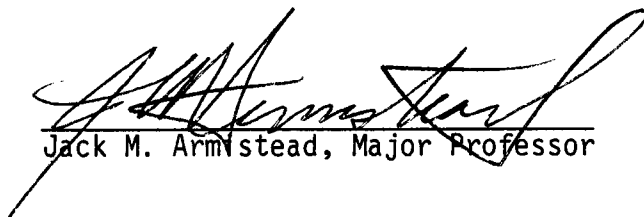


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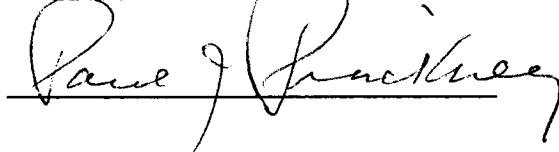
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Michael Benjamin Hudnall, Jr. entitled "Moral Design in the Plays of Sir Charles Sedley." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.


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MORAL DESIGN IN THE PLAYS
OF SIR CHARLES SEDLEY

A Dissertation
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Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Michael Benjamin Hudnall, Jr.

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ABSTRACT

Moral Design in three plays by Sir Charles Sedley--The Mulberry Garden, Antony and Cleopatra, and Bellamira; or The Mistress--allows the careful reader to discern a structural coherence and thematic unity previously unacknowledged by critics and belies the popular notion of Sedley and many of his contemporaries as frivolous, shallow, and detached from serious moral and intellectual issues.

Serious issues raised by seventeenth-century social, political, and intellectual revolutions affected Sedley and his contemporaries and figure in Sedley's three plays. The Sedleys experienced the social and political upheaval of England's Civil War firsthand, and Sir Charles knew both the positive and negative implications of the so-called new philosophy through his education at Wadham College, Oxford, and through his wide readings in literature by or about modern philosophers like Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, and Gassendi. Four elements of Sedley's moral design--skepticism, reason, a mechanical approach to life's issues, and individualism--reflect his intellectual concerns, contribute to his logical search for truth and order, and affect the technique, and to some extent the content, of his drama. A fifth element of the design--love--belies the stereotype of predatory Hobbism attributed to Sedley and other wits, and it figures significantly in Sedley's political philosophy.

Critics have traditionally regarded The Mulberry Garden as a flawed, derivative, and conventional comedy of manners. On one level, however, Sedley demonstrates his belief in the superiority of the Restoration political philosophy to that of the Puritans by paralleling them with the family governments of Sir John Everyyoung, whose daughters behave correctly, and Sir Samuel Forecast, whose daughters behave incorrectly. The heroic characters and plot and the low-comedy characters and plot that seem to interfere with the manners plot actually contribute to an elaborate contrast. The all-important manners plot contains the protagonists whose attitudes represent a golden mean of government between the extremes of self-interested, Hobbesian villains in the low plot and unrealistic characters in the high plot. The five elements of moral design lead to the identification of this ideal political philosophy.

Critics have regarded Antony and Cleopatra as flawed heroic-neoclassical drama, citing intrigues, love interests, and an unconventional admiration for the protagonists as deviations from the conventions of the mode. However, here, as in the first play, these deviations contribute to a tripartite contrast with idealistic characters at one extreme, Hobbesian characters at the other extreme, and Antony and Cleopatra in the middle. In this play, Sedley emphasizes love more than national government.

Although the critics do not fault Bellamira for deviating from a conventional mode, they limit their insights into the operation of the whole play because of their failure to recognize the operation

moral design. This, the least complicated, most effective of the three plays, also incorporates the tripartite contrast with idealistic characters at one end and Hobbesian characters at the other, and here the limitations of these extreme characters appear as a figurative impotence--morally and socially. Sedley's cynical ending challenges his audience to look inward, and the play as a whole suggests the golden mean of behavior, through the protagonists' potential for virtuous behavior and sensible government, rather than actually demonstrating it.

Examining the operation of moral design in each of these plays, one recognizes a surprising number of similarities in technique and concerns. Characters discern the possible choices, along with their consequences, among political philosophies, challenge conventions, and establish meaningful, stable relationships, or governments. This recognition of moral design, then, allows much greater understanding of Sedley's plays and of the author's intellectual sophistication and genuine concern for serious issues.

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INTRODUCTION

Sir Charles Sedley was famous in his own day as a courtier, wit, and poet, but today he and his plays are relatively obscure, the victims of the critical tendency, until lately, to focus on just a few Restoration playwrights and their plays. If students of English literature know Sedley at all, it is usually in connection with some other author or work of literature. He is Dryden's Lisideius in the Essay of Dramatic Poesy, Etherege's Medley in The Man of Mode, and the celebrated larder of Shadwell's wit in Dryden's Mac Flecknoe. Through recent anthologies of Restoration plays,¹ some students know Sedley's first original play, The Mulberry Garden (1668), but his heroic drama Antony and Cleopatra (1677) and the later comedy Bellamira, or The Mistress (1687) are unknown to all but the most serious students of Restoration drama.

Like many Restoration plays, these three by Sedley deserve far more critical attention and acclaim than critics have afforded them, and for good reasons. First, although Vivian de Sola Pinto

¹Dennis Davison, ed., Restoration Comedies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); A. Norman Jeffares, ed., Restoration Comedy, I (Totowa, New Jersey: Roman and Littlefield, 1974). Although not anthologized, Antony and Cleopatra appears, in fragmentary form, in Lewis Nathaniel Chase, The English Heroic Play (New York: Columbia University Press, 1903), and in a facsimile edition (London: Cornmarket Press, 1969). Bellamira, according to Bernard Richards, "Mercury and Syphilis: Word Play in Sedley and Congreve," Notes and Queries, New Series, 25, No. 1 (Feb. 1978), 32, has been produced by I. T. V.

has provided an excellent biography of Sedley² and an excellent edition of his works,³ no one has yet provided an extensive, close reading of the plays. Second, most of the scholarship on the plays prior to Pinto's 1928 edition is based on faulty, unauthorized texts.⁴ Most important, no one has yet applied to the plays the fruits of the scholarly efforts of a generation of critics like Thomas Fujimura, Norman Holland, Anne Barbeau, Susan Staves, and Derek Hughes, who recognize serious intellectual substance in Restoration plays.

Although Sedley has been associated in one way or another with at least four other plays, I have, for several reasons, confined my examination to the three plays that Sedley actually wrote and staged--The Mulberry Garden, Antony and Cleopatra, and Bellamira. First, Sedley's role as translator of The Grumbler⁵ and of part of Pompey the Great⁶ is too inconsequential to merit special

²Vivian de Sola Pinto, Sir Charles Sedley, 1639-1701 (London: Constable & Company, 1927), cited in subsequent references as Sedley.

³Vivian de Sola Pinto, ed., The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Sir Charles Sedley, 2 vols. (1928; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), cited in subsequent references as Works.

⁴Pinto, Works, I, v-x, points out that during Sedley's lifetime, the plays appeared in only quarto editions, and although several editions appeared in the eighteenth century, they are not reliable.

⁵"Le Grondeur" by J. de Palarat and D. A. de Brueys. The Grumbler appears in Pinto's edition of Sedley's Works, II, Appendix. See Pinto's preface on p. 105.

⁶Pinto, Sedley, pp. 80-83; Wilson, Court Wits, pp. 148-149. For a comparison of the Wits' translation with that of "the matchless

consideration, although in my second chapter I do consider Pompey's significance in the evolution of Sir Charles's Antony and Cleopatra. While Sedley did rewrite this last play in later life, as Beauty the Conquerour, or the Death of Marc Antony,⁷ it receives no special consideration in this dissertation because of its fragmentary form (Sedley never completed it) and its marked inferiority to the original. The Tyrant King of Crete, a flawed and very poor rewrite, in shortened form, of Henry Killigrew's already weak Pallantus and Eudora,⁸ likewise receives no consideration in the chapters that follow. Scholars attribute The Grumbler and Tyrant to Sedley only on doubtful authority.⁹ Moreover, these four other plays fail to exhibit the careful dramatic design and intellectual substance of the three Sedley plays treated here.

Most of Sedley's critics would find the idea of moral design in his plays strange or even ludicrous, yet it lies at the heart of each of his plays and provides a thematic unity and structural

Orinda," see Dorothea Frances Canfield Fisher, Corneille and Racine in England: A Study of the English Translations of the Two Corneilles and Racine, With Special Reference to their Presentation on the English Stage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1904), especially pp. 41, 52-63.

⁷Pinto, Sedley, pp. 279-280, and Works, I, 190.

⁸Pinto, Sedley, pp. 280-281. The only scholar to challenge Pinto and insist that Sedley wrote the play is Montague Summers, The Playhouse of Pepys (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), pp. 66-67.

⁹These plays appear in the 1722 edition of Sedley's works, which, as Pinto notes (Works, I, xxiv) contain a number of spurious works.

coherence that these critics have been unable or unwilling to recognize. In The Intellectual Design of John Dryden's Heroic Plays, Anne T. Barbeau calls moral design the dramatization of "sets of highly complex opinions concerning the obligations of man within his society . . . of a son to his parents, of a subject to his sovereign, and of a man to his own conscience."¹⁰ This definition assumes on the part of the playwright two important qualities that critics of Restoration drama have overlooked: first, a firm grounding in social, political, and intellectual currents of the seventeenth century, and second, a genuine concern with the issues implicit in the obligations mentioned above. As applied to Sedley's plays, moral refers to philosophically based considerations of right and wrong; and moral design emerges, therefore, from the comparison of right and wrong opinions and patterns of behavior, with special stress on the importance of love to self-fulfillment.

Various critical approaches to the plays of Sedley and others like him are useful to the extent that they recognize his familiarity with and interest in these currents and issues. Critics intent on studying the manners or the morality of his plays focus too narrowly on surface features, failing to explore the intellectual currents behind the attitudes of his characters. These relatively superficial critics provide valuable insights into sources, generic

¹⁰Anne T. Barbeau, The Intellectual Design of John Dryden's Heroic Plays (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 5.

developments, and the theater but do not recognize serious intellectual concerns either in Sedley and his companion playwrights or in their plays. A second category of critics recognizes Sedley's grounding in social, intellectual, and political currents but not the concern that would result in the inclusion of these currents in the kind of design Barbeau describes. To these critics, Sedley is a well-informed but not very profound gentleman playwright. A third category includes post-World War II critics recognizing the unsettling effects of seventeenth-century English constitutional crises and their attendant conflicts, especially the English Civil War, and the unsettling effects of a movement known popularly as the new philosophy. By recognizing that moral design represents a reaction to these unsettling changes, these critics have provided valuable insights into the content, themes, and structures of Restoration drama, offering hope that similar insights may be applied profitably to the plays of Sedley as well.

I. STEREOTYPES, MORALITY, AND MANNERS

A stereotype of Sedley and many of his fellow Restoration playwrights as frivolous, carefree, and lacking in moral purpose accounts in great measure for the undeserved obscurity of his plays, the lack of critical attention and acclaim, and the failure to recognize moral design in his plays. Countering this one-sided stereotype looms as no small task because from the Restoration to the present, critics have been unwilling to take seriously a

man whose prominence lay largely in his social status, his wit, and his well-known escapades. In 1661 the Duke of Ormonde described the famous Society of Wits to which Sir Charles belonged as "confident young men, who abhorred all discourse that was serious, and, in the liberty they assumed in drollery and raillery, preserved no reverence towards God or man, but laughed at all sober men and even at religion itself."¹¹ The reputation for wit "and also for profanity," says Vivian de Sola Pinto, was responsible for drawing "immense crowds" to the premiere of The Mulberry Garden.¹² The stereotype makes itself felt also in Montague Summers' appraisal of the Sedley canon:

Although a figure of considerable social importance in his day, the boon companion of Buckingham, Rochester, and the rest, Sir Charles Sedley, who "lived mostly in the great city, became a debauchee, set up for a satirical wit, a comedian, poet, and courtier of ladies, and I know not what" [quoting Anthony a Wood's "Life of Sir Charles Sedley"], has now faded away to a thin piping shadow of a writer. The personality of the man must have been everything; for with the exception of a song or two . . . , some neat translations of Ovid and Martial, one tolerable comedy [Bellamira] . . . the rest of his work is just sifted ashes.¹³

The critical awareness of the stereotype of Sedley and his companions appears perhaps most obviously in criticism which attacks

¹¹Pinto, Sedley, p. 54.

¹²Pinto, Sedley, p. 105.

¹³Summers, p. 303.

the morality, or lack of it, in Sedley's plays. According to this approach, "the dramatists, themselves depraved, enjoyed picturing immoral actions."¹⁴ Eleven years before Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698), Sedley's Bellamira provoked this kind of attack. Apparently, people objected to the rape of the innocent Isabella, Bellamira's manipulation of her doting keeper, and the original title of the play, The Eunuch, which Sedley borrowed from Terence.¹⁵ This category of criticism has continued even into the twentieth century. For example, Thomas Longueville comments, "It is difficult to imagine the time when such a coarse and atrocious production as . . . [Bellamira] could have been tolerated on the English stage,"¹⁶ and the eleventh edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica refers to Bellamira as "the best but most licentious of his comedies."¹⁷ Intent more on censure than analysis, morals criticism offers the least helpful, most superficial approach to Sedley's plays.

¹⁴Earl Miner, Restoration Dramatists: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), p. 5.

¹⁵Pinto, Works, II, 5.

¹⁶Pinto, Sedley, p. 266, quotes Thomas Longueville, Rochester and Other Literary Rakes at the Court of Charles II (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1903), p. 78.

¹⁷"Sir Charles Sedley," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1910 ed.

The Mulberry Garden and Antony and Cleopatra appear to have escaped morals criticism by contemporaries, perhaps because of their relative obscurity, perhaps because of the more tolerant and less censorious social climate of the 1660s and 1670s. Possibly too, the public realized that, despite Sedley's reputation, these plays promote love and goodness.

Reviewing several accounts of the behavior of Sedley and his companions, one can understand, to some degree, why people believed Sedley might promote immorality in his plays. One of the chief incidents contributing to the stereotype of Sedley and his close friends as depraved libertines is the famous (or infamous) frolic at the Cock Tavern, Oxford Kate's, on Bow Street.

After a riotous banquet, the diners went on to the balcony of the tavern. They are said to have been 'in their shirts,' but, according to one account, Sedley was entirely naked. There they performed some disgusting pranks which Pepys and Anthony à Wood describe in plain English, and Sedley, who was apt to get 'rhetorically drunk,' made a speech to the onlookers which seems to have been partly a parody of a Puritan sermon and partly an imitation of a speech by a quack doctor. He ended by offering for sale a powder which would make all the women of the town run after the purchaser. By this time the crowd had swollen to about a thousand people and angry rumblings were heard. The three revellers, then 'shewing Bottles of Wine . . . proclaym'd, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and let him that hath no money come to buy wine and milk without money or price.'" After this they 'drank a health to the salvation of Judas and another to the Babe of Bethlehem,' and, according to Pepys, a third to the king. The infuriated mob tried to force the door of the tavern, while Sedley and his friends hurled wine bottles at them. At last the revellers, two of whom were Members of Parliament, with tipsy solemnity announced that they would 'goe

and make lawes for the nation' and quitted the balcony amid a shower of stones which smashed Oxford Kate's windows.¹⁸

This single scandalous episode of Sedley's youth has unfortunately overshadowed the rest of his life in the several biographical portraits of him left to posterity, and a measure of its influence is the frequency with which it has been repeated in several sources. It has been described in Anthony a Wood's "Life of Sedley," Samuel Briscoe's 1722 edition of Sedley's works, Johnson's "Life of Dorset," and Pepys's Diary, as well as in later accounts based on these earlier ones.¹⁹ More recently the incident has appeared in John Harold Wilson's Court Wits of the Restoration,²⁰ in Vivian de Sola Pinto's Sir Charles Sedley,²¹ and in Pinto's Restoration Carnival.²²

Sedley's reputation doubtless suffered also through his association with the famous inner circle of courtiers at the court of Charles II, known as the Circle of Wits and the "merry gang."²³ The group included "Gentle George" Etherege; the "wicked" John

¹⁸Vivian de Sola Pinto, Restoration Carnival: Five Courtier Poets: Rochester, Dorset, Sedley, Etherege, and Sheffield (London: The Folio Society, 1954), pp. 29-30.

¹⁹Pinto, Sedley, p. 61, n.2. John Harold Wilson compares several accounts of the episode and puts the whole in perspective in The Court Wits of the Restoration (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), pp. 40-42, subsequently referred to as Court Wits.

²⁰Wilson, Court Wits, pp. 40-42.

²¹Pinto, Sedley, pp. 59-64.

²²Pinto, Restoration Carnival, pp. 29-30.

²³Wilson, Court Wits, p. 9.

Wilmot, Earl of Rochester; the Duke of Buckingham; the Earl of Dorset; and Charles II himself. The "merry monarch" scandalized his subjects by attending his mistress, Lady Castlemaine, every night, and Sir Charles Sedley was often with him, enlivening the conversation.²⁴ The Wits were heavy drinkers, as the incident at the Cock Tavern shows, and Pinto conjectures that the "enormous revels" following Charles II's coronation may have contributed to a serious illness that almost killed Sir Charles in 1661.²⁵ Like many men of his day, Sedley had mistresses, at least three of them actresses: Nell Gwynne, Mary Knipp, and Pegg Hughes (who played Charmion in Sedley's Antony and Cleopatra).²⁶ He also belonged to the Ballers, described by David Vieth as "that lurid but shadowy group of Restoration rakes . . ." who danced naked with "Lady" Bennets's prostitutes. Sedley not only wrote the "Ballers' Oath" but also once attempted in their behalf to prevent customs officials from destroying a shipment of dildoes.²⁷

It is uncertain how much the public knew about the sordid side of Sedley's character, but his tainted reputation was sufficiently widespread in his own day for the Countess of Warwick,

²⁴Pinto, Sedley, pp. 55-56.

²⁵Pinto, Sedley, p. 53.

²⁶Pinto, Sedley, pp. 101, 126-127; Wilson, Court Wits, p. 35; and Wilson, All the King's Ladies, Actresses of the Restoration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 150.

²⁷David Vieth, "Charles Sedley and the Ballers' Oath," Scriblerian, 12, No. 1 (1979), 47, 49 n.2.

Mary Rich, to fear for her honor upon learning that she was to dine with Sir Charles. According to her diary, "At dinner that day dined . . . [Sir Charles] Sedley, which was much trouble for me to see him lest he should be profane. But it pleased God to restrain him; yet the knowledge I had how profane a person he is much troubled me to be in his company"28 Richard Steele also came under the influence of the negative stereotype. He mentions Sedley twice in The Spectator (numbers 91 and 400), each time quoting Rochester's rakish portrait of Sedley from An Allusion to Horace:

Sidley has that prevailing gentle Art,
Which can with resistless charm impart
The loosest Wishes to the chastest Heart;
Raise such a Conflict, kindle such a Fire,
Between declining Virtue and Desire,
That the poor Vanquish'd Maid dissolves away,
In dreams all Night, in Sighs and Tears all Day.²⁹

Although Sedley and his fellow wits were far from exemplary citizens, their tainted reputations are to some extent undeserved. John Harold Wilson, an expert on the Wits, notes that many of the anecdotes about them were exaggerated, embellished, or totally false. "The Wits had very bad reputations; if a treasonable lampoon was written, a watchman beaten up, or a maid of honor seduced, a Wit was always blamed."³⁰ In the eighteenth century, the Wits'

²⁸Pinto, Sedley, p. 102.

²⁹Gregory Smith, ed., The Spectator (New York: Everyman's Library; Dutton, 1970), I, 284, and III, 246.

³⁰Wilson, Court Wits, p. 27.

reputation fared even worse: "venal publishers and hackwriters . . . were responsible for dozens of ugly stories, most of them fashioned from whole cloth."³¹ Given the exaggerated portraits of Sedley and his companions, it is no wonder that England's conservative citizens expected the worst in Sedley's plays. When reading the accounts of Sedley's rowdy youth, one should consider that Sedley did not remain forever a rakish Wit and that there was more than one side of his character.

Sedley was a kind and generous patron to Dryden, Shadwell, and others. Shadwell once wrote,

I shall always be proud of an occasion to boast of so good a Patron who uses me not as some Supercilious Men would (who do good merely out of vanity) as a troublesome hanger-on, but treats me with the civility and kindness of a friend. And I have had the honour to have always found so much of both from him, as if I had obliged him in receiving as much as he did in conferring his benefits.³²

Perhaps aware of the unfair and inaccurate stereotypes of Sedley, Dryden defends him from detractors in the "Epistle Dedicatory" of The Assignation or Love in a Nunnery (1673):

Such wits as they [detractors] describe, I have never been so unfortunate as to meet . . .; but have often heard much better reasoning at your table, than I have encountered in their books. The wits they describe are the fops we banish; for blasphemy and atheism, if they were neither sin nor ill manners, are subjects so very common, and worn so threadbare, that people who have sense avoid them ³³

³¹Wilson, Court Wits, p. 27.

³²Pinto, Sedley, p. 34.

³³Pinto, Sedley, p. 33.

Unfortunately, it is the sensational anecdotes of Sedley and his fellow wits that have left their impression on literary historians and biographers; for many of his detractors, Sedley's famous wit will be remembered as blasphemous, disrespectful, and anti-social.

For many of Sedley's friends and admirers, his wit was his greatest asset, the source of his great renown, and the basis for great expectations in his plays. His "reputation for wit," says John Wilcox, "was peerless."³⁴ Charles II "singl'd him . . . out for the best Genius of the Age, and frequently told his Familiars that Sedley's Stile, whether in Writing or Discourse would be the Standard of the English Tongue."³⁵ Consequently, his first comedy, The Mulberry Garden, was "long expected" and the theater was "infinitely full" at the premiere.³⁶ Understandably, much of the manners criticism, by far the most common approach to his plays, focuses on Sedley's wit and stresses just those qualities attributed to him and his companions. According to Pinto, "The English comedy of manners may be defined as a comedy of wit and fashion representing the life of a small, brilliant, aristocratic society which prided itself on regarding all the problems of life from a purely intellectual and non-moral standpoint. It aims at being brilliant,

³⁴John Wilcox, The Relation of Molière to Restoration Comedy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 184.

³⁵Pinto, Sedley, pp. 55-56.

³⁶Pinto, Works, I, 105.

heartless and anti-sentimental. The least breath of romance will immediately tarnish the glittering mirror of its wit."³⁷

Because of the widespread manners bias, the presence of a romantic, or heroic, plot in The Mulberry Garden has, from Sedley's day to the present, confused, surprised, and disappointed critics; it is something they did not expect from someone with Sedley's reputation for wit. Pinto dismisses the heroic characters as "the merest lay figures . . ."³⁸ and excuses the odd combination of comic and romantic incidents as "exactly the kind of comedy that one would expect from a gifted but inexperienced amateur."³⁹ Kathleen Lynch, John Harrington Smith, John Harold Wilson, and other prominent critics also find fault with Sedley's use of a romantic plot in his comedy and find merit only in the comic scenes, focusing on the play's role in the evolution of the genre.⁴⁰ Allardyce Nicoll, for instance, comments that this play "may not be as witty as might have been expected from its author"⁴¹

³⁷Pinto, Sedley, p. 257.

³⁸Pinto, Sedley, p. 255.

³⁹Pinto, Sedley, p. 249.

⁴⁰Kathleen M. Lynch, The Social Mode of Restoration Comedy (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), pp. 156-159; John Harrington Smith, The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948), p. 66; Wilson, Court Wits, p. 154.

⁴¹Allardyce Nicoll, Restoration Drama 1660-1700, Vol. I of A History of English Drama 1660-1900 (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1955), p. 234.

The manners critics admire Bellamira because it is not marred with the romantic features of Sedley's first comedy. Pinto's defense of the play places him squarely in this school of criticism:

Any lover of fine English prose should be able to appreciate the manner of "Bellamira." To appreciate its matter it is necessary to share Charles Lamb's delight at finding plays in which there is a "privation of moral light" and "a happy breathing space from the burthen of moral questioning."⁴²

Nicoll's assessment of the play is similar: "Satirical, witty, licentious, with that air of finesse which characterizes the comedy of manners, it well deserves to be placed alongside of the works of Etherege and of Wycherley."⁴³ Again, those features focused upon by the manners critics are wit, gaiety, and atmosphere.

The obvious problem with the manners approach is, as Thomas Fujimura points out, that "the 'manners' critics have removed the odium of immorality only by denying any serious content."⁴⁴ In focusing on the comedies as social artifacts or comments on social behavior rather than as philosophical statements, the manners critics, like the morals critics, have severely limited the opportunity for understanding Sedley's plays fully.

⁴²Pinto, Sedley, pp. 266-267.

⁴³Nicoll, p. 235.

⁴⁴Thomas H. Fujimura, The Restoration Comedy of Wit (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 4.

