

ROCHESTER AND THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY

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How do we understand older models of desire? The question haunts the literary history of sexuality because it raises the problem of change, the depiction of erotic relations over time. Once we pause to look, we see that the past's ways of wanting are not our own. The language of human motivation and the practices of embodied intimacy have a different cast. Scholarship has rightly been wary of bending these antique thoughts and behaviors to fit contemporary notions of sexual identity. As elsewhere, the rule has been always to historicize. One recently prominent approach in Restoration and eighteenth-century studies has been to concentrate on the way in which modern sexuality gradually takes shape. The past is unlike the present but still holds the key to our origins. History is therapeutic: it yields our most cherished notions of ourselves. This essay suggests a different way of encountering the erotics of the past. I situate Rochester's erotic poetry within its philosophical and literary contexts and then observe how that poetry was read in later decades. Rochester provides an important example not simply because he is so explicit in depicting acts and desires, but also because sexuality is for him such a distinctive and vexing feature of the self and world. Sex troubles human willing, perception, and desire. It thus raises problems of wide significance for Restoration culture. One of them is the nature of agency in an increasingly secular world. Like many of his contemporaries, Rochester makes desire our presiding faculty, the cause behind our actions. But desire for him is a peculiar thing. Rarely do inner wants match worldly practice. Sex leads to shame, erotic love to disappointment. The trick of many of his poems is to expose how our habits of mind and bodily appetites are experienced as private even though they begin in public, in the space where people and poems circulate. Rochester's sense of the public is specific to the court and manuscript culture of the 1670s. A great deal changes when writers attempt to imagine the civil society and print culture of later years. Rochester's language does not vanish under a politer age, as has often been assumed. Rather, his language gets turned

out to different ends. The semantics of desire change with the literary and political systems to which they are tied. One name for this change is the history of sexuality.

Let me begin with a typical moment in the literary culture of the Restoration. Retired to the country during the summer of 1678, Rochester writes wearily to his friend Savile at court about how he would counsel Nell Gwynn, the royal mistress, to maintain her advantage with the king: "it will disgrace my politics to differ from yours, who have wrought now some time under the best and keenest statesmen our cabinet boasts of. But to confess the truth, my advice to the lady you wot of has ever been this . . . Cherish his love wherever it inclines and be assured you can't commit greater folly than pretending to be jealous; but on the contrary, with hand, body, head, heart, and all the faculties you have, contribute to his pleasure all you can and comply with his desires throughout."¹ By "politics" Rochester apparently means both the vocation of "statesmen" and the erotic arts of insinuation. Each is a means of personal advancement in a culture still dominated by the court. Desire follows the footsteps of ambition. Rochester's peculiar insight is to make ambition work by apathy. Complying with the desires of another turns out to be the way of getting what you want. Politics of this order saturate the self; personal matters of embodiment and consciousness take shape from desires that are not one's own. Charles and Nell Gwynn alike have their wants spelled out elsewhere, and that is because neither one's actions proceed from their passions. As we shall see, Rochester returns habitually to this disclosure, within desire, of external sources of motivation. Like his contemporaries, he aligns selfhood with desire and desire with drive. Unlike many of them, he locates agency on the outside of things.

Rochester's political advice to Nell Gwynn might lead one to think that he considered the king to be the source of all desire, the prime manipulator of ambition. His writings on Charles's sexuality, however, are entirely within the model of erotic passivity sketched above. Consider the notorious portrait limned by *In the Isle of Brittain*, a poem Rochester apparently passed to Charles by mistake late in 1673:

Him no Ambition mov'd to get Renowne
Like a French Foole still wandring up and downe,
Starving his People, hazarding his Crowne.
Peace was his Aime, his gentleness was such

And Love, he lov'd, For he lov'd fucking much,
Nor was his high desire above his Strength:
His Scepter and his Prick were of a length,
And she may sway the one who plays with t'other
Which makes him litle wiser then his Brother.²

Charles's desire is obstreperous and timid, a paradox worked by the poem to considerable effect. We are led to consider that his political docility follows his erotic assertiveness, that he has fallen supine to the French because he prefers sexual conquest, and thus that "Ambition," of which he has none, is separate from "desire," of which he has plenty. But then the poem goes on to say the opposite. Charles's sexual desire is "of a length" with his foreign policy. Both come from elsewhere: the seductive arts of mistresses, the wiling strategies of France. For all his apparent turgidity, his "prowdest peremptory Prick" (17), his "limber tarse" (28), Charles shows himself to be pliant, easily swayed. His wants are simple to manipulate and difficult to fulfill. On one level, the worry is over royal succession and Charles's inability to produce an heir, a situation that lent sexual politics a rare and unmatched specificity throughout the 1670s and 1680s.³ On another, the lines introduce a philosophical problem that will concern Rochester over the course of his career: how to correlate the inner workings of the self—its desires or passions—with intentional behavior, a dilemma posed with some intensity by the intellectual culture of the period, as we shall see. It is interesting, for this reason, that one version of the poem, found in four separate manuscript copies, substitutes "designs" for "desire" in line 14.⁴ Considering the overall scheme, the effect of the substitution is less to desexualize or censor the poem—the "fucking" of line 13 is retained—than to clarify the question of willing and to tighten even further the bind of statecraft to erotics. That is, "designs," with its implications of forethought and strategy, underscores how the "desire" spelled out by the rest of the poem is about mental and political volition.

The poem ends with a preview of the letter Rochester will later send to Savile, where the self is parsed and given over to another as a sign of its striving assiduity.

This to evince wou'd be too long to tell yee
The painfull Tricks of the laborious Nelly,
Imploying Hands, Armes, Fingers, Mouth and Thighs
To raise the Limb which shee each Night enjoys.
(30–34)

The ambitious Nell Gwynn manages to excite the yielding king, but only by surrendering her body to the arduous drudgery of enjoyment. This image of sex as assertive dispossession will reappear in several guises in Rochester's poetry. Consider the discussion of the origin of love that runs through *Artemiza to Chloe*. As elsewhere, the question at hand concerns the provenance of sexual desire, but in this case the treatment is considerably more abstract. A verse epistle from a woman "in the country" to a woman "in the city," the poem shuttles between private life—the emotions one confesses to another in a letter, the gossip going on about town, the desires besetting one's heart—and urban living. The task that Artemiza sets for herself is to estimate the relation between the two. She begins with a long, mawkish tribute to a love now lost on "this lewd Towne" (33):

