

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS: MASCULINITIES ON STAGE AND SCREEN

by

KATHRYN BRENNNA WARDELL

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of English  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2010

“The Rake’s Progress: Masculinities on Stage and Screen,” a dissertation prepared by Kathryn Brenna Wardell in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of English. This dissertation has been approved and accepted by:

---

Dianne Dugaw, Co-Chair of the Examining Committee

---

Priscilla Ovalle, Co-Chair of the Examining Committee

26 May 2010

---

Date

Committee in Charge: Dianne Dugaw, Co-Chair  
Priscilla Ovalle, Co-Chair  
Kathleen Karlyn  
John Schmor

Accepted by:

---

Dean of the Graduate School

© 2010 Kathryn Brenna Wardell

## An Abstract of the Dissertation of

Kathryn Brenna Wardell for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of English to be taken June 2010

Title: THE RAKE'S PROGRESS: MASCULINITIES ON STAGE AND SCREEN

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dianne Dugaw, Co-Chair

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Priscilla Ovalle, Co-Chair

My dissertation analyzes the rake, the libertine male, a figure whose liminal masculinity and transgressive appetites work both to stabilize and unsettle hegemony in the texts in which he appears. The rake may seem no more than a sexy bad boy, unconnected to wider social, political, and economic concerns. However, my project reveals his central role in reflecting, even shaping, anxieties and desires regarding gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity. I chart the rake's progress from his origins in the Restoration era to the early twenty-first century. Chapter II examines William Wycherley's comedy *The Country Wife* in concert with John Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode* and Aphra Behn's *The Rover* to analyze the rake's emergence in seventeenth-century theatre and show that his transgression of borders real and figurative plays out the anxieties and aspirations of an emerging British empire. Chapter III uses John Gay's ballad opera

*The Beggar's Opera*, a satiric interrogation of consumerism and criminality, to chart the rake in eighteenth-century British theatre as Britain's investment in global capitalism and imperialism increased. My discussion of *Opera* is framed by Richard Steele's early-century sentimental comedy *The Conscious Lovers* and Hannah Cowley's late-century *The Belle's Stratagem*, a fusion of sentiment and wit. Chapter IV hinges the project's theatre and film sections, analyzing Oscar Wilde's fin-de-siècle comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a culmination of generations of theatre rakes and an anticipation of the film rakes of the modern and post-modern eras. Dion Boucicault's mid-century *London Assurance* is used to set up Wilde's queering of the rake figure. Chapter V brings the rake to a new medium, film, and a new nation, the United States, as the figure catalyzes American tension over race and gender in early twentieth-century films such as Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat*, George Melford's *The Sheik*, and Ernest Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise*. My final chapter reads contemporary films, including Jenniphrr Goodman's *The Tao of Steve*, Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz's *About a Boy*, and Gore Verbinski's trilogy *Pirates of the Caribbean* for Disney Studios, to assess the ways in which millennial western masculinity is in stasis.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Kathryn Brenna Wardell

### GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon

University of California, Berkeley, California

Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont

### DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, English, 2010, University of Oregon

Master of Arts, English, 1991, University of California, Berkeley

Bachelor of Arts, English, 1988, Middlebury College

### AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Theatre

Film

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, 2005-2010

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my co-chairs Dr. Dianne Dugaw and Dr. Priscilla Ovalle and to the other members of my committee, Dr. Kathleen Karlyn and Dr. John Schmor, for their guidance and support during the dissertation process.

Additionally, I would like to extend my thanks to my colleagues in the Department of English and to all the professors and staff members of the Department with whom I've worked during my years at the University of Oregon. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their ideas, their insights, and their love,

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. MOBILE DESIRES: THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY RAKE IN THEATRE AND <i>THE COUNTRY WIFE</i> .....	25
III. CONSUMING DESIRES: THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RAKE IN THEATRE AND <i>THE BEGGAR'S OPERA</i> .....	72
IV. QUEER DESIRES: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY RAKE IN THEATRE AND <i>THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST</i> .....	111
V. EROTIC/EXOTIC DESIRES: THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY RAKE IN FILM FROM <i>THE CHEAT</i> TO <i>TROUBLE IN PARADISE</i> .....	146
VI. BOYISH DESIRES: THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY RAKE IN FILM FROM <i>THE TAO OF STEVE</i> TO <i>PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN</i> .....	201
VII. CODA.....	248
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	251



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

To introduce the genesis and approach of this project, I begin with an explanation of its title, which gestures towards the interests and argument of the project as a whole. The title is inspired by William Hogarth's series of eight paintings entitled "A Rake's Progress" (painted 1732-33; engraved and published 1735) which show the decline of Tom Rakewell, its rake protagonist, as he gives in to appetites for sex and alcohol, pays no heed to his purse, scorns his faithful fiancée, and ends his so-called "progress" with madness and imprisonment. Like Hogarth I focus on the rake, and, like him, I view this male with a libertine disposition aimed at the achievement of sexual pleasure, power, and prestige with an interested, yet critical, eye. However, my investigation roams beyond Hogarth's period and medium to examine the rake from the Restoration until now, and it does so in two different visual media—theatre and film.

This dissertation uses close readings of select texts—from plays of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries to films from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—to explore the nature of the pleasures the rake figure provides and the needs he fulfills, and to discover why he remains a central part of social and cultural texts despite numerous social, economic, and political changes since his Restoration birth. The overall aim is to use the rake—a figure who remains remarkably consistent in his characterization and behavior through the centuries—as a means to explore and critique hegemonic norms of masculinity in Western culture.

The key to both Hogarth's approach and my own is the conjunction of the word "progress," with its multiple meanings and implications, with the figure of the rake. Hogarth's "progress" references John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1660-1672; published 1678), in which a character named Christian leaves his home and family to travel a path towards spiritual salvation, tempted as he journeys by characters who encourage him to stray from his goal and beset by numerous crises of faith.<sup>1</sup> In Hogarth's hands Bunyan's serious allegory becomes the stuff of satire. In "A Rake's Progress" Hogarth uses "progress" literally in the sense that the rake progresses or moves through various frames, yet he primarily uses the word ironically. The result is that while "progress" normally implies a positive discovery—a sense of cultural, social, and technological advancement—in Hogarth's paintings just the reverse happens.<sup>2</sup> Rakewell moves forward, but only towards disaster—a disaster largely of his own doing, albeit aided by the temptations of contemporary life. As Hogarth makes clear, Rakewell's catastrophic end is formed not by some outside force or fate but predicated on his own moral weakness and various appetites. These are supported by the corrupt

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Pilgrim's Progress* was composed between 1660-1672 during Bunyan's first imprisonment for unlicensed preaching, as Roger Sharrock notes in *John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress"* (20). The story concerns Christian's travels through a landscape in which he encounters diverse characters who seek to guide and tempt him and incidents that test his faith. As Sharrock notes the metaphor of the journey or progress was not only well-established by Christianity itself, but particularly pertinent for Protestant believers: "In one form or another the great image of the Christian as way-faring man treading his purposeful road through a careless or hostile country is as old as Christianity itself. It is there in the Gospels in the instructions to the disciplines as to how they must follow Christ. Reinforced by the actual custom of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, it is used in a number of medieval religious allegories including De Guileville's *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* and Langland's *Piers Plowman*...In the Protestant tradition the stress on personal responsibility for salvation gave a new impetus to the pilgrim metaphor" (14).

<sup>2</sup> Some select definitions from the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* in the noun form: "1a: a royal journey marked by pomp and pageant. 2: a forward or onward movement (as to an objective for a goal): ADVANCE 3: gradual betterment; especially the progressive development of mankind" and in the verb form: "1: to move forward: PROCEED 2: to develop to a higher, better, or more advanced stage."

members of his society, who are poised to take advantage of his descent. In Hogarth's paintings the progress of the rake, a protagonist who in the first image seems to have everything one could desire—a good social position, money, and love—ends in calamity, the loss of not simply material possessions but of affection and sanity itself.

Rather than simply portray Rakewell as a sexually-obsessed youth, Hogarth creates a complex narrative surrounding him in which the rake's transgressions go beyond sex alone, and in which his appetites have numerous repercussions beyond his own decline, impacting not only other immediate participants but society as a whole.<sup>3</sup> In the paintings Hogarth shows Rakewell indulging not only in his sexual desire and his appetite for drink, tied to bodily appetites, but also in a passion for stylish apparel, reflecting the growing consumer culture of the time, and with it the growth of trade and empire.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the paintings reveal the repercussions of Rakewell's misdemeanors beyond simply their impact on his own person, such as the travails of his abandoned fiancée, Sarah Young.<sup>5</sup> Hogarth also demonstrates the manner in which Rakewell's appetites support an entire system of illegal activity and encourage further

---

<sup>3</sup> Hogarth's "Progress" is meant to vividly illustrate for his eighteenth-century audience the evils of the libertine life, just as his earlier "A Harlot's Progress" (painted 1731; engraved 1732) speaks to the perils of prostitution.

<sup>4</sup> As Mary F. Klinger notes in the Augustan Reprint Society's edition of *The Harlot's Progress and The Rake's Progress*, two works based on Hogarth's prints, Hogarth "depicts an inverse relationship between morality and the misuse of money" (v), and argues that it is money that is a primary aspect of Rakewell's descent: "In the first of the eight prints, young Tom Rakewell inherits wealth from his miserly father and misspends it for the remainder of his life in copying the lifestyle of an aristocrat" (v). Klinger maintains that "Material wealth is the cornerstone of this series" (v). I would add that gender and sexuality also seem to be key.

<sup>5</sup> Hogarth charts the cost, literal and figurative, of Rakewell's excesses through the person of the faithful Sarah Young, to whom Rakewell promised marriage, and who is left with child by him. Still loyal despite Rakewell's behavior, Sarah repeatedly offers financial and emotional support to Rakewell, hoping to regain his affection and stop his fall, to no avail.

excesses of consumption by his society, a consumption of both bodies and goods as overtly referenced in the brothel scene in the third painting in the series.

Rakewell's "progress" not only connects with the sexual and the economic, but through his indebtedness, subsequent imprisonment, and madness he intersects with the legal and medical structures of his time and is connected with an entire network of eighteenth-century life. Thus as Hogarth makes clear, Rakewell's misadventures are symbolic: generally of the corruption and weakness of humanity, and specifically of the materialism, vanity, and opportunism of contemporary British life. In this context Rakewell's descent represents not simply the decline of a single fictional protagonist or a lone representation of a troubled, diseased British masculinity, but it involves the entire British society that produces this rake figure and then, via public entertainments such as plays and prints, consumes his image for and with pleasure.

In my examination of the rake figure I too seek to go beyond a simple, one-note discussion of him as a sex-obsessed bad boy and to connect his sexual appetites to wider appetites, to food and drink, to entertainment, and, in particular, to consumer goods, while regarding him not in isolation but in connection with the society he inhabits and its cultural, economic, and political reach, domestically and internationally. For while the rake's constant focus on himself and his own desires, coupled to the singularity of his voice and his detachment from his society, tend to work to make the viewer, reader, or critic examine him in isolation, the rake is very much a part of the fabric of his society and, on a larger scale, his nation, a

representative of a particular time and place which he both reflects and helps to shape.<sup>6</sup> A reading that sees the rake as solo and detached, yet also intricately connected, is needed. This is a reading that examines the rake as specific to a particular moment, medium, and nation yet able to move fluidly from one to another. To explore the rake in this manner is to begin to get at the ways in which there is more at stake in the rake than simply the pleasure his misbehavior and its ultimate reward or punishment receives. However, this pleasure itself is important to consider as the manner in which the rake smuggles ideology, with conservative or radical implications, beneath his glamorous veneer.

Thus, like Hogarth, I consider the implications of the rake's misbehavior beyond simply his own "progress," using him to plumb masculinity itself, particularly with an eye to the manner in which the rake's adventures relate to wider structures—social, political, and economic—as rake, medium, and nation intersect. And while I concentrate specifically on rake characters, I also explore the manner in which the misbehavior of the rake impacts other characters, particularly women.

This sense of the connected nature of rake, medium, and nation is a primary element of this project and a reason for its scope: encompassing numerous periods, multiple media, and two nations. Just as Hogarth publishes not a single image but a series of images, implying a need to follow the rake through a chain of adventures, so I follow the rake through both theatre and film and through a number of texts in each

---

<sup>6</sup> Given the increasingly global reach of texts, and the manner in which the nation as a discrete entity has become both obscured and clarified in the age of globalization, it is increasingly important to also think about the rake as a global figure.

media to explore the manner in which each media's formal nature shapes and is, in turn, shaped by the rake. As Hogarth uses the print medium to produce and reproduce his rake's adventures for the public, I focus on theatre and film as public entertainments that display the various progresses of their rakes. The shared and, in various ways, live nature of both theatre and film are vital aspects in complicating reception of the rake and the texts that feature him. Yet like "A Rake's Progress" these theatre and film texts can also be accessed not only in person, but via copies that circulate both domestically and internationally, in addition to a multitude of associated products, increasing their cultural and economic reach.<sup>7</sup>

Through an engagement with theatre studies, film studies, and gender and cultural studies this dissertation seeks to enrich and expand existing work on representations of gender and sexuality by examining a figure who works to both bolster and undermine social and cultural concepts of masculinity, challenging these just as he often works to reinforce them. The result is an often-ambivalently constructed and received figure who creates both pleasure and tension in the texts from Britain and the United States that are the focus of this study.

---

<sup>7</sup> As Klinger notes, the work of engravers such as Hogarth were not isolated, but were influenced by and served to influence other forms of entertainment. Thus the production of works such as Theophilus Cibber's "grotesque pantomime entertainment" of *A Harlot's Progress* (created/performed/printed 1733) and the anonymous ballad opera *The Rake's Progress* (submitted for playing 1778-80, but not staged) formed just a part of a diverse collection of entertainments created in response to Hogarth's work (introduction, i). As Klinger notes, "Of critical interest in looking at the engravings along with the dramas they inspired is the evidence provided of significant visual-verbal reciprocities in the period. In particular, it shows one aspect of the interrelationship operative between (1) creation of the prints, with the artist often relying perceptively on dramatic literature and theatrical sets, and (2) inspiration from print to theater, as playwrights generated new stage pieces based on the graphic works" (i).

The diverse nature of the rake's antecedents and the anxiety these antecedents generate explain, at least in part, the reason for this ambivalence. One of these antecedents is a figure from folklore—the trickster—a figure with often-mysterious origins who creates change, positive or negative, permanent or temporary, within his world.<sup>8</sup> Notably, the first appearance of a literary character whose transgression of social and sexual mores anticipates the rake—Don Juan—occurs in Tirso de Molina's 1630 work *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* (*The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*), which explicitly evokes the trickster in its title.<sup>9</sup> From the trickster the rake inherits his linguistic skills as well as his moral ambiguity, for the trickster is a figure whose moral compass is rarely clear. Indeed, the trickster may be aligned with evil spirits, even the devil himself. The Vice figure of medieval morality plays such as *Everyman* (late 1400s) or *Mankind* (1470) who beckons the protagonist to sin is another

---

<sup>8</sup> In her article "S/Z and Rules of the Game" from *Movies and Methods II*, a discussion of Roland Barthes and Jean Renoir's *Rules of the Game*, Julia Lesage notes the central importance of the transgressor who gets the narrative going, an argument that could well apply to the rake: "Yet it is only when an excessive element enters which interrupts the normal circulation of the antitheses, sexes, property relations, or contracts that the narrative begins. It is the transgressor that impels the narrative toward its climax or catastrophe" (494-495).

<sup>9</sup> In her article "Intertextuality and 'The Joker': Tirso de Molina's *The Trickster of Seville* and Derek Walcott's *The Joker of Seville*" in *Anthurium* Melva Persico points out the language of the titles for these two works are significant for the different ways their authors shape their Don Juan stories: "The very titles of the works call attention to the differences in their focus: Tirso de Molina's play is *The Trickster of Seville and the Guest of Stone* while Derek Walcott's is *The Joker of Seville*. Tirso's title reflects clearly two parts of the play: the first alludes to the adventures and misdemeanors of Don Juan, that is, the ways in which he tricks and seduces women and his challenges to the codes of honor, while the second alludes to his confrontation with the Guest of Stone, which results in his death. In the confrontation, the focus is on the statue of Don Gonzalo, Doña Ana's father, who has died at the hands of Don Juan. It is through this Guest of Stone that divine punishment is meted out to Don Juan (Galán Font and Ferreiro 33-34). On the other hand, in entitling his work *The Joker of Seville*, Walcott has chosen in his title, not to highlight this second important structural and thematic area. This does not mean that the second aspect of the play is neglected in the work itself; however, the 'joker' aspect of Walcott's play acquires an added dimension towards the end of the work, where it is stated that were Don Juan to be resurrected, Death would be viewed as a Joker (*Joker* 2.6)" (3).

important antecedent. Because he is associated with temptation the Vice is usually condemned; however, he is often the most vital, vibrant force within the world of the play.

The Vice descends in the Renaissance to the transgressive, yet charismatic, antagonists of Renaissance playwrights such as William Shakespeare, whose Iago in *Othello* (1603/4 performed; published 1622) and Edmund in *King Lear* (1605/6 performed; 1608 published) foreshadow the Machiavellian aspects of the rake. The rake's sexy wit and comic comeuppance, often at the hands of a woman who matches and sometimes defeats him, is anticipated in Renaissance comedies like Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598). The still-youthful, but well-traveled Benedick embodies the combination of youthful vigor and sexual experience and sophistication that the rake character often conveys. Certainly the combination of admiration and ambivalence Benedick generates in fellow characters, specifically Beatrice, the play's heroine, anticipates the mixed emotions that so often characterize reaction both within and without texts to the rake. In the wary behavior and rueful words of Beatrice Shakespeare anticipates a host of characters', particularly female characters', critique of the rake and his inconstant philosophy, interrogating the true cost of rakish appetite. Speaking of Benedick's constancy to his comrades, she argues, "he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block" (1.1). At the close of their first meeting in many years Beatrice's negative appraisal reflects the hard-won knowledge of a woman injured by a glamorous, exciting, yet ultimately hollow male: "You always end with a jade's trick; I know you of old" (1.1).



Another obvious literary influence is the figure of the picaro in Spanish picaresque literature, which dates from works such as *Guzmán de Alfarache*, written in 1604 by Mateo Alemán (trans. 1622), and Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, available in English in 1612 (Part I) and 1620 (Part II).<sup>10</sup> In "The Birth of the Picaro from the Death of Shame" from *Social Research*, Yirmiyahu Yovel notes the importance of the picaro as "...the first great anti-hero of Western literature" (1), and argues for the liberatory, democratic hail of the picaro and picaresque tale:

The picaro...embodies almost everything held in contempt by ruling Spanish values...He is also roguish and deceitful, prone to use his inventive mind to devise schemes for surviving and enjoying his crude existence against major odds. This, of course, was part of the picaro's charm and success as a popular hero. Taking delight in the adventures of this rogue gave many readers a refreshing, if imaginary, sense of liberation. (1)

The delight the picaro takes in overturning social and sexual structures and the pleasure that his audiences take in voyeuristically experiencing this freedom to transgress through him foreshadows the manner in which the rake allows his viewers to play out social anxieties and desires, safely cushioned from reality by the extraordinary, excessive nature of the rake figure and the fictional nature of the texts in which he appears.

While the rake is descended from multiple literary and cultural antecedents, it is the particular religious, social, political, and economic changes that altered English society in the seventeenth century that finally created the figure. In the introduction to *The Restoration Mind*, W. Gerald Marshall discusses the difference between Restoration

---

<sup>10</sup> *The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines the picaro as a "Rogue" and "Bohemian," relating the figure to the picaresque, which it defines as "of or relating to rogues or rascals; also: of, relating to, suggesting, or being a type of fiction dealing with the episodic adventures of a usually roguish protagonist."

and Renaissance identity, arguing that “The primary difference between the Renaissance humanists and the late seventeenth century is that the Restoration emphasizes and develops a self that is, to be sure, in a process of transformation but with no spiritual direction” (13). Restoration self-fashioning, as Marshall thus argues, is self-directed and secular, rather than spiritual, and more playful than that of the Renaissance. Figures such as Thomas Hobbes were key to this transformation, as Marshall notes, quoting Hobbes’s 1651 *Leviathan*: “Hobbes asserts that since most individuals constantly play many roles, a fixed self is essentially impossible to discern: ‘a person, is the same that an actor is, both on the stage and in common conversation; and to personate, is to act, or represent himself, or another’” (13). This idea of performance, literal and figurative, is one of the central themes of the plays I discuss, and it is performance that is so vital to the rake’s ability to transgress social and sexual mores, not only in the Restoration plays I discuss but throughout a wide range of theatre and film texts.

The rake also echoed real-life figures of late seventeenth-century England, particularly libertines such as John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. As Warren Chernaik notes in *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature*, the Restoration marked a period in which libertinism was not only an idea discussed for its relative merits—a vision of the free exercise of human will—and its demerits—narcissism, appetite, lack of moral regulation—but as a philosophy actually put into practice by libertines such as Rochester. Chernaik argues, “Libertinism embodies a dream of human freedom, recognized from the outset as infinitely desirable and as unattainable, a magical power

enabling one to overcome a sense of alienation and helplessness” (1).<sup>11</sup> In theatre this utopian imagining could be staged through rake characters who embodied this libertinism, playing out both its positive and negative implications.

These diverse antecedents combine to create the basic elements of the rake, elements which stay remarkably consistent over time periods and between texts. These key characteristics include a close relationship to the status quo despite the rake’s critique of it; linguistic skill at seduction and deceit; an attractive physical presence that facilitates sexual pursuits and positions the rake as an erotic object; a mobility both literal and figurative and an association with the foreign received as both exciting and dangerous; a fluid relationship to gender and sexuality largely based in a fondness for and skill at performance; an association with criminality, actual and figurative, and with consumption—an appetite for food, drink, and stylish accoutrements, as well, of course, as a constant desire for sexual pleasure.

I place the issue of the rake’s closeness to the status quo, by which I mean his association with the period’s dominant economic, political, and social structures, first because not only does it explain the manner in which he has the power to both bolster and undermine social and sexual norms, but also because it explains my particular reading of the rake as normally male, heterosexual, and white. While one can make an argument for select female, homosexual, and non-white characters, particularly in more

---

<sup>11</sup> Chernaik proffers Don Juan, the figure immortalized in a variety of texts from writers from diverse Continental locations from Tirso de Molina’s *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* (*The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*) to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (1787), as a prime example: “The appeal of the transgressive libertine is perhaps best embodied in the problematical figure of Don Juan, trickster, rebel, servant of the phallus and of the ruthless amoral will, demanding a freedom which enslaves oneself or others” (1).

recent texts, the tension between an insider's and outsider's connection with the status quo that is so central to my understanding of the rake is diminished if the rake protagonist departs from whiteness, heteronormativity, and masculinity and is thus, at least through most of the periods I cover, marginalized. For even when the rake seems, for various reasons, to be apart from the status quo he is revealed to be attached to it, a connection that provides him the necessary tools to maneuver within his society and accomplish his desires.

Key to the rake's close relationship to the status quo is his command of language, which he uses not only to attract other characters to him, but also for deflection and deceit. This aspect of the rake figure, and its pervasive effects, is made abundantly clear in the characterization and behavior of the key rake of chapter two, Harry Horner in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), who weaves a web of duplicity in the play's opening moments that not only surrounds him but extends to every corner of the play by its finale. The rake's facility with language and his use of it to gain and maintain control may be one of the primary ways in which he is tied to the status quo, yet there is, as there is so often with the rake, a complication—the rake regularly uses this same linguistic skill to critique society, particularly excoriating its hypocrisies, as Horner does frequently in *Wife*.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> For instance, following a confrontation with Lady Fidget, Miss Dainty Fidget, and Mrs. Squeamish, who reject Horner and Dorilant in order to preserve their public reputation of honour, Horner provides Dorilant with a critical view of these women who wear a public face of virtue but gladly sin in private and their part in a hypocritical society: "Why, these are pretenders to honour, as critics to wit, only by censuring others; and as every raw, peevish, out-of-humoured, affected, dull, tea-drinking, arithmetical fop sets up for a wit, by railing at men of sense, so these for honour by railing at the court and ladies of as great honour as quality" (2.1.406-417).

While language is normally essential to the rake's seductions, his attractiveness and appeal do not lie in language alone. While not all texts point directly to the physical attractions of their rake figures, the indication is usually that he is pleasing to behold. As Harold Weber argues in *The Restoration Rake-Hero* the rake is "the first character type in the history of English literature to derive his definition primarily from his eroticism" (3), and the rake consistently fills the role of both the desirer and the desired. Through the dialogue of other characters and their visceral reactions to his charismatic, glamorous person, the rake is positioned as an object of fascination for both male and female characters and for audiences.<sup>13</sup> This focus within texts on the rake's physical presence, coupled with the visual nature of the theatre and film media, prioritize the association of the rake with the gaze, a gaze that contains both identification with the rake as a subject to admire and emulate and the desire for erotic possession of him.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> The rake's position as an object of desire, subject to the gaze, is a throughline in the theatre and film texts I discuss. For example, in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) the highwayman Macheath is consistently discussed as a spectacular object, as in his wife's Polly's monologue in 1.12 in which she pictures him on the scaffold, an imagining that is nearly made fact in the play's finale, in which Macheath is almost hanged. Facing the possibility that her parents will inform on him and that he will be executed, she vividly imagines Macheath on the scaffold, inviting the audience to participate in this spectacle: "Methinks I see him already in the cart, sweeter and more lovely than the nosegay in his hand!—I hear the crowd extolling his resolution and intrepidity!—What vollies of sighs are sent from the windows of Holborn, that so comely a youth should be brought to disgrace!—I see him at the tree! The whole circle are in tears!—even butchers weep!..." (1.12.23-24).

<sup>14</sup> Both provide pleasure, albeit in different ways. It is the rake's characterization as a character with a literally and figuratively roving eye that allows audiences the vicarious pleasures of following that eye and its focus on a wide variety of bodies. The rake's drive for multiple sexual seductions allows playwrights/screenwriters to explore a variety of different couplings and audiences to experience a diverse range of pleasures based on this multiplicity. For a theoretical understanding of the nature and the implications of this gaze I draw on the work of writers such as Laura Mulvey, who in works such as "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" argues that the film medium offers both narcissistic (identification) and scopophilic (the pleasure of the act of looking) pleasures, with women constructed as the primary erotic objects to be viewed. As I discuss in my film chapters, Mulvey does not discuss the

The rake's relationship with the gaze serves to foreground him, literally and figuratively, for audiences, prioritizing his presence and his desires; yet the nature of much of this foregrounding—the positioning of the rake as a passive object of desire—serves to complicate the figure's construction as a normative (masculine, heterosexual, active) subject. This is because this passive, erotic positioning violates a tradition in western texts in which males are constructed as active subjects, associated with the mind and the rational, and females are crafted as passive objects, associated with the body and emotions. In this formulation, the rake stands in an in-between place. While the rake's active, even aggressive, behavior within texts fulfills the traditional role of the male as dynamic in body and in the pursuit of his desires, the rake is also repeatedly tied to the female characteristics of passivity and the body, largely through the gaze. In "Gay and Lesbian Criticism" from the *Oxford Guide to Film Studies* Anneke Smelik notes several of the implications of this alignment for the construction and reception of males: "The immanent feminization of male spectacle then brings about two possible dangers for the performing male: functioning as an object of desire he can easily become the object of ridicule, and within a heterosexist culture accusations of homosexuality can be launched against him" (140).

Another element of the rake that, in addition to his to-be-looked-at-ness, works to construct the figure as both an object of fascination and a source of tension is his mobility. By mobility I mean his connection to movement: actual physical movement

---

implication of male bodies constructed through the gaze as erotic objects, but a number of recent theorists (Steven Cohan, Robert Dyer, etcetera) have done work in this area.

from place to place and lover to lover, as well as a fluid identity per gender and sexuality. The rake is usually a well-traveled man, one who is therefore associated with the foreign even as he is obviously tied to his own nation. This travel connects the rake with experience, with a knowledge that contributes to the sense of glamour and mystery of the figure, if viewed positively, but for those who fear travel and the connection with the foreign the rake's mobility is a cause of suspicion and alarm. The manner in which the rake is associated with his own nation but also with the foreign is one of the many ways in which he is an ambiguous figure, one who is, at least as far as more conservative perspectives, aligned with the Other and infected with the stigma of difference.

This sense of the rake as tainted, as beyond the pale, often creates a figurative, sometimes literal, association of the rake with criminality. On the most basic level, the rake is criminal in the manner in which he lets his desires—for sex, for goods, for travel and its experiences—run on, unchecked. In defiance of the communal precepts of society, he concentrates not on the group and its social and sexual rules but on himself, his own desires. When these are, as is often the case, in conflict with that of society, he seeks ways to, if only temporarily, defy society's restrictions and push its limits. While only one of the rakes I consider is actually a pirate by profession, rakes metaphorically act piratically, seeking out objects that are not rightfully theirs (legally, socially), swooping in to enjoy them, then quickly escaping before the consequences—economic, social, legal—bear down upon them. Like the pirate who does not produce goods himself or own the means of production and distribution but instead interrupts the flow

of capital, waylaying it to his own benefit, so too the rake prefers to intercept bodies or goods intended for others or at least not provided outright to him. That a number of the rakes I cover are actually criminals per the definition of law—a thief, a pirate, a highwayman—speaks to the manner in which the rake’s metaphoric criminality sometimes finds its way to the outside, to an actual position beyond the law.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to these elements of the rake, one of the key aspects to discuss in concert with the rake is heterosexuality. Because the rake often pursues women, he is usually aligned with heterosexuality, so much so that many critical studies of the rake concentrate only on the rake’s heterosexual relationships, ignoring other social and sexual relationships that are key to understanding the kinds of cultural work he performs. While all of the texts I consider include the rake’s engagement in heterosexual relations, often ending in marriage or some other form of long-term commitment, other relations bear examining. This includes the rake’s friendships with both men and women, as well as his competition with them—his male-male relationships shading from the homosocial to the homoerotic. This spectrum is often revealed in the rake’s rivalry with other men over a woman, forming the triangular structure of desire discussed by René Girard in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. In this structure the woman seems to be the primary focus of both men, while the relationship between the two men is elided; yet this relationship is

---

<sup>15</sup> These characters are, respectively, Gaston in *Trouble in Paradise*, Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and Macheath in *The Beggar’s Opera*. Yet even when the rake is not overtly criminal there is a sense of multiple layers of transgressions in his deceptions in word and performance. Such is the case in Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in which the rake-dandy protagonists’ violations of social and family rules form just the tip of the iceberg; rather than reveal all, Wilde only hints at the truly transgressive nature of his characters.



essential. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick references Girard and discusses this structure in *Between Men* in a chapter entitled “Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles”:

What is most interesting for our purposes in his study is its insistence that, in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of ‘rivalry’ and ‘love,’ differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many sense equivalent. (21)

Although none of the works I discuss develop an overtly homoerotic relationship between male characters, elements of homoeroticism are often raised, even if they are ultimately dismissed by the narrative, as well as by other characters. For example, John Dryden’s *Marriage à la Mode*, discussed in chapter two, gestures towards boy-man eroticism in the pursuit by one of its male protagonists, Palamede, of a figure who appears to be a boy. That Palamede and the audience know the “boy” is a cross-dressed woman when he kisses her/him denies the homoerotic, even as it raises it in the words of Palamede’s friend Rhodophil, who unaware of the true nature of the “boy” asks, “What? Engaging with a boy? Is all honorable?” (4.3.94-85). In discussing the rake’s relationships outside heterosexual pursuit my goal is to stress the manner in which the rake’s disruptive, transgressive behavior serves to open up alternative possibilities regarding gender and sexuality beyond a single, hegemonic masculinity, creating masculinities rather than masculinity, as my title notes.

I am also interested in considering the rake’s impact on female characters and his implications for femininity. Most chapters include texts by at least one female author, to provide a woman’s perspective on the rake, and while I concentrate on rake figures, and thus male perspectives, within diegeses (by which I mean the worlds of the texts), I seek

to find moments in which female concerns are raised. I do not, as noted, argue for a female rake, however, because my definition of the rake considers it essential that the figure be inside as well as outside hegemony. The same reasoning applies, on the whole, to non-white rakes.

I focus on Britain and America solely, despite the fact that seminal rakes, fictional and real, such as Don Juan and Giacomo Casanova come from the Continent. This is because I'm particularly interested in examining the rake figure's characterization, behavior, and reception in countries with Puritan pasts. The regulations of Puritanism produce an acutely fraught rake per characterization and behavior and an especially contentious reception of this rake which are, I feel, particularly productive for examining the multiple tensions surrounding masculinity.

Finally, the reason I take on multiple media and so many centuries and don't stay in a single period and medium, say Restoration theatre, is that while there have been, for example, many excellent studies of the Restoration rake, as well as later examinations of him in eighteenth-century plays and novels (i.e. Lovelace in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*), and scattered pieces that address him in other centuries, I have yet to encounter a work that follows him through multiple centuries to uncover why he remains such an important part of Anglo-American culture. This work attempts, at least in part, to address this absence, and to consider the pleasures and tensions that the rake and his masculinities provide.

To do so I pursue five case studies—five texts in various periods and media that examine the fluid gender, liminal sexuality, and erotic pleasures provided by the theatre

and film rake. These five texts—*The Country Wife* (1675); *The Beggar's Opera* (1728); *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895); *Trouble in Paradise* (1932); and *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003-2007)—are the focus of each of my chapters, and they are compared to and contrasted with other period texts that support, contradict, and complicate the readings of masculinity portrayed by the focal work's rake (or rakes). Generically, these texts are comedies or comedy hybrids, as are the comparator texts I use with a few notable exceptions (the melodrama *The Cheat* (1915) in chapter five; the romance *The Sheik* (1921) in the same chapter). Just as the rake figure seems to promise social and sexual license, a promise that is usually short-lived, and rarely as radical as it might seem, comedy is generically both librist and conservative. While the rake's presence in other genres such as melodrama usually paint him as a dangerous figure, one who will have tragic implications for the hero or heroine, in comedy the rake is usually a protagonist or, if an antagonist, easily dismissed—rarely a significant threat to the happiness of its characters.<sup>16</sup> Differences in content in the texts—including the degree of eroticism, gender and sexual fluidity, and containment present in each—as well as formal variations will be followed to chart how each period and medium is in dialogue with contemporary social and sexual anxieties through the rake.

---

<sup>16</sup> The diverse comedy forms presented by these texts range from ballad opera (*The Beggar's Opera*) to near-screwball romance (*Trouble in Paradise*). As a genre, comedy is vitally concerned with both overturning and ratifying hegemony. Comedies emphasize reversals of the status quo for a space of anarchy and carnival, even if most comedies feature a return to norms by their finales. This explains both the utilization and the containment of the rakes within them. The witty couple is often at the heart of the text, particularly in romantic comedies and comedies of manners. In these works the rake's verbal wit and physical seduction is matched, even surpassed, by a female or females of equal skill. These works allow both male and female voices and bodies a freedom to speak and act that opens up, albeit in the fantasy world of the text, new gender positions outside of hegemony.

First, my dissertation considers the rake's development in the Restoration period through a close reading of the character of Horner in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*. My choice of Horner and *Wife* is influenced by the importance of character and play for Restoration and eighteenth-century audiences.<sup>17</sup> *Wife* both encapsulates the form and content of most Restoration plays featuring rakes and departs from them, pushing the rake's sexual masquerade and refusing the containment of the rake of other plays.<sup>18</sup> This chapter introduces the complex mix of radicalism and conservatism in the rake, and what this mixture means for attitudes towards gender and sexuality in the period. In this chapter, as elsewhere, the rake's characterization and behavior serve to subvert standard demarcations of both masculinity and femininity, and while the focus is on the male rake, his interaction with female characters is central. The frank attraction-repulsion between male and female characters, reflecting real-life gender tensions in the seventeenth century, is explored both through the battle of male and female wit in *The Country Wife* and ancillary works. To this end a female perspective on the male-female battle and its

---

<sup>17</sup> Significantly, the play appeared throughout the later period although, as John Dixon Hunt notes in his introduction to the New Mermaids edition of the play, in censored versions, which indicates changes in dramatic taste (xi). The character of Horner was one of the reasons for this censorship. As noted, Collier singles him out as one of nine characters who form dangerous examples for audience members due to their "immodesty." The other characters are female, including two from *Wife*—Mrs. Margery Pinchwife and Lady Fidget.

<sup>18</sup> *Wife* encapsulates the form and content of most plays featuring rakes—a comedy of manners in which seductions and cuckolding are conducted through disguise and wit, with a finale that incorporates revelations of the rake's misbehavior and marriage. Yet the play departs from the normal pattern, pushing the form both in the extent of Horner's masquerade (he claims impotence, opening himself up to the ridicule of the men while ensconcing himself with their wives) and in the lack of containment of the rake, leaving Horner unmarried and largely unpunished.

consequences is necessary, provided by playwright Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (1677).<sup>19</sup> Another play I consider in concert and in contrast with *The Country Wife* is Dryden's masquerade-rich *Marriage à la Mode* (1672).

My third chapter takes my examination of the rake into the eighteenth century, building on the sense of the rake as a transgressive, criminal rule-breaker by focusing on the gentleman highwayman Macheath in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. My choice of character and play is governed by the ways in which both reference seventeenth-century rake comedies while reflecting a very different social and sexual milieu. In Gay's satire the aristocratic/middle-class setting of Restoration comedies is turned upside down to be replaced by the London underworld, and its gentleman and ladies become thieves and doxies. In this topsy-turvy critique, Gay's Macheath both responds to and amplifies the sense of danger and criminality, as well as romance and gentility, expressed by the Restoration rake. Poised between two women, surrounded by his doxies, Gay's rake is excessive and transgressive, pushing the criminality only gestured at by previous rakes; yet at the same time he is charming and seductive. The radicalism of Gay's rake extends to form, for he appears in a new medium—the ballad opera—that is itself nostalgic, given its use of familiar ballads in place of foreign opera songs, yet is radically different for its wedding of song and theatre. These formal changes amplify the sense of performance existing in the rake figure, with all the destabilizing effects this performance implies. As in my previous chapter, the perspective of a female playwright—Hannah Cowley and her

---

<sup>19</sup> Behn's female protagonist Hellena both praises the rake Willmore for his very real eroticism and vitality and exposes his negative characteristics, including commitment phobia and a tendency towards sexual violence.

play *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780)—is also provided. Like Behn, Cowley critiques the rake's transgressions, although her means are different, indicating the move toward recuperation of the rake figure for the status quo in the period, a move made earlier in the century by my other comparator text, Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), a play which popularized the move towards sentimental drama in the period.

Chapter four on Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* glances back to the previous chapters while anticipating the film rakes of chapters five and six and their Wildean inheritance of a queer and fluid identity.<sup>20</sup> This chapter explores the ways in which Wilde reworks the rake, highlighting the figure's existing gender and sexual fluidity, and queers him through an emphasis on performance, both anticipating and responding to fin-de-siècle tensions regarding gender and sexuality. Comparator texts include Dion Boucicault's *London Assurance* (1841), which anticipates Wilde's version of the rake, and two plays by female playwrights: Catherine Gore's *The School for Coquettes* (1831) and Joanna Baillie's *The Country Inn* (1804).

The fifth chapter considers the development of the film rake, whose presentation plays out the exhilaration and anxiety surrounding shifting attitudes to gender, sexuality,

---

<sup>20</sup> In *Incongruous Entertainment* Steven Cohan defines queer in context with gay and homosexual. After discussing a number of connotations of gay he notes, "Queer bears an even more plural meaning, referring to people of any nonheterocentric sexual or gendered self-identification: one does not have to be homosexual or lesbian to be queer since the category includes bisexual and transgendered persons. In referring to gender or sexual nonconformity, queer also carries forward its history as a pejorative and denigrating cultural label, the opposite of straight. Contemporary usage aims to invert this history by repoliticizing the queer's disturbance of dominant culture's regulating norms as affirming, empowering, transgressive" (4-5). He argues, "In my own view, the three terms comprise something of a semantic continuum as used today: from same-sex desires and acts (homosexual), to the socialized persons orienting their identities and affective bonds around their homosexuality (gay), to the wider cultural location and value of gender/sexual dissidents (queer). This continuum explains why the terms are so often used interchangeably in academic writing, which well understands that sexuality, the individual, and culture are inextricably, dynamically, and historically bound up together" (5).

and race during the wide-reaching cultural and technological changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In these films the rake is often used as a symbol for the dangers of urban modernity and the growing presence of people from a wide range of ethnic and racial groups in these urban spaces. The lack of synchronous sound for dialogue in early film, such an important part of theatrical presentation, means that characters communicate largely through body language rather than verbal wit.

This focus on the body enhances the performativity and visual eroticism already present in the rake, while the move towards a more mobile camera, particularly the use of close-ups, increasingly closes the gap between audience members and onscreen rakes, bringing them into intimate proximity with the body of the rake and his desiring gaze. The result is to highlight the early—1890s to 1920s—rake as visually erotic and exotic, yet given the anxiety of the period to also type him as morally treacherous and a danger to the status quo. This combination is notable in *The Cheat* (DeMille, 1915), in which Sessue Hayakawa plays a villainous rake. The next phase of films highlight the rake's eroticism, while the use of a white, albeit ethnic, actor in the form of Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik* (Melford, 1921) creates a rake who is, finally, allowed to unite with the white heroine.

While the transgressions of early film rakes are expressed through the body, spoken dialogue allows later film rakes to return to the verbal sparring of theatre rakes, as is the case with the film that is the culmination of the fifth chapter—Ernst Lubitsch's comedy *Trouble in Paradise*. Lubitsch's film, like the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century plays featuring rakes I discuss, is built on the idea of performance,

and his rakish thief Gaston Monescu is self-consciously performative, utilizing multiple disguises to obtain his aims.

My sixth and final chapter focuses on contemporary film through an examination of *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Verbinski, 2003-2007) to explore the ways in which the rake continues to be a barometer of tensions surrounding masculinity, his presentation indicating both changes in conceptions of masculinity and sexuality and, simultaneously, how little has changed. The chapter's comparator texts *About a Boy* (Weitz and Weitz, 2002) and *The Tao of Steve* (Goodman, 2000) highlight the rake's ambivalent nature, such as his narcissism and childishness, while pointing to the emotionally disruptive effects of his ladykilling, even as these negative aspects of the films' protagonists are largely elided. The films thereby demonstrate the selfishness and nostalgia that lie at the heart of the figure even as they acknowledge the power the status quo grants to the rake's hypermasculinity and heteronormativity.

Through undercutting the rake's control contemporary films both acknowledge and contain the rake's transgressions. Yet the comic manner in which acknowledgement and containment are usually done in these films diffuses critique and indicates limits in contemporary interrogation of masculinity. The limited ability to acknowledge the queerness of the rake type also demonstrates, at least in contemporary comedies, a restrictive view of sexuality in popular film. As these examples indicate, the retrograde and radical rake remains a vital figure for discovering the state of masculinity in Western theatre and film texts and exploring attitudes towards gender and sexuality in Western culture itself.



**CHAPTER II**

**MOBILE DESIRES: THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY RAKE IN THEATRE**

***AND THE COUNTRY WIFE***

The flickering tallow candles reveal the well-furnished apartment of a man of wealth and privilege. Two men enter the stage, the first recognizable as the owner of the apartment, the second a quack doctor. As they enter, the first man speaks a quick aside to the audience. The aside works to draw the audience into the man's confidence and fix him as the play's protagonist, while the line's content and tone signal satire: "A quack is as fit for a pimp as a midwife for a bawd; they are still but in their way both helpers of nature" (1.1.1-2). The line connects the character—and aligns the audience, his co-conspirators—with the body, specifically sexual appetite, even as it looks beyond the momentary pleasures of the fulfillment of this appetite to its material results: pregnancy and childbirth, disease, even death. The figures the man connects in his line and who are now connected with him—quack and pimp, midwife and bawd—are interwoven in the language of the line just as they figuratively stand together in an exchange of bodies, of money, and of disease, an exchange that does not preserve the boundary lines between humans and capital, between purity and abjection, but mingles all together, confusing categories, causing disruption.

The obvious socioeconomic power, class status, and gender of the speaker oppose him in multiple ways to these socially and legally marginal, even criminal, figures, yet this man, Harry Horner, is revealed in the course of this play—William Wycherley's

1675 comedy *The Country Wife*—to be closer to them than he seems, and identified with them in more than simply a few words. For Horner is a rake—a libertine male consumed with the pursuit of sex, as well as a host of other appetites both named and unnamed, a man who uses any means, licit or illicit, to fulfill his hungers. While his status grants him the power and privilege these figures lack, his overt connection with appetites that defy social and legal restrictions and his relentless pursuit of these appetites align him with these figures and their marginal nature. They, particularly the bawd and pimp, literally and figuratively haunt society's fringes, maneuvering close enough to locate custom yet always on the move to escape the legal, economic, and moral forces that would contain them. In contrast, Horner, like many of his fellow rakes, physically moves where he will, his skills in performance and deceit, his ability to shift his identity and manipulate language, granting him an access to social circles inaccessible to them.

This mobility, actual and figurative, makes Horner, like other rakes, a figure of extreme interest and unease, both for his fellow characters and for audiences, for whom he provides a paradox—a challenge to any sense of a stable identity. For Horner is, on the one hand, a wealthy and aristocratic figure aligned with the power and privilege of the status quo; on the other hand he is apart from it—haunting its margins and commenting critically upon its mores. In this paradox, the construction of Horner, as of so many other contemporary rakes, as an unruly, in-between figure, lies not only the source of his power to excite both admiration and condemnation, but the manner in which he forms the perfect vehicle for playwrights and for audiences to explore issues of identity on both an individual and national level.

This discussion of Horner and his function in *Wife* introduces this character and the play in which he appears, this chapter's key text; it also sets up the rake figure himself and this chapter. Through an examination of *Wife* and two other popular, controversial Restoration plays— John Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode* (performed 1671; printed 1673) and Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (1677)—I examine the first stage in the progress of the English rake, theatre, and nation. This chapter argues that in a period in which the English nation and its theatre were undergoing a crisis of identity caused by multiple changes—social, economic, and political—the rake's malleable, in-between identity served as the perfect way to negotiate these changes, to address the sense of both pressure and promise created by an incipient modernity.

The rake, a new figure with his roots in the past, represented both tradition and conservatism, particularly in his aristocratic, monarchist ties; yet the figure also spoke to the fresh and radical, a vision of a masculinity that was aggressively independent, and a subjectivity that was venturesome in tongue, body, and mind, unfettered by social or moral obligations—a brave new man for a brave new world. He was perfectly matched with a commercial public theatre that similarly spoke to both past and future and provided the ideal venue for such stagings of identity. Newly reopened after the Puritan ban on public performance during the Interregnum, the two new patent houses—the King's Company, led by Thomas Killigrew, and the Duke of York's Company, led by William Davenant, staged both old and new works, utilized a combination of traditional stagecraft mixed with new technological and aesthetic developments, and, perhaps most significantly, featured actresses for the first time. The presence of actual female bodies

onstage would shape the nature of the plays produced and the types of characters preferred throughout the period.

The plays and characters I discuss in this chapter reflect the difficult yet exhilarating internal and external transformations of the English nation in the period. Two interconnected movements were central to this transformation, contributing to an increased domestic coherence and international prominence which would develop further in the next two centuries. First, England moved toward union with its contentious neighbors, Scotland and Ireland, gaining more significant control and seeking to create a sense of greater political and social stability domestically, reforming the separate nations as one: Great Britain. Second, England sought to expand its cultural, economic, and political influence around the globe and to further its competition with other nations, even as it realized the negative consequences of such increased contact. In *All Before Them* John McVeagh notes that in this period “England was to extend her contact with Continental Europe and with the wider world more systematically and successfully than before” (2).<sup>21</sup> It was also a period in which key global trading organizations and routes that would bring economic gain, as well as political and cultural prominence, were established.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> However, McVeagh notes that this contact did not always bring about the desired results, so much so that England’s influence in Europe actually decreased in the Restoration: “England’s uncertain international relations reduced her European influence in the late seventeenth century. Under Cromwell she had been a force in European affairs. In the two decades after his death the war against the Dutch, the alliance with the Dutch against the French, and the alliance with France against Holland confused and reduced her role” (3).

<sup>22</sup> McVeagh notes this was the period when “the great colonizing and trading companies were built up: the East India Company (1600), the Levant Company (1581), the Royal African Company (monopoly renewed 1651)” (9).

While many English citizens may have been anxious to stabilize a sense of an English identity removed from foreign influence, this move to global expansion necessitated contact, even as it created anxiety. The resulting tension was explored onstage, with the negative and positive attitudes toward this national intercourse played out in the rake's intercourse with the foreign, whether a literal intercourse—the rake's sexual congress with the bodies of foreign peoples—or a more figurative intercourse—the rake's travel to foreign lands, his absorption of foreign customs, and the resulting sense of difference, even abjection, that is then connected with the rake figure. As the plays reveal, the rake plays both the role of English self, opposed to the foreign other, but also, in some contexts, takes on the role of other. This sense of the rake standing in opposition to an external other but also literally embodying the other speaks not only to the rake's own complex characterization and behavior, which facilitates such a variety of positionings of the rake in regards to the status quo, but also provides an explanation of the ambivalence that so often greets the rake figure both within and without texts.

The sense of an in-between identity, both native and foreign, articulated in the fantasy figure of the rake echoed a pointed reality for the English people—the fact that a foreign influence existed right at the center of their realm in the person of its literal and figurative father, the monarch Charles II. Charles had spent years abroad in exile, primarily in France and Spanish Flanders, and brought with him language, customs, and fashions that were strange and alien to the English, including the aforementioned demand for females, not boys, to portray women onstage. Of greater concern was the religious orientation of Charles's brother James, whose Catholicism was a source of great tension

for the largely Protestant English. That England's king, the leader of this evolving nation, carried with him a whiff of the foreign made the nation's intercourse with the foreign literally and figuratively close to home.

If anxiety existed in the cultural and political ramifications of a king who brought the nation's citizens face to face with the idea of an Englishness that both was and was not English, the changes to the nation itself, particularly its capital, created by this increased political, economic, and cultural intercourse with the globe also felt alarmingly close to home. Increasingly large numbers of commodities, traders, and visitors moved through London in locations created for this purpose such as the Royal Exchange, inciting both excitement and tension.<sup>23</sup> Period texts set in the capital such as *Wife* associated the city, with its scores of shops and entertainments, its streets and parks trolled by droves of thieves and prostitutes, with all the tensions of modernity—constructing it as a location both fascinating and repellant.<sup>24</sup> The rake's association with this urban space, perceived to be a serious hazard to the unsophisticated and the foolish, contributed to his own fraught characterization and the sense that he too posed a significant danger.<sup>25</sup> The rake's physical and figurative mobility within and without the

---

<sup>23</sup> In her Introduction to *Eighteenth Century Characters*, Elaine M. McGirr quotes Joseph Addison, who enthuses in 1711, "There is no place in the town which I so much love to frequent as the Royal-Exchange. It gives me a secret satisfaction, and in some measure, gratifies my vanity, as I am an Englishman, to see so rich and assembly of country-men and foreigners consulting together upon the private business of mankind, and making this metropolis a kind of *emporium* for the whole earth" (9).

<sup>24</sup> The connection of rake and urban space, with all of its social, sexual, and economic opportunities, is not incidental, for the rake is often constructed as an early version of Walter Benjamin's wide-ranging, voyeuristic flâneur, the strolling male who commands the power of the gaze to examine and enjoy all the visual pleasures—stores, sights, bodies—arrayed before him in the urban space.

<sup>25</sup> Opposed to London, and the rake's urban associations, are the country and its people. The country is often cast, particularly in these comic texts, as a socially and culturally backward space, and country

urban space, which associated him with peoples and spaces savory and unsavory, ranging from high to low and powerful to abject, was both envied and viewed as strange and suspect.<sup>26</sup>

Of the many entertainments offered in the capital, one of the primary draws, as well as one of the primary sources of concern, was its theatres. No longer located outside the city's walls or confined to Court or closet performances, London's theatres were located in the Town, which was placed, literally and figuratively, between the Court and City, the former the home of the monarch and government, the latter the home of business and the haunt of the increasingly powerful merchant middle class. As a public medium, the theatre formed the ideal location to play out both anxiety and desire regarding the other, whether this opposition of self and other was constructed along the line of gender, sexuality, class, race, or religion. Playwrights staged contact with a variety of others through stories set both in England and abroad, based in the present or placed in the past. Anxiety about the exotic other, mingled with erotic desire for this other, could be played out onstage more easily than ever before, facilitated by contemporary technology.<sup>27</sup> As George Parfitt notes in "The Exotic in Restoration Drama" from *All*

---

characters as simple and naïve. Yet it is also viewed as a place of respite from the negative aspects of the city space.

<sup>26</sup> In *Powers of Horror* Julia Kristeva writes of abjection, "It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects" (1). She notes that the abject can only be compared to the object in one sense; it "has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I" (1). She argues that "It is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4).

<sup>27</sup> Parfitt notes developments in Restoration theatre staging allowed playwrights to more easily evoke the foreign: "It is only after 1660 that conditions in the English public theaters allow for mimetic representation of the exotic...the main development concerns scenery, as the experiments of Inigo Jones in the court

*Before Them*, there were a number of reasons why plays of the period 1660-1700 showed a great interest in other countries, from the increased travel and trade of the period to the desire to reflect the experiences of those men and women exiled along with Charles II during Cromwell's reign.<sup>28</sup> That many contemporary playwrights had first-hand experience abroad, either as a result of this exile or simply of the greater incidence of travel in the period, was also significant, as Parfitt argues, and of the three playwrights discussed in this chapter two spent time abroad: Wycherley in France and Behn in Surinam and Flanders (83).

