daughter of his uncle's neighbour and friend, Sir Feeble Fainwould. Diana in turn loves and is beloved by Bredwell, brother to Sir Feeble's new wife Leticia and apprentice to Sir Cautious. Bearjest seeks to take advantage of Bredwell's complex servile status – the two are closely connected by kin and scarcely different in social rank – by having the apprentice perform his wooing of Diana for him.[66]

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[63] Woolley, *Compleat Servant-Maid*, p.62; Lucas, *Duty*, p.194.

[64] *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.78. Woolley mentions the propriety of dress and of deportment, and discusses servants as comparative figures, on a few occasions: *Gentlewomans Companion*, p.16; 61; *Compleat Servant-Maid*, p.59; 61.

[65] As Raffaella Sarti observes, confusions of rank occasioned by dress were a broad concern across the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries: the Italian Gregorio Leti's *Del Teatro Brittanico* (1683) makes the same observation about English service, that 'maid-servants were so well-dressed that they seemed ladies of a superior class', as Daniel Defoe, in his *The Great Law Of Subordination Consider'd* (1724), does several decades later. See Raffaella Sarti, ''The Purgatory of Servants': (In)Subordination, Wages, Gender and Marital Status of Servants in England and Italy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Journal Of Early Modern Studies*, Vol.4 (4) (2015), p.355. See also Richardson, *Household Servants*, who discusses the smart dressing of maidservants as a source of consistent frustration right up until the twentieth century (pp.104-106). The practice is also mocked by Dryden in *Marriage a la Mode* (1671) with the gauche Francophile Melantha and her ambitious maid Philotis, whom Melantha pays in expensive clothes for teaching her French phrases.

[66] Bredwell is nevertheless technically subject to the patriarchal authority of his master, a point of difference of which Bearjest makes much. The power of the master over the apprentice was considerable, though the

> Bearjest. [….] [*To Diana*] Madam, this is a very honest friend of mine, for all he looks so simply.
>
> Diana. [*to Bredwell*] Come, he speaks for you, sir.
>
> Bearjest. He, madam! Though he be but a banker's 'prentice, madam, he's as pretty a fellow of his inches as any i'th'city. He has made love in dancing schools, and to ladies of quality in the middle gallery, and shall joke ye, and repartee with any foreman within the walls. [*To Bredwell*] Prithee to her, and commend me; I'll give thee a new point cravat.[67]

Bearjest, too dim to see that the proxy wooing he is forcing Bredwell to perform is really on Bredwell's own behalf, proffers his uncle's apprentice as 'an advocate for love' in his own foppish image – that is, fond of lace cravats and flirting with prostitutes ('ladies of quality') at the theatre. While making eyes at the neighbour's daughter is its own kind of presumptuous behaviour, the conventional disorderliness (registered partially through dress) that Bearjest assumes of the apprentice appears to be merely a projection. Bredwell, romantically (and thereby appearing rather an ill-fit for a banker's apprentice), resists such urban "sophistication" and finds markers of financial and social status of no interest**:** 'No: were you born an humble village maid/ That fed a flock upon the neighbouring plain […] By heaven, I would adore, love you, wed you.'[68] Bredwell's heedless devotion to Diana, and Bearjest's interest only in her fortune, are rewarded and punished respectively through the appropriate permutation of marriages at the play's end.[69]

In the opening epistle to *Compleat Servant-Maid,* Woolley states that diligent servants make desirable wives, and that the alternative is a woman 'who can do nothing but Trick up her self fine, and like a Bartholomew Baby, is fit for nothing else but to be looked upon.'[70] A woman obsessed with finery – such garments being an index of fastidious vanity and domestic incompetence – does not make good marriage material. Behn does not necessarily agree. She registers that the socially transformative power

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responsibility worked both ways: see Patrick Wallis, 'Labor, Law, and Training in Early Modern London: Apprenticeship and the City's Institutions', *Journal of British Studies* 51 (October 2012), pp.791-819.

[67] '*The Lucky Chance, or An Alderman's Bargain'*, in *The Rover and Other Plays*, ed.by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.1, p.247.

[68] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 4.1, p.248. For an apprentice to become sexually or romantically involved with his master's female servants or immediate family members was not unheard of, and the riotous apprentice was a well-known dramatic and popular figure. See, Steven R. Smith, 'The Ideal and Reality: Apprentice-Master Relationships in Seventeenth-Century London', *History Of Education Quarterly,* Vol.21 (4) (1981), pp.449-459.

[69] Behn's depiction of the disobedient apprentice who marries without his master's permission also identifies an infringement of the terms of indenture. This premature end to an apprenticeship – which would precipitate the non-completion of the term (normally a seven year agreement) and the independent setting up of his own household – would not necessarily have been unusual. Chris Minns and Patrick Wallis indicate that the performance of apprenticeships often did not match up with the regulations governing the system: 'apprentices frequently started late, often left temporarily or permanently after serving only part of their term, and generally finished early', and roughly 50% of apprentices [based on London and Bristol data] did not complete their term. 'Rules and reality: quantifying the practice of apprenticeship in early modern England', *Economic History Review*, 65, 2 (2012), p.574.

[70] Woolley, *Compleat Servant-Maid*, sig. A5^{v}.

of dress might be thought objectionable (the greedy Sir Cautious appears to be the only character who agrees with Bearjest about the violation of decorum – 'Hum, my heir marry a chamber-maid!'), but looks to the way in which dress might permit a re-framing of social identity rather than making a pejorative association between disguises of dress and the societal chaos that Woolley imagines.[71] Disorderly dress becomes a means of pursuing order and justice, for a 'confusion of Habits' is the means by which Bearjest is obliged to honour that betrothal to Pert that he scorned for the wealthy knight's daughter. The maid is disguised in the clothes of Diana – 'I'll swear, Mrs Pert, you look very prettily in my clothes' – and is advanced, with the important approbation of a parson, 'to a husband she already has so just a claim to.'[72] Bearjest, who is so ready to demean a subordinate by condescending to pass on a lace cravat for a humiliating romantic performance but baulks at being married to a servant ('what does he, but marries her himself, sir; and fobbed me off here with my lady's cast petticoat'), is witheringly disgraced by his hypocrisy and his attitude both to the apprentice and the maid.[73] One's class, such as it is understood to be a phenomenon of external appearance, can be partially concealed (as Woolley's complaint makes clear) by one's 'finified' dress; that equally important quality, one's character (self-conceit, foppishness, vulgarity, or indeed one's worthiness), can also be revealed by it.

One further, and especially important, aspect of service work that is discussed in the conduct literature, and which is pertinent to our concern with its representation in Behn's drama, is the relationship of the employer to the employed in matters of love, romance and sex. A basic characteristic of the work of servants in the comedies – that of facilitating their mistress's desire to dispose of themselves in either marriage or in sexual connections of their choosing – is one which the conduct material finds most objectionable, and upon which Woolley and Lucas, despite other differences, find an understated agreement. Lucas is strident, and clear, on the subject:

> but of all the mischiefs, a Servant is capable of doing his master's Son, there Is none I think greater than the assisting him in a conceal'd Courtship, or aiding him in carrying on a Marriage without the knowledge, or what is worse, contrary to the will of his Father; all the rest seem to be but single sins, but this is a complication of all mischiefs together, the Child's Virtue, Honour and Interest, are all betrayed at once.[74]

Woolley echoes Lucas' deep disapproval of the temerity of the child who imagines that they may be beyond the authority of their parents in the matter of marriage: 'But of all of the acts of Disobedience, that of Marrying against the consent of Parents is the highest. Children are so much the Goods and

[71] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.7, p.267.
[72] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.6, p.262.
[73] Behn, *Lucky Chance*, 5.7, p.267. Bearjest also shows himself lacking the necessary 'complaisance and agreeableness' as a gentlemen in speaking to and about Bredwell and Pert as impolitely as he does. Stefania Biscetti, 'Power, (Im)Politeness and Aggressiveness in Early Modern Master-Servant Relations (1660-1750)', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, Vol. 4 (4) (2015), p.295.
[74] Lucas, *Duty*, p.151.

Chattels of a Parent, that they cannot without a kind of theft give themselves away without the allowance of those that have the right in them.'[75] The role of the servant in the erotic fortunes of her mistress, however, is one which Woolley never faces head-on. It is the omissions and silences of her texts, an inarticulateness nevertheless informed both by Woolley's customary sexualisation of female service work and her self-confessed awareness of comic and bawdy literary forms, that speak to the stage servant's work as an intermediary, fixer, secret-keeper and mastermind of her mistress's efforts to shift for herself in matters of sex and marriage.[76] Woolley is not unfamiliar with literary narratives of elopement and rendezvous ('idle and wanton ballads' inform impressionable young minds 'how craftily two Lovers had plotted their private meetings' and 'the Letters that pass between for the continuation of their affection would 'straight ways makes the Reader up to the ears in Love'), and nor does she appear to have a favourable opinion of stage comedy.[77] 'Some [gentlewomen] may be so vain as to delight more in a Comedy than a Sermon, and had rather hear a Jack-pudding than a Preacher'.[78] Additionally, her advice to 'Such as desire to be Waiting Gentlewomen' to guard preciously their sexual reputations participates in the literary and cultural exemplification of female servants as figures of sexual incontinence: her warning places the burden of impropriety firmly upon the servant herself while absolving the authoritative figure (a gentleman, in this case) of exploiting the economically and physically vulnerable employee. She warns such women to be 'Sober in your countenance and discourse, not using any wanton gesture, which may give Gentleman any occasion to suspect you of levity; and so court you to debauchery, and by that means lose a reputation irrecoverable.'[79]

In much the same way, a displacement of culpability energises her vision of the mistress/maid relationship on the matter of intimacy and shared knowledge: she cautions employers and their children against over-familiarity with servants (be 'not over-familiar with any of them, lest they grow rude and sawcy with you; and indeed too much familiarity is not good with any, for contempt is commonly the product thereof') but in the absence of restraint on the part of the mistress, it is incumbent upon the servant to maintain silence ('If you are entrusted with any secrets be careful that you reveal them not.')[80]

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[75] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.24.
[76] On the sexualisation of service work, Woolley imagines prostitution and crime as a short step down from a failed attempt at finding a position in service: ambitious maidservants lacking in accomplishments but unwilling to settle for a menial position find themselves 'courted to be Players', others find their way into 'Bawdy-Houses' and others are 'tempted to steal.' *A Supplement to the Queen-Like Closet* (1674) p.134.
[77] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.76.
[78] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion,* p.77. Woolley states that, when in service herself, she undertook 'daily reading to my Lady, Poems of all sorts, and Plays' – though, frustratingly, gives no sense of what type of drama this may have been. She expresses a preference for the didactic value of what are primarily French heroic romances: 'such Romances which treat of generosity, gallantry, and virtue, as *Cassandra, Clelia, Grand Cyrus, Cleopatra, Parthenessa*, not omitting Sir *Philip Sydney's* Arcadia.' (*Compleat Servant-Maid,* p.13; 9)
[79] Woolley, *Compleat Servant Maid,* p.4. Woolley also displays a double-standard attitude towards female physical vulnerability in respect of non-servant women. The prejudicial language of siege warfare – so common, too, to drama of the period – is used to warn young gentlewomen away from courtships: 'It is dangerous to enter parley with a beleaguering enemy; it implies want or weakness in the besieged.' (*Gentlewomans Companion*, p.17).
[80] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, pp.27-8; *Compleat Servant-Maid,* p.2.

If the mistress requires that her maid keep a secret of an improper nature, should she do so, despite knowing that any suspicions of 'levity' are a great risk to herself? (A reader familiar with Restoration comedy might answer in the affirmative; it is the maid's very purpose). Woolley, rather carefully, neither causes this question to be asked, nor answers it, despite her recognition elsewhere that many a mistress may fail to be discriminating about the identity of her bedpartner.[81] 'Most in this depraved later Age think a Woman learned and wise enough', Woolley sniffily asserts, 'if she can distinguish her Husbands bed from anothers.'[82]

This injunction to secrecy, and the unspoken insinuation that, for female servants, this may mean being enjoined to confidentiality with her mistress to the exclusion of her master, is the site of a potential conflict of conscience and of household authority that goes unprobed by Woolley, but which sits at the heart of much of the service work depicted in Behn's comedies. Woolley's further eloquent warning to humble kitchen maids that their lowliness is no bar to sexual predation, for 'Hungry Dogs will eat dirty Puddings', surfaces as the largely undeserved typification of female servants as inherently lewd in Behn's (as indeed in most Restoration) comedies.[83] Female servants do not altogether lack expressions of sexual interest or of agency, but their personal involvement in debauchery – a successful physical enactment or attempt to enact their own sexual desires – is actually uncommon. Behn's maids are not permitted to compete with their mistresses in matters of desire or love, but are, far more frequently, a means to renegotiate the relationships of the heroine(s) to husbands, fathers and lovers. Woolley, lamenting the poor education frequently offered to young gentlewomen, and the vulgarity of parental aspirations for their daughters in their doing nothing beyond laying up 'a considerable summ [a dowry] for some person whom they value by his greatness, not his goodness', invokes an image of both greed and parental fiat that encapsulates neatly the behaviour of fathers and other authoritative blocking figures in Restoration comedy. As we will see in the next chapter, the work of female servants in Behn's comedies dramatizes the righting of this 'careless neglect', though, certainly, in a manner that the conduct material would be loathe either to recognise or endorse.[84]

[81] Woolley does gesture vaguely in the direction of reputational damage regarding confidences between mistress and servant in *A Supplement to the Queen-Like Closet* (1674): 'Trust not a Servant too much with Secrets which concern your Credit, or your Livelyhood, least you thereby enslave your self to them; for I have seen very sad effects from such confidings. You may make the Messengers for to carry Letters, but do not trust them to be your Counsellours.' The unspoken sexual heft of the term 'credit' in respect of a female reader would not go unrecognised. (p.102).
[82] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.1.
[83] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.214.
[84] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.15.

6. Rewarding faithful service in The Dutch Lover (1673)*, and pedagogy in service in* The Town Fopp (1677)

The compleat-est servant maid: Olinda's disinterested interest and the service-to-marriage narrative

Service on Behn's stage is recognisably that on the conduct book page, but Behn thoroughly stretches the letter of the law to accommodate an interpretation of service relationships that outstrips the imagined requirements of ideal forms of conduct-book service. The prescriptive demands made upon, for instance, a chambermaid in her management of the space and materials of the mistress's bedchamber ('Then you must learn to make your Ladies bed, well, soft, and easie, to lay up her Night-clothes, and see that her Chamber be kept neat and clean'), and the state of absolute priority in which the mistress's wants are held ('and that nothing be wanting which she desires or requires to be done') rouses no little sense of familiarity in a reader familiar with Restoration comedy. Such an image – which suggests the urgency of desire and readiness of the maid to manage it – slides with almost no effort into the primed imaginary of the theatregoer or play-reader.[85] Woolley, as other advice authors, of course does not write within a context or genre that permits her to critically imagine or empathise with an employer who has improper secrets to keep. Behn does, and her heroines clearly have their own notion of an essential, exemplary model of service – a female alliance that anticipates needs without explanation, is sympathetic, loyal, clever, ready for action and instrumental (if not always consciously so) in working against a disordered status quo inimical to the autonomy and contentment of women. As "good" servants in dramatic terms, Behn's maidservants, women, nurses and governesses at once present an image of service that runs counter to and aligns with the normative behaviour expected of them in the conduct literature –

[85] Woolley, *Compleat Servant-Maid*, p.61.

assuming, however, that one concurs with Behn that the desperate problems faced by her heroines justify the radical interpretation of prescriptive ideas about servants used to solve them.