But how, my dearest Chloe, shall I sett
 My pen to write, what I would faine forgett,
 Or name that lost thing (Love) without a teare,
 Synce soe debauch'd by ill-bred Customes heare?
Love, the most gen'rous Passion of the mynde,
 The softest refuge Innocence can fynde,
 The safe directour of unguided youth,
 Fraught with kind wishes, and secur'd by Truth,
(36–43)

These lines have often been read as Rochester's most sentimental and least characteristic utterance.⁵ Yet their place in the Restoration's semantics of desire is more complicated than one might assume. Few words are more overlaid with allusive meaning in the period than "passion" (a painful transport of feeling, the suffering of Christ, the emotions of the mind). Artemiza's use in these lines appears to narrow the meaning to the passions of contemporary philosophical discourse: fear, hope, envy, shame, and so forth. She draws upon a tradition of thought that dates back to the ancients and places the poem within one of the great philosophical controversies of the seventeenth century.⁶ What are the origins of our emotions? What role do they play in knowledge? How do they shape our behavior? Love is more "gen'rous" than other passions because it directs our "unguided" actions to other people without apparent origins in self-regard or the desire for power.⁷

Because love appeared to imply a transcendence of self-interest, and because love appeared to involve at least two people, it was of

habitual interests to writers attempting to understand the shape and origins of societies. For example, Artemiza would seem to cite and disagree with the view presented by Thomas Hobbes that love follows upon the possession of what one desires. Hobbes's logic is inexorable: "small beginnings of Motion, within the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called Endeavor . . . This Endeavour, when it is toward something which causes it, is called Appetite or Desire . . . That which men Desire they are also said to Love . . . So that Desire, and Love, are the same thing; save that by Desire we alwayes signifie the Absence of the Object; by Love, most commonly the Presence of the same."⁸ In this passage from *Leviathan*, Hobbes makes the important move of placing love within the restless pursuit after power. Love springs from a desire that is satisfied by what it possesses. In an earlier work, Hobbes states the point even more baldly: "This is that love which is the great theme of the poets: but notwithstanding their praises, it must be defined by the word need; for it is a conception of the need a man hath of that one person desired."⁹ On this view, love is an insufficient basis for civil society because different people's desires inevitably come into conflict. Society is imposed by the state, which mandates we cede our rights to things and thus fall out of love.

When Artemiza describes love as "gen'rous" and "kind," she makes what would appear to be a point counter to Hobbes: love transcends interest. She is closer perhaps to Rochester's exact contemporary, Walter Charleton, the Royal physician, whose 1674 treatise *A Natural History of the Passions* claims love "is the most agreeable and complacent of all Passions." Alone among the passions, love cannot be explained by the regard we have for ourselves or by our need to secure personal safety. In love, we will sacrifice our welfare, our safety, even our lives. This is because when we are in love "we consider ourselves as *already* joynd to the thing loved, by a certain conception of ourselves to be as it were a part thereof." Love is agreeable because it causes us to surrender interest in solitary cares for an interest in the cares of other people. Or to be more precise, we are able to feel more than for ourselves because we have become part of someone else, our initial interest in whom derives from our own needs: "I should define Love," he closes, "to be a Commotion of the Soul, produced by a motion of the Spirits, which inciteth her to joyn herself, by her will, to objects that appear convenient and gratefull to her."¹⁰

According to Chareilton, love transfigures the self and hence lays the basis for lasting bonds. According to Hobbes, appetitive desire ultimately discomposes these bonds to the extent that they require the state to hold them in place. In either case, the burden is to imagine how inwardness—"small beginnings of Motion, within the body of man"—initiates the attachments of civil society.

What then happens when love fails to name inner wants but is the result of outer fashion? This appears to be the substance of Artemiza's long complaint to Chloe. Love has become "debauch'd" and "lost" not because we are too egotistical, as the lines have often been read, but rather because we are not egotistical enough. What is lost is, in fact, a passion that begins within the precincts of the self. Artemiza works over this point enough to warrant a long citation:

This onely Joy, for which poore Wee were made,
Is growne like Play, to be an Arrant Trade;
The Rookes creepe in, and it has gott of late
As many little Cheates, and Tricke, as that.
But what yet more a Womans heart would vexe,
'Tis cheifely carry'd on by our owne Sexe,
Our silly Sexe, who borne, like Monarchs, free,
Turne Gipsyes for a meaner liberty,
And hate restraint, though but from Infamy.
They call whatever is not Common, nice,
And deafe to Natures rule, or *Loves* advice,
Forsake the Pleasure, to pursue the Vice.
To an exact perfection they have wrought
The Action *Love*, the Passion is forgott.
'Tis below Witt, they tell you, to admire,
And e'ne without approving they desire.
Their private wish obeys the publicke Voyce,
'Twixt good, and bad Whimsey decides, not Choyce.
Fashions grow up for tast, att Formes they strike;
They know, what they would have, not what they like.

(50–69)

We are reminded that the correspondence is from one woman to another, this time in order to place the dilemma of love in a series of reflections on misdirected feeling. Women are the subject of private emotions made public, in poem's like *Artemiza to Chloe*; they are also the bearers of private emotions misshapen by the public. The lines slide the one into the other. The blush of "poor Wee" lovers, beheld by whomever may read this poem, is put at risk of being made into a "Trade." Turning love out in public in this

fashion is a hallmark of the times, according to Artemiza, who embellishes the image by making the commerce sexual; many women “Turn Gipsyes” and sell their favors, she writes, and then lists the ways in which publicity warps the circuit of desire.¹¹ Our thoughts and feelings proceed from the external circumstances of urban living, including the very correspondence and circulation that underwrite the poem. Agency is turned over on itself, as the will becomes a hollowed out aftereffect of the “publicke Voyce.” The result is a curious blend of inwardness and anomie, where “Whimsey decides, not Choyce.”

As is often the case in Rochester’s poetry, sexuality turns into a drawn out mistake. When Artemiza complains that the townsfolk have forsaken “Pleasure” for “Vice” she seems to accuse an odd variety of sex that is wholly public, that has neither beginning nor end in the privacy of the self. One could make a good case that this is the most common motif of all of Rochester’s erotic verse, where the image of modernity as the scurrying about of bodies rift from their wants occurs regularly in shameful scenes of mechanized copulation. In Carole Fabricant’s influential formulation, “Rochester’s poetry is characterized not by an exaltation of sexuality as commonly assumed, but by an unequivocal demonstration of the latter’s transience and futility.” For Fabricant, sex is Rochester’s “comprehensive metaphor of man’s failure to realize his desires in the mortal world.”¹² I’d like to suggest that the precise opposite is the case; the failure of sex lies in the world’s strange realization, indeed its fabrication, of desire. We may see this in a couplet worth pausing over, Artemiza’s oft-quoted complaint, “To an exact perfection they have wrought / The Action Love, the passion is forgot.” The couplet articulates two types of love in the form of a broken pair: action and passion, doing and feeling. Each term takes its meaning from the absence of the other: passion is forsaken by the action that proceeds in its stead; action is cut loose from its anchor in the subject. Sex in town is depraved because no one wants to be having it. The citizens are “lewd,” oddly, because they have too little desire; “e’ne without approving they desire”; “They know, what they would have, not what they like.” The action of love manufactures its cause in the privation of the self.