As I touched on in the introduction (chapter one), in each period authors foreground certain elements of the rake that speak to each time's crisis of identity, helping to articulate, even form, the social and sexual tenor of the time. In this chapter the rake element highlighted is mobility and its central connection with this transforming English identity. By mobility I mean the movement of the rake, actual and metaphoric, and his progress across borders, literal and figurative. This movement occurs in multiple ways, including the crossing into and between nations, the assumption of multiple personas per gender and sexuality, and the muddling of the barrier between inanimate commodity and animate person, a mixing that demonstrates the profound manner in

---

masque are carried over into the Restoration theater, where backdrops and sliding flats allow the possibility of exact reproduction of foreign scenes" (83).

<sup>28</sup> "First, there was by 1660 a long history of diplomatic and cultural contact between England and other countries, notably France, Spain, and Italy... Second, by 1660 the English had been participating for decades in European voyages of travel and exploration throughout the world, this providing firsthand knowledge of non-European lands... Third, there is a history of exile. This includes men and women leaving England for religious or political reasons: fugitives from the Catholic restoration of Mary I, Catholic refugees from Protestant Tudor monarchs, and Puritan exiles from Tudor and Stuart Anglicanism. Most immediately relevant to the Restoration, however, is the flight of royalists during the commonwealth and protectorate" (81-82).



which economic exchange and burgeoning capitalism, in concert with the period's other developments, were transforming the nation. Border crossing in the manner of the rake provokes both desire and anxiety: the desire to test these borders, gaining power and pleasure by transgressing the social, moral, political, or economic regulations that maintains these borders, and an attendant fear of the ways in which this border crossing can destabilize not only the one who crosses but also impact his/her fellows, while also revealing that these borders are both more rigid and more permeable than they might appear.<sup>29</sup> While much of the anxiety evoked is a fear of a definable other—different in nationality or religion, class, or gender—the greater fear, as these plays stage, is the anxiety that the other cannot be truly separated easily from the English body or the English nation but is, in some ways, already incorporated in it.

My exploration of the manner in which the rake's mobility reveals and interrogates the fraught nature of national identity concentrates on four intertwined aspects of this mobility: first, physical borders and anxiety over contact with other nations and peoples; second, commerce, consumers, and commodities; third, gender and sexual borders; and fourth, associated with all three, performance, both inside and outside the text's world. All three plays provide useful clues to the multiple ways in which the rake focuses a fascination and fear regarding national change and modernity, and I will

---

<sup>29</sup> As Mary Douglas notes in *Purity and Danger*, the sense of margins, and of interrogation of them, is crucial: "...all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins" (121). For example, she argues, "We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body" (121).

discuss them in order of production in order to chart the development of the rake, as he progresses through the Restoration, beginning with Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode*.

*Marriage*, which precedes *The Country Wife* by only a few years, sets up much of the discourse of mobility—and ambivalence surrounding it—of the later play. Yet *Marriage*'s overall tone and the behavior and language of the rakes within it are much less pungent and chaotic than *Wife*, showing Dryden pushing at his society's social and sexual boundaries in a different, more gentle, manner through his portrayal of the tensions surrounding his rakes' physical and figurative mobility. This lighter touch is signaled by the title itself, which weds the serious—the religious, social, and economic contract of marriage—with the less serious—manners and fashion—proposing in this hybrid title an almost throwaway approach to ponderous social issues.<sup>30</sup> Dryden's choice of a French title for his English play, albeit one set in Sicily, tips the balance towards the less serious, in the direction of the elaborate mannerisms and stylish fashion associated with French language and culture, as well as the association in the English mind of France and all things French with sexual license. A sense of hybridity is also created by Dryden's blending of the genres of heroic romance and witty urbane comedy in two plots that intertwine at times, bringing the characters into contact with each other, although they largely remain separate.<sup>31</sup> This act of blending creates a formal instability that

---

<sup>30</sup> Although it is worth interrogating the manner in which this breeziness might be, to some extent, assumed—a cloak to conceal more serious critique, just as Oscar Wilde deliberately misleads with the subtitle of his play *The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People* (1895).

<sup>31</sup> The reason for the disconnect between the two groups of characters and tone of language and behavior is created, Mark S. Auburn argues in his introduction to the Regents Restoration Drama edition of the play, by the need to adhere to the contemporary theory of decorum; Auburn notes, "Decorum prescribed that characters of highest rank should speak and conduct themselves according to their station: their sentiments

foreshadows the manner in which fixed notions of what constitutes identity, from the level of national identity to individual gender and sexuality, will be disrupted within the play.

In brief, the play's high romantic strain concerns a young prince named Leonidas, rightful heir of the Sicilian crown, rediscovered after many years of rustic fosterage. The narrative plays out the complications of Leonidas's love for a fellow rustic, the virtuous Palmyra, soon revealed to be the lost daughter of the crown's usurper. The play's finale finds the lovers united and Leonidas's rightful place as king reclaimed. Counterpoised to the heroic and romantic tone of this plot is a comic plot featuring the love intrigue of two much less noble couples: Rhodophil, the captain of the guards, unhappily married to Doralice, and Rhodophil's friend Palamede, a courtier newly returned to the court, affianced to Melantha, a court lady obsessed with all things French. The couples try to woo each other's mates through various assignations and acts of subterfuge, the most spectacular being the cross-dressing of both women as boys as the court celebrates a masquerade. Despite their efforts, the couples' spouse-swapping is never consummated, and they ultimately remain with their legally and socially sanctioned partners, with Rhodophil suggesting to Palamede "a firm league not to invade each other's propriety" (5.381-382).

As noted, Dryden sets his play in a foreign country, a choice that aligns him with Behn's choice of a foreign setting for *The Rover*, and provides a key contrast with

---

should be exalted, their actions noble and circumspect. Only characters from lower ranks (persons of high social state, but not princelings) would be capable of wit, repartee, and comic sexual intrigue, only persons of the meanest ranks of mere buffoonery" (xviii). In order to adhere to what Auburn characterizes as "the increasingly accepted body of critical theory" (xviii) of his period, he must work to separate the characters and their plots and to differentiate them based on their rank.

Wycherley, who sets *Wife* in contemporary London, bringing the play's satire directly into contact with its audiences.<sup>32</sup> Dryden's choice of Sicily for a location creates a setting for the play that both is and is not England, and that therefore, like *The Rover*, conveys its ambivalence regarding border crossings in somewhat different ways than *Wife*.<sup>33</sup> Exotic to its audiences, yet relatively familiar, particularly in contrast to more overtly exotic locales such as the New World or the East, the foreign location of Sicily and its alien customs create a dissociating effect, allowing Dryden's characters to safely play out English anxieties without directly confronting them. This distancing lets Dryden, like Behn, delve more deeply into the complex, even dangerous, nature of rake boundary transgressions and their implications, although it also works to soften the play's satire and remove the audience from some of the concern that might be generated by a rake located close to home.

Dryden stresses the connection of his two rakes, Palamede and Rhodophil, with the foreign—foreign locations and foreign bodies—in their introduction, and links the men's physical mobility with economic and sexual mobility, crafting them as rovers on multiple levels. As Rhodophil greets Palamede, who has just returned from five years abroad, their discussion reveals that Rhodophil himself was a traveler several years ago. These travels are directly associated with sexual contact: Palamede not only ranged over

---

<sup>32</sup> In a rough survey of a number of plays of the period, more than half are set outside England, in locations in countries such as Italy, France, and Spain. Of the plays set in England, most seem to be set in London.

<sup>33</sup> Like Behn's play, *Marriage* indirectly confronts recent English history, which creates both a sense of the play as exceedingly topical, yet distanced from its viewers by its connection with the past and its obviously fantastic and exotic elements. The play's backstory reveals that Sicily is ruled by a usurper, Polydamas, and much of the serious/heroic portion of the play deals with the discovery and assumption of the rightful prince, Leonidas, raised as a simple Shepard. This element of the narrative connects the fantasy world of the play with the real-life Interregnum and the Restoration of Charles II.

various lands, but over the women of these lands, connecting national bodies—nations—with individual human bodies, linked through a sense of erotic tourism. Rhodophil teases Palamede for the extensive nature of his sexual voyaging, yet his characterization of Palamede’s role in this foreign intercourse constructs Palamede not as the active, aggressive desirer that one might expect but as, in some ways, the passive member. In Rhodophil’s construction, Palamede is not the dominant, colonizing force but an affective man, one who is enslaved, at least momentarily, by the women’s charms: “Then, I cannot choose but grieve for all the good girls and courtesans of France and Italy. They have lost the most kind-hearted, doting, prodigal, humble servant, in Europe” (1.119-122). Yet no sooner does the play raise the specter of Palamede’s active, roving past, but Palamede himself insists that his traveling days, together with his sexual indulgence, are over, cut short by his father’s command that he return home and enter an arranged marriage.<sup>34</sup> The revelation that Rhodophil earlier went through a similar process underlines the difference between these rakes’ past and present situations: the unconstrained nature of the men’s former physical and sexual mobility contrasted with the limits currently placed on their individual wills and their bodies, no longer truly their own. The disclosure of the men’s arranged marriages sets up *Marriage’s* association of the rake with economic and sexual exchange, with its rakes positioned not only as active traders who attempt to acquire partners to suit their own desires, but as passive trade goods, valuable items to be traded in the marriage market.

---

<sup>34</sup> In contrast to the later Horner, even Palamede’s past roving is not presented as particularly active/hypermasculine. Rather, it is the women who have had the control, for Palamede, at least per Rhodophil’s construction, is described as “doting” and as a “humble servant” to the women, just as he is a dutiful son to the wishes of his father. The character is thus provided with none of the independence and unwillingness to bend to social and sexual mores seen in Horner.

Unlike the other plays of the chapter, Palamede's and Rhodophil's adventures abroad are not overtly positioned as a source of anxiety, yet the issue of tensions over the foreign is brought into play via Palamede's fiancée Melantha, a woman obsessed with the world outside Sicily. Unlike *Wife*, which embodies anxiety regarding contact with the foreign in the person of a male, Horner, in *Marriage* the anxiety regarding travel and the possible contamination of international places, peoples, languages, and customs is placed on a female.<sup>35</sup> Melantha's love of the foreign, particularly her love of everything French, is mocked as foolish within the play. Other characters, including both Palamede and Rhodophil, are put off by her aping of foreign language and manners. Dryden constructs Melantha as a character who is so overwhelmed by the foreign that she is almost possessed, and her chaotic nature threatens to overwhelm not only her own self but everyone near her. For example, as Palamede remarks when Doralice asks why he does not follow his betrothed when she exits a scene running, "Follow her? Why, at this rate she'll be at the Indies within this half hour" (2.234-235). Palamede's line intertwines Melantha's runaway tongue and feet with sexuality and trade, bringing together these aspects of mobility in an awkward hybridity that the play must work out in order for Melantha to be integrated back into society and married to Palamede.

Dryden thus allays the tension of associating the male body with the foreign that will later be staged by Wycherley by instead placing the female body as the possible

---

<sup>35</sup> As Auburn notes of the character, "Founded most likely upon the title characters of Moliere's *Les précieuses ridicules* (1660), she reflects in excess the fashionable preoccupation with all things French in Charles's court during the first decades after his return from exile" (xxv). Auburn notes that Dryden had taken such French obsession to task in *The Conquest of Granada*, in which "Dryden rallied at 'those Fopps who...pretend they cannot express their meaning in English, because they would put off to us some French phrase of the last Edition'" (xxv-xxvi).

source of contamination, although, as we shall see, Melantha's abjection seems less profound than that of a character such as Horner. Yet while Dryden separates some of the tension created in the connection of males and the foreign, he, like Wycherley, implicates the male body in the trading process by positioning both Palamede and Rhodophil as commodities.

This association of the male with exchange is one of the play's primary tensions, and one of the main ways in which it sets up a complex dichotomy of both activity and passivity attached to the rake figure, a dichotomy which will be a crucial aspect of Horner's characterization and behavior. In *Marriage* both Palamede and Rhodophil are closely tied to an exchange of bodies—their own in marriage—over which they have little control. Palamede, for example, notes that he expressly left behind the exercise of his freedom of movement via the mobility of travel and unfettered sexual intercourse not to follow his own desires but to obey his father's wishes, bowing to “The commands of an old rich father” (1.145). Thus while the play's introduction of Palamede and Rhodophil and their conversation underlines their libertine past, it also quickly emphasizes their enforced submission and lack of power, forming these rakes as both active and passive, hypermasculine and feminine. Mirroring Palamede's revelation of his upcoming containment, Rhodophil reveals that he too was constrained to marry, and Palamede argues this has transformed Rhodophil, like himself, into a commodity that has been traded:

RHODOPHIL. In one word, I am married, wretchedly married, and have been above these two years. Yes, faith, the devil has had power over me, in spite of my vows and resolutions to the contrary.

PALAMEDE. I find you have sold yourself for filthy lucre. She's old, or ill-conditioned. (1.136-145)

Maneuvered into arranged marriages, the rakes assume, at least in this exchange of dialogue, the female position—dependant on the whims of older, powerful men with little hope that their intended will match their own desires.

If *Marriage's* rakes are, in a sense, trapped, their movement constrained, the use of performance allows them, as it does the play's female comic characters, at least some mobility to change their gender and sexual roles for other roles, if only momentarily. Rhodophil and Palamede display their rakish capacity in the manner in which they are in tune with performance, and both men seize on the opportunities of the court's masquerade and the confusion of rank, gender, and persons created by the masquerade to try to obtain their desires.

The moment that best demonstrates the characters' engagement with performance and the resulting slipperiness of gender and sexuality is Act 4, which features all the characters in masquerade dress. Doralice and Melantha appear dressed as boys, while Palamede and Rhodophil carry vizor-masks. While the men's identities are never in doubt, the females' dress complicates the issue of identity on an individual level, as well as generally in regards to gender and sexuality. For example, Doralice's dress deceives Palamede until she reveals her true nature to him. Her performance of maleness is so convincing that her husband Rhodophil, seeing Palamede kissing this "boy," perceives homoeroticism: "What? Engaging with a boy? Is all honorable?" (4.3.94-85). Rhodophil has presented his own "boy" in the shape of Melantha, and he is eager to see if Palamede will be taken in by him. Just as *Wife's* Horner will find his desire to have sex with



women enhanced by the possibility of tricking men, particularly those men intimately connected with these women, so here Rhodophil's desire for Melantha is increased by his desire to trick her fiancé.

Performance offers the characters the chance to explore mobile identities and to enact a complex play of desire and revenge, a process that works to destabilize notions of fixed identity within the text and speaks to the manner in which the theatre medium itself allows the play's audience to explore multiple identities through the characters' portrayals and behaviors. In the masquerade scene the sense of performance and its carnivalesque implications are explored as Dryden reveals that the characters' control over their disguises and their identities is inexact, blurring the line between performance and reality. Thus the disguised Melantha and Doralice trade insults and then attempt blows as if they have internalized their assumed male attire and become males indeed, demonstrating how the masquerade, and performance in general, can obscure the line between playing and being.

For the male and female characters alike the masquerade offers the opportunity to investigate overtly transgressive desires—the violation of the legal, economic, and moral bonds of marriage/engagement—as well as to imagine more covert appetites and explore objects of desire beyond sexual and social norms—i.e. boys for Palamede and Rhodophil—even if this causes discomfort within and without the world of the play. Thus the masquerade provides a space for the characters, and through them the audience, to question the rigidity of the gender roles and sexuality imposed upon them by their society, even if the play's narrative ultimately restores the characters to their socially

sanctioned partners and heterosexual commitment, reassuring the audience that while masculinity, femininity, and heterosexuality might be momentarily interrogated, that norms of gender and sexuality are restored and thus stable.

This issue of performance is one of the key tropes not only in *Marriage* but in the other plays of this chapter, particularly *Wife*, and a brief discussion of its significance is helpful to place the plays of this chapter in dialogue and to set up my discussion of Horner. As these are specifically theatre texts, performance occurs on both an external and internal level. Externally, there is the physical and cultural structure of the theatre medium itself, in which audiences in real time view actors performing roles.<sup>36</sup> Internal elements such as prologues, epilogues, and, in particular, asides call attention to the theatrical form and craft an overt dialogue with the audience, acknowledging and amplifying the sense of performance. To these layers is added the performance of the actors, whose star text (a combination of promotion, publicity, roles, and criticism/commentary) might call the audience's attention to how much—or little—their presentation of a certain role agrees with their existing, evolving text.<sup>37</sup> Finally, there is

---

<sup>36</sup> These audiences, along with the actors, agree to a collective fantasy that the stage experience is “real,” while simultaneously aware of the constructed nature of the medium. This knowledge and concurrent disavowal of performance is especially the case in Restoration theatre, in which relatively small houses diminish any sense of distance in any sense.

<sup>37</sup> In *Stars* Richard Dyer argues that adherence between star text and role can further suture actors and audiences to the performance at hand, while a lack of adherence might serve to create distance and alienation beyond the detachment/reserve found already in the rake figure (129-131). Stars were usually associated with rake roles, and a number of the period's most famous stars played multiple rake roles. For example, as Auburn notes in a discussion of *Marriage à la Mode's* first performances by the King's Company, “The King's Company cast its strongest actors in the comic roles. Charles Hart performed Palamede. The lover of the promiscuous Lady Castlemaine was clearly the leading actor of the organization and later would have the roles of Wycherley's Horner and Manley” (xv-xvi).

the performance of the character himself/herself, who might assume multiple roles within the play, crossing gender, class, and race within the work.

As a character with a self-reflexive nature, constantly considering how to employ performance to accomplish his plots of seduction and revenge, rakes are not only aware but, often, masters of performance. In this manner the rake may be argued to be a natural inheritor of a cultural trend of the previous century discussed by Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Greenblatt argues that the sixteenth century saw a change in perceptions of the self, in which a greater sense of autonomy, if not necessarily freedom, developed. With it came, as Greenblatt notes, the idea of shaping one's social/sexual role: "Perhaps the simplest observation we can make is that in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (2).

The rake inherits and develops this sense of the self as fashioned from both outside—society and culture—and inside, as the individual negotiates his/her own place in social and economic hierarchies. He is, in fact, ideally placed to enjoy self-fashioning and its effects. First, he is sensitive to the potential social and sexual gains of self-fashioning. Second, his close relationship to the status quo and his mobility of body, mind, and tongue enable him to take full advantage of self-fashioning, whether in an overt or subtle manner. The rake's mastery of self-fashioning as part of his general physical, social, and sexual mobility explains in part why he seems, at least initially, so enticing for other characters and for audiences. His performance awareness and the

alienation effect it creates provide a sense of both intimacy with and distance from the rake for other characters and for audiences.<sup>38</sup>

While Dryden shuts down the performance of his rake characters and their wives in his play's finale, such distinct closure and overt restoration of stability after fracture is less certainly the case in Wycherley's *Wife*, which offers a rake who is a greater master of performance and a more thorough challenge to social and sexual mores. Set not in a foreign locale or other time period but in contemporary London, the play locates its satire in the here and now, while its use of direct address, as discussed in the chapter's opening, creates an immediate intimacy with the play's audience members, who are constructed as co-conspirators in Horner's plot whether they desire this role or not. They are implicated in his crimes.<sup>39</sup>

In the play *Horner*, a clever rake, plans to pose as impotent in order to gain access to the city's wives and daughters. The city's husbands and fathers let down their guard, thinking him no threat.<sup>40</sup> Horner depends on gossip to spread this lie that will allow him

---

<sup>38</sup> The rake's ability to maintain space, actual or emotional, allows him this freedom, although at a cost. Space is central to the rake's mobility, which enables him to put a distance, literal and figurative, between himself and the nations, social norms, and characters who try to change him or make him conform to their rules. This autonomy may seem attractive to other characters and audiences, whose only opportunity to enjoy such freedom may be vicariously through the body and the actions of the rake. Desire for rake sovereignty can be so powerful, the rake's physical and linguistic charisma so intense, that it almost conceals the price that must be paid.

<sup>39</sup> The breaking of the fourth wall in this manner distances the viewer, like Horner himself, from the rest of the characters and their actions, creating a sense of alienation that forces viewers to actively—rather than passively—absorb, and interrogate, the play's characters and their social and sexual mores. Combined with the play's setting, which places the scurrility and creativity of Horner and his fellow characters literally and figuratively within contemporary England, this direct address does not let the viewer wiggle away from the implications of the characters' hypocrisies.

<sup>40</sup> As James Ogden argues in the introduction to the New Mermaids edition of the play, the impotence plot is one of the ways in which the play has been linked, per possible sources, to Terence's *The Eunuch*. Ogden notes that in one of the play's two plots a young man disguises himself as a eunuch and ravishes a

to obtain not only sexual pleasure but, just as essentially, revenge on the men through cuckolding.<sup>41</sup> His plan is so successful that everyone, including his friends Dorilant and Harcourt, is taken in. While most of the characters mock the seemingly transformed and vulnerable Horner, his friends comfort him with homosocial pleasures of drink and conversation, including railing at women. The former rake Pinchwife is, however, unaware of Horner's lie, and he tries to keep his new country wife Margery from Horner and the dangers of London. Horner, however, infiltrates all the boundaries placed before him to achieve his desire for sex and revenge. While the play's finale finds his lie discovered, he is still triumphant—able to continue his conquests. He is, however, forced to retain his supposed impotence because the other characters have found the lie beneficial to them. Horner's continued role as impotent will allow the women to enjoy sexual pleasure with him while maintaining their outward reputation for honor, and permit their husbands to pretend to be unaware of Horner's true state while they enjoy freedom from the burden of waiting attendance on and protecting their wives. The finale thus finds the formerly mobile Horner trapped, in a sense, yet he is also free to continue his transgressive behavior, as the dance of cuckolds that ends the play reinforces.

It is performance, and Horner's skill at it, that allows him to accomplish his remarkable spatial, sexual, and social maneuverings in *Wife*. A perceptive performer, he

---

girl, marrying her in the finale (xvi). Ogden argues that Ben Jonson's *Volpone* is another potential source: "There was also the example of the Jonsonian comedy of humours, with its simplified characterization, farcical elements, and satirical purpose" (xxvi).

<sup>41</sup> Ogden notes that there is another goal at work in Horner's masquerade. The guise of impotence will allow him to truly perceive which women are lusty and which are not, for, he argues of Horner, "He plans to fool everybody, especially the husbands, keepers, and guardians of attractive women; and to seduce the women, foreseeing that those who are disgusted by a eunuch will be fascinated by a rake" (xiii-xiv).

anticipates the desires of the other characters and performs the necessary role to win what he needs from each. For example, for anxious husbands such as Sir Jaspar Fidget he performs sexual impotence through outward signs—physical passivity and a sharp, even angry, wit—that they read as linguistic compensation for his sexual lack. Utilizing none of the honeyed language he may have employed in the past on both men and women to enact his seductions, he publicly employs the language of satire. For instance, when Sir Jaspar, Lady Fidget, and Mrs. Dainty Fidget arrive in 1.1 to experience for themselves the new Horner, he quickly attacks women, including Lady Fidget, with satiric vigor, even getting in a verbal stab at husbands, although he diverts Sir Jaspar's potential outrage at what might be a reference to his own condition by speaking generally of husbands and not specifically of him:

HORNER: I do know your wife, sir, she's a woman, sir, and consequently  
a monster, sir, a greater monster than a husband, sir.

SIR JASPAR: A husband! How, sir?

HORNER (*makes horns*) So, so. But I make no more cuckolds, sir.

SIR JASPAR: Ha, ha, ha! Mercury, Mercury! (1.2.79-84)

Sir Jaspar enjoys Horner's unmannerly speech, believing the lie that his sting is now only in his tongue. He seems particularly mollified since, while Horner does manage to get a jab in at husbands, much of this sting, here and elsewhere in the play, is directed at women in a misogynistic diatribe. While Sir Jaspar exhibits none of the overt, violent form of misogyny to women evinced by Pinchwife, his joy in this exchange, as in others, reveals, perhaps, a substratum of misogyny within him, pointing to a general attitude of

this kind on the part of the play's men, Horner included.<sup>42</sup> Because he knows his private acts can reverse their displeasure, Horner dares to displease his female listeners as well. As the conversation with Sir Jaspar and his party continues, Horner takes up Lady Fidget's response to the exchange above with a direct assault on the hypocrisy of the women of honor and of the English association of all things French with overt sexuality:

LADY FIDGET: Foh! he's but too much a French fellow, such as hate women of quality of virtue for their love to their husbands, Sir Jaspar. A woman is hated by 'em as much for loving her husband as for loving their money. But pray let's be gone.

HORNER: You do well, madam, for I have nothing that you came for. I have brought over not so much as a bawdy picture, new postures, nor the second part of the *École de Filles*, nor— (1.1.88-96)

For the men who are not his sexual rivals—Dorilant and Harcourt—Horner performs a rueful resignation of his change of status, along with an enthusiasm for the delights of male society. Shaping his language and his behavior to each character's desires, Horner fashions himself anew with each contact.

Horner's ability to anticipate the cravings and anxieties of the other characters also plays into the manner in which he constructs his lie of impotence. Sensitive to the tensions of mobility, Horner knows he has only to reference his recent trip to France and the unspecified accident that befell him there to play upon his fellow Englishmen's combination of insulation from, distrust of, and fascination with other nations and to provide a potent backstory for his supposed transformation from virile ladykiller to impotent eunuch. The belief that meets his lie reveals a very real anxiety over the

---

<sup>42</sup> As Walter Chernaik notes in *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature*, "The assertion of power, literally phallogocentric in *The Country Wife*, masks a fear of impotence and reproduction to a "female" passivity, no less marked in the priapic Horner, the play's Don Juan prototype, than in the play's collection of blind and foolish cuckolds" (3-4).

influence, actual or symbolic, of other nations over England and English citizens among the supposedly cosmopolitan London aristocrats and merchants.<sup>43</sup>

The story of the accident provided in the play's opening not only implicates the foreign in Horner's change, it intermingles English and French in a chaotic mix that betokens bi-national instability, for as his co-conspirator the doctor notes, "'You told 'em 'twas by an English-French disaster, and an English-French chirurgeon...'" (8). Because the accident is clearly marked as a fabrication, Wycherley reassures the play's audience that such national mingling is not the case, and is not, after all, actually damaging; he thus allows the audience to align with Horner and enjoy a sense of superiority over the easily gulled and xenophobic characters of the play who would condemn him not only for such a disaster but, by implication, its bi-nationality.

The profound nature of this association in Horner's lie not only makes places beyond England the imaginary source of disease, it also marks his own English body as hybrid—English and French, sexual and impotent—and as contaminated and abject. Horner may use the characters' prejudices regarding other nations against them, just as he utilizes their hypocrisies with respect to social and sexual roles as a way to blind them to his true intent, but in doing so he neglects the very real ways in which his playing out of difference and hybridity in his own body actually adheres to him. While he willfully constructs himself as other in order to gain the upper hand on the husbands and keepers, his lie rebounds on him, as the idea of contamination follows him. In consequence, the

---

<sup>43</sup> As Parfitt notes, Wycherley had spend time in France, and thus would not only have been experienced with the nation and its customs, but also with English attitudes towards the French, such as the long-standing association in much of English literature of France with sexual diseases (83).



figure of the rake that allows this contact with pollution, particularly a pollution that might be brought back to the nation by that figure, becomes questionable, as does the mobility that enables it. This idea is so pervasive that it plays out in actual reception of the play itself, with some critics focusing on Horner as a tainted, dangerous figure whose presence onstage spreads moral contagion to his audiences.<sup>44</sup>

To this anxiety regarding national borders must be added tension over the flow of capital over those same borders to feed a growing consumer trade in goods and, as all the plays discussed in this chapter reveal in various ways, bodies. Because the rake is usually white, male, and of relatively high social status he is less overtly positioned as a commodity than females or racial and ethnic others. However, his physical and transnational mobility is intrinsically bound up with the economic arena through either a possession of capital or a lack of it, with the former granting movement and independence and the latter limiting it. Just as the rake represents some of the more contested issues of national mobility, so too he becomes a nexus of concerns over England's growing economic power via its trade and colonies.<sup>45</sup> This economic

---

<sup>44</sup> In *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720* Jean Marsden notes that in his *A Short View of the Immorality, and Prophaneness of the English-Stage* (1698), an argument for the reformation of the stage, clergyman Jeremy Collier points to certain characters as particularly troublesome. Of these characters, eight are women and one is Horner (23). Since Horner is also linked, in some ways to Charles II, this connection of the sexually licentious rake with contagion could also form a send-up of the monarch's libertine behavior and the alignment of some of his lovers with the foreign. This is particularly so in the case of Louise de K roualle, who Nancy Klein Maguire notes in "The duchess of Portsmouth: English royal consort and French Politician, 1670-85" from R. Malcolm Smuts's *The Stuart Court and Europe*, was a descendent of Breton nobility, and who first appeared in England in 1670 (257). As Maguire argues, there was concern about her "perceived role as a French popish agent" (255).

<sup>45</sup> In *Male Fantasies*, Klaus Theweleit discusses capitalism as an assertive force, both fluid and obstructionist: "Capitalism brought about a comprehensive deterritorialization...it dissolved every previous order and code (religious, scientific, philosophical)...Like every dominant force that wishes to remain dominant, feudal capitalism (followed by bourgeois capitalism and the bourgeois state) took up the task of

distinction, along with the combination of national unity and international prominence, creates a sense, both positive and negative, of English citizens as global subjects—part of a vast network of economic, social, and cultural intercourse.

The position of the rake vis à vis money is also a site of contention: capital allows him access to a variety of spaces and consuming pleasures, while its lack limits him and his mobility—even transforming him into a commodity. Horner demonstrates the ways in which the rake's financial position is intertwined with his social and sexual selves and his physical and figurative mobility. As a man of relative wealth and high social status Horner is an ideal consumer, indulging fully in multiple appetites—whether drinking with Dorilant and Harcourt or viewing pretty women at the theatre. Horner's lie about his impotence may strip him of his sexual capital, but he retains his financial assets, making him an ideal companion for the women of honor, who then desire his company for the economic gains they can obtain from him at cards. As Lady Fidget remarks, Horner's relative wealth and lack of pressing business construct him as both bearer of a commodity—a full purse and time for games of ombre—and a commodity himself. A social companion for the women, he can, as they soon discover, also provide sexual pleasure as a lover. Even relatively early in the play Horner is positioned as both active and passive—man and item of trade—a move that begins to destabilize him by removing his masculine power, even his humanity. Horner's abundance in purse and rank may momentarily balance his perceived sexual lack, making him briefly acceptable, yet the responses of the characters reveal he is still received as a hybrid, almost monstrous,

---

blocking new possibilities, obscuring their existence, chaining them up, redirecting streams for their own benefit" (270).

creature.<sup>46</sup> Even Sir Jaspas Fidget's comment to Lady Fidget, as he seeks to push Horner as an ideal partner for her and a substitute for his own company, highlights the ways in which Horner assumes an in-between, othered position: "He loves play as much as you, and has money as much as I" (473). Sir Jaspas makes Horner not an individual with his own desires but a combination of his own appetite for finance and Lady Fidget's appetite for entertainment. Horner not only becomes a stand-in for both Fidgets and their appetites, he also becomes a hybrid of male and female and a human who is also a commodity.

The anxious mixture of Horner as consumer and Horner as commodity to be exchanged and consumed, a mixture that plays out in microcosm the growing reality of many Englishmen's and Englishwomen's lives under capitalism, is most clearly explored in the famous "china" scene in Act 4, scene 3. Surprised by her husband while visiting Horner's apartment for sex, Lady Fidget substitutes in her conversation the idea of Horner's china, his fine goods, for his sexual goods in order to disguise the true reason for her visit. Horner and Mistress Squeamish take up the code, discussing their sexual plans under cover of conducting a trade in Horner's china. In the process a luxury item

---

<sup>46</sup> Part of the anxiety provoked by Horner's creation of himself as a creature neither male or female may be because of his gender. While the impersonation of males by the women in *Marriage* moves females towards the male, here a male is moving away from maleness and towards femaleness. This anxiety could lead from an inheritance from the Renaissance and the construction of gender in the period. In "Feminizing Gender: Constructing the Hermaphrodite in Renaissance Europe" from *Body Guards* Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass argue that in the Renaissance period people believed that women might become men, but dismissed the idea that men could become women (84). They note the work of George Sandys and his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Sandys cites the example of women called Mary German who becomes a man. The end of Sandys's text reads: "But it is without out example that a man at any times became a woman. From whence we may derive this moral, that as it is preposterous in Nature, which ever aims at perfection, when men degenerate into effeminacy; so contrarily commendable, when women aspire to manly wisdom and fortitude" (85).

of trade, the china, comes to stand for a human being and his sexuality.<sup>47</sup> Significantly, the good chosen is “china,” not only a product that is both valuable and vulnerable, interesting per its association with Horner and masculinity, but also a product whose name evokes foreign trade and the foreign in general. Thus Horner become mingled with the foreign and the other. But because Horner is, despite his foreign travel, constructed as English, this is also a moment in which English masculinity is mingled indiscriminately with the foreign, alien other, moving this mingling beyond an individual to a national level. Another layer of tension is provided in the manner in which the human man is confused with a non-human trade good, dehumanizing him.

Finally, the fact that it is Lady Fidget and not Horner who begins this association of him and china, and that she and Mistress Squeamish then proceed to fiercely barter over the acquisition of this “china” despite Horner’s inability to provide more, for he admits “Upon my honour I have none left now” (4.3.193), begin to chip away at Horner’s management of the scene for his own maximum gain per both sexual pleasure and revenge. If so much of Horner’s mobile power within the play lies in control, a control enabled by the gender privilege, social rank, and financial status that grant him this command and the freedom to exercise it, this scene comically shows all the tables turned, as the women turn aggressors and stage managers and Horner must follow their lead rather than leading himself.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Ogden notes that the “roll-wagon” that Horner says he will have for Squeamish “another time” (4.3.204) is “a cylindrical china vase, somewhat phallic in appearance” (108).

<sup>48</sup> In *Sexual Freedom* Chernaik argues, “The notorious “china scene” in *The Country Wife*, with its string of double entendres, anatomizes a society in which sex is a quantifiable commodity both for women and for men, and in which, as in the model of human behavior proposed by Hobbes, all members of a society are

As this discussion of physical and national borders and economic and trade movements suggests, sex and the sexuality of the individual (rake) body is intimately tied to the national body and issues of nation, as well as the movement of commodities. To follow the former association first, it is after all sexual intercourse and its physical remainder—venereal disease—that has caused Horner’s supposed transformation, so once again Horner’s intercourse stands in for transnational intercourse and the anxiety surrounding it. For example, when Sir Jaspar and Lady Fidget discuss Horner in his presence, Sir Jaspar’s reference to Horner as a “mere eunuch” leads Lady Fidget to combine location, sexuality, and contamination in her response: “O filthy French beast! Foh, foh!” (1.2.100-101). Characters in the play several times refer negatively to France as a location that is particularly suspect due to its connection with a transgressive sexuality, while Old Lady Squeamish in discussing the new Horner both imagines him a castrato and makes Italy the site of altered bodies whose sexuality is a void: “They say he’s a merry, harmless man now, e’en as harmless a man as ever came out of Italy with a good voice...” (4.3.173-174). This sense of male sexuality and masculinity as imperiled by this fluidity of national borders and the movement of associated sexualities displays tension about real-life changes in gender roles and approaches to sexuality.

---

locked in an unceasing struggle for dominance, masked by the polite formulas of decorum” (5). He notes of the women’s fight over Horner’s “china” that “Quite explicitly, the passage equates the competitive and sexual drives, unmasking the unbridled, ravenous desire for dominance and sexual satisfaction which motivates these female libertines” (6).

The seventeenth century saw critiques of change—and the lack of change—in gender roles worked out in period texts.<sup>49</sup> Aphra Behn, author of *The Rover*, condemned the double standard of male roving and female containment and male liberty and female oppression visible in both real-life and in literary texts. Other critics focused on a sense that masculinity was in crisis, pinpointing very different areas of anxiety—from concerns over libertine sexual excess to imputations of effeminacy.<sup>50</sup> The plays featuring rakes display diverse responses to these various models of gender roles and sexuality, from more conservative responses that seek to shore up the status quo to more radical treatments that interrogate and destabilize that status quo.

Anxiety over masculinity was also tied up with concerns about male sexuality and changes in perception of male-male relations, played out in the uneasy mixture of competition and comradery displayed by the men in *Marriage, Wife, and The Rover*. The Restoration stood as a transitional period between the Renaissance's lack of definition for male-male sexual relations and the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, when a concept of homosexuality as a distinct identity evolved. Contrasting 1600 with 1700, Paul Hammond in *Figuring Sex Between Men* notes of the later period, “it is hard to find any literature which celebrates the male body homoerotically, while at the same time there is now a self-confident, self-defining subculture, with its own

---

<sup>49</sup> This was particularly true of theatre whose inclusion, as noted, of actresses allowed real male and female bodies to play out discourses of gender in a completely new manner than previously possible.

<sup>50</sup> The impact of this interrogation, often in literary form, along with social and religious developments, ranged from anxiety over male dress to tension surrounding male sexuality. For example, some Protestants, particularly the more radical dissenters, argued for less physical ostentation for men, a restriction which clashed with many males' overt occupation with fashion and style, epitomized by King Charles II. A lower rate of marriage and a higher rate of bachelorhood led to critiques of a perceived male effeminacy, while the promulgation of libertine texts, discussed and played out in works by writers such as John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, created a sense of overwhelming male appetite barely, if at all, contained.

meeting places (the ‘molly houses’) and its own language; meanwhile, one encounters an anxious insistence on the lack of eroticism in male friendships, and denunciations of ‘sodomy’ from groups such as the Societies for the Reformation of Manners” (1).

Contemporary authors such as John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, might offer a fluidity of object choice in work such as his poem “The Disabled Debauchee,” in which both boys and women are positioned as objects of the speaker’s desire, but this fluidity would be increasingly troubled and constrained.

The tension surrounding the more limited, fixed masculinity in this period, in concert with changes in femininity, can be tracked through the different nature of the characters’ reception of Horner’s various masculinities, from impotent eunuch to virile rake. Horner’s past is, as the other characters attest through discussion of his reputation, that of a cuckold, a past clearly proclaimed in his name.<sup>51</sup> However, Horner’s plan requires a break with that past, and a purposeful transformation to a new kind of human being who unites male and female components, removing signs of an aggressive and overt sexuality. The transformed Horner is male biologically, but his reputed impotence unmans him in the eyes of the other characters.<sup>52</sup> In a sense, his lack then positions him

---

<sup>51</sup> Like Behn’s rake Willmore, Horner carries a world of meaning—a play in himself—in his name. Both as noun and verb, “Horner” means to cuckold. In the noun form, the third meaning in the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* explicitly associates the name with the act: “One who cuckolds; a cuckold-maker.” Interestingly, the fourth meaning for the noun also implies a certain transgression: “A person who has been ‘put to the horn’ or declared a rebel” (“Horner”). Thus, “Horner” betokens transgressive behavior that is active, not passive—the doer, and not the one to whom the action is done. Horner’s name promises a distinct mobility that is, like that of most rakes, both actual and symbolic/figurative.

<sup>52</sup> This sense of a loss of his previous identity takes place in the difference from his excessive past sexuality to his perceived current lack. However, in invoking the image of the castrato, traditionally associated with Italian or French culture and performers, Wycherley again mixes issues of bodies and the foreign, and, perhaps, takes satiric aim at the popularity of these performances and modes of performance, contrasting

as female: biologically, in the sense that his ineffectual genitals lack the assertive will of his past self, and socially, for he is now figured as passive, vulnerable, and apart from the other men. This sense of removal from the specifically heterosexual masculine space moves him towards the women's social sphere and pursuits. The other characters are both repelled by and drawn to his resulting gender and sexual hybridity. A truly in-between creation, lacking any sense of distinct borders, the new Horner combines both masculinity and femininity, as well as a memory of sexuality and a distinct absence of it in the present. This Horner thus truly adheres to neither gender or any sexuality at all.

Just as the blending of nations in Horner's body serves to create a disturbing hybridity with far-reaching effects, so too Horner's sexual mobility creates a similarly destabilizing mixture—one that is more significant than he or we, the audience, might initially realize. While any actual change in Horner's sexuality is a chimera, the accumulated, largely negative, discourse of this change and its effects work to construct Horner, both for the characters and for the audience, as alien, unnatural, even monstrous. However, Horner's disguise simultaneously points to the character as more normative, rather than less, for the contrast with the foreign, such as the othered castrato, serves to make Horner seem even more firmly manly and thoroughly English. In this way Horner conforms to Hammond's argument about a move towards regulation, and with this regulation an increased sense of pleasure in and obsession with sexual hybridities, which is demonstrated in the avid attention of the other characters towards him. For Horner's supposed impotence and the alignment of him with the alien work to construct him as a

---

them with the truly virile nature of his hero Horner and the tradition of British comedy. In this manner he foreshadows Gay's ambivalent take on the popularity of the foreign opera in eighteenth-century England.



locus for sexual anxiety within the play, particularly on the part of the men. It also serves to transform him into a spectacle, subject to the visual and aural focus of the characters' gazes and their gossip.<sup>53</sup>

Responses by the play's male and female characters to Horner's sexual mobility and the resulting change in his social status reveal their own anxieties about mobility. The husbands, suspicious of the sexual mobility of rakes such as Horner, enjoy the idea that he is now, supposedly, contained by impotence. They also delight in the idea that by having lost his sexual prominence he has, in some manner, lost his status and been reduced to a social nothing, one who will be dependant, like a ward or a wife, on their benevolence, as Sir Jaspur emphasizes. While the husbands embrace the idea of Horner's transformation from sexual predator to sexual nothing, his friends welcome the idea, pushed by Horner himself, that his lack of focus on his sexuality and pursuit of women will instead be directed to them and the homosocial world, as Horner proclaims, "Well, a pox on love and wenching! Women serve but to keep a man from better company. Though I can't enjoy them, I shall you the more. Good fellowship and friendship are lasting, rational, and manly pleasures" (1.1.207-210). While none of the men openly embrace homoeroticism, there is a sense that Horner's forced separation from women means that the men can reclaim his society and energy for their own. The society women, who see his past persona as filthy and excessive given its attention to sexual appetite, see the present impotent Horner as useful only for his money, his economic

---

<sup>53</sup> Horner is aware that he is the object of such attention, and he courts it in order to bring the objects of his seduction and his revenge into his grasp. As part of this strategy he has already attended the theatre, as his discussion with Harcourt and Dorilant reveals in 1.1, where he was the focus of the audience's gaze and conversation.

liquidity.<sup>54</sup> However, when they learn that the impotence is only a performance, and that they will be able to enjoy him sexually while maintaining their social status—their honor—with no repercussions, the society women reveal ravenous appetites of their own. Initially the predator, Horner becomes, at least in some manner, prey, truly making him the passive, defenseless figure he pretends to be.

Wycherley constructs Horner as one of the most intriguing and dangerous characters in Restoration drama, one who showcases the sexual and intellectual power of the rake; yet at the same time he is one of the most vulnerable—after all, he is forced to remain a social outcast and a eunuch in the play’s end. Most dangerously for the ways in which the rake and the nation are associated and the former plays out the anxieties of the latter, Wycherley hints that at the bottom of the rake’s energetic, often successful, mobility is nothing at all. Even the rake’s sexuality, the seeming font of his power, is in question, for Horner’s sexual desire reads as so overwhelming that it begins to no longer register, and his seemingly powerful drive for sexual mastery is all too easily overtaken by the women’s desires, demonstrating his limits.

Horner’s lack of desire may provide evidence for an argument that his true interest may lie in the homosocial, even homoerotic, space, as so much of his energy is devoted to revenge on men rather than sex with women. However, this argument is complicated by the manner in which he does not seem to want to share the homosocial space, at least with Dorilant and Harcourt, for he does not bring them into his plan, and

---

<sup>54</sup> For instance, when Sir Jaspar has persuaded Lady Fidget that Horner is safe, due to his impotence, but also desirable, given his full purse and love of games, she sees an opportunity to not only enjoy his money, but revenge on his past behavior through taking away that money: “Then I am contented to make him pay for his scurrility; money makes up in a measure all other wants in men.—(*Aside*) Those whom we cannot make hold for gallants, we make fine” (2.1.505-508).

his pretended enjoyment of the manly pleasures he discusses in 1.1, seems to be false, an enthusiasm that is feigned to put them off the scent of his true desires.<sup>55</sup> One can also argue that Horner is, on some level, not lying at all in his pose as impotent, and that he actually is what he pretends to be. He is emotionally, if not sexually, unable to connect authentically with either women or men. If this is the case, then masculinity, particularly the hypermasculinity of the rake, is certainly in peril, or has, at the very least, been shown as deflated, brought down to earth, made foolish.<sup>56</sup>

As a result of his performance of impotence and its bi-national association Horner registers in sum as a disturbingly hybrid figure, and his body as a place of both excess of sexuality and lack of sexuality. He remains an Englishman, but because of his travel and the association of his disease and his transformed sexuality with France and Italy and non-normative figures such as the castrato he is also connected with the Continent. While he retains some of his mobility as a traveler who moves from place to place and sexual partner to sexual partner, he has also been corralled, and his individuality, even his humanity, leached away by the implication that he is now a sexual possession for the ladies of honor. In his various performances—shuttling from nation to nation, public space to private space, consumer to commodity, hypermasculine to effeminate, stage manager to managed, wit to fool—Horner comes to occupy all, and truly none, of these

---

<sup>55</sup> Horner swears to his friends, “Come, for my part I will have only those glorious manly pleasures of being very drunk and very slovenly” (1.1.238-239). While Dorilant is convinced by Horner’s arguments against love and his avowed preference for drink as a superior object for a man’s time, Harcourt’s love for Alithea makes him desire to balance out these “manly pleasures” with “some of those pleasures you call effeminate too. They help to relish one another” (1.1.211-213).

<sup>56</sup> For as much as Wycherley comically builds up Horner in the opening, showing him a master director of the other characters and a master performer himself, he also undercuts the character repeatedly as part of his overall satiric goal—to expose the foibles and hypocrisies of society.

physical and figurative locations. He is everywhere and everything, and yet he is nowhere and nothing—for in occupying all positions he destabilizes them or cancels them out. As such he encapsulates the promise and perils of a mobile masculinity pushed to excess, an idea whose more serious implications the final author of this chapter, Aphra Behn, explores in her approach to the rake and his appetites in *The Rover or, the Banished Cavaliers* (1677). Despite the play's overall comic tone, a close reading of *The Rover* reveals that Behn is more careful than either Dryden or Wycherley to underline the perils of the rake, that is, the multiple repercussions, financially, socially, and emotionally, of his misbehavior.<sup>57</sup>

*The Rover* offers a female 'take' on mobility and the rake provided both in the vantage of its female author and in the play's focus on its female protagonists and their perspectives. *The Rover* both celebrates and critiques the transgressive movements of the rake. The play concerns the comic and romantic activities of a group of women and men in carnival time in Naples. The primary female protagonists are Hellena, a spirited young woman destined for the nunnery, her older sister Florinda, pledged to a rich, elderly man, and their cousin Valeria. The women take advantage of the carnival time to masquerade, concealing their true identities as ladies of high rank and wealth in order to enjoy the social and sexual openness of carnival. They encounter three English cavaliers who are

---

<sup>57</sup> While I concentrate in the main on the texts rather than the authors of these texts, it's important to note a few aspects of the state of gender relations, particularly as far as women and publication, in the period per the nature of Behn's experience and how this transmits to 1. Her ability to stage and publish a play such as *The Rover* and 2. How these gender relationships play into her treatment of gender within the play. As Gerald Maclean notes in the introduction to *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration*, one of the results of the Civil War period was that there was greater interrogation via debate and print of political and religious authority, and one of the results of this was a questioning of gender codes: "Legally defined only in relation to men, as daughters or wives, women from all walks of life evidently found that the cultural climate of the 1640s and 1650s was conducive to speaking and writing both as women and as socially responsible agents" (12), and that this continued into the Restoration.

visiting the city: Willmore, a charming, inconstant rake; Belvile, an honorable young man who won Florinda's heart in a previous encounter; and Frederick, their friend, all banished for their service to an exiled prince. They are joined by Blunt, a gull who is the only one of the men who has any money. When the two groups encounter each other, Hellena instantly engages Willmore's attention. However, this attention is soon distracted with the beautiful Angellica Bianca, an Italian courtesan from Padua who breaks her vow of emotional detachment and falls in love with him. Florinda and Belvile reignite their past passion, while Frederick court Valeria, and Blunt falls prey to a courtesan and her partner, who proceed to rob and humiliate him. The play ends with Willmore finally vowing constancy to the witty Hellena, and all the cavaliers winning their ladies, to the dismay of their kinsman, Pedro.

Like Dryden's, Behn's setting of her play in a foreign location serves to distance the audience from the characters and their anxieties while creating the voyeuristic pleasure of examining an exotic, far-flung world and its unfamiliar rituals. Yet the smokescreen of the play's foreign setting also provides Behn greater freedom to explore social and sexual regulation in a serious manner and to open up the implications of the characters' behavior beyond the Naples of the play's world to address contemporary England.

The sense of the foreign is coded directly onto the characters due to their various nationalities; this not only creates a rich stew of diverse, exotic peoples for the English audience to enjoy, but also creates tension between these characters based on the vexed relations between these nationalities specified within the play. Florinda, Hellena, and

Valeria are of Spanish origin but call Naples, ruled by Spain in this period, their home, while Willmore, Belvile, Frederick, and Blunt are English. Yet just as the play establishes the rank and nationality of its characters it shows the characters utilizing performance to change them, emphasizing the importance of all manner of mobility in Behn's fictional world. This is particularly apparent in the women's masquerade, which allows them to, momentarily, escape the restrictions placed upon them and explore other social and sexual possibilities than those dictated by their family and socioeconomic status.

Nationality and the foreign are vital concerns of Behn, and her title hints at her play's engagement with mobility and the sense of transnational discourses situated in its characters, particularly in Willmore, Belvile, and Frederick—the banished cavaliers. Their back story of banishment clearly mirrors Charles II's long European exile, and like him they carry a sense of the exotic and other about them. The play thus mixes elements of the specifically English and historic—Charles's exile—with pure fantasy in setting and story, the latter borrowed from Thomas Killigrew's *Thomaso, or the Wanderer* (1654). Behn presents a comic adventure that is both English and other, simultaneously close to the social and sexual lives of its audiences in its nearly contemporary time period and its topical references and yet distanced by its foreign setting. This sense of fantasy and distance is amplified by the play's setting during the fantastic time of carnival—which provides an opportunity for sexual upheaval and role reversal. In this manner the anxieties raised by the play can more easily be overcome, although the tension created by

the actions of Willmore are significant and thought-provoking, lingering beyond the play's finale.

If the rake is, by nature, a wanderer, *The Rover*'s banished cavaliers are in a state of perpetual mobility that is both exhilarating and troubling. The fluidity of the characters is almost metaphysical in origin, for they serve a leader who, as Willmore notes, "...reigns still lord of the watery element" (1.2.63). The mysterious, almost superhuman, background of the English cavaliers creates an additional fantastic element to the play and its treatment of the rake, and another way in which Behn can distance the social and sexual interrogation found within the play from imputations of a direct critique that might place Behn, already in a tenuous position as a professional writer given her gender, under even greater scrutiny and criticism.

While *Wife* positions Horner as an Englishman potentially contaminated by his contact with the foreign, *The Rover* positions the Englishman Willmore and his friends themselves as foreigners in Naples, even as their nationality parallels that of their English audience. However, unlike Horner the hybridity offered by Willmore and his friends—particularly the manner in which it encompasses multiple national contacts—is viewed as largely positive. Yet Behn also notes the more problematic aspects of the cavaliers' sexual adventures in Naples, from the ways in which their presence threatens to destabilize the locals' economic and social regulations to the manner in which the proud and independent Angellica is damaged both in heart and pocketbook by the careless Willmore. These disruptions are, however, treated mildly, for the play overall treats the

Englishmen, despite their defects, as admirable and their cause noble, a reflection of Behn's Tory leanings.

In fact, the actions of Belvile, Willmore, and Frederick, particularly their carrying away of the sexual and economic prizes of Naples in the persons of heiresses Florinda, Hellena, and Valeria, seem to stand in a fictional manner for England's military and economic victories and international influence in the period. The women's kinsmen Pedro protests the social and economic violation of the cavaliers' act, which removes such valuable merchandise from the local men and economy, arguing, "Was't not enough you'd gain Florinda (which I pardon'd) but your leud Friends too must be inrich'd with the Spoils of a noble Family?" (5.1.505-507). However, in Belvile's reply Behn positions the Englishmen in the right, "Yet, Sir, my Friends are Gentlemen, and ought to be esteem'd for their Misfortunes, since they have the Glory to suffer with the best of Men and Kings; 'tis true, he's a Rover of Fortune, yet a Prince aboard his little wooden World" (5.1.511-512). Belvile's lines emphasize the true rank of the cavaliers, positioning their value in their heroism and sacrifice and not in their status or wealth. Belvile's reply, in fact, begins to establish the idea of the English gentleman, whose rank and purse may be somewhat variable but whose honor and decency are marks of true nobility and worth. Behn positions the cavaliers as stand-ins for their English audience, arguing that Englishmen, particularly Tory Englishmen, are intrinsically valuable, so much so that everywhere they go they should be, and are, valued. This value is tied in Belvile's line to that same mobility that Pedro finds negative, an argument for English mobility that complicates the more negative approach to the mobility of the English male in *Wife*.