II. INTELLECTUAL TRAINING AND INTERESTS OF THE WITS

John Harold Wilson's Court Wits of the Restoration (1948) and Vivian de Sola Pinto's Sir Charles Sedley (1927) represent significant scholarly advances in our understanding of Sedley and his companion Wits by providing more rounded portraits of them, separating fact from rumor and exaggeration, and establishing the familiarity with major intellectual currents that they would need for dramatic moral design. Although Pinto and Wilson fail to recognize moral design in Sedley's plays, they at least help lay the groundwork for establishing its existence.

Although most critics intent on morals or manners make no mention of the Wits' intellectual capacity and knowledgeability, these being extraneous to their purposes, Wilson and Pinto show that the Wits generally and Sedley in particular were not shallow fops. Wilson notes that Sedley's circle of Wits were "leaders of fashion in thought as well as in dress. According to the standards of their class, most of them were well educated."⁴⁵ Sedley probably studied Latin at an early age as well as the classical philosophers, poets, and historians.⁴⁶ His translations of Martial, Horace, and Ovid display a keen interest in and understanding of the classics. Dryden had sufficient confidence in Sedley's translations

⁴⁵Wilson, Court Wits, p. 14.

⁴⁶Wilson, Court Wits, p. 15.

to include three in Dryden's Miscellany (1684).⁴⁷ Sir Charles appears among Dryden's learned debaters as Lisideius in the Essay of Dramatic Poesy, providing a definition for a play and commenting with erudition on drama and criticism from ancient times to the present. Pinto makes much of the mutual admiration between Dryden and Sedley and cites Dryden's dedication ("My Most Honour'd Friend Sir Charles Sedley") to him of The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery:

He [Dryden] compares Sir Charles to Tibullus for his "Candour, his Wealth" and "his way of Living," and applies to him the beautiful lines which Horace addressed to that amiable Roman knight. After praising the "innocent and inoffensive Pleasure," the "eruditam voluptatem" of the ancient poets, he describes his meetings with Sedley and other Wits . . . : "We have, like them, our Genial Nights; where our discourse is neither too serious, nor too light; but always pleasant, and for the most part instructive: the raillery neither too sharp upon the present, nor too censorious on the absent; and the Cups only such as will raise the Conversation of the Night, without disturbing the business of the Morrow."⁴⁸

As Pinto points out, this picture of intellectual diversion "forms a significant contrast to the scene in Bow street," and "These frugal and polite banquets, where the talk was doubtless of Shakespeare and Corneille, of Terence and of Horace, surely deserve to be remembered as much as the debauches which Sir Charles Sedley's biographers have described in so much detail."⁴⁹

⁴⁷Pinto, Works, I, p. xiv.

⁴⁸Pinto, Sedley, pp. 92-93.

⁴⁹Pinto, Sedley, pp. 92, 93.

At Wadham College, Oxford, in the mid-1650s, Sedley probably came under the influence of Dr. John Wilkins, the warden, who was promoting the "new school of experimental and rationalist thinkers, which claimed to be carrying out the scientific programme of Bacon."⁵⁰ Pinto's biography of Sedley contains a sale catalog of his books that indicates a very strong grounding in modern philosophy of the type promoted at Wadham College. Included in the library are books by or about Spinoza, Descartes, Gassendi (who defended Epicurus), Bacon, Locke (who also attended Oxford), and Hobbes.⁵¹ Pinto says that the Wits "all read and admired the works of Thomas Hobbes . . . ,"⁵² and Sedley may have known Hobbes personally.⁵³ Apparently Sedley had ample exposure to the new philosophy. Both Pinto and Wilson make convincing cases that Sedley possessed the intellect and the background for analyzing major seventeenth-century intellectual currents.

Unfortunately, Pinto and Wilson fail to recognize even the possibility of moral design in Sedley's plays because they over-emphasize Hobbes's impact on the Wits, understate the widespread effects of the new philosophy as a whole, and depend too much on the manners approach to Restoration drama.

⁵⁰Pinto, Sedley, pp. 40-41.

⁵¹Pinto, Sedley, pp. 329, 330, 331, 337.

⁵²Pinto, Restoration Carnival, p. 12.

⁵³Fujimura, p. 44.

While Pinto observes correctly that the proponents of the new philosophy at Wadham College "were inclined to discourage mysticism and religious 'enthusiasm' and to exalt the power of human reason . . . ,"⁵⁴ and while both he and Wilson concede that the Wits' excesses "may be regarded as a sort of distorted application of the experimental view of life,"⁵⁵ they misrepresent the impact of Hobbes. Pinto, for example, remarks,

If Hobbes was right and the universe consisted of atoms governed by mechanical laws, surely it was only sensible to enjoy the good things in this world and ignore the croakings of the killjoys, whether they were preachers, old Cavalier noblemen or Anglican parsons.⁵⁶

The Wits, in Pinto's view, were escapists, "utterly disgusted with the endless discussion of questions of principle and conscience" ⁵⁷ Wilson asserts, "Their only truth was that which could be proved by the test of the senses; their only good was the action which brought about the satisfaction of the senses. They were downright empiricists."⁵⁸ The materialist view of nature, says Wilson, had its effect also on the Wits' attitude toward love: "To the intellect, love was folly; to the senses, it was delightful. Love was lust--no more; a matter to be considered apart from all

⁵⁴Pinto, Sedley, p. 41.

⁵⁵Pinto, Sedley, p. 41; Wilson, Court Wits, pp. 16-17, 172-173.

⁵⁶Pinto, Restoration Carnival, p. 12.

⁵⁷Pinto, Sedley, p. 52.

⁵⁸Wilson, Court Wits, p. 18.

questions of morality, religion, or the code of the gentleman."⁵⁹

The best evidence, however, that Pinto and Wilson consider the influence of the Hobbesian, materialist brand of the new philosophy on the Wits to be pervasive and long lasting lies in their characterizations of Restoration drama. Pinto describes the comedies in terms of his understanding of aristocratic Restoration society, emphasizing brilliance, intellectuality, amorality, and anti-sentimentality.⁶⁰ Wilson says that the Wits "wrote their plays for fun, for prestige, and for the praises of the King and their companions."⁶¹ This attitude, according to Wilson, is apparent in their plays:

Since metaphysical speculation seemed empty, they dealt with no profundities. Since their own particular society was obviously well-ordered, they discussed no problems. Since love was a matter not of soul but of body, only lust was important. Characters were seen and drawn with sharp lines and in strong colors. A man was a wit and a gentleman, or a knave, fop, dullard, gull or fool. A woman was a prude, a hoyden, a flirt or a strumpet, but never a ministering angel. The motives of human action were simple--greed, lust, and revenge. In their occasional ventures into romantic (i.e., heroic) drama, the Wits drew pictures of complex, overblown honor, but surely with tongue in cheek. . . . between man and woman there was no honor; there was only pursuit, conquest and enjoyment. For the most part they enjoyed the spectacle of man the ruttish simian scratching his itches; only Wycherley seems ever to have felt revolted ⁶²

⁵⁹Wilson, Court Wits, p. 94.

⁶⁰Pinto, Sedley, p. 257.

⁶¹Wilson, Court Wits, p. 148.

⁶²Wilson, Court Wits, pp. 172-173.

Nowhere do Pinto and Wilson's descriptions acknowledge either the seriousness of the playwright or the serious issues to which he reacted. Although they acknowledge the Wits' exposure to intellectual issues, their manners critical approach prevents recognition of these serious concerns and serious issues as part of moral design in the plays. More recent scholarship furnishes numerous reasons for questioning Pinto's and Wilson's descriptions of Hobbes's impact on the Wits.

Recent scholarship suggests, for instance, that Hobbes's influence was not as clearly defined as Pinto and Wilson think it was. Samuel Mintz says that the Wits "never really assimilated Hobbes's principles into their way of life,"⁶³ and Charles Hinnant feels that the Wits' excesses represent an interpretation of Hobbes's philosophy that "he himself had clearly not envisioned."⁶⁴ License and egoism, faults frequently attributed to the Wits, found no favor in Hobbes's philosophy,⁶⁵ says Hinnant, and "the attitude of poets and dramatists toward Hobbes during the Restoration may have been based not so much on Hobbes's actual thought as on simplified versions of his ideas"⁶⁶ Christopher Hill

⁶³Samuel I. Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1962), p. 148.

⁶⁴Charles H. Hinnant, Thomas Hobbes (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1977), p. 150.

⁶⁵Hinnant, p. 149.

⁶⁶Hinnant, p. 147.

argues that the Wits' excessive behavior was less Hobbesian than merely faddish, a phase that Sedley and his friends went through, something to épater the bourgeois and the Puritans"67 The apparent "cynical and mocking atheism," says Hill, ". . . was probably only skin deep. . . . Atheism had no respectable support; it was a fashion, a whim."68 Thomas Fujimura notes that the term "atheist" was applied rather loosely, and he feels that the Wits were actually deists.69 Because the stereotype of the Wits and to some extent the manners school of criticism reinforce the perception of the Wits as atheists, and because the public perceived Hobbes as "the bete noire of his age the 'Monster of Malmesbury', the arch-atheist, the apostle of infidelity . . . ,"70 the association between the Wits and Hobbes comes really as no surprise; however, it must not be stressed too greatly.

Even if Sedley reacted to Hobbes's actual philosophy, not the simplified public perception of it, there are good reasons for doubting that it exerted any great influence on him. The proponents of the new philosophy did "discourage mysticism and

⁶⁷Christopher Hill, Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 263.

⁶⁸Hill, pp. 264-265.

⁶⁹Wilson, Court Wits, p. 46.

⁷⁰Mintz, p. vii.

religious 'enthusiasm' and . . . exalt the power of humane reason . . . ,"⁷¹ but they did not necessarily reject religion. The Royal Society, which evolved out of the meetings of some of these Wadhamite new philosophers,⁷² rejected Hobbes's application for membership.⁷³ Hobbes's philosophy, although it calls for a strong, absolute monarchy, found few supporters, even in the court of Charles II.⁷⁴ This philosophy denies the presence in the universe of spirit, and thus of God as He is popularly conceived.⁷⁵ Samuel Mintz points out, "Scientists and theologians alike . . . could derive no comfort from contemplating a Hobbist universe, however mechanical, when that universe was devoid of spirit and only distantly related to a material God."⁷⁶ Hobbes's nominalism denies universals like honor, good, and evil.⁷⁷ He sees man in a state of nature, without laws and government, as bellicose, "driven by the passions of competition, diffidence, and glory . . . ," and Hobbes finds the origin of government "in the selfish desire of man to escape from

⁷¹Pinto, Sedley, p. 41.

⁷²Pinto, Sedley, p. 41 and n.1.

⁷³Hinnant, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁴Hinnant, p. 149.

⁷⁵Mintz, p. 35.

⁷⁶Mintz, p. 11.

⁷⁷Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), pp. 549, 550.

the insupportable war of the state of nature."⁷⁸ This view of man leads Hobbes to endorse an absolute form of government, but the basis of its legitimacy caused most Englishmen to oppose Hobbesian political philosophy. Louis Teeter explains,

That Mortal God, Charles the First, had lost his Power at Naseby, and by losing it had lost his divinity. Without power he was no longer a god. . . . The obvious corollary of such a position was that obedience was owed to whatever party could sieze power; a conclusion that could never be admitted by a Stuart or Tory. More than any other of Hobbes's ideas, at least in politics, this aroused the ire of the faithful. John Whitehall accuses him of providing the Commonwealth with philosophical justification; Clarendon says the Leviathan was a sly address to Cromwell ⁷⁹

Teeter finds little reason to believe that an expression of Hobbesian philosophy in Restoration drama "would have been 'welcome at court.' . . . In no case . . . will typical Hobbesian doctrines be found in the mouths of characters . . . considered . . . [to be] speaking for the dramatist himself."⁸⁰ These doctrines will, however, be found in the mouths of libertines, tyrants, and rebels--that is, the negative characters--of Restoration drama. Hinnant observes that Hobbism in the drama "became a rationalization for villainy."⁸¹

⁷⁸Louis Teeter, "The Dramatic Use of Hobbes's Political Ideas," ELH--A Journal of English Literary History, 3 (1936), 143.

⁷⁹Teeter, p. 146.

⁸⁰Teeter, p. 141.

⁸¹Teeter, p. 147.

In Sedley's plays, tyrants and rakes are not presented positively, and it seems unlikely that Hobbes's influence is as pervasive as many critics have thought.

Pinto's and Wilson's assumptions about the Wits' attitude toward love, derived from their insistence on the strong Hobbesian, materialist influence, require clarification also, especially since love proves an important element in Sedley's plays. While the Wits did have mistresses, a common enough practice during the Restoration,⁸² Sedley did not consider love "folly . . . lust--nothing more . . . ," as Wilson alleges. He appears to have loved his second wife, Ann Ayscough, quite sincerely,⁸³ and two poems apparently written to her emphasize the sincerity of that love in terms surprisingly platonic for one considered rakish and insensitive.⁸⁴ He ends one poem this way:

For though thy Beauty first allured my sight,
Yet now I look on it but as the light
That led me to the treasury of thy mind.⁸⁵

Wilson's assumptions about the Wits' attitude toward love do not hold true in the plays either. John Harrington Smith's study of the "gay couple" in Restoration comedies leads him to a conclusion quite different from Wilson's. Smith argues,

⁸²Wilson, Court Wits, p. 26.

⁸³Pinto, Sedley, pp. 128-130.

⁸⁴Pinto, Sedley, pp. 129-131.

⁸⁵Pinto, Sedley, p. 131.

Of course the gay couple take love seriously. Why should they not do so? It led to marriage, which was no mere "matter of convenience," but the greatest adventure--and gamble--of all. . . . It may be doubted that any period ever took love more seriously than this one, or thought more seriously about marriage.
 . . .⁸⁶

Robert Root's dissertation, "The Problematics of Marriage: English Comedy 1688-1710," also argues the importance of love and marriage in the plays, explaining that the apparent anti-romance and anti-marriage attitudes really represent the playwright's "refusal to accept the earlier conventions of romantic comedy"⁸⁷ and his rejection of "economic and legal bases for marriage and the attendant chaos and unhappiness of such marriages."⁸⁸ Root concludes, "To offer to replace such a system with marriages based on love is not after all especially libertine or vice-loving."⁸⁹ Sedley's plays offer the best evidence of his attitude toward love. Each play explores the problems of arranged marriages and compares such arrangements with relationships based on love and consent.

Pinto's and Wilson's generalizations about the impact of Hobbesian materialism on the Wits seem unfair also because they obscure Sedley's uniqueness and his change of lifestyle. John Harrington Smith finds that Sedley "represents the softer side

⁸⁶Smith, p. 76.

⁸⁷Robert L. Root, "The Problematics of Marriage: English Comedy 1688-1710," Diss. University of Iowa 1975, p. 8.

⁸⁸Root, "Problematics," p. 10.

⁸⁹Root, "Problematics," p. 12.

of the wits' attitude."⁹⁰ He was the only one of the Wits, as even Wilson admits, who attempted to fulfill the second part of Dryden's definition of a satirist--that is, to "correct the vice and follies of his time." Although Wilson confines this accomplishment to a "drearily didactic" poem, The Happy Pair: or, a Poem on Matrimony (1702),⁹¹ all of his plays and many of his poems, through their good-natured satire, seek to correct vice and follies. Root points out that the playwrights, by "laughing at the partners in arranged marriages, and by promoting the marriages of witty, young compatible lovers, . . . were in effect condemning contemporary marriage practices and advocating the replacement of those practices with a more personal romantic alternative."⁹² This corrective function in Sedley's plays is an important part of his moral design. Moreover, unlike other Wits, Sedley pursued in later life a serious career as a member of Parliament:

A Wit of the Restoration usually passed his latter years idling about town and living on his reputation among the young men who gathered at Will's Coffee-House. . . . Unlike Wycherly and Etherege, however, Sedley, having inherited a fund of solid good sense, was capable of realizing that a new England was born at the Revolution and of adapting himself to the changed conditions. He saw that the right place for a brilliant talker after 1688 was no longer at Court but at the House of Commons, and henceforward, employed the wit which had delighted Charles II and

⁹⁰Smith, p. 35.

⁹¹Wilson, Court Wits, p. 141.

⁹²Robert L. Root, "Aphra Behn, Arranged Marriage, and Restoration Comedy," Women & Literature, 5, No. 1 (1977), 4.

Buckingham to paint a series of manly and political speeches.⁹³

Although posterity remembers Sir Charles primarily for his wit and his escapades, he did mature and appears to have spent most of his life quite responsibly. In the 1670s he withdrew from the court circle, left the court party in Parliament, and settled down, owing largely to the moderating influence of Ann Ayscough.⁹⁴ After the collapse of a tennis court roof nearly killed him and after his friend Rochester converted to Christianity on his deathbed, Sedley became a much more religious man.⁹⁵ His good friend Sir George Etherege writes in 1687 that Sir Charles Sedley "sets up for good hours and sobriety," and Etherege asks Lord Middleton if he has "grown as temperate as Sir Ch[arles]. . . ."⁹⁶ In spite of all of this evidence that Hobbes was not as strong an influence on the Wits as critics have thought, that Sedley "represents the softer side of the wits' attitude," that he abandoned the rambunctious lifestyle of other Wits under the moderating influence of a woman he loved, and that he became a religious man, many critics have seen Sedley still in terms of the one-sided stereotype. One of the weaknesses of Pinto's and Wilson's studies is that they insist on the manners approach to Sedley's plays even though they acknowledge many of Sedley's deviations from the stereotype.

⁹³Pinto, Sedley, p. 175.

⁹⁴Pinto, Sedley, pp. 130-132.

⁹⁵Pinto, Sedley, pp. 146-148.

⁹⁶Wilson, Court Wits, pp. 198-199.

III. SERIOUS CONCERNS AND INTELLECTUAL SUBSTANCE

Although Thomas Fujimura's The Restoration Comedy of Wit (1952) does not comment specifically on Sedley's drama, its insights into the intellectual substance of Restoration comedy represent an important advance in scholarship, paving the way for recognition of Sedley's moral design. Like Pinto and Wilson, Fujimura feels that the Wits came under the influence of a largely Hobbesian, naturalistic version of the new philosophy.⁹⁷ He also stresses the Wits' exposure to the Restoration intellectual milieu:

There were excesses in the lives of Etherege and Wycherly and Sedley, to be sure, but they were also cultivated men of acute minds who had a keen interest in the intellectual currents of the day.⁹⁸

Fujimura's study breaks new ground, however, in recognizing intellectual substance in Restoration comedy. Unlike previous critics, he realizes that the comedy "is not a shallow reflection of a shallow society intent upon manners. On the contrary, it reflects the troubled intellectual life of the times"⁹⁹ He realizes that the comedies attack marriages of convenience, unnatural behavior, "enthusiasm," and hypocrisy, not just affected fops, country bumpkins, and others who fail to meet a social standard.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Fujimura, pp. 44, 199-200.

⁹⁸Fujimura, p. 56.

⁹⁹Fujimura, p. 57.

¹⁰⁰Fujimura, p. 4.

And he realizes that Wit, the quality for which Sedley is best known, refers not just to fancy, the power of observing similarities in dissimilar things, but also to judgement, "a more purely analytical faculty that discovered dissimilitudes in things apparently alike."¹⁰¹ Also, Fujimura recognizes that Restoration playwrights use manners in a psychological, rather than social, sense: to examine character motivations.¹⁰²

The weakness of Fujimura's study lies in his insistence that the intellectual substance of Restoration comedy must be defined in narrowly Hobbesian, naturalistic terms:

Actually most literary works are committed morally, for good or evil, because they are inextricably bound up with human decisions and actions--though that is not to say that they must be committed to Christian morality. It is my belief that the morality of Restoration comedy is naturalistic, and that the dramatists dealt with moral issues, though wittily rather than soberly. The "manners" interpretation, which is really a variation on the theory of art for art's sake, disregards the place of morality in art, and consequently emasculates the literary work it is intended to justify.¹⁰³

Yet, because naturalism, or Hobbesian philosophy, denies universals and stresses sensual gratification, Fujimura's view of Restoration drama does not vary too much from the views of Pinto and Wilson. Like these other critics, he describes the Wits as "libertine."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Fujimura, p. 18.

¹⁰²Fujimura, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰³Fujimura, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴Fujimura, p. 200.

Pinto and Wilson stress the entertainment value of manners; Fujimura stresses Hobbes's hedonic aesthetic theory, which posits that "the aesthetic experience is principally an experience of pleasure due to stimulation of the mind"105 In Fujimura's view, then, "The authors of wit comedy were interested in the pleasure to be derived from aesthetic activity; and in the evaluation of their work, the standard one must use is the quality and degree of pleasure they afford."106 Although Fujimura grants that the issues of moral design are not forgotten or avoided in Restoration comedy, his insistence on the primacy of entertainment links him more with manners critics than with critics recognizing the serious, even didactic function of moral design.

A generation of post-World War II critics recognizing the serious function of intellectual currents and issues in the drama offers the most fruitful approach to Sedley's plays. By understanding seventeenth-century revolutions in science, politics, society, and ideas generally, these critics have been able to offer insights into the purposes, content, and construction of Restoration plays. Only one of these critics, Susan Staves, has applied this understanding to a Sedley play, but their insights into other plays of the period show equal promise for illuminating Sedley's.

105Fujimura, p. 50.

106Fujimura, p. 62.

Norman Holland and Earl Miner are among the first critics to recognize a fundamental purpose of Restoration drama that previous critics have overlooked because of critical biases: to come to terms with the trauma and uncertainties of England's political and intellectual revolutions. Because of the uncertainties, says Holland, "the gaiety of Restoration comedy sometimes seems forced"107 Miner observes,

Whether through satire, wit, libertinism, or humours, the dramatists are in search of truth, especially that true source of personal happiness and integrity which social forms may obscure or imperil. . . . The sense of anger, of danger, of despair, and sometimes almost of terror only half-concealed shows that the best of these plays are far more serious than a phrase like "comedy of manners" can imply.¹⁰⁸

Even Fujimura acknowledges the Wits' desire to be true to nature; this desire is part of the search for truth that Miner describes, but recent scholarship demonstrates the inadequacy of characterizations of that search in strictly Hobbesian terms.

The constitutional crises of the seventeenth century account in large part for the playwright's search for answers and security. Margaret C. Jacob points out that "the experience of revolution and its attendant social upheaval--the first of its kind in the

¹⁰⁷Norman Holland, The First Modern Comedies (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 56. This study examines the sources of conflict and uncertainty in the Restoration and illustrates the attempts of Etherege, Wycherley, and others to cope with this uncertainty by establishing a realistic pattern of behavior.

¹⁰⁸Earl Miner, Restoration Dramatists: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 9.

highly centralised nation-states of early modern Europe--forced thoughtful people, of whatever religious persuasion, to take stock of their most basic assumptions about man and society and about God's exact relationship to his creation."¹⁰⁹ Englishmen who regarded Charles I as God's divinely ordained sovereign expected His wrath to descend on the nation of regicides.¹¹⁰ England's breakdown in authority, says Jacob, was so extensive "that lower-class spokesmen were for the first time capable of putting in print coherent statements of their democratic and republican goals."¹¹¹ Levellers and other sectaries defined society not in terms of hierarchy and divine right "but in language best described as pantheistic and materialistic."¹¹² Susan Staves points out that for many men, the idea of authority became secularized and "was detached from the hierarchical structure of . . . society. . . ."¹¹³ Part of the trauma of England's civil war, then, was its destruction of the authority which had provided a sense of comfort and security. Christopher Hill sees Restoration literary classicism as a

¹⁰⁹Margaret C. Jacob, The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 66.

¹¹⁰Susan Staves, Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), p. 3.

¹¹¹Jacob, p. 32.

¹¹²Jacob, p. 32.

¹¹³Staves, p. xi.

manifestation of the yearning for order.¹¹⁴ Laura Brown sees the rigid order and "evaluative hierarchy" of many heroic dramas as part of an attempt to promote a royalist political ideal.¹¹⁵ And Susan Staves sees the yearning for order in a series of Restoration plays promoting the royalist point of view, including Sir Robert Howard's Committee, Sedley's Mulberry Garden, and Aphra Behn's Round-heads; or the Good Old Cause.¹¹⁶ Stuart Prall points out that the order and concord that Charles II managed to maintain for some time after gaining the throne was due to England's fear of further turmoil, of the revival of civil war.¹¹⁷

Part of the trauma of the civil war also was the uncertainty created by various rival political philosophies. The war was more than a contest between royalists and anti-royalists. Hobbes and Robert Filmer were both royalists, but Filmer's divine-right political theory could not allow him to agree with Hobbes's political theory because the former makes God the source of royal authority and the latter, denying this divine sanction, makes power the source

¹¹⁴Hill, p. 276.

¹¹⁵Laura Brown, English Dramatic Form 1660-1760, An Essay in Generic History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 4.

¹¹⁶Staves, p. 41.