The Dutch Lover presents three different versions of female service, only one of which satisfies the requirements that permit the servant to achieve the reward of marriage – a source of financial stability and a step up the social ladder – for her diligence in service to her mistress.[86] A progression from service to marriage is a conventional life-cycle narrative which Woolley endorses in *Compleat Servant-Maid*, and she promises desirable reward for adherence to her advice:

> if you carefully and diligently peruse this Book, and observe the directions therein given, you will soon gain the Title of a Complete Servant-maid, which may be the means of making you a good Mistress: For there is no Sober, Honest, and Discreet man, but will make choice of one, that hath gained the Reputation of a Good and Complete Servant, for his Wife.[87]

The basics of this proposition are present, in attenuated form, in Behn's *The Dutch Lover*. This early play, briefly, is a Spanish comedy of intrigue, that hymns two central and related themes – mistaken identity and heedless, often blind, desire. An indiscriminate bargaining for bodies – and that principally performed by men for women – drives the elaborate series of confusions and misunderstandings which underpins the comic Haunce/Alonzo/Euphemia plot.[88] This concerns Haunce van Ezel (Haunce van Donkey), the Dutchman of the title, who is contracted to Euphemia by her father Don Carlo: the match is a purely financial agreement made between guardians. Her liberation from such a fate is desperately self-engineered, with the leading intelligence of her clever maid Olinda and the conscription of the rootless cavalier Alonzo. His task is to impersonate the Dutchman in order that the marriage may go ahead, and Don Carlo none the wiser until it is too late. Olinda, as a consequence, effectively steps into her mistress's vacated wedding shoes, and takes her place – a well-deserved prize - as wife to the wealthy Dutchman.

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[86] The other two servants in *The Dutch Lover*, Dormida and Francisca, fail to perform loyal service for different reasons. The very antithesis of a circumspect servant, the aged governess Dormida disrupts the distribution of authority within the service relationship by corrupting her teenage charge and prioritising her own desire to act as procuress (2.3). Dormida is appropriately ridiculed, but not outright punished. Francisca, a disloyal servant in the tragic mode, is punitively exempted from the marital merrymaking at play's end, having fomented familial conflict as a means of indulging her self-interest (1.2), facilitated an (unsuccessful) incestuous rape to be enacted upon her mistress Cleonte by her brother (3.4), and offered herself as a sexual competitor to her mistress by organising a bed-trick in which she supplanted Cleonte's body with her own (5.1).

[87] Woolley, *Compleat Servant-Maid*, sig. A5^{r-v}.

[88] When performed, it was, as Derek Hughes states, 'a fiasco', partly because of the elaborate plot: Hughes, *Theatre of Aphra Behn* (New York, NY.: Palgrave, 2001), p. 47. Janet Todd suggests, differently, that 'despite the instability and creakiness of *The Dutch Lover*, Behn knew her play was better than anything she had yet presented, close to Dryden's successful *Marriage a la Mode* and even improving on it in the interweaving of disparate sections': *Aphra Behn: A Secret Life* (London: Fentum Press, 2017), p.168.

While Olinda displays the competence, loyalty, civility, quickness of action and neatness of hand that Woolley assumes in her perfect version of a maid servant, Behn enacts a characteristic perversion of the service-to-marriage trajectory and Olinda's performance of service to that end.[89] Olinda's marriage to Haunce is, in seeming agreement with such convention, the endpoint and reward of service. What we do not see in this play – that is, what fantasy Behn does not entertain – is that which Dowd identifies as Woolley's 'progressive narrative of romance.'[90] Olinda's marriage to Haunce has nothing of erotic desire, mutual feeling, or true affect of any kind, and the absence of such a reassuring fiction only draws attention to what *is* most pertinent about this match. This service-to-marriage narrative is not a means of belaying socio-economic anxieties about the grim reality of service work – 'that', as Dowd states, 'realistic hopes of upward mobility are disappearing' as the seventeenth century progresses – but, rather, a way of making the socio-economic core of the proposition of such a marriage as visible as possible.[91] Olinda is an unapologetic social climber, and while a nakedly material basis for marriage denies, on the one hand, the 'mystification' provided by desire and by emotion (complicating factors, Behn perhaps suggests, women might do without, given Euphemia's painful prevaricating concerning her love for Alonzo) it also renders coextensive the struggles of mistress and maid as new wives.[92] Olinda's pragmatic match with Haunce involves its own kind of mutuality, since both parties seem unconcerned about the importance of genuine desire: Haunce, however, cleaves to a predatory and indiscriminate model of desire that disavows constancy and, somewhat ambivalently for Olinda, any concern with individual identity. The problem, from the perspective of Olinda's mistress Euphemia, is that her new husband Alonzo also shares in this philosophy towards women: the struggles of the newly married maid and mistress centre on the ostensible hero, and his clownish reflection Haunce, who will both continue to treat women as though they were interchangeable even once married.

What Woolley's model also silently underplays, as Dowd points out, is that the occupational roles of servant and housewife are also materially coincident, rather than one necessarily offering the potential of transition, through hard work, into the other: 'in the seventeenth century, including the decades following the Restoration, housewives were still expected to perform (as well as manage) daily housework in order to maintain their homes and their household property… late seventeenth-century household guidebooks written for female servants and for wives provide almost identical lists of required skill sets for both groups of women.' The dramatization of this in Behn's comedy points to the perpetuation and indistinguishability of Olinda's labour: she is at once servile and housewifely, inferior and authoritative, managerial and subordinate, and must superintend one (technically superior) dependent after another. She acts as the engine and architect of her mistress's hopeful fortunes, and

[89] Olinda makes a rather literal display of the maid's advantageous qualities – to be 'quick and neat handed about what you have to do' – when she catches Euphemia in a fake swoon and '*pulls off her vail'* to intentionally lure in Alonzo (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.3). See Woolley, *Compleat Servant-Maid*, pp.62-3.
[90] Dowd, *Women's Work*, p.54.
[91] Dowd, *Women's Work*, p.54.
[92] Dowd, *Women's Work*, p.46.

thence moves on to "managing" a fool within marriage. Neither is Olinda, as Woolley suggests she ought, rewarded with a husband because he recognises her as a good servant-wife, for her social and individual identity is disguised from Haunce both at and before the point of marriage. If he cares nothing for, or cannot discern, her identity as a servant, it is difficult to imagine that he wants for a conventional (obedient, capable, submissive) housewife, a suspicion only confirmed, as we will see, by his indifferent attitude to her individual identity during the masked wedding ceremony at play's close.

There are two important developments that lead up to Olinda's marriage to an indifferent Haunce: these are, the subtle if quite typical displacement of sexual impropriety from the self-conscious Euphemia onto the practically-minded Olinda, and a rather complex engagement with the interchangeability of their individual and social identities as women, a significant comment on the continuities of womanhood across the divide of mistress and servant.[93] When the audience first sees Olinda, it is a moment in which she both does and does not represent herself: she acts as proxy for her mistress within the play's newly developing cross-currents of desire (and clings thereby to an occupational identity/typified dramatic role that somewhat exempts her from disapproval), while also performing an individuating act of selection based around her own preferences for physical desirability in a partner. Deputed to retrieve 'the Cavalier' whom Euphemia hopes will be her means of rescue from marriage with Haunce, Olinda comes upon Alonzo and Lovis (friend to Alonzo and brother to her mistress Euphemia, a fact not revealed until 2.7 but which is made plain in the character list) both '*in travelling habits*.' She struggles to select the correct man.

> Olinda. Which of these two shall I chuse? [*She looks on both.*
>
> Sir, you appear a stranger. [*To* Lovis.
>
> Alonzo. We are both so, Lady.
>
> Olinda. I shall spoil all, and bring the wrong. [*She looks again on both*.[94]

Behn does not make it clear whether Euphemia intends Olinda to choose one of the two in particular, whether Olinda misperceived her instructions or if (or if not and why) either Olinda or Euphemia recognises the latter's brother.[95] (When Olinda brings Alonzo to Euphemia at 1.3, she states that she

[93] Olinda's practical intelligence is considerable, and she is key to the comic plot. She is sent forth as a go-between to bring Alonzo to meet with Euphemia (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.1); she takes a part, unprompted, in a ruse designed to provocatively unveil her mistress's face (1.3); she masterminds and instructs her mistress in the scam whereby Euphemia will marry Alonzo disguised as Haunce; she handles Haunce's man Gload in order to extract information and manipulates the Dutchman (via his servant) into agreeing to a duel with Alonzo (4.1); she coolly fobs off the deceived Haunce and his servant with a barefaced lie, and takes the place of her mistress in a final body-swapping deception in order to straiten Haunce's ability to protest or retaliate (5.2).

[94] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.1, p.3.

[95] The potential implausibility of Olinda not recognising her mistress's brother Lovis may be explained away by Lovis' claim that he and Alonzo are 'strangers in the City' and/or by their undifferentiated costume (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.1). See also Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, who discusses the importance of costume to the performance failure of the central Haunce/Alonzo conceit (p.50).

hopes ‘’tis the right man.’ Euphemia does not make either affirmative or negative response, though the spectre of incest means that Alonzo is really the only “right” man for the job.)[96] However uncertain the logical basis of this near-miss, the effect of this delegated responsibility is a shifting of culpability and a tentative dislocation of identity: Olinda stands surrogate for Euphemia, but the gentlemen do not immediately or explicitly assume that she is a servant. (Before she makes it plain that she has been deputised, she is addressed simply as ‘Lady’).[97] Occupational identity does both justify Olinda’s behaviour and will permit her the opportunity to move, if only slightly, beyond its remit, but the difference between maid and mistress is no difference at all to Alonzo and Lovis. They assume that the woman they now understand to be a servant (whose presence they are certain presages ‘some amorous adventure’) is as undiscerning in her choice of man as the lady behind the command. Lovis presumes Olinda unexacting and sexually greedy – ‘Nay, I find ’tis all one to you, which you chuse, so you have one of us; but would not both do better?’ – while Alonzo imagines Euphemia likewise unfussy about the identity of the man whom she sends her maid to bring to her bed : ‘Prethee Lovis let thee and I agree upon the matter, and I find the Lady will be reasonable; cross or pile [heads or tails] who shall go.’[98]

Mistress and maid are not as alike as the gentlemen imagine, however. The bickering that eventually culminates in a coin toss is sufficient provocation for Olinda to select Alonzo simply in order to halt the argument – ‘You will not hear me out, but I’l end the difference by chusing you, Sir’ – but before succumbing to her irritation, she is first presented with the opportunity to speak for herself and is challenged to judge according to her own tastes. In doing so, Olinda expresses a subtle, individual sexual interest, for she finds both men physically attractive: ‘What shall I do? they are both well: [*Aside.* but I’l e’en chuse, as ‘twere, for myself; and hang me if I know which that shall be. [*Looks on both*]. Sir, there is a Lady of quality and beauty, who guessing you to be men of honour, has sent me to one of you.’[99] The significance of Olinda’s judgement here is that she is permitted a personal opinion of narrative consequence, and an exercise of discretion concerning the sex appeal of two strange men: this individuates her (for in this public place, she is not *only* an acting extension of her mistress) and destabilises the naïve underestimations of conduct writers regarding the physical and social relationships between the servant and the served. Richard Lucas, in imagining that ‘sin in it self is not so taking or luscious to a Servant as those of higher quality’, suggests that restrictions on time, wealth and opportunity render those worldly enticements peculiar to servants less materially alluring and more mixed with ‘Allays, Fears and Checks.’[100] Ever chary of admitting intimacy of any kind between servant and employer, Lucas’ discourse of class differentiation somehow overlooks the fact that opportunities for ‘sin’ that pass under the nose of the master pass also under the nose of the servant – especially if the

[96] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.3, p.11.
[97] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.1, p.3.
[98] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.1, pp.3-4.
[99] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.1, p.4; 3.
[100] Lucas, *Duty*, pp.34-5.

two are physically proximate much of the time and/or if the servant is required to perform a service that hews closely, paradoxically, to rank or status. Euphemia, an unmarried gentlewoman whose public movements are restricted largely to church-going (the location where she first spots Alonzo and Lovis), is not supposed to go abroad alone; Olinda can. In the same way, Olinda acts as a ~~dramatic~~ repository for prejudicial assumptions about lewdness of reputation: the heroine may make shifts for her own desires while transposing any impropriety or bawdiness onto her proxy.[101] Olinda's part – whose stage directions offer an improper emphasis on looking, and whose response to the impatient dispositions of the gentlemen suggests a woman who is underwhelmed by male *braggadocio* – is not, as Lucas suggests, allayed by 'Fears and Checks.' She herself is a figure of counteraction or balance. She speaks to coarse, corporeal interests and the immediate force of physical impressions, to which she has no fear of submitting: Lovis' suggestion that Olinda might look to enjoy both men is rather supported than resisted by Olinda's smiling indecision about selecting one man as her own hypothetical lover. Euphemia may discourse instead of finer feelings ('if this should be love now, I am in a fine condition').[102]

Reputational risk and, more importantly, slipperiness of occupational and social identity, come to animate the relationship between Euphemia and Olinda at the second key development in Olinda's narrative, where explicit play is made of the indistinguishable bodily and social identities of mistress and maid when the two women are in the same room and faced with the same interlocutor. When Van Ezel makes his first visit to Don Carlo's house to present himself to Euphemia, the Dutchman is unable to tell the maid from the mistress: having been pipped to the post by the disguised Alonzo, who made his obeisance to Don Carlo in 3.1 as "Haunce", the actual Haunce is quite baffled by the reception that he receives from the household, which welcomes him with a puzzling level of informality. He wonders aloud to his servant Gload, '*Salerimente,* they all salute me as they were my old acquaintance. Your servant *Myn heer Haunce*, crys one; your servant Monsieur *Haunce*, crys another.'[103] Feeling pressured to identify his intended bride as through some strange intuition ('I, one of these must be she: but 'tis a wonder I should not know which is she by instinct. [*Aside.*') Haunce *Stands looking very simply on both* until he is rescued by Euphemia's social graces ('I know you – ').[104] Lack of prior introduction aside, it is of note that Haunce appears to have no further visual or social cues at his disposal that would permit him to separate Euphemia from Olinda. In a play in which identity becomes a key function of dress, the text, I would suggest, points here to the visible indistinction of the two women as a likely practice of costuming (plausibility in this moment rests partly on the actresses wearing equally fine clothes) with

[101] When Alonzo develops an unhelpful and evasive tendency to wax poetical about his predicament (betrothal to Hippolyta, infatuation with Euphemia), Olinda hints at her own prior experience with men by translating Alonzo's speech for her confused mistress - ''Tis nothing but his aversion to marriage, which most young men dread now-a-days.' (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.3, p.15).
[102] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.3, pp.10-11.
[103] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 4.1, pp.56-7.
[104] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 4.1, p.59.

its basis in that cultural anxiety, communicated by Woolley and, as we have seen, registered by Behn in *The Lucky Chance*, about social distinction and dress in female service relationships.[105]

In the case of Euphemia and Olinda, dress produces an illegibility of order, and the visual indistinction of one woman from another develops, complicatedly, into an equivocal reading whereby the difference between Olinda and Euphemia is simultaneously maximised and minimised. Olinda, once again taking the lead in a moment of crisis, urges Euphemia to marry "Haunce"/Haunce ('Fie upon't, Madam that you should have so little courage; your Father takes this fellow [the real Haunce] to be Alonzo') but is interrupted by an anxious Don Carlo:

> Carlo. What counsel are you giving there, hah?
>
> Olinda. Only taking leave of our old acquaintance, since you talk of marrying us so soon.
>
> Carlo. What acquaintance pray?
>
> Olinda. Our Maiden-heads, Sir.
>
> Haunce. Ha, ha, ha, a pleasant wench faith now; I believe you would be content to part with yours with less warning.
>
> Olinda. On easie terms, perhaps, but this marrying I do not like; 'tis like going a long voyage to Sea, where after a while, even the calms are distasteful, and the storm's dangerous: one seldom sees a new object, 'tis still a deal of Sea, Sea; Husband, Husband, every day – till one's cloy'd with it.[106]

Olinda's assumption of an "us" when she refers to Euphemia's imminent marriage recalls Haunce's confusion at being unable to distinguish the two women, even if only through the first physical impression. It also bespeaks the elision of mistress and maid into one as a sign of the intimacy between them (as registered by Don Carlo's nervous interruption about Olinda's 'counsel') and, apparently, indicates Olinda's intention to remain in her mistress's employ in marriage. Whether Olinda's personal aversion to being wed is merely bantering or not, the anticipated loss of virginity in her mistress's new household, alongside that of her mistress, presupposes that familiar risk to the female servant's sexual respectability – a risk which Haunce, as his retort suggests, is potentially ready to supply himself. Lyons proffers that in Restoration comedies,

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[105] Much of the action in *The Dutch Lover*, and a good deal of the thematic heft of misidentification and indiscriminate male greed, relies upon disguise/the significance of dress: Alonzo must don ridiculous clothes to pass as the Dutchman (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 3.1); Hippolyta's own brother fails to recognise her because of the male attire she wears (4.3); Olinda is permitted to make a considerable leap up the social ladder through the adoption of a vizard in a wedding ceremony (5.2).