While the men move from location to location with ease, the social and financial effects of the men's exile complicate their mobility and highlight the connection of rakes physical and national mobility with trade and consumption. The play repeatedly associates the cavaliers in both a positive and negative manner with commerce, consumerism, and commodities in their encounters with the alien mercantile world of Naples. The city is clearly a consumer landscape, in which goods and services, even bodies, can be traded and sold. The men expressly come to Naples to enjoy consumption, not only per wine and women but also, like early tourists, the general consumption of the culture and traditions of another country. The setting in carnival, a time of rampant appetite in preparation for the deprivations of the Lenten season, provides the perfect backdrop for these multiple layers of consumption and free exchange of desire. Willmore's desire, expressed in his first entrance, to "enjoy myself a little this Carnival" (1.2.65) speaks to a world of leisure and spectacle from which the characters, and through their adventures the audience, can derive pleasure. A few lines later, Willmore connects physical mobility, commerce, and sexual entertainment in lines that serve to further underline his character as a supreme libertine: "Love and mirth are my business in Naples, and if I mistake not the place, here's an excellent market for chapmen of my humour" (1.2.73-75).

However, the pleasure of the cavaliers is constrained, as their lack of funds means that their ranging appetites must be limited.<sup>58</sup> Far from home and the power and privilege

---

<sup>58</sup>Blunt underlines their lack as he ironically points to the ways in which their lack of financial freedom actually provides them greater liberty, in contrast to his greater financial stock, which actually limits his spending of financial and sexual capital: "But, gentlemen, you may be free: you have been kept so poor

gained through high rank and rich estates, the men are vulnerable. Displaced and disinherited, they do not have the power to choose mobility, unlike the wealthy Horner, but are instead forced to it. This vulnerability calls particular attention to the link between the men's economic mobility and gender and sexual mobility and the containment of both, and it bears some similarity to the limitations placed on the female characters' free expression.

The intersection of the economic and the sexual is stressed in the manner in which women's bodies and men's bodies, in both overt and more subtle ways, become commodities in the commercial world of Naples. Some women's bodies are openly for sale, particularly those of women who lack the power of rank or wealth. The prostitute Angellica Bianca is the clearest example of open trade in female bodies, although most of the other female characters are, in some manner, also on the market, from the thief Lucetta, who uses her body to snare gulls such as Blunt, to the women of quality—Florinda, Hellena, and Valeria.<sup>59</sup>

---

with parliaments and protectors that the little stock you have is not worth preserving; but I thank my stars, I had more grace than to forfeit my estate by cavaliering" (1.2.45-48).

<sup>59</sup> Behn highlights the connection of trade, gender roles, and sexual desire in the opening of the play, with Florinda poised between two possible arranged matches, neither of which is to her liking. The sense of the young mobile body constrained by the restrictions of the older male father echoes *Marriage*, although here the bodies are female, not male. Florinda and her sister Hellena emphasize how little control the women have of their own bodies, with Florinda possibly intended for a rich, but elderly, man who has made his fortune in the Indies, and Hellena for a nunnery. The women demand a fair trade for their beauties and a chance to exercise their own will in trading, with Florinda arguing for Belvile as a proper recipient of the commodity of her self:

PEDRO: Yes, pay him what you will in Honour -- but you must consider Don Vincentio's Fortune, and the Jointure he'll make you.

FLORINDA: Let him consider my Youth, Beauty and Fortune; which ought not to be thrown away on his Age and Jointure. (1.1.75-78).

While the trade of the women of quality is private and familial, that in Angellica Bianca is public, open to all. The location of this open trade in bodies abroad in Naples and not in the audience's own home of London becomes a way for Behn to condemn the practice in general, while distancing her audience from this trade as alien and literally and figuratively distant. Similarly, the surprised reaction of some of the Englishmen to this open trading critiques sale in general, but also allows for a moment of distancing from such action close to home. Blunt, the parsimonious country gull who is associated with Puritanism as opposed to the royalist-linked cavaliers, argues that this open commoditization of the body is typical of a foreign—which he connects with barbaric—practice. His line combines sexuality, sale, and a critique of Catholicism in a xenophobic blend: “Sold! What impudence is practiced in this country! With what order and decency whoring's established here by virtue of the Inquisition!” (2.1.96-98). The body of Angellica is so clearly made a commodity that Willmore speaks of buying shares in her with the help of his friends, and then reselling what is left on the open market: “Faith, madam, my stock will not reach it, I cannot be your chapman. Yet I have countrymen in town, merchants of love like me: I'll see if they'll put in for a share; we cannot lose much by it, and what we have no use for, we'll sell upon the Friday's mart, at 'Who gives more?'" (2.2.43-7).

While female bodies are made commodities, the play also overtly transforms male bodies into commodities. This is particularly true of the cavaliers, who have little but their talents with their blades, their wit, and their charm to offer. As Pedro notes when Florinda tries to argue for Belvile, the cavaliers' worth is only in their bodies: “what

jewels will that cavalier present you with? Those of his eyes and heart?" (1.1.80-81).

This vulnerability aligns the men with the women, placing them, at least momentarily, in a similarly powerless situation and removing the full advantages of rake mobility, just as Horner's lie does to him. Of course it is Belvile's "eyes and heart," just like those of Willmore and Frederick, that will be the selling points for the women, who use the freedom they can obtain from their purses to gain the men, and for the audience, encouraged to sympathize with the poor, yet admirable, cavaliers.

Yet the male characters are also clearly commodities as well, none more so than Willmore, the one who is, like Horner, the most rakish male onstage. This sense of the rake as a commodity is also tied to nation when, in their first meeting, Hellena teasingly connects Willmore's emotional lack, inconstancy, and his nationality. He asks her to guess what he might like to part with, as he has no money, and she says, "I have a parlous guess 'tis some foolish heart you mean, an inconstant English heart, as little worth stealing as your purse" (1.2. 143-145). While Hellena's words are meant to undercut Willmore and, by extension, tease a less-than-heroic version of English masculinity, the play's action and overall themes argue that the (inconstant) English heart does, however, have value: both in a general sense, as the victory of the cavaliers in the finale indicates, as well as in a specific sense, as both Hellena and Angellica prove in their battle for Willmore.

This battle of the wealthy women for the impoverished man places Willmore as a commodity, particularly since he takes both Angellica's gold and, in marrying Hellena in the play's finale, a part of Hellena's fortune. This transformation of Willmore from

active will to passive commodity is ironic given his statement to Angellica that he, unlike she, will not be sold: “Yes, I’m poor; but I’m a gentleman,/And one that scorns this baseness which you practice./Poor as I am, I would not sell myself,/No, not to gain your charming high-prized person” (2.2.52-55). However, these lines are complicated by the knowledge that Willmore is vying for Angellica’s attention and sympathy, using his mobile tongue to persuade her to give away her goods to him for free. As her treatment of Willmore reveals, Behn clearly sees the rake, even more than the other characters, as a commodity, one who is of great value, a compliment to the men in her audience, but is also, in a sense, the greatest prostitute—and most abject—of all.

If Behn’s treatment of the rake’s relation with trade is complicated and ambivalent, so too is the manner in which she treats performance. As Behn makes clear, performance can be limiting as well as liberating: a form of regulation as well as a method of avoiding regulation. Behn’s setting of the play in a time of carnival, like Dryden’s masquerade, creates a particularly porous sense of gender and sexuality, as well as social and national roles, and characters move from one position to another quickly, although not always easily, and certainly not permanently. Both the women of honor and the cavaliers disguise their own identities in order to enjoy themselves, the women as gypsies and the men in vizard masks. Disguise grants the women the masculine prerogative of free physical and sexual mobility, although they, and the audience, are aware that this is only temporary: the carnival time, and the freedoms associated with it, will soon end, and characters who have chosen unwisely within the carnival space may

have to endure the repercussions of these decisions when the carnival is over. This is true not only for the female characters, but for the males as well.

While Horner in *The Country Wife* is, at least initially, in control of his mobility of gender roles and sexuality, Behn displays Willmore as much less in control and more liable to be treated as a fool by the other characters, particularly Hellena, who often outmaneuvers him. If Horner is shown as a stage manager par excellence, although one ultimately discovered, *The Rover* shows Hellena, not Willmore, as the character who can best control various roles and, with those roles, her fate. Behn seems, in fact, to offer an argument that women might assume the mobility of the rake, if only for a short space and time.<sup>60</sup> Yet while time and time again Hellena shows herself to be a master of performance to compete with the likes of Horner, the finale of the play similarly contains her mobility, perhaps even more definitively than Horner is restrained. If Horner is forced to maintain impotence, a role that he did not intend, he is at least left free to roam unmarried and, seemingly, unchecked. Hellena is not, a patent reference to the inequalities between men and women, although Behn clearly shows that she freely chooses marriage over a less pleasurable containment, that of the nunnery.

Yet while it is Hellena who is the true performer, Willmore reveals a rakish capacity for it that draws her, and the audience, to him, amazed at his combination of guile, bravado, and dumb luck. His most spectacular performance is his wooing of

---

<sup>60</sup> In her introduction to the Oxford English Drama edition of *The Rover* Jane Spencer notes that there are a couple of references that seem to directly point to Hellena's desire to be like Willmore. I would agree to a point—certainly if one was to make an argument for a female rake, Hellena would be a likely candidate. Note, however, that while Hellena says that she wants to be free-floating and inconstant, that she quickly gloms onto a man and then uses all her guile to keep him—this is more like the behavior of a reformed rake or non-rake. Her libertine career is very contained—which would fit Behn's interest in, but critique of, the kinds of inconstant and passionate behavior of the rake/cavalier type.

Angellica, leaving with not only her heart but her money, before he moves on to Hellena, who appreciates his capacity for performance: “Now, if I should be hanged, I can’t be angry with him, he dissembles so heartily” (3.1.140-141). While Hellena appreciates this slipperiness of rake performance, Angellica and other characters do not, particularly the ways in which the temporary nature of this performance allows the rake to assume one role and then another, disregarding responsibility for what is done in each guise as easily as he throws off a mask or cloak. The message of the play and the treatment of the rake is thus ambiguous, even ambivalent, at times.<sup>61</sup>

As the plays discussed in this chapter reveal, the rake is an anxiety-causing figure who reflects the contested nature of national mobility. While this mobility might bring positive advantages, just as the rake’s mobility offers challenges to old-fashioned rules, from making them overt to breaking them apart, the creative destruction of the rake’s mobility also gestures to the problems of this mobility. Crucially, while national mobility and its anxieties shape the rake, the rake’s complex, even contradictory character and behavior shape the nation through the limited, yet pervasive, effects of his charismatic and ambiguous figure. While texts that feature rakes can work to control him, the far-reaching effects of the rake on the popular imagination is less easy to contain, as Wycherley, Dryden, and Behn so clearly recognize, guaranteeing his continued presence, albeit with alterations, in the national imagination and in the nation’s theatres, as the next chapter, on the rake in eighteenth-century theatre, explores.

---

<sup>61</sup> Behn underscores the dangerous social and sexual disruptions caused by rakes and the tendency to dismiss this damage due to the figure’s abundant charm and his willingness to throw over the status quo’s restrictive structures in order to create, at least in the play’s fantasy world, a place where both men and women can obtain their erotic desires and reshape their destinies as they see fit.

**CHAPTER III**

**CONSUMING DESIRES: THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RAKE IN THEATRE**

**AND *THE BEGGAR'S OPERA***

As detailed in the previous pages, my second chapter, “Mobile Desires,” deals with the emergence of the rake in seventeenth-century theatre and the manner in which this fictional figure’s transgression of borders real and figurative, social, political, and economic, plays out the real-life anxieties and aspirations of audience members in an emerging British empire. Universally at stake in the seventeenth-century development of the rake figure, despite differences across texts, is identity—an individual and national British identity formed against the backdrop of internal strife coupled with international expansion. The rake’s polyvalent characterization and behavior, encompassing both a conservative, seemingly homogenous, model of British masculinity and a more radical heterogeneous model, containing elements of the foreign, the feminine, and the other, gestures to the similarly mixed state of a nation intent on constructing itself as united, yet acknowledging, even celebrating, a hybridity of diverse peoples and histories. The trope of the rake’s literal and figurative mobility explored in John Dryden’s *Marriage à la Mode* (1671/1673), William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675), and Aphra Behn’s *The Rover* (1677) serves to construct and interrogate this evolving identity, particularly in rake contact with the foreign, whether this foreign be specifically other lands, bodies, and customs, or simply a general sense of the alien and other.



The eighteenth-century rake, like his earlier prototype, shores up his era's political, social, and economic mores and, simultaneously, challenges them, doing so in a manner similar to, yet different from, that of his predecessor, and generating both anxiety and excitement. The key text of this chapter—John Gay's ballad opera *The Beggar's Opera* (1728)—particularly evinces a sense of raised stakes surrounding the characterization and behavior of the eighteenth-century rake, reflecting contemporary tensions regarding changes—real and perceived—in gender, sexuality, and social rank. The first text considered in concert and contrast with *The Beggar's Opera* is Richard Steele's early sentimental comedy *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), which I use as a bridge from Restoration style and mores to the eighteenth century, as well as a lead-in to *Opera*. The second comparator text is Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780), a late eighteenth-century work whose marriage of wit and sentimentality anticipates the late nineteenth-century plays of Oscar Wilde.

While mobility was the trope through which I read the rake and his liminal identity in the seventeenth century, this chapter introduces the tropes of consumption and criminality as central to the hybrid nature of the rake's characterization and behavior. These tropes are not, however, new. As evidenced in chapter two, themes of consumption and criminality are easily located in Restoration plays, and Restoration rakes are associated, on some level, with both. Examples of the former include the transformation of the rake and his sexuality into a commodity as we saw with Horner in *The Country Wife* and the positioning of the cavaliers in *The Rover* as consumers of both wives and riches. Criminality, at least a general trespassing of mores, can be recognized

in Horner's repeated acts of deception and cuckolding, which violate multiple social and sexual injunctions. It can also be found in *The Rover* in the English cavaliers' transgression against the political and military forces within their home, resulting in their exile. In addition, the cavaliers' winning of the wealthy Hellena, Florinda, and Valeria, whose bodies and fortunes are intended for other suitors, circumnavigates patriarchal regulation and is, in a sense, piratical, calling to mind in a fictional, microcosmic sense the real acts of piracy practiced by English privateers against other nations in this period.

Yet while consumption and criminality are certainly part of the identity of the seventeenth-century rake, these elements are amplified in the key rake of this chapter—Macheath, the highwayman protagonist of *The Beggar's Opera*. He typifies the interlocking social, political, economic, and cultural changes that profoundly affected—positively and negatively—the nation, and which were then played out through the figure of the rake.<sup>62</sup> These changes, both national and international, included a growth in trade as Britain became a global economic power; an increase in the variety and amount of consumer goods and, with them, consumers and consumerism; the industrialization and urbanization of the countries—England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland—that by 1707

---

<sup>62</sup> In *Eighteenth Century Characters* Elaine M. McGirr argues for a transformation in the nature of characters in this period as a response to the complex intersection of political, social, and economic changes: “By the end of the eighteenth century, Britain’s was a commercial (rather than agrarian) economy. Trade brought wealth and power; it fostered an Empire. The growing affluence of [Adam] Smith’s “shopkeepers,” by which he meant the entire trading class, from East India merchants to ribbon sellers, gave them both political and cultural clout. If Britain were a nation of shopkeepers, then shopkeepers defined what it was to be British” (10-11).

made up Britain, with England particularly affected; and the continuing claims to the throne by the exiled Stuart dynasty.<sup>63</sup>

The tropes of consumption and criminality addressed onstage in *The Beggar's Opera* echoed real-world debate over the perception that both consumption and crime had mushroomed as a result of the nation's progress towards modernity. Contemporary discourses focused, for example, on the sense of political corruption and graft surrounding public figures such as the powerful Prime Minister Robert Walpole; the specter of economic criminality, as seen in the mishandling of trading corporations and subsequent widespread public ruin, most infamously in the case of the South Sea Company and the 1720 South Sea Bubble;<sup>64</sup> and criminality as defined by stringent eighteenth-century law in a period when crime, particularly in urban areas, grew substantially.<sup>65</sup> As Gerald Howson notes in *Thief-Taker General: The Rise and Fall of*

---

<sup>63</sup> As Robert W. Jones notes in *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, there had been a sea change in the issue of consumption: "It had still been possible during the early seventeenth century for people to represent their purchases as if they were not commodities; but by the end of the century the expanding market had introduced too many new goods and too many new consumers for such patrician disclaimers to have any credibility. It is this crucial conflict between aristocratic and non-aristocratic forms of taste and consumption, which, as J.H. Plumb suggests, marked the emergence of a recognizably commercial, bourgeois modernity" (4).

<sup>64</sup> In the essay "John Gay's Polly: Unmasking Pirates and Fortune Hunters in the West Indies" Robert G. Dryden notes Gay's personal stake in this fiasco: "A massive sell-off ensued and Gay, along with thousands of investors, suffered catastrophic losses. Following the South Sea debacle, investors quickly learned that the company had been a sham all along, a pyramid scheme designed to entice investors into buying shares in a fantasy" (542).

<sup>65</sup> As J. Paul Hunter notes in "The Poetry of Occasions" from *A Concise Companion to The Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, "Life in London—where an increasing percentage of English men and women lived—was getting crowded, publicly uncomfortable, and more and more dangerous; even those whose class and wealth provided generous living spaces found themselves endlessly jostled and threatened in the streets..." (205). Not only the amount of crime but also the severe repercussions for it grew in this period. Punishment by death or transportation were frequent.

*Jonathan Wild*, a biography of the probable model for Gay's Peachum, "Since about 1712, a great wave of crime had been gathering momentum in southern England, and had reached its climax in the 1720s, as a sort of underworld chorus to the "South Sea bubble" and the other social and moral disorders at that time disturbing 'the King's Peace'"(3).

Underneath these political, economic, and legal wrongdoings, and connecting all of them, lurked the slave trade, the most significant form of consumption and criminality in the period, which funded not only Britain's internal evolution, but also the growth of its empire.<sup>66</sup> While many period texts deal only marginally, if at all, with slavery itself, the issue of the sale and consuming of bodies haunt their peripheries. Such is the case of *The Beggar's Opera*, whose underworld characters may not be slaves per se, nonetheless, Gay repeatedly emphasizes the actual or figurative exchange of bodies for profit. For example, the play specifically deals with the consuming of bodies in the prostitution trade, while the general idea of slavery—of losing one's will and one's body and becoming a consumable—is never far beneath the surface, particularly as the punishment for a number of different crimes was transportation and forced labor. As Gay reveals, in a capitalist consumer society everything—and everyone—is ultimately for sale.<sup>67</sup> Thus while the title of my second chapter is "Mobile Desires," this chapter is called, with all the pleasure and terror the title connotes, "Consuming Desires."

---

<sup>66</sup> In "*John Gay's Polly*" Dryden quotes David Dabydeen, who argues that "The slave trade [during the eighteenth century] was of vast economic importance to the financial existence of Britain. It was the revenue derived from slavery and the slave trade which greatly helped to finance the industrial revolution" (27).

<sup>67</sup> Slavery is, however, openly addressed in *Beggar's* sequel *Polly*, in which Macheath has been transported and Polly follows him to the West Indies. There she is sold into the household of the landowner Ducat by Diana Trapes.

Consumption and criminality were also depicted in multiple ways in all the art forms of the period, including theatre—whose attraction, though still potent, was threatened by the growing popularity of other entertainments and an increasing need to compete for the public’s leisure spending.<sup>68</sup> As Margaret Baur-Heinhold notes in *The Baroque Theatre: A Cultural History of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, pleasures such as the Italian opera and pantomime with their opulent sets and fanciful costumes, staging exotic, often fantastic, stories set in faraway places offered immense visual variety for patrons coupled with a chance to escape from reality. Such spectacle contrasted starkly with the relative visual simplicity and focus on language—specifically wit—of theatre. To attract patrons theatre managers could innovate technically, playing to this desire for spectacle by developing new staging techniques, or seek a shift in content, departing, for example, from the lusty wit and upper class settings of many Restoration comedies to move toward the restrained manners and bourgeois settings increasingly popular in eighteenth-century plays.

The plays of writers such as Steele mark a shift in the period towards the sentimental or exemplary drama, which appealed to a sense of moral rectitude in its Manichean characterizations and produced a profound sense of affect in both characters and audiences. Sentimental drama appeared early in the century, and then became a central form later in the century in both plays and novels.

---

<sup>68</sup> These other entertainments included pantomime and opera, including the Italian opera, which Gay draws on seriously and satirically in *The Beggar’s Opera*. Steele too addresses the popularity of the opera and, through the lines of his virtuous heroine Indiana, argues for a return to native drama: “... though in the main, all the pleasure the best opera gives us is but mere sensation. Methinks it’s pity the mind can’t have a little more share in the entertainment. The music’s certainly fine, but in my thoughts there’s none of your composers come up to old Shakespeare and Otway” (2.2.44).

In addition to considering changes in staging and content to lure theatregoers, canny managers could also engage star actors to provide added spectacle and elicit emotional affect. The promotion of certain actors as stars, and the cultural and economic effects of such promotion, marked a significant shift in not only theatre but in popular culture itself.<sup>69</sup> Such promotion locates the star as both a site of cultural contestation, a place to work out diverse, even contradictory, concerns, and as a locus for commercial interests, the latter including not only selling the play itself, but also numerous merchandising opportunities associated with it and its stars.<sup>70</sup> While the seventeenth century, like the sixteenth, had its famous actors, the construction of stardom really took hold in the eighteenth century, a development that had a profound effect on the figure of the rake and his connection with consumption, particularly since rakes were so often played by stars or created as star-making roles.<sup>71</sup> The result was an increased sense of the rake figure and the actor who played him as commodities.<sup>72</sup> To an extent never previously imagined, the rake, on multiple levels, could now be sold.

---

<sup>69</sup> In an essay entitled “Reified Object or Emergent Professional? Rethorizing the Restoration Actress” from *Eighteenth-Century Theatre* Deborah C. Payne explores the ways in which the objectification and professionalization of actresses were part of the late seventeenth century move towards the primacy of the visual. Objectification diminished actresses, yet in also amplified them due to their prominence in the public sphere. Similarly, professionalization has dual function (16). While Payne’s discussion focuses on females, the argument can apply as well to males.

<sup>70</sup> In his work on stars in *Stars*, Richard Dyer has argued, “From the perspective of ideology, analyses of stars—as images existing in films and other media texts—stress their structured polysemy, that is, the finite multiplicity of meanings and affect they embody...” (3).

<sup>71</sup> The seventeenth century had certainly been aware of the potency of its actors—male and female—to draw audiences. For example, Wycherley notes the lure of attractive actors in sexy, dynamic roles through the lines of Margery Pinchwife in *The Country Wife*, while theatre critics such as Jeremy Collier devoted essays to the fearful power of these actors and their roles over potentially malleable audiences.

<sup>72</sup> *The Beggar’s Opera*, for example, spawned a good deal of merchandise. As Cheryl Wanko notes in an essay entitled “Three stories of celebrity: ‘The Beggar’s Opera’ “biographies” from the journal *Studies in*

While the theatres engaged actively with consumption through these strategies, they could also be connected with criminality literally and figuratively—an association that, at least in the eyes of critics, increased the dangerous allure of theatre and its potential to corrupt a vulnerable public. Illegal activity from robbery to prostitution occurred in the area around—and likely in—the theatres, located, as Erik Bond notes in *Reading London: Urban Speculation and Imaginative Government in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, in “the Town”—a liminal space between government in Westminster and the financial center of the City. The area was, as Bond describes, largely “unregulated” (220), and a location in which people of a variety of social classes and professions mingled: “During the eighteenth century, the Town was characterized by bohemian artistry, rampant crime and poverty, and most importantly, London’s theatres” (220).<sup>73</sup>

Criminality could also be found in the characters and plots of the plays performed in the Town, from *The Beggar’s Opera*, peopled entirely with criminals and illicit acts such as robbery and prostitution, to individual characters such as the highwayman Gibbet in George Farquhar’s *The Beaux Stratagem* (1707).<sup>74</sup> In dealing overtly with discourses

---

*English Literature*: “The play’s main characters and the actors who portrayed in them were celebrated in verse, reproduced in prints, and advertised as appearing on china, screen, and fans—some of the first theatrical memorabilia” (481).

<sup>73</sup> In Gay’s poem “Trivia, or: the Art of walking the Streets of London” (1716), which takes the reader for a picaresque tour of the capitol, it is in the Town that the reader encounters the rake: “Here roams uncomb’d, the lavish Rake, to shun/His Fleet-street Draper’s everlasting Dun” (Bond 54). Here consumption meets criminality, the one the result of the other, embodied in the form of the rake—the excessive and transgressive male too fond of style to pay attention to the balance book.

<sup>74</sup> On another level, it is important to also consider theatre itself as an art form that consumed texts, and one of the only ways for writers to make a good living in both the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Writers such as Gay depended on this to survive, as did earlier writers, particularly as patronage was unreliable and political. As Paul Baines notes of an earlier writer in *The Long 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, “Dryden, however, had maintained alongside his court position a successful career as a dramatist. In the seventeenth century,

of consumption and criminality, the former so often leading to the latter, the theatre paralleled other contemporary arts that dealt with the fascination and fear of moral corruption and financial lack. In the area of the fine arts, for example, William Hogarth's series of paintings, later engravings, discussed in the introduction—"A Harlot's Progress" (1731/32) and "A Rake's Progress" (1732-33/35)—showed eighteenth-century society its own vice-ridden, diseased face, embodied in the ironic "progress" of the paintings' prostitute and rake protagonists. In fiction, the works of writers such as Daniel Defoe explored the nature of a modern capitalist society in which economic need can easily lead to the sale of the body in prostitution or the appropriation of capital through robbery, practiced by the protagonist of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), or piracy, pursued by the protagonist of Defoe's *Captain Singleton* (1720).<sup>75</sup> The growth in the print industry in the period meant that such texts—visual or written—easily circulated within the nation and its colonies, carrying the discourse of consumption and criminality with them.<sup>76</sup>

Contemporary playwrights dealt in various ways with these changes in the nation's social, political, and cultural nature, including its focus on consumption and criminality. Some playwrights disavowed the more disruptive and disturbing repercussions of these changes to focus on sentiment and good manners, as in the case of Steele in *The Conscious Lovers*. Other playwrights exposed the outright lust at the heart

---

writing for the stage was the only effective means of making money from literature, partly through regular "benefit nights", on which the takings went to the author, and partly through publication of the plays" (7).

<sup>75</sup> Defoe's texts continued seventeenth-century precedents, such as Richard Head's *The English Rogue*, first published in 1650, and other literature dealing with both native rogues and foreign picares.

<sup>76</sup> The texts themselves were often produced without the permission of the author and thus pirated—forming another layer of criminality and pointing to the effects of a market constantly hungry for new reading material by any means.



of the transformed nation, as Gay does a handful of years later in *The Beggar's Opera*. Such diverse responses matched the similarly divided nature of the nation. As Robert W. Jones notes in *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, “Current thinking about eighteenth-century Britain has suggested a country, and more ambiguously a ‘culture’, anxious to come to terms with its dual identity as a society both ‘polite and commercial’, or in Richard Steele’s more mordant expression, ‘the most polite age and the most vicious’” (37).

It was the former that Steele emphasized in his own work, using his plays, as he did his other literary output such as his work with Joseph Addison in *The Spectator*, to argue for social and moral restraint. As Shirley Strum Kenny notes in the Introduction to the Regents Restoration Drama edition of *The Conscious Lovers*, Steele’s approach is driven by a desire to morally instruct his society: “In the *Spectator* he continued to urge drama which would promote moral and social improvement. Finally, in *The Conscious Lovers* he embodied his fully developed dramatic theory. His stated intention was to create ‘an innocent performance,’ by which to instruct his audience through ‘the effect of example and precept.’ He created moral characters to illustrate their virtues through actions (example) and instructive dialogue (precept)” (xviii). Steele fulfills this didactic purpose in *The Conscious Lovers* in the character of Bevil Junior, the play’s male protagonist.

*The Conscious Lovers* concerns the adventures of the virtuous Bevil Junior, whose primary duties are to be a good son to his father, Sir John Bevil, whilst maintaining his care for, and developing feelings towards, a young orphan, Indiana, whom he rescued while traveling abroad. Because his father has arranged a marriage for

him with Lucinda, the daughter of the wealthy merchant Mr. Sealand, Bevil Junior is torn between duty to his father and his love for Indiana. Lucinda is likewise torn between her love for Myrtle, Bevil Junior's hot-tempered friend, and the desires of her parents, her father favoring Bevil Junior and her ambitious mother the cold, avaricious Cimberton, who considers Lucinda's best gift her fortune, and who examines her as he would a handsome mare for breeding. The play's third pair of lovers consists of Tom, Bevil Junior's servant, and Phillis, Lucinda's maid—a couple whose lusty wit and equally lusty kisses contrast with the polite language and proper behavior of their master and mistress. The play ends with Bevil Junior poised to marry Indiana, discovered as Sealand's missing daughter and inheritor of half his fortune, Myrtle united with Lucinda, and the general celebration of all the characters with the exception of Cimberton, who has, finding Lucinda's fortune only half its previous strength, declined his interest in her and departed.

Despite Bevil Junior's rather scandalous behavior—hiding an attractive female orphan he is romancing and lying to his father about it, for example—the play reveals that both are done with the best of intentions, and Bevil Junior is awarded both the hand of his beloved and the approval of his father. In contrast to his Restoration antecedents and to Gay's later Macheath, Bevil Junior is a male protagonist drained of aggressive sexual appetite, skill in trickery, and individualist drive, a difference conveyed on every level, from his behavior to his language—which conveys the wish to honor, not seduce,

women.<sup>77</sup> What remains is a virtuous, yet bland, hero. This diversion from Restoration comedy and its rake protagonist was intentional, as Kenny notes:

Steele offered two reasons for choosing his style of comedy. First he contended that laughter, the response produced by ridiculing foolish characters, was an inferior reaction based on scorn, and he preferred to address himself to the goodness of the heart. Second, he argued that Restoration comedy often made disreputable characters, particularly rakes, attractive rather than ridiculous. Bevil was designed by him and accepted by his audience as a repudiation of characters like Dorimant, the rakish hero of *The Man of Mode*. Ridicule could still be used 'to bring Pretenders and Imposters in Society to a true Light,' but exemplary characters, Steele believed, offered a better means to encourage good morals and manners. (xix-xx)

Steele does keep aspects of rakish energy and ambition alive in his play, but he does so by displacing them from Bevil Junior, the upper class, romantic leading man, to the lower class Tom, a servant and a secondary character. By displacing the cheeky charm and vital energy of the rake from Bevil Junior to Tom, Steele exorcises the former of bodily desire and other appetites that are now, seemingly, typed as suitable only in the lower social ranks. He also places a distinct line between honorable, almost spiritual, love, located in Bevil Junior and his love for his virtuous Indiana, and bodily love and saucy language, located in Tom and his romance with Phillis. Steele may thus produce echoes of the witty interplay of Restoration males and females in his play, but only in the less hegemonic, more abject bodies of the servants, as if to argue that such behavior is

---

<sup>77</sup> For example, in 2.2 Bevil argues that a man can have a disinterested friendship with a woman in order to help her; Bevil argues of such a man "He is only one who takes more delight in reflections than in sensation. He is more pleased with thinking than eating" (2.2.46). Basically, he argues that such a man can still be a man and not love any of the usual pursuits of a man of his rank and background (pursuits such as dogs, cards, dice, "bottle companions", "loose women," etcetera).

only appropriate in those of a lower rank who are peripheral as far as political and social power.<sup>78</sup>

If in his characterization of the period as “the most polite age and the most vicious” Steele focuses on the former; Gay, in contrast, foregrounds the latter. In *The Beggar’s Opera* he exposes the age’s ferocious appetites, not simply laying bare the fascination and horror of consumption and criminality on an individual level, but expanding the sense of their taint to a national, even global, level—indicting everyone from the Prime Minister down. The play is set in a London underworld of beggars, thieves, whores, and highwayman in which Peachum, a thief-taker and dealer in stolen merchandise, and his friend Lockit, the jailor, are the two primary powers. Peachum’s daughter Polly has secretly married the highwayman Macheath, a rake who has also romanced Lockit’s daughter Lucy, leaving her pregnant. In addition, Macheath has relationships with a number of the town’s prostitutes, including Jenny Diver. When Peachum and his wife discover the marriage, they plot to have Macheath arrested and executed, and a number of Macheath’s compatriots, from Jenny to Jemmy Twitcher, a member of his gang, inform on him. Macheath seems destined for the gallows, but a reprieve in the play’s finale saves his life. Together with Polly, he leads the dance that ends the play.

---

<sup>78</sup> Although even this open treatment of desire, albeit in a limited manner, is critiqued. Humphrey, the faithful old servant of Bevil’s father tasks Tom and Phyllis for, in effect, aping their betters in manners that, like the clothes the servants wear, are simply cast-offs, cycling from master to servant and, finally, consigned to nothing. Humphrey would like to see such manners follow the pattern of the clothes: “Very well, sir. I hope the fashion of being lewd and extravagant, despising of decency and order, is almost at an end, since it is arrived at persons of your quality” (1.1.16).

Peopling his entire world with criminals, Gay connects directly with the reality of consumption and criminality through the fantasy world of *Opera*. In doing so he both heightens and normalizes criminality, making it simultaneously horrific and yet everyday. Given the anarchic, gritty state of the Town, Gay's choice may appear to have the advantage of evoking the familiar, even if the effect is certainly not expected or natural. Yet Gay's deployment of criminals and criminality is not a simple manner of gathering the life outside the theatre and making it the focus inside—an interesting, but limited, reversal. Instead, Gay's decision works on both a literal and figurative level. By putting criminals onstage Gay reveals what is already inside the theatre: not only identifiable criminal elements such as the thief and prostitute who work the auditorium but, crucially, the other “criminals” who are in attendance—for example, the politicians, captains of industry, and slave owners—who now see themselves onstage in the guise of Gay's extraordinary, yet startlingly real, characters. In this manner the audience members themselves, directly or indirectly, are connected with the corruption displayed in Gay's stage world and its implications.<sup>79</sup>

One of the primary ways in which Gay places this corruption and criminality center stage is in his presentation of his protagonist Macheath, *The Beggar's Opera's* rake-highwayman, a character whose extreme hybridity creates a fractured vision of stage masculinity. Through Macheath Gay reveals the divisions in an eighteenth-century culture divided between wit and sentiment, politeness and viciousness. Similarly, the

---

<sup>79</sup> In “John Gay's *Polly: Unmasking Pirates and Fortune Hunters in the West Indies*” Robert G. Dryden argues that in both *The Beggar's Opera* and *Polly* Gay “focuses on the economic implications of social relationships; however, in *Polly*, he advance the argument one step further by metaphorically paralleling the behavior of English subjects with the behavior of the English empire” (549).

hybridity of Macheath echoes an England both comforted by its union with its fellow countries as Great Britain and disturbed by the implications of these new countrymen who are also, in a way, foreigners, and who are not only over the border but within the country itself.

Through an exploration of select aspects of Macheath I examine how the character both continues and complicates past visions of stage masculinity and speaks to the trajectory of theatre and nation in the early portion of the eighteenth century. I begin by examining the ways in which Macheath is a combination of a more recent version of stage masculinity—the sentimental hero—with an older version of masculinity, the Restoration rake of wit and appetite. I then discuss Macheath's association with erotic desire as both an active desirer and as a passive object of desire, a spectacle for both male and female characters and for the audience to enjoy. Finally, I consider the manner in which Macheath presents an exotic, if disturbing, hybrid nationality, embodying both the Scottish and the English, the other and the self, as well as a hybridity of rank, muddling high and low, criminal, aristocrat, and gentleman. In tracing these elements of Macheath, I follow threads of rake construction and behavior I have traced in the rake figure since the Restoration, while noting the ways in which Gay's construction of Macheath departs from and complicates these threads, as well as the manner in which Macheath's hybrid, liminal identity anticipate the characterization and behavior of future rakes.

Gay constructs Macheath as a character who is both familiar, as a fusion of recent and older male stage types, and yet unfamiliar. For example, Macheath contains aspects

of the sentimental hero of Steele, and he is similarly associated with emotional affect.<sup>80</sup>

Yet in his sexual appetites and his frequent transgression of social and sexual mores Macheath also contains echoes of the Restoration rake, even as he differs from that antecedent. For Macheath's profession of highwayman grants him none of his Restoration antecedents' socioeconomic privilege, and while the latter's transgressions are excused due to high socioeconomic status, Macheath has no such immunity, thus marking him as a much more vulnerable figure.

The two scenes I discuss show both aspects of Macheath, the sentimental man and the rakish man, at work, with the second scene, and man, undercutting the first given their order. Taken together, however, the scenes not only empathize Macheath's hybridity, but satirize both the sentimental, exemplary hero and the narcissistic, appetite-driven rake. The first scene in Act 1, scene 13, marks Macheath's first appearance in the play and sets the tone for Gay's ironic treatment of the character. Macheath has already been established, through the previous conversations of the other characters, as a disjunctive character. For one, he is a highwayman and a criminal, a man of low status,

---

<sup>80</sup> The rake Gay creates embodies a variety of literary references both foreign and local, culturally high and low; together, this combination creates a figure who looks back to previous literary figures and yet is, in his unique mixture, unlike anything previously presented. As a highwayman he references the rogue, the wandering, often criminal, character of lower class origins—drawing from both the Spanish picaresque and the English rogue tradition. As a romancer of woman he draws on another Spanish progenitor, Don Juan, along with the rakes of the English stage, such as Horner in *The Country Wife*. There are also touches of the knight errant in Macheath's combination of skill with arms and romantic disposition, drawing on a heroic romance tradition dating from works such as the Arthurian stories of Sir Thomas Malory to the knights of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. However, while these earlier character portray a stable sense of masculinity and overt chivalry, Macheath's character is notably unstable, portraying not heroism alone but also, at times, a sense of the mock-heroic—making him closer to the mad knight of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* than to the noble Lancelot or Red Cross Knight. The result is an extreme disunity of characterization simply on the basis of literary referents alone, while Macheath's divided, ambivalent characterization and behavior and the ironic manner in which Gay treats him serve to highlight romance and heroism as not only hopelessly idealized but disjunctive in themselves.

and yet he keeps company, as Peachum notes, with gentleman and lords, and is himself an aristocrat of a sort in this underworld kingdom. Second, he may have married Polly, committing himself to her, but, as Mrs. Peachum notes, “I am in doubt whether he hath not two or three wives already” (1.9), which would invalidate this marriage and undermine this commitment.<sup>81</sup> Yet the language and behavior of the character who enters the stage to serenade Polly seems simply that of a sentimental, affective protagonist, a hero who appears unshakably honest.

MACHEATH: Pretty Polly, say,  
When I was away,  
Did your fancy never stray  
To some newer lover?

POLLY: Without disguise,  
Heaving sighs,  
Doating eyes,  
My constant heart discover.  
Fondly let me loll!

MACHEATH: O pretty, pretty Poll.

POLLY: And are you as fond as every, my dear?

MACHEATH: Suspect my honour, my courage, suspect anything but my love.—May my pistols miss fir, and my mare slip her shoulder while I am pursu’d, if I ever forsake thee!

POLLY: Nay, my dear, I have not reason to doubt you, for I find in the romance you lent me, none of the great heroes were ever false in love.  
(1.13)

As the scene progresses and Polly reveals that Macheath is in danger from her parents, who seek to profit from his death, the lovers swear their love and constancy numerous times. They finally part, as the stage directions note, “Parting, and looking back at each

---

<sup>81</sup> The character’s language not only echoes the sentimental hero of Steele, but also recalls the chivalric language and heroic behavior of the romance. There are touches of the knight errant in Macheath’s combination of skill with arms and romantic disposition, drawing on a heroic romance tradition dating from works such as the Arthurian stories of Sir Thomas Malory to the knights of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*.



other with fondness; he at one door, she at the other” (1.13). This affective interchange appears to offer a true, authentic love match between two constant characters. Yet, as time will tell, it is no more than a scene: a staged performance from Macbeth, who proves himself here a skillful performer.

For a mere three scenes later the viewer sees a very different side of Macheath, one that recalls the rapacious sexual hunger of the rake and the joy he takes in deceit, even as the extent of Macheath’s desire, if not his deceptions, outstrips that of the rake. Macheath congratulates himself for his success in fooling Polly, just as he contemplates gathering his doxies to him: “What a fool is a fond wench! Polly is most confoundedly bit.—I love the sex. And a man who loves money, might as well be contented with one guinea as I with one woman” (2.3). He sings again, to the tune “Would you have a young virgin,” a song whose language of erotic seduction contrasts with the constancy he just voiced in his song with Polly. His dialogue emphasizes his libertine nature: “I must have women. There is nothing unbends the mind like them. Money is not so strong a cordial for the time” (2.3). Despite his earlier embodiment of the role of sentimental hero, here is no Bevil Junior, committed to a single woman, but a Willmore or a Horner, driven to pursuit. Yet Macheath’s sexual transgressions go beyond even his rake antecedents, not only in the volume of his seductions, visible as he gathers his host of doxies to him, but in his transgression of legal and social mores, for unlike Horner or Willmore he is a married man, possibly married many times over.

This gap between Polly’s perception of Macheath and the man presented to the audience forms a disjunction that undercuts a sense of Macheath as a sentimental hero,

the man constant in language and in body; instead, it reveals the sentimental male as simply a persona to be assumed and then rejected by Macheath whenever he desires. By implication, Macheath's behavior, in which the sentimental is simply a hollow pose, threatens to undermine any serious treatment of the sentimental hero or drama and its effort to exemplify a proper, authentic masculinity. Macheath reveals a comfort with performance and an emotional distance from the other characters, as well as from emotions in general, that maintains a throughline from the alienation of Horner's seventeenth century rake to the eighteenth century, and a further departure from the upright Bevil, who maintains even a momentary white lie with reluctance. However, a significant difference exists between the control of performance that earlier rake characters such as Horner wielded and Macheath's relative lack of control, for as the play goes on, Macheath is revealed to have little control of the other characters, a lack of power that could spell his destruction.

The conclusion of the scene with the doxies highlights this loss of control and the vulnerability of Macheath. After wining and dining the doxies, he discovers that two of them—Jenny Diver and Suky Tawdry—have betrayed him to the law. Macheath lashes out at the women for their deception, saying, “Was this well done, Jenny?—Women are decoy ducks; who can trust them! Beasts, jades, jilts, harpies, furies, whores!” (2.5), language that reveals his surprise, as it also reveals a misogynistic side to Macheath that contrasts strongly with the sweet, courteous language he displayed in his earlier scene with Polly. While Macheath reacts angrily to their betrayal, he is little different—he may not betray other characters for coin, but in the arena of love he is the ultimate deceiver.

Together, the scenes work to emphasize Macheath's connection with the tropes of consumption and criminality I am following throughout this chapter. Both consumption and criminality are highlighted in Macheath's appetite for the doxies and his investment in the illegal trading of bodies via prostitution. Yet he is not the only character engaged in such consumption and criminality, for in the women's betrayal of him Macheath himself becomes a commodity, traded for financial reward. Similarly, Peachum and Lockit fight over the opportunity to gain by Macheath's imprisonment. The two men bring out an account-book and discuss him not as a person but as a source of profit. As Lockit notes, "In this last affair, brother Peachum, we are agreed. You have consented to go halves in Macheath" (2.10).

Through the betrayals of Macheath, first by Jenny and then by Jemmy Twitcher, and the ways in which the other characters portray him as simply a piece of goods, Gay demonstrates that the rake's dominance meets its match in the forces of capitalism. Macheath cannot control the machinations of Peachum and Lockit, he can only attempt to escape them—efforts that repeatedly prove futile.<sup>82</sup> The limitations of the rake, who in the Restoration so easily manipulated other characters using a combination of his social cachet, charisma, and control of language, are here outlined. Macheath may be the putative ruler of the underworld thanks to his own glamour, charm, and style, coupled with the brute force and industry of his gang, but Gay reveals that he has no true

---

<sup>82</sup> In "Varieties of Eighteenth-Century Sensibility," Northrop Frye notes that "In the intensely laissez-faire climate of eighteenth-century capitalism there is little emphasis on what the anarchist Kropotkin calls mutual aid: even more than the nineteenth century, this is the age of the work ethic, the industrious apprentice, and the entrepreneur: the age, in short, of Benjamin Franklin. A laissez-faire economy is essentially an amoral one: this fact is the basis of the satire of Mende ville's Fable of the Bees, with its axiom of 'Private Vices, Publick Benefits'" (30).

command. Power lies instead in Peachum, the financial nexus of the underworld, and in Lockit, who as the force of law and order stands between the underworld and the rest of the world. This sense of Macheath's vulnerability and lack of control speaks not only to the character's individual dilemma but to the trajectory of the rake figure, as his alignment with aristocratic privilege and the power and rule of the monarchy is complicated and diminished. Macheath's loss of power reveals that the older form of privileged masculinity and class power with which he was associated in the Restoration holds little water in the new world, socially and economically—a bourgeois world of commerce.

While Macheath is presented as a sought-after commodity, and thus objectified, he is also objectified in the manner in which he is offered as a sexual object for both the characters within the drama and the audience. Macheath's characterization as a glamorous, attention-getting man is constantly reiterated by the language the other characters use about him, language that also serves to fix him as the focus of the audience's attention. For example, the play's female characters from Mrs. Peachum to Polly and Jenny Diver to Diana Trapes repeatedly acknowledge Macheath's glamour and magnetism.<sup>83</sup> Even the men note his pull, both for the women and for themselves, finding him a dashing and heroic figure of homosocial, possibly homoerotic, appeal. While the presentation of Macheath as a focus of desire works to place him figuratively center stage, giving him a prominence within the play that other characters, who are not singled out in this manner, lack, the manner in which he is presented not as active subject

---

<sup>83</sup> For example, in 1.4 Mrs. Peachum notes, "...sure there is not a finer gentleman upon the road than the captain!"

but as passive object—an attractive, often vulnerable, spectacle—diminishes his power, just as his alignment with goods dehumanizes him and threatens to remove his subjectivity. Macheath’s metamorphosis in the text and in the eyes of the audience from active actor to passive spectacle is encapsulated in Polly’s monologue in Act 1, scene 12, in a moment which both increases Macheath’s potent glamour and creates him as a vulnerable victim. Learning that her parents plan to “take off” her husband, Polly vividly imagines the result, inviting the audience into the sensory experience of this possible future:

...—Methinks I see him already in the cart, sweeter and more lovely than the nosegay in his hand!—I hear the crowd extolling his resolution and intrepidity!—What vollies of sighs are sent from the windows of Holborn, that so comely a youth should be brought to disgrace!—I see him at the tree! The whole circle are in tears!—even butchers weep!... (1.12.23-24)

The moment is crafted as a fantastical spectacle, with Polly playing out in her imagination a romantic, affective version of Macheath’s possible fate.<sup>84</sup> The moment reveals the queasy mix of Eros and Thanatos in the genres of romance and sentiment, serving as both acknowledgement of the potency of romance/sentiment and a critique.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> In his discussion of Gay’s use of ballads, Newman notes the ways in which Mrs. Peachum’s song “Cold and Raw” shows that what excites the sensitive female spectator is not the innocence or native beauty of the desired object, as in D’Urfey’s song, but rather the artificial sweetener of the noose” (25). The lines of the song read “If any wench Venus’s girdle wear,/Though se be never so ugly;/Lilies and roses will quickly appear,/And her face look wond’rous smugly./Beneath the left ear so fit but a cord/(A rope so charming a zone is!)/The youth in his cart hath the air of a lord/And we cry, ‘There dies an Adonis!’” (1.4). There is a suggestion of sadism here, as in Polly’s speech.

<sup>85</sup> In its mix of an erotically thrilling yet morbidly imagined experience, Polly’s endangered Macheath also seems to anticipate the Gothic hero of the later 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century hero, the man of sensibility, romance, and danger. In his discussion of the work of Byron and his indebtedness to Gothic thriller writers such as Monk Lewis, Ann Radcliffe and John Moore, Frye notes that these males were “...sometimes a villain, sometimes presented in a more sympathetic, or more-sinned-against-than-sinning, role, but in either case misanthropic, misunderstood, and solitary, with strong diabolical overtones. The

Crucially, in this imaginary space Macheath is the central actor, but he is also the central object. The audience gets to share in Polly's desire for the body of the endangered Macheath, first through her dialogue, as she paints a picture for us of this affective scene, and then in the actual sight of Macheath about to be led to gallows in the play's finale, surrounded by the women.

As Macheath nears execution as the play comes to its close, Lucy and Polly enter to bid their farewell to him in a scene that promises the full emotional affects of sentimental drama and positions Macheath as a spectacle of vulnerable masculinity. As Macheath bids the women a tender farewell, their lines emphasize the deep emotion created by the scene. Polly says, "How can I support this sight!" (3.15), to which Lucy replies, "There is nothing moves one so much as a great man in distress" (3.15). The threesome sing together tenderly, although the sentimentality of the scene is leavened with satire a moment later as the Jailor announces, "Four women more, captain, with a child a-piece! See, here they come" (3.15). Macheath replies, "What—four wives more!—This is too much—Here—tell the sheriff's officers I am ready" (3.15). In this moment Gay materially represents the end result of Macheath's eroticism—not simply passion but children, a reality that Macheath is unwilling to face. Here the dramatic, erotic spectacle of the vulnerable male becomes a different kind of spectacle—one of comedy.

---

devil is a powerfully erotic figure, his horns and hoofs descending from the ancient satyrs, and the various forms of sadism and masochism glanced at in these thrillers helped to make them extremely popular, not least with the female reading public" (60, Northrop Frye's *Writings on the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*).

This presentation of Macheath as an erotic figure and as a spectacle of desire creates a number of issues that complicate not only the development of the rake figure, but the relationship of viewer and rake. First, as noted, it emphasizes the rake as object rather than subject, stressing the ways in which he is controlled, rather than in control, the consumed rather than the consumer. This lack of control relates to the rapacious forces of capitalism within and without the play. It also speaks to the demands of an eighteenth-century consumer society hungry for new entertainments and sensations, in which context the characters in *The Beggar's Opera*, as the text itself, become objects to be consumed, onstage or on the page. The alignment of the rake figure with consumption, particularly with a consumption that is aligned with the scopic, anticipates the voyeuristic relationship of the viewer and the film rake in my later chapters, and the positioning in those film texts of the rake figure as a spectacular, erotic object who evokes both desire and, in the desire for a male body that is othered, anxiety. While Macheath's white body is not aligned with the same tension of racial and ethnic difference of the film rakes I discuss in chapter five, the fact that Macheath's body is, in some ways, an othered, transgressive body, both as a criminal (a legal other) and as a Scot (a national other) complicates the viewer's voyeuristic pleasure in viewing his body, for to have desire for Macheath's body is to have desire for the other.

In his alignment with the foreign and the other, Macheath echoes earlier rakes such as Horner, similarly aligned with the foreign, and yet complicates this alignment, for while Horner is English, despite his connection with foreign lands, peoples, and, potentially, diseases, Macheath is not so clearly connected with the self. Macheath's

hybridity, the manner in which he is made a social, cultural insider and outsider simultaneously, begins with the national hybridity proclaimed in his name, as a number of critics have noted. While *The Beggar's Opera* is set in London, Macheath's Scottish name, which literally means "son of the heath," may herald him, at least ancestrally, as a Scot. As such, Macheath is a foreigner, albeit part of the greater "family" of countries making up Great Britain, a familial relationship solemnized in the 1707 Act of Union combining Scotland, Ireland, and Wales with England.<sup>86</sup> In his name Macheath embodies a mix of nationalities, as well as a combination of the urban and the rural that speaks not only to a divided rake figure but, on a larger scale, to the divided state of the nation.

This aura of the foreign surrounding Macheath can be read as both positive and negative. Macheath's Scottish connection is an overt reminder of the nature of Britain as a strong, diverse, melting pot, and Macheath's ascension to the leadership of his gang displays a kind of upward mobility, at least in the microcosm of the gang, that seems to indicate a level playing field for all.<sup>87</sup> A more negative reading of the hybrid Macheath,

---

<sup>86</sup> As Leith Davis notes in *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation 1707-1830* the effects on England and Scotland of the union were quite different: "For the English, the unification of Scotland and England meant a readjustment of national identity, but one made less threatening by the fact that they had not seen themselves as a pure ethnic nation; the absorption of Scotland was accompanied by some ethnic tension (the Scots, especially the Highlanders, were categorically seen as less civilized), but England remained the seat of economic and legislative power. For the Scottish national identity, however, the consequences of union were more dramatic" (5-6).