¹¹⁷Stuart Prall, The Bloodless Revolution (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1972), p. 20.

of royal authority. George Lawson and Philip Hunton, important precursors of Locke, argued that the power of government comes from the people, who share that power as part of a contract with the king.¹¹⁸ The pantheism of Levellers and other radical sects posited the equal rights of all men because of their equal divinity.¹¹⁹ Apparently, then, Englishmen had several rival theories of government from which to choose, and this choice--the definition of the nature of government in England--was, according to Stuart Prall, one of the central issues of the period: "who is to exercise the powers of the crown--the king himself with the aid of his chosen advisors, or Parliament either by choosing the king's advisors for him or by limiting the king's choice of advisors? In other words, was the government to be responsible to the king alone or to Parliament?"¹²⁰ Susan Staves makes this question of authority a major focus of her analysis of Restoration plays, including The Mulberry Garden. Unlike other critics of Restoration drama, she argues

that the plays are often intensely political and that much of their interest lies in their concern with the problems of political authority and obligation. Many plays explore the dilemmas of subjects who have to determine the legitimacy of rival rulers and the limits of their own obedience. In these plays we can trace the gradual assimilation of the

¹¹⁸John Bowle, Hobbes and His Critics: A Study in Seventeenth Century Constitutionalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 90-104.

¹¹⁹Jacob, pp. 50-51, 72-73.

¹²⁰Prall, p. 16.

political experience of the Civil War and, finally, see the emergence of new political myths to the new secular and utilitarian ideology of Locke and his eighteenth-century followers.¹²¹

Anne Barbeau also approaches Restoration drama--specifically Dryden's heroic plays--as an expression of these political concerns:

Although lovers and intrigues of love can be perceived at the plot level, Dryden's heroic plays are essentially concerned with man's proper role in the state The passions of anger, pride, and ambition . . . are chiefly important to Dryden in their public consequences, that is, insofar as they are related to the life of the state.¹²²

Barbeau in fact calls Dryden's heroic plays "part of the great surge of interest in political philosophy which prevailed in England from the reign of Charles I through that of Queen Anne."¹²³ Because the constitutional questions which brought on the revolution of 1642 still had not been resolved by the Restoration, in 1660,¹²⁴ they continue to figure significantly in the drama at least until the Glorious Revolution, in 1688, when many of these questions were resolved. This is the period when Sedley wrote The Mulberry Garden, Antony and Cleopatra, and Bellamira, and I believe that the political considerations that Staves and Barbeau find in the plays they analyze are equally relevant to these by Sedley. Sedley, too, seems in his plays to explore the validity of rival political philosophies, in search of order.

¹²¹Staves, pp. 47-48.

¹²²Barbeau, pp. 3-4.

¹²³Barbeau, p. 6.

¹²⁴Prall, p. viii.

What we know about Sedley and his fellow Wits suggests that he was not the disinterested, frivolous, selfish rake that he appears in the stereotype but that government was a genuine area of concern for him. The Sedleys felt the trauma of England's civil war firsthand. Parliamentary soldiers invaded his home and arrested his mother, and the interregnum government levied taxes on the Sedleys because of their royalist sympathies.¹²⁵ These incidents made a strong enough impression on Sedley to be reflected in the story of The Mulberry Garden. Although his participation in the translation of La Mort de Pompée, titled Pompey the Great, and his first original play, The Mulberry Garden can be viewed as expressions of loyalty to his good friend the king--each play condemns usurpers and praises the restored monarch--I think that these plays also reflect the early Restoration optimism about the order of the new government after the turmoil and unpleasantness of the civil war. When Lisideius, representing Sedley, explains in the Essay of Dramatic Poesy why English drama is not as good as French drama, he blames this turmoil:

"If the question had been stated," replied Lisideius, "who had writ best the French or the English, forty years ago, I should have been of your opinion, and adjudged the honor to our own nation; but since that time" (said he, turning towards Neander), "we have been so long together bad Englishmen that we had not leisure to be good poets. Beaumont, Fletcher, Jonson . . . were just then leaving the world; as if in an age of so much horror, wit, and those milder

¹²⁵Pinto, Sedley, pp. 30-36.

studies of humanity, had no further business among us. But the Muses, who ever follow peace, went to plant in another country ¹²⁶

Sedley's serious career in Parliament also indicates that he took an interest in political philosophies and the destiny of England. Someone like Sedley who cared this much about government and who thought about it enough to switch allegiance from the court party to the Whig party¹²⁷ could readily have examined these issues in his plays as his good friend Dryden did.

The so-called new philosophy accounts also for the sense of uncertainty and uneasiness felt by the playwrights and manifested in their attempts to cope with change and conflict through moral design. Previous critics have tended to emphasize the materialistic, Hobbesian brands of the new philosophy and to use it, as Pinto and Wilson do, to account for the seeming frivolity and aloofness of playwrights and for the manners emphasis of the comedies. These earlier critics fail to perceive either the disturbing implications of the new philosophy or its very positive, productive implications. On the one hand, the movement called into question previous explanations of reality, causing men to doubt their ability to trust their senses. It questioned assumptions about authority, tradition, and social conventions and thus, like the political turbulence, left men with uncertainties and uneasiness. On the other hand,

¹²⁶Louis I. Bredvold et al., eds., Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose (New York: Ronald Press, 1973), p. 5.

¹²⁷Pinto, Sedley, pp. 177-179.

it instilled confidence in man's ability to use reason to solve his problems; and because it exposed the errors of past authorities, it led to significant discoveries. Moreover, its effects were widespread: in science, government, society, even in religion.¹²⁸ It generated the desire to find truth and order as well as the confidence a playwright like Sedley would need to develop his moral design. Four features of the new philosophy--skepticism, the Platonic-Phythagorean tradition and the mechanical philosophy, an emphasis on reason, and an emphasis on individual responsibility--contribute to the content, theme, and structure of Restoration drama; because they figure significantly also in the valuable approaches of recent critics, and because they offer insights into Sedley's moral design, they deserve our particular consideration.

New philosophical skepticism is neither the pyrrhonic denial of man's ability to know anything for sure nor the atheism popularly ascribed to the Wits. It questions authority, tradition, and convention without necessarily opposing or denying them. Margaret L. Wiley offers a useful distinction between the popular sense of skepticism and the sense understood by the new philosophers:

Some mode of discrimination between Skepticism in its proper and primary sense of Enquiry, and in its perverted but usual sense of disbelief or Negation seems urgently needed. . . . The persistent confusion that occurs between Suspense and Negation, even in accredited works on Philosophy, is not very complimentary to the progress of human thought. Few persons seem able to realize that Skepsis is as much

¹²⁸Jacob, p. 30.

opposed to Dogmatic negation as to Dogmatic Affirmation.¹²⁹

Phillip Harth argues to the same effect in his Contexts of Dryden's Thought. Referring to Dryden's "Defence of An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," his preface to Religio Laici, and his "Preface to Sylvae," Harth presents compelling evidence that Dryden's skepticism is a "mode of inquiry" rather than a "theory of knowledge" and that it "consists in investigating a question in an open and unbiased manner."¹³⁰ This evidence becomes even more compelling once one recognizes the similarities in attitude between scientists and writers like Dryden. "But as Boyle, Glanville, and Thomas Sprat in his History of the Royal Society (1667) all make clear," observes Harth, "there is an enormous difference between themselves and the Pyrrhonists in the use which they make of doubts The doubts proposed by the members of the Royal Society . . . are merely temporary, the initial ingredients of a method of procedure which will lead to 'the attainment of undoubted truth.'"¹³¹

¹²⁹Margaret L. Wiley, The Subtle Knot: Creative Scepticism in Seventeenth-Century England (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968, p. 17.

¹³⁰Phillip Harth, Contexts of Dryden's Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 5-6. Harth provides a valuable review of scholarship on the nature and significance of Dryden's skepticism (pp. 1-31). For a slightly different perspective of Dryden's skepticism, see Louis I. Bredvold, The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1934).

¹³¹Harth, p. 12.

Certainly skepticism could lead to agnosticism or atheism as it does in Hobbes's materialistic philosophy, and some men, convinced of the unreliability of either the sense or past explanations of nature, despaired in their skepticism of ever penetrating the reality behind a world of illusion.¹³² Norman Holland attributes the uneasiness behind the gaiety of Restoration comedy to the hero's realization that he "is imprisoned in a set of thoroughly unreliable senses" ¹³³ However, skepticism proved to be a very positive tool also--a point unacknowledged by critics who attach a largely Hobbesian interpretation to the new philosophy. René Descartes' skepticism, in the form of a systematic doubting of past philosophic assumptions, allowed him to discover the certainty of his own existence (Cogito ergo sum), and on the foundation of that certainty, he was able to erect his modern philosophy, which became the basis for the philosophical systems of later great philosophers like Spinoza, Leibnitz, Locke, Berkley, and Hume. The inductive method that Bacon gained fame for promoting is new-philosophical skepticism, rejecting the a priori assumptions in past descriptions of nature in favor of firsthand examination of nature.¹³⁴ In The Advancement

¹³²Richard S. Westfall, The Construction of Modern Science: Mechanisms and Mechanics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971), p. 33; Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 77.

¹³³Holland, p. 54.

¹³⁴Jacob Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, The Western Intellectual Tradition from Leonardo to Hegel (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 186-187.

of Learning Bacon argues, "He that would begin in certainties shall end in doubts; but if he be content to begin with doubts and have patience a while he shall end in certainties."¹³⁵ Each of these mainstream new-philosophers used skepticism very positively and productively and without losing faith in God. Descartes remained a devout Catholic, and as A. R. Hall notes in his history of the Scientific Revolution,

A very high proportion of scientists up to the mid-seventeenth century were men of unusually profound religious conviction, and none used science as a lever against conviction. . . . The furtherance of science and religion were commonly regarded as inseparable objectives. . . . Even for the most empirical of scientists, like Boyle and Newton, the introduction of religious considerations into the pattern of scientific investigation was natural and inevitable. They would not have dreamed of denying the validity of a universal moral or religious law--a concept more binding to them than scientific law.¹³⁶

Although critics have viewed Sedley's skepticism in the context of the stereotype of the Wits, perhaps the views of Dryden, Sedley's close friend, offer a more accurate indication of Sir Charles's temperament. In Dryden's Essay of Dramatic Poesy, where, it will be remembered, Lisidieus is thought to represent Sedley, Crites certainly presents the effects of new-philosophical skepticism positively:

¹³⁵Wiley, p. 18.

¹³⁶Alfred R. Hall, The Scientific Revolution 1500-1800: The Formation of the Scientific Attitude (New York: Longman's Green & Co., 1954), pp. 104-105.

Is it not evident, in these last hundred years, when the study of philosophy has been the business of all the Virtuosi in Christendom, that almost a new Nature has been revealed to us. That more errors of the school have been detected, more useful experiments in philosophy have been made, more noble secrets in optics, medicine, anatomy, astronomy, discovered, than in all those credulous and doting ages from Aristotle to us?¹³⁷

But Dryden surely is no atheist or revolutionary. Anne Barbeau compares him to "the scientists of his period . . . Dryden opposes 'not only the dogmatism of credulity and tradition but also the dogmatism of unbelief.'"¹³⁸ Although Sedley had his wild years, his life as a whole suggests a skepticism closer to Dryden's.

The idea of dogma in Wiley's and Barbeau's discussions of skepticism suggests, I think, another important aspect of Sedley's skepticism. Pinto and Wilson seem to suggest that the Wits' skeptical, materialist outlook led to irresponsible avoidance of important issues. Pinto argues that the Wits, "utterly disgusted with the endless discussions of questions of principle and conscience . . . had reverted to a purely pagan attitude, and proclaimed that intellectual and sensuous pleasures were the only aims of a sensible man" ¹³⁹ I would like to suggest, however, that Sedley's skepticism reflects less an avoidance of issues than a rejection of extreme positions. Margaret Jacob feels that wars, such as

¹³⁷Bredvold et al., p. 106.

¹³⁸Barbeau, p. 176.

¹³⁹Pinto, Sedley, p. 52.

the one that divided England, "led thoughtful and disillusioned individuals . . . to embrace skepticism as the only civilised and humanistic response to religious hatred and doctrinal warfare."¹⁴⁰ Sedley's skepticism may indeed reflect the country's weariness of war and disputation and its recognition of the need for compromise. Charles II's early attempts to rule England suggest that Restoration skepticism is not only part of the search for truth; it also seems to be part of the search for peace and order, promoting tolerance and rejecting unreasonable, extreme positions. The King attempted to enact declarations of indulgence allowing greater religious toleration in 1662 and 1672;¹⁴¹ he used in his CABAL men representing Catholics, Anglicans, and Dissenters;¹⁴² and he showed a willingness, at least at first, to compromise with Parliament.¹⁴³

In recent criticism recognizing the importance of intellectual substance in Restoration drama, new-philosophical skepticism plays an important role--as part of the search for truth and as part of the rejection of the dogmatic extremism that leads to conflict.

Norman Holland sees the skeptic's distinction between appearance (often manifested as conformity to social standards) and nature (the true inner nature of a man) as a defining characteristic of

¹⁴⁰Jacob, p. 41.

¹⁴¹Prahl, pp. 37-38.

¹⁴²Prahl, p. 36.

¹⁴³Antonia Fraser, Royal Charles: Charles II and the Restoration (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 189-90.

"modern" drama and an important tool for understanding Restoration plays:

Medieval and Renaissance men tended to feel there was normally no conflict between appearance and nature. We in the twentieth century so habitually assume a conflict that we are almost unconscious of it: we inherit the feeling as part of our post-seventeenth-century, scientific world-view. Thus these comedies . . . mark the distinction between Renaissance and "modern" drama.¹⁴⁴

In his analysis of The Comical Revenge, an important model for Sedley's Mulberry Garden, Holland demonstrates how the perceptiveness of the hero, Sir Frederick Frollick, allows him to recognize the unrealistic attitudes of romantic characters and to see through the deceptions and pretensions of other characters; Sir Frederick's perceptiveness allows him to serve as a realistic "golden mean" between the extreme behavior of other characters.¹⁴⁵

Earl Miner also recognizes the importance of this distinction between appearance and reality, but he uses different terms: "art and nature." Miner realizes that although the skepticism implicit in Restoration satire often seems negative--anti-platonic, anti-heroic, and sometimes even anti-social--"the realism of detail and the witty questioning of social standards should not blind us to the romantic and socially affirmative conclusions."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴Holland, pp. 4-5.

¹⁴⁵Holland, p. 21.

¹⁴⁶Miner, p. 4.

A careful study of Sedley's comedies will confirm that he questions more than he negates and that the issues raised by Holland and Miner apply equally to his plays.

Derek Hughes' Dryden's Heroic Plays also presents the playwright's skepticism as positive and productive, a means of discovering truth and maintaining order.¹⁴⁷ In Sedley's Antony and Cleopatra, one of a group of heroic plays that Hughes describes as "in some measure critical of heroic ideals,"¹⁴⁸ the skeptical discrimination between unrealistic ideals and reality is disillusioning, certainly, but it is also positive because it suggests realistic courses of action.

The vision deriving from the so-called mechanical philosophy¹⁴⁹ and the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition also had a great impact on Restoration thinkers like Sedley. Indeed, Richard Westfall calls these analytical systems the "two major themes . . . [dominating] the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷Derek Hughes, Dryden's Heroic Plays (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p. viii.

¹⁴⁸Hughes, p. 190.

¹⁴⁹Hill (Change and Continuity, p. 255) provides useful insights into the problem of the ambiguity surrounding the term mechanical philosophy.

¹⁵⁰Westfall, p. 1. Hunter (Science and Society in Restoration England, New York: Cambridge U. Press, 1981, p. 16) calls the mechanical philosophy "The most influential doctrine of the scientific revolution."

Causal analysis, though not original to the mechanical philosophy, proved significant to methodology through its emphasis. Whereas Aristotelians attributed effects to animistic, or supernatural, qualities in matter, mechanical philosophers regarded matter as inert and accounted for effects through observation of matter and motion alone.¹⁵¹ So, for example, Blaise Pascal rejected the Aristotelian notion that nature abhors a vacuum; through observing the cause and effect of water being sucked up a tube, he correctly concluded that air pressure, not animism, accounted for the failure of the water to rise more than thirty feet.¹⁵²

The mechanical philosophers differed from earlier thinkers also in their application of causal analysis. While Aristotelians often focused on teleology--the study of why, or toward what end, things occur--mechanical philosophers applied causal analysis more practically, seeking to determine what previous circumstances occasioned a particular effect.¹⁵³ Bacon's recognition of this difference in application appears in his comment that "the inquisition of final causes is barren, and like a virgin consecrated to God produces nothing."¹⁵⁴ However, the analysis of immediate causes leads to scientific knowledge.

¹⁵¹Russell, p. 537; Westfall, p. 33; Brian Easlea, Witch Hunting, Magic and the New Philosophy: An Introduction to the Debates of the Scientific Revolution 1450-1750 (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 111-113.

¹⁵²Easlea, pp. 120-121.

¹⁵³Russell, p. 67; Easlea, p. 128.

¹⁵⁴Easlea, p. 127.

Like skepticism, the mechanical view of nature worried and confused people because it seemed to lead to atheism.¹⁵⁵ In fact, it did regard Nature as a machine,¹⁵⁶ and Hobbes denied the existence of spirit in Nature. However, there was more than one version of the mechanical view. Descartes claimed both spirit and matter in nature,¹⁵⁷ and the priest Gassendi, whose book on Epicurus appears in the sale catalog of Sedley's library, did not allow the atomistic version of the mechanical philosophy to diminish his faith. P. J. Yarrow points out that Gassendi promoted Epicurus's ethical system as well as his atomism, arguing that "the aim of life is happiness to be achieved by virtue and wisdom"¹⁵⁸ Henry More subscribed to the Cartesian model of the mechanical view and used it as a weapon against two threats to the stability of England: enthusiasm and atheism.¹⁵⁹ Brian Easlea stresses the importance of regarding the mechanical philosophers as "friends to Christianity."¹⁶⁰

The mechanical philosophy's application of causal analysis probably had some impact on the literary techniques of the seventeenth century, and it seems implicit in Dryden's definition of manners:

¹⁵⁵Hill, p. 257; Easlea, p. 154.

¹⁵⁶Easlea, pp. 113, 116.

¹⁵⁷Easlea, p. 111; Bowles, p. 42.

¹⁵⁸Yarrow, p. 103. For further discussion of the atomist version of the mechanical philosophy, see Easlea, pp. 119-120; Russell, p. 66.

¹⁵⁹Easlea, p. 134.

¹⁶⁰Easlea, p. 138.

The manners, in a poem, are understood to be the inclinations, whether natural or acquired, which move and carry us to actions, good, bad, or indifferent, in a play; or which incline persons to such or such actions. . . . From the manners, the characters of persons are derived; for, indeed, the characters are no other than the inclinations, as they appear in the several persons of the poem.
 . . .¹⁶¹

Earl Miner's discussion of the distinction between art and nature--
 Dryden's "acquired" and "natural" inclinations--indicates that
 he too recognizes the importance of mechanical causal analysis
 in the establishment of character motivation:

In these plays the polarity of the individual and society is related to thematic polarity commonly referred to as art and nature. Both terms are ambiguously positive and negative. Art is positive in suggesting that which human beings can add to life to make it more bearable and attractive; it is a positive symbol of what is good in society and civilization. It is also negative in suggesting artfulness, artifice, shame, cant, and hypocrisy created by human beings to deceive others and themselves; it is a negative symbol of what is wrong in society and civilization. Nature is positive in suggesting what the individual feels and knows to be true in himself and others; it is a vital norm within. But it also is negative in suggesting the selfishness, brutality, and anarchy that Thomas Hobbes saw in "a state of nature"; it represents that which would bring human decencies to ruin.¹⁶²

Restoration manners thus represent more than an examination of how well characters conform to a social code; as Dryden and Miner show, manners represent an examination of the sources, natural and acquired, of good or bad behavior. If the moral design of

¹⁶¹Fujimura, p. 6, quotes from Dryden's "The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy."

¹⁶²Miner, p. 10.

a play compares theories of man's obligations to his government, his family, and himself, the causal analysis of the motivations of various characters, all part of this comparison, should figure significantly in establishing the ideal theory. For example, Norman Holland demonstrates that the romantic characters of The Comical Revenge often behave according to an unrealistic heroic code that nearly leads to disaster; they use art, acquired behavior, negatively. On the other hand, greed and deception motivate the behavior of the hypocrite Cully; he also uses art, or acquired behavior, negatively. Sir Frederick Frolick strikes a golden mean between these two extremes because his motivation is not clouded by unreasonable ideals and because, although he seeks revenge through deception, his actions are witty and not destructive; art is used positively, in the spirit of good fun. The same mechanical analysis of character motivations figures significantly in the moral design of Sedley's plays.

The Platonic-Pythagorean tradition, on the other hand, seems to account for the geometrical character contrasts and groupings in Restoration drama, including Sedley's. Westfall notes that this tradition "looked on nature in geometric terms, convinced that the cosmos was constructed according to the principles of mathematical order"163 Holland finds this kind of order in several plays:

163Westfall, p. 1.

The neatness of the love-honor conflicts reminds one of the neatness of scientific descriptions, particularly that most characteristic of seventeenth-century inventions, the two-dimensional coordinate system for the graphical representation of processes.¹⁶⁴

A careful analysis of Sedley's plays shows that each employs carefully coordinated contrasts of theories of behavior as part of his moral design.

Critics have also perceived the exaltation of reason, another important feature of the new philosophy, as a negative influence on Wits like Sedley, but reason's overall impact seems to be positive. Once scientists recognized the universe as a mechanism of cause and effect, they realized that the problems of life might be solved through reason by understanding the operation of this mechanism. Reason helped Descartes eliminate the errors of past philosophers and erect axiomatically his mechanical philosophy. Descartes exalted the power of reason also to make men "lords and possessors of nature" ¹⁶⁵ The problem here as with the mechanical philosophy lay in the apparent diminished role of God. Man seemed to depend more on his own reason, less on God and the authority of the church:

Traditional natural law theory as articulated by Aquinas gave way to a new moral philosophy independent of the will of God and revealed religion. The church fathers had considered man's reason clouded or imperfect because of the Fall and maintained that without the supernatural light of revelation man

¹⁶⁴Holland, pp. 15-16.

¹⁶⁵John Veitch, trans., Meditations on the First Philosophy in The Rationalists (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books; Doubleday & Co., 1974), p. 84.

could not discern the moral imperatives of the law of nature. Such supernatural light appeared less and less necessary.¹⁶⁶

Sedley's exercise of reason and the reason exercised by his characters, however, need not be characterized as necessarily irreligious, disrespectful, or antisocial. Many quite religious groups recognized the importance of reason. The Cambridge Platonists, says Rosalie Colie, believed that "the articles of faith must be put to the scrutiny of reason, the reason not only of the philosophical mind but of what we loosely call common sense."¹⁶⁷ Many of Hobbes's critics--men like Robert Filmer, Alexander Rosse, Dr. Seth Ward, Rev. William Bramhall, Dr. John Eachard, Edward Hyde, and John Whitehall--had a "predominantly rationalistic" outlook, according to John Bowle, and they believed that "the truths of Christianity are self-evident to the light of reason operating within the sense data of immediate experience"¹⁶⁸ Three of these critics--Ward, Lucy, and Bramhall--were bishops, and Lawson was a Puritan.¹⁶⁹ Samuel Mintz argues that Hobbes forced his opponents to use reason and to exercise "his own strict, rational standards of argument."¹⁷⁰ Reason led different men to different

¹⁶⁶Staves, p. xi.

¹⁶⁷Rosalie L. Colie, Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Armenians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁸Bowles, p. 189.

¹⁶⁹Bowles, pp. 23-28.

¹⁷⁰Mintz, p. 149.

conclusions, and although Hobbes's reason led him to deny God as He is popularly known, many other seventeenth-century thinkers never lost their faith in God and used reason positively.

While skepticism leads men to truth through challenging the assumptions of the past, reason leads men to truth--and order--by helping them avoid passions that cloud thinking. Rosalie Colie says that the Cambridge Platonists believed that only reason "could stem the flood of religious 'enthusiasm' sweeping over England and could turn men's minds to brotherly love and God's honour, away from blood and persecution."¹⁷¹ Political theorists of the Restoration apparently saw reason as a necessary factor in the political process. If a sovereign breaks his contract with his subjects and if their petition fails to elicit the sovereign's proper response, says Philip Hunton, "then the superior law of reason and conscience must be invoked."¹⁷² George Lawson argues that civil liberty depends on freedom "from the dominion of our own desires . . . [and] from the lusts and imperious commands of absolute sovereigns, whose will, tho' irrational . . . must stand for laws."¹⁷³

Critics have long acknowledged the importance of reason in the heroic drama; by allowing passion, rather than reason, to

¹⁷¹Coile, p. 3.

¹⁷²Bowle, p. 104 (emphasis mine).