[106] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 4.1, p.60.

> desire is dangerous, and potentially humiliating, while for those who hold off and stay on the sidelines – as the servants do – desire provides a spectacle which can be amusing and in its way instructive. The servants and the Truewits [those who understand how games of desire work, but who nevertheless take part] thus constitute two alternate poles in a dialectic between safety and vulnerability, and these plays offer a doubleness of identification, with both contrary positions available at once to its spectators.[107]

Less vulnerable, perhaps, by virtue of having relatively little to lose, a servant like Olinda is, nevertheless, not in a position of safety: she lives and works where the field of desire and the field of economic relations overlaps, that place where a prospective head of household may already make insinuations about sexual activity between them before any authority he may hope to have over her takes on a more formal character.[108]

Any danger of a sexual nature, such as it, actually comes from Haunce's servant Gload (or so he fancies): 'Pray, Sir, let you the Maid alone as an utensil belonging to my place and office, and meddle you with the Mistress.'[109] Behn encourages the audience to take Gload's assessment of the two women as a part misperception, and as a considerable over-valuation of his own worth: Gload has no more power to make a 'utensil' of Olinda than Haunce does to 'meddle' with Euphemia, primarily because Olinda is a servant as ideal as the heroine could hope for.[110] Her civility in tolerating Gload ('[Gload *makes grimaces to* Olinda *of love*]') produces immediate intelligence – ''Madam, I find by his man, this is your expected lover, whom you must flatter, or you are undone, 'tis *Haunce van Ezel*' – and both her ability to make future strategy and her nose for perspicaciously decorous behaviour pilots this scene carefully to a point of advantage, which otherwise threatens to veer off into discomposure and revelation more than once.[111] To double the heroine in her servant is, in one sense, to at least halve the risk produced by plot and by other characters – though the doubling, pointedly, is never mirror-perfect. The maid must be able to do what the mistress cannot, and her marital reward, as we will see, depends upon (an admittedly unstable) self-identification of social difference from her mistress. Gload's estimation

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[107] Lyons, 'What Do The Servants Know', p.30.

[108] See Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex and the Social Order in Early Modern London,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp. 85-8 for the vulnerability of female servants to the sexual authority of male members of household and guests. Also, Laura Gowing, **'**The Haunting of Susan Lay: Servants and Mistresses in Seventeenth–Century England'**,** *Gender & History,* Vol.14 (2) (2002), pp.183-201 – a fascinating supernatural example of the way in which reciprocal obligations in domestic settings 'implicitly suggested that sexual and economic power would be entwined in relations between masters and servants as it was between husbands and wives.' (p.187).

[109] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 4.1, p.60.

[110] See Woolley, *Compleat Servant-Maid,* pp.61-2; Woolley emphasises modesty of deportment and especially in the society of men, of which Olinda makes a disingenuous and useful performance regarding Gload.

[111] When Gload lays out his intentions to Olinda ('I am Book-keeper and casheer to my Master, and my love will turn to account, I'l warrant you') she astutely strings him along, neither denying nor accepting him ('There may be use made of him, [*Aside*. I shall think of it'); when Haunce and Gload then perform a presumably embarrassing Dutch dance, Haunce becomes angry in the face of Euphemia's lack of composure, at which Olinda cautions decorous behaviour ('By all means flatter him, Madam.') Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 4.1, pp.61-2.

of Olinda as a fitting match for his inferiority intimates a principle of social decorum that, at least in a limited sense, Behn adheres to carefully: Olinda deserves more than the fop's servant (contrary to the desires of the fop's hopeful servant), but not necessarily more than the fop and nothing in excess of her mistress's desert. In this way, Olinda is rendered pressingly, conventionally, unlike Euphemia, but as a distinction, it turns out to be something of a moot point. Olinda's own declaration of indistinction from her mistress (that "us") offers a critique of the indiscriminating approach to women that is epitomised by Alonzo: as he puts it, 'I in the whole course of my life have taken the best care I could to make as few mistakes as possible, and treating all women-kind alike we seldom err.'[112] That "us", too, is Behn's reminder that all women, servants or otherwise, are bound by the notion of service in one important respect. Ruminating over the differences between servants and their employers, Lucas wonders whether

> the state of a Servant has some Advantages really and truly above that of a Master […] You enjoy the World without the Cares of it; Storms sink no ships of yours, nor scorching Vapours blast your Fruit or Corn; the Turns and Changes of Fortune concern you very little, or not at all; and I do very much question, whether your travail and labour, as well as your care, be not much less than that of many Masters.[113]

It is a curious argument to make for any form of service relationship in which material dependence is a concern, but Lucas' discourse of unequal risk and unequal care – that the material and financial conditions of a master do not seem to directly impact his servants – takes on an especial urgency within the context of a female/female service alliance. Behn's mistresses and their maids, in their most ethical, faithful iteration, *do* endure the world with the same cares, and that coincidence of the sexual and the economic in the case of Olinda, Euphemia and Haunce (as in so much of Behn's drama) intimates the various ways in which female servants are emotionally, physically and reputationally intertwined with their mistresses. Both mistress and maid are subject to an authority, often very directly, that seeks to control and to dispose of their bodies according to advantage.

Behn's means of allowing the heroine to circumvent this authority is through the substitution of one unknown woman for another: Haunce had agreed to the original match with Euphemia sight unseen, and when Haunce is handed a masked woman to whom he happily allows himself to be married, he knows who she is *not* (Euphemia), but does not know who she *is*. (At this point, Euphemia's marriage to Alonzo has been revealed and accepted).[114] This blind exchange does satisfy, in only a simple narrative sense, the service-to-marriage trajectory promoted in the conduct material, and such a cultural commonplace about women in service does have its dramatic and thematic uses for Behn. Olinda's own trajectory is amply accommodated by the positive vision of earned progress offered by Woolley, though with

[112] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.3, p.12.
[113] Lucas, *Duty*, p.75.
[114] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.2, p.95.

significant emendations and qualifications. Haunce is assuredly no 'Sober, Honest, and Discreet man', but the advantages of the match are considered sufficient reward for such a 'compleat' maid.[115] This reward is, moreover, structurally anticipated rather than visibly sought after by the servant herself.[116] Through the sublimation of her self-interest in particular, Olinda's role coincides, rather than collides with, conduct-book notions of ideal service: the very state of Olinda's self-interest having been subsumed throughout the play is only fully and explicitly revealed at the moment that it emerges and is rewarded with marriage. As she states in the final revelation, 'I serv'd my Lady first, and then thought it no offence to take the reward due to that service.'[117] This reward is both dramatically logical and the apt conclusion of a performance which accords with Lucas' vision of servile duty and love, a naturalisation of the sublimation of choice: 'how natural is it for a Servant to obey when he is as fond of the Love of his Master, as of his own Interest? And how natural to be faithful, when he loves his Masters Interest as his own?'[118] That Olinda herself does indeed have her own interests, but that she declines to prioritise them, suggests her exemplarity as the representative of a model of service which both allows for but prudently constrains personal hopes for progress and reward.

Olinda points clearly to these hopes for progression (and apparently nullifies any suggestion of remaining at Euphemia's side once her mistress is wed) by means of a very broad hint about her social prospects at the moment that she is faced with Gload's obsequious claim upon her attentions:

> Gload. Why, but Mistress Olinda, you have not indeed forgot me have you?
>
> Olinda. For my lover I have, but perhaps I may call you to mind as a servant hereafter.[119]

Olinda intends to do some social climbing, and nor is she alone in assuming that this is not an implausible option for a maid: the suggestion that Lovis will be involved in the scheme to match the Dutchman to Olinda is left to percolate from 4.2, and then comes to the fore when he is the one to hand her over to Haunce in the last few moments of the play.[120] This apparent premeditation, and the fact that the timing of her marriage to Haunce renders it technically unnecessary in terms of providing for Euphemia's

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[115] The first time that the audience meets the real Haunce, he is attempting to medicate away a lingering bout of violent sea-sickness through inebriation (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 3.2, pp.41-2); his first audience with Don Carlo shows him a blustering and inconsiderate interlocutor (4.1, pp.56-64); when still half drunk, he states that he has no qualms about striking any future wife he has. (3.2), p.44.

[116] Olinda's early identity confusion with Euphemia in the presence of Alonzo and Lovis (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 1.1, pp.3-4), and again before Gload and Haunce at (4.1, pp.59-61) foreshadows the more permanent substitution.

[117] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.2, p.88 (mispaginated; correct pagination, p.98).

[118] Lucas, *Duty*, p.123.

[119] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.2, p.93.

[120] Alonzo's response to Gload's request to take Olinda for himself at 4.2 ('We'l consider on't') appears to be the moment at which the idea about Olinda being made use of is planted. Alonzo, however, shows himself surprised when Olinda reveals her identity after the off-stage wedding ceremony at 5.2: the idea appears to be Lovis and Olinda's alone.

safety, suggests an aspirational and class-conscious approach to a post-service life which, in principle, if not in the means of its enaction, would be deemed admirable by a writer of Woolley's mind.

The service-to-marriage narrative, then, is a means of dramatizing the crucial bonds of loyalty and of inhibited self-interest between women, but it also enacts a critical reassessment of such a commonplace narrative and what its consummation must mean for the women whose connection, as a consequence, must be at least partly severed. As a means of providing reward for Olinda's genuine and efficacious demonstration of female alliance, the prospect of social climbing and marriage through the performance of service can only, paradoxically, lead to a compromised result from the perspective of the success of the servant's efforts. For Olinda's marriage to Haunce to be construed positively by all significant parties – by Haunce, by Olinda, and by the audience – neither Olinda nor, more importantly, Haunce himself can be permitted to understand the union as a forfeit. Howsoever considerable Haunce's shortcomings – and, read within the context of anti-Dutch feeling at the time of staging, these are not insignificant – Olinda has strategized (with a little aid) a marriage to a comparatively benign sort of swaggerer whom she feels confident she can govern: 'this', she declares with the sanguine air of a put-upon housewife, 'is the fool that I am to manage.'[121] Behn encourages the audience to understand this achievement as such, and on its own terms, for unencumbered by the denials of authority figures and, unopposed in comprehending her own worth (unlike in the case of Pert and Bearjest in *The Lucky Chance*), she finds it answerable in a merchant likely to provide her with a secure lifestyle. For his part, Haunce is as buoyant as his new wife, but here Behn gives us pause: the Dutchman's philosophy on women, one which he shares, significantly, with all of the young men in the play, is that the fairer sex are 'all one.'[122]

> Haunce. Now do they all expect I should be dissatisfied; but, Gentlemen, in sign and token that I am not, I'l have one more merry frisk before we part, 'tis a witty wench; faith and troth after a month 'tis all one whose who; therefore come on Gload. [*They dance together.*[123]

The key to dispelling any shame or embarrassment about the social origins or financial status of his new wife is to advance a jaded view of marriage before he has even embarked upon it: this in turn relies upon

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[121] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.2, p.87 (mispaginated; correct pagination, p.97). Haunce is relatively undangerous next to the ultra-violent Marcel (2.2), and the frighteningly abusive Antonio (3.3). D. Christopher Gabbard reads the play as wartime propaganda through the prism of the Third Anglo-Dutch War: 'Clashing Masculinities in Aphra Behn's "*The Dutch Lover*"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Summer 2007), pp.557-572. See also Janet Todd, *A Secret Life*, pp.165-6.

[122] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, observes 'the depressing isomorphism' of the treatment of women by both bourgeois characters (Haunce) and representatives of an older, feudal and militarised order of men (p.55). Lovis and Alonzo engage in bargains 'to communicate' (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 2.1., p.17), that is, sexually share women, while Silvio, Marcel and Antonio spend much of the play engaged in a series of complex, homosocial revenge games via the bodies of the women (Clarinda, Cleonte, Hippolyta) they alternately seduce, victimise and threaten.

[123] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.2, p.88 (mispaginated; correct pagination, p.98).

an assertion about the interchangeability of women, a phenomenon not simply caused by confusions of dress, but a sexual doctrine like to that of the libertine but, in Haunce's case, without any of the wit.[124]

Alonzo's response to Haunce's verbal shrugging off of social embarrassment is to echo the Dutchman's outlook on desire, and to cement his reputation as a restive pursuer and user of women, and that, too, unchanged by his new marital status:

> Alonzo. Monsieur Haunce, I see you are a man of Gallantry. Come let us in, I know every man here desires to make this night his own, and sacrifice it to pleasure.
>
> The Ladies too in blushes do confess
>
> Equal desires; which yet they'l not confess
>
> Their's, though less fierce, more constant will abide;
>
> But ours less currant grow the more they're try'd.[125]

According to Alonzo, the sexual desires of women are less fierce but more consistent than those of men; the sexual appetites of men like Alonzo, Haunce and Lovis are intense and avaricious, but the more that they are exerted or called upon by the same woman ('try'd'), the less genuine they become.[126] As Cleonte, another target of Alonzo's itinerant sexuality dryly remarks in the face of his transparent lover's rhetoric, 'I am afraid your heart's not worth the keeping, since you took no better notice where you dispos'd of it.'[127] Alonzo's conviction about the propensity for men to spread thinly their sexual energies – which sees the relations between men and women as uneven, acquisitive and sometimes downright predatory – has been evidenced through Alonzo's preferred model of service: when, for instance, he encounters the governess Dormida and her vulnerable charge Clarinda abroad at night and in need of protection, he makes plain to the audience the conditional nature of his gallantry. As he offers in an aside when first seeing Dormida, 'I hope the others young, or I have offer'd my service to little purpose.'[128] This is in turn shown up for its emptiness by Olinda's own understanding of service as alliance: Alonzo's preferred paradigm, conversely, is service as transaction.

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[124] Haunce is characteristically blunt about his right to receive the 'wares' (Euphemia) of his agreement, and complains that she is becoming a 'dear [expensive] comodity' (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 4.2, p.66); when Haunce comes upon Antonio about to rape Hippolyta, he entirely misjudges both the situation and the context of sexual jealousy and indicates that he has 'a mind to put in for a share' of Hippolyta if Antonio will accept. (3.3, p.49)

[125] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.2, p.88 (mispaginated; correct pagination, p.98).

[126] *OED Online*, 'currant'/'current', *adj., 5.* Having the quality of current coin; sterling, genuine, authentic: opposed to *counterfeit*. *Obsolete*.; 8. '*to pass, go,* or *run current'*: to be in circulation or in common use; to be generally related, reported, or accepted; to be received as genuine. (Formerly '*to pass for current* or *to go for current*.') Behn plays upon the sense of the authentic, and perhaps also specifically the idea of coinage in "trying" or testing its genuine nature.

[127] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.1, p.81.

[128] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 2.5, p.26.