<sup>87</sup> These observations serve to paint Macheath as an outsider, even an alien, a sense that is reinforced when one considers that Macheath's Scottish name can serve to reference the exiled Stuart dynasty and their claims to the English throne. Yet Macheath's hybrid nature can also be argued to connect him to the power of hybridity as a positive, enriching source, in the union of the diverse, but seemingly united, countries of Great Britain. Thus although Macheath seems to function, in some manner, as an outsider, he can also be argued to be an example of the growing financial and political strength of this union, whose strength derives from the very diversity of its urban and agricultural riches, as well as the diverse talents of its people. In a sense, Macheath seems to be a model of the perfect British subject, showing all the enterprise



however, would move backwards for a moment to consider the anxieties surround the English rake Horner in *The Country Wife*, a tension that largely springs from this rake's very physical contact with the foreign and the imputation of disease he thus carries. From this treatment of Horner one can then consider how these anxieties might be complicated, even amplified, in the hybrid figure of Macheath. For Macheath has not only visited a foreign country, his body itself is foreign—as if he has internalized the foreign influence that proves so fascinating and repellant in Horner. Unlike Horner, however, Macheath's "foreignness" is much closer to home, making it both less dangerous and, possibly, more insidious: implying a certain naturalness surrounding hybridity, which now becomes the norm.

The sense in which Macheath is rooted to hybridity, in fact embodies it, is emphasized by the genealogical implications of "son of the heath." Son literally and figuratively of the open land and of Scotland, Macheath is rooted to the social and political state of the land and connected to the complicated founding of the optimistically-termed "Great Britain." Despite such seeming rootedness, Macheath is, however, not rooted to the land or to any distinct sense of family. While his name specifies him as a son, his progenitor is a blank. Macheath, crucially, is a fatherless-son, and while *The Beggar's Opera* has two powerful, influential fathers—Polly's father Peachum and Lucy's father Lockit—Macheath appears entirely without kin and the

---

of mind and spirit, as well as the physical strength and bravery, to make his way successfully in a difficult world—not only succeeding by himself, but leading a group of similarly-minded individuals to group success. This mixture of brains and brawn is bruted to be the keys to Great Britain's financial and political success on an individual scale—the successful, self-made man—and to its international expansion, in the cooperation of such men in industrialization and trading enterprises. In this manner, the self-made man Macheath mirrors the innovation and power of the nation itself.

financial and political force such family might wield.<sup>88</sup> As Mrs. Peachum notes when she reacts angrily to Polly's marriage to Macheath, "If you must be married, could you introduce no-body into our family but a highwayman?" (1.8.16). Certainly Macheath's profession as a highwayman offers a problem, but here Mrs. Peachum locates the difficulty of Macheath in the idea that as a hybrid character with a mysterious history he is both a problematic somebody, a highwayman, and nothing at all—a "no-body" who is figuratively a ghostly, non-native presence with little real social footing in London, the economically, politically, and culturally powerful capital.

This rootless aspect of Macheath as a character who seems to spring from nothing and nowhere has a metaphoric aspect, but it is also connected with distinct economic and social realities of the period, particularly changes in the national landscape such as the enclosure acts, which work to gradually reduce access to common lands such as heaths and turn away the people who farm them.<sup>89</sup> Thus in addition to its other possible meanings, Macheath's name reminds audience members that the heath, formally a democratic space open to all as an economic resource and travel throughway, is

---

<sup>88</sup> The issue of parentage is often a problem for rakes, who are separated from their actual parents and their immediate family, from their inheritance, or from a larger sense of family—their community or "fatherland." Polly and Lucy, in contrast, have fathers who are all-too present and represent the general force of parental authority (patriarchy), as well as specific bulwarks of power in the underworld—the broker and the jailer; they also represent the major forces of the capitalist state, standing for the forces of trade and law.

<sup>89</sup> Enclosure had not only local economic and social consequences, the entire project was connected with national ideas of economic and social change. As J.M. Neeson notes in the Introduction to *Commoners: Common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700-1820*, this sense of a national project helped to provide the rationale and political force behind the large-scale changes of the enclosure acts: "The eighteenth-century enclosers' excuse was the national interest. In its name they deplored the insubordination of commoners, the unimprovability of their pastures, and the brake on production represented by shared property. In the end they won the argument: they identified parliamentary enclosure with the national interest" (7).

threatened, just as Macheath himself, seemingly a vestige in his literary antecedents and his name of an older, more rural time, is threatened with extinction.

The sense of Macheath's unique combination of being rooted, located by name in rural space, and uprooted further sets him apart from his fellow characters: decidedly rooted in urban London. Unlike Macheath, their names tie them to the nature of their professions—Filch and Dolly Trull, for example—as well as to city locations—i.e. Matt of the Mint or Robin of Bagshot. Macheath's name thus argues for the character, seemingly so embedded in the urban underworld of Gay's work, as also crucially apart from it, a schism that is crucial to understanding Macheath's alienated status and the effect this has on Gay's revision of the rake figure as a character who is associated with, but also apart from, the status quo.

Macheath's association with the foreign, specifically with a foreign that is both part of and apart from England, Great Britain's cultural and economic center, sheds a new light on his construction by the other characters as a item to be traded, not subject but object. In this use of the hybrid body of Macheath financial concerns and issues of nation and nationality converge. For instance, in 2.10, in which Lockit and Peachum debate who will profit from Macheath, he becomes a commodity, a Scottish body traded by English merchants. This is a trade that troubles the notion of equality between the countries of Britain, while it also calls to mind the issue of slavery and the consumption of bodies in the slave trade. If transported, Macheath's Scottish/English body will become an export, one to be used overseas in the colonies for profit and to further fund

the economic and political practices of the nation, including its use of slavery and transportation.<sup>90</sup>

If Macheath presents a particularly fraught hybridity as far as nationality, one that disturb prior associations of the rake figure with the English self, the fact that this hybridity is carried over to social rank further destabilizes both Macheath and rake. For in making the lower class, criminal Macheath his hero Gay destabilizes the formerly upper class, even aristocratic, associations of the rake figure while interrogating a social hierarchy and judicial system that would lessen the repercussions for upper class transgression while punishing lower class infractions, as Sven M. Armens notes in *John Gay: Social Critic*.<sup>91</sup> He also critiques the bourgeois gentleman, the man presented by Steele as socially and morally exemplary. For while Macheath's lower class origins and criminal nature exempt him from middle-class status, his industriousness echoes that of the bourgeoisie. Ironically, of course, Macheath's industriousness occurs in thieving, not in the proper legal and economic channels of capitalism. At the same time, Gay frequently indicates that Macheath, despite his criminality, can easily pass as a gentleman, making the supposedly authentic, exemplary gentleman simply one more role to be assumed and then discarded.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> As Gay's sequel to *Opera, Polly*, details through the characters' transportation and sale in the West Indies.

<sup>91</sup> Armens argues, "The aim of presenting the thieves in a better light than the aristocrats is to heighten the social injustice involved in having them punished for crimes, committed on a small scale, which the aristocracy (as courtiers) and bourgeoisie (as politicians) commit on a grand scale and from which they prosper rather than suffer" (61).

<sup>92</sup> Gay portrays the highwayman Macheath as, through his language and his manners, a gentleman—an ironic move on several levels. Gay reverses the normal order of social and economic hierarchy—raising an abject, criminal individual into the realm of social success, power, and a kind of legality. Macheath's role

So what are the larger implications of the interrogation of social, cultural, and economic structures of eighteenth-century Britain provided by *The Beggar's Opera* and Gay's rewriting of the rake? Gay might name his construction of a world of criminals and consumers a fantasy and a nothing, but the play is certainly something, a something that became a global phenomenon— appearing not only numerous times in London and in diverse areas of the nation, but spreading to the colonies and beyond.<sup>93</sup> While Gay's original has delighted and challenged audiences from 1728 to the present with its unique voice, it has also proved to be exceedingly flexible, open to reinterpretations by numerous artists from diverse corners of the globe, thus helping to further spread the

---

as gentleman even goes beyond a simple flipping of low and high, criminal and gentleman, to imply something more permanent and far-reaching about the relationship of the criminal to the gentleman, the male of low rank to the male of high rank. The fact that Macheath, the outsider and criminal, can assume the role of gentleman, the hegemonic insider, implies that the proper English gentleman or the elegant courtier are not created naturally, but the result of social construction. There is a democratic dimension to this—the idea that if these are roles open to anyone skilled enough to assume them then anyone can indeed do so—and reap the social and economic rewards associated with them. The implications for ascent of this kind are matched with the potential for deconstruction and descent—for if anyone can perform the role of gentleman, then the gentleman is not in himself superior in any social, physical, or cultural manner, and without that superiority he cannot maintain power over others. The real-world connotations of this to, potentially, destabilize social rank and complicate contemporary hegemonic masculine privilege is obvious and troubling—the gentlemen who control the nation's joint stock companies, pay court to its monarch, or sit in its parliament are performing just as Macheath is performing. Gay further complicates this by going beyond social rank to the realm of criminality in the argument, stated by the Beggar in the finale, that the criminal can assume the role of gentleman and be believed, while the gentleman can easily be seen to be criminal as well, reducing any difference between them: "Through the whole piece, you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen" (3, 17.72). This sense of the two as indistinguishable is not only because the gentlemen, like the criminals, perform, but because they are, despite their fine manners and their positions, corrupt.

<sup>93</sup> As Calhoun Winton notes in *John Gay and the London Theatre*, the work had widespread appeal: "*The Beggar's Opera* enjoyed as everyone knows an initial run of unprecedented length and established itself in the repertory of the London theatres and in the provincial and colonial theatres of the English-speaking world: George Washington would ride horseback across Maryland or Virginia to take in a performance of his favorite play at Annapolis or Williamsburg" (xiii-xiv).

influence of the play and the rake at its center.<sup>94</sup> *The Beggar's Opera* was certainly judged to be something at the time, for Walpole's government felt it was sufficiently politically and socially dangerous to ban its sequel *Polly*, and only nine years separate the controversy over *The Beggar's Opera* and *Polly* and the 1737 Licensing Act, which restricted theatre's potential for political and social critique for years to come.

Yet what makes *The Beggar's Opera*'s with its underworld content, its hybrid form, and its fusion of criminality and consumption really so unique and disturbing? One can argue that the use that Gay makes of underworld, peripheral characters to dramatize the workings out, and problems, of empire is not necessarily new—for instance, broadside ballads had been telling the tales of real or fictional outlaws and pirates for decades, airing the possibility for transgressions against the state and the emerging forces of capitalism. Similarly, writers such as Defoe and Henry Fielding also utilized underworld characters in their critiques, using them as ways to expose the corruption at the heart of the nation's political and economic center.<sup>95</sup> Macheath is indeed hybrid, upsetting stable notions of not only literary masculinity, but potentially real-life masculinity as well. Yet the Restoration rakes of chapter two are hybrid in many of the same ways, and proffer many of the same critiques of hegemony while helping, at the same time, to support that hegemony.

---

<sup>94</sup> As Dianne Dugaw notes in *Deep Play*, artists as diverse as Bertolt Brecht, Vaclav Havel, Alan Ayckbourn, and Louis Armstrong have written their own versions of *The Beggar's Opera* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone.

<sup>95</sup> In *The Long 18<sup>th</sup> Century* Paul Baines notes that Swift, like Gay, in works such as the former's *Drapier's Letters* and *Gulliver's Travels* showed politicians as crooks: "These *Letters* had been denounced as seditious and in *Gulliver's Travels* Swift took even more risks, indirectly representing Walpole's regime as a criminal gang running the country on a system of bribery" (50).

However, while Gay's work admittedly has antecedents, his combination of traditional and radical, foreign and local in the play and in the character of Macheath explains why *The Beggar's Opera* and its rake have startled and intrigued audiences for centuries. Macheath exposes the sense of consumption and criminality present in the rake figure, elements that play a vital part in the construction and behavior of future rake roles. If the rake is sexually and socially transgressive as played out in Restoration rakes such as Horner, here these transgressions remain, but with a new wrinkle: the rake as commodity and visual spectacle, abject suspect and outright lawbreaker. The result is to complicate the rake's status as both a hegemonic insider and outsider, placing him more firmly in the latter category, while questioning even more thoroughly the stability of the former.

Such complications in the rake figure are also taken up later in the eighteenth century in plays that engage not only with the Restoration's witty, sexy characters and the social critique of Gay, but also reference the sentimental drama presented in works such as Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*. While *The Beggar's Opera* and Gay's other texts both adhere to and critique the reformatory impulse of the sentimental genre, late century works such as Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* and Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* stray from both the direct critique and gritty realism of Gay and the moral didacticism and romantic idealism of Steele while utilizing certain elements of each. These later

plays look back to the Restoration and to early eighteenth century works, yet also anticipate the late nineteenth century plays of Wilde.<sup>96</sup>

Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*, for example, responds directly to Farquhar's early eighteenth century *The Beaux Stratagem*, while the play's determined heroine Letitia, skilled at masquerade, recalls the women of Behn's *The Rover*, albeit with less of the sexual forthrightness of Behn's Hellena. Cowley's play captures some of the sexual spark and elegant banter of Restoration drama, while wedding it to the sentimental drama's focus on decorum and restraint. Although sentimental texts often focus on the tragic suffering of vulnerable female protagonists for their impact, Cowley celebrates a heroine who can take center stage with little or no sentimental affect.

The rake that Cowley constructs—her protagonist Doricourt—is both familiar and new; he maintains many of the characteristics seen in previous rakes, including elements of consumption, while injecting new aspects that speak to the influence of the sentimental. As the play's opening reveals, Doricourt has traveled, and is thus associated with a consumption of foreign styles of dress and manners, including language. Such experience is judged largely positively by the other characters, particularly for Doricourt's exposure to continental fashion, which has made him a kind of walking item of consumption and a spectacle for the Town. As the malevolent roué Courtall notes, "His carriage, his liveries, his dress, himself, are the rage of the day! His first appearance set the whole *Ton* in a ferment, and his valet is besieged by *levées* of tailors, habit-

---

<sup>96</sup> In *Eighteenth Century Characters* McGirr argues that in the eighteenth century the qualities necessary for commercial exchange also became central to social exchange. She notes, "Craig Muldrew's excellent work on the 'economy of obligation' has demonstrated how a credit economy helped create that defining feature of the eighteenth century, the progress of politeness. Credit requires trust... This is an equitable exchange: it functions by agreements, not command. The same was true of polite society" (10-11).



makers, and other Ministers of Fashion, to gratify the impatience of their customers for becoming *à la mode de Doricourt*"(1.1.416). Like Gay, Cowley satirizes consumption, particularly pointing to the foolishness of English characters slavishly following and consuming foreign goods. Yet it is Doricourt's contact with another element of the foreign—foreign women—that becomes the primary bone of contention within the romance plot of the play, albeit in a very different manner than that of Horner in *The Country Wife*. Here the problem is that Doricourt prioritizes the foreign over the local, thus diminishing English women, including his prospective fiancée, Letitia. While Doricourt's friend Saville, who has not traveled, champions native beauty, Doricourt's consumption of the foreign has made him blind to English charms:

DORICOURT. She should have spirit! fire! l'air enjoué! that something, that nothing, which every body feels, and which no body can describe, in the restless charmers of Italy and France.

SAVILLE. Thanks to the parsimony of my father, that kept me from travel! I would not have lost my relish for true unaffected English Beauty, to have been quarreled for by all the belles of Versailles and Florence.

DORICOURT. Pho! thou hast no taste.... (1.3.421)

Doricourt displays the dangers of the Englishman abroad who consumes to the point that he loses his individual and national identity, a danger that can, as the plot reveals, be surmounted through his marriage with the English Letitia.

Cowley, however, does not paint her male protagonist as completely contaminated with the foreign, for while Doricourt is blind to the charms of his countrywomen, he still maintains the superiority of his countrymen and, in his affiliation with them and his nation, his own exclusive, independent identity; for, he argues, Englishmen "make the best soldiers, citizen, artisans, and philosophers in the world; but

the very worst footmen. I keep French fellows and Germans as the Romans kept slaves, because their own countrymen had minds too enlarged and haughty to descend with a grace to the duties of such a station” (1.3.420). Cowley prioritizes the independence of the British, particularly the English, over the people of other nations in patriotic language that instructs male listeners of the responsibility and duties of the British gentleman, duties that Wilde will gleefully subvert. In these lines Doricourt others foreign men, constructing them as passive and submissive. As he continues, he outlines the rational, superior nature of the Englishman set against the men of other nations: “An Englishman reasons, forms opinions, cogitates, and disputes; he is the mere creature of your will: the other, a being conscious of equal importance in the universal scale with yourself, and therefore your judge, whilst he wears your livery, and decides on your actions with the freedom of a censor” (1.3.420). Not only does Cowley sing the praises of Englishmen through Doricourt’s lines, she also points out the foolishness of hierarchy amongst the English people, arguing instead for equality in the “universal scale.” Like Gay, she reveals the constructed nature of rank and interrogates it.

Similarly, Cowley undertakes to demonstrate the importance of equality in gender, particularly in the character of Letitia—who shows an independence and activity that connects her not only with earlier heroines, but also with heroes. Cowley shows her, in fact, to be more active than the play’s men, including its male protagonist. For while Doricourt talks of independence and rationality in regards to his discussion of the positive nature of British masculinity, he is revealed to be a somewhat passive character, a slave to his prejudices, a man who is, as a rule, acted upon rather than one who acts. Doricourt

seems less like Macheath, who matches his romanticism with moments of pragmatism and self-interest, and more like the sentimental hero, the man ruled by his heart, such as Bevil Junior. For example, when in the play's finale Letitia asks how he finally awakened to her charms his response is made in language full of sentiment: "I feel it *here*. I never met with a woman so perfectly to my taste; and I won't believe it formed you so on purpose to tantalize me" (4.1.465). Doricourt's line seems to indicate the character's blocking in this moment, blocking that heightens the words' sentimental affect. While we don't know where "here" is, one suspects the actor puts his hand over his heart, swearing in his lines and in his body language his devotion to his bride. Mutable and emotional, Doricourt anticipates the Romantic hero, while his passivity contrasts sharply with the activity of Letitia, who offers a model of a strong-willed and inventive British femininity almost rakish in its overt following of its desires.

While I am not arguing for Letitia as a rake per se, it is interesting that in the crucial rake area of performance it is Letitia who demonstrates performance mastery, while Doricourt seems entirely lacking in any notion of performance. Letitia's creative skill in the masquerade as the mysterious lady who intrigues Doricourt demonstrates her mastery, one that is so profound that Letitia indicates that, if needed, she can continue the masquerade, mutating to suit Doricourt's desires: "You see I *can* be anything; choose then my character—your taste shall fix it. Shall I be an *English* wife?—or, breaking from the bonds of Nature and Education, step forth to the world in all the captivating glare of foreign manners?" (5.5.484). Letitia's lines celebrate an intense embrace of performance, yet they also reveal a willingness to place herself in her lover's power. The latter seems,

perhaps, derived from the role of the sentimental heroine, such as Indiana in *The Conscious Lovers*, who gladly relinquishes control to her beloved, rather than the free-spirited Restoration heroine such as Hellena in *The Rover*, who pursues a goal of male-female compromise.<sup>97</sup> A sense of male-female equality is, however, reinstated in Doricourt's response, which emphasizes the need for Letitia to maintain her own identity in marriage. This response and its affirmation of the rightness of Letitia's identity, an identity that is specifically native, also work with Cowley's project throughout the play of celebrating English identity. Thus Doricourt's lines to Letitia place emphasis on the importance of her identity as an individual, granting her independence, while celebrating her nationality as an Englishwoman, responding, "You shall be nothing but yourself—nothing can be captivating that you are not" (5.5.484).

While she constructs Doricourt as a somewhat passive character, particularly in contrast to the vital and witty Letitia, Cowley also introduces a further rake character, one who captures the amoral sexual desire that glimmers in earlier rakes and anticipates the Gothic villain of Romance fiction and poetry—Courtall. As his name suggests, Courtall is an equal opportunity seducer, and one whose combination of a lack of morals and a scheming mind recalls rake progenitors such as the machiavel and vice figure. His focus on bodily desire alone, with no consideration of the appeal of wit or mental attraction, also calls to mind Cimberton in Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, who treats Lucinda as an

---

<sup>97</sup> In her discussion of the play in the introduction to the *Meridian Anthology of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Plays by Women*, Katharine M. Rogers notes that "Letitia is a properly modest young lady of the late eighteenth century, but she is as witty, resourceful, and enterprising as a Restoration belle. Her goal is significantly different, however: not merely to marry a desirable young man but to win his wholehearted devotion in marriage—a sentimental ideal that would not have been recognized by a Restoration heroine. Doricourt, her young man, has the taste of a Restoration rake, but is corrected of them" (xii).

item for trade, a beautiful vessel with no will of her own, although Cimberton seems more foolish and less aggressive than Courtall. Yet while Courtall is created as the villain of the piece, he is an easily defeated fiend, one who verges on the ridiculous. Set on seducing the virtuous Lady Touchwood, Courtall overestimates his own powers of seduction and demonstrates an emphasis on power and aggression that points to the more negative characteristics of the rake:

SAVILLE. Why, sure, you do not insinuate—

COURTALL. No, not insinuate, but swear, that she's now in my bedchamber:--by gad, I don't deceive you.—There's generalship, you Rogue! Such an humble, distant, sighing fellow as thou art, at the end of a six-months siege, would have boasted of a kiss from her glove.—I only give the signal, and—pop!—she's in my arms. (4.2.467)

To deflate this cocksure masculine boasting Cowley constructs a finale in which Courtall's machinations are publicly defeated, and the character's aplomb is easily shaken. Indeed, while Horner can stand a certain amount of ridicule, the foolish, excessive nature of Courtall is showcased in the manner in which he responds to this shaming. Defeated, Courtall will only say, "There's no bearing this! I'll set off for Paris directly" (4.2.72) and exit. Not only does Courtall lack the resolve to stay and endure this ridicule, he retreats to the foreign to do so, while Doricourt, cured of his fascination with the foreign, can become a good English husband.

The end result for the rake figure of Cowley's splitting of the rake into the very good Doricourt and the very bad Courtall is the creation of a protagonist who is much less ambiguous and compelling than previous rakes and an antagonist who is similarly limited. If Courtall is the Gothic villain, albeit a fool as well, Doricourt represents the attractions, but also the limitations, of the sentimental hero. The result for a sense of

national identity is an idea of British identity that is largely without the ambivalence of Gay. Not only is the strained, but fascinating and productive, hybridity of Macheath absent, but the sense of criminality in all levels of society, from the ordinary citizens to the topmost political and economic leaders, is gone.<sup>98</sup> Cowley's Britain is a much less gritty and decidedly more jolly place, one in which identity is formed by concentrating on the strengths of being British, and by posing this positive British nature against the foreign in a lighthearted manner. It will be left to Wilde to blend consumption, criminality, and circulation together, all in the proper and innocuous form of the perfect English gentleman, and to build on the satire of Gay, the sentiment of Steele, and the romance of Cowley.

---

<sup>98</sup> In her Introduction to *Eighteenth Century Characters*, McGirr characterizes the general shift in the characters of the period as a reflection of the social, economic, and political changes afoot. She notes that "the period's many revolutions brought about a general shift from a patriarchy grounded in absolutist thought to one of sociability and contract; from fathers who command to husbands who partner. The century's economic upheavals also brought forth the long-heralded rise of the middle class. By the century's close, the aristocratic ideology, the idea that "birth makes worth," that had held sway for centuries had been largely replaced with a bourgeois ideology" (5).

**CHAPTER IV**

**QUEER DESIRES: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY RAKE IN THEATRE**

**AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**

This chapter on the rake in nineteenth-century British theatre forms, in multiple ways, a hinge between the two parts of this project. It is flanked by the theatre texts of the previous two chapters and reflects the accumulated discourse regarding British identity that these texts represent. It also previews the concerns over modern and postmodern identity of the film texts in my next chapters. In itself, the chapter and the plays that are its focus—Joanna Baillie’s *The Country Inn* (1804), Catherine Gore’s *The School for Coquettes* (1831), Dion Boucicault’s *London Assurance* (1841), and the chapter’s key text, Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)—span a period of great change for the rake, the theatrical medium, and the nation, whose interplay I have followed throughout this project. The fin-de-siècle rakes Jack and Algernon of *Earnest* seem, at times, almost unrelated to *Inn*’s Worshipton, the chapter’s earliest rake. Yet there is a definite throughline from Worshipton to Jack and Algernon, just as all three contain echoes of the Restoration rakes of chapter two. Yet while these rakes reflect the past, there are multiple ways in which they anticipate the characterization and behavior of the film rakes to come. This is particularly the case regarding Jack and Algernon, whose performativity, conveying a sense of a fragmented, multiple, modern identity, and queerness challenge heteronormativity and prepare the way for the diverse, variously othered film rakes of the next two chapters.

As we have seen, the rake's polyvalence—variously hypermasculine and effeminate, heterosexual and homoerotic, heterosocial and homosocial—plays a central role in the negotiation of national identity. The fluid nature of the rake's characterization and behavior coupled with the equally flexible nature of the theatre medium allow playwrights to interrogate social and sexual norms, whilst the rake's and theatre's fantastic nature allow viewers to safely confront the repercussions of the nation's social, political, and economic transformations. The rake can perform this role because he can move between the self—the white, male, heterosexual, aristocratic or bourgeois English subject—and the other—non-white, female, homosexual, lower class, and foreign.

Yet the rake often takes on aspects of the other himself and is thus associated with the tension occasioned by the other. For example, in *Wife* the rake Harry Horner embodies a sexually and socially powerful, privileged English masculinity—one that is active, virile, assertive, and aligned with the status quo. Yet the character is also portrayed both by himself and by other characters as passive, impotent, vulnerable, and othered. Similarly, the rake highwayman Macheath in *Opera* is a leader in the underworld kingdom, a successful, if criminal, businessman who dominates other characters with his social power, sexual magnetism, and criminal skills. He is thus aligned with a powerful, privileged English masculinity; in fact, he, like several of *Opera*'s other characters, is modeled on the nation's Prime Minister, Robert Walpole.<sup>99</sup> However, Macheath also embodies the other, for his name betokens Scottish origins, his criminal profession places

---

<sup>99</sup> As David Lindsay notes of Walpole in his introduction to the Everyman edition of *The Beggar's Opera and Other Eighteenth-century Plays*, "Gay's Macheath and Peachum were seen as caricatures of the 'Great Man' ..." (xxv).



him outside the law and good society, and he is constantly in peril from the other characters' schemes, in danger not only of losing his control of his gang and his women, but of his life itself.

This chapter's rake characters are similarly aligned with both English subjecthood and a fascinating, yet anxiety-provoking, other; yet while in earlier chapters the other is more clearly defined and separated from the self, in this chapter the division is much less clear, creating an even greater sense of anxiety and higher stakes surrounding the rake's onstage negotiation of British identity. For example, in *Wife* the foreign, whether specifically foreign lands, peoples, and customs or more generally social and sexual structures that seem alien to English society, is much more clearly defined as separate from the English nation and its rake. So too, while the characters of *Wife* associate Horner, via his lie of impotence and his recent travels, with the foreign self, the audience is ultimately reassured that Horner is most closely aligned with the English self.

In chapter three the interplay between self and other is literally, as well as figuratively, close to home. Here the foreign that Macheath embodies is not a dialectic between English self and a faraway land, such as the France or Italy discussed in *Wife*, but between England and the other countries that make up Great Britain: Ireland, Wales, and, Scotland, the last the location of the Jacobite threat from James II's descendents. That Macheath's name directly evokes Scotland, whose people would be counted as both self and other by the English, while the character resides in London, England's capital, creates a greater sense of ambivalence in the play, for here the other is within the nation rather than separate from it. Yet the same aspect of Macheath that arouses anxiety—his

name—also serves as a way to allay that anxiety, at least to some degree, for his name marks him and makes his otherness material. Because he is overtly signified in this manner his otherness is known and negotiated, rather than unknown and invisible.

No such clarity of marking and identification exists in this chapter, in which significant transformations in gender roles, conceptions of sexuality, and class within the nation turn the focus inward, rather than outward, so that as the century moves to its close the other opposed to the English male, heterosexual, bourgeois self is increasingly the British gendered, sexed, or classed other.<sup>100</sup> This other—variously feminine, homosexual, and working class—is no longer physically separated from the self but

---

<sup>100</sup> Gender reconfigurations, real and imagined, were a constant area of discussion and anxiety in the century's texts, from divergent ideas of masculinity, with two models—the muscular imperialist strain and the intellectual, creative Aesthetic—at odds with each other, to the challenge to traditional ideas of femininity posed by the increasing social and economic independence of women. In “An Emigrant and a Gentleman: Imperial Masculinity, British Magazines, and the Colony That Got Away,” Anne M. Windholz characterizes the first strain as it was epitomized by contemporary writers such as Rider S. Haggard, author of *King Solomon's Mines* (1886), and Rudyard Kipling, author of *Kim* (1901), as a masculinity that was adventuresome, martial, and physically vital, meant to inspire young British boys to physical strength, purity of heart, and to carrying on the work of empire by spreading British spiritual, social, and economic structures around the world. Paradoxically, this masculinity was primarily homosocial, yet denied any sense of the homoerotic; instead, it promoted heterosexuality, yet denied women a central role within texts, as within society itself. In contrast was what Windholz terms the “continental bohemia” of the Aesthetes and Decadents, of whom she argues Wilde was a prime example (631). If a sense of a single, stable British masculinity was challenged by the divergence of these modes, it was further tested by the increased pressure exerted by women for greater rights and the figure who personified, in the popular press, this new, more aggressive and active woman—the so-called New Woman. For some contemporary commentators she represented a challenge to a soft, passive femininity; for others, she represented the problem of a more socially and legally free, and thus more troubled and troubling, British femininity. The period was also marked with a variety of discourses over sexuality, including texts by sexologists such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Richard von Kraft-Ebing and by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes in her introduction to *The Epistemology of the Closet*, the term “homosexuality” first appeared “during the last third of the nineteenth century—its popularization preceding, as it happens, even that of the word ‘heterosexual’” (2). Yet homosexuality was not accepted, with the 1885 Labouchère Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act, as Alan Sinfield notes in *The Wilde Century*, “criminalizing homosexual acts in private” (13). The result was that to be openly homosexual could elicit abuse and the potential for imprisonment, as Wilde would discover when he was sentenced to two years of hard labor following his 1895 trials, detailed by Richard Ellmann in *Oscar Wilde* (435-478). Queer bodies and queer behavior were thus acknowledged, yet constructed as marginal, and certainly as criminal.

connected to it, located not overseas or over the border but present in the bodies of its citizens within the nation. Otherness thus becomes both a more complex and, potentially, ambivalent issue. The result is that the rake's association with other as well as self is even more fraught with tension as the century wears on, and as a more profound sense of the presence of these others permeates British society and the texts that reflect this society.

This sense of a British self both stable and singular and yet increasingly multiple and fragmented is conveyed by the aspect of characterization and behavior that I focus on in this chapter—the rake's performance. By performance I mean the rake's overt assumption of multiple social and sexual roles, masquerades through which the character, and with him the audience, can explore alternative identities. It is *Earnest's* highlighting of performance and queerness, a queerness that speaks both to the older sense of the word as strange and different and to the newer sense of the word as used in queer theory, that makes the text and its rakish characters so unique and forms the reason for my choice of it as this chapter's key text. Yet while *Earnest* finds its rakes conveying via their performativity compound identities, an overt recognition of both self and other, a liminal, diverse identity, the texts that present rakes which begin the century present the idea of performance, and the rake himself, in a very different way, shutting down the sense of fluidity and fabrication implied by performance and either rejecting or reforming their rake characters.

It is performance, with its implications of doubleness and deceit, that particularly engages the anxieties and desires of nineteenth-century playwrights and audiences, just as

mobility was a central issue in the seventeenth century, and consumption and criminality a concern to the eighteenth century. All of this chapter's authors engage with the trope of performance in some manner in connection with their rakes, although some of them treat its play with identity negatively, as a sign of instability and fraud, while others treat it positively, as a creative exercise that subverts social and sexual restriction and helps to move its characters towards pleasure and freedom. While Baillie proves the most complete example of the former, Wilde offers the most profound instance of the latter.

The ambivalence surrounding performance is a product of developments in British theatre, primarily the rise of sentimental drama, which reflected real-life social and economic changes within the nation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sentimental drama proved a popular genre well into the nineteenth century. Speaking to a demand for exemplary, affective protagonists, it conveyed a sense of authenticity and trustworthiness that contrasted sharply with the foregrounding of wit and cunning of earlier theatre. The prioritization of the sentimental drama and its socially and sexually regulated characters matched a move towards a similar regulation of the body and its behavior in actual British society. As Elaine M. McGirr notes in *Eighteenth Century Characters*, the shift to a credit-based economy based on trust elicited a reification in society and in texts of the polite, regulated subject, open-hearted and honest. In this light the doubleness and deceit implied by performance, particularly when paired with the disruptive figure of the rake, created profound unease.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> McGirr notes that in the eighteenth century the qualities necessary for commercial exchange also became central to social exchange, arguing that the trust required of a credit economy necessitated social change—a move to relationships built on reciprocity. Summarizing Craig Muldrew's work on the "economy of obligation," she argues "a credit economy helped create that defining feature of the eighteenth

Yet in the hands of Boucicault and Wilde, particularly the latter, performance becomes a tool to interrogate authenticity, to subvert the implication of a single, stable masculinity and coherent British identity that had been building throughout the texts of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, replacing it with the multiplicity implied by performance. It is Wilde who particularly highlights this sense of performance, and through his emphasis on it he foregrounds the inherent queerness of the rake figure.

Queer is a mobile word that speaks to a person, place, or object that troubles the norm.<sup>102</sup> Under its older definition, it applies to the strange, unusual, and marginal.<sup>103</sup> This older sense of queer, for example, describes the manner in which the hybrid form of *Earnest*, both farce and comedy of manners, creates a sense of dislocation by mixing familiar elements in an unfamiliar manner. However, in this chapter I primarily use the term as it is defined by queer theory, in which queer speaks specifically to alternative readings of gender and sexuality beyond the structures defined as the norm for western society, creating alternative readings that act as tools of social and political interrogation. Through this definition of queer I examine how Wilde's characterization of Algernon and

---

century, the progress of politeness. Credit requires trust: the suppliers trust the shopkeeper, the shopkeeper trusts his customers, and everyone gets paid in turn. This is an equitable exchange: it functions by agreements, not command. The same was true of polite society" (10-11).

<sup>102</sup> That queer as a term and queerness as a concept are elusive is part of their appeal, but it also makes fixing a definition difficult. The fluidity of queerness has made it suitable for critique of many different texts, as well as useful in conjunction with other theoretical approaches. Yet it has also offered trouble for that same fluidity. As Heather Love notes in "Introduction: Modernism at Night" in *PMLA*, "Queer keeps drifting all over the map. Its great strength as a tool of interpretation and politics—its flexibility and its corrosive relations with fixed identity categories—might also be its greatest weakness" (745).

<sup>103</sup> The online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines queer thus: "Strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric. Also: of questionable character; suspicious, dubious" ("queer").

Jack as performative and his emphasis on their multiple unruly performances challenge traditional, normative constructions of masculinity and heterosexuality, including conventional construction of the figure of the rake. This queering forms part of Wilde's overall goal of underlining and interrogating fin-de-siècle social and sexual norms.

My focus on queerness in *Earnest* does not argue that rakes before Algernon and Jack do not have queer elements and effects, but simply that Wilde takes the existing potential for queerness inherent in the rake and emphasizes it. The rake's complex mix of characteristics, often placed in tension with each other, certainly define him as queer under the older definition of the word, yet the newer definition of queer in queer theory is less immediately apparent given the manner in which the rake is overtly designated as heterosexual in both characterization and behavior. However, several elements, discussed in the previous chapters, place a question mark around this designation, as Sedgwick notes in her discussion in *Between Men* of Horner in *The Country Wife* (1675). Reading Horner, Sedgwick emphasizes the ways in which Horner's relentless pursuit of women is necessarily bound up with his pursuit of the men to whom these females are attached, pointing out the ways in which it is the homosocial, even homoerotic, that he seeks to conquer.<sup>104</sup> The rake's close relationships with these other men—either as friends or rivals—adds an air of homosociality, even homoeroticism, to the figure, as does the excessive nature of the rake's construction as heterosexual, which serves to create a strain regarding this construction, throwing it in doubt. Similarly, the manner in

---

<sup>104</sup> Sedgwick notes that "Horner's very name, to begin with, makes explicit that the act of cuckolding a man, rather than of enjoying a woman, is his first concern" (56).

which the rake aligns himself in multiple ways with females and the feminine removes the figure from the rigid classification of the masculine as defined by its opposition to the feminine.<sup>105</sup>

Through close readings of this chapter's texts, in chronological order, I chart three phases in the rake as he progresses through the century. I begin with Baillie's *Inn* and Gore's *Coquettes*, which represent an early-century characterization of the rake that continues many of the aspects of his late eighteenth-century antecedents. I then move to Boucicault at mid-century, who presents a more liminal, performative rake figure that works to set up Wilde. Finally, my discussion of *Earnest* anticipates the spectacular bodies and fluid identities of the twentieth and twenty-first century rake in film.

*Inn*, an unstaged play by the Scottish writer Joanna Baillie, and *Coquettes*, by the English writer Catherine Gore, provide a female perspective on period masculinity and reveal the early nineteenth-century theatre's direct inheritance from eighteenth-century theatre, particularly the rise of sentimental drama. As the readings reveal, Baillie and Gore present different interpretations of the rake with diverse outcomes; however, both reflect a move toward an affective, exemplary masculinity as proposed by Steele and

---

<sup>105</sup> Examples of this include the manner in which the rake, like the female, is aligned with amatory pleasures, rather than heroic adventures, utilizing not brute force but wit—both intelligence and linguistic skills—to achieve desires. As explored in *The Country Wife*, the rake, like women, is often connected with consumption and entertainment rather than production and business. This is emphasized in *Wife* when Sir Jaspar aligns Horner with the women not simply because his impotence makes him a non-man, constructing him literally as well as figuratively as a place of lack, but because his energy and time can now be devoted to card-playing and parlor conversation like a woman.

reimagined by Cowley and a shift away from the aggressive sexual appetites that are so much a part of earlier rakes such as Gay's Macheath.<sup>106</sup>

*The Country Inn* concerns the adventures of a group of male and female characters who are variously staying at or working in a country inn. The males include a vain, unpleasant rake named Worshipton who seeks a wealthy wife to finance his lifestyle of excessive consumerism; his uncle Sir John Hazelwood, a country bachelor; and a poet named Amaryllis, who lives at the inn. The female characters include the benevolent Lady Goodbody; her foolish niece Hannah; her sensible niece Miss Martin; and a flirtatious servant named Dolly. As the play proceeds Worshipton courts and then secretly marries Hannah, who he supposes rich, although it is Miss Martin who is the true heiress. He does so in preference to Dolly, whom he prefers, because she is poor. Dolly then marries Amaryllis, and discovers that she has inherited a fortune, while Sir John and Miss Martin fall in love. The play concludes with the discovery of Worshipton's schemes and his anger when he learns that Hannah is not rich. He then shows his true colors, cruelly turning on Hannah and the other characters, and attempts to leave,

---

<sup>106</sup> While Baillie did have several works staged, most famously *De Montfort* (1800), *The Country Inn* was not staged, and Baillie struggled to find a public forum for her work. The demand for self-restraint/decorum in both men and women's social behavior, particularly that of the latter, restrained the ability for playwrights such as Baillie to pursue public exhibition of their work, and cast particular pressures upon productions by women playwrights and the content of their plays. The difficulty of female production in this period was so great that, as John Franceschina notes in the introduction to *Gore on Stage: The Plays of Catherine Gore*, Baillie suggested in correspondence to her friend Sir Walter Scot that a female author would benefit by holding back her own identity and producing anonymously: "She [Miss Head] would fain have kept her name & sex unknown, if her friends would have allowed it, and they were not very wise friends who thwarted her on this point. I speak feelingly on this subject like a burnt child. John anybody would have stood higher with the critics than Joanna Baillie. I too was unwisely thwarted on this point" (15-16). In contrast, the later Gore had much greater success in staging her work and finding acclaim. As Franceschina argues there was a significant audience for Gore's work, and support of her regardless of her gender. Franceschina notes that she wrote eleven plays "ten of which were immensely popular on the professional British stage between 1831 and 1844" (1).



determined to abandon his marital responsibilities entirely. However, Sir John and Lady Goodbody grant him a continued income on the stipulation that he remain married. An angry Worshipton ungraciously agrees to this arrangement, while the rest of the characters joyfully celebrate their unions.

This summary demonstrates how Baillie develops in the person of Worshipton an unsavory picture of turn-of-the-century rake masculinity, or at least one version of it, anatomizing a character consumed with vanity, puffed with pride, and overtly misogynistic. For example, Worshipton's dialogue with his uncle regarding his spending reveals that he prioritizes making a good show and supporting his own appetites over any other concern. When Sir John suggests work—an army commission—rather than a marriage of convenience as a solution to Worshipton's debts, the latter responds, "Will three hundred a year and a commission in the army keep a man's pocket in loose money, my good sir, support a groom and a valet, a pair of riding horses, and a curricle?" (1.160). His desire to continue his rakish, consumerist life despite the commitments of marriage demonstrates his blatant disregard for society's mores, in combination with his high opinion of his own sexual charisma. While the good-hearted Amaryllis truly loves Dolly and values a commitment to her, Worshipton contemplates matrimony only as a means to continue his public role as an accomplished rover, arguing, "For a man pretty well received by women of the first circles, as I believe without vanity I may say of myself, it would be a silly trick to marry at all, did not my circumstances compel me to it; but I shall make such a choice of a wife as shall make me pass as much as possible as a single man still" (3.3.205).

In *Worshipton* and his marriage of convenience to Hannah, Baillie stages the dangers, especially for female characters, of the rake's narcissism and of a masculinity driven solely by pleasure and the pursuit of cash to finance these pleasures. The result is that *Worshipton* is blind to the emotional, social, and financial damage he causes others, particularly the unfortunate Hannah. Ultimately, he is constructed as a cad and villain with no redeemable qualities.<sup>107</sup> While the earlier *Cowley* maintains some good in her rake, albeit splitting rake masculinity into positive and negative qualities in her characters *Doricourt* and *Courtall*, Baillie's use of a single rake character as the play's antagonist speaks to an unease with the socially and sexually disruptive capacity of the rake figure.

The result is that Baillie's true hero is not a rake at all—reformed or not—but Sir John, a man who is presented as a true gentleman in his polite manners, sober respectability, and adherence to social mores, a stark contrast to his rude, anti-social nephew. The difference between the men is established early in the play, as the servants David and Jenkins debate the qualities of the older and younger man. David, the servant of the inn, praises Sir John's good manners and sober sense over *Worshipton*, who is seen as unmannerly and a spendthrift. Jenkins, *Worshipton*'s servant, in turn argues for his master's quality based on the volume of his consumption, noting, "he spends his money like a gentleman" (1.142). David, however, cautions Jenkins in connecting moral qualities and social rank with a consumption whose only purpose is showy spectacle, the performance of status rather than authentic status: "I don't care a rush how he spends his

---

<sup>107</sup> *Worshipton*'s view of marriage, as he voices to *Amaryllis* later in the play, is as a necessity that he will try to shape as much as possible to his own advantage so he can continue to indulge all of his appetites: "For a man pretty well received by women of the first circles, as I believe without vanity I may say of myself, it would be a silly trick to marry at all, did not my circumstances compel me to it; but I shall make such a choice of a wife as shall make me pass as much as possible as a single man still" (3.3.205).

money: they seem to be the greatest gentleman now-a-days, who have least money to spend” (1.142).

The play’s finale returns to this idea that consumption, vanity, and gentlemanly behavior cannot coexist, and that masculine identity must instead be shaped by honor and rationality in all areas. The narrative has shown that good behavior (Sir John’s) and disinterested love (Amaryllis’s) win over the selfish behavior and excessive consumption of Worshipton. In the last lines of the play Lady Goodbody, seeing a lesson, praises her own unseen nephew, a model of hard work, heroism, and thrift. Worshipton’s response underlines both the extent of his bad temper despite his chastening and the ways in which his life is meant to be instructive for his audience, although it is a lesson that he himself does not desire to study: “Well, well, I understand you; but tell me no more of your good-boy stories at present: this cross-fated day has taught me a powerful lesson which makes every other superfluous. (*Exeunt*) (5.278).

In sum, Baillie’s take on the rake highlights the figure’s less pleasant tendencies—misogyny, selfishness, and a kind of delayed adolescence. Through Worshipton she showcases just how disruptive his presence can be. These negative elements are often hidden in texts, concealed, as in the case of earlier rakes such as Horner, beneath witty banter, disguising the ways in which the rake can mark trouble for those who do not share the privilege provided by his rank and gender.

In contrast to Baillie’s outright rejection of the rake, Gore presents a rake character—Frederick Lumley—as her hero in *Coquettes*, although he is a decidedly reformed version of the figure. As the play opens Frederick’s father, General Lumley,

and his uncle, Lord Marston, are anticipating Frederick's return home to London and his upcoming marriage to their niece, Caroline Hampton. Marston speaks critically of Frederick, noting his nephew's playboy past, and arguing that Lumley himself has criticized his scion as "a French fop engrafted on an English libertine" (1.1). However, Lumley assures him that Frederick's transgressions are behind him. In an echo of Steele's Bevil Junior in *Lovers*, neither man is aware of Frederick's secret marriage to an orphan he discovered while abroad: Amelia. Frederick is accompanied by a mysterious young man named Fitz Albyn, a fortune seeker who attached himself to him on his travels. The coquette of the title is Frederick's cousin, Honoria, Marston's daughter, whose marriage to a sober M.P. named Howard is threatened by the former's late-night parties and flirtations and the latter's seeming indifference to his wife's efforts to gain his attention. As the play proceeds Howard's jealousy is awakened by Frederick's return and a duel is narrowly avoided; Fitz sets his cap at Caroline, only to lose her to Frederick's friend Colonel Donnelly; and Amelia is revealed to be Marston's daughter. The play ends with this discovery and the subsequent reconciliation of Frederick and his family, the reunion of Honoria and Howard, and Lady Hampton's acceptance of Donnelly as a suitor for Caroline.

As this summary reveals, Frederick is no Macheath. Instead, he is a distinctly tamed rake, most closely echoing Cowley's relatively passive Doricourt and, as noted, the sentimental hero Bevil Junior. However, while Doricourt's lines reveal glimmerings of sexual appetite in his reminiscences of encounters with foreign ladies, Frederick is consumed only by love for Amelia. Gore constructs Frederick as virtuous, stable vision

of English masculinity, one whose French fop and English libertine past is now subsumed by a committed marriage to a fellow Englishwoman. Nonetheless, she does present a masculinity that is more suspect and more liminal, in numerous ways, in the person of Fitz.

Anticipating Boucicault's later *Dazzle*, Fitz is a man of mysterious origins, one whose social class and nationality are uncertain. His introduction, as he waits in an apartment at the Clarendon Hotel for Frederick along with Frederick's servant Marron and the hotel's waiter, creates a sense of his liminality:

FITZ. Is there anything approaching towards dinner time, my good fellow? Eh! (*Yawns*)

WAITER. If your lordship pleases, I will inquire

MARRON. (*Aside to the waiter*) How oft I tell you dat no lordship.

WAITER: I'm sure he gives trouble enough for one.

MARRON. Bah! Dat be Monsieur my Maistre's traveling toady—he do de dirty work—pay de horses—swear de postboy—scold de waiters.  
(2.1)

Fitz may act the part of the gentleman, expressing his appetite for dinner and commanding the waiter, but he lacks the definite social rank to perform this role, even as he aspires to an heiress and a fortune. The character's nationality is similarly uncertain—creating a sense of a disturbing hybridity. The other characters assume Fitz is Irish, though he claims to have been “born in Yorkshire and bred in Paris—entirely”

(2.1.54).<sup>108</sup> This multinational construction, together with the shifting sense of his socioeconomic status, creates a character who is distinctly othered. The unfixed, fluid

---

<sup>108</sup> However, his aside to the audience when he parts with Frederick seems to point to an Irish future, if not an Irish past: “And now by the toe of St. Patrick, I'm off to try my luck with the heiress; and if I lose this last chance of making my fortune, I'll settle myself in St. Shamagulder's Lane in the city of Tipperary as plain 'Inery Halpin. And instead of waithing upon the whims of fine jintlemen, faith, I'll take my old trade of tide waither (*Exit Fitz Albyn*)” (5.1).

nature of Fitz, a man with a mobile body, tongue, and status, serves to make the identity of Frederick, the socially secure and overtly English protagonist, the epitome of the self, seem even more stable in contrast.

However, the unknown nature of Fitz's relationship with Frederick challenges this normativity, injecting a sense of homoeroticism into the text even as Frederick attempts to distance himself from this liminal man. The first instance of this distancing occurs as Frederick uses his dialogue to assure his friends Polter and Donnelly that his relationship with Fitz is normative and temporary:

POLTER. (*Aside to Frederick.*) Pray who *is* your friend? He appears to forget that I have not the pleasure of his acquaintance. A very singular person, upon my honor!—

FRED. Don't be so much alarmed. I am not going to introduce him to you. 'Tis a well meaning useful blackguard—pedigree unknown—who stood my friend in a troublesome fighting business in Rome, and has obliged me with the gratuitous favor of his company ever since. I have promised to speak to my uncle for him; and if Lord Marston refuses his patronage, why, I must lend him a horse and get rid of the fellow.

POLTER. You will act very judiciously! Miscellaneous acquaintances become a serious calamity in London. This person will commit you beyond redemption. (2.1)

As if in response to the vehemence of Polter's observation that a continued relationship with Fitz will injure him, Frederick soon breaks off their association entirely.

As these summaries and brief discussions of Baillie's and Gore's plays reveal, the authors may provide different readings of the rake, yet they proceed from the same conclusion—that the rake as he exists in Restoration and eighteenth-century texts is

unworkable as a whole.<sup>109</sup> He must be tamed, like Frederick, his less virtuous aspects shuttled to another character, such as Fitz, or made completely villainous and rejected as a dangerous relic of the past, like Worshipton, a male so associated with unregulated appetite that he cannot be integrated into polite society.

If Gore and Baillie present relatively one-note visions of rakes, with the exception of Fitz, and promote the stable, truthful, genteel male as the epitome of masculinity, Irish writer Dion Boucicault presents a more complicated vision of masculine identity in his comedy *London Assurance*, one that is less easily resolved by the play's finale. Like the work of Baillie and Gore, Boucicault's *Assurance* reveals elements of sentimental drama, but it also shows the wit that Cowley utilizes in *Stratagem*, as well as elements of the social satire of Gay. In the vision of masculinity Boucicault presents onstage, *London Assurance* seems to endorse the centrality of the polite, restrained English gentleman, as do Baillie and Gore. Yet *Assurance* complicates the earlier plays' straightforward treatment of this figure. While it positively constructs the idea of the gentleman—the perfect model of masculinity, the proper economic and social man—as an ideal, it also overtly indicates that this role of gentleman is indeed a role, bringing an overt sense of performance, and all its baggage of deceit and doubleness, into discussion. However, Boucicault does not venture as far as Wilde, whose work suggests that all identity is

---

<sup>109</sup> The years between the two writers' work—1804 for Baillie's *The Country Inn* and 1831 for Gore's *The School for Coquettes*—may speak to the reason behind this change. The move to the gentler, tamed rake beginning with *The Conscious Lovers* in 1722 was well-established by the time of Gore, while for Baillie there is still a sense of a transition, both in texts, in which the older versions of the rake might still appear, and in reality, in which the more negative outcomes, particularly for women, of the power and privilege of rakes and their appetites and the inequalities of sexism might still be felt. Thus Baillie, keenly aware of the damage that rakish males can cause, condemns them, while Gore, more accepting of them because more distanced from them, does not.

performed, and that the seemingly ideal gentleman is a role to be assumed and discarded at will.

Set in 1841, the year of its first performance, *London Assurance* concerns a wealthy young Londoner named Charles Courtly, a university student who is assumed by his foolish father, Sir Harcourt Courtly, to be living a sober and studious life.<sup>110</sup> Instead, as the play's opening reveals, Charles is living a double life, engaged in late-night drinking, carousing, and occasional theft in the streets of London.<sup>111</sup> Having made the company of a mysterious young man called Dazzle, Charles soon realizes that his debts have caught up with him, in the person of the collector Solomon Isaacs. He and Dazzle then depart for the country home of Max Harkaway, Sir Harcourt's old friend. The play ends with the truth of Charles's double life discovered and Charles united in marriage with Max's daughter, Grace Harkaway. Having resolved Charles's mischief and settled him as a sober, truthful member of society, the characters discuss the shadowy origins of Dazzle and dispute, in doing so, what does and does not constitute the true qualities of an authentic gentleman.

The issues of truth and authenticity and deceit and performance and their connection to the gentleman and the gentlemanly body are laid out in the opening of *London Assurance* as Charles and Dazzle, the play's two supposed gentlemen, are

---

<sup>110</sup> In his first appearance Sir Harcourt describes Charles thus: "A perfect child in heart—a sober, placid mind—the simplicity and verdure of boyhood, kept fresh and unsullied by any contact with society" (1.34). Sir Harcourt goes on to say, after hearing Cool reassure him of Charles's virtues and lack of appetite for smoking, drinking, brawling, and "night parading" that "In fact, he is my son, and became a gentleman by right of paternity—he inherited my manners" (1.34).

<sup>111</sup> Charles justifies his stealing of the door knockers and bell pulls of local merchants such as "Old Vampire, the money lender" and "Miss Stitch, the milliner" as revenge for these instruments "disturbing the neighborhood" (1.32).



introduced. Charles immediately registers as a typical rake—debauched, fond of trickery, and, at least at first, most comfortable in the homosocial space. He, like Dazzle, is also in debt, as the arrival of Isaacs reveals. Given the depths of his indulgence of his appetites and his subsequent lack of control, the opening reveals that Charles is a potentially foolish figure, one whose dissipation makes him vulnerable. These elements are picked up when Cool, the valet, questions Charles about his arrival in the company of Dazzle at Sir Harcourt's home in Act 1. Uncertain of this strange young man and concerned about Charles's adventures, Cool quizzes him regarding the nature and circumstances of their acquaintance:

COOL. (*aside*). Why, Mr. Charles, where did you pick him up?  
YOUNG COURTLY. You mistake me, he picked me up.