As we have seen, the category of action is no less implicated in the thick of seventeenth-century discourse than passion. The term describes the churning procession of the will from thought to formulated behavior in the world. “The action love” is a distinctive

take on this problem. If love names the tissue of feeling that binds or sunders one person and another, then sex is love in action, a procession from the self outward. Rochester bends action to show how it is initiated and put in peril by the “publicke” in all of that term’s allusive richness: citizens in town, readers of poetry, followers of fashion, denizens of Whitehall. Considered this way, we can see the special charge that sexual disgrace carries for him. Erotic relations are the means by which Rochester attempts to understand our habits of mind and action now that their anchors in tradition have been cut loose.¹³ Or so the poem would seem to suggest, as it holds out the unity of passion and action as the never to be found meeting of desire and worldliness. (The term for this meeting is pleasure, which is as absent in *Artemiza to Chloe* as elsewhere in Rochester’s poetry.) Rochester’s meaning may be clarified if we turn to his more abstract consideration in the *Satyr on Reason and Mankind*.

Keyed to the philosophical idiom of its time, this poem makes the problem of agency central to its break from traditional modes of understanding human psychology.¹⁴ The poem makes this clear, in fact, by distilling and simplifying philosophical conflict into a neat rupture with the twin institutions of Religion and Scholasticism, whose dreary procedures of detachment—“Reason, by whose aspiring Influence / We take a flight beyond Material sense” (66–67)—provide Rochester with an antithetical model of the self. His modern response lies with Hobbes in the attempt to ground personality and desire in “sense.”¹⁵ Thought is useful to the degree to which it leads to action in the world. When the speaker of the poem attempts to articulate this position, however, he encounters a familiar problem. Once we dismiss traditional modes of explaining how thought becomes an action, the precise relation between the two is difficult to pin down. For Hobbes, the answer lay in what he proposed as the material nature of consciousness. A “[m]otion, within the body of man,” thought is itself already an action.¹⁶ With his simpler and more secondary level of argument, Rochester’s speaker cannot afford such fine distinctions. He prefers to let the problem wind its way across his couplets:

. . . Thoughts are given for Actions government,
 Where Action ceases, Thought’s impertinent.
 Our sphere of Action is Life’s happiness,
 And he who thinks beyond, thinks like an Asse.
(94–97)

Four lines crosshatch thought and action in a variety of relations; thinking first governs, then requires, then opposes acting.¹⁷ The effort is to join the two in a sustained mixture. Eventually, this results in a tentative reconciliation with a “right reason” (99)

That bounds Desires with a reforming Will,
To keep them more in vigour, not to kill.
(102–3)

Set against the extended dismissal of Scholastic rationality, this recourse to “right reason” has long struck readers as curious. The effect is to reenact the tension between private and public as a conflict within the self, a conflict between mental faculties where reason corresponds to the public, desire the private. Seen this way, the lines repeat in miniature the troubled relation of passion to action in town, except here desire is encouraged not shrunken by something outside itself. The passion forgotten by the action at town is brought into being by a rational faculty that lies on passion’s exterior. The speaker explains matters to his “Scholiast” interlocutor as follows:

Your Reason hinders, mine helps enjoy,
Renewing appetites yours would destroy.
My Reason is my friend, Yours is a cheat,
Hunger calls out, my Reason bids me eat;
(104–7)

Scholastic reason “hinders” and “destroy[s]” presumably because it stands apart from—is unaware of—the wants of the body. In contrast, the speaker’s right reason “bounds” then “bids” desire and does so in verbs (“reforms,” “renews,” “helps”) that suggest a transitive agency. Through this simple feat of consonance, we are invited to glimpse how an act of repression turns into an act of excitation. The result is a delayed urgency. Desire is twice represented (in Hobbesian language) as appetite, an unalterable precondition to willing.¹⁸ Yet, its course is oddly circuitous, as if one must be reminded to be hungry. The speaker presents his self-love as if it comes from somewhere other than himself, and on a certain sense of things this is so. Public desire has so burrowed into the psyche that the generative power of right reason comes to seem like it is the presence of an alien form.

At this point, one might reasonably object that I have so abstracted sexuality from the body that it has become indistinguishable from the more pristine regions of the mind. Yet, if my

reading has demonstrated anything, it is, I hope, that the turning of sex into a problem of thought (and thought into sex) is a central preoccupation of Rochester's poetry. The fateful split of passion and action animates well-known scandal poems like *A Ramble in St. James's Park*, where the abjected Corinna stands guilty of being a "Whore in understanding" (101). By this, the poem seems to mean that Corinna, like the citizens of *Artemiza to Chloe*, is having sex without wanting to. She circulates in public and freely disposes her body to others while apparently not ever choosing to do so. How should we understand this insistent separation of sexual activity from volition? We might begin by observing that sex in the poem takes place in the anonymous setting of a park and is defined by contact with strangers. The "All-sin-sheltering Grove" is a place of profligate social mingling, where

Great Ladies, Chamber-Maids, and Drudges,
The Rag-picker, and Heiriessse trudges;
Carr-men, Divines, great Lords, and Taylors,
Prentices, Poets, Pimps, and Gaolers;
Foot-Men, fine Fops, do here arrive,
And here promiscuously they swive.

(27–32)

This is Rochester at his most Juvenalian.¹⁹ Rome has been replaced by London, but the image of urban chaos remains in certain respects the same; the satirist recoils in fascination from a cityscape of promiscuous intercourse. Sex is sociality gone awry, as a cross-section of the social order blends at its most sensitive points of contact. When Corinna forswears the speaker and joins the rabble, she illustrates how public forms of erotic concourse shape the desire alleged to precede them.

What kind of choice has Corinna made? Recent criticism has tried to rescue her decision for an incipient feminism. "Corinna retains initiative," according to one reader; hers is a "considered female libertinism," according to another.²⁰ But the poem seems to resist making her decision anything like a purposive act. Here is the moment of volition:

One in a strain 'twixt Tune and Nonsense,
Cries, *Madam, I have lov'd you long since,*
Permit me your fair hand to kiss.
When at her *Mouth* her *Cunt* says yes.