¹⁷³Bowle, p. 99 (emphasis mine).

rule their lives, characters become unjust and inefficient, unable to govern either their own or others' behavior. In the Conquest of Granada, for example, Derek Hughes notes, "Abdalla's essential fault is that he allows his passion to vanquish his reason; Zulema's villainy consists largely in feeding the fires of unreason; and Almanzor persistently flouts reason in terms indistinguishable from those of the dupe and the villain."¹⁷⁴ In comedy, too, which also uses dupes and villains, reason figures significantly in a character's success or lack of success. W. Gerald Marshall observes, for instance, that Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing-Master "presents characters in dramas of madness, in play-worlds which reflect contemporary Restoration notions of insanity."¹⁷⁵ These madnesses, says Marshall, take the form of an obsession of some kind.¹⁷⁶ Sedley's two comedies and one heroic play do follow these standards of reason. Characters obsessed with lust, passion, greed, envy, or revenge usually are shown to lead unfulfilled lives. Reason allows other characters to distinguish between appearance and reality, to choose between rival theories of behavior, and to remain in control of their destinies.

Skepticism, the inductive method, and other features of the new philosophy led to a greater use of individual reason.

¹⁷⁴Hughes, p. 102.

¹⁷⁵W. Gerald Marshall, "The Idea of Theatre in Wycherley's The Gentleman Dancing Master," Restoration, 6, No. 1 (1982), 1-2.

¹⁷⁶Harth, p. 5.

Of course, individualism, like these other features, varied in degree and quality from one person to another and needs to be put into perspective. On the one hand, Bacon and the Royal Society encouraged greater cooperative effort among scientists, planning together and sharing ideas and information.¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, skepticism and the inductive method made questioning of authority and the exercising of individual reason a responsibility and an integral part of the scientific method of investigation. As Hunter observes, "It is not paradoxical to claim that Restoration science was characterised partly by its very tolerance of diversity, which was itself a unifying factor."¹⁷⁸ Too much individualism could lead to solipsism and obscurity, too little to stagnation in the pursuit of truth and the advancement of scientific knowledge. My analysis of Sedley's plays in the chapters that follow shows, I believe, that the playwright recognizes the need for a balanced, or moderate, individualism.

Again, one should realize that skepticism, and the resultant individualism, were not necessarily the rejection of the ideas and ideals of the past, so the individual behavior and attitudes of Sedley and other Wits, despite what the morals and manners critics say, were not necessarily antisocial. In religion the skeptical questioning of authority led not to a wholesale rejection of

¹⁷⁷Hunter, pp, 14-15, 27-28, 30.

¹⁷⁸Hunter, p. 20.

religious authority and tradition but to a reformation of the church. Many protestants insisted on personal salvation, without the need of a pope or other church officials, and on an individual interpretation of the Bible. "This insistence that each believer should look inward to his own heart," says Hill, "contributed to give protestantism its fundamentally individualist bias."¹⁷⁹ For some men, the mechanistic view of nature seemed to remove the hierarchical sense of place in relation to God and other men, to isolate man. "In the Newtonian world," Bertrand Russell observes, "the earth was a minor planet of a not specially distinguished star It seemed unlikely that this immense apparatus was all designed for the good of certain small creatures on this pinpoint."¹⁸⁰ Yet recognition of the power of individual reason gave men like Descartes hope to master nature. Moving away from the authority--and security--of the past, early-modern man struggled in many ways with an identity crisis which balanced individual rights with social demands. The Reformation required individuals to evaluate their rights and responsibilities by comparing the expectations of the church to their own understanding of the Scriptures. Men and women reinterpreted their roles in marriage: Lawrence Stone finds that "the successful reduction of authoritarianism in the political constitution gave extraordinary freedom to the propertied

¹⁷⁹Hill, p. 84.

¹⁸⁰Russell, p. 538.

classes. . . . there took place a relaxation of the tyranny of fathers over children and husbands over wives ¹⁸¹ Marriage evolved in such a way that it gradually came to reflect less a social or economic commitment between families and more an individual commitment based on love.¹⁸² Political philosophers debated whether man was a piece in God's hierarchical puzzle, under the authority of the king (the divine-right view); a predatory, egoistic, bellicose individual requiring the authority of an absolute sovereign (the Hobbesian view); a divine part of a pantheistic universe, deserving equal rights with all men (the radical view); or a rational, basically-good member of society participating, through a contract between people and sovereign, in the establishment or dissolution of government (the moderate, pre-Lockean view promoted by Lawson, Hunton, and others).

This identity crisis--visible in the struggle between the individual and society--constitutes one of the most distinguishing and important characteristics of Restoration drama. It is no coincidence that the protagonist of so many comedies and heroic plays is an individualist who must choose between social expectations and the individuality he cherishes. In The Mulberry Garden, Sedley's Wildish must choose between freedom implicit in the social code of the rakes and marriage to Olivia. Sedley's Antony, like many Herculean heroes, must choose between a selfish love and an honorable

¹⁸¹Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 265.

¹⁸²Stone, pp. 270-72.

commitment to his family and country. Sedley never says that either side in the struggle between the individual and society is always right or wrong. Like Miner's art and nature, individuality can be positive or negative. Characters manifesting traits of Hobbes's man in a state of nature--tyrants, hypocrites, pretentious fools--illustrate the negative aspects of individuality. They use art basely and selfishly to prey on the unsuspecting. Romantic characters often, in Sedley's plays at least, illustrate the negative consequences of bowing to social expectations. Decidedly unskeptical in their attitudes, these characters too often accept unrealistic or even false values unquestioningly. The positive characters in Sedley's plays exhibit enough skeptical individualism to avoid the pitfalls of unrealistic idealism and enough social responsibility to avoid becoming predatory egoists. Etherege's Frederick Frolick in The Comical Revenge is a good example of the responsible individual in Restoration drama. A careful reading of Sedley's three plays reveals that he promotes the same kind of responsible individualism, either explicitly or implicitly, in his own plays.

Although Anne Barbeau is the only one of the post-World War II generation of critics to refer specifically to the moral design of Restoration drama, many of them share an appreciation for the causes of the playwright's concern--the uncertainty and uneasiness born of political and intellectual revolutions--and each in his or her own way recognizes how the issues of these revolutions account in part for the content and method of the

playwright. Taken together, their insights suggest that playwrights like Sedley dealt with complex issues in a rather complex way.

Truly modern literature acknowledges and often reflects the complexity of existence; much of the complexity of plays like Sedley's baffles earlier critics because those critics do not recognize the early-modern concerns of the period and the impact of those concerns on the literature. If we add to these insights into the intellectual and political milieu of the period the recognition of the importance of love--the affirmation of love--in Restoration drama, then we have the means whereby to recognize moral design in Sedley's plays, to discern the deliberate technical accomplishment in the plays, and thus to place Sedley's literary achievement into proper perspective. The best way to make the case for moral design and literary achievement in Sedley's plays is to apply our understanding of skepticism, reason, the Platonic-Phythagorean tradition, the mechanical philosophy, individual responsibility, the political turbulence of seventeenth-century England, and Sedley's life to the three plays in question. This is precisely what the succeeding chapters attempt.

CHAPTER I

THE MULBERRY GARDEN

The Mulberry Garden has long attracted attention as an example of the so-called comedy of manners and as a vehicle for the celebrated wit of Sir Charles Sedley, the man Charles II dubbed "Apollo's Viceroy."¹ Hardly anyone, however, has recognized the play's central concern: its examination of government--not just in the sense of ruling a nation, but also in the sense of governing human behavior. Because the manners critics have focused primarily on the wit of the playwright and his play, because indeed these critics expect nothing serious or profound from this member of the "merry gang" and ringleader of the infamous drunken frolic at the Cock Tavern, they have judged Sedley's play less than successful, finding themselves at a loss to explain its seriousness and its odd admixture of heroes, beaux, fops, and coquettes; heroic, manners, and low-comedy plots; lofty love-honor debates, ridiculous dissimulation, and witty repartee; civil war, "love-dueling," and cudgeling. By making use of the insights of a recent generation of critics including Susan Staves, Norman Holland, Anne Barbeau, and Derek Hughes, however, one can see that political, social, and intellectual issues at the heart of Sedley's play--all part of his moral design--govern its content and organization. The Mulberry Garden is more serious

¹Pinto, Sedley, p. 56.

and possesses far more thematic unity and structural coherence than critics have been able to acknowledge.

I. WITTY ENTERTAINMENT

From Sedley's day to the present, the critical tendency to focus narrowly on his and other plays as witty entertainment derives partly from the one-sided stereotype of the Wits and their plays as artificial, frivolous, and shallow. Sedley's reputation for wit, as well as for profanity, says Vivian de Sola Pinto, accounted for the "immense crowds" attracted to the opening performance of The Mulberry Garden.² Pepys arrived hours early to see this long-awaited play by "so reputed a wit," only to find "many people already come in by private ways" ³ Like many in the theater, he expected "great matters": in other words, wit and laughter; but finding very little of either of these qualities, he proclaimed his disappointment with the play.⁴ Pepys allowed a preoccupation with wit, gaiety, and other popular but superficial features of the drama to obscure the operation of the play as a whole: "the whole play had nothing extraordinary in it at all," says Pepys, "neither of language or design" ⁵ The same

²Pinto, Sedley, p. 105.

³Pinto, Works, I, 105.

⁴Pinto, Works, I, 105.

⁵Pinto, Works, I, 105.

preoccupation with wit and gaiety has unfortunately obscured the play for generations of critics after Pepys.

An insistence on "all lightness of touch, all gaiety, ignoring . . . moral preoccupations . . ." ⁶ accounts for the critics' labeling Sedley's first play a flawed comedy of manners. Although the play as a whole puzzles them, they like the manners plot well enough, despite Pepys's objections. Three characters in particular--Everyyoung, Wildish, and Olivia--exhibit the wit, gaiety, and conviviality so important to this school of criticism. Sir John Everyyoung, an old Cavalier, dresses smartly, rides horses, drinks champagne, and generally enjoys life with gusto. His honesty, wisdom, and good nature contrast with the meanness, small-mindedness, and hypocrisy of his Puritan brother, Sir Samuel Forecast. Everyyoung's good-natured kidding of his brother and his exposure of Forecast's ridiculous dissimulation (when the latter dresses extravagantly to woo a widow) provide humor and support the social mode. Jack Wildish, one of the play's protagonists, shares Everyyoung's joi de vivre, good sense, and wit. His wit especially, when contrasted with the affectation and pretentiousness of Estridge and Modish, two fops, provides much of the play's humor. By exposing the fops' false tales of amorous conquest, Wildish succeeds in wooing Olivia, the play's other protagonist and his equal in wit, away from her ridiculous suitor, Estridge. Wildish and Olivia, the play's "gay couple" (to use the term coined by John Harrington

⁶Pinto, Sedley, p. 258.

Smith), provide the most brilliant, polished repartee, which Pinto calls "both from an artistic and historical point of view the most important thing in the play."⁷ Other critics also, despite their reservations about The Mulberry Garden as a whole, find considerable merit in the manners elements. Kathleen Lynch, for example, says that the characters of the manners plot "give the play all its life and color,"⁸ and John Wilcox sees the manners elements as influential in the success and evolution of the comedy of manners.⁹

While the manners approach offers a legitimate, albeit limited, explanation of popular appeal, it fails to account adequately for the non-manners elements and their role in the play as a whole. The Mulberry Garden begins with a rather serious debate between Everyyoung and Forecast over how much liberty a parent should allow his children, a debate which, Pinto says, "is soon forgotten in a tangle of intrigue"¹⁰ Forecast's daughters, Diana and Althea, face a choice between obeying their father and pursuing their love for two rebels he opposes, Eugenio and Philander. Eugenio and Philander have serious dilemmas of their own: they must choose between their commitment, as rebels, to the king and their devotion to Althea and Diana. Two other characters complicate the love-honor dilemmas further. Everyyoung's daughter Victoria loves Horatio,

⁷Pinto, Sedley, p. 256. John Harrington Smith reaches the same conclusion in The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy, p. 61.

⁸Lynch, pp. 156-157.

⁹Wilcox, p. 184.

¹⁰Pinto, Sedley, p. 250.

but Horatio loves Althea, who is promised by Forecast to Horatio but who is committed to Eugenio. Other plots add to the play's humor but also to its complexity. Wildish plots to trap Forecast into marrying a supposed rich widow (actually the maid of a rich widow), but the two fops, thinking they can get revenge on Wildish by thwarting the match, fall into the trap: Estridge marries the "widow." Forecast plots to gain the wealth of this widow by disguising himself and attempting to trick her into marriage. Ever-young, seeing his brother in disguise, hires bullies to cudgel him. Despite efforts to curry favor with the interregnum government, Forecast lands in prison with the royalist rebels, but all are released when Charles II is restored to the throne. Like Pepys, the more recent critics fail to understand the odd admixture of dramatic elements, suggesting that it is less an organic whole than a haphazard pandering to the tastes of Restoration audiences. Wilson refers to the play as "a derivative and imitative olio of plots, sub-plots, and counter-plots . . ."¹¹ and attempts to explain the play in terms of traditional dramatic formulas:

Two pairs of despairing lovers are at the usual cross-purposes: the two men love one girl, leaving the other out in the cold. Another heroic pair (Diana and Philander) seem to be unhappy for no reason at all. . . . Finally, all the plots are sorted out after a fashion, every Jack gets his Jill, and the rich widow, who turns out to be a cast mistress, is married to a minor rake who seems to have no other function in the play.¹²

¹¹Wilson, Court Wits, p. 154.

¹²Wilson, Court Wits, p. 154.

Pinto echoes Wilson's view of the play's complexity, alleging that Sedley "resolved to drag in by hook or crook every stock situation of contemporary comedy he could think of."¹³

Because critics like Lynch, Pinto, and Wilson regard The Mulberry Garden as a play largely flawed in its deviation from the manners formula, they are able to account for its theatrical success¹⁴ only by reference to Sedley's social prominence. "The stage success of the play," according to Pinto, "must have been due to his [Sedley's] reputation as a man of wit and fashion."¹⁵ Wilson feels, too, that "its measure of undeserved success was probably due to its author's eminence and courtly favor."¹⁶ While Sedley's reputation surely accounts for some of the comedy's theatrical success (the play was, as Pepys notes, "long expected"¹⁷), it is not unlikely that the audience also recognized and appreciated

¹³Pinto, Sedley, p. 251.

¹⁴Pinto, Works, I, 105. Pinto comments, "'The Mulberry Garden' seems to have been a successful acting play. Pepys went to see it again [after the premiere on 18 May 1668] on May 20 On June 29 he saw it a third time with his wife. There is no other record of performances, but it was probably revived in 1675 and 1688, when quarto editions were published." Drawing on the same sources, William Van Lennep corroborates Pinto's account of the play's staging in The London Stage, Part I: 1660-1700 (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), pp. 127, 136, 139, 221.

¹⁵Pinto, Sedley, p. 249.

¹⁶Wilson, Court Wits, p. 154.

¹⁷Pinto, Works, I, 105.

the moral design, which accounts for the comedy's complexity and which addresses serious issues on the minds of many Englishmen.

II. INTELLECTUAL ANALYSIS

Only Sedley's friend Sir George Etherege seems to have recognized the intellectual dimension of the play's complexity. In 1687 he wrote in defense of The Mulberry Garden, "Some barren sparks have found fault with what he [Sedley] has formerly done [that is, The Mulberry Garden] . . . onely because the fatness of the soile has produc'd to [sic] big a Crop."¹⁸ Pinto, because his critical bias blinds him to the play's operation as a whole, regards Etherege's comment as an acknowledgement of Sedley's "overloading of the plot."¹⁹ Granting that the complexity of the play presents critical problems, especially to the manners critics, I think that Etherege's entire statement places more emphasis on the limitations of "barren sparks" than on the limitations of Sedley's play. I submit that Etherege recognized the play's difficulty, not for all of Sedley's audience, but for "barren sparks" unable to appreciate his keen intellect and fertile imagination: "the fatness of the soile." His "Crop" is too big, not just because of surface complexity, but because of the intellectual issues informing surface structure--issues that the sparks could not appreciate. Etherege realizes, then, that men unfamiliar with the intellectual issues

¹⁸Pinto, Sedley, p. 248.

¹⁹Pinto, Sedley, p. 251.

criticize the play out of ignorance. Anne Barbeau's analysis of Dryden's heroic plays argues persuasively that they are informed by intellectual currents and that Dryden wrote for "the intelligent reader [who] would have been familiar with the scientific ideas of the day and, therefore, prepared for the quasi-geometrical design of Dryden's plays."²⁰ I think it equally plausible that Sedley, Dryden's patron and a learned man with whom Dryden discussed literature on many "genial nights,"²¹ built his plays on serious intellectual issues and wrote for the intelligent reader who would recognize these issues and their relevance to his "Crop."

III. ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT

In The Mulberry Garden the intellectual issues of Sedley's moral design center on government--a topic his critics have strangely ignored. The comedy is set during the English Civil War, during the last days before Restoration. The somber Roundhead Forecast aligns himself with the Puritan government and his daughters love rebels who oppose that government. Sedley, it will be remembered, experienced the injustices of the war firsthand, and his story recalls some of the experiences--the Puritans' confiscation of the estate of one of the rebels, for example. Charles I's quarrel with Parliament over the authority of his government led to the

²⁰Barbeau, p. 11.

²¹Pinto, Sedley, pp. 92-93.

war and his defeat, and the continuation of the debate over what shape England's government should take led to the Restoration, an event Sedley uses as a kind of deus ex machina to tie together the loose ends of his plots. In the Essay of Dramatic Poesy, Lisideius (generally acknowledged to represent Sedley²²) blames the lack of government, or order, for the decline of English drama. The interest in government is shown also, I think, in the subject that the Wits chose for their exercise in translation: the story of Pompey. The regicide, usurpation, and restoration of rightful government in Corneille's Mort de Pompée parallels England's experience with civil war, and the epilog to the Wits' translation promises an original play about England's war. In fact, The Mulberry Garden could well be the play about war and government promised by the Wits in their epilog:

They that Translated this, but practice now
To improve their Muse, and make her Worthy you [Charles II],
That she hereafter may Adorn the Stage
With your own story, making the coming Age
Admire the Firmness of a Mind so Young,
Tost in those Tempests you indur'd so Young,
Confusion first and Horrour shall appear,
Such as Involved us, while you Absent were,

²²Pinto, Sedley, pp. 89-90. In Court Wits, p. 176, however, John Harold Wilson argues, "Dryden's pictures of Lord Buckhurst as Eugenius and Sir Charles Sedley as Lisidieus in his Essay of Dramatic Poesy must not be taken too seriously." Wilson bases his argument on the assumption that Sedley and other Wits did not take life very seriously, an assumption which I attempt to refute in this chapter and in my general introduction.

Then with a change of Scene they shall behold
Your throne establish'd and an Age of Gold;²³

Although Charles II never appears in Sedley's story, the play does present the injustices of the war and argues for the superiority of the restored government. As Susan Staves, the only recent critic to recognize intellectual concerns in the play, observes, "The Mulberry Garden expresses the euphoria of the early Restoration" ²⁴ The play, however, is more than a simple panegyric of Charles II and the new government that inspired hope and confidence; more importantly, it examines why the Restoration government is superior, and this has much to do with its content and structure.

The apparently bifurcated nature of Sedley's first play reflects his comparison of the Puritan and Restoration theories of government. The combination of prose and verse, wits and heroes, realism and romance actually makes far more sense than critics have assumed, once one recognizes the attempt to show the superiority of Restoration political theory. Stuart Prall has observed that central to England's constitutional crises in the latter half of the seventeenth century was the issue of authority,²⁵ and this issue invited speculation on a number of related issues: the role of Parliament in government, the rights of citizens, the nature

²³Pompey the Great. A Tragedy. As it was Acted by the Servants of His Royal Highness the Duke of York, Sir Charles Sedley et al., trans. (London: Henry Herringman, 1664), p. 56.

²⁴Staves, p. 124.

²⁵Prall, pp. viii, 8.

of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, the causes of disorder, and so on. Not surprisingly, each of these important issues enters into Sedley's comparison of governments. The Puritan government used its authority to close the theaters and restrict entertainments allowed by the previous governments; Puritans attempted to impose their standards on the rest of society because, as Christopher Hill notes, they believed that "Conversion, sainthood, repression, [and] collective discipline . . . were the answer to the unsettled condition of society, the way to create a new order through creating new men."²⁶ Although he spent much of his life in exile, Charles II, like his fellow Englishmen, was ready to put an end to the disputation, extremism, bloodshed, and disorder of the war; the moderation, tolerance (at least at first), and liberty of his government struck a contrast with the extremism and, for some members of English society, repressive atmosphere of the Puritan government.²⁷ Antonia Fraser says that "the whole Restoration was based on an optimistic feeling that the king and Parliament would in future amicably share power"²⁸ Perhaps the trauma of civil war, as much as anything else, fostered the Wits' skeptical search for truth and meaning, rejecting the ideas that had caused so much suffering. Analysis of rival political

²⁶Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), pp. 38-39.

²⁷Prahl, pp. 22, 24.

²⁸Fraser, p. 189.

philosophies certainly formed an important part of this search, and the apparently bifurcated structure of the play reflects this search.

IV. USE OF MOLIÈRE

For examining the issues of authority, freedom, and tyranny, Molière's L'Ecole des Maris proved an excellent source and model--from the standpoint of both ideas and structure. Previous critics have assumed that Sedley uses Molière merely because of the popularity of this French playwright. Pinto, for example, sees this use of Molière as a manifestation of the Wits' francophilia.²⁹ John Wilcox thinks that Dryden's successful use of Molière in Sir Martin Mar-All (1667) inspired other playwrights to use Molière's plays, and citing Gerard Langbaine, observes that more than twenty-five Restoration plays use Molière in one way or another.³⁰ Molière's play proves most useful to Sedley, however, in its contrast of two theories of government, and especially in the contrast of ideas about the role of individual liberty; it is not, as Wilcox argues, "a mere device for opening a typical Restoration intrigue."³¹ L'Ecole des Maris provides a reasonable, systematic examination of government and liberty, the kind of examination that would appeal to the

²⁹Pinto, Sedley, pp. 96-97.

³⁰Wilcox, p. 1.

³¹Wilcox, p. 129.

new-philosophical attitude of Sedley and many of his contemporaries. It is, as P. J. Yarrow points out, Molière's "first play to contain a raisonneur, i.e., a character expressing a moderate, common-sense attitude"32

In L'Ecole's debate between two brothers over how to govern their wards, Sedley found a convenient model for his contrast of the Puritan and Restoration governments. Each play treats the question of liberty in government as a domestic, or family, issue. Molière's raisonneur, Ariste, disagrees with his conservative brother, Sganarelle, over how much liberty they should allow their wards, just as the liberal brother in Sedley's play, Everyyoung, disagrees with his conservative brother, Forecast, about how much liberty they should allow their daughters. Table I illustrates the parallels between the main characters in the two plays.

Table I. Character Parallels.

<u>The Mulberry Garden</u>	Role	<u>L'Ecole</u>
Forecast	the restrictive father/guardian	Sganarelle
Everyyoung	the liberal father/guardian	Ariste
Althea & Diana	the restricted daughters/ward	Isabelle
Olivia & Victoria	the liberated daughters/ward	Leonore
Eugenio & Philander	the forbidden suitor(s)	Valere

³²Yarrow, p. 214.

In each play, the brothers go beyond mere theorizing and, like the new philosophers of the seventeenth century, put their theories to the test; the behavior of the wards and daughters proves one brother right, the other wrong. So far, Sedley follows his source fairly closely, especially in the first few scenes of his play. The parallels between his play and Molière's include characterization, purpose, and, to some extent, plot.

Sedley's deviation from his source provides equally significant insights, however. Whereas Molière confines himself to examining family government and human behavior in general, Sedley very carefully ties these questions to the national controversy over freedom in England.³³ Molière's *Ariste* and *Sganarelle* are apolitical, but Sedley takes pains to associate Forecast with the repressive and intolerant Protectorate and Everyyoung, at least in dress and temperament, with the more liberal, tolerant Restoration government.

Forecast's appearance, ideas, and regulation of Althea and Diana identify him clearly with the Protectorate. His clothes are plain, he criticizes the behavior of Everyyoung and the liberty allowed Olivia and Victoria, and he objects to plays, romances, and other entertainments, preferring for the girls "some piece

³³Although few critics comment on the analogy between domestic government and national government, Sedley's audience could hardly have avoided associating Forecast with the Puritan government and Everyyoung with the Restoration government. Susan Staves is possibly the first critic to discuss the analogy, in Players' Scepters, p. 124: "Both plots are concerned with governance and honor, the upper plot with the governance of the state and men's honor, the lower with the governance of families and with women's honor."

of Huswifry, or at least some good Book (I. i. ll. 65-66).³⁴ Like other Puritans, he sees man as weak, easily corruptible, and prone to sin--in need of strict authority; he fully expects Olivia and Victoria to lose their good reputations because of the freedoms Everyyoung allows them, and he tells his brother, "if they were my Daughters I should be looking for Cradles and Nurses" (I. i. ll. 60-61). A virtual "Lord Protector" (like Cromwell) over Diana and Althea, Forecast feels his rigid discipline should extend to Everyyoung's household as well, fearing the bad influence of the liberated girls. Whereas Molière's tyrant Sganarelle opposes his ward's suitor, Valere, because he (Sganarelle) wants to marry her himself, Forecast's opposition to Eugenio is highly political. He tells Wildish,

Eugenio I never lik't, and as things stand now, am
right glad we had no more to do with him; but that
I am one whose Affection and good will to the State
has sufficiently manifested itself, I might be thought
to have a hand in their Design, and so have been
put in the Tower

(II. i. ll. 6-11)

Forecast's name might also have been intended to associate him with Puritanism: his smug confidence in his own and his daughters' future, his forecast, resembles the assurance implicit in the Calvinist doctrines of election and predestination.