In this exchange Boucicault instantly provides numerous pieces of information about Charles's character and, potentially, something of the nature of mid-nineteenth century urban pleasures. The extent of Charles's carousing is underlined by the implication that it is so great that not only does he pick up men of unknown social status and profession (with the potential sexual aspect of this, as well as the social repercussions for a man of Charles's rank), but he is so out of control that he does not even have the active power to invite them himself; instead, it is he who is "picked up." The potential queerness of the act, and of Charles himself, is put on hold as the young men then depart for the countryside.<sup>112</sup> Charles's subsequent courting and winning of Grace Harkaway and his father's discovery of his dual life (and private approbation of his wild oats, despite his

---

<sup>112</sup> This move to the country is precipitated by Charles's financial transgressions and requires that he not only leave London but assume an additional identity—that of Augustus Hamilton. It is in this guise that he courts Grace, although he must reveal the truth in the play's finale.

public displeasure) establish him in a stable, family—approved heterosexual union, seemingly redeemed from his roving, roistering days.

Charles may follow the path of most stage rakes from a liminal sexuality (often filled with homosocial, even homoerotic, relations) to heteronormativity, from misbehavior to regulation, but *Dazzle* is a different matter. Boucicault's treatment of *Dazzle* allows the playwright to further investigate the implications—potentially radical—of a performance that is obviously social, perhaps sexual, and to question the real nature of a gentleman. Notably, while Charles's roving, trouble-making days are closed down, *Dazzle* remains in the play's end, like Horner in *The Country Wife*, a decidedly free agent—uncontained, unmarried, and unknowable.

In the course of the play *Dazzle* reveals an identity that is infinitely flexible, all the more because it seems, ultimately, to be built out of nothing but the assurance of the play's title. Boucicault carefully leaves *Dazzle*'s origins a secret through much of the play, although the audience quickly becomes aware that he is a kind of social con man, and comes to recognize and rejoice in the reiteration of his con—a claim of kinship with anyone who might provide the comforts of food and lodging.<sup>113</sup> *Dazzle* is so thorough in his promises of familial ties that by the play's completion he has declared some kind of

---

<sup>113</sup> In the introduction to the Methuen Theatre Classics edition of the play, which is a 1971 adaptation of the original play prepared by Ronald Eyre for a RSC production, Eyre notes that in its first manuscript draft the play was called *Out of Town*, Sir Harcourt was Sir William *Dazzle*, Charles was Charles *Dazzle* and his alias was Jack Scatter, and that "The *Dazzle of London Assurance* is an anglicization of Ignatius Mulvather, an Irish adventurer" (xvi). He notes that "The discovery that *Dazzle* was a misplaced Irishman led to rehearsal experiments at the RSC in which first the actor concerned, then other members of the cast, put on Irish accents" (xvii).

kinship with everyone.<sup>114</sup> When at last all the characters meet to uncover the confusions of the plot, they seek an answer to one of the most substantial of these confusions—the question of Dazzle’s true identity. True to his status as a conman and trickster, yet also to his seeming vocation as a gentleman who must, by nature, be honest, Dazzle answers in a manner that is both specific and imprecise:

MAX. (*coming down, aside to Sir Harcourt*). One point I wish to have settled. Who is Mr. Dazzle?

SIR HARCOURT. A relative of the Spankers, he told me.

MAX. Oh, no, a near cousin of yours.

SIR HARCOURT. Never saw him before I came down here, in all my life. (*To Young Courtly*). Charles, who is Mr. Dazzle?

YOUNG COURTLY. Dazzle, Dazzle—hang me, if I know—will you excuse an impertinent question?

DAZZLE. Certainly—

YOUNG COURTLY. But who the deuce are you?

DAZZLE. I have not the remotest idea.

ALL. How sir?

DAZZLE. Simple question as you may think it, it would puzzle half the world to answer. One thing I can vouch—Nature made me a gentleman—that is, I live on the best that can be produced for credit. I never spend my own money when I can oblige a friend. I ‘m always thick on the winning horse. I ‘m an epidemic on the trade of tailor. For further particulars, inquire of any sitting magistrate.<sup>115</sup> (5.95)

---

<sup>114</sup> Meeting Max Harkaway, and supposing that he might be Charles’s father, he says of his relationship to Charles: “Oh, a most intimate friend—a friend of years—distantly related to the family—one of my ancestors married one of his. (*Aside*) Adam and Eve, long way back” (1.38). Receiving an invitation to Harkaway’s house in Gloucestershire, he says, “Harkaway—let me see—I ought to be related to the Harkaways, somehow” (1.38) and agrees to take part, with a caveat: “With pleasure! Any part but that of the husband” (1.38).

<sup>115</sup> In the introduction to *Selected Plays Dion Boucicault – Irish Drama Selections 4* Andrew Parkin describes Dazzle as “...an opportunist, but a genial one, this Autolycus of the dawn of the great age of credit claims to be a gentleman yet lacks origins, having only the “bare-faced assurance” of a man-about-London, “the vulgar substitute for gentlemanly ease” as Sir Harcourt puts in the “the tag” or last speech of the play that Mathews, playing Dazzle, insisted on speaking...” (14).

As the interchange reveals, Dazzle has, in effect, created himself, and created himself specifically as a gentleman through his acts of social networking and the nature of his consumption.

In creating Dazzle, Boucicault constructs a radical masculinity that is liminal and, ultimately, indefinable, exciting for the promise it holds as a performative strategy. With assurance, perhaps, anyone can be a Dazzle. Yet Boucicault also inserts an addendum, perhaps a corrective, to Dazzle's performance. Dazzle may pretend, using what Sir Harcourt characterizes as "barefaced assurance" (1.95) to perform the part of gentleman, but Sir Harcourt, at least, argues that "gentleman" cannot be thus performed, even as he argues that it is a position available to all:

Charles, permit me, as your father, and you, sir, as his friend, to correct you on one point. Barefaced assurance is the vulgar substitute for gentlemanly ease; and there are many, who, by aping the vices of the great, imagine that they elevate themselves to the rank of those, whose faults alone they copy. No, sir. The title of gentleman is the only one out of any monarch's gift, yet within the reach of every peasant. It should be engrossed by Truth—stamped with Honour—sealed with good feeling—signed Man—and enrolled in every true and honest heart. (1.95)

This speech, which ends the play, seems both democratic and conservative, like the character of the redeemed gentleman Charles and, to a lesser extent, given his more unique and potentially subversive elements, the character of Dazzle. It offers a kind of democratic promise to all men to attain the rank of gentleman, yet it does so by critiquing the kind of performance done by Dazzle, one which is, however, rewarded through most of the plot and forms one of the greatest pleasures of the play. In this moment Boucicault seems to critique one of his most compelling characters and to draw back from the radical ideas suggested by that character and his behavior. Yet there is also the possibility that

this speech, with its mingling of conservative and revolutionary ideas regarding identity and social rank, is itself Boucicault's final joke.<sup>116</sup>

Through Charles and Dazzle and their multiple performances Boucicault conjures a world in which identity is, at least momentarily, in play. This focus on performance will be taken up by Wilde, not only in the similarities between his characterization of Jack and Algernon, with their similarities to Charles and Dazzle, but in the creation of an onstage world that is topsy-turvy.<sup>117</sup> And while Boucicault's commitment to the radical liminality of his rakes, even Dazzle, is in doubt, Wilde's is not. In *Earnest* Wilde pushes the performativity of his rakes, stretching the polyvalence of the figure.

The plot of *Earnest* is deceptively simple in the manner of a fairy tale or folktale, and its characters are similarly facile, like the Manichean characters of a melodrama who are all surface, no depth. *Earnest's* bright facade and breezy style employs this simplicity to reach its audiences, yet simultaneously critiques it, using its prioritizing of surfaces to convey a complex critique of fin-de-siècle culture and society, particularly the largely decorative, potentially obsolete upper class. *Earnest* concerns a wealthy young man

---

<sup>116</sup> In the introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of the play Klaus Stierstorfer argues that the seriousness of the sentiments of this final statement should be viewed skeptically given the nature of its speaker—Sir Harcourt—who is presented as a vain, foolish, and changeable man: “To sum up, then, the play’s moral structuring is conventional. Youth and beauty win against old age and money. Sir Harcourt even testifies to his conversion in the play’s final speech—which no one can take very seriously, so inconsistent is it with the speaker’s previous behavior—where he proclaims Truth and Honour as the real qualities of an English gentleman” (xxii-xxiii).

<sup>117</sup> The play’s form transgresses in mixing comedy of manners, a high genre of comedy, with farce, a low form. The result is an intriguing, but also potentially alienating, hybrid form that seems to offer an explanation for the excesses of the characters and the play as a whole; yet, upon closer examination, such an explanation cannot accommodate the difference posed by *Earnest*. While this hybridity might provide a basis for the extreme mobility and speed in language and physicality of *Earnest's* characters—the witty retorts flying fast and furious; characters shuttling from urban to rural location, as well as from mood to mood—the excessive and fluid nature of their characterization and behavior go beyond generic expectations of the farce form, venturing into strange, new territory.

named Jack Worthing and his quest to marry his beloved high-society sweetheart Gwendolen, a quest complicated by his mysterious past and the objections to this mystery on the part of the formidable Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen's mother. With the help of the play's other characters, including his friend Algernon, and the evidence provided by the handbag in which he was found as a child, Jack finally learns his true identity and obtains his wife, just as Algernon, revealed to be his brother, woos and marries Jack's ward, Cecily. Everyone, it is assumed, lives happily ever after. Wilde presents a seemingly basic story and characters who are, in a manner, exactly what they seem—bright-eyed lads and lasses of privilege merrily courting. Yet, simultaneously, the play hints that all is not as it seems.

Just as *London Assurance* immediately establishes the rakish qualities of its male protagonists—Charles and Dazzle—so *Earnest* signals the transgressive qualities of Algernon and Jack in the characters' introduction. As the play opens Algernon is pictured in his fashionable urban bachelor apartments eating the sandwiches intended for his aunt's impending visit. Algernon's constant desire for food, and repeated discussion of it, a running joke visually and textually throughout the play, establishes, in a lighthearted way, that here is a character with appetites, both specified and unspecified. That the sandwiches are intended for his aunt, not Algernon, demonstrates the character's transgression—he is unafraid to violate the rules of social hospitality and to defy familial responsibility. His friend Jack is likewise positioned as a creature of appetite, as the characters' first interchange in Act 1 reveals:

ALGERNON. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere?

Jack's response seems to promise that here is a character who lives for the kind of self-pleasure that Algernon must, at least momentarily, forfeit due to his hosting duties.

Yet just as Jack announces that it is "pleasure" that is his guiding star, and Algernon chides him for his flirtations with his cousin Gwendolen, Jack informs Algernon that he is in town to propose. The rakish pursuit of desire seems, at least for Jack, cut off as soon as it is voiced. Certainly Algernon, who maintains the rakish line and argues for a lack of commitment in order to retain desire argues so:

JACK. I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGERNON. I thought you had come up for pleasure?...I call that business.

JACK. How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGERNON. I don't really see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty.

(1)

Jack's renunciation of his flirtatious past for marriage recalls Frederick, Gore's reformed playboy, and Boucicault's Charles, who begins the play a roisterer, but quickly transforms into a sober young man as he falls for Grace. However, as the men converse further, the discussion of a cigarette case, inscribed "From little Cecily with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack," leads to a new revelation. For while Jack claims it as his own, Algernon begs to differ:

ALGERNON. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

JACK. It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGERNON. You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You

look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest looking person I ever saw in my life... (1)

Finally, Jack is forced to reveal the truth: in town, where he enjoys himself dining with Algernon and flirting with Gwendolen he is Ernest; in the country, where he is the guardian of a young ward, he is Jack:

JACK. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

ALGERNON. The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, a modern literature a complete impossibility! (1)

Jack's revelation of his secret elicits a secret in turn from Algernon, who has also created an imaginary persona, one that allows the urban Algernon to infiltrate the country just as the rural Jack's Ernest persona allows him to visit the city:

I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I might be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary ill health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's tonight, for I have really been engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week. (1)

As their lines reveal, these masquerades are transgressive on several levels. First, the men place their own pleasures first, above the social responsibilities of their class and their familial duties, with Jack escaping his guardianship of Cecily and Algernon his obligations to his aunt, even as the men to pretend to uphold these responsibilities.

Second, they do so through the use of deceit, their mobile tongues allowing their equally mobile bodies to speed their way to unspecified urban and country pleasures. Jack and



Algernon thus are rakish performers in the mode of Horner, albeit perhaps more so, for while Horner informs the audience of the nature of his desires, the pleasures that Jack and Algernon pursue are largely, and suspensefully, unspecified.<sup>118</sup>

Yet, no sooner is the two characters' mobility, actual and figurative, evoked and celebrated, with Algernon finding his friend "a confirmed Bunburyist" (1), than Jack negates any sense of a future, at least for himself, in performance and its liminal identity:

I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him...And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr....with your invalid friend who has the absurd name. (1)

Thus just as Boucicault differentiates between his two male protagonists—the initially rakish Charles, who is quickly reformed through the affective power of love, and the liminal Dazzle, who remains uncontained and unmarried, so Wilde posits two different directions for his rakes—Jack towards a denial of performance and committed heterosexual reunion, while Algernon denies the attraction of marriage and embraces the freedom of performance. The reactions of the two men to the revelation of "Ernest" and "Bunbury" are significant in contrasting the level of transgression each is willing to accommodate. While Algernon argues that he and Jack are the same, both

---

<sup>118</sup> To add to the transgressive nature of the men's masquerading is the manner in which the relationships they pursue—whether homosocial or heterosocial, homosexual or heterosexual—and appetites they fulfill—for food, for finery, for sex—are largely unnamed, and thus left to the interpretation of the other characters and, of course, to the audience. Wilde provides hints of at least some of Jack's pleasures—for example, the fine dinners at men's clubs that Jack in his Ernest persona enjoys and does not pay for, as well as, one assumes, his heterosexual pursuit in the form of his surreptitious courting of Gwendolen. However, the true nature of the "dreadful scrapes" is not specified. In the case of Algernon the shadowy existence of the "invaluable" Bunbury provides him specifically homosocial opportunities, per his dinner with Jack at Willis's in Act 1 in defiance of the heterosocial world of his aunt's dinner party. It also provides him the opportunity to visit Jack's home, a visit whose amorphous nature is resolved in his flirtation with and eventual engagement to Cecily. Yet Wilde leaves the full nature of the pleasures indulged in Algernon's Bunburying and Jack's Ernesting to the imagination.

“Bunburyists,” Jack resists the comparison and any attempt at fixing a label to his masquerade. Instead, his lines shows a negation of any possibility that aligns himself with a queer—strange—or queer—homoerotic—strategy, returning to the normative (heterosexual) space away from the fantasy of these doubles.<sup>119</sup> Yet the idea that Jack protests too much in both his denial of “Bunburying” and in his drastic statement that he will “kill my brother” lingers.<sup>120</sup>

Thus no sooner does *Earnest* open up a free play with gender and sexual identity then this free play is threatened with closure, at least for Jack, and as the play proceeds the homosocial space of the opening increasingly gives way to the heterosocial. The men’s close company with each other crumbles in the need to attend to the women. The homosocial is obtained again towards the end of Act 2, when the men’s lies have been uncovered by the women. Here the sexes separate: the women retiring to the house, leaving the men alone in the garden to eat and quarrel with each other. But while the opening of the play posited the homosocial as a space of pleasure, one whose time was,

---

<sup>119</sup> The names the characters assume, as well as the names of other characters within the play, speak to a more overt sense of queering of these bodies, even though there is a covert nature to it as well – a language only to be understood by those in the know. Both doubles—Ernest and Bunbury—bear names that various critics have claimed offer a kind of code, full of multiple meanings, many regarding gender and sexuality, and yet also opaque. For instance, in “Alias Bunbury” in the Norton Critical Edition of *The Importance of Being Earnest* Christopher Craft includes seven potential meanings for the name Bunbury, more than half of which deal with issues of gender and sexuality, primarily homoerotic and homosexual (148).

<sup>120</sup> That Jack vows to so absolutely shut down the Ernest person reveals the extent to which, while purely fantastic, his creation of the role of Ernest and his performance of him has created a crisis, with “Ernest” posing a threat on multiple levels. He threatens Jack’s union with Gwendolen, acting potentially as a kind of homosocial or homoerotic interloper who takes Jack away from the heterosocial and heterosexual. But “Ernest” also stands as a figure who is too desirable in the heterosexual sphere—like a true rake “Ernest” beckons interest from his audiences (Cecily and the play’s audience) simply through the telling of his exploits, commanding the full seductive force of his audience’s imagination to shape the delicious, mysterious nature of his transgressions. Ernest is thus an excessive signifier in both realms, and the disturbance of Ernest’s multivalent attractions must be eliminated in order for Jack to move to a single kind of relationship—heterosexual—with a single partner—Gwendolen.

however, ending with Jack's impending engagement, the homosocial—and the men's ability to obtain it through their masquerades—is even more in peril here. Its pleasures—whether homoerotic or heteroerotic—and its liminal qualities lost potentially forever. In a fit of pique, each man celebrates the manner in which the other has been backed into a corner, his lies, and his masquerades discovered, and future opportunities for such escape destroyed:

JACK. Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too.

ALGERNON. Your brother is a little off colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing either. (2)

The men seem to glory, at least momentarily, in the manner in which each other's identities have been irrevocably shifted to only a single persona, denying them the mobility that allowed them access to the homosocial space, as well as the possibility for heterosexual or homosexual adventure. The homosocial, like Bunbury, has been "quite exploded." With the dissolution of the homosocial, the homoerotic seems to be completely denied; the freedom that the men had to spend time with each other and with other men, to celebrate an enjoyment of each other's company is negated. Yet the exceedingly prickly, spiteful nature of the men's exchange seems to speak to the extent of their frustration at pleasures now denied, revealing the extent to which they realize what they have lost. Both men are now contained by their present roles and their present sexuality, unable to move again. They may celebrate each other's inability to masquerade further, but the panic underneath, in which they realize they themselves can

no longer perform, speaks to something deeper—a panic contained in the move towards the norm, the clang of the portcullis of hegemony cutting them off from their liminal play of gender and sexual roles.

The play's finale seems to offer just this shutting off of liminal play and containment of its rakes. Yet, like the finale of *London Assurance*, it is more complicated than it might seem. It occurs as Jack learns his true identity—he is the son of General Moncrieff, and thus Algernon's brother and Gwendolen's cousin—and his name is indeed Ernest. He welcomes the news, as do the other characters, particularly Gwendolen, who has longed for a husband called Ernest:

GWENDOLEN. Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

JACK. Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

GWENDOLEN. I can. For I feel you are sure to change.

CHASUBLE. (*to Miss Prism*): Laetitia! (*Embraces her.*)

MISS PRISM. (*Enthusiastically.*) Frederick! At last!

ALGERNON. Cecily! (*Embraces her.*) At last!

JACK. Gwendolen! (*Embraces her.*) At last!

LADY BRACKNELL. My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

JACK. On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest. (3)

The finale seems to allay the chaos offered throughout much of the play in the stabilizing of Jack's identity, and the revelation that his name itself, Ernest, with its pun on "earnest," speaks to a sense of truth and authenticity. Yet the finale works to extend this chaos at the same time, complicating the seeming assurance it provides that these rakes are now contained by the ties of marriage, familial responsibility, and a fixed identity.

Just as Wycherley creates an open-ended finale in *Wife*, one that leaves his rake character

poised between the truth of the lie and the lie of the truth, so Wilde crafts a finale that is similarly open-ended, even as it seems to offer closure, by reopening the sense of liminal identity and possibility for performance present in the play's opening.

The assertion of the return to a liminal identity, indeed, the possibility for even greater play, is given in several moments. First, Jack paradoxically apologizes to Gwendolen for telling her that his name was Ernest, finding it “a terrible thing” that he “has been speaking nothing but the truth.” Wilde’s reversal of truth for lies keeps Jack’s tongue, at least, transgressive. Jack apologizes not for the lie, which it seemed to be, but for the truth, which it has improbably become. Gwendolen accepts his apology, but on the grounds that he lies again, noting that while he may have spoken the truth he is “sure to change.” Just as Jack seems to be fixed in a role, Wilde begins, through this final exchange, to hint that he will once again “change.”

Lady Bracknell, the voice of regulation and the character most concerned in fixing Jack’s identity, seems to sense the fluidity bubbling once again to the surface, and hones in on this as transgressive, accusing Jack of “displaying signs of triviality.” On one level Lady Bracknell’s choice of “triviality” as the problem seems to indict Jack for being irresponsible and silly in his behavior, while it returns the audience to the subtitle of Wilde’s work: “A Trivial Comedy for Serious People.”<sup>121</sup> Jack counters that he is instead being “earnest,” a word that seems to betoken truth, performed through behavior that is pure and simple. Jack’s assertion of his performance of “earnestness” seems the

---

<sup>121</sup> In Wilde’s characterization of his work as “trivial” there is a parallel with Gay’s citation of Martial in the first page of *The Beggar’s Opera*, which, translated, reads as “We know these things to be nothing at all.”

opposite of the masquerading of the opening—with its revelation of multiple transgressions, from his deception of his friend and beloved regarding the nature of his man to his refusal to pay bills while in his Ernest persona. Yet the ambiguity of the final line with its play on being “earnest” leaves this in doubt. Is Jack really “earnest” or is he simply “Ernest?” Even his embodiment of the masculinity of “Ernest” can mean two very different things: implying two different kinds of men. There is the stolid “Ernest” the Father—Jack’s long-dead papa who Lady Bracknell refers to as “eccentric” and as a military General who was “a man of peace,” yet who seems to stand for the stolid virtues of steadiness and good imperialist British masculinity applauded by writers such as Ryder Haggard. However, there is also Jack’s “Ernest,” the rakish “Ernest” who lied, stole, and cheated, transgressing on almost every level. Which Ernest Jack now embodies as the play ends is up to the audience to decide—Wilde leaves us guessing.

So what are the implications of Wilde’s foregrounding of performance and the play of identity, his highlighting of the tension between the homosocial, homoerotic, and heterosexual worlds, his opening, closing down, and last-minute opening up of these queer possibilities? Wilde does not simply open the door for homoerotic and homosexual relationships, he also deconstructs heterosexuality in such a way that there is no normative to be found. The characters may seem to travel from a more liminal, queer space to a more restrictive, heterosexual space, but this idea is undermined by not only the majority of the play, but its finale itself, which, as noted, offers the audience a neat

resolution to the play's questions of social and sexual identity and yet puts these fully in play again.<sup>122</sup>

The sense of open-endedness provided by *Earnest* is very different from the approach to rakes found in earlier texts such as *Imm* and *Coquettes*, and even *Assurance*, which variously restrain the rake figure and his role-playing, closing down the sense of multiple identities. The relative inflexibility in regards to gender and sexuality of these earlier rakes and the distinct decriminalizing of them, either through taming (Gore) or outright rejection (Baillie) underscores the extent to which Wilde refashions the rake, restoring the sense of danger and criminality of Gay's Macheath, as well as the implication of marginalization from hegemony and a critique of the rigidity of society and its norms, including heteronormativity.

Yet just as Wilde reinstates transgressive elements of the figure removed from the rake in the decades since Gay, he also anticipates the rake in film. In its focus on performance, a performance that repeatedly draws attention to the bodies of the characters—and actors—performing these roles, *Earnest* looks forward to the spectacular nature of the rake in film, his body magnified and brought close by the camera's movements. The erotic presence of the rake in film is anticipated in *Earnest* not only in the stylish bodies of Jack and Algernon themselves, but in the manner in which other

---

<sup>122</sup> However, it is notable that while Wilde grants his rake characters access to the social and sexual transgressions offered by performance, their female counterparts are not given the same access. While one can certainly argue that Gwendolen and Cecily are, in some way, reflections of the New Woman and of more progressive ideas of femininity—after, all, they are quite firmly in control of the male characters, stage managing their proposals in a way that recalls the witty, clever Hellena in *The Rover* or, particularly, Cowley's Letitia from *The Belle's Stratagem*—neither is allowed the mobility, literal and figurative, of the men, and the only possible role Wilde imagines for them is as wives.

characters constantly refer to their appearance, emphasizing their vitality and glamour, a word that captures the sense of the rake's almost magical charisma.

For example, after Jack has proposed to her in Act 1 Gwendolen notes, “..what wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me, just like that, especially when there are other people present.” Gwendolen's wish evokes the erotic nature of the rake as both an active subject, the wielder of the gaze who stares with desire at other characters, but also as the object of the desiring gaze of other characters and, of course, the viewer. This literal and figurative focus on the spectacular body of the rake echoes previous rakes aligned with the exotic via the gaze, from the repeated focus on Horner's attractions voiced by the characters in *Wife* to the affective spectacle of Macheath in danger in *The Beggar's Opera*, both as he is imagined on the gallows by Polly and in the scene of the jailed Macheath awaiting execution, surrounded by his mourning “wives” in the play's conclusion.

If *Earnest* anticipates the representation and reception of the film rake in its focus on the rake's body as a source of erotic spectacle, nineteenth-century theatre's evolution throughout the century had also begun to prepare the way for the film medium, even as differences separated the media. As Robert Knopf notes in the introduction to *Theater and Film: A Comparative Anthology*, there had been a push towards greater spectacle in nineteenth-century theatre, anticipating the focus on the visual—including the exotic and erotic—of the rake in film. In fact Boucicault's *London Assurance* obtained at least part of its popularity for the startling realism and beautiful detail of its sets, which dazzled



contemporary audiences.<sup>123</sup> Yet as Knopf notes, spectacle could be more easily realized in the film medium: “For despite all the advances of the nineteenth-century stage—seen most clearly in the stage spectacles and melodramas of Steele McKaye, Henry Irving, and David Belasco—film could bring audiences to places they could not travel and position them closer to events than might otherwise be safe in person” (2). Film increased the sense of intimacy with the rake’s body, a body that is more desirable and othered than ever before as next chapter’s film texts reveal.

---

<sup>123</sup> In his discussion of the play in *Dion Boucicault* Robert Hogan notes, “The play had a brilliant cast and was a resounding success. Part of its acclaim was doubtless due to the superb acting of Mathews in the role of Dazzle, and part to the elaborately realistic box sets which utilized a dazzling array of real carpets, furniture, chandeliers, and looking glasses. The painstakingly realistic setting of the piece was an attractive novelty and predated the realism of Tom Robertson by a quarter of a century” (31).

## CHAPTER V

### EROTIC/EXOTIC DESIRES: THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY RAKE IN FILM FROM *THE CHEAT* TO *TROUBLE IN PARADISE*

“Beginnings are always difficult,” says the Baron in smooth, cultured tones as he lays the scene, literally and figuratively, for the seduction of a new conquest—a lovely Countess—in director Ernst Lubitsch’s *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), doing so, despite his statement, with a graceful ease. He stands, half in shadow, cigarette smoke swirling around his elegant, tuxedo-clad form as a short, portly waiter hovers, waiting to take his instructions for a champagne dinner. Standing on the balcony of his room in the Grand Hotel, overlooking a Venetian canal, the Baron appears the picture of the confident, entitled Continental noble. However, Lubitsch quickly moves to reveal that all is not as it seems: the Baron is no aristocrat but the master crook Gaston Monescu, while the woman for whom he waits is not a Countess but a thief named Lily. As rapidly as Lubitsch establishes the high class identities of his handsome, sophisticated lovers these identities are tossed aside—and this episode is just the beginning of the series of masquerades that form the film’s light-hearted yet multifaceted rumination on the liminal nature of identity and the social and sexual roles people play.

This issue of identity, and the stakes regarding this identity on an individual, communal, and national level, is the crux of this chapter, which brings the rake from the medium of theatre to film, from Britain to the United States, and from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Specifically, this chapter centers on the vexed nature of U.S.

identity amidst modernity's social, economic, and political changes and the manner in which the presence of the rake in the new film medium in the early decades of the century helped to articulate a national conversation regarding race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, the order of these reflecting their importance for this chapter's discussion.

As a figure both radically new and linked to tradition the rake in film formed the ideal vehicle to play out modernity's tensions, just as the film medium, a mass entertainment form likewise rooted in the past but born of the technology and artistry of the moment, was perfectly situated as a screen, literal and figurative, on which to project the period's mix of shock at the scale and scope of modernity's metamorphoses and exhilaration at the potential for greater freedom created by these transformations. Similarly standing between present and past was the United States itself—youthful in its cultural, economic, and political history, yet tied via its colonial past to Britain and the Old World.<sup>124</sup>

Rake, medium, and nation were thus more than usually aligned in this period, and their connection played out in a particularly fraught manner due to the immense social, economic, and political transformations of the United States in the early years of the century. In particular, a combination of immigration and domestic migration increased the nation's racial and ethnic diversity, particularly in its quickly-expanding cities, while the growing social and economic power of women forced a reconsideration of gender

---

<sup>124</sup> The nation and the fledging film industry kept step with each, each developing quickly. As Robert Sklar notes in *Movie-Made America*, "The two decades from 1890 to 1910 span the gap from the beginning of motion pictures to their firm establishment as mass entertainment; they are also the years when the United States transformed itself into a predominantly urban industrial society" (3). In just a few decades film moved from kinoscope parlors to nickelodeons, and then to ornate movie palaces, the growth in size of these venues speaking to the popularity of film, and the increasingly opulence of its surroundings to the growing sense of respectability of the medium.

roles. These internal changes challenged the assumption of U.S. identity as nativist, white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, and interrogated male power and privilege just as the nation's growing global prominence led to a greater intercourse culturally, economically, and politically with foreign lands, peoples, and customs. This intercourse elicited excitement yet, in an echo of chapter two and my discussion of the Restoration theatre rake, it also created anxiety and suspicion, particularly in combination with these diverse domestic changes.

The tension and exhilaration caused by the period's transformations are reflected in this chapter's texts—*The Cheat* (DeMille, 1915); *The Sheik* (Melford, 1921); and *Trouble*—and in the representation and reception of the rakes featured in them. These rakes in film are both similar to and significantly different from their theatre predecessors. Like them, they are connected to the national self, partaking, in some measure, of the power and privilege of the status quo; yet they are also distant from this status quo. Echoing theatre rakes from Harry Horner in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) to Algernon and Jack in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) they are associated with the erotic, both as figures who actively pursue sexual desires within the text and as figures who are, due to their passionate nature and attractive mien, simultaneously constructed as objects of desire for other characters and viewers. They are also connected with the fascination and fear evoked by the exotic, their exoticism inscribed by contact, actual or metaphoric, with the foreign, from travel to foreign locations to a tie to any social, economic, or political structure that is alien and unknown. Through intercourse with the foreign the rake in film, like the rake in theatre,

is linked to the raced, ethnic, gendered, sexed, or national other and inflected, even infected, with the ambivalence the other creates. While the rake's appeal as both erotic and exotic, and the interplay between these two, formed a significant aspect of his representation and reception in theatre texts from the Restoration onwards, this combination, and the anxiety provoked by it, increased due to several key differences between these theatre antecedents and the early twentieth-century rake in film: the latter's foreign origins and the media's formal differences.

The first marks a significant break from previous texts in which the rake is poised between the self and other, but with a much clearer alignment with the self. For example, in *Wife* Horner negotiates English fears over foreign intercourse by embodying both English self and foreign other, although his Englishness, and other aspects of his connection with the status quo, is never truly in doubt for the play's viewers, even as its characters entertain doubts. This chapter's film texts similarly position the rake between self—usually constructed as rural, white, heterosexual, and American—and other—variously urban, non-white, queer, and non-native. Yet for the first time none of the chapter's rakes are native-born, aligning them much more fully with the other than the self. This sense of otherness is increased by the actors who play them, who may appear in Hollywood films that circulate throughout the nation and the world as American film products, but are, like the characters they play, non-native. This confusion between self and other in the period's rake mirrors the actual mixing of races and ethnicities within the nation. Increasingly, the foreign was no longer a distant location and foreign people separate from the American self; instead, the foreign appeared within the nation's borders

in the material form of immigrants from every corner of the globe. These immigrants made up a part of the United States even as they were constructed in films, as in other media, as apart from the U.S. norm due to their racial, ethnic, and cultural difference.<sup>125</sup>

Second, the formal differences between theatre and film create a greater sense of both desire and ambivalence with regard to the rake due to the particular nature of the screen-viewer relationship. Film's ability, via the mobility of the camera and editing, to bring the viewer into an intimate relationship with the rake body in a manner impossible in the theatre medium, in which the viewer's relationship with the stage and its rake characters is fixed, reforms this relationship. Camera positions such as close-ups, for example, bring the viewer into close contact with the rake's body, overwhelming the viewer with the rake's material, if virtual, presence. This intimacy can create a profound sense of desire for the rake, the attractive object of the viewer's gaze at the screen, as well as a sense of identification with that body. Yet if the body with whom the viewer is so literally close is a body that speaks more thoroughly to other than to self, this can be a moment as much of anxiety as desire. That the camera not only displays the rake for the viewer but also shares the rake's perspective through point of view shots sutures the viewer into the rake character and his desires. Yet in this context such sharing can be

---

<sup>125</sup> In *Barbarian Virtues* Mathew Frye Jacobson notes that it was the nation's greater global interaction that occasioned much of this unease: "The historic American encounter with foreign peoples thus took place in intricate relation to the ambivalent American idea that foreign peoples: images and stereotypes of the foreigner—by turn menacing, cowed, aggressive, vanquished, needy, or defiant—frame the social and political relations between the United States and its economic participants from around the globe" (97).

problematic, forcing the viewer to share literally, potentially figuratively, the perspective of a body aligned with the other.<sup>126</sup>

Yet while *The Cheat*, *The Sheik*, and *Trouble* all present rake characters associated to various degrees with the erotic and the exotic, the amount of anxiety these figures create and the manner in which they are constructed varies greatly as the rake, medium, and nation progress through the first three decades of the new century. By examining three distinct stages in this progress, I chart the manner in which the figure moves from racial other through ethnic other to national other, in the process transforming from antagonist to protagonist. This shift in the rake's role in the text and the amount of anxiety he provokes is facilitated by a literal, as well as figurative, whitewashing of the figure that not only reduces the difference between the rake and the white heroine, or heroines, he pursues in these films, but moves him further from other towards self.

*The Cheat* represents the first stage, in which its rake, a Japanese art dealer named Hishuru Tori (played by the Japanese actor Sessue Hayakawa), is constructed as alien and dangerous. Tori embodies a distinctly non-white difference and a figure utterly unredeemable for white, Anglo-Saxon U.S. society. From this sense of an otherness that cannot be allowed or assimilated, I examine Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan in *The Sheik* (played by the Italian actor Rudolph Valentino). In this second stage of construction and

---

<sup>126</sup> As Leo Braudy notes in "Stage vs. Screen" from *Theater and Film: A Comparative Anthology*, "Films add what is impossible in the group situation of the stage or the omniscient world of the novel: a sense of the mystery inside character, the strange core of connection with the face and body the audience comes to know so well, the sense of an individuality that can never be totally expressed in words or action. The stage cannot have this effect because the audience is constantly aware of the actor's impersonation" (354).

representation in the twenties the rake is a source of less ambivalence, but still associated with unease, his exoticism both explored and, ultimately, denied. In *The Sheik* this shift is notably facilitated by a move from racial difference between Ahmed and his white beloved towards similarity in the finale's revelation of Ahmed's white, European heritage. The final stage of the early thirties, as film enters the sound era, is exemplified by Gaston Monescu in *Trouble* (played by the English actor Herbert Marshall), who represents a rake who is a more acceptable, nearly hegemonic, figure, yet who is still marked with a touch of difference.<sup>127</sup> In Gaston the viewer is presented with a white rake whose construction as erotic thereby evokes much less tension, although in his Continental origins and criminal profession he still retains some element of the exotic other.<sup>128</sup> With his vaguely Northern European, white masculinity Gaston is presented as a much less threatening, more normative figure than the overtly foreign, racially and ethnically othered rakes Tori and Ahmed, both of whom are presented as distant from "normative" American white femininity and masculinity. As a white European male Gaston both is, and is not, normative in this sense: offering an erotic, exotic presence, but one safely tempered by whiteness. Like many of the later rakes who are protagonists, no longer antagonists or secondary characters like earlier rakes, he offers a foreignness that

---

<sup>127</sup> In a discussion of Cecil B. DeMille's melodramas and the move to using European characters and stars to explore emotional and sexual ranges considered outside the range of American norms, Sklar characterizes the stereotype of the European in the American imagination: "Europeans were more sensual, decadent, emotional, sinful than Americans, also more calculating, rational, and willful. They dared what the innocent American flirts in a DeMille movie would never dare—to be direct and clear in their desires. They were charming, fascinating, dangerous and possibly evil" (96).

<sup>128</sup> The character was rechristened Haka Arakau in the film's 1918 re-release, and changed from Japanese to Burmese in order not to disturb Japanese-U.S. relations, as Daiske Miyao notes in *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* (28).



is so softened, a sexuality so domesticated, that it might be almost nonexistent. Gaston may be foreign, but less obviously and less negatively so.

Formal aspects of the film medium such as *mise-en-scène*—setting, costume, lighting, props—also play a crucial role in the construction of these rake bodies as variously different and more or less threatening, both enhancing their difference and allaying it. All of the films discussed evoke the foreign in different ways in their *mise-en-scène*, aligning them with the exoticist film. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stamm note in *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, the exoticist film creates a space to engage with and explore fantasies of sexual, social, and racial crossing in a manner beyond the capacity of other films: “Exoticist films [also] authorize subliminally transsexual tropes, as the orient provides an outlet for a carnivalesque play with national and gender identity” (167).

While of the films considered in this chapter *The Sheik*, set in Algeria, is the most overt example of a specifically exoticist film, the other films partake in various ways in the tropes of the exoticist film. For instance, *The Cheat* may be set in the United States, yet it creates a sense of exoticism close to home in the shadowy, orientalist *mise-en-scène* of the home of the villainous rake Tori. *Trouble* is set abroad, but in the Continental locations of Venice and Paris rather than the desert location of *The Sheik*. However, the references to locations outside of Europe within the film—particularly the invocation of Constantinople and its harems—play on the allure of the exoticist film.

This exploration could, however, create tension, particularly if films were literally and figuratively located close to home, as in the case of *The Cheat*. The film’s melodrama of sexual violence and racial difference is placed inside, rather than outside,

the nation's borders, thus placing its anxieties within the nation rather than without. *The Cheat* and its rake character Tori represent a crucial difference between what I will call foreign difference and local difference and the level of tension each creates. In the case of the former, the rake is actually located in a foreign environ, physically separated from the United States, as in the case of both *Trouble* and *The Sheik*. This foreign difference is less anxiety-provoking due to the foreign context for the rake's difference, coupled with the actual separation implied. More threatening is local difference, in which the rake retains his association with the foreign, but is actually located within the United States, with no separation between his non-normative difference and the normative Americans around him.

While *Trouble* is the key text of this chapter, I give greater weight to its comparator texts *The Cheat* and *The Sheik* because of the essential nature of each text's contribution to the development of the rake in film. I also concentrate much more fully on issues of race and ethnicity in this chapter than I have in previous chapters, which have foregrounded gender and sexuality. This is not only because it is issues of race and ethnicity that seem to create particular tension in the period, but also because race and ethnicity are so intrinsically tied to gender and sexuality, especially during this period of nation-building. The pursuit by foreign rakes of white, European or American women onscreen brings these threads together in a particularly contentious manner.

Although none of the films are directed or written by a female, a divergence from my inclusion in previous chapters of a female perspective on the rake, *The Sheik* does allow me some measure of this perspective, for the film was based on a wildly popular

novel by Edith M. Hull of the same name, published in 1919. Additionally, *The Sheik*, particularly the film version, was a text aligned in multiple, often fraught, ways with the period's anxieties over gender, particularly of women's increased film spectatorship and their enthusiasm for male stars, especially Valentino.<sup>129</sup> There was intense anxiety about the increased agency of women in the period, as they ventured more and more out into public spaces, mixing with men of other races, ethnicities, and classes, as well as regarding women's spectatorship in cinema, where they gazed not only on male bodies in a manner previously impossible to them, but on bodies that were racially different, as in *The Cheat*, and ethnically different, as in *The Sheik*.<sup>130</sup>

My consideration of the rake in film begins with silent cinema, explored through *The Cheat* and *The Sheik*, and the manner in which its form necessarily foregrounds the rake's visual, rather than aural, power, disturbing cultural norms by prioritizing the rake's body while emphasizing the eloquence of this body's language.<sup>131</sup> As I have discussed,

---

<sup>129</sup> In *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* Miriam Hansen notes of Valentino and his stardom that "The publicity governing this meteoric career until Valentino's premature death in 1926 and his legendary afterlife revolves around two fatally intertwined issues: his ethnic otherness and the question of his masculinity...But the dual scandal of this ethnicity and ambiguous sexuality was a function of the overruling, enabling stigma of Valentino's career: his enormous popularity with women" (254).

<sup>130</sup> Hansen notes, "The projection of the ethnic and racially male other as sexually potent, uncontrollable, and predatory no doubt reflected anxieties related to the ongoing crisis of WASP masculinity. The source of these anxieties, however, was more likely the New Woman, with her alleged economic independence, liberalized life-style, and new public presence (as voter and consumer), which seemed to advance the articulation of female desire, of erotic initiative and choice" (255).

<sup>131</sup> In a chapter on D.W. Griffith, Sklar explores the ways in which amongst Griffith's innovations was a new style of acting for the camera, one which was copied by many other directors. He argues, "The acting style Griffith developed in his players, which was widely copied by others, was one of restraint and repression, a far cry from the open expressiveness of the stage or the exaggerated gestures of the early one-reelers. Sessue Hayakawa, the Japanese actor who starred in Thomas H. Ince Westerns, likened the style to kabuki acting—intensity of emotion was conveyed by the concentrated visible act of holding back rather than booming forth, the audience became enthralled not by large gestures and broad expressions, but by

rapt attention to the male body disrupts the traditional duality of western culture, destabilizing the conventional affiliation, carried over in filmic codes, of the male with the mind (disavowing the body and the bodily), and the female with the body as locus of desire, creating ambivalence. Such intense focus on the body alone marks a break from theatre texts, in which the rake's aural command forms a significant part of his charm arsenal, enticing characters and viewers to him, as well as one of the primary markers of his distinct tie to hegemonic power and privilege.

The prioritization of the visual, as well as aural, aspects of the rake as both desiring subject and desirable object is one of the outstanding elements of the figure in early film, and the issue of the gaze and its implications for the construction and reception of rake masculinity in film organizes much of my close reading. By the gaze I mean not simply the manner in which the rake looks with desire at other characters or the manner in which they regard him, with the rake as both wielder and receiver of the gaze within the diegesis, but the screen-viewer relationship I touched on earlier. The end result is that the film medium creates a greater visual focus on the rake's body as both active desiring subject and erotic object of desire within the diegesis and in the screen-viewer relationship, serving to emphasize these divergent elements of the rake. This is true even as the film medium removes the physical presence of the actor, to replace it with the shimmering shadows of celluloid.<sup>132</sup>

---

small movements of the eyes, face, body, and hands, an interest enhanced by the absence of voice in silent movies" (72).

<sup>132</sup> In the introduction to *Theater and Film: A Comparative Anthology*, Robert Knopf discusses the two media and some crucial differences. He notes, "If there is an inherent theater that I would isolate at this point, it is the fact that theater performance, by virtue of its 'live-ness,' disappears as soon as it is spoken,

Since so much of this chapter highlights the rake's body as visual spectacle, the issue of the actor who plays this highly-visible rake and the manner in which an actor's star text can affect diegetic treatment and viewer reception of the film rake are central.<sup>133</sup> This is the case not only in understanding single rakes, but in charting the development of rakes in film as a group, screen masculinity in general, and the evolution of the Hollywood film industry as a whole.<sup>134</sup> As a number of studies of the history of the star system have shown, the popularity of stars served not simply to ensure that individual films in which specific stars performed received widespread publicity and high profits, but worked to shape the make-up, in regards to race, gender, and class, of film audiences.<sup>135</sup> So too the visible artistry of stars and their exemplary onscreen and off-screen lives, at least when spun through the pens and photos of film publicists, could help

---

leaving texts (scripts) as the primary record and most widely consumed 'artifact' of the theatrical event. Film performance, by nature of its preservation on celluloid and now on videotape and DVD, is kept 'alive' in a way that theater performance, even in the best-taped performances or in written documentation, cannot be. The cinematic artifact, therefore, is the film itself, whereas the theatrical artifact is the script" (6).

<sup>133</sup> The construction and meaning of film stars is both similar to and different from stars of the theatre, a difference based on many factors, including the differences between the media. As Philip Auslander notes in "Live and technologically mediated performance" in the *Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, "Audiences witness theatre actors in the moment of performance but see performances by film actors only long after the actors have done their work. Stage acting is therefore temporally immediate to its audience in a way that film acting is not" (107). In "Signs of Melodrama" from *Stardom: Industry of Desire* Christine Gledhill argues that stars are figures whose "fragmentation can make them sites of ideological contestation – of struggle to redefine the 'moral occult' for different groups" (217).

<sup>134</sup> Given the importance of the film industry to the nation's economy, domestically and internationally, as well as to the value of films as carriers of the nation's ideology, stars are also, in a sense, vital to the nation itself.

<sup>135</sup> In *Heavenly Bodies* Richard Dyer notes, "Stars articulate what it is to be a human being in contemporary society; that is, they express the particular notion we hold of the person, of the 'individual.' They do so complexly, variously—they are not straightforward affirmations of individualism. On the contrary, they articulate both the promise and the difficulty that the notion of individuality presents for all of us who live by it" (8). In *Stars* he argues that the star image is comprised of elements of four categories: promotion, publicity, films, and criticism and commentary (60).

to construct film as a respected art form, an important issue for early filmmakers and studio heads who sought to assert the legitimacy and artistry of their medium.<sup>136</sup>

Yet while stars offered numerous benefits for filmmakers and for studios, their presence also offered complications, for while male stardom could highlight the power and prestige of the male body and the cultural, social, and economic prominence of men, the spectacular nature of these bodies and the avid attention to them could also undermine this power through objectification and threaten the normativity of the American male.<sup>137</sup> This was particularly the case in films that dealt explicitly with romance, as Steven Cohan notes in *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties*, and required a protagonist who could be desired, both by other characters and by audiences. The solution, Cohan argues, was foreign stars such as Valentino, males who were different either in ethnicity or in national origin from the white American man and could thus deflect the negative implications of objectification away from the American male.<sup>138</sup> Yet while foreign stars could work to alleviate anxiety they could also increase it, as I have

---

<sup>136</sup> As Sklar notes, film and filmgoers were not always considered in a very high light, particularly in film's early years. He argues, "To these guardians of public morality the movie theaters were one more example of corrupt institutions and practice that had grown up in the poor and immigrant districts of the new industrial city; they belonged in the same class as brothels, gambling dens and the hangouts of criminal gangs. In a way they were worse, for the movies appeared to some merely as harmless amusements and thus were an even more insidious trap for the unwary" (18).

<sup>137</sup> In *Heroes of Eros* Michael Malone notes that the more powerful a male star gets the less chance he will be constructed as a desired object, but the truly erotic stars can occupy both places (object and subject): "It is the unique gift of the preeminent erotic stars (and there have been few) to serve simultaneously as inseparable sexual object and sexual subject" (70).

<sup>138</sup> In *Masked Men* Cohan argues, "During the studio era, one recurring strategy to prevent the male body from appearing too desirable in these genres was to make the lover foreign (or if not foreign, then ethnic). Using his body to attract and manipulate the female gaze, sometimes to his advantage, sometimes to her, a foreign lover—Valentino comes to mind, obviously, but so do, in the fifties, Yul Brynner, Rossano Brazzi, Louis Jourdan, Fernando Lamas, and Ricardo Montalban—helped to naturalize, by implication, the myth of the silent, rugged, and sexually honest American male" (182).

indicated, as viewers watched—and potentially desired—bodies who were, given the star's own racial, ethnic, and national origins, othered.

I consider the ambivalence created by the foreign star as part of my close readings of this chapter's films, examining the star text of each actor to consider how that actor's image contributes to and complicates the evolution of rake masculinity in film. The order of close readings is chronological, beginning with the teens and *The Cheat*, moving to the twenties and *The Sheik*, and concluding with the early thirties and *Trouble*. Because rake, medium, and nation are so closely intertwined, I contextualize the time period surrounding each film, touching on the social, economic, and political shifts that impacted the rake's treatment within the diegesis and shaped viewer reception. A close reading of each rake highlights the manner in which every film develops and then attempts to contain and/or dispel the power and allure of the rake's erotic and exotic elements, doing so in similar, yet different, ways based on the period and the nature of each rake.

The first stage in this evolution begins in the teens, the period when the United States began its transformation to an international power. The nation's growing modernity was most evident in its burgeoning cities, spaces where genders, races, and ethnicities, once more thoroughly separated, increasingly mixed in an exhilarating—and to some commentators terrifying—manner. Contemporary tension regarding this racial and ethnic mixing and its implications was reflected in attempts to stem this change by restricting immigration, building on previous efforts to similarly maintain the status quo. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that was initially created to ban Chinese

immigration for ten years stretched to decades, as Matthew Frye Jacobson notes in *Barbarian Virtues* (80). While immigration from other Asian nations continued, immigrants faced a number of restrictions and significant prejudice. For Japanese immigrants this was especially the case, as Jacobson notes, in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War (1910-5).<sup>139</sup> As Daisuke Miyao argues in *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*, “The period from the 1910s to the 1920s witnesses the rapid increase in anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States along with a xenophobic atmosphere, especially after World War I” (6). This prejudice is reflected onscreen in the association of the Japanese character Tori in *The Cheat* with menace. Other limitations such as the Immigration Act of 1924, which aimed at keeping the number of Southern and Eastern European immigrants low, were also enacted as the country moved through the teens and into the twenties. As Emily W. Leider argues in *Dark Lover*, a biography of the Italian-born Rudolph Valentino, groups such as Italians were targeted as undesirable, a treatment that impacted the roles Valentino played and his reception.

The association of the film rake with the city and its racial and ethnic mixing is one of the many ways in which contemporary films telegraphed the early rake as a dangerous figure and antagonist, contrasting him with protagonists who were invariably white, usually rural, and who projected an unspoiled virtue, simple honesty, and uncomplicated goodness that the rake notably lacked. In *Heroes of Eros: Male Sexuality*

---

<sup>139</sup> Jacobson notes that the war “elevated Japan to new heights of perceived menace in the American political imagination” (83).



*in the Movies* Michael Malone notes that in the early days of cinema overt male sophistication was the marker of the cad: “He was urban and urbane, wealthy, upper-class, educated, often foreign, and always bad. The hero was rural and rustic, happily poor or contentedly comfortable, middle-class, ignorant (natural), always native U.S.A., and always good” (3). Malone’s description encapsulates the first stage of rake representation, exemplified by Tori in *The Cheat*, a stage in which the rake is not simply tied to the erotic and exotic but is specifically constructed and received as foreign.

The film’s narrative concerns a vain, spendthrift society woman named Edith Hardy who is married to Richard—a busy stock trader. Edith has a social association with a wealthy Japanese man, the art dealer Tori. She turns to Tori when she loses charity money in a stock venture, but when Edith offers a check to repay Tori’s loan rather than her passion, he angrily uses his branding iron to mark her. She shoots him and flees the scene, just missing her concerned husband, who has followed her. Richard is discovered with the wounded Tori, arrested, and, despite his wife’s pleas, insists on standing trial. The final portion of the film depicts the trial, at which Edith’s sensational revelation of the brand changes the tide of public opinion. The Hardys leave as heroes, while Tori is surrounded by an increasingly angry crowd.

I define Tori as a rake for several key reasons. First, he is aggressively sexual in his pursuit of Edith, while his branding of her, which literally places his mark on her, is an act that emphasizes the rake desire for not just passion but for power, a power over both female lovers and male rivals. In branding Edith Tori not only claims her as his but displaces Richard’s claim to her. He is also transgressive in his relationship to social and

sexual mores. His pursuit of Edith violates social mores because she is married, while her whiteness means that in his desire for her he transgresses the period's racial codes. His stylish dress and modern motor car also convey his investment in consumerism, a rake trait, and link him to Edith, who is similarly aligned with consumerism. The negative inflection of this rake's connection with consumerism links Tori to earlier theatre rakes who are constructed as villainous, such as Worshipton in Joanna Baillie's *The Country Inn* (1804), while the overt sense of his sexual hunger recalls the cold, calculating Cimberton in Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722).

The treatment of Tori in *The Cheat* reproduces the typically divided manner in which rakes are unleashed to transgress and yet ultimately constrained; yet an extra dimension of anxiety and containment is added in the overt insertion of racial difference, a tension injected on the level of both narrative and form, such as *mise-en-scène*. While *The Cheat* gives Tori's social and sexual transgressions full rein for a time, only to eventually restrain them, the containment of Tori is different—more violent and overt—than in other texts. Similarly, while the film depicts Tori as an active, assertive subject, a figure for identification, it also repeatedly positions him as the passive object of the gaze: first as a handsome, erotic spectacle of exotic masculinity; then as a symbol of a threatening alien masculinity; and finally, in the trial scene, as the impotent other, who must be ostracized. This charged treatment of Tori, which contains both titillation and tension, is conveyed via the particularly dramatic *mise-en-scène* in which he appears, as a reading of key scenes reveals.