(75–78)

Startling and disquieting as the final line of this verse paragraph may be, it is difficult to reclaim its resonance for embodied, female agency. Rather, the line's peculiar intensity lies in its frustrated splitting of Corinna's body from itself. Her cunt belies her mouth and speaks out of turn. The synecdoche is less about an impetuous and crafty desire than the difficulty of locating desire's origin, or, that is, the beguiling sense that the latter dwells in the fluid relations of city living itself. Corinna's leap into the vortex of public sex thus becomes, in the outraged language of the speaker, a leap into relations that, like the social circulation first noticed at the park's entrance, refuse to stand still.

And with these Three confounded *Asses*,
 From *Park*, to *Hackney-Couch*, she passes,
 So a proud *Bitch* does lead about,
 Of humble *Currs*, the Amorous rout;
 Who most obsequiously do hunt,
 The sav'ry scent of Salt-swolne *Cunt*.

(81–86)

Urbanity turns sex into a roundabout chase, an image the poem insists upon so strenuously as to make it difficult to see how bodies ever stop moving long enough to come into contact. While this satire of disruptive urban life is readily taken from Juvenal, Rochester turns it to his own ends when he shows how urbanity scuttles choice making. The back and forth between park and hackney couch quickens action and freezes passion. The speaker does not condemn Corinna so much for the recklessness of her sex therefore as the inanition of her will:

Had she pickt out to rub her Arse on,
 Some stiff-Prick'd *Clown*, or well hung *Parson*,
 Each job of whose Spermatick Sluce,
 Had fill'd her *Cunt* with wholesome Juice,
 I the proceeding shou'd have prais'd,
 In hope she had quencht a Fire I rais'd:
 Such nat'rall freedoms are but just,
 There's something gen'rous in meer Lust.
 But to turn damn'd abandon'd *Jade*,
 When neither *Head* nor *Tail* perswade;
 To be a *Whore*, in understanding,
 A Passive *Pot* for *Fools* to spend in.
 The *Devil* plaid booty, sure with thee,
 To bring a blot on infamy.²¹

(91–104)

Once again, what does it mean to have desire without volition, to act without choosing, to be a whore in understanding? The first sentence presents an alternative case of passionate action. Had Corinna chose—"pickt out"—her assignation, the speaker would be content. She would have, as he puts it later, "pleasure for excuse" (124). As with love, lust is apparently "gen'rous," a "nat'rall freedom" of appetitive self-regard. This hypothetical libertinism is circumscribed, however, by its conditional syntax. The point is not to celebrate women libertines. The point is to offset and augment Corinna's eerily frozen will. Her many actions are entirely "passive" because she does not initiate or participate in their cause. Recruited by a world outside herself, she remains immune to reason and passion, head and tail alike.

We are led to suspect that sex in the modern moment can result in nothing other than the will's infirmity. This is still the case, I would argue, when the precise opposite occurs in Rochester's *Imperfect Enjoyment*, a poem in which the passionless action of public sex is replaced by the actionless passion of private impotence.²² Whatever else one might choose to say about this frequently discussed poem, one might observe that Rochester describes the moment of spectacular failure, strangely, as a victory of the emotions:

Eager desires Confound, the first intent,
Succeeding shame does more success prevent
And Rage at last confirms me impotent.

(28–30)

The triplet makes impotence of philosophical interest by showing how it troubles our expected sense of causation.²³ Within the philosophical milieu from which this poem takes its catalog of the passions, action is either a direct or mediated result of an emotional antecedent. According to Hobbes, it would be logically impossible for desire to confound "intent" because the two are the same thing. When we desire something we call upon the will to bring it to us: "*Respice finem*," he recites as a maxim, "in all your actions, look often upon what you would have, as the thing that directs all your thoughts in the way to attain it."²⁴ On Charleton's view the procession of passion and action is nature's tricky plan to secure positive behavior in the world: "her design in instating our Passions, was in the general this; that they might dispose and incite the Soul to affect and desire those things, which Nature by secret dictates teaches to be good and profitable to her, and to persist in

that desire.” Man is “constituted propens to Passions,” Charleton reasons; yet “he is not therefore the less perfect, but rather the more capable of pleasure from the right use of the good things of this life.”²⁵ Rochester turns this line of thinking over and, famously, makes it “imperfect.” He traces a curious breakdown or stutter at the threshold of volition: passion does not issue in an action, but folds back on itself. The result is a remarkable forfeiture of the very pleasure that marks our secular being in the world.

I’ve attempted to demonstrate thus far how sexuality is a privileged means by which Rochester’s poetry stages problems around agency, publicity, and privacy specific to the philosophical and literary culture of the late seventeenth century. I would like now to discuss how Rochester’s categories are transformed under the different conditions of his successors. Before doing so, however, it may be useful to distinguish this essay’s sense of Rochester’s place in the history of sexuality from recent treatments of the same. Recent scholarship has tended to understand Rochester in terms of what comes after him; I shall do the opposite. According to Randolph Trumbach, the influential historian of eighteenth-century sexuality, Rochester is the last great example of a world that has not yet divided itself into homo and heterosexual modes of being. Rochester was comfortable describing sexual relations with men because, on Trumbach’s view, these relations did not yet carry the negative stigma of effeminacy but were, rather, signs of libertine extravagance. By the early eighteenth century, however, “Rochester’s bisexual sodomy . . . could no longer be used as the supreme symbol of license; it had come instead to be seen as incompatible with a libertine’s driving interest in women.”²⁶ Critics following Trumbach’s lead have attempted to fill in the image of Rochester’s premodernity by comparing his rebarbative and ambidextrous erotics to the system of polite sexual difference that would, on this account, follow in his wake.²⁷ Much of this discussion has centered on the poem *Love to a Woman*:

Love a Woman! Th’rt an Ass:
Tis a most insipid passion
To Chuse out for thy Happiness
The dullest part of Gods Creation.

Let the Porter and the Groom,
Things design’d for dirty slaves,

Drudg in fair *Aurelias* womb
To gett supplies for Age and Graves.

Farewell *Woman*—I entend
Henceforth every Night to sitt
With my lewd well natur'd Friend
Drinking to engender witt.

Then give me health, wealth, Mirth, and wine,
And if buizy Love intrenches
There's a sweet soft Page of mine
Can doe the Trick worth Forty wenches.