As the last scene of the play ends on the theme of desire – mediated through Alonzo – so this scene had begun on the same subject, but filtered through the prism of Olinda's conquering view of that same issue. The opening of 5.2. is a domestic scene of work, in which Olinda and Dormida are seen about the business of dressing the bridal chamber for Alonzo and Euphemia:

> Olinda. But is the Bride-chamber drest up, and the bed made as it ought to be?
>
> Dormida. As for the making, 'tis as it use to be, only the Velvet Furniture.
>
> Olinda. As it use to be? oh ignorance! I see these young wenches are not arriv'd yet to bare imagination: Well, I must order it my self, I see that.
>
> Dormida. Why Olinda, I hope they will not go just to bed upon their marrying without some signs of a wedding, as Fidles and Dancing, and so forth.
>
> Olinda. Good Lord, what joys you have found out for the first night of a young Bride and Bridegroom. Fidles and dancing, ha, ha, ha! they'l be much merryer by themselves than Fidles and Dancing can make them, you fool.[129]

Music is merely a putting-off, velvet bedclothes for show and not for making love in: while Dormida expects deferral and ritual celebration, Olinda, demonstrating that she sympathises with the personal urgency of desire, anticipates and makes sure of immediate pleasure. She nevertheless spends the play deferring her own desires and endorses, by her actions, the delayed gratification of service without motive. Alonzo, differently, is willing to embrace difficulty, but anticipates an almost instant gratification (or the assurance of it) for each service that he proffers. The course of events teaches him that such precipitate expectations are flawed, and he never achieves anything close to a rendezvous before he falls into marriage with Euphemia.

Olinda's perfect performance of service – her diligence, loyalty, capability, quick-thinking and neat-handedness – finally saves her mistress from an unsophisticated bourgeois merchant who is a coward when he is not drunk and given to a braggart's show of lumbering violence when he is.[130] There is no act of service she could have performed that could preserve Euphemia, or indeed herself, from the vagrant male sexuality which Alonzo and Haunce share alike. Behn refuses, finally, to conceal the inequities of desire (and the presumptions men make in that regard) with the gloss of a romantic narrative. Alonzo's discomforting assertion of anticipatory sexual boredom is the last word of the play, and Olinda's rebuke about the urgency of desire on the wedding night is therefore modified, from an image of playful, compelling, mutual lust into one of a brief, vital but ultimately one-sided sensation, bound to lead eventually to an ungovernable, wandering, male sexuality. Nor can Behn aver that fidelity

[129] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.2, pp.91-2.
[130] Haunce makes a surprisingly successful show of violence against Antonio at 3.3, where he disarms and slashes Antonio across the face with '*a great Dutch knife*.' (p.50).

and care between women might stave off the inevitable: while Woolley offers hope that the service bond might remain in place as a form of physical and social protection – 'when she [the servant] is gone from you, afford her your assistance when she stands in need, and grace her with your Company when it is required; for then her Husband will be apt to be the more kind to her, and will have an awful reverence for you' – there is no fully 'safe scenario' proffered in *The Dutch Lover*, no fantasy that is reassuring to women in particular whereby 'female desire results in patriarchal marriage.'[131] Marriage is simply not the place for what Alonzo dubiously terms 'Equal desires.' For heroines and their maids, the support afforded by the alliance of the service relationship must suffer disintegration as a consequence of its very success. If, moreover, Olinda can be said to represent movement, that rolling stone that gathers no moss, then she stands for progress or personal betterment; the stigma of transience, that concern nursed by conduct writers of servants who they believe are ever on the make, belongs, to judge by Behn's parting shot, to men.

The 'tuition of a maid in love' in The Town Fopp*, and pedagogy in service in Hannah Woolley*

Like *The Dutch Lover*, *The Town Fopp* limns a set of central concerns – male invasiveness and greed, sexual desire and rivalry, the connection between sexual relationships and an economy of exchange – and therefore also examines the logical response to this, which is that such self-interested behaviour necessarily has victims, and that such presumptions towards these victims must require guarding against. In *The Town Fopp*, that role of guardianship is taken up by Nurse, who acts, variously, as tutor, defender, facilitator, witness and invisible labourer, to bring her charge Celinda to the man she wishes to marry, and her own role to a point of obsolescence.[132] The female servant in *The Town Fopp* is, as with the 'mumping Matron' Dormida in *The Dutch Lover*, a means of introducing and containing that particularly feminised form of sexual impropriety, a bawdy and indecorous behaviour in which her literal-mindedness and lack of social tact are both humiliating and useful.[133] As a servant who undertakes a pedagogical role, Nurse imparts lessons about gendered behaviour that, given her own sharp-tongued performance, do conduce to a certain amount of comic derision. At the same time, she is also responsible for transmitting knowledge to her charge about the social performance of masculinity, the results of which can only be described as equivocal. While permitting Celinda to pursue

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[131] Woolley, *A Supplement to the Queen-Like Closet* (1674) p.102. Dowd, *Women's Work*, p.46.
[132] In the tragicomic play which formed Behn's source, *The Miseries of Inforst Mariage* by George Wilkins (London,1607) there is no nurse to guard Wilkins' Clare (Behn's Celinda), who takes on a tragic role and dies early on in the play. Prior to this, she addresses herself wittily and with great directness to Scarborrow (Behn's Bellmour): his enforced marriage to another woman nevertheless causes Clare's demise. The eager and naive speech which Scarborrow offers to Clare (sig. A4^{v}-B1^{r}) is vastly altered in tone and given to the rather more sinister Sir Timothy Tawdry by Behn. Wilkins' rousting knight Sir Francis Ilford (the rough equivalent of Sir Timothy) finances his lifestyle by scamming and depleting the fortunes of young gentlemen (sig.C1^{r-v}): Behn's titular fop instead looks to augment his fortunes and maintain his mistress mainly by the advantage of a pre-agreed and predatory marriage to Celinda.
[133] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 2.5, p.26.

some autonomy, the result of these lessons (Celinda's aggressive pursuit of suicide) is to undermine and critique masculine codes of conduct by condensing such behaviour down to mere swagger, empty words and the waving about of swords.

Nurse, like Olinda in *The Dutch Lover*, works to protect her charge from the ordeal of a non-consensual marriage 'made up by the old Folks in the Countrey' who, as so often in Behn's comedies, consider the desires of the unfortunate young woman immaterial.[134] Like Dormida – that failed counterpart of Olinda – Nurse also seeks to direct and facilitate the romantic desires of her charge: 'Well, 'tis an endless trouble, to have the tuition of a Maid in Love, here is such Wishing and Longing – And yet one must force them to what they most desire, before they will admit of it.'[135] (Nurse's earthy manner of speaking and practical-minded approach to guiding Celinda through the experience of romantic feeling of course draws on her antecedent in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, a garrulous woman characterised by what Barbara Everett terms a 'comfortable humanity' and which quality remains in evidence in Behn.)[136] Nurse's initiative meets with quick success, and Celinda and her beloved Bellmour make a secret betrothal that, coming so early in the plot, cannot but be trouble: he is subsequently bullied into marrying his cousin Diana under pain of loss of inheritance and legal action by his uncle and guardian Lord Plotwell (2.3). While the young man spirals out of control, selfishly dissipating the fortune on which both his younger brother and sister depend, Celinda takes up a cross-dressed disguise in order to defend Bellmour from her brother Friendlove (who had personal hopes of Diana) and, by persistently intervening in sword fights, makes several unsuccessful endeavours to find her end (in her grief at Bellmour's apparent betrayal) on the point of someone else's blade (3.1). In the end, the correct individuals find their mates after Lord Plotwell reverses his unyielding stance towards Bellmour. Nurse's role in defending, supporting and outfitting Celinda for such action is in large part a pedagogical one: Nurse's rather proprietary claim about the responsibility she bears for the 'tuition of a Maid in Love' raises the issue of the educational facet of their service relationship. What does Nurse teach Celinda and what can be the basis of her authority for disseminating knowledge? What concerns and anxieties surrounded this pedagogical service relationship on the part of contemporaries?

For Behn's part, only an imprecise dramatic distinction is made between the role of a governess (like Dormida in *The Dutch Lover*) and that of Nurse (a nursemaid whose charge begins to outgrow her) in *The Town Fopp*. Dormida and Nurse, but for the difference in their competence and their investment in

[134] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.1, p.1.
[135] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 2.1, p.11. Like Nurse, Dormida's own strongly vicarious pleasures in managing sexual relationships are a leading force in shaping the service bond with Clarinda, and she makes much of her seniority in matters of romance: 'I am a little elder of the two, and have manag'd as many intrigues of this kind as any woman, and never found a constant just man, as they say, of a thousand, and yet you are sure.' (Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 2.3, pp.22-3).
[136] Barbara Everett, '*Romeo and Juliet*: The Nurse's Story', *The Critical Quarterly*, 14.2 (1972), p.131.

the interest of their charges, occupy practically the same working role.[137] This in turn reflects a reasonably indistinct cultural division between the two, which, in the early modern period, house a number of identical requirements. Both offer moral guidance, company, informal education and practical assistance: as Sheila MacIsaac Cooper has observed, the governess would be expected to have some formal education of her own, which she would impart to the young gentlewomen who were her pupils, but she was not yet the familiar cultural and literary figure of Victorian fame, and performed the task of minding older children and offering companionship as much as providing formal tutelage.[138] The duties of a nurse or nursemaid were very similar (which may or may not have involved wet nursing), but with an emphasis on the child-rearing, and a potentially piecemeal contribution to the early education, of charges lower down the age scale.[139] Woolley, once more, is effusive on the subject of service and its relationship to tuition, and upon the meeting of formality (a quality or mode never really displayed by Dormida and Nurse) and informality in pedagogical service relationships. Woolley is, of course, personally implicated in these issues as an author of conduct material and a marketer of her own services: in the prefatory address to *The Ladies Directory* (1662), later repurposed for *The Ladies Delight* (1674), Woolley makes a personal offer of her services to readers who might be future tutees, and states that 'If any desire to be further enformed in these Arts, be pleased to enquire for me where you find these Books are to be sold, and I shall readily do them any service.'[140] Key to her own authority as a dispenser of advice are the claims that she makes of her exemplarity, the way in which she draws upon the discourse of an everyday emulation that is informal and intimate, as well as her own mode of formal, textual pedagogy. Given the ubiquitous presence of servants in the early modern household, and their quasi-familial position, it is of little surprise that writers like Woolley were concerned about the effect that servant behaviour might have on the young persons of the family. Contact with servants was near constant, and as Cooper has further suggested, the exemplarity of servants, and the informal means of pedagogy by which they might offer an education of sorts to children and young people, was almost of more import than the formal means of instruction offered by teacher-servants employed for the purpose in sufficiently wealthy households: 'their pervasive presence in families, their position as family members, their access to children, and their resulting instrumentality made quite ordinary

[137] Both women also appear to have been in long service in their families; Dormida indicates that she has been involved in the affairs of 'my Lady Octavia' (Clarinda's mother) since before Alonzo (Clarinda's older brother) was kidnapped as an infant (*Dutch Lover*, 5.1, pp.79-80). That Nurse is so named suggests historic child-rearing duties, and the familiarity between the older woman (apparently sixty years old or more) and the young gentlewoman also indicates long term care (*Town Fopp*, 2.1).

[138] Sheila McIsaac Cooper, 'Servants as educators in early-modern England', *Paedagogica Historica*, Vol.43 (4) (2007), p.548; pp.561-2. See also, Jean Lambert, "Early Modern Educational Culture: The Wit of A Woman", *Performing Pedagogy in early Modern England*: *Gender, Instruction, and Performance*, ed. by Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2011) pp.131-145.

[139] Addressing the perspective of mothers, Woolley advises that they should encourage their child to view the service relationship with a nurse – already physically and emotionally intimate – as quasi-maternal: 'and as your Child grows up, teach it to love the Nurse, and infuse those Principles into it, that when you are dead and gone, your Child may still remember her with a perpetual kindness.' (Woolley, *Supplement*, 1674, p.104).

[140] Woolley, *Ladies Directory*, sig. A3^{v}-A4^{r}.

servants important instructors and exemplars', and 'even children of the comfortably off' might find that the utility of formal, structured education 'was secondary to what they were learning informally' in and around the household from servants.[141]

For Woolley, a discourse of exemplarity is general, and forms the basis of a variety of familial and social relationships – between parents and children, between young people and their friends, amongst siblings, women as a group, and amongst servants themselves – but the need for good example in the behaviour of servants before the young persons of the family is particularly pressing.[142] Woolley's directions 'for such who desire to be Nursery-maids' urge that they 'neither speak nor act mis-becomingly, lest your bad example prove the subject of their imitation'; the governess, too, should be mild, 'winning', and chary of appearing severe, as well as ready to praise 'such and such of their [the gentlewoman's] own age, that are thus and thus qualified, which will breed in them an emulation to tread in their footsteps.'[143] Reciprocally, a young gentlewoman 'must and will obey' her governess, and understands that she must 'follow those good examples and precepts she [the governess] shall lay down for my better information.'[144] In offering some autobiographical detail, Woolley suggests that the foundation of a governess's abilities, and her authority to proffer herself as a good example, rests upon experiential knowledge, self-education and, cleverly, a critical self-reflection about her failings that only increases the reader's confidence in her qualifications as tutor and author. 'I am indebted', Woolley writes, 'for the basis, or ground-work of my Preserving and Cookery, by my *observation* of what she [her employer] order'd to be done.'[145] Her acquired skill as secretary and scribe was, likewise, developed through exposure, practice and self-education, and as she 'gather'd how to manage my tongue gracefully' through reading French romances so she also 'acquired a competent knowledge' of 'Physick and Chyrurgery' through the practice of 'assistance' in cases of sickness and injury.[146] Her advice concerning the maturity of a governess, moreover, 'is the fruit of experience, having had too great a charge in this nature, when I was very young' and 'I can now with a greater sense look back upon my faults, than I could discern them when first committed.'[147] Her self-awareness about her lack of experience when first appointed a governess herself is an endorsement of the experiential authority she now claims as an author and disseminator of knowledge: a mixture of practical exposure, action

[141] Cooper, 'Servants as Educators', p.548; p.553. As Cooper suggests, this informal education could be practical (how to deal with on the spot financial transactions at a market, for instance), social (navigating urban spaces), and religious (the reading aloud of religious texts by servants).
[142] Woolley on parental exemplarity (*Supplemen*t, p.139); on maternal exemplarity (*Gentlewomen's Companion*, p.3); women are exhorted to look to others of their sex on the matter of learning (*Gentlewoman's Companion,* p.30); young gentlewomen are encouraged to beware of the peer pressure of bad company, 'for example is more forcible than precept' (*Gentlewoman's Companion,* p.34).
[143] Woolley, *Compleat Servant-Maid*, p.111; *Gentlewoman's Companion*, pp.4-6.
[144] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.26. Employers are also exemplars to their employees: Woolley 'treasured up things necessary for my understanding' by 'hearing that ingenious and agreeable discourse interfac'd between my Lady and Persons of Honour.' (p.12).
[145] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.12; emphasis mine.
[146] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.13.
[147] Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.27.

and education fits her for a pedagogical role, then (in instructing her charges) and now (in publishing a didactic text for public consumption).