It is the foreign, yet local, body of Tori, not the white, American bodies of Edith and Richard, with which the film opens, a body that is immediately associated with a menacing exoticism through select props, lighting, and costume. The camera reveals a room full of beautiful, unusual Asian art objects, both highlighted and shadowed by chiaroscuro lighting. Tori is at the center of the frame, lit by the glimmer of a brazier as he brands the goods with his private seal, an act that foreshadows his later branding of Edith. The combination of the low key lighting and the possessive, aggressive action of the branding creates an immediate sense of Tori as threatening, while the goods and his relationship with them associates him with consumption. The character's costume—an ornate dressing gown referencing traditional Asian dress—establishes his exotic origins and nature, just as his western dress a scene later as one of the Hardys' "smart set" indicates his westernization. It is the interplay of traditional and western dress throughout the film which most overtly speaks to the manner in which the character is caught between worlds, occupying an uncertain, liminal space. His assumption of both kinds of dress in the scene in which he brands Edith, with the foreign layered on top of the western, brings this uneasy mingling to a head.

The second branding scene visually and thematically mirrors the first, and the sense of menace in the opening is repeated and heightened as the scene plays out the dangerous intersection of white woman and non-white rake. The *mise-en-scène* is the same, with Tori again practicing with the branding tool, overtly master of this world and all it contains. He is dressed in an elaborate robe with glimpses of Western evening dress beneath and surrounded by his goods, whose exotic shapes reinforce the sense of Tori's

similarly foreign nature. Edith's presentation of a check in place of passion elicits Tori's terse response via intertitle—"You cannot buy me off"—the verbal force of this response turning quickly to physical coercion as he forcibly embraces and kisses Edith. The film stages their struggle allegorically: as she attempts to escape she gains higher ground and he literally and figuratively drags her down, exposing her neck and back as he brands her. His face is glacial as he looks down at the distraught Edith—the model of the implacable victimizer—a dynamic reversed a moment later as Edith shoots him and he falls to the floor. No longer powerful and in command, his ineffectual grab at her coat as she flees foreshadows the manner in which the rest of the film removes his authority and emphasizes his ostracism. The scene's end thus forms a stark contrast to the scene in the film's opening, a contrast predicated on the presence and treatment of Edith by Tori in the space most associated with his erotic and exotic nature.

For while the first scene portrayed Tori's potentially transgressive nature in a relative vacuum, simply in concert with his goods, this scene places him in a violent and possessive relationship with a white woman—the reason for the radical differences in the scenes' conclusions. The manner in which Tori is left literally and figuratively weakened and brought low encapsulates the film's overall move to contain and punish its rake.

The film's final scene furthers this, transporting Tori far from his own room, in which he has command, and placing him in a courtroom while surrounding him with a sea of first curious, then angry, white faces. Swept away by the crowd's surge following Edith's dramatic revelation, clinging to the judge and the court officials, Tori's power is extinguished as the united Hardys depart to the well-wishes of the crowd. His fate is

uncertain, but Miyao argues that there are indications that he might be lynched. Certainly the palpable anger and force of that sea of outraged white men bodes no good to him.

The film thus treats Tori's overt sexuality as exceedingly problematic, particularly in combination with his foreign nature, moving quickly to dispel the sense of his exotic and erotic appearance as desirable. Yet the manner in which attention is repeatedly brought to Tori's face and body, whether in dramatic action or frozen in contemplation, particular via the dramatic nature of the lighting, speaks to the ways in which the film acknowledges his appeal to viewers and courts this appeal. The spectacular nature of Tori's dress, whether his ornate robes or his stylish western suits, hails the viewer's eye, while the manner in which the camera focuses on Tori's repeated gazes of desire at Edith, the camera lingering on his eloquent face, may serve the narrative in foreshadowing the direction of their relationship, but it also allows the viewer to enjoy the spectacle of this handsome body and its passionate, desiring gaze.

The sense of confusion created in the film, in which the exotic and erotic body of the foreign rake is to be both desired and denied by the film's characters and viewers, creates an ambiguity that influences further rake film roles, not only in the next phase of representation, but beyond. For while Tori is ultimately crafted as villainous via the branding scene, DeMille, aided by Hayakawa's nuanced performance, develops subtleties for his rake beyond simple lust. For instance, in an early scene Edith nearly falls exiting a car and Tori's hands move quickly to gently support her; this is a moment that speaks to the character's seemingly chivalrous side and his construction as the ideal ladies' companion. Yet here too the rake character can be constructed as dangerous, even

though his actions are not the aggressive behavior of the later branding scene; instead, they speak to the potentially more insidious problem of the man of leisure at unsupervised play with other men's women. Thus the reality of the period's increased mixing of men and women of different races, ethnicities, and social classes and the real-world tension surrounding this finds expression in *The Cheat's* social scenes, in which Tori is accepted into the Hardys' social whirl, blending in, a blending that the film argues is dangerous, particularly for the manner in which the danger is not immediately apparent.

In its construction of its rake figure as seductive yet ultimately negative, *The Cheat* is indicative of the first movement of films featuring rakes, which position these rakes as urban Don Juans who lure innocents to emotional and physical trauma. This phase demonstrates the general anxiety over changing gender roles and the heightened sense of the perils posed by greater sexual freedom, particularly in the dangerous urban space. Yet the difference between the ways in which non-white rakes such as Tori are treated vis à vis period white rakes also speaks to the fraught nature of race and ethnicity—particularly in association with gender and sexuality.<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> For instance, the contrast between the treatment of Tori and that of the white rake character in D.W. Griffith's *Way Down East* (1920) only a few years later is instructive. Like *The Cheat*, *Way Down East* demonstrates the dangers that the rake poses to the unwary, particularly females, in its story of the manipulation of the innocent town girl Anna, played by Lillian Gish, who encounters *East's* white, wealthy urban playboy Lennox Sanderson, played by Lowell Sherman, when she visits her wealthy city relations. Lennox lures Anna into a sham marriage and then abandons her, leaving her pregnant, penniless, and disgraced. While Anna manages to survive, Lennox's behavior and her subsequent social rejection mean that she faces multiple physical and mental hardships, nearly dying in the film's finale. While both Lennox and Tori are coded as dangerous to the films' white heroines and, by implication, to society as a whole, it is Tori who is crafted as much more threatening, both literally and figuratively, marked via the mise-en-scène as malevolent. Despite the ultimately more reprehensible behavior of *East's* rake, the punishment of Tori is both more overt and extreme, revealing racial unease.

The sense of difference in the character of Tori—his erotic and exotic elements and the tension caused by them—is both alleviated to an extent, yet heightened, by the foreign origins of Hayakawa himself, who came to stardom in the role. While the period was, indeed, one of extensive prejudice against Japanese immigrants, Hayakawa’s Japanese heritage also created an ambiguity that crafted him in a particularly divided manner, just as Tori is represented in a disjunctive fashion. Due to what Miyao describes as Japanese Taste, “the middle-class fascination with Japanese artifacts and culture” (14), Hayakawa could be read as foreign and dangerous, yet also desirable. For while Japanese people were considered racial others, they were deemed less radically so and with less negative connotations than other groups, particularly African Americans. For example, in his discussion of Hayakawa’s early roles Miyao describes the actor playing Japanese characters, such as in his screen debut in ● *Mimi San* in 1914, and Native American characters, two groups aligned, as Miyao notes, in the minds of many white Americans as both savage and civilized, othered, but not completely so.<sup>141</sup>

This sense of a middle ground that Miyao explores is echoed in the direction of the film industry itself, which increasingly sought to address middle class viewers and appeal to their tastes in the selection and presentation of stories. This address was facilitated by stars who were acceptable to this middle, and who could help to assert the artistic merit and moral benefits of film. As Miyao argues, “Movie stars were meant to

---

<sup>141</sup> Miyao notes, “While Native Americans were often highly regarded as ‘noble savages,’ Japanese were regarded as sophisticated in the middle-class discourse of Japanese Taste. Both Japanese and Native Americans had been considered as descendants of the Mongoloid race, lower levels on the human ladder envisaged by the thought of social Darwinism or eugenics, but yet higher than the Negroid in the racial hierarchy” (76-77).

assert that the cinema was morally a ‘healthy phenomenon,’ compared with the scandalous theater world” (87). As *The Cheat*’s producer Jesse L. Lasky’s careful construction of his new star’s image, detailed by Miyao, indicates, while the specifically erotic, exotic Tori in *The Cheat* was the source of Hayakawa’s stardom, a role that so clearly connected him with the menace of miscegenation was not the stuff for a long-standing career.<sup>142</sup>

As a foreign-born male who incites and troubles the gaze Hayakawa is important in his own right, as well as for the ways in which he is a precursor to later stars such as Valentino and the next phase of rake development. Notably, however, despite their similarities, the treatment of each star’s rake characters, like their star images, diverge significantly. This is a difference predicated by the lessened tension between racial difference, in the case of Hayakawa, and ethnic difference, as in the case of Valentino, as the rake’s progress moves into its second stage.<sup>143</sup>

This sense of a lessened difference and the middle ground it evokes—a rake who is still somewhat dangerous, and yet not so dangerous that he cannot be desired—

---

<sup>142</sup> As Hansen notes in *Babel and Babylon* there was an “injunction” against casting actors that looked ethnically or racially different in these early years. She says, “The social discourse that maintained this injunction was the nativist movement that had gained momentum in the 1890s and culminated in the 1920s in response to the massive influx of ‘new’ immigrants from southern and eastern Europe—Italians and Jews—the very groups that populated the nickelodeons and entered the industry as exhibitors, distributors, producers and actors” (255).

<sup>143</sup> The end of the teens marked a new stage in the development of the film medium and industry, one of longer stories, larger casts, and greater sophistication in all areas of production; this was also the period of the second phase of rake presentation. In it rakes would still be constrained, but in a less repressive manner, still presented as outsiders, although their desirability would be more overtly acknowledged. The rake character might, for example, be allowed some complexity in his onscreen representation beyond Manichean villainy, although he was still, as a representation of unchecked, self-indulgent desire, restrained by other characters and by the trajectory of the diegesis. This greater complexity potentially serves to catch the viewer’s notice, perhaps even engage his or her sympathy, while the attractive rake body presented to the viewer via the camera’s eye works to further engage attention.



between the racially other and the ethnically other rake, and star, can be illustrated, as Miyao notes, by a comparison between the ultimate outcome of both men's playing of Arab characters in consecutive years—Hayakawa as Ahmed in *An Arabian Knight* in 1920 and Valentino as a character of the same name in *The Sheik* in 1921. Miyao charts the variance between the ways the two roles play out, the most important of which is that the Valentino character, ultimately revealed as not Arab but European, is allowed to get the girl, while the Hayakawa character is separated from any union with a white woman.<sup>144</sup> This move towards a greater recuperation of the rake figure in *The Sheik* is an essential part of the next phase in rake presentation, and it is notably played out via a character and an actor who are much less overtly different than the Japanese Tori and Hayakawa.

Shaped by these changes in rake representations and presentation, actors such as Valentino are also instrumental, like the earlier Hayakawa, in affecting them. The villainous nature of Valentino's early roles echo the casting of Hayakawa in *The Cheat*: glamorous, but dangerous males, ultimately socially and sexually unacceptable. Yet his selection as the seductive and indolent, yet ultimately brave and selfless, Julio in the big-budget epic *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) changed this categorization, moving him from ostracized villain to ambivalent, yet ultimately heroic, protagonist.

---

<sup>144</sup> Miyao notes, "There were similar tensions and anxieties raised by the images of Hayakawa and Valentino in the era of xenophobia and consumerism. Similar motifs, such as costuming, feminization, Orientalism, and consumerism, appeared in both stars' careers, but they did so in different cultural and racial contexts, which inform their meanings. In order not to enhance the fear of sexual arousal and the anxiety of miscegenation, Ahmed, and Hayakawa as a nonwhite star, is strictly kept at a certain distance only to be looked at, especially as a self-sacrificial genteel victim hero, and to be read about in fan magazines, as an Americanized model minority who embodies refined Japanese Taste but who cannot be touched and can never be kissed. Valentino, in contrast, in the finale of *The Sheik* united with the white heroine when it is revealed that he is a son of European aristocrats" (193).

Begun in *Four Horsemen*, this significant shift in Valentino's career was cemented by his other role that year for Famous Players-Lasky, the same studio that released *The Cheat*: the forceful, yet romantic, Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan in *The Sheik*. This transformation was significant not only for Valentino himself, but for the trajectory of the rake.

Based, as noted, on Edith M. Hull's 1919 novel, and set in Algeria, *The Sheik* tells the story of the passionate young Ahmed who sights an independent young Englishwoman, Lady Diana Mayo, and pursues her, finally kidnapping her and taking her to his camp. Despite his desire for her, her fear and disdain for him, coupled with the counsel of his French friend Raoul St. Hubert, keep him from ravishing her. Captured by the bandit Omair, Diana faces sexual violence. She is rescued by Ahmed, who kills Omair, but who is so wounded in the process that he nearly dies. As they watch over the injured Ahmed together, Raoul reveals to Diana that Ahmed is the son not of the old Sheik, but of an English father and Spanish mother. The film ends with the tribes' celebration of Ahmed's recovery and the affirmation of Diana's love for him.

I consider Ahmed a rake, and therefore tie him to earlier rakes in theatre, for several main reasons. First, he is a character predicated on sexual desire, and much of the film's narrative revolves around his pursuit of Diana and his near-mastery of her, until a sense of tenderness and respect, rather than aggression and dominance, changes this behavior. He is also an erotic object of desire himself, particularly as played by the handsome, suave Valentino, who uses his expressive eyes and the forceful, yet graceful, movements of his body to lure the other characters to him, substituting this evocative body language for the witty verbal seductions of earlier rakes such as Macheath, or later

rakes in sound film such as Gaston. He is also, like previous rake characters, a cunning schemer, successfully plotting to capture Diana, effectively holding her captive until he chooses to let her go, and ultimately maintaining his possession of her despite the efforts of Omair, his main rival, to obtain her.

Several key scenes in *The Sheik* are illustrative of the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality that is such a vital dimension of this film, as of *The Cheat*, and that is played out, like the earlier film, on the level of both narrative and form. Yet while a number of the scenes featuring Ahmed in *The Sheik* echo Tori in *The Cheat*, their divergence speaks to the difference the passage of time, coupled with a rake who is, ultimately, coded in a very different manner in regards to race, can create. That the Arab-cum-European character Ahmed, played by the Italian Valentino, offers less overt danger of miscegenation than the Japanese Tori and Japanese Hayakawa is crucial to this difference, and established in the character's introduction early in *The Sheik*'s narrative.

While Tori is immediately crafted as a mysterious, malevolent character, Ahmed is presented as benevolent and sensitive, a disparity played out through the different body language of the characters coupled with divergent mise-en-scènes. Establishing shots of an Algerian town and a call to prayer reveal the film's exotic locale, which then moves beyond the town to a desert location. This is the home of Ahmed's people who live, as a title card informs the viewer, "In happy ignorance that Civilization has passed them by," and Melford chooses an iris effect throughout the sequence that highlights for the viewer a sense that he/she is spying into a forbidden, mysterious world, one unconnected with the viewer's ordinary experience. A marriage market is in process, and Ahmed, as sheik,

officials. A dispute over a woman, loved by one of Ahmed's men, arises. The men appeal to Ahmed, and the camera cuts to a medium-long shot of him sitting cross-legged, smoking a cigarette, with a tent and an African man behind him. Ahmed directs his gaze to the right, to take in the lovers, and the camera shares his point of view. The camera then returns to Ahmed, a medium shot allowing the viewer to drink in his handsome face as he smiles in the lovers' direction. A man objects; the camera briefly moves to him, and then back to Ahmed as he voices, via an intertitle, his decision: "When love is more desired than riches, it is the will of Allah. Let another be chosen." Coupled with Ahmed's body language, the dialogue reveals the level of his command, demonstrating that here, like Tori, is an assertive male figure. Yet this dialogue also establishes Ahmed's romantic attitude towards love—forming a contrast between the two men.

While both Ahmed and Tori are shown in non-western dress that associates them with the exotic, the remainder of the *mise-en-scène* presents their milieus and reflects their characters in very different ways. While the *chiaroscuro* lighting of Tori's room literally and figuratively crafts him as a creature of the shadows, a man of not only mystery but menace, the high-key lighting of Ahmed's introduction casts no shadow, literal or figurative, of this kind on Ahmed. Instead, the lighting reveals every aspect of Ahmed's outdoor environment, while allowing the viewer to enjoy each visual detail: from his rich costume to his handsome, smiling face. So too the lighting reveals the manner in which Ahmed's character fuses East and West. While both title card and *mise-en-scène* associate Ahmed and his people with the exotic and the traditional, casting them and their world as decidedly unmodern, Ahmed's smoking indicates the character's

alignment with the West and western appetites. This is only the first of numerous visual and textual references to Ahmed's in-between nature, which include the revelation of his Parisian education, the presence of his French friend Raoul and butler Gaston, and Raoul's discovery to Diana of Ahmed's European parentage.

Just as the film splits the difference between Ahmed as traditional and modern, exotic and familiar, so too it positions the character as both non-white and white. Here *mise-en-scène* is again critical. In his introduction Ahmed is pictured repeatedly in the foreground of the shot with a dark-skinned African man in traditional dress behind him. While the man's presence serves to visually connect Ahmed with the exotic and other, it also serves to indicate his distance from the African man's overt difference, a literal and figurative distance provided by the separation of the two men spatially in the shot and the stark contrast in their skin tones. It is the African man's darkness that serves to highlight the pale face of Ahmed, showing the viewer that while Ahmed may be connected with otherness, visually in the shot and per the narrative in his adoption as an Arab, he is not all that different—he is, in fact, more modern and more white than might originally appear to be the case. This construction of Ahmed as in-between is continued in his interaction with his love interest, Lady Diana Mayo, an interaction that plays with the issue of difference/lack of difference between genders, as between races.

If the opening of the film represents Ahmed as both exotic and erotic object for the camera's gaze and as active subject, the scene in which he meets Diana, the film's heroine, demonstrates the ways in which the film aligns the two across gender and race even as it separates them. Diana is an independent young Englishwoman, her desire for

freedom indicated both in her refusal of a marriage proposal from a suitor and her wish to venture out into the desert unaccompanied by a white man. When the two encounter each other, the camera reveals Ahmed's attention held, his gaze directed towards the camera. The camera then cuts to show the object of his gaze—Diana. She stares back, and the camera returns to Ahmed, and then back to a defiant Diana. Finally, Ahmed moves away, then turns back as if he desires to look once more, and finally departs out of frame, with Diana staring after him. The scene's interplay of gazes between Ahmed and Diana reveals a reciprocity of a sort, for Diana may be the object of the gaze but she also returns it, and thus redresses the usual formula, described by Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" from *Visual and Other Pleasures*, of the woman as the object of the gaze, positioned for the delection of both the onscreen characters and the viewer. Diana's gaze at Ahmed drinks him in in a manner that addresses her interest, if not desire, for him, although the manner in which it is he, not she, who begins this dance of the gazes moves the sense of active looking, as opposed to passive objectification, back to him. Later scenes, such as Ahmed's spying on a sleeping Diana and his binocular sighting of her in the desert before he swoops down on her, again place the power with Ahmed and form his perspective as the viewer's own, while emphasizing the repeated ways in which this character's gazing is situated within the province of desiring and desirability.

An added layer of tension is added to the manner in which the characters share/don't share the power of the gaze by the manner in which they share/don't share whiteness. The film makes it clear that it is Diana's whiteness, as well as her spirit, that

attracts Ahmed's gaze, while Diana is intrigued by his difference from the white men who surround her.<sup>145</sup> It is not simply Ahmed's gaze but his gaze at a woman specifically constructed as white, and especially desirable for that whiteness, that the film emphasizes. As Leider notes in *Dark Lover*, Ahmed repeatedly draws attention to Diana's whiteness, from his observation of her "pale hands and golden hair of a white woman" when he discovers her in disguise at an Arabs-only party, to the lyrics of his song "Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar" when he serenades her beneath her room in the hotel (160).

Yet while in *The Cheat* this gaze of the othered male at the white woman is constructed as ominous, with Tori's desiring gaze already associated with the violent possessiveness and sinister intent created in the first scene, Ahmed's is treated quite differently, as played out in the crucial seduction scene. In this scene the hungry gaze of Ahmed at Diana seems to foreshadow the kind of ravishment portrayed in *The Cheat*, yet the film departs from this representation of the character and his relationship with Diana, revealing a move to contain the rake's desires and align this foreign man with restrained passion rather than outright violence. The seduction scene occurs in the *mise-en-scène* of Ahmed's tent, and shows Ahmed literally in his element, in contrast to a vulnerable, uncomfortable Diana. He advances on her and embraces her tightly, and she seems to

---

<sup>145</sup> Shohat and Stamm note *The Sheik* is an example of the gender/race dynamics of imperial narratives, noting, "In many films, colonial women become the instrument of the White male vision, and are granted a gaze more powerful than that of non-Western women and men. This ephemeral superiority granted European women in a colonial context is exemplified in *The Sheik*. Based on Edith Hull's novel, the George Melford film first introduces the spectator to the Arab world in the form of the 'barbarous ritual' of the marriage market, depicted as a casino lottery where Arab men select women to serve as 'chattel slaves.' At the same time, the Western woman character, usually the object of the male gaze in Hollywood films, is endowed in the East with an active (colonial) gaze; she temporarily becomes the sole delegate, as it were, of Western civilization" (166).

swoon. Ahmed's hands show up as startlingly dark against Diana's skin and pale clothing, emphasizing their difference, although his face is, as Leider notes, no darker than hers.<sup>146</sup> Bending over her, he kisses her, his face obscuring hers—an image of erotic control that foreshadows that of Bela Lugosi overcoming his victims in *Dracula* (Browning, 1931).<sup>147</sup> Here the rake is, like the vampire, a creature of pure appetite, his victim powerless to resist. The manner in which Ahmed seems so different and so threatening at this moment—the height of sexual tension—speaks to the fantasies of sexual control melded with racial difference played out here, specifically via Ahmed's identification as an Arab, joined to Valentino as the dark, foreign lover. As Shohat and Stamm note, for white audiences this is a moment to indulge in fantasy, for they argue that white heterosexual desires are often displaced onto African, Arab, and Latino men “who play the id to the Western masculinity superego” (168).

The seduction does not progress further, however, in contrast to its source material; instead, Ahmed is interrupted by a sandstorm, and when he returns he finds Diana, overcome, collapsed over a low divan. In a further dance of the gazes, this time

---

<sup>146</sup> As Leider notes, racial tensions were still high and the film could not go too far in emphasizing the darkness of Ahmed in contrast with the pale, European Diana, for “in the racially polarized world of the American 1920s, where the Klu Klux Klan was again on the rise and nativist ideas about white purity were gaining new favor and fervor, care had to be taken to ensure that colour boundaries would not be too openly or brazenly breached (161-162). She notes that “The Production Code would specifically forbid showing miscegenation on-screen when the Hays Office set up shop in 1922” (162).

<sup>147</sup> In *White Dyer* notes, “The vampire's bite, so evidently a metaphor for sexuality, is debilitating unto death, just as white people fear sexuality if it is allowed to get out of control (out from under the will)—yet, like the vampire, they need it. The vampire is the white man or woman in the grip of a libidinal need s/he cannot master... All this is so menacing that it is often ascribed to those who are not mainstream whites—Jews (see Gelder 1994: 13-17), South East Europeans (Transylvania in *Dracula* and its derivatives), the denizens of New Orleans (Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*). Horror films have their cake and eat it: they give us the horror of whiteness while at the same time ascribing it to those who are liminality white” (210).



between Ahmed's gaze at Diana's desirable exposed back and his gaze to the camera, he shares with the viewer his desire for her and then, as he masters himself, his restraint.<sup>148</sup>

Thus while the earlier moments in the sequence created a sense of anticipation in both Diana and the viewer of a violent ravishment, the conclusion of the scene is quite different, and a sharp contrast with that of *The Cheat*. Here the rake is again defeated, not by violence but, the film seems to argue, by the power of love. Crucially, the viewer is repeatedly sutured into Ahmed's perspective in a manner that the viewer is not in *The Cheat*, in which a subjective camera shows Tori's and Edith's struggle and its resolution, with only a few moments in which the camera/viewer shares either character's perspective. Through the repeated shots of Diana's back from Ahmed's perspective the viewer partakes in both the initial temptation her pale, exposed flesh provides and then, as those shots are interspersed with Ahmed's looks to the camera, with his very different perspective on this flesh—as something not to be enjoyed for his own delight, but treasured. These gazes to the camera create a relationship between the viewer and Ahmed that is very different than that between the viewer and Tori. While Tori, even as

---

<sup>148</sup> The camera shows Diana crying and praying silently for aid, her arms outstretched and her back, in an elegant Western evening gown, exposed. The camera follows Ahmed as he moves towards the prone Diana. A cut to a high angle long shot shows the interior of the tent, Diana on one extreme side of the frame and Ahmed at the other extreme, coming towards her. He moves closer, nearly touching her exposed back. The camera cuts to a close-up of his face from mid-low angle, the view that Diana would have of him leaning over her if she turned around. He is smiling in anticipation, although as the camera remains on him the smile begins to fade. The camera cuts to his point of view of her pale back stretched over the divan. A close-up of Ahmed shows no longer anticipation but dismay, and a move to a long shot from that earlier high angle shows him pulling back. In a medium close-up he looks to the camera, his face confused, then there is a sense of something awakening in him. His eyes move in Diana's direction as we see his emotions play over his face. We see her pale back again from his point of view. A further close-up of Ahmed reveals an abashed expression; he rolls his eyes, closes them, seems to master himself, and then looks again to the camera. Now his look is desolate. His eyes move down to Diana. In a long shot from that previous high angle he moves away from her, returning to the side of the frame, pauses, almost moves to her, and then moves away, his body language registering defeat.

an active subject within the diegesis, is almost always the object of the camera's gaze, Ahmed's look to the camera, the sense in which his regulation of himself comes about through his relationship with the camera/viewer, offers a transformational moment—the rake is no longer a creature of appetite, he is a creature of love and reverence, one in whom the viewer is emotionally invested. This intense exchange of glances may explain why *The Sheik* proved so popular, and the character of Ahmed, and Valentino's portrayal of him, so seminal.

One final sequence at the end of the film cements the transformation of the rake from villain to hero, from foreigner to assimilated lover, doing so on two levels: one visual and one narrational. The scene shows Ahmed, prone on a bed, wounded from his fight with Omair; Raoul is watching over him. Diana enters, and we repeatedly see Ahmed from her perspective. He is devoid of his robes and covered by a blanket, his head coverings replaced by a white bandage. He is a vulnerable man—a Sleeping Beauty. Diana caresses one of his hands, dark against her white hands, and comments on its size: "He has such large hands for an Arab." This is when Raoul reveals Ahmed's true parentage, a parentage that in its blend of northern European (English) and Southern European (Spanish) maintains a sense of the character as still exotic to a degree, but acceptably so. Diana prays for Ahmed's recovery, and he wakes with a smile. His line to her echoes the language of European love poetry, while specifically conjuring up an idea of light associated with her and his love for her: "Diana, my beloved. The darkness has passed and now the sunshine" Ahmed's courtly behavior and language, coupled with the revelation of his heritage, mark him as westernized, serving to largely dissolve the

East/West divide of the character throughout. This notion is reinforced by the presence of Raoul and Diana, the film's other major characters—both Europeans—at his sickbed.<sup>149</sup> Yet while Diana remains, marking Ahmed as not only westernized but heterosexual, Raoul, the friend with whom he has a homosocial, even homoerotic, bond leaves Ahmed's side in the film's last moments, ejected from the heteronormative space.<sup>150</sup>

As these scenes reveal, the film has it both ways in its portrayal of Ahmed as active and passive; the violent, exotic male and the soft, familiar lover; the foreign, non-white man and the European white man. While Ahmed seems at moments the model of the aggressive, predatory rake, the film domesticates him, taming him through the love of an independent European woman and the friendship of a worldly, cultured friend. Stripped of his power and of his racial difference, Ahmed can wed Diana, while the rake figure, once ostracized, now becomes a source of overt erotic delight for viewers. This evolution of the character and of the rake figure is mediated through the star text of Valentino, whose own sense of in-betweenness per exoticism and the European, sexual

---

<sup>149</sup> Raoul's presence in the film's final moments is key, visually marking the manner in which the Ahmed-Raoul relationship parallels, even challenges, that of Ahmed and Diana. Like Diana, Raoul is a European; unlike her, he has a long history with Ahmed, a history predicated on western education and western manners. As such, Raoul is crucial to Ahmed's presentation as a man of both East and West, and instrumental in Ahmed's transformation from aggressive ravisher to courtly wooer. It is Raoul who critiques Ahmed for his behavior, which he terms savage, asking, "Does the past mean so little to you that you now steal white women and make love to them like a savage?"

<sup>150</sup> While Raoul serves as the conduit for Ahmed and Diana to enter a westernized version of love, one that is specifically heterosexual, he also highlights the homosocial, even homoerotic, side of Ahmed. When Raoul arrives, Ahmed sings; he tells Diana that this behavior, seen earlier in his wooing of her, is indicative of his happiness at his friend's arrival. In some ways it is Raoul rather than Diana who becomes Ahmed's focus for much of this middle portion of the film. When he later, under Raoul's influence, decides to let Diana go, he asks Raoul to return to his camp with him to ease his "loneliness." This demonstrates not only Ahmed's tender side and the sacrifice he is making in foregoing Diana, but also the closeness of his relationship with Raoul.

abandon and restraint, is crucial to the process, and is, for its own part, cemented by *The Sheik*.<sup>151</sup>

This process is navigated via Valentino's ethnic difference, which both allows the creation of a sense of difference and yet allows a desire that racial difference would not allow. Key to this is not only Ahmed's positioning as really European, but Valentino's own Italian heritage. As Leider notes in *Dark Lover*, he was born in Castellaneta in 1895, traveled to New York in 1913 as part of a wave of Italian immigration, and finally moved to Los Angeles.<sup>152</sup> While he soon received bit parts, as Leider observes they were normally as villains—roles dictated by his appearance: "He didn't set his sights on romantic or heroic roles. Physical traits determined casting choices and he knew he looked foreign, which meant he would be typed as a villain...To American directors and producers, and much of the audiences, dark skin implied contamination" (87). Even if this was not always the case, prejudice still existed.<sup>153</sup> In *White* Richard Dyer summarizes period attitudes regarding whiteness and notes a definite hierarchy. In this

---

<sup>151</sup> As Leider notes of Valentino, "Once he portrayed the Sheik, his identity as a *homme fatale* took hold on a grand scale. Millions of fans identified him with his character, attributing to him the same combination of sexual menace and air of Oriental mystery along with European polish that Ahmed Ben Hassan displayed" (159). Hansen notes in *Babel and Babylon* that it was *The Sheik* that really associated Valentino not only with eroticism, but with an eroticism connected with ethnicity. Discussing the differences between *Four Horsemen* and *The Sheik* she notes, "While the former film rationalized Valentino's difference to circumvent Hollywood's code of casting, the latter stressed it as a source of his appeal. To be sure, the fascination was disavowed on the fictional level (as in the novel), by having the wild Arab turn out to be the son of an English nobleman and a Spanish lady. But this melodramatic formula, rehearsed in a persistence pattern of dual identity in many of Valentino's films, ironically enabled the creation of an ethnically distinctive star" (257).

<sup>152</sup>As Jacobson notes, "Immigration from Italy first began to reach appreciable numbers in the 1880s, and nearly four million Italians arrived between 1880 and World War I" (63-64).

<sup>153</sup> For example, Leider quotes an exchange between an Italian job seeker and an American-born employee: "'You don't call an Italian a white man?' The answer came back, 'No, sir, an Italian is a dago'" (50).

hierarchy Italians fell in an in-between space: less welcome than other, more securely white groups, but more welcomed than others; Dyer notes, “There are gradations of whiteness: some people are whiter than others. Latins, the Irish and Jews, for instance, are rather less securely white than Anglos, Teutons and Nordics” (12). As first *Four Horsemen* and then *The Sheik* revealed, Valentino’s liminal status could be employed to play out this middle ground between white and non-white, racial/ethnic other and acceptably normative American.<sup>154</sup>

Thus Valentino and his film roles, particularly from *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* to his final film *The Son of the Sheik* (1926), bridge the evolution of the film rake in the time period from the teens to the twenties and in the transition in roles from villain to hero. While Valentino may not have offered quite the challenge to normative white American masculinity that Hayakawa offered, his stardom seems to be similarly derived from the ways in which his characters and his embodiment of them allowed audiences to play out their interest in and fear of the transgressive rake figure, particularly when this rake was inflected by the foreign and the freight of exoticism and eroticism attached to the foreign.<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> Yet while Valentino’s difference from the other white actors who were considered and rejected for *The Sheik* was in part due to his ethnicity, Leider also notes that the film downplayed the sense of true difference in the character of Ahmed: “Valentino’s dark complexion might have been highlighted as an asset, since he was playing a hot-blooded, charismatic Arab chieftain instead of a pale-skinned Frenchman such as Armand Duval or Charles Grandet. But the producers played it safe: only in the posters and lobby cards, especially those in color, does Rudy’s skin look tan or even black. On-screen, his face appears white, but his hands show darker” (159).

<sup>155</sup> In “Discourses of Gender and Ethnicity: The Construction and De(con)struction of Rudolph Valentino as Other” in *Film Criticism* Gaylyn Studlar characterizes Valentino’s appeal as deriving from “a contradictory sexual spectacle of male ethnic otherness within a xenophobic and nativist culture” (19).

Yet while he may have been considered more acceptable in many ways than Hayakawa, Valentino also created tension, largely due to his primarily female audience base: a base which excited fears of hordes of unsupervised, consumption-mad women. As Gaylyn Studlar notes in *This Mad Masquerade*, this reaction parallels the concern in the previous generation of social critics at the specter of the theatre matinee girl, who haunted the afternoon performances of melodramas and romances to adore her favorite male lead.<sup>156</sup> There was also, she notes, the issue of Valentino's association with dance during his early years in the United States, specifically his association with the tango as an instructor, pejoratively termed a "tango pirate," and as an exhibition dancer, for tango was considered particularly dangerous amongst the social dances for its close contact between male and female partners and its foreign origins.<sup>157</sup>

How Valentino and his directors may have addressed the prejudice against him and continued to develop the particularly erotic, body-conscious rake, aligned with ethnic difference, that he represented as the United States moved into the thirties and films moved towards sound is intriguing to consider. Valentino's death, however, marked an end not only of his progress onscreen, but the close of an era in which it was the rake's body that was the primary focus of both desire and anxiety for other characters and

---

<sup>156</sup> Studlar follows the manner in which concerns over gender, consumption, and the objectification of the male body come together in the roles and star text of John Barrymore, whose success in theatre would translate to film stardom and rake roles such as those in *Beau Brummell* (1924), *Don Juan* (1926), and *The Beloved Rogue* (1927).

<sup>157</sup> Studying contemporary critical responses to the contemporary dance craze, Studlar quotes a piece called "The Revolt of Decency," originally published in the *New York Sun* in 1913, to argue that "The new social dances enthusiastically taken up by middle-class women in chic urban cabarets and tango palaces were regarded as indecent in their 'American and South American negroid origin'" (157).

viewers. Sound would serve to both increase and decrease the tension elicited by the rake.<sup>158</sup>

The advent of sound brought back an element of danger in the portrayal of rakes, yet it also contained this danger. Sound allowed this charm merchant to engage his full measure of seduction in both body and tongue, yet sound also distracted both characters and viewers from the bodily appeal of the rake. Formally, sound transformed the manner in which the narrative was relayed—no longer simply through actions, *mise-en-scène*, and scattered title cards and intertitles, but through the increasingly complex dialogue of the characters.

Sound affected not only the characterization and behavior of the rake, but also the men who played him, who, in turn, began to affect the rake figure. While the rakes in silent film needed only an attractive body and come-hither glance, the rakes in sound films needed voices that would seduce, as well as the ability to get their tongues around a wide variety of dialogue in the English language. This issue of language, and a requirement for largely unaccented voices, excluded some actors from these roles.

By the time of the Lubitsch musicals of the late 1920s and comedies of the early 1930s the rake, at least as embodied in the charming but hardly violent and othered forms of Lubitsch actors such as the French actor Maurice Chevalier and the English actor

---

<sup>158</sup> While the Valentino films portray the rake as, ultimately, the hero-seducer, others seek to dismiss him as harmless or foolish, a brilliant buffoon. For example, while rakes such as the “jazz hound” Babe Winsor in *The Battle of the Sexes* (Griffith, 1928) can cause disruption in the diegesis, they are contained by the film’s end. Babe’s actions may be negative, he helps to blackmail a married man who has been seeing his gold-digging girlfriend, yet he also ultimately interferes with the gold-digger’s attempt to keep the wealthy married man on the line, thus allowing him to return to his family and stability. The film’s finale shows rake and gold-digger together, safely distanced from the hero, heroine, and their family.

Herbert Marshall, is center stage as the protagonist. These Lubitsch rakes, particularly Gaston Monescu of *Trouble in Paradise*, are both more conservative and more radical than previous film rakes, and help to point the way to the complex millennial rakes of my final chapter. *Trouble* plays out the division of foreign and not foreign this chapter has charted through a rake who is white, yet not American; familiar and comfortable for film viewers, yet not completely so.

The plot of *Trouble in Paradise* concerns Gaston and Lily—a male and female thief—who, while posing as high society characters, discover each other's true identities and professions and fall in love. They fleece their way across Europe, but find themselves down at heel in Paris. Having stolen a jeweled purse from the wealthy widow Mariette Colet, they discover they will make more money returning it for the reward than pawning it. They then decide to be “honest.” Under the name of “Monsieur La Valle” Gaston falls into a job as Colet's secretary, becoming intimately acquainted with her finances, her household, and her. Mariette pursues him, and he soon finds himself caught between her and the jealous Lily, who has taken a job as Mariette's assistant. Seeing Gaston's feelings more clearly than he does, Lily encourages him to rob Mariette and leave with her, while Gaston struggles with his attraction to both women and the distance his criminal past sets between him and Mariette. Finally, Gaston admits the truth to a saddened Mariette, who gives him the pearls Lily wanted as a gift. The two thieves reunite in a taxi; initially tense, the scene builds to a mirror of their meeting scene, as each reveals the stolen items they have purloined from each other's pockets. The two characters embrace, as Lily's delighted “Gaston!” reveals that the thief with whom she



fell in love has once again resurfaced after his long pose as the La Valle of Mariette's world.

The film's famous first scene, in which a portly garbageman collects a trashcan, dumps its contents into his transport, a gondola, and then, singing opera, poles his garbage-heavy vessel down a canal, sets its location as Venice, but a Venice far from ethereal romance. While Gaston does not appear in this scene, its mix of the low garbage and the high opera is essential to setting up his character, with its blend of the aristocratic and the criminal. For this is a Venice that is overtly a place of mixing: one full of bodily appetite, with the garbage the visceral remains of this appetite, as well as a place of ethereal loveliness, the latter provided by the garbageman's lofty song. In addition to setting up the satiric tone of the film, the opening establishes its Continental setting, which will shortly move from Venice to Paris.

As the sounds of opera fill the canal, the camera reveals a dark room, a man collapsing to the floor, and a shadow leaving through the window and then removing a disguise. The camera moves outside the building, panning along its exterior to arrive at a balcony and to reveal a man, the Baron. While the viewer does not yet realize the truth, this elegant, seemingly indolent Baron was the shadowy form, quickly robbing another hotel guest, Francois Filiba, then slipping expertly away, only to reappear, the picture of the romantic Continental roué.

Lubitsch immediately figures the Baron as an erotic and exotic figure, a man deeply attuned to the nature of heterosexual romance and the perfect performer in the sexual game. He is, in fact, not only a performer but a director, for as the opening shot

and dialogue reveal he is devising the perfect seduction scene. The camera shows an elegant table, its china and glassware glittering in the brightly-lit room, while the dialogue between Gaston and the waiter concerning the upcoming dinner highlights appetite, not simply a hunger for the food and wine being laid out, but also a sexual appetite for the woman who will soon arrive. Gaston's line to the waiter regarding the supper and its purpose is both a witty tossaway line and yet a sexually explicit promise of what will unfold. As his eyes follow Lily, arriving via gondola in the canal below, he says, "It must be the most marvelous supper. We may not eat it, but it must be marvelous."<sup>159</sup>

In the line Lubitsch hints at the powerful nature of Gaston's own appetite, and the magnetic pull of his erotic presence which will soon bring all the other characters to him, as he effortlessly charms and controls them, shifting his personality subtly but expertly to suit each one. With the earthy Lily, a fellow thief, he reveals his quick-fingered criminal prowess in a game of thieving one-upmanship in their first scene together, culminating in his theft of her garter, while with the wealthy, elegant Mariette he poses as a displaced gentleman, a member of the "nouveau poor," displaying a cultured appreciation of art and lecturing her on her make-up. Not only do Lily and Mariette fall almost instantly under Gaston's spell, but Lubitsch hints at further heterosexual possibilities for him in the opening moment of the garden party scene, as a circle of three admiring, attractive ladies

---

<sup>159</sup> This moment that foregrounds appetite—for food and drink, but primarily for sex—is one of the key moments that ties this rake in film to the rakes in theatre I have discussed in the previous chapters. Like characters such as Horner and Macheath, Gaston is a socially and sexually transgressive figure, a man who does not let moral or legal restrictions interfere with his pursuit of his own pleasures. He is also a figure who is, as my discussion of Filiba notes, associated with both the hetero and homoerotic. Finally, in his stylishness he not only recalls earlier rakes in film, such as the stylish Tori, but the elegant figures of rake-dandies such as Jack and Algernon in *Earnest*.

surround him. Mariette obviously sees this too, gently steering him away so she can have him to herself.

One of the most effective illustrations of Gaston's sexual potency combines the allure of the rake and the medium of film to create a come-on that directly hails the viewer, allowing him/her to share in the erotic response evoked by the rake. Early in the film Lubitsch provides a montage of Mariette's staff attending to her commands with repeated affirmations that they will be fulfilled, a montage that reveals her socioeconomic power and dominance. As Gaston assumes control of the household, Lubitsch recreates the montage, albeit with a difference. While the staff respond with "yes" or "no" to Gaston's secretary persona of La Valle as they did to Mariette, the final image is of an attractive young maid, who responds coyly, "Maybe, Monsieur La Valle," while displaying a decidedly flirtatious body language. This sexual fillip to the staff montage not only establishes Gaston's new power in the realm of Mariette's household, but it reiterates the extent of his existing sexual command for the audience. Since the camera, and thus the viewer, assumes Gaston's point of view in the montage, this sequence of visual and aural addresses to Gaston also cements the suturing of the viewer with Gaston, as the viewer shares his reception, and potential enjoyment, of this "Maybe."

Yet while Lubitsch concentrates here and elsewhere on Gaston's heterosexual relations, he hints at his homoerotic, even homosexual, potential—a queerness similar to that of Wilde's rake-dandies in the previous chapter. In *Trouble* Gaston notably seems just as comfortable with men as with women, commanding both with ease, while drawing the gaze of both males and females within the diegesis, just as he elicits the gaze of the

viewer. One of the gazes he draws with the most regularity within the diegesis is that of Filiba, revealed to be a failed suitor of Mariette. Filiba's character serves not only as a comic secondary character, providing a release from the more serious, sensual relations between Lily, Mariette, and Gaston, but he also serves to underline Gaston's status as a successful heterosexual seducer and normative, commanding male. As such, Filiba, like his equally ineffectual competitor for Mariette, the Major, assumes the position of the impotent male, inadequate both in action and in sexual performance, who stands on the sidelines of the love/power game in contrast to the rake's overt playing of the game. Thus Filiba rhymes with the ineffectual fops and frustrated husbands of Restoration comedy, while Gaston calls to mind the scheming seducer Horner of Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), as well as John Gay's hypermasculine rake highwayman Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera* (1728).<sup>160</sup> Not only does the comic characterization of Filiba, as

---

<sup>160</sup> As the narrative develops and the characters' relationships are revealed, Filiba's masculinity—or lack of it—becomes a running joke. Like Gaston, Filiba is initially positioned as a rake character; yet while Gaston is successful, Filiba is not. Filiba's introduction shows him unconscious in his room, victim of Gaston's thieving, and thus unable to open the door to the two women who wait outside. This demonstrates Filiba's powerlessness, one that occurs on multiple levels: a vulnerability to the persuasive skill and wits of Gaston, and an inability to fulfill his social and sexual desires with the women. The subsequent Paris scenes show Filiba in pursuit of Mariette, a pursuit that, despite its length, has been unsuccessful, so much so that Mariette pointedly notes that while marriage might be a "beautiful mistake which two people make together," with him marriage would simply be "a mistake." Filiba's failure with Mariette contrasts with Gaston's quick mastery of her household and her attention. Filiba's potential rakedom is further undermined by his constant positioning, literally and figuratively, within the frame alongside his similarly failed rival, the Major. The Major's construction as comic foil and failed suitor is stressed in Mariette's similar refusal of him moments after her "mistake" line to Filiba. Additionally, just as a distinct difference is stressed between Filiba and Gaston, so too the Major is contrasted with Gaston, particularly in the conclusion of the opera scene. When Mariette and the Major search for her lost purse she leads, he follows, so much so that he follows her into the ladies' room. He is quickly ejected, and stands shame-faced in the hallway. While the Major is shown, in a literal and figurative sense, in the wrong place, the next shot is of Gaston, quietly leaving the men's room. Not only is the thief hiding in the place—the men's room—where neither Mariette nor the Major looks, but he knows which room to go into, unlike the confused, dominated Major. Gaston's knowledge of which room to enter to hide demonstrates not only his cool in the face of the search, but also the sense of his seemingly assured gender and sexuality.

well as that of the Major, highlight Gaston's success, it also introduces a homoerotic element into the film.

While Filiba can be argued to be, like the Major, a kind of eunuch, a sexual blank, he can also be discussed as a homoerotic figure, both in his relationship with the Major and in his relationship with Gaston. As the camera repeatedly reveals, Filiba's attention is constantly drawn to Gaston. While the narrative explains this interest per Gaston's theft of Filiba's pocketbook and Filiba's subsequent efforts to work out where he might have seen Gaston before, Filiba's focus on Gaston creates a diegetic relationship that reads as both homosocial and homoerotic. The scene that best argues for a reading of this kind, leaning towards the queer, takes place in the garden party scene as Mariette and Gaston entertain their guests, including Filiba, who is formally introduced to Gaston here for the first time.

Through camera position and editing, Lubitsch creates a veritable volley of loaded glances back and forth between the men, as Filiba tries to remember Gaston's identity and Gaston tries to deflect this remembrance and the subsequent unraveling of his con. Their glances and constantly interrupted dialogue culminate in an exchange regarding the gratification of travel in general, specifically pleasure travel, which hints at both heterosexual and homosexual desires. In this exchange Gaston, in a sense, seduces Filiba, not only with his own persona—calming, charming, and stylish—but also with the evocation of exotic and erotic spectacles—including foreign people—available for the pleasure, voyeuristic and otherwise, of the traveler. That this moment directly connects with a foreign country and different, non-European, customs—a space, potentially, of

non-normative, different sexuality—is also important, inflecting both men, especially Gaston, the obviously more knowledgeable, with exoticism and eroticism.

The exchange begins with goodbyes, and then Filiba’s potentially dangerous question: “Uh, before I go, before I say goodbye, I want to ask you one question—have you ever been in Venice?” Gaston, as he has done throughout the scene, both answers Filiba with a “no” and deflects him, asking him about other famous cities he has visited, spinning off the names of Vienna and Amsterdam before he halts at Constantinople, a city that catches both men’s attention:

GASTON. Constantinople?

FILIBA. No.

GASTON: *(seemingly surprised)* You’ve never been in Constantinople?

FILIBA. No.

GASTON. But you have been in Venice?

FILIBA. Yes.

GASTON. Well, let me tell you, Venice can’t compete with  
Constantinople.

FILIBA. But...

GASTON. I don’t care what you say. In Constantinople at least you have  
streets, sultans, pashas, turbans

FILIBA. *(with a knowing look)* And harems, um.

GASTON. All kinds *(music begins, the clichéd faux Middle Eastern music  
of a hundred occidental Arabian Nights)*

FILIBA. *Looking at Gaston with a smile, he whispers in his ear. Gaston  
shakes his head with a smile, as if he’s amused and ready to instruct;  
he whispers in Filiba’s ear and Filiba gets excited, with a naughty  
look on his face)*

FILIBA. Well, Constantinople!

Gaston’s response to Filiba’s mention of the harems—“All kinds”—leaves the question of the true nature of these harems and the sexual tourism that might take place there

unanswered.<sup>161</sup> The moment celebrates the idea, if not necessarily the reality, of polymorphous pleasures. It opens a space for pleasures beyond the heteronormative or any strict regulations, creating a queer space. As Alexander Doty notes in *Making Things Perfectly Queer*, queerness is “something that is ultimately beyond gender—it is an attitude, a way of responding, that begins in a place not concerned with, or limited by, notions of a binary opposition of male and female or the homo versus hetero paradigm” (xv). The moment draws both men together in a mutual secret—the consideration of a space both real and imagined and a sexuality both actual and fantastic—yet it also potentially pulls them apart, for we don’t know which pleasures each man desires.

In the exchange Gaston is revealed to be, potentially, an expert in all areas of pleasure—the traveler and rake par excellence—a character who not only embodies a hard-to-pin down sense of the erotic in himself, but elicits it in others. Here, as elsewhere, Lubitsch uses Gaston to suggest other, more hidden and transgressive, pleasures. In this conversation it seems that it is what is half-said and unsaid that is particularly scandalous, yet nothing is overt—Lubitsch ultimately leaves “all kinds” to the audience’s fertile imagination, just as the whispered exchange between the men, an exchange to which the audience is crucially not privy, keeps the true nature of their conversation—and their connection—a mystery.

The men’s exchange is but one of the places in which Lubitsch underlines the sense of Gaston’s difference, a difference built on the character’s fluidity—from his easy,

---

<sup>161</sup> As Shohat and Stamm note, “The topos of the harem in contemporary popular culture draws, of course, on a long history of orientalist fantasies. In actuality, Western voyagers had little access to harems; indeed the Arab etymology of the word ‘harem’ (*harim*) refers to something ‘forbidden’ and ‘sacred’” (161-162).

quick mobility from place to place, to the liminal nature of his gender and sexuality, to his role-playing of both respectable gentleman and gentleman thief. Lubitsch uses this sense of fluidity to play with the gaps between the “real” Gaston, if such a figure exists, and the Gaston who performs for Mariette, Filiba, and the other characters.

This difference is heightened by the formal treatment of the character.

If the medium of film complicates treatment of the rake per masculinity as I have explored in my work on the silent rake, taking away activity and subjectivity, Lubitsch’s treatment of Gaston both within the diegesis, as a character who is torn between active and passive positions, and in the manner in which he is, and is not, visually created as an object for voyeurism, is particularly interesting. The gaze is at play both within the diegesis and in the viewer’s relationship with Gaston, and this highlighting of the gaze and its contemplation of the body—female or male—draws extra attention to the act of gazing and its implications per both erotic control and identification. At the same time it diffuses the power of this gaze by explaining it away as a necessary part of the narrative. That Gaston is largely the medium for this gazing—the one within the diegesis who gazes, and one of the primary objects of the viewer’s gaze—places much of this weight of desiring looks upon his elegant shoulders.<sup>162</sup>

The opening of the film highlights this complex mixture of activity and passivity—Gaston as actor and Gaston as object. The first sight of the character positions him as the embodiment of romance, a fantasy figure who literally fulfills the cliché of

---

<sup>162</sup> That Gaston is granted this much control of the gaze demonstrates the ways in which he is constructed as more normative in his white, northern European identity than the racially and ethnically different rakes Tori and Ahmed. He is integrated into the camera’s gaze, and into society, much more fully than they, as this formal difference reveals.



tall, dark, and handsome. Yet if he is positioned as the object of the gaze, he is also positioned as an active force within the scene, not only commanding the waiter, but also fixing his gaze upon the canal, awaiting his assignation with Lily. It is his point of view that grants the viewer his/her first look at Lily, and the viewer shares his perspective as she responds to his/the viewer's gaze with a wave of joyful recognition.

Similarly, the viewer shares Gaston's point of view in the opera scene, a view that is specifically transgressive—both criminal and sexual—as it veers between an object of potential theft, Mariette's bejeweled handbag, and the similarly bejeweled Mariette, whose elegance recalls, yet contrasts sharply with, the earlier object of desire for both Gaston and the audience—Lily. In the scene an unknown man, later revealed to be Gaston, spies on Mariette and the Major in their opera box. The sequence begins with a medium shot of a man, his face obscured by opera glasses, looking down at something. The camera then reveals the object of his gaze—not the expected view of the opera stage but Mariette and the Major. A cut transitions to a close-up of the bag, then the camera/Gaston's gaze moves up to a close-up of Mariette's face, then back to the bag, and then back to Mariette—capturing the Major's attempt to take her hand and her shrugging off of his hand and him. The camera/gaze then pulls back to reveal a two-shot of Mariette and the Major arguing, a silent argument since the audience shares Gaston's aural capacity. Finally, it moves to a shot of Mariette only. The voyeurism of the sequence is emphasized by the manner in which an optical effect allows the viewer to share the telescopic gaze of Gaston as he spies on Mariette and the Major. The manner in which the gaze flicks between the beautiful Mariette and the similarly spectacular

handbag on the ledge in front of her reveals the divided nature of Gaston's attention, as his desire to steal and his desire to desire lead his eyes to wander from one to the other. The sequence works to suture the viewer with Gaston, identifying with him and his desires, and sharing the power and privilege of his voyeurism.