(1–16)

According to Harold Weber, this poem isn't really about sex at all, or at most uses sex as a vehicle to express the gloaming days of an aristocratic order: "Boys and lower class substitutes, firmly fixed in an economic system that is far less fluid and dynamic than the sexual economy, can stand in for women precisely because they do not question the distinction between active and passive, superiority and subordination." To the variable world of sexual desire and difference that will issue in only after him, Rochester prefers the rigid taxonomy of traditional society. In Duane Coltharp's similar terms, "sexual difference yields to class difference."²⁸ Even if we accept for a moment Trumbach's historical argument—that the modern system of gender and sexuality emerged near the turn of the eighteenth century and put to rest the coarse uncertainty of writers like Rochester—it would seem strange to derive the meaning of the poem from a world to which it logically had no access. It would seem strange, too, to read out of the poem its own vocabulary of the sexual. The first thing that one might notice along these lines is the unusual way in which the opening stanza makes desire a matter of volition. Lovers of women "Chuse" an "insipid passion," while lovers of drink allow "witt" to come to them. The turn in the final stanza from drinking to sex is thus made to seem predictable. Love "intrenches" from outside the self and takes shape from the male sociability the speaker prefers to the dreary work of desire. The upshot is dramatic: Rochester eroticizes the courtly reception framework of the poem itself. But what happens to the vocabulary of desire once this framework forever changes?

The difficult relation of passion and action was Rochester's bequeathment to the eighteenth century. In 1709 alone, the *Artemiza* couplet "To an exact perfection they have wrought / The Action Love, the Passion is forgot" was cited twice by Steele in the *Tatler* and in the opening pages of Manley's *New Atalantas*; soon it cropped up in the oddest places. Between Rochester and the *Tatler* lies a remarkable change in the nature of the public. Rochester circulated his poems in manuscript; Addison and Steele marketed their papers in print. Rochester wrote for an audience lodged at court; Addison and Steele wrote for the urban coffee houses.²⁹ Rochester's poems bristle with the topicality of an audience that knows, or claims to know, its individual members; Addison and Steele's audience could include anyone who knew how to read. In each respect, the citation of Rochester importantly transforms the meaning. The public whose actions of love put passion in peril is the very audience of the *Tatler* itself, an audience who consumes print daily, and who enjoys discussing small chestnuts of the national literature, like several lines from *Artemiza to Chloe*. This draws sex on a different parabola. When Steele discusses the importance of these lines from "long ago," he coaches his readers in common habits of desire and common habits of speech, a conversation that stretches to include the very limits of civil society. In *Tatler* 5, the lines sit atop the paper as an epigraph. Why is this paper introduced with a citation from Rochester? Steele turns to his reader and responds: "ask Mrs. Meddle, who is a Confident, or Spy, upon all the Passions in Town, and she'll tell you, that the Whole is a game of cross purposes: the Lover is generally pursuing one, who is in pursuit of another, and running from one that desires to meet him."³⁰ The clue to Steele's reading lies in the direct address: ask Mrs. Meddle, dear reader, and she'll tell you. Simply to accept this address is to recognize oneself in the world of the *Tatler*, where love rebounds across the passions in town. Steele is writing to me and also to readers who are like me. Our love has the same strange destiny as the *Tatler*: it crisscrosses the public.

When Steele returns to Rochester's couplet three months later, he gives a much fuller sense of what the action and passion of love signified for his culture. As befits a journal designed for widespread circulation in print, Steele begins *Tatler* 49 with an attempt to pin down terms for general consumption. We must get beyond our particular understanding of things and agree upon certain

shared meanings. Apparently, no single term “has suffer’d so much in this Kind as Love; under which rever’d Name, a brutal Desire call’d Lust is frequently concealed and admitted.” The effort to distinguish the two obliges Steele once more to discuss the meaning of Rochester’s elusive couplet: “Philander the other day was bewailing this Misfortune with much Indignation and up-braided me for having some time since quoted these excellent lines of the satyrist:

To an exact Perfection they have brought
The action love, the passion is forgot.

How could you (said he) leave such an hint so coldly?” (1:348). In response, Steele interprets “The action love” to mean lust, “passion” to mean love, and both to augur a specific type of feeling. Love weaves and lust tears apart the fabric of civil society. Like Rochester and his contemporaries, Steele ponders the emotional bonds of a secular community. Yet, his sharp division between love and lust reworks self and desire alike. Love is no longer a possession or assimilation of the beloved; these are now the fervent qualities of lust. Rather, the improbable attachment of one person to another is secured through “benevolence,” the becalmed darts of respect. To be in love, on this view, is to feel a lasting “concern and fondness” for someone. To be consumed by lust is, oddly, to feel a lasting aversion: “lawless desire . . . has something so unnatural in it, that it hates its own make, and shuns the object it lov’d, as soon as it has made it like it self” (1:348–49). Where love secures selfhood by discovering feelings for others, lust destroys the very same. In each case, the relation to the object surpasses what we might initially expect. Lust eagerly consumes, love respectfully shies from the beloved: “Love . . . is a Child that complains and bewails its inability to help itself, and weeps for Assistance, without an immediate Reflection or Knowledge of the Food it wants: Lust, a watchful Thief which seizes its Prey, and lays Snares for its own Relief; and its principal Object being Innocence, it never robs, but it murders at the same Time” (1:349). The passion of love, once so unable to find an equivalent action in the world, now is the basis of sociability, a surrender of personal appetite that marks true concern for others. Meanwhile, the action of love, once so defining of life in town, now marks the fatality of a self that only labors for possession.

To this new account of agency and desire, Steele matches a new account of society. “We may settle our Notion of these different Desires,” he continues, “and accordingly rank their followers,” first among whom is the angelic woman we all know, “Aspasia.” “In this accomplished Lady, Love is the constant Effect, because it is never the Design” (1:349). Here Steele resolves the problem of desire and worldliness, the unlikely joining of one person’s wants with other people’s happiness, simply by leaching desire out of the passion of love. To be in love is to lack “Design,” which is why Aspasia makes good citizens out of her lovers: “to behold her is an immediate Check to immoderate Behaviour, and to love her, is a liberal Education . . . A Regard for Aspasia naturally produces Decency of Manners, and a good Conduct of Life, in her admirers.” Love is the very spring of social cohesion, feeling the root of civility. As Steele explains, “Love is the happy composition of all the Accomplishments that make a Fine Gentleman.” This is because the passion is really not that passionate, nor the action that vigorous. Love makes citizens once we’ve cooled its idiom: “The Motive of a Man’s Life is seen in all his Actions; and such as have the beauteous Boy for their Inspirer, have a Simplicity of Behaviour, and a certain Evenness of Desire, which burns like the Lamp of Life in their Bosoms” (1:349). Passionate action is gentility unbound, a meeting of inwardness and volition to last the length of one’s days. Lust fails on both scores; its devotees “often desire what they scorn, and as often consciously and knowingly embrace where they are mutually indifferent” (1:349–50). Fervent desire is doubly antithetical, paired with hatred and apathy at turns. Through these various distinctions and their exemplary figures (Aspasia, Florio, Amanda, Limberham, among others), Steele bends the Rochester citation to suit his public. We accede to the model of this journal because in it we find the love that shapes our society.