Behn endorses such a model of competent service and the basis of its license: Nurse is both an exemplar (as a fulltime companion, and linguistic example) and active instructor (in helping to shape the knowledge and form of desire experienced by Celinda, and in teaching masculine social performance).[148] Nurse does not, through her own example, teach (as she ideally ought) restraint, patience or mildness, but that what is objectionable, harmful or offensive need not pass with the humility and silence of the servile. The conduct book ideal of forbearance, a virtue advised both for servants and children as analogous though unequal subordinates to the household's patriarch, is unfit for the ethos of a comedy.[149] As an informal tutor, Nurse teaches Celinda, rather, that, for a woman who means to make her own choices, action and self-sufficiency go hand in hand ('Nay then dispose of yourself, I say, and leave dissembling, 'tis high time'), and that, correlatively, helplessness and inaction are bedfellows.[150] Nurse's informal tutelage about the matter of desire has its foundation, too, in experiential knowledge: 'But I am past it – Well, I have had my pantings, and heavings, my impatience, and qualms, my heats, and my colds, and my I know not whats – But I thank my stars, I have done with all those Fooleries.'[151] Worldly knowledge with its basis in past erotic feeling also makes of Nurse a sceptic, for though she is a proponent of marriages of mutual choice and of affect, she nevertheless has little time for pastoral daydreams: Celinda's vision of a 'loanly cottage', 'kind Boughs' and a 'gentle Flock' shared with her love Bellmour is dismissed by Nurse as mere impracticality ('how prettily Love teaches his Scholars to prattle?'), and she instead seeks to remind Celinda of reality.[152] Her match to Sir Timothy is imminent, and attempting to marry Bellmour against the wishes of his uncle, who may bestow or deny Bellmour's inheritance to his liking – 'and then I think it were not so good Marrying him' – is imprudent.[153] (Her pragmatism never prevents Nurse from aiding Celinda in achieving a rendezvous with Bellmour. Her cautions to her charge about Bellmour's inheritance might be prophetic, but sagacity does not win out over absolute loyalty. Nurse here, unlike Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet,* is not designed to be dismissed by the heroine for her irrelevance, for a troubled set of fidelities, or for

[148] Nurse is privy to Celinda's 'daily (nay, and nightly, too) disorders' concerning her love for Bellmour, and therefore seems to be a sleeping companion. Like Dormida, Nurse helps to give form to Celinda's feelings for her beloved: 'For e're I saw Mr Bellmour, you spoke the kindest things of him,/As would have moved the dullest Maid to Love.' (Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.5).
[149] On forbearance and reverence in older female children, Woolley, *Gentlewoman's Companion* (p.22); on a child's continued duty in the face of neglect (*Gentlewoman's Companion*, p.25). On a servant's patient suffering when wronged, Lucas, *Duty of Servants* (p.91). On the burden of an impatient master, *Instructions to apprentices and servants* (p.5).
[150] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 2.1, p.13.
[151] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.5.
[152] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, pp.5-6.
[153] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.5. Sheryl Nadler observes that Nurse is on the side of affective marriage, even if Behn is more equivocal. The soundest of marriages require money and, if possible, the approbation of parent/guardian. See 'Aphra Behn's Conflicted View of Marriage in The Town Fop', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research,* Vol. 9.1 (Summer 1994), pp.34-50.

overbearing attempts at protective care.) However plain it is to Nurse that such fantasies are of no immediate use, she is also unwilling to countenance the unseemly irregularities of Sir Timothy towards her 'young Mistris': vigorous action is Nurse's own mode of service and in order to prevent the possibility of Celinda being obliged to politely endure his wooing, Nurse talks and talks, anatomising Sir Timothy in a way that details his faults (consonantly with his own self-representation in 1.1) but which, as it turns out, fails to predict his eventual successes.[154]

When Sir Timothy approaches Celinda in order to open a fumbling sort of address, she finds herself in a paralysis: her brother Friendlove has instructed her, unhelpfully, that 'if you would be rid of the trouble of him, be not coy, nor witty, two things he hates.'[155] Celinda attempts to follow her brother's mystifying advice, but whether she is falsely talkative, intentionally un-witty, or (from Sir Timothy's perspective) leadingly quiet, makes no difference, for anything is a provocation. Interpreting her silence as consent, Sir Timothy takes her confused reticence towards him as an opportunity to kiss her (an assault from which she is physically defended by Nurse), while her claim to have no wit merely enlivens his interest in displaying his wife-to-be for her physical attributes rather than admiring her for the quality of her thoughts. As he rather dismissively puts it, 'as if there were any Wit requir'd in a Woman when she talks; no, no matter for Wit, or Sense: talk but loud, and a great deal, to shew your white teeth.'[156] In a more sinister vein, Sir Timothy expresses a voyeuristic desire to observe a woman struggle with the management of her composure and with social performance in a public setting: he longs to 'see a pretty Woman stand right up an end in the middle of the Room, playing with her Fan, for want of something to keep her in countenance.'[157] Sir Timothy's intention to display and humiliate his future wife – he will 'teach [her] to entertain at another rate' – is the final straw for Nurse: she had assured Celinda at Sir Timothy's entrance that 'I that ever help you at a dead Lift, will not fail you now', and subsequently demonstrates both her considerable ability to defend her charge and proves the superiority of her own pedagogical model as a means of instructing and protecting her mistress. In place of Friendlove's ineffective instruction, Nurse provides an example that elucidates utterly any difficulties of meaning, and sets aside any quandaries about civil sociability in the face of an interlocutor who it is too risky, and quite fruitless, to humour. Neither coy nor witty, Nurse soundly, and appropriately, abuses Sir

[154] Sir Timothy is finally married to Phillis, Bellmour's sister, by means of a trick played upon him by Sham and Sharp, his hangers-on, and the ironically named Trusty, servant to Lord Plotwell. He also communicates his intention to continue to maintain his mistress, Betty Flauntit, using his wife's money. As Hughes succinctly puts it, 'In the final minutes of the play, he is inside the house with his hat-trick achieved: wife, money, whore.' (Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.79).
[155] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.6.
[156] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, pp.7-8.
[157] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.8. Sir Timothy's unpleasant interest in witnessing a woman experience emotional strain in this way recalls Dorimant's chilling declaration that he derives pleasure from 'making a woman […] break her fan.' *The Man of Mode* (1676) was published very shortly before *The Town Fopp* (1677). Sir George Etherege, '*The Man of Mode'*, *Four Restoration Libertine Plays*, ed. by Deborah Payne Fisk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 1.1, p.94.

Timothy – not a guest to be 'civilly used' but an interloper who is to be exposed – for two pages.[158] With increasing aggression, she takes aim at his vanity ('to purchase a little Grandeur, as you call it, that is, to make everyone look at thee'), his mismanagement of his finances ('thy Creditors, who, poor Souls, despair of a Groat in the Pound for all thou ow'st them, for Points, Lace, and Garniture'), his sexual behaviour as a keeper of prostitutes as mistresses (Celinda's 'fortune shall not go to the maintenance of your Misses'), his opportunism ('thou art so sorry a creature, thou wilt endure anything for the lucre of her fortune'), and his delusions of grandeur about his perception by others ('what a Fool thou art, who else might pass unreguarded amongst the common crowd.')[159]

And while Woolley we recall, 'gather'd how to manage my tongue gracefully' through the examples she gleaned from a literary education, Nurse, seeming likewise to be a servant with the leisure to read, and to read *didactically,* has instead made use of the texts she has read by transforming what we might assume was the pleasure of reading two comical works into the utility of insult. As Randall Ingram observes, early modern reading practices marked out an imprecise separation between the "didactic" and the "literary", a state of affairs which sometimes produced anxiety about *how* literary texts might be used and *by whom*: the idea that his book of verses might be so misconstrued and misused as to become physical packaging material for 'grocers' to wrap up 'Spice' leads Robert Herrick to pressingly set out, as Ingram indicates, the distinction of 'the literary book as a special artifact' that is 'properly separate from the workaday world.'[160] Less invested than Herrick in superintending who accesses literature and how they use it, Behn allows Nurse to pick up some useful terms of abuse from a literary text (or two) and reuse them to an ultimate good in the context of her labours as a servant. Nurse questions Sir Timothy's 'quality':

> Sir Tim. Yes, I am a Gentleman, and a Knight.
>
> Nurse, Yes Sir, Knight of the ill-favour'd Countenance is it?
>
> Sir Tim. You are beholding to *Don Quixot* for that, and 'tis so many Ages, since thou couldst see to read, I wonder thou hast not forgot all that ever belong'd to Books.
>
> Nurse. My eye-sights good enough to see thee in all thy colours, thou Knight of the Burning Pestle thou.
>
> Sir Tim. Agen, that was out of a Play – heark ye Witch of *Endor*, hold your prating tongue, or I shall most well-favourdly Cudgel ye.[161]

[158] Woolley, *Compleat Servant-Maid*, p.36.
[159] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.8-9.
[160] Randall Ingram, 'Seventeenth Century Didactic Readers, Their Literature, and Ours', in *Didactic Literature in England 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed* ed. by Sara Pennell and Natasha Glaisyer (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016) p.78.
[161] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.9.

Sir Timothy's objection to Nurse's insults – amongst the mere fact of their offensiveness, and that they come from a woman – is her lack of originality: the Witch of Endor (an Old Testament character) was, disputedly, a demonic necromancer or a ventriloquist alike to a Classical oracle, but, in either case, a channel for the speech of others.[162] Nurse, too, is a conduit for the words of dead men, words which Sir Timothy appears to be invested in gatekeeping. Her appropriation of the literature that she appears to have read or, perhaps, also seen in dramatic performance – Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (first translated into English in 1612) and Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613), texts which satirise the self-importance and romanticism of the knight errant – is a reuse of knowledge harvested from acts of reading in order to perform service (such as she understands her duties) to the best of her ability.[163] Sir Timothy's sense of self-importance seems to urge that he not be outdone by an old nurse in terms of cultural capital, and, though conceited and cowardly, Sir Timothy is no romantic nor even, really, a man with any lofty ideals – otherwise ripe for satire – about chivalry. Consonant with other knights and fops of the Restoration, the system of the world as Sir Timothy understands it is greased by money: Nurse, then, denigrates his physical appearance and his obviously crass performance of rank. (In doing so, she also provides an exemplar – albeit, perhaps, one inimitable by anyone but an indecorous servant – of what kind of speech is effective for exposing and challenging an adversary. Impertinence and aggression seem to be the only possible responses when politesse, coyness, wit, a rustic candour, reservation, or an attempt to ignore Sir Timothy, produce no favourable result). The defence of her mistress by 'that old Mastiff' is not, then, just a brass-faced comic performance intended to lighten the tone and to explicate what is obvious to the audience (that Sir Timothy is a deeply unpleasant man who intends to thoroughly misuse his wife) but is a carrying out of service underwritten by the authoritative force of conduct literature on the subject, and particularly by Woolley's exhortation

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[162] *KJV* (1611) 1 Samuel 28. That Sir Timothy associates Nurse with the Witch of Endor on the grounds of a misogynistic link to witchcraft and devilry is strengthened by his insult concerning her outspoken nature: 'The Devil's in her tongue, and so ''tis is most Womens of her Age; for when 't has quitted the Tail, it repairs to her upper Tire.' (*Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.9). The insult takes on an explicitly gerontophobic sense too: the inept governess Priscilla in Thomas Shadwell's *The Scowrers* (London, 1691) is called a 'filthy, toothless, wormeaten old Maid…thou Witch of Endor' by her angry employer Lady Maggot (Shadwell, *Scowrers*, 3.1, p.21).

[163] A dense intertextuality weaves together *Town Fopp*, Behn's main source (Wilkins' *The Miseries of Inforst Marriage*) and the two other texts by Cervantes and Beaumont mentioned by Nurse. Don Quixote in the original Spanish was first published in 1605; Thomas Shelton's translation *The History of the Valorous and Wittie Knight-Errant Don-Quixote of the Mancha* (1612, reprinted in 1652 and 1672), may have been Behn's likeliest first hand source (see p.161 of Shelton's translation for 'ill favoured countenance'). This translation, so Alex Thomas argues, may have been the manuscript source (likely completed in 1607) for Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (published 1613; performed 1607). This play is performed in the early Restoration: Wednesday May 1662 (Pepys: 'I saw the last act of the "Knight of the Burning Pestle," which pleased me not at all.' https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1662/05/07/) and again sometime between 1665 and 1671. See *The London Stage 1660-1800, Part One: 1660-1700*, ed. by William Van Lennep (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p.95. As Alex Thomas also points out, George Wilkins appears to have had Don Quixote at his disposal, for in Scarborrow (Behn's Bellmour's) dissipation scene, Wilkins refers to the idea of fighting with a windmill ('Now am I armd to fight with a Wind-mill', *Miseries*, sig. F1^{r}). See, Alex Thomas, 'The English *Quixote:* Cervantes and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle', Studies in Philology,* Volume 117, Number 4 (Fall 2020), pp. 826-845. There is precedent for Behn drawing on Cervantes in an earlier play, *The Amorous Prince* (London, 1673): see Ángeles Tomé Rosales, 'Behn's and Guillén de Castro's adaptations of Miguel de Cervantes's "*El curioso impertinente*."', *Cervantes* (Gainesville, Fla.), 30.2 (2010), pp.149-169.

to read, to appropriate and to reuse.[164] Woolley's own method of advising and educating her readers is broadly achieved through example and pattern, through the providing of precedent, model and instruction that is to be hearkened to, repeated and re-consulted when required – though certainly, the eschewing of originality does not mean that Woolley does not make claims for the superiority of her own judgement through practice.[165] The prefatory address to *The Ladies Delight* (1674) proffers the work as a source of instruction that cannot be bettered: other receipt books 'being rather Confounders, than Instructers', readers are assured 'that they are very Choice Receipts, and such as I have not taken up on the Credit of others; but do Commend them to you from my own Practice.'[166] The purpose and power of Woolley's literature is satisfied by its status as a source of purchasable upskilling and its availability for gleaning – and by the idea that the skills required of a servant (or of a wife) are transmissible and replicable when the instruction is clear (rather than confounding). The evidence of what Nurse has garnered through self-education, and the demonstration of her tutelage to 'a maid in love', certainly challenges the standards of obedient and moral servant behaviour transmitted in the conduct material: however, the means by which Nurse makes a dramatic performance of pedagogy for Celinda (that she appropriates, and ventriloquises from, reading matter for her further use in the undertaking of service, and provides clear exemplar rather than unhelpfully imprecise instruction for her charge) aligns with the basic instructional paradigm that Woolley describes as most appropriate for the servant whose purview is educational.

Though, perhaps, a bad example of a bad example (that is, a vision of service that makes play of impudence and impropriety, and which is not treated punitively, but, rather, ultimately endorsed), Nurse is also the only character in the play who demonstrates that admirable quality of Behn's preferred model of servant – a consistently disinterested investment in the contentment of her charge.[167] Behn also offers, by way of contrast, sufficient demonstration of what poor service looks like. Sham and Sharp, Sir Timothy's paid hangers-on, seek to cozen their master by tricking him into a marriage with Bellmour's sister Phillis, and, with the help of the ironically named Trusty (the old family servant to Bellmour and his siblings), they succeed. It is through well-intentioned incompetence rather than malice that Trusty undertakes the enterprise with such a pair of ne'er do wells: Trusty's desire to see the young mistress

[164] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.2, p.10.
[165] Wall states that 'Woolley thus defines housewifery as knowledge that has to be self-consciously reproduced within the market rather than simply imbibed in everyday culture' and that the almost identical skills of the servant are, similarly, 'the product of domestic training' (*Staging Domesticity*, p.58; 54). Receipts/recipes for cookery and physick are obvious examples, and often involve claims of prior use and exhort further repetition through practice. Letter writing models in Woolley's *Supplement* (1674) offer both positive examples to be copied and negative ones to be avoided. See also Linda C. Mitchell, 'Entertainment and Instruction: Women's Roles in the English Epistolary Tradition', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Volume 79, Number 3 (Autumn 2016), pp. 439-454.
[166] Woolley, *Ladies Delight*, sig. A2^{r-v}.
[167] Nurse jestingly states, 'I must bear all the blame, what mischief soever comes of these Night-works', and understands that she oversteps by acting without her mistress's explicit permission when she lets Bellmour into the house late at night. Nurse faces no personal consequences, and she is treated no more punitively than anyone else by Behn (Behn, *Town Fopp*, 2.1, p.11).