³⁴This and all subsequent quotations of Sedley's plays are based on Vivian de Sola Pinto's edition of Sedley's Works. I have abandoned the distinction between italicized and non-italicized words, as Dennis Davison does in his edition of the Mulberry Garden, Restoration Comedies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). However, I have retained the capitalization of Pinto's edition.

Although Everyyoung's associations with Restoration political theory are more tenuous than Forecast's with the political theory of the Puritans, Sedley provides numerous indications that Everyyoung should be associated with the new government--in temperament if not in ideology. The liberal brother drinks champagne with friends and a "Brace" of girls, satirizes rural life, frequents fashionable places like Hyde Park and Coleby's, and bets on horses (I. ii. 11. 12-28). Molière had begun his play by having Sganarelle (the conservative, tyrannical brother) defend his lifestyle from the attacks of Ariste (the liberal brother). Sganarelle says, "Each of us must live as pleases him best."³⁵ To maintain the analogy between the liberal parent and the liberal Restoration government, Sedley deviates from Molière, making Everyyoung, the liberal, the brother who must defend himself from the other's intolerance. What Everyyoung argues in favor of liberal domestic government resembles Sganarelle's speech, but more importantly it resembles the tolerance of Charles II's administration:

Well, for all this heat, let's every one govern his
own family as he has a mind to't; I never vex my
self that your daughters live shut up as if they
were in Spain or Italy; nor pray don't you trouble
your self that mine see Plays, Balls, and take their
innocent Diversion, as the Custom of their Country
and their age requires.

(I. i. 11. 1-7)

When Forecast insists on his repressive regulation of Diana and Althea, Everyyoung answers with the kind of commonsense so valued

³⁵A. R. Waller, trans., The Plays of Molière, Vol. II (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1926), I, i, p. 241.

by the new philosophers: "I think those women who have been least us'd to Liberty, most apt to abuse it, when they come to it" (I. i. ll. 67-69). Molière's expression of this view is quite similar: Ariste argues,

her sex loves liberty; it cannot be governed properly
by severity; and suspicions, bolts, and bars do not
make either women or girls virtuous. A sense of
honor keeps them in the path of duty, not the severity
we use towards them. A woman who is only prudent
from compulsion is but a poor thing ³⁶

Whereas the Puritans saw repressive government as a necessary means of controlling sinful man, a raisonneur like Ariste or Everyoung recognizes the power of reason to help man act rightly and the importance of the freedom to exercise that reason. The Mulberry Garden becomes a symbol of the freedom to exercise reason, for better or for worse, and it contrasts with the confinement of Althea and Diana. In allowing Olivia and Victoria to go to the garden, Everyoung expresses his confidence that reason will keep his daughters from abusing their freedoms.

Other of Sedley's changes point also to a political purpose. Whereas Molière begins his play with Ariste and Sganarelle's argument over their own lifestyles, focusing on the brothers' relationship, Sedley begins with an argument over how much liberty each father should allow his daughter, thus strengthening the analogy between

³⁶Waller, I. ii. p. 251. These lines also resemble lines 7-10 of Sedley's translation "To A Man that lockt up his Wife" from Ovid's Amores, number XCIII in Pinto's Works, I, 97:

Spies, Locks, and Bolts may keep her brutal Part,
But thou'rt an odious Cuckold in her heart.
They that have Freedom use it least, and so
The power of ill does the design o'erthrow.

the government of the family and that of the nation. The focus in Sedley's play is much more on the relationship between the governor and those he governs; he even uses the word govern in this first speech of the play to support the analogy. Eugenio and Philander, the royalist conspirators against the Puritans, are two of Sedley's most political creations in the play. The corresponding character in Molière's play, Valere, has no apparent political affiliation. As these two heroes of Sedley's heroic plot fight for their king and their "bleeding Country" (III. i. 1. 75), they serve as a mouth-piece for overtly royalist sentiments, decrying the tyranny of the usurpers (III. i. 11. 75-88). According to Pinto, "Molière's aim was primarily to express a moral truth and incidentally to paint human nature. The aim of . . . [Sedley] . . . was to give a gay and witty picture of the fashionable society of the day."³⁷ Sedley's changes for political purposes show, however, that he, like Molière, aims to express a moral truth. Building on the same general assumption--that reason and freedom, not authoritarian government, foster responsible behavior--Sedley merely extends Molière's moral truth to political ideas.

Sedley's emphasis on both bad and good government, a deviation from Molière, makes the bifurcated approach even more evident. Like Molière, Sedley emphasizes the negative consequences of repression--the former author through the deceptive behavior of

³⁷Pinto, Sedley, pp. 251-52.

Sganarelle's ward, the latter through the incorrect behavior of Forecast's daughters. Unlike Molière, however, Sedley demonstrates the positive effects of allowing Olivia and Victoria greater freedom than their cousins have. By extending the comparison by way of analogy to national government, Sedley illustrates his belief not only in what is wrong with Puritan repression but also in what is right with the freedom of the Restoration.

In Molière's play *Ariste* has offered Leonore freedom to choose her own husband. But Sganarelle, intent on marrying Isabelle, offers her little freedom and no choice in her marriage. Backed into a corner, she must resort to deception, and this deception becomes Molière's primary means of showing the unreasonableness of Sganarelle's theory of parental government. Isabella pretends to hate Valere and to resent his love declarations, hoping to trick her guardian. She writes a letter to Valere warning him of the impending forced marriage; then she tells Sganarelle that it is a love letter that she wants him to return to Valere unopened. This kind of secret communication continues while the two young people actually affirm their love for each other. Finally Sganarelle follows a girl he thinks to be *Ariste*'s ward, Leonore (actually the girl is Isabelle), to a residence. Confident that *Ariste*'s lax authority has allowed Leonore to cheat her guardian, Sganarelle sends for *Ariste* and for a magistrate to marry Valere, who is also at the residence, to the girl within. The marriage takes place, but when Sganarelle discovers that Isabelle, not Leonore, has married

Valere, it is clear that his tight reign was responsible for the deception. Leonore, on the other hand, who has the freedom to choose her husband, respects Ariste and makes plans to marry him the next day.

Sedley shows the right behavior of Olivia and Victoria to be just as important as the wrong behavior of Diana and Althea. Forecast forbids his daughters ever to see the rebels, Eugenio and Philander, again; furthermore he promises Althea's hand to Horatio, a man in favor with the Puritan government. The girls submit to their father's tyranny, and only the deux ex machina, the Restoration at the end of the play, allows them to make the right decision, marrying the men they love. Olivia and Victoria, given the freedom to choose their own beaux and husbands, use their good reason to marry the men best suited to them, the men they love. This dual emphasis results in the type of symmetrical plot structure one associates with the mathematical, mechanical minds of seventeenth-century new-philosophers.³⁸ Everyoung's daughters

³⁸Holland, pp. 15-16, comments on this relationship between neat symmetry and the scientific spirit of the latter half of the seventeenth century: "The neatness of the love-honor conflicts reminds one of the neatness of scientific descriptions, particularly that most characteristic of seventeenth-century inventions, the two-dimensional coordinate system for the graphical representation of processes." Similar observations are found in Cecil V. Deane, Dramatic Theory and the Rhymed Heroic Play (London: Frank Cass & Company, 1967), p. 35, as well as in Barbeau's study of Dryden's heroic plays, pp. 11-12. Although Holland, Deane, and Barbeau examine mechanical symmetry in the heroic drama, the same symmetry appears in comedies as well.

dominate the comic, realistic scenes of the play; Forecast's daughters, the heroic, romantic scenes. Each brother has two daughters, and each set of daughters faces choices complicated by a love triangle. Althea must choose between Estridge and Wildish. Victoria, though paired with Modish, actually loves Horatio. Althea, though promised to Horatio, loves Eugenio.

The combination of realistic and romantic dramatic elements against which Sedley's critics protest so readily actually serves a quite useful purpose--it allows him, through analogy, to make the important comparison between the Puritan and Restoration governments. The heroic element in particular allows the kind of serious treatment of political issues that would be difficult or impossible in the "pure" manners plot. Recognizing the serious purpose and issues of The Mulberry Garden prepares the way for accepting the serious elements of the play. Sedley gained experience with serious drama of ideas when he helped translate Corneille's La Mort de Pompée, and he recognized Molière's serious and "scientific" means of examining attitudes in L'Ecole des Maris. That he draws on each author's techniques to write a play which examines ideas about government "scientifically," systematically, should come as no surprise. Also, this kind of analogy and bifurcation is not without precedent and reason, for, as Susan Staves points out, some

early Restoration . . . plays . . . accept the conventional analogies between family and state [and], indeed . . . depend upon them for the degree of structural coherence they achieve, plays like Sedley's Mulberry Garden (1668) or Dryden's Conquest of Granada (1669-70). Apparently it sometimes seemed impossible to deal

adequately with the issue of authority without having an upper plot involving sovereign/subject conflict and a lower plot involving domestic conflict.³⁹

While critics attribute the kind of multi-strand construction one finds in Sedley's Mulberry Garden to a retention of pre-Restoration dramatic technique,⁴⁰ the odd combination serves Sedley's intellectual purposes well and is not the aberration some critics think it to be. Etherege's first play, The Comical Revenge, or, Love in a Tub (1664), also combines heroic and comic plots and, in fact, served as an important model for Sedley. Seeing the connections between Molière and Sedley contributes to a better understanding of structure, issues, and characterization; understanding the connections between Etherege and Sedley contributes even more significantly to our appreciation of Sedley's moral design and the operation of the play as a whole. Molière's play helps us understand that the Mulberry Garden of Sedley's play serves not merely as an appropriate setting for a manners plot but, more importantly, as a symbol of freedom, a place where people may use their good sense and freedom to make their own decisions and interact peaceably. Etherege's play also provides insights into the nature of human conflict, allowing us to recognize the Mulberry Garden as a battlefield of sorts.

³⁹Staves, p. 123.

⁴⁰Wilcox, p. 73; Robert Hume, The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 256.

The recognition of the importance of conflict to questions of government is apparent in the title of Etherege's first play: although the full title--The Comical Revenge, or, Love in a Tub--refers in part to an incident in which a maid, Betty, locks a valet, Dufoy, into a sweating tub (used to cure venereal disease), conflict in the form of revenge occurs on more than one level. Etherege compares the causes of conflict at each level and the resolutions of conflict at each level.⁴¹

V. USE OF ETHEREGE

A comparison of The Mulberry Garden to Etherege's first comedy reveals that Sedley's complex organization derives largely from The Comical Revenge and that Sedley's techniques for examining government come partly from this play. Each play compares the conflicts of three plots: a high plot in the heroic mode, a middle plot in the manners mode, and a low-comedy plot. This arrangement fits conveniently into Sedley's scheme for treating the question of liberty in government. Althea and Diana belong to the conflicts of the high plot, Olivia and Victoria to the conflicts of the middle plot, and Forecast, Estridge, and Modish to the conflicts of the low plot. Whereas the precise function of these last three characters and their schemes is not entirely clear as part of the story's

⁴¹For this insight and many that follow, I owe an obvious debt to Norman Holland's analysis of The Comical Revenge in The First Modern Comedies, pp. 20-27.

thematic bifurcation, their function is more easily discerned in the tripartite organization suggested by Etherege's play. As Norman Holland points out, Etherege uses his contrast of the three plots in order to present a "realistic but golden mean" of behavior in his middle plot.⁴² Sedley's tripartite structure works in very much the same way. As regards the question of liberty in government, the behavior of Olivia and Victoria proves superior to the behavior of Althea and Diana in the high plot, also to the behavior of Estridge, Modish, and Forecast in the low plot. Sedley's middle (manners) plot presents the golden mean between two extremes in the same way that Etherege's does.

In the high plot of each play, the author intends for his audience to view both the cause and the resolution of conflicts negatively. In The Comical Revenge Graciana loves Beaufort (the cousin of Etherege's protagonist, Sir Frederick Frollick) and he loves her; however, family honor requires that she accept Colonel Bruce. Her brother, Lovis, an admirer of Bruce, had arranged the relationship, and her sister, Aurelia, presses Graciana to honor that commitment. Family honor stands in the way of individual love for Aurelia too, who, ironically, loves Colonel Bruce but remains silent out of a sense of duty to the family's commitment to the match. In The Mulberry Garden, Forecast's commitment to Horatio, a Roundhead, forces Althea to bow to her sense of honor

⁴²Holland, p. 25.

rather than to follow through with her loving relationship with Eugenio. Diana must simply honor her father's command never to see Philander again. Taken at face value, negative uses of honor in the high plots of each play seem to suggest that the author advocates rejecting honor in favor of love; this confusion doubtless has contributed much to the misinterpretations propagated by the morals critics and the manners critics. However, these plays are not necessarily anti-heroic; rather, they reflect the new-philosophical skepticism that demands a questioning of past assumptions, authority, conventions, ideas, and ideals. Etherege and Sedley ask the audience to question the validity of the so-called honor governing the behavior of the high-plot characters.

This code of "honor" accounts for the conflicts of male characters in each high plot, also. In Etherege's play Col. Bruce challenges Beaufort to a duel to preserve his honor after learning that Beaufort loves Graciana. Even after Beaufort helps his rival fight off a band of attackers hired by an enemy of Bruce, the offended colonel insists on going through with the duel--again, out of a sense of honor. Disarmed by Beaufort, Bruce falls on his sword, and only the commonsense of Beaufort's second, Frollick, prevents Bruce's second, Lovis, from falling on his sword in compliance with the code of "honor."⁴³ Thinking that Bruce may die, Graciana feels guilty and rejects Beaufort, even though she still loves him.

⁴³Holland, p. 22.

However, Bruce recovers, Aurelia admits her love to him, Bruce returns her love, and Aurelia and Bruce are finally united. The point Etherege tries to make here is that unquestioning adherence to a code of behavior is unrealistic and even dangerous. This artificial code nearly causes Lovis to fall on his sword and Bruce to die! It nearly causes Graciana to reject the man she loves and Aurelia to remain silent about her love for Bruce.

Sedley's Eugenio and Philander face two conflicts rather than just one; unlike the dueling of Etherege's high plot, however, these serve as contrasts to the conflicts of Althea and Diana rather than as additional examples of a misused code of behavior. Eugenio and Philander must choose between their love for Althea and Diana and their commitment to the royalist cause. Choosing honor over love makes them enemies of Forecast, effectively prevents the lovers from meeting except in secret, and threatens their relationships with Althea and Diana. Disguised as a boy, Diana upbraids Philander for his choice:

your fault was great,
To think of Honour when the day was set
For Hymens Rites
(V. i. 11. 92-94)

And she tells Althea,

On thee Eugenio did his Life, bestow,
To me Philander did his Service vow;
Yet both for Honour have those ties despised
(I. iv. 11. 25-27)

Although ostensibly both men and women in the high plot choose honor over love, two important factors make the men's behavior

superior to and more reasonable than the women's. First, Eugenio and Philander make their choices freely; Althea and Diana are bound by a code of "honor." Forecast, like Ariste in Molière's play, forces the choice; and as Ariste observes, "A woman who is only prudent from compulsion is but a poor thing." Second, Eugenio and Philander align themselves with a truly honorable cause--the royalist resistance to the Commonwealth--whereas Althea and Diana accept unquestioningly a code which, in this particular instance, is based on anything but honor. As the play unfolds, the audience realizes that the girls' behavior supports Forecast's greed more than it supports any real ideological commitment he might have to the Commonwealth. For example, although Forecast claims to oppose Eugenio and Philander for political reasons (a halftruth), he admits to Wildish that he resents Eugenio's father's having outbid him for a piece of property, he complains that Eugenio is not "the man he was; he had an Estate, 'Tis now sequester'd, he dare not show his Head . . ." (II. i. ll. 28-30). Forecast prefers the more wealthy suitor, Horatio, who has "Six thousand pounds a year, an Estate well Wooded, and I am told very improveable . . ." (II. i. ll. 3-5). Although they submit to their father's tyranny, even Althea and Diana recognize that the royalist cause is truly honorable. Althea says,

for who that had a grain
Of Honour in him, cou'd endure the Reign
Of proud Usurpers, whose Relentless will,
Is all the Law by which men spare or kill;
And his true Prince in Banishment behold;
Worthy of more than Fortune can with-hold
(I. iv. ll. 36-41)

Althea and Diana finally accept their lovers' choice of honor, recognizing its validity, and respect them for it (I. iv. ll. 48-49).

Two points merit special attention in this contrast of conflicts. Sedley obviously does not condemn all codes of honor: he is not totally anti-heroic. As a skeptic, he considers each code on its merits, and he does find merit in the honorable efforts of Eugenio and Philander for the royalist cause. Forecast's government, on the other hand, hardly merits the support of Althea and Diana. While honoring one's parents does not violate the rules of good sense, blind acquiescence to tyranny does. Sedley does not, then, simply cater to Restoration tastes for the heroic by injecting formulaic conventions; rather, he deliberately contrasts a valid love-honor conflict with an invalid one, and his new-philosophical skepticism allows him to distinguish between the two, laying bare the pretense and deception of Forecast. The second point is that Forecast's selfish, deceptive behavior contrasts with the selfless and truly honorable behavior of the rebels he condemns. Table II illustrates Sedley's contrasts.

Sedley's use of Etherege's high plot works two ways. On one level, it supports the general contrast of theories of government by suggesting to Sedley ways he can demonstrate the fallacies of the Forecast/Puritan theory of government. On another, more important level, it suggests the problems with Althea and Diana's behavior. I think Sedley uses the heroic mode in part because he recognizes in it the potential for error, through blind

Table II. Contrast of Choices.

	Conflict	Choice	Reason
Althea & Diana } →	obeying Forecast or Eug. & Phil.	false honor	forced code of behavior
Eugenio & Philander } →	royalist cause or Althea & Diana	true honor	free will
Forecast →	Puritan gov't. or royalists	false honor (no other choice)	greed and fear

acquiescence to convention or authority, that stands in the way of free exercise of reason every bit as much as tyranny does. As Table II makes clear, both tyranny and blind acquiescence stand in the way of responsible, honorable behavior; Sedley is careful to show, however, through his use of Eugenio and Philander, that he can sympathize with some of the heroic ideals of the mode, even though the conventions sometimes conflict with his new-philosophical sensibility.

Sedley's low-comedy plot also owes much to Etherege's The Comical Revenge. Like Etherege he uses the conflicts of the lower plot as negative examples. Although Sedley has nothing like Etherege's comic love relationship between Dufoy and Betty, the two plays do share a number of similarities in characters and situations.

One of the most obvious debts is Sedley's Forecast-Widow relationship. In Etherege's play, A Puritan knight, Sir Nicholas

Cully, will do almost anything to marry a supposedly rich widow. Like Forecast, he is greedy and unscrupulous: he takes possession of estates (I. iii. p. 19),⁴⁴ dresses hypocritically in stylish clothes (IV. ii. p. 68), and affects the behavior of his rival, Sir Frederick Frollick (p. 69). In each play the relationship with the "widow" turns out to be a conflict, a contest of wills to see who can dominate the other. Forecast and Cully obviously are after money; greed is the motivating force in their conflict. This greed is especially evident in Forecast's language.

When consulting Wildish about how to woo the widow, Forecast asks, "When am I to see your fair and wealthy Cousin . . .?" (II. iii. 1. 1). Although the old Puritan refers first to beauty, the wealth of the "widow" interests him most. Seeing her for the first time, he refers to her in terms of wealth: "O the endless treasure of a Virtuous Wife!" (II. iv. 11. 1-2). In an attempt to console the woman as she cries, Sir Samuel remarks, "Heaven bless the Estate, and Widow of my good Friend your Husband . . ." (II. iv. 11. 36-37); apparently the estate means more to him than the widow, for it comes first in his blessing. Greed continues to be Forecast's primary concern after his peremptory attempt to console the widow. He asks her about her business concerns, promises her that "five-thousand pounds well dispos'd . . . 'tis able to procure us Judgements

⁴⁴This and all further references to The Comical Revenge come from A. Norman Jeffares, Restoration Comedy, I (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974).

on half the young Prodigals of this Age . . . ," boasts that his kinsman is a judge who can pervert justice in their favor and that they will be able to buy a thousand pounds worth of lands this way for only a hundred (II. iv. ll. 58-60, 69-71). Moreover, he tells her that a woman's gold and silver mean more to him than the "red and white" of every milkmaid (II. iv. ll. 85-87). If Sedley's audience has had any questions about the motives behind Forecast's banishment of Eugenio and Philander and his strict government of Althea and Diana, this scene strips away the pretense to reveal the true baseness of his character.

In the Forecast-widow relationship as in the Cully-widow relationship, greed, rather than love or honor, is the true motivating force governing the behavior of the Puritan and his treatment of the widow. Sedley's Forecast appears slightly more evil than Etherege's Cully because, while Cully must marry wealth in order to repay a debt, Forecast preys on a grieving widow and has no pressing need for her money. Another interesting difference is that Cully competes with Sir Frederick Frollick but Forecast competes with his brother, Sir John Everyyoung. As Pinto notes, Sir John Everyyoung's interruption of Forecast's visit to the widow "is not unlike Sir Frederick Frollick's similar escapade in The Comical Revenge."⁴⁵ In fact, Sedley seems to have based Everyyoung at least partly on Frollick.

⁴⁵Pinto, Works, I, 101.

In each play, the so-called widow is an imposter. In Etherege's play, the widow is Grace, Wheedle's mistress and part of a scheme to bilk Cully of a large sum of money. One of the more important conflicts of Etherege's play pits Wheedle and Palmer (two con men) against their dupe, Cully. Recognizing the beauty of the irony in Etherege's plot--the duper being duped, using greed to catch a greedy man--Sedley imitates the plot, but Wildish, not a couple of sharpers, is behind the plot to trap Forecast. In The Comical Revenge, Frollick establishes his behavior as a golden mean partly by straightening out the conflicts of the lower plot, saving both the real widow and Sir Nicholas Cully and forcing the sharpers to marry his (Frollick's) cast mistresses. In The Mulberry Garden, Wildish intends to use the widow scheme to trap Forecast, but Estridge falls into the trap instead. That Wildish seems at first a vindictive character but later becomes a true lover is significant. He is not a static character like Forecast or the fops, or, for that matter, like Etherege's Sir Frederick Frollick. One might even say that Wildish's movements from selfishness and an overly antagonistic and predatory attitude compromise and a cooperative attitude is analogous to England's movement from civil war to cooperation and peace.

In The Comical Revenge Etherege compares the duel of the high plot with the sharpers' challenging Cully to a duel. Of course, the low-plot duel appears ridiculous by comparison, but on another level, they share an important similarity: neither

is justified. In each plot, behavior is forced, not guided by reason and free consent. An artificial code of behavior governs actions in the high plot; in the low plot, greed motivates both the sharpers and Cully. Wheedle and Palmer know that Cully will not go through with the duel over his debt to Palmer; they realize that involving him in the scheme to marry the supposed widow will allow him to pay the debt, appeal to his greed, and make them an even greater fortune.

In The Mulberry Garden Sedley seems to approach the comparison of conflicts the same way. The love-honor debates of Althea and Diana in the high plot strike a sharp contrast with the Forecast-Widow relationship of the low plot, yet these relationships share an important similarity: in each case, the free exercise of reason is denied. Althea and Diana submit to Forecast's tyranny; Forecast, a slave to his own greed, ignores the "widow"'s feelings as well as his own. Like the sharpers of Etherege's play, Wildish knows he must appeal to the greed of the devious Puritan.

Although The Comical Revenge presents a neat contrast of a duel in the high plot to a duel in the low plot, the only conflict in Sedley's play approaching anything like a parallel to the fight between Eugenio and the Parliamentary soldiers is the cudgeling of Forecast in III. iii. Pinto explains the scene as Sedley's warning to Kynaston, an actor who had been mimicking Sedley.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Pinto, Works, I, 101-102.

The cudgeling scene contributes, then, to the play's symmetry: In The Mulberry Garden as in The Comical Revenge, physical conflicts and love antagonism in the low plot parallel similar situations in the high plot. Sedley aims, of course, at far more than symmetry. The combination of the sublime in the high plot with the ridiculous in the low plot accentuates the degree of extremism practiced by the characters of each plot. The extreme selflessness of Diana and Althea nearly leads to disaster. The extreme selfishness of Forecast is equally responsible for conflicts in the play. Either position seems to preclude the possibility of the kind of free and rational decision making advocated by Everyoung at the beginning of the play. Althea refers to the enslaving grip of greed on her father when she tells him,

Sir, the happiness of life lies not in wealth, in
Title, or in shew, but in the mind, which is not
to be forc'd; and we are not the less Slaves for
being bound in Chains of Gold
(II. i. ll. 54-57)

Between the extremes of selflessness in the high plot and selfishness in the low plot, Sedley offers the more realistic, moderate behavior of manners characters in the middle plot.