Steele’s rival Delarivier Manley published her scandal novel, the *New Atalantas*, a month after the *Tatler*’s first citation of Rochester. Her exposé of the intimate lives of prominent Whig politicians begins with the goddess Astrea’s return to Atalantas and reunion with her neglected mother Virtue. Virtue’s first words to her daughter on the sad state of affairs at home include the following:

Innocence is banished by the first dawn of early knowledge. Sensual corruptions and hasty enjoyments affright me from their habitation. They embellish not the heart to make it worthy of the

God; their whole care is outward and transferred to the person.
By a diabolical way of argument they prove the body is only
necessary to the pleasures of enjoyment; that love resides not in
the heart, but in the face, and as certain of their poets have it,

To an exact Perfection they have brought
The Action Love, the Passion is forgot.³¹

Rochester's couplet has become an occasion of party politics. On Steele's Whig reading, the passion of love allows us to imagine a society built on the pleasant deferral of appetite. Manley's Tory response concentrates on an action of love set loose on a fallen world. She thus returns to the couplet a portion of the corrosive sexuality bled out of Steele's reading. Rochester illustrates how the modern, Whig regime has split desire from interiority and made it subject to "outward" cares. Manley makes some use of this reading. In many respects, her novel is nothing other than a series of instances in which desire takes shape from politics. The various examples of debauched court life follow the careers of crafty citizens who manipulate sexuality for personal advancement. Soon after the Rochester citation, for example, we are told how Fortunus and Germanicus plot their ascents at court by surrendering to the desires of others, Fortunus to the Dutchess, Germanicus to the Prince. Neither has "desire" to speak of, but each burns with insatiable "ambition."³² In the hollowed out precincts of Manley's subject Rochester echoes loudly. Yet, Manley retrieves this account of political sexuality across the gulf that separates the two writers. Rochester wrote his poetry for an audience at court. The framework of reading included the state, even when the poems were read elsewhere. As we saw in the scepter poem, the verse understands no firm distinction between polity and audience. In contrast, Manley writes to the civil society that judges the state. She exploits the media of print and novel to circulate a kind of sexualized political propaganda.³³ Rochester's world of passionless action no longer projects an image of the state onto the town, but in the opposite vein, provides a way for an urban, reading public to glimpse and criticize its politicians.

Steele and Manley twist the Rochester couplet to fit their different political allegiances. The twin citations reveal how ideological argument led to rival accounts of the reading public and rival models of desire. Four years later, Jane Barker further twists the couplet to explore the fate of inwardness in the new form of

the popular novel. Barker's *Love Intrigues* begins by establishing itself as a pleasing retreat from the sort of party conflict that embroiled Steele and Manley. The "little novel," as she calls it in the dedication, recounts the ill-fated courtship of Galasia and Bosvil, two lovers who never quite manage to understand each other's intentions.³⁴ Framing the narrative is a discussion between Galasia and her friend Lucasia, who meet in the St. Germain's Garden while war rages abroad and political conflict percolates at home. Exhausted from discussing "the Several Adventures of the former and late War, and what they had to hope or fear from the Success, or Overthrow of either or both Parties," Lucasia "desired Lucasia to recount to her the Adventures of her early Years, of which she had already heard some Part, and therefore believed the whole to be a diverting Novel" (83). Barker does not simply shift away from Manleyan political allegory; she stages this shift as the essential importance of the novel. The frame provides a set of instructions on how to read the novel as leisurely diversion.

Galasia and Bosvil navigate the shoals of a modern courtship whose rituals constrain the articulation of feeling. Galasia's modesty, for example, belies a churning unease: "tho' in Bosvil's Presence I made a shift to keep up this Outside of a seeming Insensibility of Love; but interiorly I was tormented with a thousand Anxieties, which made me seek Solitude where I might without Witness or Controul, disburden my overcharged Heart of Sighs and Tears" (87). And Bosvil's expressiveness belies an inner disregard: "he made the outward Grimaces of Lover, with an indifferent Interior; whilst I bore up an outside Indifferency, with a Heart full of Passion" (90). The novel resolves this split by providing the "Interior" life of its characters, or at least promises to do so at such moments of sheer exposition. Galasia in fact follows the insight with a small lesson in reading: "Thus a Mask is put on, sometimes to conceal an ill Face, and sometimes to preserve a good one: And the most part of Mankind are in reality different from what they seem, and affect to be thought what they are not" (90). Novels show people as they really are, apparently, by mapping the warped circuit of action and passion, behavior and interiority. Since she is in a position to instruct us how to read the novel, it is no surprise that Galasia thinks she has finally learned how to read Bosvil's character. When Bosvil discovers he has a rival for Galasia's affection, one Mr. Brafort, he asserts the priority of his affection. Brafort easily complies and slinks away, causing Galasia to reflect:

To an exact Perfection he had brought
The Action Love, the Passion be forgot. (91)

The Rochester couplet helps to explain Brafort's bluff indifference, compared to which Bosvil's recent attention appears genuine: "This transaction . . . gave me a strong Belief of Bosvil's Sincerity and made me interpret every little dubious Word, which he sometimes mixed with his fond Actions, to be Demonstrations of a real Passion" (91). Soon thereafter, Bosvil again forsakes Galasia. The momentary correspondence of passion and action turns out to be yet another ruse, and Galasia receives an education in the modern semantics of desire: "My Grammar Rules now became harsh Impertinences, for I thought I had learned *Amo*, and *Amor*, by a shorter and surer Method; and the only syntax I studied, was how to make suitable Answers to my father, and to him, when the longed-for Question should be proposed" (91). For Galasia, traditional marriage is the period of all romantic sentences. The new language of desire provides nothing but bafflement, as Bosvil's actions run athwart the grammar of matrimony and Bosvil's passions sink into unknowable inwardness. The rules she had expected to govern his behavior and structure her feelings have failed her, and she is unable, as yet, to understand what has come to replace them. In this failure, of course, lies the success of the novel, which unfolds the process of her love in the secular time of narrative.