Phillis settled and secure overtakes his good judgement, but by this Phillis is done a demonstrable wrong and finds herself trapped in a marriage with a man, Sir Timothy, who only hankers after her money.[168] Betty Flauntit (Sir Timothy's mistress) and her bawd Driver embody a more complex mistress/servant relationship – since it is clear that their financial interdependence is a motivated, two-way connection – and while from one perspective, the bawd's role may seem the closest analogical service role to that of Nurse (who does indeed play the role of 'Letter-in of Midnight Lovers'), the correspondence between prostitution and marriage is made as distant as it can be by Nurse's endorsement of Celinda's volition over her mere survival.[169]

The natural counterpart to poor service is poor guardianship – for Behn, this is the failure to imagine the consent, knowledge, contentment and security of those who stand in some form of dependent relationship as important.[170] These deficiencies can be partially mitigated by the female service relationship, for Nurse is the only character who thoroughly performs guardianship on terms which consider the personal desires of her charge as a valid basis of obligation – even if those desires might tend towards self-destructive behaviour. Celinda, it is important to note, remains embarrassed throughout Nurse's barrage of abuse towards Sir Timothy and exhorts her to stop several times**:** we eventually learn, however, that Nurse's tutelage of Celinda in brash social performance does not fall on deaf ears, and indeed permits the heroine to expose herself to the danger she so desires. In the closing revelatory moments at the end of the play, Celinda reveals that, in her bid to protect Bellmour and to 'seek a Death from any welcome hand', it was Nurse furnished her with the instruction and the practical necessities to do so: 'your [Bellmour's] page inform'd the Nurse,/ All that had past […] And much concern'd, she got this Habit for me,/ And inform'd me how 'twas I was to Act.'[171] What is that the nurse appears to have taught Celinda about how to 'Act' like a man?

Despite Nurse's evident scepticism about the quixotism of men like Sir Timothy, the implication is that she performs the pedagogical role of teaching her charge how to engage in violent, passionate and foolish

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[168] Trusty promises Phillis's other brother Charles that he will 'undertake to Marry her to a man of 2000 l. a year; and if I fail, I'll be sure to keep her Honour safe.' (Behn, *Town Fopp*, 5, p.55).

[169] Driver's dependence on Betty, and on Sir Timothy, is made explicit when he states that he will cast Betty off. Driver exclaims, 'then I'm undone, she's the upholder of my Calling, the very grace of my Function.' (*Town Fopp*, 4.1, p.48) Sham and Sharp unfairly describe Phillis's innocent maid as 'this Letter-in of Midnight Lovers' (2.4, p.23).

[170] Lord Plotwell displays no concern for his nephew's wishes and would rather see Belmour 'in a Dungeon', where 'you shall ask your food of Passers by' than 'resist [his] Will' in marrying a woman not of Lord Plotwell's choice (*Town Fopp*, 2.3) Celinda's parents risk the very fortune they hope to increase by arranging marriage to the grasping Sir Timothy; for both her parents and Sir Timothy, Celinda is merely a cipher for her inheritance (1.1). Bellmour himself, whose satisfactory marriage is key to the security of his brother (Charles) and sister's (Phillis) portions, goes through with the match to Diana only to self-indulgently squander Phillis' future security on drink and gambling (4.1). Phillis is obliged to take up with the first wealthy man that can be secured for her, which is Sir Timothy.

[171] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 3.1, p.29; 5.1, p.63. The small detail of the connection between Nurse and Bellmour's page is also representative of the absolute dramatic necessity of servants; an independent line of communication between the servants of two different households was the means by which Celinda's cross-dressing plot, and some key confrontations of the play, were made possible.

behaviour: the servant's ability to help renegotiate her mistress's relationship to authoritative male figures seems, at first, to turn back on itself, for she educates and equips her charge to engage in the impetuous masculine behaviour (particularly towards women) that she has already heavily criticised. Nurse first demonstrates the usefulness of her didactic reading, and then its limitations in the face of servile loyalty, by helping Celinda to engage in some startling violence, the predominant mode of social performance by men in the play. Sir Timothy, certainly a coward ('this Wounds, and Blood, sounds terribly in my ears'), laments duelling as the 'damn'd Honourable English way of shewing a Mans Courage.'[172] He may indeed be a man without valour (due, ideally, to an individual of his rank) or the proper self-control incumbent, in the correct circumstances, upon an ideal example of manhood (he beats his servants/hangers-on when they are impertinent), and represents courage as a merely splenetic spasm brought on only by provocation to anger.[173] However, his distaste for the masculine violence of duelling ('My Honour! 'tis but Custom that makes it honourable to fight Duels') is not without merit. Bellmour, who has issued the challenge to Sir Timothy over Celinda, is reassured by Friendlove: 'Hang him, he'll ne're meet thee; to beat a Watch, or kick a Drawer, or batter Windows, is the highest pitch of Valor he e're arriv'd to.'[174] Physical bravery as they understand it does not pertain to street brawling and criminal property damage; rather, 'Valor' is violence springing from an offence to one's honour, and the two gentlemen offer just such a model of masculinity that relies upon hastily drawn swords, vengeance, and *quid pro quo* bargains over women. Here Behn broadens out a critique of masculine presumption, from the matter of Sir Timothy's vulgar social indiscipline, and the inadequate performance of rank by the knight, to a more encompassing commentary on the (mis)behaviour of men and its disguise by seemingly honourable conventions. Kathleen Leicht observes that it is 'restraint' that is the key requirement 'to maintain duelling as a signifier of social class: overused, the duel becomes merely the indulgence of a vulgar appetite and not the signifier of social privilege.'[175] Neither Bellmour nor Friendlove display this restraint concerning ritualised public violence, and while Sir Timothy can indeed be mocked by Nurse for his vulgarity and unfit social aspirations, the separate (if related) accusation of a masculine, romantic indulgence (pertaining to public violence, to codes of honour and vengeance, and to the treatment of women) is preserved for Bellmour, and, less so, Friendlove. Each represents a certain hollow idealism in respect of monogamous love: 'Fortune', as Friendlove points out, 'is sufficient to excuse…other faults' in women, and whatever Bellmour may claim about his horror of 'making a bargain to possess a Woman!', the two are bound together in an agreement of mutual interest in precisely that manner.[176]

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[172] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 2.2, p.16.
[173] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 3.1, p.30.
[174] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 2.2, p.16; 2.1, p.15.
[175] Kathleen Leicht, 'Dialogue and Duelling in Restoration Comedy', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 104, No. 2 (Spring, 2007), p.277. Robert Shoemaker, looking at the period from the 1660s to the late eighteenth century, states that there was a decline in deliberate public violence during this time and evidence that many individuals, men and women, were intolerant of such displays; gentlemen (as opposed to other individuals defined by class or occupation) were disproportionately represented as perpetrators in homicide statistics. See 'Male honour and the decline of public violence in eighteenth-century London', *Social History*, Vol.26 (2) (2001), pp.190-208.
[176] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 5.1, p.58; 4.1, p.48.

Friendlove gives his approbation for the match between Celinda and Bellmour as long as the latter helps him to secure Diana. It is a brotherhood that quickly, predictably, falls apart: apparently open-handed principles about loving 'on the square' actually boil down to unnecessary violence and shallow homosocial bonds easily broken.[177] The natural development of their attitudes towards women are displays of destructive and disruptive behaviour.[178]

Bellmour's self-absorption about his role in Celinda's fake suicide (he has not killed, and does not kill, anyone) is a particularly rich moment of vanity. Recalling *Macbeth*, he sets out an affected acceptance of guilt about his hypothetical violence:

> Tho' before I had loaded up my Soul
>
> With sins, that wou'd have weigh'd down any other,
>
> Yet this one more it bears, this sin of Murder.
>
> And holds out still – What have I more to do,
>
> But being plung'd in, in blood, to wade it through.[179]

Besides 'habit' (clothing), Celinda is able to pass as a young man precisely because of her willingness to incarnate this bloody vision of manhood: after 3.1, when she adopts male disguise, her social performance of masculinity repeatedly involves casual violence, for which she is identified as 'Brave Youth!' by Bellmour.[180] Her intention is self-slaughter by displaced means and, as becomes obvious by the needless fighting which breaks out between Friendlove and Bellmour over a simple miscommunication, performative masculinity in *The Town Fopp* may be condensed down to fruitless (and at its worst) suicidal violence.[181] Sir Timothy, but particularly Bellmour and Friendlove, make a poor showing of the management of their own independence as gentleman, and of the responsibilities and restraint required of them. As a means of critiquing masculine behavioural codes, Nurse, whose tutelage leads to Celinda's convincing aping of these men, is perfectly placed as a character to do so – typified by a coarse, worldly circumspection and a sufficient freedom to be garrulous and indelicate, the older female servant is both improper enough to be a credible source of instruction to her ingenue charge about the means for her to chase some autonomy, and sufficiently irresponsible to be complicit in her dangerous behaviour.

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[177] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 1.1, p.3.
[178] At his nadir, Bellmour loses 'a petty thousand' at dice, and fights and wounds his younger brother in a scrap in a bawdy house (*Town Fopp*, 4.1); Friendlove starts a fight at Bellmour and Diana's wedding party (3.1), and agrees to kill his former friend in order to appease Diana (5.1).
[179] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 3.1, p.27. *Macbeth*: 'I am in blood/Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,/Returning were as tedious as go o'er.' *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd Edition, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katherine Eisaman Maus (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008) 3.4, p.2608.
[180] Where this does not occur, there is an unusual almost-rape (*Town Fopp*, 4.1) in which Celinda fears she will be assaulted ('She'll Ravish me') by the forward Diana, who means to have sex with the 'Fair bashful Boy' to revenge herself upon her new and dismissive husband Bellmour.
[181] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 3.1, pp.33-34.

She is, moreover, implicated in critiquing the low excesses of those whom she can comfortably term her social superiors. Friendlove and Belmour would never sink, as the former has insisted, to the battering or smashing of windows, an act of spiteful vulgarity more suitable, as Sham and Sharp indicate, for the likes of male servants who have been dismissed for theft: ‘’tis an act below a Gentleman’, and one ‘which every Footman may take of his Lady, who has turned him away for filching.’[182] Such low behaviour is suitable to the servile, but Friendlove and Belmour mark out their own vulgarity with, as Leicht has suggested, the disruptive nature of their violent excesses: their indulgence in public violence identifies not refined social privilege but boorish if rather stagy bloody-mindedness. Nurse’s own place in this is to offer tutelage to her charge in such behaviour – she has been a visible exemplar for indecorous speech, and, so Celinda’s statement implies, an instructor for indecorous and self-indulgent behaviour offstage – and to provide a parallel in her own linguistic aggression to the physical combativeness of the gentlemen. Nurse, unlike Friendlove and Belmour, may claim the excuse of the servant’s loyalty, and the teaching of her charge to behave in a manner about which she has already indicated scepticism also marks the ethical distillation of Nurse’s loyalty from her inclinations. Nurse is, as Celinda states, ‘much concern’d’ – that is, she is worried, but also personally invested. Her own efforts in didactic reading, in performing an exemplary verbal defence for her charge, and her tutelage and her care, would all be for naught if Celinda were to fall into the hands of Sir Timothy. Teaching Celinda to ‘Act’ like a certain kind of man is, moreover, not consistent with Nurse’s own scepticism about masculine, romantic indulgence, even if it is, curiously, methodologically textbook. A governess is advised to ‘study diligently the nature, disposition, and inclination of those she is to teach; and so by suiting their humours, make their study more facile’: recalling Nurse’s chiding of Celinda’s romantic disposition, we might imagine that Nurse’s tutelage in masculine behaviour – that it should be impetuous, affect-driven, that an informal assumption of violence is credible and praiseworthy by other men – cleaved closely to that outlook which prioritises emotion over reason, and which we see Celinda, and Bellmour and Friendlove, repeatedly perform.[183] Nurse’s fitting of her tutelage to her charge makes her a good servant on paper, though not necessarily in moral terms. Her willingness to offer instruction in hot-headed and decidedly risky masculine performance is, above all else, a fierce expression of fidelity.

Conclusions

The Town Fopp is a play in which service is talked about by other characters, as well as one in which its performance is exposed to the scrutiny of a reader or audience member. Through Sham and Sharp, Behn discusses servants discussing service. Apt to judge other servants by their own standards, these

[182] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 3.1, p.34
[183] Woolley, *Gentlewoman’s Companion*, p.5.

two hangers-on find a credible alibi for their own servile misbehaviour in the imputed wrongdoing of their fellow servants: Sham draws authority from the accepted paradigm that those in service are of a universally deceptive nature and likely to take advantage where they can. He ascribes such deception, for instance, to Phillis's voiceless maid, whom he claims to have bought off for access to her mistress ('And I have brib'd her Maid to bring her this morning into the Mall'), as well insisting on the apparent greed of the 'avaricious Judas' Trusty, thirty years steward to Bellmour's family.[184] Embodying the anxieties about honesty and fidelity that run through conduct literature on service, Sham and Sharp also enact a certain scepticism about the way in which servants are perceived (or can be positioned to be perceived) by or for the sake of employers. Privately, Sham and Sharp agree that the likelihood of debauching Phillis, through the medium of her maid, is practically nil ('What design hast thou in hand? For I suppose there is no such real thing, as the debauching of this Lady'), and the primary evidence of a wilful, servile self-interest in the play is rather their own behaviour than that of other servants: 'Look ye Sharp, take to thee an implicit Faith, and believe impossibilities; for thou and I must cozen this Knight.'[185]

Given this concern about representation, we can see that service is not merely "there" as a fact of Behn's comedies: the knowing manipulation of the perception of servants by two of their most unscrupulous representatives troubles, in its own way, the authoritative representation of service by didactic writers like Woolley. The ready assumption of disorder, corruptibility and lack of self-control that the advice in the conduct material is designed to address and to mitigate – and that, importantly, in particular relation to the sexually suspect female servant – might begin to seem an undue assumption, an overstated threat, or a conservative (and therefore rather anxious) discomposure about maintaining order in the face of the actual performance of service by women in Behn's comedies. Given that female servants are imagined to personify, and yet are entrusted as managers of, risk in relation both to the intimate service bond and the broader relationship with a household's reputation, it is difficult to imagine a scenario where failure is not laid at her door. What conduct material might term failure or misconduct, however, may be called success by a different metric: Phillis' maid never actually appears, much less betrays her employer's trust, and servants like Nurse, and, in *The Dutch Lover*, Olinda, display the utmost fidelity to their mistress, as well as a sense of self-restraint and focus generally lacking in the frenetic atmosphere of the plays. The didactic material on service, then, suffers a double failure to reinforce order through prescriptive ideals when such material is read against comedy: Sham and Sharp's greed allows us to see that attempts at enacting power over servants can be wrested from employers through an appropriation of the power of representation by the servant. The conventional line on female servile sexual depravity becomes something beyond a mechanism for discursively policing servant behaviour if the deployment

[184] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 2.2, p.18; 5.1, p.52. The agreement struck between Sham and Trusty is such that a successful marriage sees Sham given 'all the Money that he [Sir Timothy] offers to debauch her.' (5.1, p.56).
[185] Behn, *Town Fopp*, 5.1, p.53.

of this line is not exclusively the privilege of an employer class, or of those who publish texts aimed at them. (At the same time, of course, Sham and Sharp's own model of service only buttresses cultural anxieties about lazy, deceitful and self-interested servants, that in turn support and are supported by those common concerns voiced in the conduct material about secret-keeping, authority, loyalty and reputation). The conduct material also fails to contain or fully account for another alternative locus of power – the coincidence of interest between mistress and female servant, and the wit, determination and steadfastness of a service bond that happily, urgently, embraces risk and disorder.