That this voyeurism is specifically granted by the narrative—through Gaston's occupation as thief and rake, as well as through its setting in the opera hall, a location of spectacular sights—allows Gaston, the camera, and the viewer to focus on Mariette as an object of desire, yet splits this focus through an almost equal gaze, per the nature of the gaze and the time devoted to it, directed towards the bag. This splitting of the objects of the gaze excuses the voyeurism inherent in the sequence, seeming to diminish the sexual control of the gaze and the anxiety/desire provoked by it; however, it also enhances it. While this focus on the bag may seem to reduce the sexual/control connotations of the gaze, the alignment of the bag and Mariette complicates this in regards to commodity exchange and consumption. Since the bag is tied to Mariette, to focus upon it is, figuratively, is to focus on her and her role as consumer. That the bag and not Mariette is the first object of the gaze serves to place emphasis on the act of gazing as an act tied to the consumption of beautiful things, specifically things that can be bought and sold. The move from the bag, constructed in this manner, to Mariette highlights the manner in which Mariette is not only a consumer but is also, particularly in this moment, a beautiful object to be consumed.

The sequence fulfills Mulvey's description of the film gaze as not simply an act of looking, but a voyeurism that engages issues of sexual satisfaction and control.

Here audience members derive sexual pleasure from the act of watching and, in effect, controlling the object of the gaze, a woman (Mariette), and from the ego libido, in which pleasure is derived from identifying with a watcher—the male Gaston—who not only is in control of the gaze, but is also in control of the narrative.<sup>163</sup> Notably, while we rarely, if ever, share the point of view of Tori in *The Cheat*, we often share Gaston's, speaking to a greater level of comfort in relating to and sharing with the white rake as opposed to the non-white rake.

Yet Gaston himself is also constructed as an object of pleasure for the audience's gaze throughout the film—through the spectacular nature of his body itself, the stylish clothes he wears, and the dynamic nature of his body. This last is showcased in several ways that make this body seem extraordinary, a fit object of attention. First, there is Gaston's almost supernatural dexterity—as showcased in the dinner scene with Lily, as each outdoes the other. While Lubitsch largely portrays their contest as a draw, it is Gaston who gets, in effect, the last word, as he draws Lily's garter from his pocket to her amazement and consternation, kisses it, and then returns it to his pocket. Not only is this the moment that cements her desire for him, but it is also a moment in which the viewer recognizes the almost magical quality of Gaston's skill. Similarly, the characters' kiss on

---

<sup>163</sup> It is Gaston's theft of the bag that elicits Mariette's advertisement and reward, his meeting with her, and his subsequent position as her secretary, a position in which he has close access to her possessions, jewels and cash, as well as to her. The moment shapes audience members' understanding of Mariette as a character, while constructing her as an erotic object. This construction of Mariette agrees with Mulvey's argument in "Visual Pleasure" regarding the alignment of spectatorial pleasure with a hierarchy of sexual difference, in which the female, not the male, is the erotic focus of the gaze: "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (19).

the sofa in advance of vanishing before the viewer's eyes marks these attractive criminal bodies as exceptional. This vanishing not only indicates the passage of time and teases the viewer with a hint of a passion to which the viewer cannot be privy, it emphasizes the materiality of these bodies just as they miraculously disappear.<sup>164</sup> These visual revelations of Gaston's extraordinary body work to startle not only the characters within the diegesis, crafting him as an object of special attention, but to amaze the viewer, serving to create the character—the rake—as spectacular.

While past rakes may have had to depend on their bodies alone to announce their spectacular nature and to pursue their seductions, in Gaston Lubitsch weds visual and vocal seductions, creating a potent mix that hails both other characters and the viewer. Gaston's first scene establishes not only the nature of his voice—smooth, elegant, vaguely foreign—but also the levels of command the voice and its owner hold within the diegesis. The scene with the waiter demonstrates the flexibility of this voice as a performing instrument for the masquerading Gaston, revealing a voice that can variously caress and command as necessity demands. Gaston's voice is subtle and expressive, highly controlled, and able to command, with a shift in tone, those around him. The constant “Yes, Baron” of the waiter underlines Gaston's power, a power conveyed not only through the authority of his (assumed) title, but also the authority conveyed to the waiter and the viewer in his physical and vocal mannerisms. The power of Gaston's

---

<sup>164</sup> Lubitsch further highlights Gaston's extraordinary body in his ability to unobtrusively move from place to place, seemingly appearing as if by magic. This is twice used in his first meeting with Mariette, as Lubitsch shows a distracted Mariette speaking to a Gaston who, she realizes, is no longer there. Instead, he is somewhere else, seemingly having moved to this spot by magic. Lubitsch again, however, draws the viewer's attention to the very solid and material appetites, sexual and criminal, of Gaston despite this seemingly light as air magic, for he reveals that the character is subtly, but thoroughly, casing the joint right under Mariette's eyes.

voice is also highlighted in the character's skill with languages, a skill that highlights his performance skills, his ability to assume any persona and nationality in order to pursue his criminal acts—from seduction to thieving.

Gaston thus represents a noticeable difference in the rakes I have discussed thus far regarding the connection of rake and nation, offering in his northern European, white masculinity a less anxiety-provoking figure for viewers, particularly in contrast to Tori and Ahmed, who are constructed as much further from “normative” American white femininity and masculinity. As a white European male Gaston both is, and is not, normative in this sense: offering an erotic, exotic presence, but one safely cushioned by his whiteness. In this manner he also echoes more closely the theatre rakes I have discussed in the earlier chapters, characters who are variously othered, but less so than Tori or Ahmed.

The casting of the Englishman Herbert Marshall in the part and the nature of Marshall's star image further creates a sense of Gaston as a “safe” version of the rake. Marshall's smooth, cultured voice with its received British accent aligns the character with high class status and taste, despite his shadowy origins, assuring the viewer that despite his criminality Gaston is not all that othered. That Marshall embodies a Western European whiteness speaks to the prioritized sense of western/northern whiteness in the hierarchy of whiteness, as opposed to the less lofty status of southern and eastern Europeans, as noted in the discussion of Valentino, making his whiteness even more acceptable to U.S. viewers. Marshall also conveys a sense of experience that melds well with *Trouble's* construction of Gaston as a well-traveled man (in more ways than one),

but also serves to make his sexual appeal quite different from the youthful vigor and virile masculinity of Hayakawa and Valentino, with the issue of age perhaps one of the reasons that Marshall never reached the upper echelons of stardom.<sup>165</sup>

Yet while Gaston, particularly as embodied by Marshall, represents a much more normative masculinity and a rakishness that is greatly softened, the character must still be transgressive—which means that he must, at least in some manner, remain foreign in order to misbehave. Gaston’s difference, albeit subtle, thus excuses his sexual indiscretions with both Mariette and Lily and allows the audience to accept, even celebrate, his open-ended relationship with Lily, with which the film ends. That Gaston’s true national origins and back-story are never known is one of the film’s many jokes, along with the seemingly endless ability of Gaston and Lily to adopt any language as needed. Gaston’s linguistic skills, his ability to shift from language to language as he shifts from the doctor, to the Baron, to Gaston, to La Valle, and back to Gaston within the diegesis serves to create him as a man of all nations—and none—highlighting this rake, like the rakes before him, as an outsider, yet one closer to self than the othered Tori and Ahmed.

The finale of the film is telling for the manner in which Lubitsch both wraps up the sexual and criminal escapades of Gaston, yet leaves them open-ended, a move that combines both conservative and radical impulses. Like Wilde, whose rakes Jack and

---

<sup>165</sup> The few references to the actor and his star image speak of him specifically in regards to a sense of his smoothness and elegance. The title of an article from *Films of the Golden Age* by Brad Richards is simply titled “Herbert Marshall, Gentleman,” which seems to sum up his appeal, as well as the potential limitations in his star text. Perhaps because of this there is, as far as I can find, only one book devoted solely to Marshall, a 1932 biography entitled *Life Story of Herbert Marshall* that the Internet Movie Database lists as published in 1932

Algernon end the play with their identities revealed and their fiancées in hand, Lubitsch seems to finish his work with a containment of the rake and a resolution of the suspense of the narrative, both the erotic thread—who will Gaston choose—and the social/legal thread—will Gaston choose ‘gainful employment’ or return to thieving. As the last scene in the back of the taxi cab reveals, Gaston rejoins Lily, rejecting the alluring Mariette. He leaves behind “going straight” as a secretary to rejoin a partnership both professional and erotic with the thieving Lily.

Yet while Lubitsch creates a certain resolution, he also leaves much open-ended. Gaston has chosen Lily, but given Gaston’s roving ways through most of the picture, his constancy to her, or to any woman or man, is in doubt. While Gaston has chosen a profession, it is not the normative one of gainful employment but a return to a life of mobility and thieving, going crooked, as it were. That the two characters unite in a car on the way to a train station and a sleeper to Berlin establishes that this rake’s roving will continue—he is not contained. The ending is thus seemingly conservative—one woman, one career—and yet non-normative—no marriage, and criminality. Its openness implies that what the viewer has witnessed in the film is only one ring in an endless chain, for like Don Juan’s seductions the love play and thieving of Gaston will go on and on.

Not only does Lubitsch picture his rake as uncontained, like Wycherley, Gay, and Wilde before him, he does not punish his rake, providing none of the obvious social shunning/shaming, exile, or even death seen in the silent films that feature rakes to this point, or the enforcement of marriage and social responsibility found in many theatre

texts. Indeed, Gaston not only gets away with his crime, he, in a sense, gets both girls—leaving Mariette so gently that she wistfully gives him some valuable pearls for Lily. He also gets the social upper hand, having admonished a much bigger crook— Adolph, the Board Chairman of Colet and Company. Lubitsch seems to tell the viewer to root for transgression, yet I would argue he also stacks the deck so that transgression's more negative aspects, particularly the impact of such roving masculinity on femininity, is largely unrealized.

As this close reading reveals, Lubitsch's film fuses the seductive, mysterious body of the silent rake with the linguistic dominance and silky wit of the stage rake. Yet *Trouble* in many ways marks the zenith of the rake's disruptive presence and capacity for social and sexual interrogation in early twentieth century film. Enforcement of the Production Code in 1934 would shut down many of the potential directions for the film rake to which the film gestures.<sup>166</sup> While the rake would continue onscreen, granting his erotic, stylish presence and tart, teasing wit to numerous films, the potential for true transgression outside the threat of censorship, as promised by Gaston and the silent screen rakes who preceded him, would wait decades to be realized, and, in some ways, is waiting still.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup> For instance, as Shohat and Stamm note the Production Code forbids miscegenation, and its enforcement would shape the direction of much of twentieth century film and its depictions of race, while reflecting and shaping real-life racial prejudices: "This delegitimizing of the romantic union between White and Black is linked to a broader exclusion of Africans, Asians, and Native Americans from participation in social institutions" (160).

<sup>167</sup> As Gerald Mast and Bruce F. Kawin note in *A Short History of the Movies*, the Code was eliminated in 1968 in response to social and sexual changes in the nation and in the film industry (522).



## CHAPTER VI

### **BOYISH DESIRES: THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY RAKE IN FILM FROM *THE TAO OF STEVE* TO *PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN***

A man, his back to the camera, is viewed in a low angle long shot as dramatic music plays. He stands straight-backed, legs planted—the very picture of the brave adventurer. His prominence within the frame anticipates, the viewer suspects, his importance within the unfolding narrative. He literally towers over the camera and the viewer: a mighty presence. The man's anonymity whets the viewer's appetite to see his face while allowing the viewer to construct this man in his or her mind as the most magnificent hero. The camera moves up and towards the man to share his point of view, beginning the suturing process. Finally, the camera reverses its perspective and faces the man, moving towards him to drink in his handsome face, elaborate clothing, and strong upper body, illuminated by a golden light. He is singled out, special, demanding the attention and admiration of the viewer.

Yet a moment later the viewer must revise his or her high opinion of the man and the heroic, assertive masculinity, with its command of both frame and narrative, that he seems to represent. A long shot captures the entire *mise-en-scène* and reveals that the character is not standing atop a mighty vessel, master of a busy crew, as the initial shots seem to indicate, but the solitary occupant of a tiny vessel, quickly sinking. The man's swift leap from his high position on the mast and subsequently squat position in the

bottom of the ship to quickly, yet ineffectually, bail the rising water, lower him not only literally but figuratively: the superman is revealed to be a clown.<sup>168</sup>

The presence and nature of this reversal do not simply transform the viewer's understanding of the man, whose heroic stance now seems ridiculous, they also reveal to the viewer that he or she is, at least momentarily, in a carnivalesque world, one where nothing is what it seems—the man himself or the masculinity he represents. This visual revelation of male frailty and the disjunction it causes is heightened by the continuation of the soundtrack's gallant, confident tones through the character's putative highs and lows. Given the visual evidence of the man's fall, the music that once asserted his bravery and strength is ironic, highlighting even more fully his abjection, placing the viewer even more completely in a topsy-turvy world.

Such disparate effects form the comic and dramatic introduction of the rake character who is this chapter's focus, Captain Jack Sparrow, the wildly popular pirate-rake protagonist of Disney Studios' trilogy *Pirates of the Caribbean* (*Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003); *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006); and *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007), all directed by Gore Verbinski. Conveying both hypermasculinity and effeminacy, heroism and comic foolishness, the sequence, which forms Sparrow's introduction in *Pearl*, the first film in

---

<sup>168</sup> The divergent physical qualities—and diverse reception—of Sparrow created by the character's stillness and then his frantic movement create a significant break in filmic codes for an action-adventure film such as *Pirates*, inserting generic aspects of the comedy. As Mark Gallagher notes in *Action Figures*, the hero of the action genre usually displays his power through his stillness, with frenetic motion reserved for comic, often ineffectual, males: "Physical movements, or the lack thereof, contribute substantially to Hollywood action cinema's conceptions of idealized masculinity... audience identification depends on the construction of a powerful and charismatic protagonist, in accord with traditional Western formulations of heroic masculinity... Displays of flexing muscles or tense postures... suggest bodies ready for action, if not in action" (171).

the trilogy, seems to offer a vision of a truly liminal, postmodern, global screen masculinity, one that embraces traditional codes of the normative male protagonist both in film and in society and simultaneously defies this construction.

In *Sparrow* the viewer is offered an adherence to a normative construction of a male screen protagonist, an active male subject who appears white, heteronormative, powerful; yet, at the same time the viewer is presented with a non-normative body, one whose unusual costume, overt makeup, and excessive gesticulation hail the viewer's eye and form this body as a spectacle in itself. It is a body that speaks to a fluid sense of gender and sexuality, to a queerness in both the older sense of the word, as strange or alien, and in the newer queer theory meaning—a body that challenges the rigidity of heteronormativity. The character also reads as racially and ethically other due to his tanned body, dreadlocks, and the exotic nature of the jewelry and clothing that cover his body, conveying a sense of global travel and contact with multiple foreign ports. Here, it seems, is a rake who not only embodies both self and other but who, in his overt hybridity, interrogates the division between self and other to a greater extent than any rake character before him.

Yet this celluloid vision of a progressive postmodern masculinity that upturns conventional notions of western masculinity in film is simply that, a vision, for the promise offered by *Sparrow*'s unruly, transgressive body, presented so vividly in his introduction, albeit emphasized for dramatic effect, is not maintained. Instead, the liminal gender and sexuality he displays is gradually restricted, first in *Pearl* and then in the trilogy as a whole. *Pirates* is not unique in opening up, both in its narrative and

formal techniques, and then shutting down its rake's polyvalence, ultimately insisting on the character as normative. The trilogy's move to regulate its rake figure's hybridity and to shut down his queerness is mirrored by this chapter's comparator texts: *The Tao of Steve* (Goodman, 2000) and *About a Boy* (Weitz and Weitz, 2002). Despite a number of differences between the films, from genre and setting to production and country of origin, all three ultimately move towards conventional treatment of their rakes.

While it is difficult to obtain critical distance on the trajectory of the rake in this century due to its relative newness, these divided desires speak to what I feel is the central element of the millennial rake's characterization and behavior in film and the truths regarding anxiety about western masculinity he provides—stasis. By stasis I mean the sense that the millennial rake's progress, especially when measured against the vast social, economic, and political transformations of the postmodern period, is truthfully a standing still, even a regression. This stasis is embodied in this chapter's middle-aged rakes, men who convey a sense of both childishness and maturity, and who are thus doubly portrayed as literally and figuratively trapped between the past and the future. Similarly, this chapter's films seem to waver between presenting these rakes through a conventional lens and a more radical one. The former maintains an older version of western masculinity that is specifically white, heterosexual, and bourgeois, one that largely elides the social, economic, and political changes of the past decades, such as Civil Rights, feminism, and gay rights and presents western masculinity as powerful, dominant, and stable. Yet there is also a move to examine the rake through a more radical lens, to imagine a vision of a progressive masculinity that can view the contemporary

male as vulnerable, fragmented, and liminal. The result of the wavering between these two opposed poles is a sense of stasis.

My choice of this chapter's three films is predicated on the ways in which they allow me to examine this issue of stasis through a cross-section of contemporary western films featuring rake characters, working across genre (with *Tao* and *Boy* comedies and *Pirates* an action-adventure/comedy); production (low-budget, mid-budget, and blockbuster respectively; as well as independent, per *Tao*, and studio, per *Boy* and *Pirates*); national origin (the United States for *Tao* and *Pirates* and Britain for *Boy*) and gender, with both male and female perspectives on the rake provide by two films directed by males (Verbinski and the Weitz brothers) and one film directed and co-written by a female (Goodman). The diverse nature of these films makes the similarity between their efforts to contain their rake figures and the sense of his liminal gender and sexuality all the more surprising. For while ambivalence regarding gender and sexuality that falls outside conventional norms, filmic and social, of masculinity might be expected in a blockbuster from a mainstream, family-friendly Hollywood studio such as Disney, the fact that the low-budget independent *Tao* and the mid-budget *Boy* similarly shut down the sense of their rake figures as non-normative, including dispelling any sense of queerness, speaks to the continuing conservatism of western society.

The millennial rake's presence as an avatar for contemporary anxieties about gender and sexuality forms a throughline from my previous chapters, in which the rake's polyvalence allowed him to both interrogate and allay anxieties about national identity, first in theatre and then in film, by embodying both the self, associated with the status

quo, and the other, While the dialectic of self and other that the rake has played out began as a distinct division in the Restoration period of his birth, the ensuing chapters have seen a lessening of the difference between the two as a reflection of real-life changes in attitudes about gender, sexuality, race, and class within the nation (Britain in chapters two, three, and four, and the United States in chapter five). This lessening distinction between self and other created a growing ambivalence towards the rake due to a sense of his increased imbrication with this otherness. For example, in my previous chapter on the early twentieth-century Hollywood rake in film the rake was, for the first time, not simply tied to the foreign; instead, he actually embodied the foreign through racial, ethnic, and national difference. The problematic nature of this otherness, particularly that of race in films such as *The Cheat* (1915), was notable in the fact that it was only in the whitening of rake characters, creating white European rakes such as Gaston Monescu in *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), that the figure moved from being portrayed as an antagonist, associated with unregulated appetite and corruption, to a protagonist.

In this chapter a similar move from non-normative to normative occurs; however, because all the rakes I discuss, with the possible exception of Sparrow, are white, the move I chart is not a process of whitening but a movement from hybridity and queerness towards a lack of hybridity and a denial of queerness. This movement is conveyed via the arc of the narrative, as well as through formal techniques such as the framing of the rake's body. Together, narrative and form move, on the whole, from initially highlighting the disjunctive nature of this rake body to a more conventional vision,

literally and figuratively, of this body. This process reveals that the stakes for maintaining a sense of a western masculinity through the rake body that is ultimately stable, dominant, and conservative are high.

The strains of boyishness and queerness this chapter's texts raise and ultimately dispel echo elements of the rake and reactions to him explored in past chapters; however, these strains are brought to the fore in this chapter due to the social, political, and economic changes to masculinity, medium, and nation leading up to the millennium and the manner in which these changes have transformed the nature and repercussions of rake presentation, putting even greater pressure, I would argue, on a conventional vision of the rake. One of the most pertinent of these changes is that the rake is now a global presence, his transgressions—and the regulation of these transgressions—projected on screens across the world. While the twentieth-century Hollywood rakes of the previous chapter worked out issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality for a largely American audience, albeit with a growing move from domestic to international circulation, the rakes of this chapter, whether products of Hollywood or independent film, now speak to global audiences in a postmodern world.

Due to economic, social, and political forces such as globalization, in addition to convergence's marriage of media and technology, the rake's relationship with medium and nation that I have traced throughout this project has shifted. The millennial rake is now, in many ways, largely free of a tie to either the film medium or to a specific nation, if any. He is now available not only in film but in a host of other media, as well as in a vast array of tie-in products, while the global address of contemporary filmmaking not

only encourages but demands that the rake embody a more multivalent masculine identity, one that can resonate beyond the borders of a single nation.<sup>169</sup> Yet at the same time the rake's relationship with both nation and medium is closer than ever before due to the ideological and economic importance of the rake to both. While the nation may in this era of globalization be a contested concept and its borders, real or imagined, no longer clear, there is a very real way in which the western rakes I discuss in this chapter are specifically American and British cultural products despite the manner in which they are created for a global marketplace. The anxieties that are revealed in the characterization and behavior of the rakes I discuss are thus largely generated from a sense that a rake in a film produced in the United States, for example, still represents, in the main, a vision of a specifically American masculinity. Similarly, while the rake may now be free to rove through a variety of media and commercial platforms, he is still of vital importance to the film medium and industry. In the high-stakes economic climate of contemporary filmmaking films must hail as many viewers and offend as few of them as possible, which explains both the high priority in creating exciting, attractive rake characters to draw viewers to films and the pressure to regulate these characters' more transgressive elements. Such pressure is particularly so in the case of the most expensive film, the blockbuster, and it is therefore all the more surprising that the most flamboyant

---

<sup>169</sup> In *Globalization and the American Century*, Alfred E. Eckes Jr. and Thomas W. Zeiler see the roots of globalization in the past, "extending back to the first explorers and traders, the predecessors of Christopher Columbus and Marco Polo" (1); yet they add, "But we believe that globalization is much more than an incremental process that, over the centuries, has brought people and nations close together as technological innovations dissolved barriers of time and distance, enhanced flows of information, and promoted greater awareness and understanding" (1).



and unique, and potentially the most transgressive, rake character of this chapter—Sparrow—appears in a Disney blockbuster.<sup>170</sup>

While this chapter continues the previous chapter's discussion of the rake in the film medium rather than the theatre medium of my earlier chapters, it is in a number of ways, specifically in its discussion of the contemporary rake's queerness, close to the fourth chapter. Both chapters deal with rake figures whose unstable representations of gender and sexuality reflect the particular anxiety of the times. Oscar Wilde's fin-de-siècle comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), which reflects and subverts the social and sexual mores of a British nation trembling on the brink of modernity and a British empire undergoing immense transformations, anticipates, in many ways, *Tao*, *Boy*, and *Pirates*, films that echo the anxiety of two western nations that continue to be dominant culturally, economically, and politically, particularly in the case of the United States, and yet face unexpected internal and external challenges.<sup>171</sup> It is no wonder then that in this millennial moment, as in Wilde's turn-of-the-century moment, there are cultural and economic stakes in maintaining a sense of western masculinity as stable and

---

<sup>170</sup> As a blockbuster, *Pirates* is an expensive film designed to reap large-scale financial profits through its dazzling effects and easily digested plot, utilizing multiple visual and narrative hooks to guarantee profitability and company synergy.

<sup>171</sup> If my previous chapter explored a rake shaped by a Hollywood film industry dominant domestically and, to an increasing degree, internationally, and a modernizing United States poised to become a world power, this chapter's rake is the product of a film medium and industry, both in the United States and in Britain, responding to and trying to shape the demands of a global film industry, while struggling to retain their dominance, although in *How Hollywood Works* Janet Wasko notes that US films still maintain a great deal of economic—and social/cultural—power: “The dominant position of US films is clear when examining the top ten films in various countries around the world. A survey of 38 countries during 2000 found US films representing no fewer than 50 percent of the top ten films of each country. Furthermore, for most countries, 80 percent of the top ten films were from the US” (175). As far as the nation, the manner in which goods, people, ideas flow easily from location to location, media platform to platform in this age of globalization has transformed traditional ideas of the nation state, along with all rigid social, cultural, political borders.

dominant, and that even greater energy goes into creating a sense of fit as such in western media texts. This includes working to both celebrate the rake's western male subjectivity while containing his more disruptive aspects; disavowing the damage he causes to other characters by focusing largely on his journey and its positive, because normative, outcome; and both exploring then shutting down any sense of him as queer. This wavering between celebration and interrogation of the rake leads, as noted, to a sense of stasis literally, as well as figuratively, presented in the hybrid bodies of these rake characters who are represented as boys/men and queer/not queer. That these characters are further hybridized through a combination of the rake and another male type (variously the slacker and the pirate) serves to both heighten and dispel this boy/man and queer/not queer hybridity.

While I unpack the implications of the millennial rake's hybridity through close readings of the films, a brief discussion of them can help to set up the argument of those readings. First, the characterization of these rakes as both boys and men results in rakes who appear confident, stable adult males and yet are, at the same time, needy, insecure children. As such, while they may hurt other characters with their excessive appetites and willful disregard of social and sexual mores, they are largely excused for their mischief. These characters are also, as a rule, separated from what constitutes normative time and space for adult males in western, bourgeois society—roles as responsible breadwinners and committed husbands and fathers.

These rakes thus inhabit what Judith Halberstam in her book *In a Queer Time and Place* designates as queer time and space.<sup>172</sup> While the characters I discuss are fictional, not the real-life subjects Halberstam discusses in much of her book whose placement outside normative time and space ostracizes them from hegemony, their experiences and the implications of them are not dissimilar, for these rakes are in diverse ways alienated from the status quo. However, a crucial difference between Halberstam's subjects and the film characters I discuss lies in the issue of choice. The separation of these white rakes, two of whom would be classed as bourgeois, from the emotional, social, and economic bonds typically determined as normative in western society is, on the whole, voluntary, and this choice grants them a privilege that other characters, and real-life subjects, do not have. As previous chapters have explored, it is the rake's closeness to the status quo that grants him the freedom to choose to step away from it, and that provides him, ultimately, with a safety net, complicating arguments that would paint the rake as truly passive or vulnerable.

Finally, a further element that heightens the strains of boyishness and queerness of these rakes is provided by the actors who play them, two of whom—Johnny Depp and Hugh Grant—are global stars, and one of whom—Donal Logue—achieved new

---

<sup>172</sup> In the opening of *In a Queer Time and Place* Halberstam notes, "For the purpose of this book, 'queer' refers to non-normative logic and organization of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time. 'Queer time' is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance. 'Queer space' refers to the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics" (6).

prominence in this role.<sup>173</sup> The star texts of Depp and Grant in particular contain associations with literal and figurative boyishness, from their youthful appearances and history of real-life misdemeanors and indiscretions to the characters they have played. Both actors' initial film roles and subsequent promotion and publicity positioned them as boyish and soft, rather than mature and hard-bodied, and as erotic objects. Depp was associated with teen pin-up status via the television series *21 Jump Street* (various directors, 1987 – 1990), while Grant's role as the ineffectual and sexually inexperienced, yet charming, Charles in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* popularized a vogue for what Pamela Church Gibson in "Queer Looks, Male Gazes, Taut Torsos and Designer Labels: Contemporary Cinema, Consumption and Masculinity" in *The Trouble with Men* characterizes as an ephebic body and a floppy-haired nostalgic Edwardian English masculinity.<sup>174</sup> Both actors have also been associated with a sense of gender and sexuality outside traditional formations of masculinity and heterosexuality due to their slender frames and pretty-boy looks, as well as overt and oblique references to non-normative gender and sexuality in their roles, from Depp's cross-dressing in films such as *Ed Wood* (Burton, 1994) and *Don Juan De Marco* (Leven, 1995) to Grant's roles in films such as *Maurice* (Ivory, 1987).<sup>175</sup>

---

<sup>173</sup> According to the *Internet Movie Database*, *Tao* would bring Logue a best actor win at Sundance in 2000.

<sup>174</sup> Gibson notes Abigail Solomon-Godeau's work on "the ephebic male" in her discussion of the move from the centrality of the highly-muscled body of the 1980s to the less exaggerated body of the late 80s and then 90s, and the highlighting of the ephebic body via stars such as Grant, arguing for a combination of these as a hallmark of the 1990s (177).

<sup>175</sup> Depp has been particularly singled out for his youthful appearance, while both men have a history of acting in transgressive ways socially and sexually: for example, Depp's hotel-trashing, tattoos, and long list

In order to situate the millennial rakes of *Pirates*, *Tao*, and *Boy* and my close readings of these films, I briefly sketch in some of the major social, political, and economic developments in the decades leading up to the twenty-first century and the manner in which they shaped conceptions of gender and sexuality. I do so by touching on a few films featuring rakes that speak to the portrayal of rake masculinity in each time period and that reflect, either directly or indirectly, these key developments in the United States and Britain, with an emphasis on the former. This background, beginning in the 1950s, serves as a connective tissue between the twentieth-century rakes of the previous century and their twenty-first century incarnations.

While Britain suffered through continued economic and social unrest and declining global prominence in the 1950s, the United States, in contrast, appeared economically strong, expanding its cultural, economic, and political prominence internationally. This confidence seems to be represented in contemporary Hollywood films such as the romantic comedy *Pillow Talk* (Gordon, 1959), yet closer examination reveals anxiety regarding gender and sexuality bubbling underneath. Hudson plays a songwriting lothario called Brad Allen who creates and then performs another persona—the rural innocent Rex Stetson—to woo a successful working woman called Jan, played by Doris Day. Via Jan the film nods to the growing power of women in the workplace, although the finale finds Jan happily succumbing to a more traditional role—marriage to Brad. The film insists upon heteronormativity even as Brad’s masquerade as Stetson, in addition to his overt role-playing as an urban Don Juan in his various heterosexual

---

of girlfriends, and Grant’s arrest for soliciting sex with a prostitute and failure to commit to long-time girlfriend Elizabeth Hurley.

adventures, emphasizes performance and a strained sense of masculinity and heteronormativity. Notably, it is *Pillow Talk* that Steven Cohan chooses to use in *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* as the touchstone for his focus on the performative nature of the decade's films. Cohan notes that *Pillow Talk* "uses its narrative, social setting, and leading man to call explicit attention to the gender and social masquerading that...underlies the representation of masculinity in movies of the fifties" (xxi).

If the 50s was, perhaps, a more socially and sexually unstable period in the United States than the shining, serene surface of films such as *Pillow Talk* betrayed, the 1960s brought increasing unrest in both the United States and in Britain. Mainstream films, however, addressed these changes largely through denial. For example, the 1960s birth of the film version of Ian Fleming's James Bond, beginning with *Dr. No* (Young, 1962), reflects the books' 1950s publication date while reaching back to Fleming's own youth and a period of British cultural, economic, and political power. Through first the Bond books and then the films, the British nation could, on a fantasy level, regain her imperial might as Bond, equally successful at violence or sex, globe-trekking through exotic locales and erotic encounters.<sup>176</sup> *Dr. No*, like later Bond films, both addresses and disavows feminism: acknowledging female desire while always keeping male desire center stage, and relegating female characters to the roles of help-meets or damsels in

---

<sup>176</sup> In his introduction to James Chapman's *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films*, Jeffrey Richards argues that "The Bond films were born at a precise moment in British history, a decisive period of social and cultural change—the 1960s, which simultaneously witnessed sexual liberation, Britain's global political decline and the transformation of the United Kingdom from sober and responsible superpower to swinging symbol of fashion, music, youth and consumerism" (vi).

distress. Bond's heterosexuality is insisted upon, even as the film's camp dialogue and performances and the sheer excess of Bond's heterosexual encounters produce queerness.<sup>177</sup>

In America the 1960s Civil Rights movement was reflected to various degrees in films such as the blaxploitation dramas *Sweet Sweetback's Badass Song* (1971) and *Shaft* (1971), with their tough ladies' men protagonists fighting the system. To various degrees contemporary films also reflected the rise of feminism, although the struggle for greater gay visibility and agitation for rights following the 1969 Stonewall riots saw little reflection in films featuring rakes. The 1968 elimination of the Production Code and the MPAA's subsequent establishment of CARA, the Classification and Rating System in response to the social and sexual changes in the nation and in the film industry did, however, allow rakes to display a more graphic wit and even more graphic sex drive (Mast and Kawin, 522).

This more openly sexual rakish masculinity is apparent in a character such as Tony Manero, played by John Travolta, the protagonist of the dance drama *Saturday Night Fever* (Badham, 1977). Tony's rakishness is conveyed through his sexual hunger for women and his obsession with disco style, as well as with more unpleasant aspects of the rake figure—extreme narcissism and elements of misogyny. In contrast to the economically secure and sunny tone of the earlier *Pillow Talk*, *Fever* reflects a 1970s

---

<sup>177</sup> In *Incongruous Entertainment* Steven Cohan defines camp as “the ensemble of strategies used to enact a queer recognition of the incongruities arising from the cultural regulation of gender and sexuality” (1). He argues, “Camp strategies for achieving ironic distance from the normative have always exploited the slippery space between a ‘posture’ and an ‘imposture,’ between ‘resembling’ and ‘dissembling’—in one way or another, camp signaled the queer eye for a straight guise” (1).

United States mired in inflation. In tune with the national mood of cynicism and doubt, Tony represents a much less assured masculinity than that of Brad, just as his working class, Italian, Catholic character departs from Brad's WASPY roots and wealth. *Fever* thus marks a move to return the sense of ethnic difference largely absent from the rake figure since the twenties rakes of Valentino, while echoing the liminal social and economic identity of the early thirties Gaston Monescu in *Trouble in Paradise*, reflecting a change in perceptions of American identity and masculinity. In the person of Stephanie, an ambitious young administrative assistant, the film represents the increased prominence of women in the workplace, playing out the challenge the growth of feminism posed to masculinity, in real and imagined terms, through Stephanie and Tony's contentious relationship.<sup>178</sup> Overall, the film's portrayal of gender and sexuality, as of race and ethnicity, is ambivalent, even contradictory.<sup>179</sup> *Fever* also returns an explicit sense of spectacle in regards to its rake figure. The camera repeatedly focuses closely on Tony's limber body, clad in skintight clothes, as he goes through spectacular dance sequences as appreciative crowds watch. These sequences form Tony not only as an attention-getting male protagonist but as an erotic object of desire.<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup> The open-ended nature of the ending can be read as both progressive and conservative, seemingly to deny the typical film narrative of romantic coupling and narrative closure, while succumbing to the desire to close down the roving of both of its independent characters in a committed relationship.

<sup>179</sup> For example, the film exposes the more violent aspects of heterosexual masculinity, per the misogynistic language and behavior of Tony and his group of male friends, culminating in a near-rape and rape. Yet Tony and his masculinity are still portrayed ultimately positively, while the film's few homosexual characters exist only for the protagonists to bully, asserting their own power and privilege amidst a location—Bay Ridge—and period when male working class socioeconomic power appears to be dwindling.

<sup>180</sup> That the character is a dancer provides the perfect diegetic excuse for exposing and dwelling on his slim, yet muscular, shape, whether in stillness or in motion, in a manner reminiscent of the attention paid to early exotic and erotic rakes such as Valentino and Hayakawa. Even when Tony is not dancing, however, the



If *Fever* represents the social, economic, and political uncertainty of the United States, particularly regarding masculinity, *Fever*'s sequel *Staying Alive* (Stallone, 1983) indicates a renewed sense of national political and economic might, visually embodied in the new built body of Travolta as Tony. Reflecting the general mood of the Reagan era, *Staying* displays a conservatism regarding any challenge to social and sexual structures. Thus Tony displays little of the self-doubt and angst of his previous incarnation, just as he seems distanced from his roots in Bay Ridge and his connection to class/economic struggle and issues of ethnic difference. The film's treatment of women is contradictory, acknowledging them as independent professionals who freely pursue their own sexual desires, yet consistently prioritizing Tony's professional success and emotional/sexual needs over theirs. The film's relative conservatism regarding gender is made clear in the finale, when the film insists, despite Tony's roving, on moving him to a committed relationship with his faithful, long-time lover. Similarly, the film seems to want to explore Tony as an erotic object and to hint at queerness, yet ultimately denies both.<sup>181</sup>

Later American films of the twentieth century, such as the comedy *Don Juan De Marco* (Leven, 1995) starring Depp, display a similar mixture of conservative approaches

---

camera dwells on him and his body. The film's opening, as Tony struts down the street to a disco beat, not only captures the character's enjoyment of the comely female bodies he sees, but concentrates repeatedly on his dynamic, stylishly-clad body.

<sup>181</sup> The camera's repeated, voyeuristic focus on Tony's body, a body that is oiled, gleaming, often nearly-naked, serves to make this body prominent, yet to complicate attempts to craft Tony as a normative, active male subject. The film's contradictory approach finds its apex in the show in which Tony appears, titled 'Satan's Alley.' As Tony's character descends into what appears to be Hell, he is set upon by groups of male and female characters wielding whips and dressed in costumes that recall S & M fetishistic gear. That the film means these characters to embody all that is deviant and destructive, which Tony's character must rise above, literally elevating on a hydraulic lift that takes the character to Heaven and Tony to stardom, speaks to its desire to both evoke and deny non-normative sexualities. Yet the excessive nature of the film's insistence on a lack of queerness, while constantly creating queerness through its mise-en-scène and its focus on Tony's body, serves to complicate this.

to male-female relations and to any hint of queerness, while repeatedly associating the rake body with erotic spectacle. Like other 1990s films featuring rakes, *Don Juan* insists upon the rake as heterosexual and, ultimately, committed to a single woman, while hinting at queerness only to ultimately deny it. The film promises the famous lover in the person of Depp's character, yet the narrative insists that all of his roving occurs with the goal of locating and winning back his first beloved. *Don Juan* does move its title character beyond traditional representations of masculinity and heterosexuality, most explicitly by showing him cross-dressing in a harem, a ruse so successful that the sultan desires the attentions of this desirable "little dove." However, the film makes it clear that it is precisely this cross-dressing that allows the character access to the ladies of the harem, making this sartorial border crossing an act that heightens, rather than diminishes, the narrative's insistence on the character's heterosexuality, just as Horner's pose of impotence in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) serves simply as a ruse to allow him to roam more freely among London's ladies. Ultimately, the film maintains its Don Juan's heterosexuality, reuniting him in its finale with his beloved Doña Ana and closing down any suggestion of further roaming.

Thus despite the years between *Pillow Talk* and *Don Juan*, a relatively conservative treatment of gender and sexuality persisted, even with the elimination of the Production Code and the significant strides that had been made towards greater equality per gender, sexuality, and race. Female characters, for example, remained largely discardable and almost interchangeable in rake narratives, either bound in a relationship/marriage with the rake protagonist or thrust aside. As far as attitudes towards sexuality, none of the films

construct a truly queer rake.<sup>182</sup> Instead, all ultimately inscribe the rake figure for heteronormativity, denying the implications of his frequent objectification and association with spectacle, just as the negative aspects of the rake's heterosexual roving is largely elided.

Just as the films featuring rakes leading up to the millennium both evoke and then deny any sense of queerness in their rakes, in a move to containment I have charted in my discussion of rakes in theatre, such is the case with *Tao*, *Boy*, and *Pirates*. While all three films offer adjustments to the rake figure in the course of the narrative and in the manner in which the rake is formally represented through the framing of his body, none truly challenge conventional representations of masculinity, proving that they are all, ultimately, more conservative than radical. This is particularly so regarding queerness. Reading the films, beginning with *Tao* and ending with *Pirates*, I note the ways in which the characters are presented as disjunctive in both the narrative and via the formal framing of their bodies, ultimately registering as both normative and non-normative even as the texts' narratives work to foreground the former.

*The Tao of Steve* concerns the adventures of an overweight, part-time schoolteacher named Dex who lives with a group of male friends and courts a series of women using the Tao of Steve, a formula for seduction that is a fusion of Eastern religion (Buddhism, Taoism), which ties this rake character to the exotic; western philosophy (such as

---

<sup>182</sup> *Don Juan* takes advantage of Depp's almost androgynous beauty and his ability to use clothes to transform himself to explore multiple identities, including fluid gender roles. *Don Juan* features several Depp disguises, from his masked Don Juan to the harem dress he wears as the slave of a sultana, who disguises him as a woman so that she (and the rest of the harem) can enjoy him whenever she pleases. This is put to an end when the sultan encounters this veiled "woman," kisses her hand, and requests her services, all the while believing that he is truly a she.

Kierkegaard and Heidegger); and cool masculinity inspired by famous media males such as Steve McQueen. Dex's assurance fails, however, when he meets an attractive, intelligent woman called Syd, a former college classmate who not only seems immune to his charms but who questions his slacker lifestyle and lack of discernable life goals. The film follows Dex as he instructs a younger man in the Tao, all the while realizing that he is falling for Syd, whose wary demeanor is soon revealed to be a result of their past, a past he does not remember. Dex must leave the Tao and his current life behind him if he is to win Syd and enter a committed, adult relationship with her. In the final scene of the film he leaves his home in Taos, New Mexico, to follow Syd to New York and a romantic reunion.

One of the primary ways in which Dex in *Tao*, like the later Will in *About a Boy*, appears strange and different, at least initially, and thus queer in at least one sense of the word, is his hybridity on the level of type and the specific nature of this hybrid cross: the blend of the rake and the slacker.<sup>183</sup> The latter is a relatively recent male figure whose presence serves to create a rake who appears much more soft, vulnerable, and passive, and thus both more and less open to objectification and specularization, than previous rakes.

The slacker came to prominence onscreen in American films of the 1990s such as *Slacker* (Linklater, 1991), *Clerks* (Smith, 1994), and *Reality Bites* (Stiller, 1994) as a

---

<sup>183</sup> In the introduction to *Where the Boys Are*, Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward argue, "...in a sociological sense most adult heterosexual relations in consumer capitalism are between mature women and men who are living out an extended adolescence in one way or another. As masculine youth is extended, and the moratorium on adulthood put back further and further, it becomes increasingly difficult to find the line where boyhood actually ends" (3).

male figure who, as the name suggests, chooses passivity rather than activity, literally and figuratively opting out of the furious activity of capitalism and the fast pace of contemporary American life.<sup>184</sup> Departing from the Protestant work ethic and the dictum of hard work as the measure of the man, the slacker chooses to observe from the sidelines, avoiding the mainstream for the margins. This sense of alienation, coupled with an engagement with consumption, forms one of the places where the seemingly opposite rake and slacker meet, although with significant differences.<sup>185</sup>

The result of the cross between the rake and the slacker is that the latter persona removes much of the aggressive, highly sexual edge of the rake, while inserting a certain vulnerability and boyishness. In addition, the slacker's position as a socioeconomic outsider serves to heighten the elements of estrangement from the status quo already inherent in the rake. The result is a particularly postmodern figure—one who is relatively solitary but is linked to a complex social web; a subject who is master of his own destiny,

---

<sup>184</sup> The title of Richard Linklater's low-budget independent film help to popularize use of this term to describe twenty-something youth. In an interview in *My First Movie: Take Too* with Stephen Lowenstein, Linklater notes in response to a question regarding media interest in the "slacker generation" that "There were all these articles about what was going on. Who are these twenty-something people? There'd be an article about Nirvana that would mention Slacker. The band is Nirvana, the book is *Generation X* by Douglas Coupland, and the film is *Slacker*. That was the holy trinity that qualified it to be a bigger cultural thing" (39). In the interview he notes that during production there was some doubt whether it was the best title for the film, yet it stuck: "It was just a term we'd started calling each other. Because no one was getting paid, people would show up late and we'd call each other 'slacker.' Like, 'Get to work, you slacker'" (38). Linklater notes that in his early twenties, "The thought of having a real job was super-depressing. I would have been content to just live in a little closet and read all day and live on welfare" (6).

<sup>185</sup> The intersection of each figure with consumer culture varies. Rakes pursue style in their dress and equipage to enhance the seductive power of their performance, allowing them even greater entrée into a variety of social and sexual circles and increased ease of movement within this society. Slackers take the energy the rake expends on outward show and moves it inward, concentrating on self-pleasure. Both rake and slacker engage with mobility, but while the rake embraces action, whether per pursuit of women or travel to other lands, the slacker stays put actually and metaphorically, finding pleasure not in the wide world but in the home through personal entertainment medias such as video games, comics, DVDs, and other gear which allow relative independence from, and limited interaction with, other people, particularly non-slackers.

yet enervated and adrift. He is a character whose queerness is predicated, to follow Halberstam's argument from *In a Queer Time and Place*, in his placement outside normative time and space in a body either large, literalizing his excess of appetite, per of Dex, or androgynous, combining both male and female, per Will. The nature and activity of this body, combined with the manner in which slackers often prioritize homosocial, rather than heterosocial, relationships, helps to create a sense of queerness, overtly and more subtly.

This hybridization of rake and slacker creates in the person of Dex a fresh twist on the rake—a gentler, even sensitive, rake. Since it is intelligence and wit that allow Dex's success, the character refocuses attention on the rake's command of these elements rather than simply his attractive shell, emphasizing charisma over beauty. Dex also combines boyish and adult qualities, a combination demonstrated in his lack of career goals, his living situation (sharing a house with a group of male friends), and his part-time job as a kindergarten teacher (he is repeatedly shown playing gleefully with the children, a big kid himself). Dex is socially, emotionally and economically static, a kind of Peter Pan, and this sense of inertia coupled with his boyishness poses a challenge to the committed, adult relationship he seeks with Syd, which the film's ending seeks to resolve.

Overweight, fond of food, drink, and marijuana, and unwilling, at least as the film begins, to change any element of his life, Dex is the embodiment of the slacker, and thus already aligned with passivity and alienation.<sup>186</sup> The character's separation from the

---

<sup>186</sup> In her discussion of the work of David Harvey, Halberstam notes, "But while Harvey hints at the gender politics of these forms of time/space, he does not mention the possibility that all kinds of people, especially in postmodernity, will and do opt to live outside of reproductive and familial time as well as on the edges of logics of labor and production. By doing so, they also live outside the logic of capital

other characters within the diegesis, as well as from a history of overtly attractive rake characters, is predicated in this same slacker body, which visually sets him apart. While the elegant, stylish rake normally easily commands the gaze of both characters and viewers, the gazes that Dex's body draws are not, at least initially, looks of desire, but of surprise, even condemnation. Here is a character who seems particularly vulnerable, even as the character seeks through his wit to address his own bulk and to dismiss it.

Yet Dex is certainly a rake character, his command of language, as well as his creation and mastery of the Tao, granting him the power that his bulky frame and lack of high socioeconomic status might seem to deny.<sup>187</sup> The film's opening, which takes place in a college library, stresses Dex's erotic presence and his connection with the status quo as the camera tracks along a row of library books bearing the names of famous philosophers. This is the weight of western culture, the same culture that Dex employs to attract and seduce numerous women. A break in the books shows two figures twined together, having noisy sex in defiance of the location—Dex and a woman who is later revealed to be married to a college classmate.

The shot not only emphasizes that Dex is a successful rake, it also sets up a framing of his body within this opening that portrays it as both normative and non-normative.

---

accumulation" (10). She goes on to note, "here we could consider ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers, and the unemployed. Perhaps such people could productively be called 'queer subjects' in terms of the ways they live (deliberately, accidentally, or of necessity) during the hours when others sleep and in the spaces (physical, metaphysical, and economic) that others have abandoned..." (10).

<sup>187</sup> The more predatory aspect of earlier rake characters such as Horner in *The Country Wife* (1675) are hinted at, even as Dex is portrayed, on the whole, as a much less disruptive rake. For instance, as a young woman with whom he has just slept examines the books on philosophy and religion in his room she remarks on them and he responds, under his breath, playing the wolfish male, "All the better to seduce you."

The shot, from the shoulders up, gives no hint of the size of Dex's body, conveying a sense only of a body that fits the normal parameters of masculinity onscreen. However, a long shot shortly afterwards, as Dex chats with friends following this encounter, not only reveals the size of his belly, but by placing his body in context and contrast with the bodies of the other men and women who surround him emphasizes that this body is excessive. The choice of a loud Hawaiian shirt further constructs Dex's body as a spectacle, one whose unusual nature is emphasized by a shot of three female classmates who stare at Dex and comment on his size. While one of the three women argues that Dex's size has diminished his former appeal as the campus stud, dialogue that emphasizes the non-normative, and, by implication, negative aspect of this body, the other two women have to disagree with her: they've both slept with him.

This pattern of framing, and the normative and non-normative connotations it creates, carries over to a scene later in the film in which Dex is pictured figuratively and literally laid low. He has received bad news from a doctor about his health, a punch from the husband of his married lover, and Syd's rejection. The camera starts at floor level and moves up the bottom of the bed and over its top to slowly take in Dex's bulk and vulnerable posture. As the camera moves higher and closer to Dex's face, it reveals the ice pack he has on it, further emphasizing his vulnerability. It is with the camera framing his upper body that Syd arrives, kisses his "boo-boo," and begins a more physical relationship with him. Through this camera move the eye travels from the non-normative sight of Dex's whole body, which elicits pathos, to a more normative view, literally and figuratively, that takes in only the non-excessive elements of his body and that elicits a



romantic gesture from Syd, and the beginning of their relationship, a relationship that will move Dex away from the non-normative—his constant heterosexual roving and his homosocial living environment—to a committed heterosexual relationship with her.

The film's somewhat pat romantic ending, in which the distrustful Syd and the commitment-phobic Dex are, somewhat improbably, united serves to contain Dex's queerness on several fronts. It emphasizes the continuing heterosexuality of the character while removing the character's previous association with excessive heterosexuality, his rakish roving, as well as the homosocial, even homoerotic, trope created by the all-male nature of his domicile and his arrested social and sexual development.<sup>188</sup> Dex can therefore leave queer space, literally and figuratively, behind him and join "normal" space and time—committing to Syd and, potentially, marriage, children, and a more permanent job.<sup>189</sup>

That the film moves Dex in this direction speaks on the one hand to an effort to reform the rake as a positive gesture both for the rake character himself, who must move from multiple deceptions and seductions to the clarity of truth and a single relationship,

---

<sup>188</sup> This mirrors the process seen in earlier rake stage comedies, such as *London Assurance* (1841) and *Earnest*, in which rake characters are moved away from roving, whether heterosexual or homoerotic, and towards engagement and marriage.

<sup>189</sup> As John Troyer and Chani Marchiselli note in "Slack, Slacker, Slackest: Homosocial Bonding Practices in Contemporary Dude Cinema" in *Where the Boys Are*, "Invariably, however, his ability to stumble through his adventures is made possible by his position within a fraternal group of two. In dude pairings, the young men mirror each other's dress, speech, manner, and philosophy. Theirs is a masculine intimacy characterized by narcissistic mimicry. Because dudes always appear in such mimetic pairs, their relationships are loaded with erotic implication" (266). While *Tao* does not overtly present the buddy pairing of many of the films Troyer and Marchiselli discuss, Dex is very much part of a homosocial environment in his living space and through the group of men, other proponents of the Tao, with whom he spends a good deal of time. A thread throughout the film is Dex's tutoring of a twenty-something man named Dave, thus creating a buddy pairing, but with the mentor and mentored dynamic also something of an adult/child combination.

and for the other characters. Syd's revelation of how hurt she was by their past encounter, in which Dex slept with her and then moved on, serves to make Dex reexamine his rakish ways and the damage they have caused, and the characters' growing relationship seems to be the fitting fillip to Dex's journey towards adulthood. Yet the manner in which this narrative, like so many other narratives featuring rakes, seeks to contain its rake character also speaks to a desire to not only cease the disruptive capacity of the rake per his roving, but to bolster heteronormativity. Just as the film reinforces sexual norms, it elides the more negative gender issues at stake. Despite coming from a female director, the more damaging aspects of the rake vis à vis his treatment of women are largely elided. Dex is presented as a sweet, smart teddy bear of a guy, seemingly not a threat to anyone, and even the issue of his wounding of Syd is relatively quickly dispelled. That *Tao* is not a big-budget Hollywood product but an independent film makes the conventional nature of its finale somewhat surprising, but it demonstrates the ways in which even texts that stand outside the mainstream tend to move towards mainstream conventions.<sup>190</sup>

However, while the narrative may gesture towards a conservative take on the rake, it does offer a visual break with tradition in the casting of Donal Logue in the role. Logue is an essential element of the manner in which *Tao* does offer at least a partial rethinking of the rake figure and of mainstream film's usual presentation of male

---

<sup>190</sup> In *How Hollywood Works* Wasco cautions against considering independent films as necessarily different than Hollywood products. She notes, "Emanuel Levy (1999) has argued that the concept that best describes independents (or indies) is institutionalization. As Levy points out, independents represent an industry that runs not so much against Hollywood but parallel to Hollywood. In other words, there are two legitimate film industries, mainstream and independent, each with its own organizational structure and its own core audience" (78).

protagonists, marking this character and film as unique. Logue's body is neither highly muscled, like the action stars popular during the 1980s into the 1990s, or lean, shading to androgyny, like Grant and Depp. Instead, he has the physique of the average man, although an article in the magazine *Rolling Stone* notes that the actor packed on thirty pounds for the role of Dex, combining this average physique with a prominent belly.<sup>191</sup> Just as Logue's physique is average, so too his face is unremarkable, a departure from the overtly handsome Depp and Grant, although it does convey a distinctly boyish quality, with a roguish twinkle in the eyes. Through the manner in which Logue's body defies Hollywood norms, the actor marks Dex as non-normative.