Barker cites Rochester on one of those occasions—typical for the early novel—when the peculiar intentions of the genre rise to a point of didactic articulation. She wants to tell us what she is doing so we are sure to read her correctly. Yet, the riddle of passion and action is ultimately solved at the level of the story, where it is strung across the history of lovers. We follow lovers as they confront irresolvable differences between their subjective experiences of the world. For Barker, love refers only to itself. She is interested neither in the political allegory of Manley, nor the social modeling of Addison. With this reduction of scale, Barker's adaptation of Rochester assumes its widest significance. Self-referential in time, the bonds of intimacy are more the stuff of stories than the springs of society. Secular love has become an enclosed system—a "grammar" as Galasia puts it—and in so doing it has deepened the problems encountered by Rochester. How are we to understand the wayward drift of our own passions, let alone

the intentions of another person? Barker makes no attempt to answer the question, but she does aim to exploit its difficulty. It should come as no surprise, then, that the separating out of intimate relations from the relations of society and politics comes with the development of a form adequate to their exploration.

We would be hard pressed to map these citations on a single arc: Barker, Steele, and Manley are contemporaries; each makes use of formal and institutional developments particular to the age: a market for print, a system of politics, a grammar of love, a theory of society. Rochester's categories are made to serve a new culture. The move from Rochester to his reception in the eighteenth century covers forty important years in the history of sexuality. Recent criticism has emphasized how Rochester's depiction of sexual relations was unlike those brought about by the modern system that took shape after him. With sufficient dexterity, this argument could perhaps be made for any writer at any time. I have emphasized, therefore, the details of Rochesterian usage and their survival into the next age. I have dwelled on passion and action because they provide a semantic context for Rochester's model of sexuality, and its eighteenth-century aftermath. The terms bring us into the language world in which private and public motivation were secularized and made uncertain at an important moment of change. These were terms understood to have a wide implication for the fate of the self and the contours of desire. Doubtless there were others. The history of sexuality consists in nothing less than reconstructing this language and measuring its change over time. I hope to have provided in this essay a preliminary sense of what that project might look like.

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NOTES

¹ "Rochester in the Country to Savile in London," June 1678, in *The Letters of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 189.

² John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *In the Isle of Brittain*, in *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 5–13. All citations of Rochester's poetry are from this edition and are hereafter cited parenthetically by line number.

³ For Rochester's place in this context see Ronald Paulson, "Rochester: The Body Politic and the Body Private," in *The Author in his Works: A Problem in Criticism*, ed. Lewis Martz and Aubrey Williams (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1978), 103–21. For the context of Charles's sexuality, see Rachel Weil, "Some-

times a Scepter is Only a Scepter: Pornography and Politics in Restoration England,” in *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800*, ed. Lynn Hunt (New York: Zone, 1996), 125–53.

⁴ See Rochester, “Group-E. text,” in *Works of Rochester*, 89.

⁵ For a recent treatment, see Marianne Thormählen, *Rochester: The Poems in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), and her subsequent discussion “Dissolver of Reason: Rochester and the Nature of Love,” in *That Second Bottle: Essays on John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. Nicholas Fisher (Manchester: Univ. of Manchester Press, 2000), 21–34.

⁶ See Susan James’s definitive and brilliant study, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997). “Our affective life,” on James’s account, was subject to a “strong synthesizing urge” over the course of the century. The passions were drawn into “pairs of negative and positive emotions . . . variously characterized in terms of inclination and aversion” (6, 7).

⁷ Pity and compassion offer similarly other-directed aims but are easier, ultimately, to reconcile with protection of our fragile sense of ourselves.

⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 38.

⁹ Hobbes, *Human Nature: Or the Fundamental Elements of Policy*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 4, ed. William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1839), 48.

¹⁰ Walter Charleton, *A Natural History of the Passions* (1674), 100 (“is the most”), 101 (“we consider”; “I should”).

¹¹ In a tantalizingly titled essay, “On Not Being a Very Punctual Subject: Rochester and the Invention of Modernity” (in *Reading Rochester*, ed. Edward Burns [New York: St. Martins, 1995]), Nick Davis makes the following point about the nature of desire in *Artemiza*: “The poem is structured as a series of disappearances (flights or headlong pursuits) into ego’s compelling counterpart to ego, on the principle that social desire (we might say ‘socialized’ desire, which for the Freudian tradition desire always already is) consists of accession to the desire of the other; this calls into play a relationship of aggressivity towards an other whose attitude to ‘self’ one has somehow to take on without having the remotest chance of displacing it—‘it’ is where ‘you’ find yourself having to be” (130). As I’ve attempted to demonstrate, the “aggressive” accession to the other was central to the seventeenth century’s sense of its own modernity. If there is a connection to Freud to be found here, it lies only in psychoanalysis’s philosophical prehistory, not as Davis suggests, its transhistorical veracity.

¹² Fabricant, 343, 348.

¹³ *Artemiza*’s quasi-religious thoughts on love that lead into the lament, in this respect, are placed at an ironic distance from the rest of the poem.

¹⁴ Thormählen’s discussion of the intellectual context (*Poems in Context*, 162–89) is the most recent and lengthy account of his debts, although I think she mistakes the nature of Hobbes’s materialism, as I discuss below.

¹⁵ *Leviathan* (1651) opens with the following clarification:

The cause of Sense, is the Externall Body, or Object, which presseth the organ proper to each Sense, either immediately, as in the Tast and Touch; or mediately, as in Seeing, Hearing, and Smelling; which

pressure, by the mediation of Nerves, and other strings, and membranes of the body, continued inwards to the Brain, and Heart, causeth there a resistance, or counter-pressure, or endeavour of the heart, to deliver itself: which endeavour because *Outward*, seemeth to be some matter without. And this *seeming*, or *fancy*, is that which men call *Sense*; and consisteth, as to the Eye, in a *Light*, or *Colour figured*; To the Eare, in a *Sound*; To the Nostrill, in an *Odour*; To the Tongue and Palat, in a *Savour*; And to the rest of the body, in *Heat, Cold, Hardnesse, Softnesse*, and such qualities, as we discern by *Feeling*. (13–14)

Within these churning sentences lies a two-part movement set to define the rigor of modern philosophy. Sense binds thought to “external bodies or objects,” but these are known only through the mind’s reflection on itself, the “seeming or fancy” tied to an outside whose presence must always only be supposed. We are a tissue of impressions left by objects; our minds are involved in understanding these objects. Both the world and the self become subject to intensive deliberation. On this account, Hobbes intends to correct “the Philosophy-schooles, through all the Universities of Christendome,” whose misguided authority is “grounded upon certain Texts of Aristotle” (14). Where the schools argue that matter alone causes sensation, Hobbes postulates that the mind represents sensation to itself. Thoughts and passions are motions within the self and the beginnings of actions in the world. In contrast, matter can neither do nor think anything. The accusation that Scholasticism entailed a “thinking” nature, one endowed with agency, was common to the modern polemic, not just to Hobbes but to his antagonist Robert Boyle as well. See, for example, Boyle’s *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Receiv’d Notion of Nature* (1687).