The manners plot that most scholars find to be the most interesting feature of the play is indeed important--but not just because it is the manners plot, not just because it portrays witty, carefree, socially acceptable behavior. As part of Sedley's tripartite contrast of plots, characters, and conflicts, it provides the golden mean of behavior as well as answers to Sedley's question of liberty in government.

From the standpoint of the question of liberty in government, Olivia and Victoria are the most important characters in the middle plot, and their behavior must appear very positive in comparison with the behavior of Diana and Althea in order for this plot to conform to the scheme suggested by Molière. Although they correspond to Leonore in Molière's play, they owe much more to Gatty and Ariana, Etherege's two heroines in She wou'd if she cou'd. Like Olivia and Victoria, Gatty and Ariana come from the country to visit the town (She wou'd, I. ii. p. 13⁴⁷), ramble in the Mulberry Garden, and engage in what John Harrington Smith calls "love dueling." Pinto suggests that Olivia and Victoria recall the two sisters of Sedley's brother's widow, Katherine and Mary Savage, "who were probably flighty girls in 1656. . . . It needs no great stretch of the imagination to picture Katherine and Mary Savage, like Olivia and Victoria in the play, repairing unescorted and masked to the Mulberry Garden"48

From the standpoint of the tripartite contrast, the most important character of the middle plot is Wildish. His behavior, like Frollick's in The Comical Revenge, must appear reasonable and superior in comparison to the behavior of the characters in the other two plots. Wildish has Frollick's good sense but, in his wittiness and gentlemanly behavior, owes more to the heroes

⁴⁷Dennis Davison, ed., Restoration Comedies (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1970).

⁴⁸Pinto, Sedley, pp. 45-46.

of She wou'd if she cou'd, Courtall and Freeman. Moreover, Wildish's relationship with Olivia corresponds to Courtall's relationship with Gatty.

For their behavior to be superior, the characters of the middle plot must avoid the greed, deceit, and general viciousness and selfishness of the low-plot characters and the tendency of the high-plot characters to allow an artificial code of behavior to dominate their lives unreasonably. In other words, the characters must allow each other the liberty of mutual consent in the establishment of relationships. The so-called manners of this plot allow this golden mean of behavior, although the protagonists do not achieve it immediately. Like the characters of the high plot, they have an artificial code of behavior, what Kathleen Lynch calls a social mode. As John Harrington Smith notes, this code calls for antagonism between the sexes,⁴⁹ on the surface, the kind of antagonism one expects in selfish low-plot characters like Forecast. However, the war between the sexes is more a game than actual hostility--unless it gets out of hand.

The characters' ability to strike a balance between the two extremes depends very much, says Norman Holland, on their ability to distinguish between, and to balance, inner convictions and the desire to conform to social expectations.⁵⁰ Holland calls this

⁴⁹Smith, p. 41.

⁵⁰Holland, p. 5.

tension "appearance versus nature" (that is, inner nature). In the middle plot as in the other two plots, a character's success at making independent decisions, without becoming a slave to social expectations, requires the ability to distinguish between the two elements of this tension; it requires new philosophical skepticism, reason, and independence. "Both language and action," says Holland, "represent human conduct split under the pressure of conformity into visible, social appearance and a personal, private nature. Folly is the confusion of the two; wisdom is their separation and balance."⁵¹

The initial actions of Olivia, Victoria, Wildish, and the two fops (Estridge and Modish), reveal an uncertainty about this balance between appearance and nature, a difficulty in balancing the two. This uncertainty contributes, in turn, to the problems they have in resolving questions of liberty and conflict. Sedley's earlier title for the play may in fact reflect this uncertainty. The Wandering Ladys refers to Olivia and Victoria, of course, and most scholars would see this title as appropriate merely because the adventures of the heroines constitute the main action of the manners plot. "Perhaps," says Pinto, "it was suggested by the bold frolics of the Maids of Honour, who, imitating the court gallants, had sometimes sallied forth from Whitehall in disguise."⁵²

⁵¹Holland, p. 37.

⁵²Pinto, Sedley, p. 104.

More likely, the wandering of Olivia and Victoria reflects the Restoration search for meaning and fulfillment: in the freedom of the garden they must choose not merely between suitors but also between attitudes and between ideological/intellectual systems behind those attitudes. The garden is a battleground of beaux, coquettes, and fops; more importantly, however, it is a battleground of these intellectual systems and ideologies--romantic platonism, predatory Hobbism, and the golden mean of free, consensual, contractual government. When asked by Forecast where they intend to go, Victoria answers vaguely, "we were only going a Rambling" (I. i. 1. 81). But the ladies are not the only wanderers; as Pinto notes in his explanation of the title, these ladies are imitating the court gallants. Perhaps Sedley's recognition that both men and women wander caused him to change his title to the place where the wandering and the conflicts take place: the Mulberry Garden.

Much of the repartée for which the play is famous reflects neither the extreme artificiality of the high plot nor the deceptive and predatory selfishness of the low plot, but rather a golden mean--not too conventional and not really antagonistic. For example, military terminology in the middle plot is conventional yet creative, suggesting hostility without really meaning it. In private, Wildish and the fops discuss conquests of women the way soldiers discuss military achievements. Women are "impregnable Forts" (with the obvious pun on "impregnable"), "Plunder," and a "Conquest"; their heart is a "fortification" which makes "resistance" to the "Seige"

of wooing (I. ii. ll. 70-76). Planning for the "battle" with Estridge and Modish, Olivia observes, "ours are most accomplished Mounsieurs, must be assaulted on all parts e're they'll yield; must have their Ears charmed as well as their Eyes . . ." (III. ii. ll. 5-7). So far, this sex antagonism is only playful, however; there is no real hostility.

Hunting and gaming imagery likewise seems to reflect only friendly rivalry. Seeing Estridge and Modish at the Mulberry Garden, Wildish asks, "What, is there store of Game here, Gentlemen?" and comments, "I thought this place had been so full of Beauties, that like a Pack of Hounds in a Hare-Warren, you cou'd not hunt one for another . . ." (IV. i. ll. 24, 25, 29-30). For Olivia, being severe to men is only part of the game:

The only way to oblige most men is to use 'um thus, a little now and then; even to their faces, it gives 'um an Opinion of our wit; and is consequently a Spur to theirs: the great pleasure of Gaming were lost, if we saw one anothers hands; and of Love, if we knew one anothers Hearts: there would be no room for good Play in the One, nor for Address in the Other
(I. iii. ll. 29-36)

In the same vein, Olivia refers to courtship as fishing and gambling: "Who ever caught any thing with a naked hook? nothing venture, nothing win, and for my part I am resolv'd to allow all innocent liberty . . ." (III. ii. ll. 21-24).

Although the characters of the middle plot use imagery of war, hunting, and gambling, the repartée betrays no actual viciousness or insensitivity. In contrast, when Forecast says he admires

gold and silver rather than the beauty of a woman, he means it; he wants to trick the "widow" into marriage only because he wants her fortune and the power it would afford. Olivia, Victoria, and Wildish engage in sex antagonism primarily as a game, and Olivia's comparison of courtship to a game of cards underscores the playful nature of their remarks. Forecast's deceit represents a denial of liberty: the widow lacks the truth, he thinks, to make a reasonable decision about marriage. He deliberately denies her the ability to distinguish between his appearance and his true inner nature. In contrast, Olivia, Victoria, and Wildish do distinguish between appearance and reality, and their language represents less an attempt to tyrannize the other sex than witty fun.

Nevertheless, the manners characters wander; they search for truth and meaning; their achievement of balance between appearance and nature and between selfishness and selflessness is neither immediate nor complete. Some of the language in the play suggests that they do not always distinguish successfully between appearance and nature, that they sometimes get too caught up in their roles as playful antagonists, and that they sometimes really do seem to deny the opposite sex the freedom and the reason to make decisions. Women are seen as "Animals," "Cattel" (IV. i. l. 102), hard-to-tame creatures (IV. i. ll. 207-208), and birds (V. ii. ll. 34-36). Or they are food for the appetite; Estridge says, "I am not for those Ladies that deal by whole-sail, a bit off the Spit serves my turn as well as a whole joint, and methinks has a prettier relish"

(IV. i. ll. 74-77). Modish boasts, "Two young juicy Girls . . . stick as close to us, as the Bark to the tree, and part as unwilling from us, as green fruit does from the stone . . ." (IV. i. ll. 119-122).

Wildish defends Forecast's mistreatment of Diana and Althea by intimating that women are brainless children.

for so the Fan be play'd
with, the hand kist; in fine, the passion handsomly
discharg'd, 'tis no great matter who does it. As
Children cry after their old Nurses, but 'till they
are acquainted with their new: so young Ladies regret
the loss of one Servant, but till they have got the
same familiarity with another
(II. i. ll. 66-72)

For Wildish, a relationship with a woman can seem a mere business transaction: "My piece makes my Complement when I come in, and my Excuse when I go away . . ." (I. ii. ll. 100-101). This links him to Forecast in the low plot, who establishes his relationship with the widow purely on the basis of greed and calls her "a tender piece" (III. ii. l. 138).

The women's language, too, at times seems to go beyond mere playfulness, debasing relationships by comparing them to commerce. Olivia tells Diana, "'Twere ill husbandry in a Mercer to be thrifty in his Patterns, it often disparages a good stuff; and too great reserv'dness in one of us, especially at the first, might give a discouragement to our further acquaintance" (III. ii. ll. 8-12).

The most compelling evidence that the protagonists of the middle plot almost carry the conventions of conflict too far in

the manners mode lies in their near rejection of love. When Estridge asks Wildish, "Thou never knew'st it seems what 'twas to be in love then," Wildish replies, "No, faith, I never let the Disease run on so far . . ." (I. ii. ll. 108-109).⁵³ Olivia tells Victoria, "This Matrimony is a Pill will scarce down with a young man without guiding; let Estridge believe I am in love with him, and when he leaves me, he'll find I'm not" (III. ii. ll. 24-27).⁵⁴

Sedley indicates that his manners characters become addicted to the social mode for its own sake as much as Forecast becomes addicted to greed and power and the heroic characters become addicted to their heroic code. Chastised by Olivia for defending Forecast's tyranny over Althea and Diana, Wildish admits that he is merely following the conventions of the mode: "This is only the way of talking I have got among my Companions, where when we meet over a Bottle of Wine, 'tis held as great a part of wit to rallee women handsomly behind their back, as to flatter 'um to their Faces" (II. i. ll. 87-91); and he explains, "All that I have done of late, has been meer compliance, as Papists go to Church for fear of the

⁵³The reference to love as a disease appears in Sedley's other two staged plays as well. In Bellamira, Thisbe says that love is "like the Small Pox" (II, ii. ll. 74-75), and in Antony and Cleopatra, Iras calls love a "mighty ill" (II. i. l. 111). Here and elsewhere the comparison of love to something negative indicates either that the speaker does not understand love or that his attitude reflects a conventional attitude.

⁵⁴Compare the similar metaphor in Sedley's late poem about matrimony, The Happy Pair (1702): "And gilded Pills, tho' bitter, may delight/ The liquerish lust of wav'ring Appetite" (ll. 128-129). The poem appears in Pinto's edition of the Works, I, beginning on p. 65.

penalty" (II. i. ll. 108-110). The comparison to the Papists may be noteworthy, for Charles II and others like him (probably Sedley) desired an end to extremism and, in its place, a new mood of tolerance; Charles II twice tried to enact an Act of Indulgence.⁵⁵ The point here and elsewhere in the play, again, is that compulsion is wrong. Wildish's behavior here, his addiction to the social mode, seems every bit as much a matter of compulsion as the Papists' forced compliance to national religious observances.

Sedley provides strong evidence also for Olivia's near addiction to the social mode, the reliance more on appearance than on nature to guide behavior. In Olivia's preference of the Mulberry Garden over the country walks of their home, the appeal lies not in the garden itself as much as it lies in the mode which is such an important part of life in the garden:

methinks 'tis much better than the long Walk
at home: for in my opinion half a score young men,
and fine Ladies well drest, are a greater Ornament
to a Garden, than a Wilderness of Sycamores, Orange,
and Lemmon Trees; and the rustling of rich Vests
and Silk Pettycoats, better Musick than the purling
of Streams, Chirping of Birds, or any of our Country
Entertainments ⁵⁶

(I. iii. ll. 4-11)

At the beginning of the middle plot, then, the relationships, or the conflicts, resemble the relationships of the low plot because

⁵⁵See Chapter I, p. 44.

⁵⁶Pinto's citation of this passage (Sedley, p. 254) as a true example of wit and manners points to the seductiveness of the social mode, the temptation to pattern behavior on the basis of superficial convention. While contributing to the gay and witty atmosphere of the manners plot, the passage more importantly betrays Olivia's preoccupation with modish behavior.

of a tendency to treat others as less than human. Business terminology in each part reflects this insensitivity to true love.

However, Olivia and Wildish do eventually fall in love, allowing Sedley to contrast them with the characters of the other plots. Wildish is the first to admit his love (to himself):

I was to blame no earlier to use my self to these
Women of Honour, as they call 'um; for now like one
that never practis'd swimming, upon the first occasion
I am lost; there are men would have fool'd with Olivia,
and fool'd her too, perhaps by this time, without
ever ingaging in one serious thought: your good
Fencer always thrusts in Guard, he's but a Novice
that receives hit for hit: this Modish and Estridge,
I know not what to make of their continual Visits,
Methinks Love and Jealousie come too quick upon a
man in one day.

(IV. i. 11. 1-11)

Ironically, this admission of Wildish confirms what Everyyoung had said about liberty in government of women: that those least used to liberty are most prone to abuse it when they finally get it, or, to put the idea another way, those denied the opportunity to make decisions freely are least prepared to use freedom when they at last get it. Now that Wildish has found love, he wishes that he had the experience to govern his behavior effectively.

Wildish does, however, have the good sense, like Frolick in The Comical Revenge, to expose the greed and hypocrisy of pretenders--in this case, Estridge and Modish; and he has the wit and charm to convince Olivia to choose love over greed (for Estridge's fortune). Estridge and Modish's false claims of conquest of and intimacy with Olivia and Victoria effectively demonstrate

their hypocrisy and pretense; and Wildish's wit effectively wins Olivia in the famous proviso scene of the play.

Wild. I can tell you how to be reveng'd on him [Estridge]
. . . .

Oliv. Prithee how, Wildish?

Wild. Why, marry me, make a good Wife to me and let him hang himself for rage.

Oliv. I am not so inveterate an Enemy, I'll forgive him rather; if I were your Wife, I must board half a year with a Friend in the Country, tumble about the other half in most villainous Hackneys, lye two pairs of Stairs high, and wear black farrendine the whole year about; see you when you had no money to play, and then be kist out of a Ring or a Bracelet.

Wild. I wou'd not use a City Widow of five and fifty so, with seven small Children: and am I to suffer nothing all this while?

Oliv. What can you suffer?

Wild. Why, the loss of that which is dearer than life, my liberty; be known for a marry'd man, and so put my self out of all capacity, of breaking Gold, promising marriage, or any other way of ensuring my self to scrupulous young Virgins I shall like hereafter.

Oliv. That is to be taken from the occasion of playing the Rascal: is that all?

Wild. Not half; if I make but love to a Chambermaid, I shall be answer'd, you have a sweet Lady of your own, and why will you wrong her? if I get acquainted with any young woman, after the fourth or fifth visit, be look'd upon by her Father and Mother, worse than the Tax-Gatherers in a Country Village; all this you count nothing.

Oliv. Not to a Lover, Wildish.

Wild. Well, there is no service so desperate, but a gallant man will shrink at, if he like his reward; and to give his hand thus to a woman, in him that

rightly understands what he does, is as bold an action as Mutius Scaevola's: yet that I may use it hereafter where and when I please, upon my dear Olivia I'll venture it.

Oliv. Softly, when you please, and where I please.
(V. iv. 11. 22-58)

This scene, which critics find interesting for its wit and its role in the evolution of the comedy of manners,⁵⁷ provides a valuable contrast between Olivia's relationship to Wildish and the other relationships in the play. Forecast attempts to deceive the widow; Estridge pretends he is a wit and a rake. Although the repartee between Olivia and Wildish in the proviso scene is witty and playful, it does not conceal the true concerns of the gay couple: Wildish's concern for his loss of freedom and Olivia's fear of poverty and country life. These two are open and honest in a way that Forecast, Estridge, and Modish could never be because the "gay couple" are motivated by love rather than by greed or vanity. Each offers the other the freedom to make demands and grant concessions: Wildish will use his hand on Olivia when he pleases yet where she pleases. Their relationship is contractual, not coercive. If their marriage constitutes revenge against Estridge for his ridiculous claims of amorous conquest, it is a comical, sensible revenge to be contrasted with the violence and extremism of revenge taken by Forecast (against Eugenio) and by Estridge and Modish (when they force the "widow" to marry Estridge).

⁵⁷Pinto, in Sedley, p. 256, calls it "from an artistic and historical point of view the most important thing in the play."

Olivia and Wildish's free choice of love resolves a love conflict comparable to the love-honor conflicts of the high plot. The diagram below illustrates the choices.

Olivia < Wildish (love; a contractual, consenting relationship)
 Estridge (wealth; antagonistic relationship)

Wildish < Olivia (love; a contractual, consenting relationship)
 Bachelorhood (freedom; antagonistic relationships)

The important difference between these love conflicts and the love conflicts of the high plot is that love wins out over thoughtless addiction to the mode; nature, rather than social expectation, rules their behavior. Surely, Wildish and Olivia have not abandoned the mode altogether, for there is nothing inherently wrong with it. They simply do not accept the mode slavishly, the way that characters in the high plot accept a mode of behavior. Wildish and Olivia exercise their good sense and their new-philosophical skepticism to recognize the good and the bad of the mode and to establish some balance between social appearance and inner nature. And just as they successfully avoid slavish adherence to a mode of behavior, they also avoid the destructively selfish behavior typical of characters in the low plot. Olivia and Wildish provide a golden mean of behavior between the extremes of selflessness and selfishness.

For a physical conflict in the middle plot paralleling the physical conflicts of the other two plots, one turns not to Wildish,

as one might have expected at the beginning of the play, but to Estridge and Modish. Like Forecast in the low plot, they are phonies. They affect the behavior of gentlemen and wits but fall short of the mark. A true wit, Wildish recognizes these fops for what they really are:

such Mounsieurs as you by your Feathers are known
to be Birds of prey, and though you catch nothing,
you scare all; Besides, every good man is not acquainted
with this Principle among you, that you can be in
Love with nothing but your selves, and [every good
man] may be jealous of his Wife, when indeed you
come innocently to take a view of your persons from
Head to feet in the great Glass; comb out your Periwig,
shake your Garnitures, and be gone.⁵⁸
(I. ii. ll. 44-53)

In other words, for all their talk of conquests, these fops are not the "lady killers" they think they are. They are too in love with themselves to have a serious relationship with a woman. Estridge and Modish truly are addicted to the mode, which causes them to value everything and everyone according to appearances. Talking to Wildish about his amours, the fops ask him what "Petticoat" he has come from. They criticize Olivia and Victoria for

⁵⁸Wildish quite appropriately compares these fops to "birds of prey." The word estridge (also spelled estrich) refers either to an ostrich or to a hawk. The former sense suggests the fops' ridiculous appearance. The latter suggests the predatory attitude they affect. Wildish's initial reference to them as birds of prey is, of course, ironic. Interestingly, the OED seems to have made a mistake in its definition of estridge. It cites Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra (III. xiii. 197), where the word appears in this sentence: "To be furious, Is to be frightened out of feare, and in that moode The Dove will peck the Estridge." As Maynard Mack notes in the Pelican Shakespeare, estridge here means hawk. The irony of this sense of the term--a much more sensible interpretation under the circumstances--parallels, in a loose way, Sedley's irony. C. T. Onions' The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966 ed.) lists both senses of the word.

being out of fashion--"they have always somewhat on, that is just left off by the Better Sort" (I. ii. ll. 147-148)--when ironically they are the ones who overdress. Even Olivia recognizes Estridge's addiction to appearance when she notes the reason for his being late to the Mulberry Garden: "the two Garnitures he brought out of France are Soil'd; his Feather broke, and he has been so out of humour these two days, there's no enduring him . . ." (I. iii. ll. 16-21).

The most telling observation about the fops' addiction to appearance comes from Wildish. When they ask him if he denies them the ability to be witty, to have "Discourse," Wildish replies,

Yes, a little now and then about their dress, Whether their Patches be too many or too few, too great or too small, whether her Handkerchief Be Point de Venie or Rome; and having left behind you some proof of your ability in the Mode, return to shew your selves at the last Act of a Play.

(I. ii. ll. 56-61)

Under their modish appearance, Estridge and Modish are no better than Forecast. This is particularly true in their attempted revenge on Wildish for exposing their pretenses in front of Olivia and Victoria. They reject the idea of fighting Wildish since they are cowards: "Hang him, he'll fight" (V. ii. l. 9). Instead they decide to kidnap the widow and force her into marriage; although they make no mention of rape, Estridge seems to hint at it: "when she considers she has no other way to save her Reputation, she'll hear reason" (V. ii. ll. 37-38). In other words, their government, like Forecast's, is tyranny. The kidnapping of the widow is the

physical conflict of the middle plot. Like the pseudo-duel of the low plot, it is part of a scheme which has greed as its basis. Estridge tells Modish, "He that marries her, shall give the other a Statute upon his Estate, for two thousand Pounds, a pretty good Sum . . ." (V. ii. ll. 41-43). Like wheedle and Palmer's scheme in The Comical Revenge, this one backfires, and Estridge, like Wheedle, is forced to marry the false widow, who happens to be the cast mistress of the play's hero: Wildish in Sedley's play, Frolick in Etherege's. This connection between the two plays brings up an interesting point I have found in no previous scholarship: neither of Etherege's first comedies has a fop; Etherege's equivalents for Estridge and Modish are the sharpers of his low plot, Wheedle and Palmer.

Having examined each plot's treatment of the issues of government, one can appreciate the overall coherence and sense of purpose in the play that most critics have missed. Table III, for example, indicates Sedley's careful paralleling of love conflicts and physical conflicts in the three plots. The reasons for these parallels--their relationship to Sedley's examination of government and related issues--merit at least brief recapitulation, especially as most critics have been confused by the apparently complex surface structure of the play. The play's bifurcated treatment of theme reflects Sedley's comparison of two theories of government--a repressive government that Althea and Diana submit to in the high plot and a considerably freer government allowing Olivia and Victoria

Table III. Parallel Conflicts in The Mulberry Garden.

Love Conflicts		Physical Conflicts
<u>High Plot</u>		
Althea	< Eugenio (love) Horatio (heroic code: false honor)	Royalists vs. Common- wealth Eug. & Phil. vs. soldiers
Eug. & Phil.	< Alth. & Diana (love) Royalist Cause (true honor)	

<u>Middle Plot</u>		
Olivia	< Wildish (love) Estridge (mode & wealth)	Estr. & Mod. vs. Widow & Wildish
Wildish	< Olivia (love) Bachelorhood (mode & freedom)	

<u>Low Plot</u>		
Forecast vs. Widow (motive: greed)		Forecast vs. Prentices

eventually to govern themselves correctly in the manners plot. Operating on the same principle that Molière illustrates in L'Ecole des Maris--that a government which allows freedom and consent is superior to authoritarian government--The Mulberry Garden illustrates, by way of analogy, the superiority of Restoration national government to the Puritan Commonwealth government. The right behavior of Olivia and Victoria vindicates the Everyyoung/Restoration theory of government; the wrong behavior of Althea and Diana bears out the problems of the Forecast/Puritan theory of government.

On another level, Sedley's play reveals a tripartite structure in which the manners plot serves as a reasonable paradigm for government, to be compared to the unreasonable government of the high and low plots. Sedley contrasts Wildish and Olivia's free and contractual relationship in the manners plot to the tyranny exercised by Forecast in the low plot and the mindless adherence to convention in the high plot. Moreover, Sedley establishes the basis for right behavior in the middle plot and wrong behavior in the other plots. In each plot, the balance of appearance and nature affects the ability of the characters to make the right decision in the parallel conflicts charted above (Table III). High-plot characters cling too tightly to convention to be realistic. Low-plot characters, though their dissimulation indicates their ability to distinguish between appearance and nature, or reality, sometimes confuse the appearance they put on with the inner nature they hide from public scrutiny. And they submit to greed too much to act with the kind of free choice exercised by the manners characters.