This returns us to the beginning of this chapter, and to the relationship between Behn's depictions of service and the way in which we find it represented in conduct literature. Behn clearly draws from a common well of ideas (if not actually ransacking conduct and other dramatic material) about servants – their (dis)orderly behaviour, their lauded abilities, their imputed failings, and anxieties about their close relationships with employers – and it is one shared by writers like Woolley and Lucas. Behn, however, provokes the reader to consider how service, and the necessarily intimate connections it fosters, might be made to operate for different ends than those imagined by conduct writers. The explicit intention of the conduct material is to educate, instruct, guide and provide models for emulation, a claim that Behn herself disavows for her plays: 'Playes were certainly intended for the exercising of mens passions, not their understandings…And as for Comedie, the finest folks you meet with there, are still unfitter for your imitation.'[186] The comedies are able to dramatize the potential of service work – often unelaborated, avoided or arguably misconceived in the conduct material – precisely because the delight of impropriety is an appropriate generic aim, claims about emulation can be put aside and the need to instruct is scarcely imagined necessary. The ends to which service work might be put are, as we have seen, to manage and recalibrate disorder, that regular irregularity of patriarchal relations between men and women which dictates the future contentment of Behn's heroines and, sometimes, significantly, the maids who serve them. Given their roles in facilitating radical fantasies of female volition and autonomy, these maids, women, nurses and governesses are hardly to be viewed as emulable patterns of behaviour, but they do provide an audience with a prompt to consider the category of "fantasy" more closely. Behn provokes us to reflect on the conditions that make emulation of such characters untenable, that allow, maintain and make necessary their restorative work *as fantasy*. The three main concerns that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter – Behn's interest in the service-to-marriage narrative, in pedagogy in service, and in fidelity as a principal tenet of a gendered service bond – all draw on ideas and idealisations espoused in the conduct material but go further in suggesting the consequences of such prescriptive norms beyond the limits of merely didactic intentions. For Behn, there is always some excess that is fit for comedy, some concern about what cannot be cleanly contained by regulatory narrative or normative

[186] 'An Epistle to the Reader' (sig. A4^{r}), which prefaces *The Dutch Lover*.

idea: such narratives and norms, of course, so rarely have the desires of the female subject in mind but comic fantasies allow for the kind of elasticity that prescriptive texts generally disavow.

In *The Dutch Lover*, Behn places the proposition of the service-to-marriage narrative – at the least a marketing ploy, if not a fully credible assumption in conduct material in the latter half of the seventeenth-century – under no little strain. The happy prospect of transition is outweighed by the likely disappointment that one discovers on the other side, that little has changed and that maintaining the attentions of one's husband is only another duty to add to the list. Labour relations, then, are sexual relations, a certainty borne out by the macho presumptions of the Dutch lover Haunce to Olinda as a future subordinate in his imagined household, as by the authoritative heft of Erminia's role as a mistress when brought to bear on the sexual reputation of her maid Isillia in *The Forc'd Marriage*. The coincidence of the servant and the wife means that the connections between sexual vulnerability, one's economic fortunes, and the possibility of a ceaseless work remain in play even when the servant believes herself transitioned from one state to the other. Woolley seeks to underplay this relationship, while Behn seeks its exposure. To be denied the opportunity to progress from service to marriage, nevertheless, retains a punitive value and service remains an enabling condition for romance amongst servants.[187]

Nurse's studied performance of service in *The Town Fopp* also touches on the interaction between the dramatic and the didactic in a more obviously textual way: read in light of ideas about the educative value of literature for the willing and industrious servant, Nurse's appropriation of her leisurely reading matter contributes to a certain denaturalisation of the comic ease and natural adaptability of the servant in romantic dilemmas. Nurse is an extremely capable defender of her charge, but she is a little better at exposing the threat of Sir Timothy by having read didactically, retained carefully, and reused comically. Methodologically sound means can conduce to extreme ends, however: the ethics of Nurse's pedagogical relationship with Celinda comes up against the twinned issues of extreme fidelity in service and the jeopardy of individual volition for women in a context dominated by masculine violence and patriarchal property relations. Nurse's matchless dedication to the desires and agency of her charge can allow us to read her as unflinchingly loyal even in the face of her own reservations, or as merely permissive, and too ready to decline to protect her mistress from herself. Such a model of service might, after all, represent an inadvisable limit rather than an ideal version, and Behn does suggest that there are more complex models of servile loyalty available, which might instead require prudent retention, a thoughtful silence or a calculated response. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, for instance, Gallatea's maid of honour Olinda recognises that persuading her mistress of the foolishness of her romantic belief in irrevocable love is a bootless, and perhaps cruel, undertaking. Instead, her carefully null contribution to the conversation ('Madam, my judgment's naught./ Love I have treated as a stranger guest') is a

[187] In *The Dutch Lover*, Dormida receives pardon, and the assured continuation of her employment, for her role in debauching Clarinda: service is also the very condition for her own appropriate romantic relationship with old flame and fellow servant Pedro (*Dutch Lover*, 5.2, p.87).

withdrawal from the possibility either of difference from or disobedience to her mistress.[188] Fidelity shows its politic face in a more responsible light, and suggests the way in which a servant might carefully negotiate her independence of thought in response to her mistress's desires.

Behn does, then, quietly recognise the difficulty of the straightforward performance of loyalty between women: the shared interest between mistress and maid that is assumed to be the ideal state of affairs might require some anticipatory genius from the servant, but telepathy is a stretch. There must be some frank exchange and, on the mistress's part, a modicum of self-knowledge: the fidelity and disinterest of the maid reflects as much on the behaviour of the mistress as the servant herself. The conflicted and unstable performances of service by, for example, Francisca in *The Dutch Lover* and, similarly, by the waiting woman Closet in *The City-Heiress* (1682) each reflect the fractured emotional state and strained self-recognition of the mistress. Both Francisca and Closet make their desires legible, consider them actionable and prioritise them – the former aims to destroy her mistress Cleonte's relationship with her half-brother Silvio in lieu of being able to have Silvio herself, the latter accepts financial bribes from competitors to Lady Galliard's hand and allows them access to her physically and emotionally vulnerable mistress – but such disloyalty is not as simple as individual malice.[189] Where the mistress cannot conceive of herself as a desiring subject beyond the limits of patriarchal ideas of honour and chastity, recognises but struggles to accommodate her desires to such limitations, or is incapable (through denial, confusion or the obscuring fog of the taboo) of grasping or giving name to passionate feeling, she fails to be mistress of herself. She is consequently a poor one to her servants, behaving intemperately towards them and verbally abusing them (as Lady Galliard towards Closet) and misperceiving their own desires as they do their servant's intentions (as with Cleonte and Francisca). Taking the servant's worldly abilities in sexual matters for granted is, clearly, a risk, and such complacency towards interdependence with a servant can lead to the exposure and suspension of the service bond: the awkward issue of repentance, which takes on an intimate, interpersonal character between Francisca and her mistress Cleonte, is a matter without resolve in the remaining convivial moments of *The Dutch Lover*, and forgiveness (a comically useful tool for successful dramatic closure) is only tacitly available.[190]

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[188] Behn, *Forc'd Marriage*, 1.2, p.8.

[189] Wilding, Sir Anthony and his nephew Sir Charles all offer bribes to Closet in exchange for access to Lady Galliard; Lady Galliard is almost raped as a consequence and is coerced into marriage with the unsuitable Sir Charles. *The City-Heiress: Or, Sir Timothy Treat-all. A Comedy* (London, 1682), 4.1.

[190] Behn, *Dutch Lover*, 5.1, p.91. Sheeha reads the issue of servile repentance and open-endedness as particular to tragedy: 'whether this [Zanche's unrepentance] is to be seen as a celebration of her disobedience or perhaps as a statement about the extremity of her corruption, her being beyond redemption, the play leaves open for its audiences to decide…*The White Devil*, in the final analysis, breaks new ground unexplored in the tradition of domestic tragedies with which it engages: a disobedient and defiant servant dies unrepentant.' '"Her ladyship's foolish": The servant's disobedience in John Webster's *The White Devil'*, *ANQ* (Lexington, KY.), Vol.31 (3) (2018), p.188.

The vision of perfect servitude espoused in the conduct material may seem by turns conservative or naïve, and we might also wonder, in the end, if Behn's idealism about ethical service between women has the same flavour. Behn's evocation of such service can render the most wholeheartedly disinterested servant something of a sexual scapegoat, an apparently acceptable outcome of a representative strategy that emphasises difference amongst women of different rank, even as Behn makes a point of their indistinction under the male gaze. Fidelity, still, comes prior to all else, and excuses much: 'I might sum up all,' Lucas states, 'as our Saviour doth, under one Virtue of Faithfulness, for he makes a Good and Faithful Servant to be terms equivalent, *Matth.25. Well done good and faithful Servant.*'[191] Though Behn's female servants are hardly visions of piety – and even the most adept sleight of hand by the comic playwright could not successfully elide the often shifty practical abilities and moral uprightness of dramatic servants – she does, ultimately, sustain that good service between women is equivalent to faithful service, to service that is always sensitive to the requirements of the mistress.

[191] Lucas, *Duty*, pp.86-7.

Conclusions: a woman's work is never done

This thesis has argued that Aphra Behn thought and wrote about work in gendered terms, and that she necessarily depicted a limited range of forms of work performed by women that reflected, endorsed but also critiqued a narrow set of roles already circulating in contemporary cultural narratives and literary texts. The conventionality of these types of labour, however, has been key to their potency as lightning rods for Behn's dissatisfaction with women's status as commodities in themselves, as unacknowledged labourers, and as subject to power and property relationships that make them particularly vulnerable *as women*. Behn's concern with women's work, then, has been bound up in her proto-feminist perspective. The attention that Behn pays to the risks, limitations and drawbacks of work as a gendered phenomenon suggests that, while a general snobbishness about labour and those who must perform it may be a consequence of the generic conventions of comedy, and of the ideological context of a theatre that reiterated socially conservative views on the lower orders, this is not the whole picture. Behn makes evident a more particular criticism of the imbrication of gender, property, power and labour by considering performances of women's work in light of both the rationale for such forms of work and the dangers that they afford.

In the case of the landlady, the entwining of financial and sexual economies offers an unusually detailed vision of the shifts to which the poorer sort are put in order to survive, and a surprisingly (though, certainly, not fully) sympathetic evocation of its hazards. While Behn's representation of poverty is in step with broader ideas about ill moral character and lack of social credit, the degraded and degrading landlady is shown to be deeply vulnerable on a material level, a vulnerability that seems both to concretize the importance of her occupational identity as a sign of economic and social marginality, and to suggest that such a visible and material expression of class difference might also perform the function of a sort of disguise. Gammer Grime's classed body fails to conceal or subsume the essential fact of her womanhood in the eyes of a male economic actor. All of the signs of the social embarrassment of working for a living – the ever-present spectre of poverty, the grubbing, shifting and pawning for small

amounts of money, the physical evidence of work in the fabric of the lived environment of the household and upon the body, the vulgarity of language and lack of refinement – are, to a certain extent, insubstantial signifiers of difference.[1] Women's bodies might be more or less costly wares depending on the class of the woman in question, but the indiscriminate principle of commodification retains its force regardless. What focusing on the landlady and her work has also allowed us to see is that genteel women are victimised in such a way that they are effectively corralled into the same space of marginality as lower class women. Indeed, the embodiment, in a very visibly classed character, of that female need to combine financial and sexual interests in order to survive, aligns Julia and Gammer Grime in a dubious sisterhood of unwitting exploitation. Personating this requirement to imbricate financial security and sexual virtue (or lack of it) in a woman who works in a grimy and impecunious trade ensures that, through Gayman's eyes, this need is shown up as unappealing and difficult to empathise with. Gayman appears unable to appreciate why women might find it necessary to put a price on their own bodies, especially for the purpose of prioritising their own security and authority. Behn makes visible and legible this need, as well as the short-sightedness of those (Gayman, Sir Cautious, and Sir Feeble) who fail to take the point. In using the body and labour of a working woman to model other property based relationships, and to embody the male gaze, however, Behn can also be seen to use "work" as a vehicle in a way which manifests the insignificance of the worker herself: Gammer Grime's labours are, to some extent, really about staging Gayman's humiliation and about encouraging compassion for Julia. Of the two women, the non-working woman appears to come out (conventionally enough) much the more attractive, physically and morally.

The physical indistinguishability of these two very different women does also express a broader concern about the legibility of class (understood as partly contingent on occupational identity) and its overlap with gender, and it is this concern that is at play in Behn's representation of both the landlady and the female servant. Masculine, acquisitive attitudes towards women tend to have the effect of striding over class distinctions, big or small, and rendering malleable or simply unimportant individual identities: as with the case of the landlady and the Cit's wife, the dramatization of the servant's resemblance to her mistress can flatten these individual identities to the point that both the mistress' advantage (her putative

[1] Gammer Grime's textual dissimilarity from the heroine Julia may, speculatively, have been undermined in performance by the physical presence of the very likely young actress who played the role of the ugly old landlady in 1686. Mary Powell, who seemed to have found her niche in portraying bawdy older women in her later career, gave her first known performance as Gammer Grime. There is no known birth date for her but given the age of her husband George Powell (also an actor), and her continued presence on the stage into the 1720s, she was likely to have been a young woman in the 1680s. If she was born around the same time as her husband, c.1668, then she would have been in her late teens or early 20s at the time of performance of *The Lucky Chance*: attempts to make her appear aged and physically repulsive might therefore have come with a contrived and conspicuous urgency. Her first role seems to have been in step with much of the rest of her career: she appears to have developed a line in secondary female characters, including landladies, housekeepers, bawds, widows and old aunts**.** See, Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800, Volume 12: Pinner to Rizzo* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973) pp.114-115.

social and economic authority) diminishes, while the servant's relative privation of status also (almost) disappears. While social inferiors, moreover, do find themselves co-opted into larger plots that essentially underwrite a socially conservative ideology, the way in which Gammer Grime in *The Lucky Chance*, Olinda in *The Dutch Lover* and Nurse in *The Town Fopp* may take their part in retrenching class privilege must be balanced against the disturbance that Behn's focus on their working roles makes possible. Being attentive to the availability and intertextuality of other genres and forms in reading female servants in Behn's comedies has permitted a fresh perspective on her own depiction of service as gendered work (as indeed on Restoration stage service more broadly), and in ways that illuminate some of the ambiguities of Behn's position on labour, property and gender relationships. Both the conservative drift of Behn's evocation of service, as well the influence of less regressive, less unimaginative ideas about what close service relationships can do for women, are brought into view by considering the relationship between stage comedies and prescriptive material about service.

The didactic and the comic were generally understood by conduct writers and dramatists as troublesome bedfellows – as a writer of didactic texts, Woolley, we recall, expressed concern about the effect of comedies on the moral character of her impressionable female readership – but interrogating Behn's representations of female servants has, quite differently, illuminated how comedies could dovetail with conduct material in a flexible, and not always oppositional or sardonic manner.[2] Behn retains an interest in the dramatic figure of the slightly risqué, upwardly mobile maidservant, and draws license from conduct material as the basis for a depiction of service as acceptably, nakedly careerist and as conscientious of social and economic improvement. Behn appears, nevertheless to look both backwards and forwards in terms of models of service: there is a general occlusion of the fact that service is (or should be) remunerative work, and she displaces the apparent fact of unremunerated servile labour in her drama by supplementing a loyalty based model of service with marital-financial (but not necessarily romantic) reward.[3] The servants themselves also draw authority from models circulating in didactic works, which in the case of Nurse in *The Town Fopp* are pedagogical ones: these works textualized and endorsed replicability and the possibility of acquiring and selling skills, and from these Behn's female servants derive both validation and precedent within a context which commodifies servile abilities. The servant's desire to conform to the will of the mistress remains important – and, indeed, some examples

[2] See Thomas Shadwell, *The Scowrers. A Comedy* (London, 1691): Shadwell ironises the disjoint between permissive funny business on the stage and pious conduct material by having the 'provident, prudent, and pious House-keeper' Abigail enter towards the end of the first scene of *The Scowrers* clutching a copy of *The Ladies Calling*, a conduct book for godly women. The play opens amidst the chaos of Sir William Rant's 'morning levee', attended by fellow 'scowrers', 'duns' (unpaid tradesmen) and two 'ugly Whores' (also unpaid). These – Mrs Haughty and Mrs Mavis – duke it out over Sir William, screaming insults while the housekeeper admonishes them fruitlessly, '*with her Spectacles in one hand, and the Ladies calling in the other*', for disturbing 'a well order'd Family' and for their lack of civility (1.1, pp.1-9).