¹⁶ On thinking as motion in Hobbes’s philosophy, see James, *Passion and Action*, 126–31.

¹⁷ Glossing these lines, Dustin Griffin has written that “[m]orality, for Rochester, was the product of rational thought, not revelation” (*Satire Against Mankind: The Poems of Rochester* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973], 8). This strikes me as half correct. While it is surely right to say that the poem prefers the secular to the religious, it is nevertheless misleading to suggest that the solution dwells in the very category the poem insists upon questioning.

¹⁸ Hobbes writes frequently of the “beginnings of motion, within the mind of man” as “Desire or Appetite” (*Leviathan*, 38).

¹⁹ The model would be Juvenal’s third satire.

²⁰ Stephen Clark, “Something Gen’rous in Mere Lust: Rochester and Misogyny,” in *Reading Rochester*, 27; and Sarah Wintle, “Libertinism and Sexual Politics,” in *Spirit of Wit: Reconsiderations of Rochester*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (Hamden: Archon, 1982), 165.

²¹ Thormählen argues that “[w]hat motivates her is one of the three defects which are always seen as inexcusable in Rochester’s oeuvre: vanity, or pride” (*Poems in Context*, 98). I think, rather, she has no motivation at all.

²² I owe this observation to Kathleen Luby.

²³ Griffin makes the opposite point: “The mind, the nonsensual faculties, have nothing to do with the lover’s failure; indeed, the culprit is the unruly member which is imagined to have a will of its own. It is the offending organ, not the meddling mind, that is cursed” (95).

²⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 21.

²⁵ Charleton, 169–70.

²⁶ Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution 1: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998), 75. Trumbach's model looms large over the recent discussion of sexuality in eighteenth-century Britain. His account runs something like this: before the modern age, sodomy was unrelated to effeminacy but understood to be an act between men of different ages or with unequal degrees of power; as relations between men and women gradually became more equal, male-male desire grew equated with effeminacy in the person of the "molly." The emergence of the molly as a social type thus depends upon the larger reshuffling of gender roles Trumbach assigns as the hallmark of the modern age. In the past, masculinity and femininity existed in a relation of hierarchical similitude. Over the course of the eighteenth century, masculinity and femininity split into a reciprocal difference that has the molly as a stigmatized "third gender" at its constitutive threshold.

Influent as this model has been, it seems to me tentative in several respects. According to Trumbach, eighteenth-century men had to "prove" they weren't mollies by sleeping with prostitutes or through non-consensual sex. Nascent homosexual identity is thus deduced from the alleged (and never quite demonstrated) prominence of the molly, which is in turn deduced from the alleged, compensatory behavior of men: arrests for rape and prostitution increase, ergo homosexuality! Setting aside for a moment this curious logic, we should not be surprised to find that arrests for these crimes increased over the century since arrests for all crimes increased. Trumbach does not account for changes in record keeping or inquire whether arrests for these crimes increased disproportionately. The gap between evidence and argument in this respect is massive, and one suspects that the numbers are ushered in after the fact.

²⁷ In addition to the articles below, see Trumbach's early discussion of the poem in his "The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660–1750," in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman and Martha Vicinus (New York: New American Library, 1989), 129–40. Cameron McFarlane criticizes Trumbach's reading in *The Sodomite in Fiction and Satire, 1660–1750* (New York: Columbia, 1997) for overemphasizing the significance of the poem, but wrongly bases this point on the fact that, like all of Rochester's poetry, the poem wasn't "published" (by which he means printed) during Rochester's life. As for the larger point, McFarlane is certainly correct to point to Trumbach's schematized narrative, but the alternative he proposes—sodomy as "transgression" both now and then—hardly seems more rigorous or historical.

²⁸ Harold Weber, "'Drudging in Fair Aurelia's Womb': Constructing Homosexual Economies in Rochester's Poetry," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 33 (1992): 114; Duane Colthorp, "Rivall Fopps, Rambling Rakes, Wild Women: Homosocial Desire and Courtly Crisis in Rochester's Poetry," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 38 (1997): 27. Weber builds his argument on Trumbach's model: "Though his poetry does register some of the specific historical ambiguities and contradictions of male sexuality in a patrilineal society that led to the establishment of a 'new' sexual identity, it belongs instead to . . . an older mode of sexual discourse concerned with 'hierarchy' rather than 'difference'" (102). Colthorp's reading is less reliant on Trumbach's narrative

than Weber's and more interested in situating Rochester's "homosocial desire" in the politics of the Restoration. For further thoughts along these lines, see Sarah Ellenzeig's incisive essay "Hitherto Propertied: Rochester's Aristocratic Alienation and the Paradox of Class Formation in Restoration England" (*ELH*, forthcoming 2002).

²⁹ Compare Steele's sense of audience below to that provided by Rochester at the end of the *Allusion to Horace*:

I loath the Rabble, 'tis enough for me
If Sydley, Shadwell, Shepheard, Wicherley,
Godolphin, Butler, Buckhurst, Buckingham
And some few more, whome I omitt to name
Approve my sence, I count their Censure Fame.
(120–24)

³⁰ Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, ed. Donald Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 1:27. Hereafter cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

³¹ Delarivier Manley, *New Atalantas* (1709), ed. Ros Ballaster (London: Penguin, 1991), 5.

³² Here is part of Manley's long exposition of how Fortunas's "ambition would not rest": "The lovely youth knew punctually how to improve those first and precious moments of good fortune whilst yet the gloss of novelty remained, whilst desire was unsated, and love in the high sprint-tide of full delight; having an early forecast, a chain of thought, unusual at his years, a length of view before him, not born a slave to love, so as to reckon the possession of the charmingist woman of the court as a zenith of his fortune, but rather the auspicious, ruddy streaks of an early morning, an earnest to the meridian of the brightest day" (15).

³³ My argument here is indebted to Paula McDowell's *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678–1730* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998).

³⁴ Jane Barker, *Love Intrigues: Or, the History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia, As Related to Lucasia in St. Germain's Garden. A Novel* (1713), in *Popular Fiction by Women, 1688–1750*, ed. Paula Backscheider and John Richetti (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 84. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.