While Sedley's tripartite organization allows him to compare reasonable government to unreasonable government, and, through analogy, to comment more specifically on the superiority of the Restoration government, the contrasts allow him to make an important statement about the nature of freedom and government which critics unfamiliar with his intellectual grounding might miss. Government, domestic or national, is more than a matter of strict rule, although the kind and degree of authority are serious issues--the freedom to govern oneself depends also on perceptiveness (the ability to use reason, to distinguish between appearance and nature) and on a questioning, skeptical attitude (the willingness to use reason in the pursuit of truth). Because Diana and Althea accept the validity of their father's government unquestioningly, because they do not perceive the discrepancy between Forecast's appearance and his inner nature, they choose to adhere to his false code of family honor rather than pursuing their romantic interest in Eugenio and Philander, whose code of behavior is truly honorable. Whereas the high-plot characters deal with conflict unrealistically because of conventional selflessness, the low-plot characters handle conflicts unrealistically because of their extreme self-centeredness. The almost obsessive greed of Forecast and vanity of the fops blind them to the reality of Wildish's scheme involving the supposed widow. Greed blinds Forecast to the marriage trap Wildish has set for him, and wounded vanity blinds the fops to the trap, which eventually, because of their desire for revenge, they fall into.

The contrast of conflicts in the three plots illustrates, in other words, not only that the ideal government allows some degree of freedom in its laws and in social behavior, but also that freedom is the willingness and ability to use reason. True freedom depends as much on perspicacity of the citizens as it does on the laws of government and society.

The complexity of The Mulberry Garden extends beyond the tripartite contrast of love conflicts and physical conflicts, the complexities within each plot prove just as serious and just as important as the contrasts between plots.

In the high plot, for example, Horatio serves as more than just a rival to Eugenio, a means of revealing Forecast's greed, and part of a love triangle. His infatuation with Althea, manifested in conventional Platonic terms, supports Sedley's emphasis on the importance of reason and contrasts with the true love between Eugenio and Althea. He makes the conventional complaints: her beauty "has rais'd a flame" (II. ii. l. 67); he asks the "Kind Maid, to ease a Lover of his pain," (II. ii. l. 66); he claims to have been "converted" from worshipping Victoria to worshipping Althea (II. ii. ll. 103-104). And he compares his love to a religion: "Sure none can faithless to such Beauty prove;/ He that's in Heaven, can no higher move" (II. ii. ll. 113-114). Althea's response reveals a psychological analysis worthy of new philosophers such as Hobbes: "A Lovers Heaven in his Phansie lyes,/ Which Beauty oft neglects, and oft supplies" (II. ii. ll. 115-116). Horatio thinks that her

beauty has motivated his love for her, but she points out that his imagination, not her beauty, has motivated his supposed love. This confusion between appearance and nature prevents Horatio from controlling his behavior freely: he is governed by his imagination, which becomes a tyrant of sorts. Predecessors of John Locke--George Lawson and Phillip Hunton--cite reason as a necessary ingredient in constitutional, contractual government.⁵⁹ And Locke himself would later argue, as Jacob Bronowski observes, "The test for participation in government was the possession, not of property . . . but of reason."⁶⁰ Allowing imagination to cloud his reason makes Horatio a tyrant over Althea, at first, just as much as Forecast is a tyrant. This added complexity in the high plot serves another important function for Sedley, I think: it shows that life itself is complex and that simplistic solutions and conventional ways of thinking cannot allow a person to cope adequately with complex problems. It would have been simple, for example, for Sedley to have presented all of the high-plot characters as unrealistic. As a skeptic, however, he realizes that stereotyping stands in the way of the search for truth. The honor motivating Eugenio and Philander's resistance to the Commonwealth contrasts

⁵⁹See my introductory chapter, notes 172, 173. Samuel Mintz argues that even Hobbes recognizes the need for reason: "How can man avoid the extreme of the 'state of nature'? . . . The answer . . . can be discovered by the proper exercise of reason. So that while it is one side of human nature--the passions--that brings him to this predicament, it is another side of human nature--reason--which can deliver him from it" (p. 33).

⁶⁰Bronowski and Mazlish, p. 214.

with the pseudo-honor preventing Althea and Diana from marrying these heroes. The true love of the two pairs contrasts with the love Horatio thinks he feels for Althea. And not one of the high-plot characters behaves always correctly or incorrectly; they are complex beings. Even Eugenio and Philander falter in the performance of their patriotic duty. In trying to see Althea, Eugenio is caught and imprisoned. Althea understands love but fails to recognize the ulterior motive for her father's behavior. And Horatio is not all bad, not totally a victim of his overactive imagination. Once he recognizes his error, he releases Althea from her father's obligation and makes amends with Victoria, to whom he had earlier pledged his love. Sedley uses numerous conventions in his high plot, certainly, but it is hardly as artificial and derivative as critics have claimed.

The complexities within the middle and low plots also reinforce Sedley's early-modern acknowledgement of the complexity of existence and the importance of reason, skepticism, and individualism. As stated earlier, Olivia and Wildish must make some mistakes, or wander, before becoming the models of correct government. We must not only compare Sedley's "gay couple" with characters in the other plots but must also compare the protagonists' correct behavior with their earlier wandering behavior. And of course we compare them with the fops. The complexities of these two plots allow Sedley, in addition, to make some important, yet ironic, statements about the nature of freedom.

The fops seem to exercise all of the freedoms Forecast frowns upon and fears. They attend plays, mingle freely with the public at parks and other places, and exhibit all the fineries currently fashionable. Their lifestyle, in the freedoms it allows, runs counter to the philosophy of the Commonwealth. Obviously, however, Sedley does not admire these characters, even though he advocates a freer government. Estridge and Modish's behavior is subject, to a lesser extent than in the high plot, to the confusion of appearance and nature. After long affecting the wit and amorous expertise of a manners character like Wildish, the fops actually fancy themselves rakes and witty gentlemen. In truth, however, their greed, vanity, and predatory instincts identify them much more closely with Forecast. They misuse their freedom and ironically become victims of that misuse. They feel free to force the "widow" into marriage in the same way that they feel free to manipulate the truth when it serves their purposes. However, just as their ridiculously high opinion of their knowledge of fashion blinds them to their own ludicrous behavior and dress, so their equally misguided opinion that they have the ability to foil Wildish's plans makes them victims of those plans. Again, freedom unguided by reason fails to give characters the control over their destiny that they think they have. Estridge thinks himself a predator in love, like the hawk his name denotes. In reality, he is more like another bird his name denotes and suggests, the ostrich. Perhaps Sedley is quite aware of this distinction when he has Wildish

say to the fops, "such Mounsieurs as you by your Feathers are known to be Birds of prey, and though you catch nothing, you scare all . . ." (I. ii. ll. 45-47). Despite their apparent freedom, the fops become so caught up in their vanity, pretense, greed, and desire for revenge, that they lack the good sense to deal realistically with the world around them. They will never really experience love because they love themselves too much and follow the stereotype of the rake too slavishly; ironically, one of them becomes trapped in marriage to Wildish's cast mistress.

Forecast provides more irony than any other character in the play. Like the fops, he seeks to maintain control over his own life by manipulating others, by pretending to be someone he is not, by lying when it suits his purposes. More than the fops, however, he seeks order in his life through wealth, hence his greed. Although Forecast aligns himself carefully with the Commonwealth government, however, he falls victim to chance, happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and ends up in jail with cavaliers. Although he condescendingly regrets the lack of forecast, or foresight, in his daughters, his own careful planning does not prevent his arrest. Because of the very self-centeredness which is supposed to give him control over his life, he loses perspective on the problems that surround him and lacks the reason to behave with true, complete freedom. Like the Cockwoods in She wou'd if she cou'd, Forecast has pretended so long that he confuses his deceptive appearance with his inner nature. To his brother Everyyoung, who

knows him very well, Forecast's complaints at the beginning of the play about extravagant dress and behavior must seem odd if not ridiculous; later in the play, when Forecast dresses extravagantly himself in order to woo the widow, the audience knows that the early complaints are ridiculous. When Forecast requests Olivia and Victoria to stay away from Althea and Diana, Everyyoung replies, "And I'd as lieve you'd keep away, till you understand your self better; what? you think your Daughters like your Money, never safe, but under Lock and Key" (I. i. 11. 102-105). Everyyoung realizes that for all Forecast's concern for reputation, he treats his daughters like mere possessions rather than as real people. This is exactly the attitude Forecast takes toward the widow; he calls her a "piece," a "treasure." Sadly, Forecast's single-minded self-centeredness, though it seems to provide freedom and security, does not allow him the freedom to establish a truly loving relationship with the widow, his own daughters, or anyone else. He will never really understand love, much less honor.

These carefully reasoned contrasts within plots and between plots of The Mulberry Garden underscore the determination of the author to explore questions of government thoroughly, to link surface structure to moral design, and to provide complex answers to complex questions. More than a contest between Puritans and Royalists, more than a question of sovereign authority and individual rights, government, Sedley realizes, is a matter of reason, skepticism, consent, and contract; the relative successes

and failures of Sedley's characters bear out the importance of these early-modern considerations of philosophy and psychology to questions of domestic government. And as the tripartite structure of the play takes the audience beyond the simplicities of domestic government, it likewise indicates Sedley's recognition of the complexities of national government. In fact, the psychological and philosophical principles behind the examination of domestic government inform Sedley's examination of national government, too. The analogy really is inescapable, and the tripartite organization clarifies Sedley's contrast of national political theories.

The selfless, unthinking submission to authority in the high plot bears a strong resemblance to the kind of thinking behind divine-right political theory. One of the more famous proponents of this theory, Sir Robert Filmer, argues in Patriarcha: or The Natural Power of Kings that political power derives entirely from the patriarchal authority of the king, which is analagous to the authority of Adam and other patriarchs over their children. As Bertrand Russell explains the theory,

the source of regal authority is the subjection of children to parents; . . . the patriarchs of Genesis were monarchs; . . . kings are heirs of Adam, or at least are to be regarded as such; . . . the natural rights of a king are the same as those of a father; and . . . by nature, sons are never free of paternal power, even when the son is adult and the parent is in his dotage.⁶¹

⁶¹Russell, p. 619.

Although Patriarcha was not published until 1680, after Sedley wrote The Mulberry Garden, Filmer wrote the book under Charles I, and his views would have been known to members of the court circle at least.⁶² Moreover, Charles II's minister, the Earl of Clarendon, popularized the divine-right theory also. Like Filmer, he rejects the concept that power in government results from a contract; according to John Bowle, Clarendon claims that power "is innate in the King and modified only by condescent of grace"⁶³ This is the kind of political philosophy which causes Althea and Diana to submit to authority, though reluctantly. Theirs is a very conventional, traditional notion of authority. When Althea complains,

Under what Tyranny are Women born!
Here we are bid to love, and there to scorn;
As if unfit to be allow'd a part
In choosing him, that must have all our heart;
(II. ii. 11. 1-4)

the audience associates Forecast's tyranny with the tyranny of the Commonwealth. A staunch royalist like Filmer surely has no sympathy for the Puritan government; the point is that the basis for authority he uses to justify a strong royalist government is the same basis for authority that prevents Althea and Diana from disobeying Forecast and marrying the two rebels. While Sedley certainly endorses the royalists in this play, he does not

⁶²Russell, p. 617.

⁶³Bowle, p. 33. For Filmer's similar views, see Russell, p. 618.

automatically endorse Filmer's divine-right theory. Just as Filmer parallels domestic government and national government, so does Sedley; and Sir Charles rejects the conventional divine-right theory of government for the same reason that he rejects Althea and Diana's unquestioning obedience to Forecast.

The divine-right point of view contrasts in a few important respects with the growing spirit of skepticism, independence, and general questioning of authority. In other words, some of the same attitudes that contributed to advances in seventeenth-century science could and did lead to changes in political philosophy. First, the divine-right point of view denies the individual rights so prized by men like Sedley. According to Stuart Prall, James I and Charles I "continued to assume that the king was England in an era when increasing numbers of his subjects were coming to think of the king as one among many Englishmen"64 This conflict between sovereign authority and individual rights, says Prall, led to England's civil war and was "the heart of the controversy," which was not to be resolved adequately until the Glorious Revolution of 1688.⁶⁵ Second, divine-right theory, through its insistence on the absolute authority of the monarch, denies the individual skepticism so important to many seventeenth-century thinkers. Third, it denies the power of individuals to use reason in government

⁶⁴Prall, p. 8.

⁶⁵Prall, pp. viii, 8.

because conventional authority remains unchallenged. Clarendon denies "the . . . assumption that men are rational," claiming, "Anyone with political experience knows this to be untrue"66 Forecast, of course, takes the same attitude toward his daughters: he compares them at one point to pigeons lacking the foresight necessary to govern themselves. The eventual successful behavior of Wildish, Olivia, and Victoria shows, of course, that individuals can exercise their reason rightly in matters of government.

The selfish, tyrannical, and predatory behavior of low-plot characters links them with the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. While Sir Samuel Forecast appears to resemble Filmer's patriarchal authority figure, governing by virtue of divine right, and while he appears to belong in the high plot with characters committed to worthy ideals, he owes much more, of course, to the Hobbesian point of view or at least to the popular perception of Hobbism.⁶⁷ Forecast's absolute government of his daughters might easily be mistaken for the absolute authority described by Filmer, yet the old dissembler's insistence on the importance of wealth and power shows the Hobbesian view of authority to be the basis of his parental government. Like Hobbes he sees power, not divine right, as the source of authority, and much of his power derives from his ability to deceive and manipulate other people. In the absolute monarchy Hobbes advocates, the reason and consent of citizens are important

⁶⁶Bowle, p. 163.

⁶⁷See the Introduction, note 66.

only in the original contract granting the absolute authority: afterwards, they have no rights and no power.⁶⁸ This political theory, like divine-right theory, denies the individual the freedom prized by men like Sedley, and it implies, through its tainted view of man, the impracticality of including those governed in the governing process.

The resemblance Forecast bears to stereotypes associated with Hobbesian philosophy also links Sedley's low plot to Hobbes's political theory. On one level, Forecast resembles the Hobbesian tyrant. "In the heroic drama of the period," says Samuel Mintz, "the Hobbist was presented as a rebel, usurper, tyrant, or Machiavellian, and he expressed, either by word or deed, a point of view loosely adopted from the Leviathan"⁶⁹ Forecast tyrannizes over Althea and Diana, and he sides with the usurping government. He also fits Hobbes's description of man in a state of nature: self-centered and ruthless, prone to conflict. Throughout Sedley's play, Forecast finds himself in conflict--with his brother, with his daughters, with the widow, with Eugenio's father. That Sedley associates the Hobbesian Forecast with the Puritan government, even though Hobbes was an ardent royalist and friend of Charles II, is not so strange as it might first seem. Sir Samuel shares with the Puritans a view of man as a selfish creature, prone to violence, or sin, if not governed with a firm hand. He is

⁶⁸Teeter, pp. 143-144.

⁶⁹Mintz, pp. 137-138.

unwilling to trust his daughters in the company of Everyyoung's offspring, and he doubts Olivia's and Victoria's ability to make the right decisions on their own, because of this jaundiced view of man. If Forecast's authority really did derive from the conventional view of parental government which is part of Filmer's political theory, he would probably be more trusting and less vicious. Sir Samuel's alignment with the Commonwealth, like any citizen's obedience to a government in Hobbesian political theory, is based on fear--of poverty and instability. In allowing his audience to question the validity of Forecast's parental authority, Sedley forces his audience, I think, to question the analagous Puritan abuse of power. Sedley seems to suggest, in other words, that the Puritan government seized power not because of any worthy ideals such as those associated with the high plot but because of greed, envy, and ambition--the kinds of Hobbesian characteristics we associate with low-plot characters.

Sedley rejects the extreme political philosophy of Hobbes in the same way that he rejects the extreme behavior of the low-plot characters with whom Hobbesian philosophy is associated. Evidence outside the play also suggests Sedley's rejection of Hobbesian political philosophy. First, as Louis Teeter points out, Hobbes's political theory held no sway at court: it was not considered respectable.⁷⁰ Second, Sedley must have recognized Hobbesian

⁷⁰Teeter, p. 141.

political philosophy as impractical, like Photinas's self-defeating Machiavellianism in La Mort de Pompée. Apparently Dryden also recognized its impracticality, for as Anne Barbeau notes in her study of Dryden's heroic plays, the tyrant Boabdelin is

self-deceived in his notion of a king's power
Boabdelin wants to rule without the voice of the
people because he thinks he can be more successful
in his wars and create greater stability in the state.
Dryden undercuts this theory by showing that it is
just that tyrannical wielding of power that brings
on rebellions and disrupts the political order.
The notion of absolute monarchy espoused by Sir Robert
Filmer and Hobbes appears, consequently, to be im-
practical in the application.⁷¹

This attitude is shared also by George Lawson, a constitutional theorist who wrote before the Restoration that the absolute exercise of authority is liable to provoke conflict.⁷² In The Mulberry Garden, Forecast's tyranny proves impractical: despite his original machinations, Forecast nearly falls into Wildish's trap with the phony widow, and only the stupidity of the fops and the coincidence of being arrested with the Cavaliers save him from disaster. The fops' tyranny over the supposed widow lands them in the trap Wildish had set for Forecast, and Estridge marries Wildish's cast mistress rather than a fortune. The impracticality of tyrannical national government is evident in England's rejection of the Commonwealth government in favor of the restored Stuart monarchy at the end of the play.

⁷¹Barbeau, p. 120.

⁷²Bowle, p. 203.

Although Sedley rejects two royalist theories of government--divine right and Hobbesian--he does so because they are extreme, not because they are royalist. The critic accustomed to viewing England's conflict as a contest between royalists and Puritans rather than a contest among several competing political philosophies will likely misinterpret both the politics and the organization of The Mulberry Garden. Just as Sedley rejects the divine-right and Hobbesian political philosophies associated with the extreme behavior of the high plot and the low plot, so he endorses the more moderate political philosophy associated with the more moderate behavior of the middle plot.

We perceive Wildish, Olivia, Victoria, and Sir John Everyoung as successful characters and suitable role models because they exercise reason, skepticism, individualism, and moderation. Not surprisingly, the same qualities characterize the form of government endorsed by Sedley. Though a royalist, he favors greater freedom, individual participation in government, reasonable consent, and government by contract. Although we commonly associate these concepts of government with John Locke or the Whigs--that is, with a period several years after Sedley's first play--they were already fairly widespread in the mid-seventeenth century, before the play was written.

The seventeenth-century emphasis on reason, skepticism, and individualism has been amply demonstrated, I think, in my discussion of science and philosophy in the introductory chapter.

Not surprisingly, these same attitudes, or emphases, seem to affect the political philosophies of the period. In fact, as the work of Filmer, Hobbes, and other theorists shows, it is difficult to separate one's view of man in nature from one's political philosophy: the one leads logically and naturally to the other. Although John Locke would not publish his views on contract, consent, reason, and other elements of government until 1689 and 1690 in his two Treatises on Government,⁷³ many of these ideas were already being discussed even before Sedley's 1668 play. Bertrand Russell suggests that the philosophical liberalism which characterizes Locke's political philosophy is "little more than a clarification and systemization of prevalent opinion . . ."⁷⁴ or, we might say, of prevalent attitudes. John Bowles has identified George Lawson and Philip Hunton as two important forerunners of Lockean and Whig political theory.

Reverend George Lawson wrote two books on political theory that appeared before Sedley's play. His Examination of the political part of Mr. Hobbs his Leviathon appeared in 1657, his Politica Sacra et Civilis, which Locke probably read, in 1660.⁷⁵ Lawson's repudiations of Hobbesian philosophy merit particular attention because of the similarity they bear to later Whig constitutionalism.

⁷³Russell, p. 617.

⁷⁴Russell, p. 601.

⁷⁵Bowle, p. 86 and note.

Hobbes had said that a sovereign requires absolute control over society because war is the natural state of man, but Lawson argues that war is unnatural and that, in Bowles's words, "A king or ruler is not the source of sovereignty, but a trustee. Here, already," says Bowles, "is the fundamental Whig position."⁷⁶ Hobbes had contended that the authority of the government derives from the power of the sovereign, but Lawson argues that authority derives from God and the community, through consent, or contract.⁷⁷ Philip Hunton's A Treatise of Monarchie, . . . Done by an earnest Desirer of his Countrie's Peace likewise appeared before The Mulberry Garden, in 1643,⁷⁸ and it presents political positions very similar to those found in Lawson's books. Like Lawson and Locke, Hunton believes that power is a trusteeship conveyed by contract and depends on the consent of the people. According to Bowles, "Hunton, unlike Hobbes, believed that 'conciliation of interests could best be brought about not by coercion but by consent.'<"⁷⁹ And constitutional theorists like Lawson and Hunton believe, says Bowles, "that the truths of Christianity are self-evident to the light of reason operating within the sense data of immediate experience."⁸⁰ That is, they recognize the importance of reason.

⁷⁶Bowle, pp. 89-91.

⁷⁷Bowle, p. 92.

⁷⁸Bowle, p. 101.

⁷⁹Bowle, pp. 103, 105.

⁸⁰Bowle, p. 189.

The failure of scholars to link Sedley with the kind of political philosophy endorsed by men like Lawson and Hunton is probably owing to the poet's close ties to the Restoration court. He did, after all, claim the friendship of the Earl of Rochester, the Earl of Dorset, and Charles II himself. However, although the high spirits, good times, and glamor of the court doubtless proved seductive to the young Sedley, he was a skeptic and thus a relatively independent observer of political affairs. Then too, as Susan Staves points out, the division between Royalists and Roundheads has been overemphasized: "Propaganda postulated the immiscibility of puritans and cavaliers, parliamentarians and royalists, dissenters and Anglicans, when, in fact, alliances shifted as issues and circumstances changed. . . . given individuals might be to the left or to the right of each other depending on particular issues and particular circumstances."⁸¹ Charles II's abandonment of his father's unreasonable demands, his inclusion in the CABAL of representatives of diverse political and religious backgrounds, and his attempts to promote religious toleration are indications of the mood of compromise and moderation that prevailed immediately following the Restoration. Pinto's biography of Sedley provides evidence that he did, in fact, identify with the Whig view of government to some extent. He "was re-elected both at the General Election of October 1679, when the Whigs triumphed all over the

⁸¹Staves, p. 4.

country, and again to the turbulent Parliament that met at Oxford in March 1680/81, which contained a smaller but still distinct majority of Whigs."⁸² Pinto also points to Sedley's friendship with Shadwell and speculates that Sir Charles, like Shadwell, may have been a member of the Green Ribbon Club, headquarters for the Whigs.⁸³ Whether he identified with the Whigs or the Tories, Sedley's independent spirit seems to have prevailed. According to Pinto,

Sedley . . . had the very qualities which are necessary for a brilliant parliamentary free-lance. The wit, good sense, and non-party spirit of his extant pieces call to mind the pamphlets of his great relative, George Savile, Marquis of Halifax. In the Parliaments of William III, when Sacheverell, Montague, Harley, and St. John were inaugurating the traditions of the two great political parties, it surely deserves no small praise to have helped to found that body of independent and critical opinion which has always existed since the Whigs and the Tories, and whose existence is as necessary as theirs for the well-being of the commonwealth.⁸⁴

Once one recognizes the diversity of political philosophies, the moderation and compromise of Charles II's government, and Sedley's independent spirit, the connection between Sedley's middle plot and the contractual, moderate form of political philosophy he advocates is not so strange as one might have thought. A careful comparison of the domestic government of middle-plot characters

⁸²Pinto, Sedley, p. 179.

⁸³Pinto, Sedley, p. 178.

⁸⁴Pinto, Sedley, p. 176.

to the kind of national government advocated by Lawson and Hunt reveals several similarities.

An independent, skeptical, rational questioning of convention--in this case, the social mode--enables Wildish and Olivia to break away from the constraints of the mode to form a meaningful relationship, a contract of sorts. Wildish abandons his rakish pose and behavior to pursue a serious relationship with Olivia. She, in turn, abandons her antagonistic relationship with Estridge to pursue a serious relationship with Wildish. The give, take, and compromise of the proviso scene, showing each lover consenting to the surrender of individual liberties for the sake of their relationship, mirrors the principles of England's constitutional monarchy. Neither lover is a slave to conventional concepts of marriage; they marry on their own terms, without the consent of Everyyoung. Neither are they selfish and deceptive mates like the Cockwoods in Etherege's She wou'd if she cou'd, each dallying behind the other's back. Their relationship represents a golden mean of domestic government, just as the constitutional monarchy advocated by Hunton, Lawson, and others represents a golden mean of national government between the extremes of Filmer's divine-right theory, which requires selfless, unquestioning obedience, and Hobbes's political theory, which pictures man as selfish, aggressive, and controlled only by the absolute power wielded by the sovereign. Wildish's abandonment of extremism is evident, also, in his abandonment of the scheme to trick Forecast into marrying the supposedly rich widow.

No longer intent on revenge, Wildish concentrates on winning Olivia. His spirit of reconciliation is particularly apparent when he tells the imprisoned Forecast, his former enemy, "To lye in Prison for concealing Cavaliers will be great merit; and let me tell you as a friend, there's likely to be a turn suddenly, 'tis thought the General will declare like an honest man, I say no more; therefore carry your self moderately . . ." (IV. ii. ll. 194-198). This last phrase, directed toward the dour roundhead, comes most appropriately on the eve of the Restoration, an era of reconciliation for which Wildish's advice might serve as an apt slogan.