Another hybrid rake-slacker figure who seems, at least initially, to offer a fresh look at the rake figure and contemporary masculinity and to speak to the rake's potential for queerness in both the older and newer sense of the word is the character of the Englishman Will Lightman in the film *About a Boy*, based on Nick Hornby's 1998 novel of the same name. Will is a well-to-do thirty-something Londoner who lives off the income from his deceased father's one hit song. Unwilling to connect emotionally with anyone given his perception of the messiness of long-term romantic and social relationships, Will spends his time shopping, watching television in his high tech house, and wining, dining, and dumping countless women. When he discovers that single mothers offer his best chance for short-term, yet passionate, dating, Will joins a support group called SPAT (Single Parents Alone Together). That he must make up an

---

<sup>191</sup> A 2000 *Rolling Stone* article by Jenny Eliscu entitled "Donal Logue," which came out around *Tao's* release, notes his previous work as "the greasy, lumpen Jimmy the Cabdriver" on MTV, and notes that he added thirty pounds for the film (87). Logue's other roles in film and TV have played on his everyguy persona and his talents as a comic.

imaginary two-year-old son to do and a wife who abandoned him troubles him not at all; instead, he is simply impressed by his own performance of the role of single father.<sup>192</sup>

Through his romance with Susie, a SPAT member, he meets Fiona and her son Marcus, a chronically unhip, lonely twelve-year-old. Fiona's attempted suicide drives Marcus to seek support in Will, who finds himself, unwillingly, increasingly involved in Marcus's life. Crises occurs when both Marcus and Will fall in love—the former with Ellie, a cool girl at school, and the latter with Rachel, a single mum. Both “boys” must change—with Marcus finding confidence in himself, and Will finally opening himself up emotionally to an adult, committed relationship. The film ends as Will and Marcus celebrate Christmas together, surrounded by their network of friends and family, no longer alone.

As this summary reveals, Will, like Dex, contains slacker elements, although he seems initially light years away from Dex, as well as from Sparrow—English to the former's American, and a socioeconomic insider, unlike the other men. Given his comfortable income, Will can devote his considerable energies to entertainment and sex, in an echo of privileged Restoration rakes such as Horner in *Wife* or the high society rakes Jack and Algernon in *Earnest*. He is also different in that while many slackers are more attuned to the homosocial, rather than the heterosocial, Will is, as he asserts in the film's opening scene, an “island,” despite his home in London, one of the world's largest and busiest cities. In his largely solitary lifestyle and lack of emotional/career achievement, Will, like Dex, represents Halberstam's example of someone who has

---

<sup>192</sup> This issue of performance is one of the reasons that I define Will as a rake, in concert with his sexual roving, his love of stylish dress and accoutrements, and his lack of adherence to social and sexual mores. For example, when Will successfully convinces the SPAT group of his backstory of single fatherhood, eliciting emotional and physical warmth from the group, Will is impressed by his persuasive performance, noting, “What a performance; I was even fooling myself.”

deliberately removed himself from “normative” time and space. Yet the film does not leave Will in queer space or time, instead charting his journey from a man socially and sexually disconnected to one who, by the film’s end, is in a committed heterosexual relationship and the father figure not only to his new partner’s teenage son but to Marcus, the boy whose interrogation of Will’s status initially forced Will to begin to move, putatively, from “boy” to man.

*Boy*’s opening, like that of *Tao*, establishes its rake/slacker as both normative and non-normative, as a traditional active male subject and an erotic object of desire, both eliding and highlighting the character’s queerness. The film’s first sequence reveals an anonymous man, Will, alone in his posh bachelor home as he moves around its high-tech space getting ready to go out. The camera’s gaze follows him as he listens to and erases a message from a woman, checks out his lithe body in a full-length mirror, and glances into the sides of a gleaming espresso-maker for one final look as he prepares to leave. This final shot is telling. It not only reveals the character’s face—that of star Grant—but also creates a sense of the character, despite the confidence of his voice, heard in a voiceover throughout the scene, as fractured and uncertain. While Will’s body may seem to conform more closely to ideas of rake masculinity than Dex, and may in general accede more clearly to norms of masculinity, this opening asserts that this body is strange, first by denying the viewer a shot of Will’s face until the reflection of it in the espresso-maker, and then providing a literally distorted image when that face is provided that speaks to Will’s wounded child-man persona.

The sense of Will as literally and figuratively distorted is reinforced later in the film in a scene in a beauty salon, a location that Will regularly visits to get his hair, in his words, “carefully disheveled,” an oxymoron that ironically reflects the truly disjunctive nature of Will’s characterization and behavior. A shot from behind Will, who is sitting in a salon chair, reflects the character’s upper body in the mirror before which he sits, but takes in not his trouser-clad legs but the bare legs and dress of the woman sitting in the chair opposite him. This shot literally divides Will between male and female bodies while it figuratively emphasizes the ways in which Will’s existence is not normative but, as the image reveals, unusual and unique. Will is made effeminate in the placement of his male body within the traditionally female space of the beauty salon, and in the manner in which this location—and the focus on his body—ties him into the binary of female location in and obsession with the body.<sup>193</sup> The repeated formal concentration on Will’s body, a body that is spectacular, crafts him as an aesthetic object for the viewer to contemplate rather than an active subject, further queering the character and the masculinity he represents.

That this body is star body with a distinct star text as both romantic and caddish male is also intrinsic to the viewer’s reaction to it. Grant employs his twinkling blue eyes and dimples here not as the naïve romantic bumbler of his breakout role in *Four Weddings*, but as the aggressive hunter, although the boyishness of that previous role

---

<sup>193</sup> His vanity (hair-mussing) and leisure (time to enjoy shopping/salon; lack of work) ties him to stereotypes of the lady of leisure, even the kept woman. Will is “kept” by his father’s legacy literally in the money he has inherited, but also in the sense of disappointment that suffused his father and his relationship with him. He is thus not simply physically or socially distant from other characters, but in a state of mental arrested development as well.

haunts his performance of Will. So too does his role as Daniel Cleaver in the *Bridget Jones* films (*Bridget Jones* in 2001, and its sequel *Bridget Jones and the Edge of Reason* in 2003), in which the character's narrowed, knowing eyes and naughty smile betokened a wolf on the prowl, a figure who is definitely a desirer but who is also, in the constant notations of the film's heroine of his attractions and point of view shots from her perspective, continually presented as an object of desire. This sense of Grant as both pursuer and object of desire necessarily inflects *Boy*.

That Will's body could as easily be read as a queer body as a heteronormative body is both addressed and denied by the film's diegesis and the manner in which Will/Grant is shot. Will's relative slightness and lack of a built body and his boyish, even androgynous, clothing construct the character as normative, but certainly not hypermasculine, while his endless womanizing and lack of nonsexual relations with either men or women point to a character who is emotionally asocial.<sup>194</sup> That the only relationship that Will does develop is with a young boy, Marcus, is also indicative of his own boyishness and lack of social graces, but also veers towards a queer reading of the character.

The diegesis openly addresses this through a scene mid-way through the film when Marcus's mother, Fiona, learning that Marcus has been visiting Will without her

---

<sup>194</sup> This is emphasized early in the film when two of his friends, a married pair, invite him to their home and announce that they would like Will to be the godfather to their infant daughter. Will's response transgresses social and sexual mores, its frankness both refreshing—he does indeed seem to be this kind of character—and shocking:

**WILL.** I couldn't possibly think of a worse godfather for Imogen. You know me. I'll drop her at her christening. I'll forget her birthdays until her 18th, when I'll take her out and get her drunk and possibly, let's face it, you know, try and shag her. I mean, seriously, it's a very, very bad choice.

**CHRISTINE.** Oh, no... it's just that I thought you had hidden depths.

**WILL.** No. No. You've always had that wrong. I really am this shallow.

knowledge, jumps to the belief that he is a pedophile and confronts him in a crowded restaurant, accusing him of having “interfered” with her son. Will and Marcus’s denial of this, bourn out by the many shots the viewer has already seen of the two watching television, eating, chatting, and playing music, demonstrates the innocent and equal nature of this homosocial bond between two “boys.” Yet while the film acknowledges the adult in Marcus and the child in Will, in the latter half it works hard to normalize the relationship dynamics per the characters’ relative age, moving to a father/son dynamic between the two rather than a homosociality of contemporaries. Thus Marcus poses as Will’s son when Will tries to woo single mother Rachel, and Will stands in as Marcus’s music partner and surrogate parent onstage when Marcus performs in the school music show. While these acts demonstrate the deepening trust and dependence between the two, it also works to disavow any interest besides the parental/filial. This development of the Marcus/Will relationship is only one of the ways in which the film transforms its alienated rake protagonist into a member of a community, alters his excessive sexuality—heterosexual or queer—to a committed relationship with a woman, and tames his frank, politically incorrect tongue.

Will amply illustrates Halberstam’s idea of queer time—non-reproductive, non-married—a time apart from the normative. As someone who does not work and does not have a committed relationship or children he is outside the normative sense of human time per western society. In this way he is very similar to Dex, and connected to the male types of the slacker and geek. While Will’s fusion of the rake figure with the slacker/geek is less overt than Dex’s in many ways, the revelation the film provides of the



gaps in Will's seemingly more normative body, self-confidence, and socioeconomic power, married to a greater sense of isolation and arrested development, craft the character as potentially more queer and less normative than Dex. Yet like *Tao* the film ultimately contains its rake, moving Will to a socially and sexually acceptable relationship with time/space.

Such containment is not the case, at least initially, in the case of my key rake, Captain Jack Sparrow, who ends both the original stand-alone *Pearl* and the final film in the trilogy *At World's End* (2007) as a rake who is not simply a sexually rover, but who is also socially and economically transgressive.<sup>195</sup> These many layers of transgressions certainly craft Sparrow as the least normative, fitting the older definition of queer, and as I discuss in this chapter's opening, he is the character who most clearly moves away from heterosexuality. In my close reading of Sparrow I concentrate on *Pearl*, with references to the second and third films as needed to demonstrate the trilogy's overall treatment of the character.

Set in the Caribbean in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, *Pearl* concerns a young man and woman—Will Turner and Elizabeth Swann—who live in the British-controlled harbor town of Port Royal. The two met years ago when Swann rescued an injured Turner, survivor of a pirate attack, and, unbeknownst to him, hid the pirate medallion he wore. Differences in status make marriage between the adult Turner and Swann impossible, and Swann moves towards an engagement to an upright naval

---

<sup>195</sup> I consider Sparrow a rake for several reasons. First, he is, both as a pirate and as a character, aligned with social and sexual transgression. He is driven by appetite—whether for food, drink, ornamentation, or flirtation—and he uses extreme cunning to achieve his ends, besting not only his fellow pirates but the British Navy itself.

commodore, Norrington. The arrival of a lone pirate named Captain Jack Sparrow, followed by an attack on the town by the pirate ship the Black Pearl, captained by Sparrow's former first mate, Barbossa, transforms their lives, as Sparrow and Turner combine to rescue Swann and defeat Barbossa and his crew. Ultimately, they are successful, although Sparrow is set to be executed for his past transgressions. However, Swann, Turner, and Sparrow's new crew set him free. The film's final image shows Sparrow once again in command of the Pearl, gazing out into the horizon, ready to plunder once again.

At least part of the reason for Sparrow's more transgressive construction and behavior than that of Dex or Will and the sense of queerness he conveys can be found in the particular nature of his hybridization, the combination of rake and pirate. While the slacker conveys a sense of passivity, softness, even vulnerability, the pirate is aligned with aggressive behavior and hypermasculinity, a figure who is transgressive legally and economically, outside boundaries of all kinds. Pirates, real or fictional, became popular figures, feared and admired, in the seventeenth century due to their defiance of legal, economic, and social structures in their renunciation of ties to nation, church, and society and their creation of their own laws. As Hans Turley notes in *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash*, an examination of the construction of the pirate image, the pirate and the rake have long been aligned: the pirate's ability to pursue his own economic and social destiny mirroring that of the rake, although the rake's socioeconomic power normally puts him much closer to hegemony than the pirate. The pirate was, as Turley notes, *hostis humani generis*—the common enemy against all mankind (1-2). The sense of transgression

contained in the pirate figure also applies to sexuality, in which the pirate's homosocial world can be read as both exceedingly hypermasculine and as aligned with sodomy. Thus the pirate, like the rake, is himself a complex, fractured figure, and the combination of these two in Sparrow creates a rake who is, as this chapter's opening indicates, a rich mixture of different elements, a figure who is, particularly in the first film, certainly queer.<sup>196</sup>

As the opening of this chapter details, the introduction of Sparrow in *Pearl* serves, at least initially, to convey the image and idea of a strong, heroic character, a normative male protagonist. The character literally dominates the frame in these opening moments due to the camera position, which raises the character over the viewer's head and magnifies the size of his body, and the manner in which the camera's gaze is fixated solely on the character. The spectacular nature of Sparrow—not simply his centrality within the frame but the striking nature of his appearance—similarly draws the viewer's attention. Sparrow seems the very picture of the brave adventurer in his tricorn hat, long boots, loaded down with cutlass and sword, gazing off intensely into the horizon.

Yet Sparrow's costume gives a hint, even before the long shot reveals the truth of his environment, that this is no ordinary protagonist and no everyday pirate. Sparrow's clothing and gear move beyond the expected garb of the adventurer or pirate into the

---

<sup>196</sup> This sense of mixture is heightened by the film's own generic hybridity, combining action-adventure and comedy. This hybridity both helps to explain Sparrow's divergent characteristics—in a manner eliding them, yet also serving to heighten them. As Gallagher notes in *Action Figures*, the combination is unstable, and can be disruptive of traditional treatments of action masculinity: "Generic prescriptions have historically limited the interplay between action films and comedies. Comedy's inversion of social hierarchies potentially places the male hero's dominant gender position in distress, a transformation that poses serious structural problems for the action cinema...If an action narrative makes the protagonist a comedic foil, he relinquishes some narrative or visual power, diminishing his apparent heroism and his ensuing generic credibility" (163).

realm of excess, from the luxurious fall of his long, dark dreadlocks, to the multiple scarves fluttering from his waist and around his head, and his abundant jewelry, including numerous rings, prominent ornaments dangling from his hair, and the long piece of ivory attached to it. Most striking is the kohl around the character's eyes and the flash of his gold teeth, which provide a unique, even unsettling, effect that is not reproduced in any other character in the film, pirate or not. The elements of visual excess revealed in his costume and the visible use of make-up foreshadow the character's campiness and queerness. Contributing further to the sense of the character as non-normative per usual screen representations of masculinity is the manner in which the gaze is constantly reinforced. For instance, in his introduction Sparrow evokes the gaze from both the onscreen dockworkers, who stare at him in amazement as he sails by, slowly sinking, and from the viewer, evoking a sense of astonishment and admiration that restores the character's dominance. Yet these gazes also serve to craft the character not simply as an active subject, but as a spectacular object, his objectification, a position unusual for the male, serving to heighten, rather than reduce, the sense of the character's difference.

The beauty of Depp, the actor who plays Sparrow, is also central to the manner in which the character is visually disruptive. Depp's star text, as noted in the early portion of the chapter, is particularly associated with to-be-looked-at-ness given his early teen heartthrob roles. My use of the word beauty, a word that tends to connote female, rather than male, attractiveness to describe Depp provides a sense of the unsettling nature of his appearance. Males who are described as beautiful often carry the marker of difference, even effeminacy. In "Notes on Camp" Susan Sontag argues that physical attractiveness

“consists in going against the grain of one’s sex. What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine” (223).

As the film goes on the excessive and fluid nature of the character’s gender and sexuality are further revealed, highlighting Sparrow’s highly performative nature and developing the character as truly queer despite constant moments in the narrative that seem to stress the character’s normativity—whether sexual or gendered. For instance, when Sparrow and Turner visit the island of Tortuga in search of information and a crew, Sparrow encounters multiple former-lovers, whose presence seems to argue for the character’s heterosexual past, while providing comedy in the punishment they mete out on Sparrow. As Sparrow and Turner navigate the streets of Tortuga two women, in quick succession, confront Sparrow angrily and slap him. Sparrow responds to these mini-dramas by appealing to his audience—Turner and the viewer:

*(a red-headed woman approaches)*

JACK. Scarlet. *(She slaps him)*

JACK. I’m not sure I deserved that.

*(a blonde woman approaches)*

JACK. Giselle.

GISELLE. Who was she?

JACK. What? *(She slaps him)*

JACK. I may have deserved that.

A further former lover is presented a few scenes later in the form of Anamaria, a female sailor who Sparrow not only deserted, but from whom he stole a boat. That Anamaria is disguised as a man in order to gain work in Sparrow’s crew adds a different dimension to their confrontation, while obviously building upon the previous ones:

JACK. Anamaria. *(Anamaria slaps Jack)*

WILL. I suppose, you didn't deserve that one either?

JACK. No, that one I deserved.

ANAMARIA. You stole my boat!

JACK. Actually...

*(Anamaria slaps Jack again)*

JACK. Borrowed...borrowed without permission, but with every intention of bringing it back.

While Jack's interchange with Anamaria comically caps his experiences with Scarlet and Giselle, driving the point of his heterosexual rakishness home, it also points to the excessive, non-normative nature of Sparrow's sexuality, making it an object of comedy and, given the sheer excess of girlfriend after girlfriend, associating this moment and this character with camp. Furthermore, Anamaria's cross-dressing inflects both characters, and their relationship, with queer aspects—she is a non-normative woman given her dress and her profession; he is a man who has had a relationship with a woman who is, at least in her dress, also a man. That Sparrow and Anamaria's sexual past together is never referenced again, and that the two spend the rest of the film working together as shipmates not as lovers not only places the heterosexual aspects of their exchange firmly in the past, it also casts doubt on Sparrow's current status as hypermasculine heterosexual rover.<sup>197</sup>

Indeed, the forceful emphasis on the character's sexuality in the Tortuga sequence serves to undermine, even as it tries to highlight, the character's heteronormative

---

<sup>197</sup> While Sparrow himself does not cross-dress explicitly in *Pearl*, a scene towards the end of the film not simply demonstrates his love of treasure, per his pirate nature, but hints at an outward queerness by aligning him with an obsession with adornment. The scene shows a treasure room piled high with glittering treasure, with which Sparrow eagerly bedecks himself, loading himself with jewels and crowning himself with a huge, gaudy crown. Sparrow's assumption of the crown serves as a carnivalesque crowning – the king of fools—per the comedic construction of the character, but there also seems to be a reference to the kinging (performance of maleness) that Halberstam discusses, here combined with camping.

masculinity, the first of many moments in *Pearl* and throughout the trilogy in which the narrative strains to align the character with a stability that his characterization and behavior constantly elides. Similarly, efforts to join Sparrow in a conventional romantic heterosexual relationship never succeed. While the narrative gestures towards the union of Sparrow and Swann as a possibility, a move that might stabilize Sparrow's liminal gender and sexuality, the anticipated conjunction of the characters does not occur in *Pearl*. Instead, Swann and Turner are united, leaving Sparrow, in direct contrast to Will and Dex, unmoored to heterosexual commitment and free to pursue whatever erotic object he may desire. The resulting departure from the heterosexual pairings of most Hollywood films, particularly the blockbuster, serves to further underline the manner in which Sparrow is a queer character, one who has the potential to queer the entire film given the manner in which he upsets classical narrative and audience expectations.

Yet while Sparrow is certainly not conventionally heterosexual, neither is he positioned as completely homosexual. Sparrow's flirtation with everyone—male and female—crafts him as a character fixed to no one object choice—and no defined gender position or sexual category. Certainly he is aligned with the homoerotic, since most of the characters he flirts with are male given the all-male environments of the pirate and naval worlds. This is emphasized by the fact that Sparrow's most intense energy is directed not towards women such as Swann or Anamaria but Turner, who he mentors in piracy, Norrington, his exact opposite in the legal and economic realm, and his primary

object of interest—the treacherous and flamboyant Barbossa.<sup>198</sup> Ultimately, however, it is not another character, whether male or female, who is his ultimate object choice but his own persona as “Captain Jack Sparrow” with whom Sparrow seems most in love.<sup>199</sup> Sparrow’s queerness is thus ultimately beyond either heterosexuality or homosexuality, occupying not simply a place in-between but beyond any kind of gender or sexual boundaries/categories.

Yet while the ambiguity of Sparrow’s gender and sexuality as presented in *Pearl* appears to be one of the primary attractions of his character for viewers based not only on critical reviews but on audience comments on a variety of websites, this quality apparently raised anxiety in the filmmakers given the ways in which the character is reimagined and contained in the second and third films. For example, in the second *Pirates* movie, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* (2006), the relationships of

---

<sup>198</sup> Hector Barbossa is not quite as loaded with ornamentation as Jack Sparrow, but both characters display a fondness for dress and ostentation, and a somewhat similar approach of deliberate showiness on the part of both actors that connects the two. Geoffrey Rush’s performance as Barbossa has been noted by some critics as camp due to the ways Rush vocally and physically plays the role, as well as the character’s fascination with consumption (from food to hats). For instance, Scott Weinberg of the website *efilmcritic* writes, “Geoffrey Rush (*Shine*) is clearly having a whole lot of fun as the head villain, though he consistently keeps his performance just this side of high camp” (*Rotten Tomatoes*), while in his review for *The New York Times* Elvis Mitchell connects both Rush and Depp with camp, noting that Rush as Barbossa is “nearly as game—and gamy—as Mr. Depp” (*Rotten Tomatoes*). The characters’ love/hate relationship, developed further over the course of the three films, in which the two constantly snipe and sneer at each other while seeming to truly get a charge out of each other’s presence, demonstrates the manner in which they are not only doubles but, potentially, lovers.

<sup>199</sup> That Sparrow turns his desire inward rather than outwards ties him to the “invert,” the term used in early discussions of homosexuals as a group differentiated from heterosexuals. The term, notably used in Oscar Wilde’s trials for “gross indecency” in 1895, highlights the idea popular in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century texts that the homosexual is in love with the same rather than the other. It is the character’s narcissism, together with his performativity and excessive costuming, that directly links him to camp for, as Sontag argues in “Notes on Camp,” successful camp “reeks of self-love” (224). Sparrow’s campiness serves to highlight the rake figure’s inherently camp aspects while pushing these aspects to an extreme degree. Similarly, Sparrow’s camp underlines masculinity, and certainly the heroic masculinity of his introduction, as performance—making it strange.



the characters are reframed so that amorous interests are created where none seemed to exist in the first film, and Sparrow is moved more firmly towards heterosexuality. While, as noted, Sparrow leers at Swann just as he leers at everyone else in *Pearl*, in the second film he seems to actively pursue her and Swann, in contrast to *Pearl*, seems at least interested in him. However, the filmmakers' efforts to craft a heteronormative relationship between the two characters is complicated by Swann's assumption of male dress, first worn towards the end of *Pearl*, and then throughout most of the second and third films. Swann's cross-dressing may serve to emphasize her femininity and underline the heterosexual nature of her relationships with Sparrow and Turner given that unlike Anamaria, who initially actually appears to be a boy, the audience and the characters always know this is a girl in men's clothing.<sup>200</sup> Yet Swann's assumption of male dress in all three movies, relatively briefly in *Pearl*, primarily in *Dead Man's Chest*, and almost exclusively in *World's End* also serves to destabilize her normativity and unsettle the heterosexual relationships in which she's engaged—not only with Sparrow, but also with Turner and Norrington.<sup>201</sup> By making Sparrow's focus a cross-dressed female, the

---

<sup>200</sup> The filmmakers play up, and simultaneously disavow, the potential homoeroticism of this cross-dressing in *Dead Man's Chest* in Swann and Sparrow's first encounter in the film. Swann, dressed as a sailor and accompanied by a much-the-worse-for wear Norrington, approaches Sparrow on the dock:

*(speaking to the back of Sparrow as he moves towards the ship)*

SWANN. I'm here to find the man I love.

*(Stops in his tracks. Makes faces at Gibbs, and a gesture of get this person out of here)*

SPARROW. I'm deeply flattered, son, but my first and only love is the sea.

*(Norrington throws up)*

SWANN. Meaning William Turner, Captain Sparrow.

SPARROW. Elizabeth. *(to Gibbs)* Hide the rum. *(facing her)* You know, those clothes do not flatter you. It should be a dress or nothing. I happen to have no dress in my cabin.

<sup>201</sup> The nature of Swann's cross-dressing is as follows: a British naval uniform in *Pearl*; a sailor's pants and shirt in *Dead Man's Chest*; and the tunic and pants of a Chinese male, followed by the elaborate robe and trousers of a Chinese pirate lord, in *World's End*. The final images of the character restore her, however, to

character, and the second and third films, are returned to the queerness of *Pearl*.<sup>202</sup> This cross-dressing also serves to remind the viewer of the cross-dressing found in previous rake texts, such as the cross-dressing of Melantha and Doralice in John Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode* (first performed in 1671), with its emphasis on masquerade as a means to obtain greater sexual freedom and pleasure, whether hetero or homoerotic.

Presented as both straight and non-straight, hypermasculine and effeminate, Sparrow occupies a position per gender and sexuality that is both inside and outside hegemony, just as his profession as pirate places him in opposition to social, economic, and political norms. Much of Sparrow's transgressive characterization and behavior is derived from his profession of pirate, and it is this cross of the rake with the pirate in the character of Sparrow that allows the filmmakers to go further in crafting a truly transgressive rake than the creators of Dex in *Tao* and Will in *Boy*. For while the slacker or dude are transgressive figures in their own right in the manner in which their delayed

---

a more conventional female dress, showing the character in a long tunic dress, showing a great deal of flesh, as she trysts with Turner, now her husband, on an island before he sails away to return to his life as the captain of the Flying Dutchman.

<sup>202</sup> The conclusion of *Chest* is also interesting in the manner in which the filmmakers both confront and deny the issue of Sparrow's queerness. The film ends with Sparrow's confrontation with a monster whose sharp-toothed circular maw looks like nothing more than a vagina dentata. The character, looking into this mass of teeth, says, "Hello, Beastie," echoing the cheeky tone he's used in meeting other characters. The beast spews fluids, which resembles both sperm and vaginal secretions, at Sparrow, who wipes these off and then, drawing his sword, jumps into the monster's maw. The moment typifies the anxiety towards sexuality found in *Chest* and its desire to both address and deny the first film. While *Pearl* seems to create a world that is both overtly heterosexual and yet strongly queer, the second film, in seeming to overcome its queerness, creates even more queerness. *World's End* similarly seems to disavow, yet increase through this disavowal, the queerness within the diegesis as a whole and in Sparrow himself.

adolescence keeps them in a queer time and space, defying social and economic adulthood, the pirate presents a much more dangerous figure to combine with the rake.<sup>203</sup>

Yet it is the hybridization of many contemporary rakes with other male figures, particularly those imbued with more stereotypically feminine traits—passivity, vulnerability, body-image issues—that is one of the primary reasons for the sense of a softened, less radically interrogative, rake figure in contemporary film texts. As noted, the hybridization of the rake and the slacker/dude, per *Tao* and *Boy*, creates a new type of rake constructed as less socially and sexually invincible than previous rakes, psychologically troubled and ultimately sensitive men who represent, in their social and sexual stasis, boy-men. Potentially, these rakes create a greater sense of empathy in audiences who do not, ultimately, condemn them for their misbehavior but relate to, and even forgive, their inability to grow up. That these rakes have chosen this delayed adolescence, to a large extent, and bear a significant amount of the responsibility not only for their own state but also for the emotional damage they do to other characters is largely elided. *Tao* and *Boy* show only a few of the reactions of the characters—male and female—affected by these rakes' misbehaviors, and do so, when they do at all, largely for comic effect. Even these transgressions are largely ignored when the rake-slacker accepts some responsibility for his past and present state and takes definite action to move into a committed heterosexual relationship—from Dex's breaking off his ongoing

---

<sup>203</sup> Depp's performance as Sparrow also overtly references Keith Richards of the rock group the Rolling Stones in costuming, accent, and behavior, a citation that serves to connect the character not only with the pirate, but also with the modern equivalent of the pirate's outlaw sensibility and sexuality: the rock star.

affair with a married woman and decision to follow Syd to Will's surrogate fathering of Marcus and his commitment to Rachel and her son.

In contrast, the fusion of the pirate and rake in the character of Sparrow implies, as noted, a more dangerous rake who is more likely to challenge both his fellow characters and audience members. Yet the manner in which the pirate is treated as a figure historically bound to a specific—past—time period and as a figure of fantasy, rather than a real-life figure who arose in response to specific economic, social, and political opportunities and pressures, serve to remove much of the truly transgressive potential of the pirate from this hybridization by distancing the viewer from him. Similarly, Sparrow's very excesses, which on the one hand do indeed contribute to the manner in which he shakes up conceptions of the rake and screen masculinity, also serve, however, to make the character so unique that he exists in a fantastic bubble by himself, with no connection to anyone or anything else—certainly not to real-life social, political, or economic structures.

While the hybridity found in these characters does, on the one hand, serve in various ways to mitigate their critique, it can, however, also work in an interrogative manner by creating a greater sense of instability in the rake figure through the process of hybridization. This instability allows an opportunity to examine the fractures in the rake's representation of masculine privilege and power and the damage of his hypermasculinity while constructing a queerness that challenges popular culture's assumption of heterosexuality as normative. However, the ultimate containment of this queerness, as of the rakes themselves, serves to lessen any lasting critique.

As I have noted, these films seem to work particularly hard to contain their rakes and their potential interrogation of gender and sexuality. This move to containment has multiple causes. First, the move to containment within the narrative is underwritten by the conventions of Classical Hollywood Cinema, which demands a clear resolution of the protagonist or protagonists' goals and, normally a conclusion of his/her/their heterosexual romance.<sup>204</sup> That CHC remains the norm is indicated in the narrative similarity between the potentially disparate low-budget, independent *Tao*, the mainstream, middle-budget *Boy*, and the blockbuster *Pirates*. Second, all of these films, despite their differences within their diegesis and without in their industrial construction, are commodities, intended to generate profit. Thus their narratives must appeal to the largest audiences possible while displeasing the least number—creating an economic incentive to follow the familiar structure of Classical Hollywood Cinema.<sup>205</sup>

This containment also works per the films' genre conventions. The containment of Dex and Will in committed heteronormative relationships, for example, works not only to appease viewers who might be offended by an open-ended finale that gestured to further sexual roving, it also serves the generic expectations of the romantic comedy, which sees its primarily male and female protagonists united in the finale, and of comedy's move away from initial chaos towards social and sexual stability, usually

---

<sup>204</sup> In *Thinking About Movies* Peter Lehman and William Luhr summarize the main points of classical Hollywood narrative, as discussed in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. These points include “a clear forward direction” for the film’s plot, a focus on a small group of protagonists “whose goals are very clear,” with everything in the film moving towards the resolution of these goals (29). They also note that “The goals tend to be twofold: a private one and a public one. The private one is frequently a heterosexual romance and the public one involves the accomplishment of an important deed or the attainment of something valuable” (29).

<sup>205</sup> This issue of commercial appeal is also true of the plays I discuss in the first three chapters, albeit to a lesser degree.

through marriage. Thus both Dex and Will end their films firmly tied to a single partner, no longer to rove in whatever manner, straight or non-straight, again. Only Sparrow seemingly remains free of regulation, although the increasing move to stabilize him per heterosexuality in the course of the trilogy, coupled with Disney's economic necessity to leave Sparrow's future, and that of the *Pirates* franchise, open speaks to the manner in which even his seeming freedom is complicated.

Thus while Sparrow may seem to offer a vision of the future of the film rake as progressive rather than conservative, moving towards a more liminal, even utopian, vision of masculinity, a balanced consideration of the character, who so neatly brings me back to the period and concerns of my second chapter, must also raise the same questions posed by that chapter's key rake, Horner of *Wife*. First, whatever freedoms the rake proposes are strictly tied to fantasy, the safely fictional nature of the stage and screen. Second, the rake's own divided nature as a character who is both part of and apart from hegemony means that he can always be excused by both his closeness to the center and his distance from it, disallowing any truly significant rethinking of hegemonic structures. As much as the rake may gesture towards a discussion, even embrace, of queerness, the trajectory of *Pirates* speaks to the continuing ambivalence in western culture towards characters and texts outside heteronormativity.

One final word, however, is necessary on the subject of Sparrow and the rake, for while I have emphasized the character's containment, and what this containment, particularly of his queerness, says about contemporary attitudes, this is not quite the end of the story, at least not of Sparrow's story. Just as one should never underestimate the

appetites of a rake, one should never underestimate the hunger of a Hollywood studio. The commercial rewards of the *Pirates* trilogy (1.038 billion in sales domestically, 2 billion globally, and counting) have been so great that a fourth film, *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, is in production.<sup>206</sup> How the new film will address Sparrow's rakish desires is anyone's guess. Reputedly, a love interest has already been chosen for him—Blackbeard's daughter.<sup>207</sup> Whatever the outcome of this fourth film, however, Sparrow, like the rake figure himself, will certainly continue.<sup>208</sup> The filmmakers gestured to Sparrow's vitality and his literal and figurative boyishness in the finale of *At World's End*, as Sparrow set out, once again in a tiny boat and once again alone, heading for the horizon. He has a map in his lap and a goal in mind. The map notes the location of a mythical libation: aqua vitae. Fittingly, Sparrow is voyaging to the Fountain of Youth.

---

<sup>206</sup> Figures from *Box Office Mojo*.

<sup>207</sup> Information from the *Internet Movie Database*.

<sup>208</sup> According to the *Internet Movie Database*, "Disney's Head of Production Oren Aviv said that this would 'hopefully be the first of another trilogy.'"

## CHAPTER VII

### CODA

In this dissertation I've charted the rake's journey through multiple centuries, media, and texts, seeking to interrogate why the rake survives—thrives, even—while so much has changed in the two nations whose theatre and film texts I've discussed, as well, of course, in the rest of the world. Perhaps one of the reasons for the rake's continued presence is his lack of change, a sense of continuity that has its own appeal. In contrast to the seemingly endless social, cultural, political, and economic flux of today's twenty-first century world, for example, the very reliability of the rake—that same lust for new conquests, that same desire to shake up society—feels comforting.

Yet the rake would never have survived so long, and certainly would not have remained a figure of both controversy and fascination, if he had truly remained the same. Instead, he is a figure who in his appeal to other characters and to audiences echoes what Enobarbus says of Cleopatra in William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*: "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale/Her infinite variety" (2.2). For as I have discussed in each chapter, it is the rake's polyvalence, his ability to encompass a wide range of characterization and behavior from hypermasculine to effeminate, heteroerotic to homoerotic, heterosocial to homosocial that allows him this flexibility, not only within texts but between texts, changing as the situation, media, and century demands. For playwrights, screenwriters, and directors this built-in fluidity has allowed them to take the pieces of rake characteristics that most clearly and strongly engage with the particular anxieties and desires of the period—from mobility to criminality, consumption to



performance—and highlight these. Similarly, the wide range of rake characteristics allow audiences diverse pleasures, pleasures that can shift from moment to moment as the rake progresses through a text, or from one text to another.

There is also something endlessly hopeful about the rake's constant desiring, his infinite pursuit. He is ever setting out on a new conquest, his appetite for sexual adventures an ironic echo of the grand voyages of scientific exploration and ambitious venturing for even greater capital so prevalent amidst western nations from the sixteenth century onwards. In the interlacing of sexual intercourse and other intercourse—with other lands and peoples and with strange new customs and undiscovered opportunities—the rake's desiring echoes John Donne's *Elegy XIX, "To His Mistress Going to Bed,"* in which the speaker considers his lover's body as if it were a map of the world: "License my roving hands, and let them go/ Before, behind, between, above, below./ O, my America! my new-found land..." (25-27).

Yet just as there is something refreshing about the rake's endless desiring, with its sense of never-ending possibility, there is something not simply wearisome or suspect but deeply troubling about it. In the rake's nonstop setting out for a new adventure, another deception, constantly beginning again, there is something disturbing, almost horrific. It speaks to the hunger of the undead—the monsters such as zombie or vampires who walk again, but only by feeding on the bodies and the wills of others. This monstrous element of the rake derives, potentially, from several sources: first, the sense of him as a creature, despite his excess, of lack—a void; second, a sense of him as cursed, echoing back to Cain wandering the desert. While the rake is in no way so overtly monstrous and

is, more often than not, aligned more thoroughly with the life force via Eros than with Thanatos, there is a certain element of the drive to death, to destruction, in the rake, for in some instances one feels that only death itself can stop his roving.

However, since the texts I've discussed are in the main comedies, or at least comedy hybrids, albeit with a few exceptions (the melodrama *The Cheat* and the adventure-romance *The Sheik*, both in chapter five), it is the lighter side of the rake that remains foremost both in these texts themselves and in the overall tone of this dissertation as it has considered the rake's "progress." For in comedy the disruptive energy and transgressive desires of the rake, a source of danger and destruction in the tragic and dramatic mode, are not only accepted but essential to the drive towards carnivalesque reversal in the text, even if the rake is usually, with a few exceptions, contained by the text's finale. However, while individual texts may contain their rakes, and this project itself must conclude its discussion of the rake, the figure himself goes on, moving onwards towards the next text, the next media, and the next century.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- About a Boy*. Dir. Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz. Perf. Hugh Grant, Toni Collette. 2002. DVD. Universal Studios, 2003.
- Alemán, Mateo. *The Rogue; or, The Life of Guzman de Alfarache*. 1622. Trans. James Mabbe. London: Constable and Company, 1924.
- Armens, Sven M. *John Gay: Social Critic*. New York: Octagon Books, 1970.
- Auslander, Philip. "Live and technologically mediated performance." *Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*. Ed. Tracy C. Davis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 107-119.
- Baillie, Joanna. *Miscellaneous Plays*. Ed. Donald H. Reiman. New York: Garland Publishing, 1977.
- Baines, Paul. *The Long 18<sup>th</sup> Century*. London: Arnold, 2004.
- The Battle of the Sexes*. Dir. D.W. Griffith. Perf. Jean Hersholt, Don Alvarado. 1928. DVD. United Artists, 2000.
- Baur-Heinhold, Margaret. *The Baroque Theatre: A Cultural History of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.
- Behn, Aphra. *The Rover*. Ed. Frederick M. Link. Regents Restoration Drama. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967.
- Behn, Aphra. *The Rover and other Plays*. Ed. Jane Spencer. Oxford English Drama. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*. Ed. Michael W. Jennings. Trans. Howard Eiland. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Bond, Erik. *Reading London: Urban Speculation and Imaginative Government in Eighteenth-Century Literature*. Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2007.
- Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.

- Boucicault, Dion. *London Assurance*. 1841. Ed. Ronald Eyre. London: Methuen, 1971.
- Boucicault, Dion. "London Assurance." *Selected Plays of Dion Boucicault*. Irish Drama Selections 4. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1987. 30-95.
- Braudy, Leo. "Stage vs. Screen." *Theater and Film: A Comparative Anthology*. Ed. Robert Knopf. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 352-360.
- Bridget Jones*. Dir. Sharon Maguire. Perf. Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant. 2001. DVD. Miramax, 2004.
- Bridget Jones and the Edge of Reason*. Dir. Sharon Maguire. Perf. Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant. 2004. DVD. Universal Studios, 2005.
- Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965.
- Canfield, J. Douglas and Deborah C. Payne, eds. *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995.
- The Cheat*. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Perf. Sessue Hayakawa, Fannie Ward. 1915. DVD. Kino Video, 2002.
- Chernaik, Warren. *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Clerks*. Dir. Kevin Smith. Perf. Kevin Smith, Brian O'Halloran. 1994. DVD. Miramax, 1999.
- Cohan, Steven. *Incongruous Entertainment: Camp, Cultural Value, and the MGM Musical*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Cohan, Steven. *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties*. Bloomington And Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Cowley, Hannah. "The Belle's Stratagem." *Eighteenth-Century Women Dramatists*. Ed. Melinda C. Finberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 211-280.
- Cowley, Hannah. "The Belle's Stratagem." *The Meridian Anthology of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Plays by Women*. Ed. Katharine M. Rogers. New York: Diane Publishing, 1994.

- Craft, Christopher. "Alias Bunbury." *Norton Critical Edition: The Importance of Being Earnest*. Ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 136-166.
- Davis, Leith. *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation 1707-1830*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Defoe, Daniel. *Captain Singleton*. 1720. Ed. Shiv K. Kumar. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Defoe, Daniel. *Moll Flanders*. 1722. Ed. J. Paul Hunter. New York: Crowell, 1970.
- Dr. No*. Dir. Terence Young. Perf. Sean Connery, Ursula Andress. 1962. DVD.
- Don Juan De Marco*. Dir. Jeremy Leven. Perf. Johnny Depp, Marlon Brando, Fay Dunaway. 1995. DVD. New Line Home Video, 1998.
- Donne, John. "Elegie XIX." *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*. Ed. Charles M. Coffin. New York: The Modern Library, 1994.
- Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.
- Dracula*. Dir. Todd Browning. Perf. Bela Lugosi, Sheila Manners. 1931. DVD. Universal Studios, 2004.
- Dryden, John. *Marriage à la Mode*. Ed. Mark S. Auburn. Regents Restoration Drama Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981.
- Dryden, Robert G. "John Gay's Polly: Unmasking Pirates and Fortune Hunters in the West Indies" *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 34.4 (2001): 539-557.
- Dugaw, Dianne. *"Deep Play": John Gay and the Invention of Modernity*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001.
- Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. 2nd. ed. London: Routledge, 2004.
- . *Stars*. London: BFI Publishing, 1998.
- . *White*. London: Routledge, 1997.

- Eckes Jr., Alfred E. and Thomas W. Zeiler. *Globalization and the American Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.
- Ed Wood*. Dir. Tim Burton. Perf. Johnny Depp, Sarah Jessica Parker. 1994. DVD. Touchstone, 2004.
- Eliscu, Jenny. "Donal Logue." *Rolling Stone*. September 2000: 849. 87. Print.
- Ellmann, Richard. *Oscar Wilde*. 1987. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. Print.
- Farquhar, George. *The Beaux Stratagem*. 1707. London: Nick Hern Books, 1995.
- The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Dir. Rex Ingram. Perf. Rudolph Valentino, Alice Terry. 1921. VHS. Tapeworm Video Distributors, 1998.
- Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Dir. Richard Curtis. Perf. Hugh Grant, Andie MacDowell. 1994. DVD. MGM, 1999.
- Frye, Northrop. *Collected Works of Northrop Frye: Northrop Frye's Writings on the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. Ed. Imre Salusinszky. 17 vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005.
- Gallagher, Mark. *Action Figures: Men, Action Films, and Contemporary Adventure Narratives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Gay, John. *The Beggar's Opera and Companion Pieces*. Ed. C.F. Burgess. Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc. 1966.
- Gay, John. *Polly: an opera*. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. University Of Oregon, 2010. Web. 30 May 2010. <<http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW110208431&source=gale&userGroupName=euge94201&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>>.
- Gibson, Pamela Church. "Queer Looks, Male Gazes, Taut Torsos and Designer Labels: Contemporary Cinema, Consumption and Masculinity." *The Trouble with Men: Masculinities in European and Hollywood Cinema*. Eds. Phil Powrie, Ann Davies, and Bruce Babington. London: Wallflower Press, 2004. 176-186.
- Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Tr. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1972.
- Gore, Catherine. "The School for Coquettes." *Gore on Stage: The Plays of Catherine Gore*. Ed. John Franceschina. New York: Garland Publishing, 1999. 31-79.

- Gledhill, Christine. "Signs of Melodrama." *Stardom: Industry of Desire*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: Routledge, 1991. 207-229.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. 1980. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.
- Paul Hammond. *Figuring Sex Between Men*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Hansen, Miriam. *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991.
- Head, Richard. *The English Rogue*. 1650. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1928.
- Hogan, Robert. *Dion Boucicault*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969.
- Hogarth, William. *A Rake's Progress*. Sir John Soane's Museum, London. 1 Feb. 2010 <<http://www.soane.org/rakesprogress.htm>>.
- Hopper, Vincent F. *Medieval Mystery Plays*. Ed. Vincent F. Hopper. Woodbury: Barron's Educational Series, 1962.
- Hornby, Nick. *About a Boy*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.
- "Horner." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2010. 1 Feb. 2010 <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.
- Howson, Gerald. *Thief-Taker General: The Rise and Fall of Jonathan Wild*. London: Hutchinson & Company, 1970.
- Hull, E.M. *The Sheik: A Novel*. Boston: Small, Maynard, and Company, 1921.
- Hunter, Paul J. "The Poetry of Occasions." *A Concise Companion to The Restoration and Eighteenth Century*. Ed. Cynthia Wall. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 202-225.
- Internet Movie Database*. 2010. 14 February 2010 <<http://imdb.com>>.
- Jacobson, Mathew Frye. *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000.

- Jones, Ann Rosalind and Peter Stallybrass. "Feminizing Gender: Constructing the Hermaphrodite in Renaissance Europe." *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*. Eds. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub. London: Routledge, 1991. 80-111.
- Jones, Robert W. *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Klinger, Mary F. Introduction. *The Harlot's Progress and The Rake's Progress*. By Theophilus Cibber. Los Angeles: Augustan Reprint Society, 1977.
- Knopf, Robert. Introduction. *Theater and Film: A Comparative Anthology*. Ed. Robert Knopf. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Lehman, Peter and William Luhr. *Thinking About Movies*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
- Leider, Emily W. *Dark Lover: The Life and Death of Rudolph Valentino*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.
- Lesage, Julia. "S/Z and Rules of the Game." *Movies and Methods II*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. 476-499.
- Life Story of Herbert Marshall*. New York: Cinema Classics, 1932.
- Lindsay, David W. Introduction. *The Beggar's Opera and Other Eighteenth-century Plays*. London: Everyman Library, 1993.
- Love, Heather. "Introduction: Modernism at Night." *PMLA*. 124.3 (2009): 744-748.
- Lowenstein, Stephen. *My First Movie: Take Too*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2008.
- Maclean, Gerald. Introduction. *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration*. Ed. Gerald Maclean. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Maguire, Nancy Klein. "The duchess of Portsmouth: English royal consort and French Politician, 1670-85." *The Stuart Court and Europe*. Ed. R. Malcolm Smuts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 247-273.
- Malone, Michael. *Heroes of Eros: Male Sexuality in the Movies*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979.



- Marsden, Jean. *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Marshall, W. Gerald. *The Restoration Mind*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997.
- Mast, Gerald and Bruce F. Kawin. *A Short History of the Movies*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.
- Maurice: The Merchant Ivory Collection*. Dir. James Ivory. Perf. Hugh Grant, James Wilby. 1987. DVD. Merchant Ivory, 2004.
- McGirr, Elaine M. *Eighteenth Century Characters: A Guide to the Literature of the Age*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- McVeagh, John. Introduction. *English Literature and the Wider World: All Before Them 1660-1780*. Ed. John McVeagh. Vol. 1. London: The Ashfield Press, 1990.
- Miyao, Daisuke. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Neeson, J.M. *Commoners: Common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700-1820*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Newman, Steve. *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- Parfitt, George. "The Exotic in Restoration Drama" *English Literature and the Wider World: All Before Them 1660-1780*. Ed. John McVeagh. Vol. 1. London: The Ashfield Press, 1990. 81-95.
- Persico, Melva. "Intertextuality and 'The Joker': Tirso de Molina's *The Trickster of Seville* and Derek Walcott's *The Joker of Seville*." *Anthurium*. 6.2 (2008): 1-29.
- "Picaro." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 11<sup>th</sup> ed. 2003.
- Pillow Talk*. Dir. Michael Gordon. Perf. Rock Hudson, Doris Day. 1959. DVD. Universal Studios, 1999.
- Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*. Dir. Gore Verbinski. Perf. Johnny Depp, Geoffrey Rush. 2007. DVD. Walt Disney Pictures, 2007.

- "Pirates of the Caribbean." *Box Office Mojo*. 2010. Web. 14 Feb. 2010  
<<http://www.boxofficemojo.com>>.
- Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*. Dir. Gore Verbinski. Perf. Johnny Depp, Geoffrey Rush. 2003. DVD. Buena Vista Home Video, 2003.
- Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*. Dir. Gore Verbinski. 2006. Perf. Johnny Depp, Geoffrey Rush. 2006. DVD. Buena Vista Home Video, 2006.
- "Pirates of the Caribbean." *Rotten Tomatoes*. 2010. 15 Feb. 2010  
<<http://www.rottentomatoes.com>>.
- "Progress." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 11<sup>th</sup> ed. 2003.
- "Queer." *Oxford English Dictionary*. University of Oregon, 2010. Web. 1 Feb. 2010.
- Reality Bites*. Dir. Ben Stiller. Perf. Ben Stiller, Ethan Hawke. 1994. DVD. Universal Studios, 1998.
- Richards, Brad. "Herbert Marshall, Gentleman." *Films of the Golden Age*. April 2002: 32-57.
- Richards, Jeffrey. Introduction. *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films*. By James Chapman. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: I.B. Tauris. 2007.
- Richardson, Samuel. *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady*. New York: AMS Press, 1990.
- Rogers, Katharine M. Introduction. *The Meridian Anthology of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century*. Edited Katharine M. Rogers. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.
- Saturday Night Fever*. Dir. John Badham. Perf. John Travolta, Karen Lynn Gorney. 1977. DVD. Paramount, 2002.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Shaft*. Dir. Gordon Parks. Perf. Richard Roundtree, Moses Gunn. 1971. DVD. Warner Home Video, 2000.

- Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. New York: Avenel Books, 1975.
- Sharrock, Roger. *John Bunyan: The Pilgrim's Progress*. London: Edward Arnold, 1966.
- The Sheik*. Dir. George Melford. Perf. Rudolph Valentino, Agnes Ayres. 1921. DVD. Reel Enterprises, 2007.
- Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Sinfield, Alan. *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Sklar, Robert. *Movie-Made America: a Cultural History of American Movies*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Slacker*. Dir. Richard Linklater. Perf. Brecht Andersch, Rudy Basquez. 1991. DVD. Criterion, 2004.
- Smelik, Anneke. "Gay and Lesbian Criticism." *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Eds. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. 135-47.
- Sontag, Susan. "Notes on Camp." *Partisan Review*. 31:4 (1964): 515-30.
- Staying Alive*. Sylvester Stallone. Perf. John Travolta, Finola Hughes. 1983. DVD. Paramount, 2002.
- Steele, Richard. *The Conscious Lovers*. 1723. Editor Shirley Strum Kenny. Regents Restoration Drama Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968.
- Stewart, James B. *Disney War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.
- Stierstorfer, Klaus, ed. *London Assurance and Other Victorian Comedies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Studlar, Gaylyn. "Discourses of Gender and Ethnicity: The Construction and De(con)struction of Rudolph Valentino as Other." *Film Criticism*. 13.2 (1989): 18-35.
- Studlar, Gaylyn. *This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.

- Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*. Dir. Melvin Van Peebles. Perf. Melvin Van Peebles, John Amos. 1971. DVD. Cinemation Industries, 2003.
- Tao of Steve*. Dir. Jenniphir Goodman. Perf. Donal Logue, Greer Goodman. 2000. DVD. Sony Pictures, 2001.
- Theweleit, Klaus. *Male Fantasies*. Trans. Stephan Conway. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Trouble in Paradise*. Dir. Ernst Lubitsch. Perf. Herbert Marshall, Miriam Hopkins, Kay Francis. 1982. DVD. Criterion, 2003.
- Troyer, John and Chani Marchiselli. "Slack, Slacker, Slackest: Homosocial Bonding Practices in Contemporary Dude Cinema." *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth*. Eds. Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005. 264-278.
- Turley, Hans. *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash: Piracy, Sexuality, and Masculine Identity*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.
- Wanko, Cheryl. "Three stories of celebrity: *The Beggar's Opera* biographies." *Studies in English Literature*. 38.3 (1998): 481-499.
- Wasko, Janet. *How Hollywood Works*. London: SAGE, 2003.
- Way Down East*. Dir. D.W. Griffith. Perf. Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess. 1920. DVD. Image Entertainment, 1998.
- Weber, Harold. *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.
- Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest*. 1895. New York: Penguin Books, 1982.
- Windholz, Anne M. "An Emigrant and a Gentleman: Imperial Masculinity, British Magazines, and the Colony That Got Away." *Victorian Studies*. 42.4 (1999/2000): 631-658.
- Winton. Calhoun. *John Gay and the London Theatre*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993.
- Wycherley, William. *The Country Wife*. 1675. Ed. John Dixon Hunt. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1983.

Wycherley, William. *The Country Wife*. 1675. Ed. James Odgen. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Mermaids. London: A & C Black, 1991.

Yovel Yirmiyahu. "The Birth of the Picaro from the Death of Shame" *Social Research*. 70:4 (2003): 1 Feb. 2010. <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2267/is\\_4\\_70/ai\\_112943745/?tag=content;coll1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2267/is_4_70/ai_112943745/?tag=content;coll1)>.