[3] On service being a careerist option, Iman Sheeha observes, in the tragic mode, the punitive and pejorative treatment of a female servant who mobilises her own hopes of upward social mobility: 'Of counsel with [m]y mistress': The mistress–servant alliance in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622)', *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies*, 107.1 (2021), p.10.

of bad service remind us that the possibility of the female servant finding her role(s), desires and priorities multiply located tends to be a problem – but the possibility of performing disinterested service also requires the leverage of forms of authority that do not singularly derive back to her superior. Nurse's service appears to be given freely (in both senses), but it also, in cleaving to pedagogical models of service published in conduct material, draws license from acts of service understood as an economic, marketized fact. The dramatic role of the servant, however, is generally to strive towards her own obsolescence, and recovering an idea of the servant as a subject beyond the relationship with her mistress is practically impossible: the occasional materialisation of a tragically-coded failure of servant loyalty seems to occur when servants fail to accept the inferiority of their position. And though a particular kind of feminist ethicality regarding the service relationship – that exculpatory model of servant fidelity based on a female alliance of shared interests – does excuse a range of actions unfit to be extolled in conduct material, it also attenuates the representation of servants as characters beyond the service bond. Servants, it seems, must remain limned in purpose and action by the sexual and romantic quandaries of the women they serve: even upon the cusp of becoming Mistress Van Haunce and instituting a new social identity, Olinda in *The Dutch Lover* justifies her imminent marriage by reference back, ineluctably, to the duty she has done her mistress Euphemia. Whether servants are, like Closet in *The City Heiress* and like Francisca in *The Dutch Lover*, selfish and dangerous to their mistress, or uncannily and selflessly attuned to her, expressions of individual preference tend to only reiterate the force of that forgiving though defining service bond. What does exist beyond that limit for the servant – upward social mobility through marriage – is found (as Olinda discovers) to be an indifferent reward.

Behn is characteristically ambivalent, across her oeuvre, about the rewards and risks of marriage, but it is in her prose fiction that we see her most critical take on it: the entire experience of entering into and enduring marriage requires labour of women that it does not of men, and Behn's prose fiction, as I have suggested, offers a more expansive and apt space for exploring the inequities of matrimony. In Restoration comedies, it is something of a commonplace, and therefore somewhat taken for granted, that marriage makes a lost cause of women who risk being sent off to, or, indeed, desire to emerge from confinement in the country estate and all of the boring, rustic housewifery that takes place there. It is a fate to be avoided where possible. Both *The History of the Nun* and, to a lesser extent, *The She-Anchoret*, linger instead over what this experience of marriage looks like beyond such commonplaces: both texts depict a genteel type of housewifery, and both interrogate the limits of the influence afforded to wives within such a marital domestic context. Viewing this influence in the light of underrecognised forms of gendered domestic labour has permitted an expansion of this category – generally associated, in the case of upper class women, with physical tasks like cookery, needlework and the production of medicines – to include erotic and emotional work, which are both crucial to the shape of hierarchical domestic relations in *Anchoret* and *History*, and are averred as a means of wives gaining, bargaining

for and maintaining access to material property, to sexual agency, to wifely authority and to sound social reputation. That both Cavendish and Behn mediate these struggles through the heroine of a romance formalises the particular feminine urgency of the work involved. Cavendish uses the intellectual licence of the heroine of her philosophical romance to set her queasy recommendation of domestic courtesan-ship against the largely unquestioned sexual and moral tyranny of the husband, while Behn explicitly and immediately establishes a narratorial scepticism about the force of patriarchal custom in women's lives, and from this authorises a lengthy interrogation of the internalisation of such custom. Both texts, finally, menace the marital teleology of romance: the acceptance and performance of a variety of strictures on the behaviour and feeling habits of women boils down to the requirement to endlessly police and perform a specifically feminine virtue, an interminable undertaking of wifely work that rather imperils the desirability and sustainability of marriage than recommends it.

To frame this concern with marital work as generically and formally significant – that prose opens up serious extended discussions about labour and material security in marriage, for instance, where stage comedy barely affords the space or cannot accommodate such a concern to a conservative ethos – needs not, finally, to be overstated. It is important, on the one hand, to account for the flexibility and accumulative nature of prose fiction at this point. We might recall, for instance, Isabella's abrupt theft of a significant amount of money from the convent only after extolling the virtues of an Edenic pastoral existence, and which is only one example of a comical episode in *History*. It is as well to remain aware, too, of the potential of comic modes more broadly to make legible a sober interrogation of inequality.[4] Women's access to material assets and to physical security through the performance of labour, their ability to exercise their own sexual and economic agency, and the possibility of bodily autonomy, are all taken seriously by apparently non-serious forms. The popular humorous ballad *A Womans Work is Never Done* (1660) is one example of such a text, proffering an apparent site of complaint about the burden of women's working existence: in doing so, the text offers a useful hermeneutic concerning the reading of *The History of the Nun*, as indeed all of the texts in this thesis, through the lens of "work". The ballad lists the predictably endless round of tasks required of the good (and servant-less) housewife – a textual expression of something legibly "realistic" for at least some early modern women – which includes rising early, setting the fire and making breakfast, sweeping, cleaning and doing laundry, making beds, spinning and needlework, tending to her children and nursing her infant.[5] The wife laments particularly the laboriousness of reproductive labour, and both the lack of rest and independence of body that regular production of children occasions: while she manages to 'pack away to School' her older children, she remains physically encumbered by her 'sucking Childe, that at my

[4] Though after Behn's lifetime, there is a vogue for marriage-problem comedies in the 1690s and the early 1700s that consider the position of unhappy spouses in relation to ideas of compatibility, consent, abuse, and the difficulty of divorce. See Thomas Southerne, *The Wives' Excuse* (1692), John Vanbrugh, *The Provok'd Wife* (1697), George Farquhar, *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707).
[5] Anon., *A Womans Work is Never Done* (London, 1660).

brest/ Doth knaw and bite, and sorely me molest.' Abed of an evening, and engaged in what we would now term co-sleeping, the wife finds respite neither from her infant nor her husband:

Then if my Husband turns me to the wall,

Then my sucking Childe will cry and brawl,

Six or seven times for the brest t'wil cry,

And then I pray you judge what rest take I.

The wife, overworked, jammed against the wall by her inconsiderate bedpartner, and worn out by the evidence of marital sex that clings to her breast, nevertheless seems to have some spare energy for erotic feeling:

And if at any time a sleep I be,

Perchance my Husband wakes, and then wakes me;

Then he does that to me which I cannot shun,

Yet I could wish that Work were oftner done.

If this wife's claim that she does not get enough sex seems a little suspicious given the nature of her grievance about the rigours of motherhood and her lack of choice (and perhaps consent) when faced with her husband's desires, the following and final verse helps to make sense of this curiously mixed message:

All you merry Girles that hear this Ditty,

Both in the Countrey, and in the City;

Take good notice of my Lines I pray,

And make the use of the time you may.

This ballad about the dreariness of married life appears to be *about* work and the inequities of the gendered division of labour in the home, and can certainly be approached in that way, but might more productively be critically interrogated as though the ostensible purpose is, rather, a lens. "Work" is to be read *through* – indeed, the ballad encourages or makes urgent, on inspection, a reading that recognises some sleight of hand. By this, we discover the visibility of those aspects of the text that double down on some subtle, conventional compliances, and make the reader aware of the way in which comical satirisations and seemingly critical complaints (like the ballad, and, indeed, like those of Behn) can contain their own forms of acquiescence with the status quo.

A Womans Work is Never Done can be seen to function as heavily disguised *carpe diem* verse, drawing on the certain tomorrow of toilsome marriage rather than the incipient threat of a pleasure-less afterlife or the decrepitude of age. Unmarried virgins are encouraged to 'make the use of the time' they have while they remain unwed, an implicit exhortation to sexual activity that would be understood by its original readers or listeners.[6] The suggestion that the wife is under-sexed in marriage, and that young women in a pre-marriage, dubiously innocent phase of life are urgently encouraged to satisfy themselves before they take up the burdensome mantle of wifehood, arises from a post-Petrarchan English tradition of love lyric that recognises and encourages female sexual desire in order, a sceptical reader might assert, to take advantage of it. If marriage comes with its inevitable hardships and restrictions for women (and marital chastity itself hardly seems an enticing prospect in this text), so pre-marital sex, of course, is not without its cost or risks for young women. (One thinks of Hellena's desire for Willmore in *Rover*, but her distaste at the idea of a 'cradle full of noise and mischief').[7] In its own way, then, the ballad reifies the silent endurance of the toiling wife: the implicitly masculine perspective of the urgent *carpe diem* sentiment about sex only raises suspicions about the ventriloquy of the entire complaint, and this suspicion is answered by the conservative drift of the representation of gendered domestic labour. Regurgitating and reifying a traditional domestic hierarchy, the song validates the authority of community to police the wife's conduct and praise her hard work ('And how my self I do bestow,/ As all my Neighbours well do know'), it maintains a fissure between the wife's consciousness of her centrality to the productive activity of the house and her ability to convert this importance into domestic authority (the wife never actually complains *to* her husband and can do nothing about her status), and the song is, in a larger way, less concerned with the lost cause that is the wife, and more with the maids who are its intended performers: 'Here is a Song for Maids to sing,/ Both in the Winter and the Spring…Maids may sit still, go, or run,/ But a Womans work is never done.' Whether one is more or less cynical about this representation of youthful pre-marital sex, marriage certainly seems to put pay to the woman's access to her own desires as a matter of volition, closing down the possibility of a space of mutual desire, and foreclosing an active, willing sexual subjectivity.[8]

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[6] Robert Herrick suggests that marriage is the context in which to exercise exuberant sexuality in 'To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time' (p.93), while in **'**Corinna's Going a-Maying' (pp.74-6) the threat of life's decay urges on an immediate promiscuity in which marriage does not feature – both from *Hesperides* (London, 1648). For a discussion of the opportunistic, or more radically anti-authoritarian, attitude towards erotic urgency in Andrew Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*, see Michael Bryson, '*Carpe Diem:* Love, Resistance to Authority, and the Necessity of Choice in Andrew Marvell and Elizabeth Cary', *Humanities*, Vol.7 (2) (2018), pp.1-17. For the overlap between *carpe diem* verse and the eroticisation of virgins girls/young women, see Jennifer Higginbotham, 'Girls and Sexuality in Seventeenth-Century Love Lyrics', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol.59 (1) (2019), pp.153-175.

[7] Behn, *The Rover* (London: 1677) 5.1, p.80.

[8] The wife in the ballad also assumes a categorical and narratorial break between the subject of her physical labours, and that of her emotional state. The disarticulation of domestic and emotional economies (the wife returns her to 'first Discourse' of endless physical labours after a brief pause to state that her husband's negligence 'grieves me to the heart') formally prevents a recognition of the way in which the two are intertwined, even as she hints at the co-dependence of her implied repression of emotion and her husband's part

Here, as in *The History of the Nun*, the relationship of the wife's labours to material security is decidedly unstable: in her comedies, Behn generally endorses the institution of marriage as the surest means of achieving such security (whatever other considerable problems beckon), but in *History*, scepticism about the inherent instability of marriage is made visible by considering the heroine's narrative in terms of the work that she is obliged to perform. As with *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, there is some useful play of "about" and "through" available here: reading down through the ostensible purpose of the ballad (apparently a complaint about women's work), we can see that the text acknowledges the uncertain (because unquantifiable) nature of women's domestic labours (its proverbial ceaselessness renders it invaluable and therefore not measurable in time or by financial recompense). Marriage is rather frankly acknowledged as a burdensome trap: this vision of marriage also, however, contains and reifies some quietly patriarchal assumptions about female sexuality, about the hierarchy of gendered authority in the marital household and the role of public reputation in circumscribing women's choices and actions. Behn's *History* is not really about work (any more, indeed, than *The Lucky Chance*, *The Dutch Lover* or *The Town Fopp*), but we can usefully read these texts through it. That narrow set of working roles available for textual representation by Behn, and that shaping of thought about women's work that is restricted by typification and commonplace narratives, may take on the same function of "work" in the ballad: it is a way to read down or through to the inequities ranged against women regarding property, labour, agency and power. In *History*, the need for marriage as a guarantor of physical survival is strained by the sense that the seeming stability that is promised and made possible by matrimony is indeed *only* seeming: what we can see in *History*, when we look at the text through the lens of emotional labour, is how this gendered work is implicated in the inherent instability and inequity of marriage as an institution. Isabella must act as her own guarantor of stability and security, maintaining, through continual effort, the affective and reputational tone of her marriages, as well as to seek after and ensure continued access to material resources. The downfall of both marriages and Isabella is tragic, but hardly, given the strain of her efforts, surprising. As Behn indicates, the force of custom obliges women to perform unlooked-for and onerous labour, but it can also facilitate the expansion of women's capabilities beyond the limits that those customs were designed to enforce. The most radical potential for women to claim the fruits of their own labours and to benefit by their skills seems to be here, in *The History of the Nun.* It perhaps speaks to the depths of Behn's rancour towards the institutional entrapment of women in this instance that the surest means of assuring female agency and autonomy in relation to marriage, and the most dazzling demonstration of a wife's abilities, is in the work of murdering one's husbands.

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in silently taking her (extra)ordinary, unpaid labours for granted. Behn, too, finds profound emotional sincerity and mutuality unlikely in marriage: 'A wife! A wife, my Silvio, That unconcerned domestic necessary, Who rarely brings a heart, or takes it soon away.' *Feigned Courtesans*, ed.by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p.113.

While it would be overstating the matter to assert that those texts by Behn under discussion in this thesis – *The Lucky Chance, The Dutch Lover, The Town Fopp, The History of the Nun* (and others for which there has simply not been sufficient space – *The Rover* parts one and two, *Sir Patient Fancy, The Feigned Courtesans, The City Heiress, The Forc'd Marriage, The False Count*) – are about work as such, reading them through this lens allows us the urgency of seeing a fresh manifestation of Behn's antagonism with the material, ideological and sexual inequalities deployed against women. Considered together, finally, the work of the landlady, of the wife and of the servant make visible the mundanity, and interrogate the conventionality, of property and labour relations in a context in which women are systematically conceived of as resources rather than as subjects, denied the ascription of value to their labours, and whose access to property is ineluctably mediated by men. The negotiation of women's access to sexual and economic agency, to material property, to physical freedom, to eroticism, to choice of partner, and to social mobility, always implicate a specifically feminist set of concerns. In the end, "work" in Behn is, perhaps, not an encouraging picture: even the most generous reading of her interest in the relationship between women who work and those who do not merely suggests a widening of the parameters of the physical and financial vulnerability of such women through their closer kinship. Encoding sexualised and feminised self-commodification as low-class tells us something about the attitude of Behn and other early moderns towards the poorer sort, but it also points to a discomforting and pessimistic continuity between women at differing levels of rank and material wealth. And, women must always work, and often together, to ensure that in erotic and marital relationships, the man in question is desirable, genuine, steady and capable of understanding a subject position other than his own. (None of these are, of course, ever a given, or such work would not be necessary). When the threshold of marriage is crossed, work does not stop either. For Behn's socially elevated heroines, this is not necessarily labour of the grinding, physical sort made visible in *A Woman's Work is Never Done*: it remains, nevertheless, materially and socially necessary, urgent to the question of a woman's understanding of her own subjecthood, and, since always on an uneven legal, economic, social, sexual and emotional playing field, invariably inequitable.

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