The identification of middle-plot characters with the new government's spirit of moderation and reconciliation receives further support from the scene in which Everyyoung visits his brother in prison. Though Sir John Teases Sir Samuel at first, he still cares about his scheming, argumentative, and narrow-minded brother: "Though we fall out now and then about trifles, we are Brothers, and ought to serve one another in matters of concern" (V. iii. ll. 61-63). This scene of domestic reconciliation parallels England's national reconciliation among rival factions, and it, too, appears appropriately on the eve of the Restoration.

Sedley's presentation, at the end of the play, of the betrothals of various characters coincides with the news of the restoration of the monarchy. That consent is tied to contract in each of these relationships, domestic and national, strongly suggests that Sedley intended his audience to see a parallel between the two.

Although Forecast has promised Althea to Horatio, Horatio realizes that she does not love him and that therefore he should not force the match:

Madam, you know your Father does command,
That you shou'd shortly give me your fair hand
Before a Priest; but since I find no part
Goes with it of your generous heart,
My mind the charming present can refuse,
Fearing t'indulge a passion you accuse;
(V. v. 11. 1-6)

In other words, Horatio will not establish a contract, or marriage government, represented by hand, without Althea's consent, represented by heart.⁸⁵ Now that Althea has been given her freedom, Horatio realizes that he loves Victoria and seeks to marry her. Again, Sedley presents marriage as a contract requiring the consent of each party. Victoria's love for Horatio throughout the play makes her consent practically a foregone conclusion, so when Everyoung offers the couple his blessing, he instructs Victoria, "give Horatio your Hand, go and be marry'd . . ." (V. v. 11. 143-144). Once again, hand indicates the commitment, or contract, and the love Victoria admits in the succeeding lines indicates her consent to the relationship.

Once Forecast recognizes the advantages of aligning himself with the cavaliers and the new government, he allows Althea and Diana to marry the men they love, Eugenio and Philander. The Restoration, which gives English citizens a greater voice in

⁸⁵Sedley uses hand and heart the same way in Antony and Cleopatra (III. iii. 11. 319, 326).

government and more freedom, allows and coincides with Forecast's decision to let his daughters choose their marriage partners freely. The end to Forecast's tyrannical denial of their voice in choosing a marriage partner, by way of analogy with the Puritan government's denial of Englishmen's voice in national government, suggests that Sedley intends love and consent to be roughly equivalent. Lawrence Stone's research into the history of the role of consent in marriage indicates that "the successful reduction of authoritarianism in the political constitution . . . [parallels] a relaxation of the tyranny of fathers over children"86 At first, family, relatives, and parents arranged marriages without the consent of the couple. Later, children had limited power to refuse a match. "The third option," says Stone, "is that choice is made by the children themselves, on the understanding that it will be made from a family of more or less equal financial and status position, with the retaining the right of veto."87 By the Restoration, according to Stone, "children were able to veto their parents in all but the highest ranks of the aristocracy"88 Interestingly, the growing trend toward individualism and the importance of the consent of those betrothed parallels a growth "away from family interest and towards well-trying personal affection."89

⁸⁶Stone, p. 265.

⁸⁷Stone, pp. 270-271.

⁸⁸Stone, p. 272.

⁸⁹Stone, p. 272.

So there does seem to be some basis for linking consent and love. Stone's observations about the nature of love are relevant to Sedley's ideas about domestic and national government, too. "Almost everyone agreed . . . that both physical desire and romantic love were unsafe bases for an enduring marriage since both were violent mental disturbances which would inevitably be of only short duration."⁹⁰ One would expect to find these extremes in Sedley's high and low plots; Hobbesian rakes bent on selfish gratification would exhibit physical desire, and the romantic characters of the high plot would exhibit romantic love. Olivia and Wildish, on the other hand, exhibit the reasonable, "well-tried affection" necessary for a successful domestic government.

Although Pinto fails to recognize the larger significance of love in Sedley's play, he does recognize its importance in L'Ecole des Maris, for he quotes the line which, he realizes sums up Molière's play:

Je trouve que le coeur est ce qu'il faut gagner.⁹¹

Molière's play illustrates that domestic government is best when it gives people the liberty to follow their hearts--that is, to exercise free consent. Sedley illustrates the same idea in his play and, through analogy, implies the importance of consent, liberty, and contract in national government. This analogy is

⁹⁰Stone, p. 272.

⁹¹Pinto, Sedley, p. 250.

underscored in his play when, in the scene following Wildish and Olivia's proviso agreement, the same scene in which the several couples make plans to be married (V. v.), Eugenio indicates the role of consent in the restoration of the Stuarts to the English throne:

That Cause which Armys did in vain support,
And noblest spirits did, successless, court,
We in a bloodless triumph shining see,
Without the dire effects of Victory.
For in the Generals breast (the noblest Scene)
The Fate of England has transacted been:
(V. v. 11. 49-54)

The "cause" is not just the restoration of the monarchy; it is also the establishment of a government acceptable to the people of England. Significantly, while war and disputation failed to restore peace and order to England, the simple desire for peace and stability did; the "Generals breast," his heart, seems to represent the collective consent, or desire, of Englishment for the restored monarchy. As a representative of the people's will, that is, General Monk restored peace and thus transacted "the Fate of England."⁹² Just as Wildish, Olivia, and Victoria wandered through the Mulberry Garden and through life generally in search of meaning, identity, and security, so England wandered for a time in search of an identity--a form of government. In each case, the answer is a golden mean of government, contrasted with extremes and guided by reason, individualism, and skepticism. It is a government which

⁹²Fraser, pp. 164-165, 168.

allows freedom and consent. These ideas are the heart of Sedley's first original play, the moral design which governs the content and structure for so long misunderstood by most critics.

The Mulberry Garden is not the haphazard conglomeration of popular dramatic devices that critics have accused it of being. Rather, it is a serious, thematically unified, and structurally coherent play as well as a vehicle for significant constitutional and intellectual issues of the latter half of the seventeenth century. Once this much is understood, one can appreciate Sedley's knowledgeability and his intellectual capacity, and one can sympathize with Sedley for having to suffer the criticisms of "barren sparks" such as Etherege describes, who possess neither the knowledge nor the intellect to understand the play. Is this a first-rate drama of ideas? Though not his best play, I think it is a good one, and I tend to accept Susan Staves' perception of the use of serious ideas in plays:

I do not agree with the anti-intellectualism . . . recently expressed by John Harold Wilson in A Preface to Restoration Drama (1965), James Sutherland in English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century (1969), and Robert Hume in The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (1976)--a reaction against what they perceive as the overinterpretation of certain Restoration plays. All three stress the importance of the plays as entertainment and deprecate thoughts of their profundity. . . . Of course comedies and tragedies are not the place for careful development of original philosophical arguments. But it is a long way from saying that to saying they cannot reflect perceptions of philosophical interest.⁹³

⁹³Staves, pp. xv-xvi.

The manners critics, especially Professor Pinto, have detailed the numerous merits of the manners plot. An appreciation for the philosophical content of that plot and the play as a whole provides a richer understanding of those manners elements and helps us realize that manners are more than slavish, artificial, formulaic imitation. We recognize that wit is discernment, judgement, and an important means of steering our individual destinies. And we learn that heroic and low-comedy characters do not meet with our approval, not because they fail to fulfill the requirements of the social mode, but because their ideas and their ideals pose a threat to the proper functioning of society. And by the same token, manners characters like Wildish do meet with our approval, not because they fulfill the expectations of fashionable society, but because they avoid the extreme behavior and faulty thinking of romantic characters and low-comedy characters. And though they often compare life to a game, it is a very serious game. When in the prologue to The Mulberry Garden Sedley compares himself, the playwright, to a gamester, he does so quite seriously, I think. He must cope with critics, "Wits and Heroes" (l. 4; apparently an ironic reference to envious pretenders like Estridge and Forecast). And though on the surface the language is playful and entertaining, as Thomas Fujimura points out, "We do not forget the larger issues of life, nor do we flee them" ⁹⁴ Sedley's repartee, his comparisons,

⁹⁴Fujimura, p. 63.

and his imagery delight and entertain, but they are also indicative of various characters' ability to make the important distinction between appearance and reality. Perhaps the measure of Sedley's success in this play is his ability to entertain as he instructs--to present complex, serious, and perhaps even painful realities on the stage while, through the wit, humor, and assured self-control of the protagonists, offering a means of coping with these realities.

CHAPTER II

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Of the three Sedley plays to be staged, Antony and Cleopatra has received the least favorable response, largely, it seems, because the critics have once again approached Sedley's plays as conventional drama rather than as drama of ideas. Viewed as conventional heroic drama, even as tragedy, the play has consistently disappointed expectations because, although it employs a number of conventional heroic devices, in reality it challenges much of the conventional wisdom associated with the drama. Critics have not understood Sir Charles' deviations from the conventions, failing to recognize the deviations as significant elements of his elaborate moral design. In the scholarship and criticism about the play, three categories of deviations have received particular attention: the author's generation of admiration for Antony and Cleopatra, who violate the conventions of morality by placing love before honor; his inclusion of distracting love interests, some of them without historical basis; and his inclusion of subplots which, like the love interests, detract attention from the love-honor struggle which should be the central concern in conventional heroic drama. A careful examination of the play, placing it in the context of new philosophical trends discussed in the preceding chapters, reveals, in fact, that the admiration we feel for Antony and Cleopatra at the end of the play is calculated: the love interests and subplots to which critics object allow Sedley

to expose the inadequacies of conventional approaches to examining and solving life's problems.

The first attempt at this genre by any of the circle of Wits, Sedley's play premiered at the Duke's Theatre, Dorset Garden, in February 1677,¹ apparently with some success: in March of that year, the Marquess of Worcester wrote that it was "acted often."² Most critics have assumed that the purely theatrical elements of the production probably had something to do with the play's success. Vivian de Sola Pinto observes that the play could boast of Jeremiah Clarke's "elaborate musical setting," and of a "very strong" cast which included a number of "brilliant actors and actresses." Antony was acted by Betterton, Caesar by Smith, Photinus by Sanford, Mecoenas by Harris, Canidius by Melbourne, Thyreus by Crosby, Agrippa by Jevon, Cleopatra by Mrs. Mary Lee, Octavia by Mrs. Betterton, Iras by Mrs. Gibbs, and Charmion by Mrs. Hughes.³ Spectacle was being used very successfully at the Duke's Theatre in the 1670s,⁴ and

¹Wilson, Court Wits, p. 167. Van Lennep's The London Stage cites 12 February 1676/77 as the probable date of the premiere (p. 254). The play may have been revived, according to Van Lennep, in 1696, when Sedley's play was reprinted (p. 450). Sedley did rewrite the play as Beauty the Conquerour: or, The Death of Marc Antony, a classical rehandling of the story, incomplete, and markedly inferior to the original (Pinto, Works, I, 190; Sedley, pp. 279, 280). Beauty the Conquerour appears only in Ayloffe's edition of 1702 and apparently was never produced.

²Pinto, Works, I, 190.

³Pinto, Works, I, 190. Van Lennep et al., eds., p. 254.

⁴Robert Hume, The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 300. Cecil

because Sedley's story would lend itself to spectacular treatment and effects, this purely theatrical aspect of the play probably did contribute to the stage success.

Sedley's heroic-neoclassical treatment of the Antony and Cleopatra story also may account, in part, for the success of the play. This treatment provided a means of circumventing the King's Company's monopoly on Shakespeare's plays while catering to the current taste for the heroic and spectacular effects. A measure of the popularity of this kind of treatment is the King's Company's response to the success of Sedley's play: by staging not Shakespeare's play but another neoclassical rendering of the story--Dryden's All for Love.⁵ Though Dryden's version probably completely superseded Sedley's,⁶ Dryden pays Sedley the compliment of adopting the heroic-neoclassical treatment and using Sedley's play as one of his models.⁷

In the scholarship on this, Sedley's second original play, one finds very little evidence suggesting that Sir Charles intended

Deane, Dramatic Theory and the Rhymed Heroic Play (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967), p. 62, observes, "The only things that could be counted upon to hold the attention of the philandering, brawling audience at a heroic play were . . . bombast and spectacle"

⁵Peter Caracciolo, "Dryden and the 'Antony and Cleopatra' of Sir Charles Sedley," Anglo-American Supplement to English Studies (1969), pp. li.

⁶Pinto, Works, I, 190.

⁷Particularly interesting scholarship on this topic includes Caracciolo's article; Neville Davies, "Dryden's All for Love and Sedley's Antony and Cleopatra," Notes & Queries, XIV (June 1967), 221-227; and N. J. Andrew's introduction to his edition of All for Love (London: Ernest Benn Limited; The New Mermaids, 1975).

anything other than a conventional heroic drama. In 1671, William Joyner, in his dedication to Sedley of The Roman Empress, suggested that Sedley write a tragedy.⁸ A number of circumstances in the early 1670s furnished the opportunity for such an undertaking. Shortly after 1671, he withdrew from the "merry gang" and lived a life of retirement and moderation with his second "wife," Ann Ayscough.⁹ Pinto feels that Sedley consoled himself in his retirement from the Wits by writing Antony and Cleopatra.¹⁰ Then too, his previous familiarity with the Cleopatra story through his participation in the translation of La Mort de Pompée, along with the popularity of the heroic genre and spectacular effects, encouraged him to write his own play about Antony and Cleopatra.

On the surface, the play provides much evidence for the pervasive view of the play as conventional heroic-neoclassical drama. Though he draws most extensively on Plutarch, Sedley must have recognized the heroic potential of the story in Shakespeare's presentation of Antony as a "Herculean hero"¹¹ who is "more great than good."¹² Despite his moral failings, Sedley's Antony also assumes epic proportions as a great conqueror and co-ruler of the

⁸Wilson, Court Wits, p. 156.

⁹Pinto, Sedley, pp. 129-130.

¹⁰Pinto, Sedley, p. 133.

¹¹David M. Vieth, ed., All for Love (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), p. xx.

¹²Eugene Waith, Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), p. 107.

world. He compares himself and Cleopatra to Mars and Bellona (the god and goddess of war), says that they will reign "like the immortal gods," and swears by Hercules.¹³ Set in romantic, exotic Egypt, the play features battle on land and at sea, waged between the enormous armies of Antony and Caesar for colossal stakes: nothing less than the world itself. Heroic couplets, so popular in serious drama between 1675 and 1677,¹⁴ also contribute to the conventionally heroic tone of the drama. In the interest of conventional neoclassical rules, Sedley makes a number of changes in the Antony and Cleopatra story. The play begins in medias res, after the Battle of Actium, uses fewer characters than Shakespeare's play, and omits details of other accounts in order to approximate the unity of time as much as possible. Sedley makes no mention of Caesar's winter cessation of hostilities during the war with Antony (a fact which his source, Plutarch, does mention)¹⁵ and omits Antony's trip to Athens, where, after an unsuccessful attempt to escape to the Persian Gulf, Cleopatra joins him.¹⁶ In addition, Sedley transfers the desertion of Antony's soldiers from Greece to Egypt.¹⁷ And like many a heroic play,

¹³Pinto, Works, I, I. ii. ll. 249; II. ii. ll. 24, 226; IV. iii. l. 54.

¹⁴Hume, p. 310, finds twelve of sixteen serious plays using heroic couplets during this period.

¹⁵Bernadotte Perrin, trans., Demetrius and Antony, Pyrrhus and Caius Marius, Vol. IX in Plutarch's Lives (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), p. 307.

¹⁶Pinto, Works, I, 189.

¹⁷Pinto, Works, I, 189; Perrin, p. 293.

Sedley's focuses on the hero's destiny and the role of his love-honor struggle in that destiny. By conventional standards of the genre, Antony's demise appears as the logical and expected result of his having put love before honor. In this play the consequences of Antony's ignoble passion for Cleopatra are many. He abandons his wife Octavia--Caesar's sister and the symbol of the world peace he had forged with Caesar. He abandons also his children by his previous wife, Fulvia, children whom Octavia dutifully cares for. Because a sensuous, neglectful, carefree existence with Cleopatra has kept Antony from being the kind of governor he should be, Canidius, Antony's loyal general, has taken over many of Antony's military responsibilities. As the play opens, many of the characters complain about Antony's behavior, suggest that he is a slave to passion and Cleopatra, and provide evidence of his unwillingness to listen to reason. Three of Cleopatra's subjects--Memnon, Chilax, and Photinus--make similar complaints about her. Even Antony recognizes his faults and admits them. The ignoble passion is blamed for the war with Caesar, the defeat at Actium, Antony's rejection of Caesar's peace terms and mistreatment of his ambassador, desertions, and other setbacks suffered by Antony's side. Under the circumstances, the decisions of the other characters to plot against Antony, defeat him, and strip him of his power seem not unreasonable; and the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra at the end of the play seem to bear out the conventional wisdom that placing love before honor can lead only to disaster. Many elements of the play, then--ignoble passion, heroic features, neoclassical features, and the not-unexpected decline of

the lovers--suggest a very conventional heroic play, and most critics have thus approached the play as a conventional drama.

Sedley's Antony and Cleopatra is not without defenders; however, these include, for the most part, men biased by their association with the author. In the dedication to his A True Widow (1679), Sedley's close friend Thomas Shadwell praises Antony and Cleopatra: "In this Play the Romans are true Romans, and their Style is such; and I dare affirm that there is not in any Play of this Age so much of the Spirit of the Classick Authors, as in your [Sedley's] Antony and Cleopatra."¹⁸ The friendship between these two playwrights probably contributed to the very positive tone of these remarks, but the enmity between Shadwell and Dryden--whose All for Love made him Sedley's competitor in the world of the theater--may also have contributed to Shadwell's high praise for Dryden's competitor.¹⁹ Another unsurprising defender of Sedley's play is Captain William Ayloffe: nephew to Sedley's second wife, Ann Ayscough; literary executor of Sedley's estate;²⁰ and editor of the 1702 edition of Sedley's works. Ayloffe comments, "Cleopatra dy'd not more gallantly in Alexandria than by our author in Drury Lane."²¹ Sedley's only unbiased favorable critic, R. H. Case, describes Sedley's play as "full of life, bustle,

¹⁸Pinto, Sedley, p. 277, n.1.

¹⁹Andrew, p. xix.

²⁰Pinto, Sedley, pp. 128-129; Works, I, vi.

²¹Pinto, Sedley, p. 277, n.1.

combat and siege . . . [,] the whole can appeal," he says, "if we forget Shakespeare."²² Professor Pinto finds Case's assessment "justified if we regard the play purely as a piece of stage carpentry, a libretto for Clark's music."²³ Significantly, Sedley's defenders say nothing of the play's ideas, its intellectual design.

By far the greatest number of critics evaluating this relatively obscure play do not like it. Indeed, many find so little merit in it that they restrict their discussion primarily to impressions without detailing the play's flaws. Walter Scott writes in his introduction to an edition of All for Love, "Daniel, Mary countess of Pembroke, May and Sir Charles Sedley, each produced a play on the fortunes of Anthony. Of these pieces, I have never read the three former, and will assuredly never read the last a second time."²⁴ According to Montague Summers, "Sedley's Antony and Cleopatra cannot but be considered to have plumbed the nadir of all Restoration heroic tragedies."²⁵ Allardyce Nicoll judges the play a failure,²⁶ and Bonamy Dobree calls it "viciously bad."²⁷ While John Harold Wilson

²²Pinto, Sedley, p. 277.

²³Pinto, Sedley, p. 277.

²⁴Davies, p. 221.

²⁵Summers, p. 304.

²⁶Nicoll, p. 120.

²⁷Bonamy Dobré, Restoration Tragedy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. 68.

Robert Hume, and Vivian de Sola Pinto offer more specific analysis, they, too, are far from enthusiastic about the play. Hume says, "No doubt the play suffers unfairly from inevitable comparisons, but awful is the word for it."²⁸ Even Sedley's recent defender, Professor Pinto, must admit that the play "deserves most of the unkind things which the critics have said of it"²⁹

Several critics have complained that the protagonist's love-honor dilemma, which should be the central concern of the play, is, in N. J. Andrew's words, "swamp[ed by] the rest of the action"³⁰ Vivian de Sola Pinto contends, "The love of Antony and Cleopatra and the struggle in Antony's mind between love and honour, which must surely dominate the whole action in a successful play on this theme are obscured in Sedley's piece by other motifs that are not particularly interesting in themselves, and which are quite unwarranted by history."³¹ John Harold Wilson also criticizes the "invincible inventiveness" of Sedley's deviations not only from the conventional focus on the love-honor conflict but also from history. Ironically, Dryden's much-praised All for Love has drawn criticism on similar grounds--according to David Vieth, "because so much action has been initiated by other characters, particularly Alexis [based partly on Sedley's Photinus]."³²

²⁸Hume, p. 314.

²⁹Pinto, Sedley, p. 277.

³⁰Andrew, p. xvi.

³¹Pinto, Sedley, p. 278.

³²Vieth, ed., All for Love, p. xvii.

A number of these objectionable deviations, distractions from Antony's dilemma, involve love relationships. As Wilson observes, "Sedley has made the Egyptian Photinus a knave who lusts after Iras and betrays his queen; he turned the Roman Thyreus into a milksop, hopelessly enamoured of Cleopatra; he made Caesar's counselor Mecoenas, also a lover, smitten by the fading charms of Octavia."³³ Actually, Photinus was not living during this part of Cleopatra's life: Caesar had had him killed long before the battle of Actium, as Sedley would have known from having assisted in translating Corneille's La Mort de Pompée, which records the event. Moreover, the historical Photinus was a eunuch.

The complicated subplots and detours of Sedley's account also constitute flaws for these critics. Noting several similarities between All for Love and Sedley's play through Act II, scene i, of Antony and Cleopatra, Peter Caracciolo comments, "This is the point beyond which the play becomes quite farcical With ludicrous symmetry, Photinus, whose machinations against Antony echo the evil designs of Caesar, loves Iras, Cleopatra's maid, as Maecenas loves Octavia."³⁴ These machinations of Caesar and Photinus include engineering desertions and riots among Antony's forces and, in general, through devious means undermining Antony's ability to rule. For example, Caesar chooses as his ambassador to Antony a man whom he

³³Wilson, Court Wits, p. 168.

³⁴Caracciolo, p. liv.

knows to be in love with Cleopatra and thus likely to fail in his mission of peace: Thyreus. John Geneste and Neville Davies object to Sedley's handling of the episode in which Thyreus kisses Cleopatra's hand and Antony become jealous. Enraged, Antony orders Thyreus taken prisoner and whipped, his advisors object to this harsh treatment, the town riots and frees Thyreus, and Antony finally recognizes and repents the rashness of his reaction. Geneste says that Sedley has made a mountain out of a molehill,³⁵ and Davies describes the same scene as an "elaborate detour."³⁶

Possibly the only critic to probe beyond the conventional features of Sedley's play in an attempt to explain his deviations from the heroic mode is N. J. Andrew. Though he describes the play as "a conventional rhymed neo-classical tragedy,"³⁷ Andrew sees it also as a criticism of Charles II's politics:

The conventional subordination of the selfish interests of love to the altruistic demands of honour underlined the individual's duty to the state and the evils of rebellion. Sedley used such criteria to show how far short of the heroic ideal Charles II's pursuit of self-gratification had made him fall: Sedley even goes as far as portraying the motives of the Egyptian rebels Chilax and Memnon as understandable if inexcusable.³⁸

³⁵ John Geneste, Some Account of the English Stage (Bath, England: Carrington, 1832), Vol. I, p. 208.

³⁶ Davies, p. 224.

³⁷ Andrew, p. xvi.

³⁸ Andrew, p. xxi.

On the surface Andrew's argument seems to have some merit. Sedley did leave the King's party in the 1670s and became a Whig, though a very independent one.³⁹ This is the period of time, it will be remembered, when Sedley left his courtier friends and enjoyed a more sedate existence with his wife Ann.⁴⁰ The weakness of Andrew's argument, however, lies in his contention that Sedley criticizes the king through Antony. Actually, Sedley's presentation of Antony is not entirely negative; Antony hardly seems the tyrant that Caesar describes. Moreover, Sedley's audience feels unmistakable admiration for Antony and Cleopatra at the end of the play. The "exaltation of the hero" in this play generates the same effect that All for Love, based partly on Sedley's play, generates: at the end of Dryden's account, says Eugene Waith, "the final emphasis is on regal transcendence"⁴¹ If Sedley did intend Antony to be identified with Charles II, he certainly tempers his criticism with this "exaltation" and "transcendence"--a realistic compassion perhaps not unlike that found in Dryden's portrayal of Charles II and Monmouth in Absalom and Achitophel.

While many critics find fault with Sedley's play because they mistakenly consider it conventional heroic drama, and while Andrew mistakenly attributes Sedley's deviations from conventional formulae to political attacks on Charles II, other critics have added further

³⁹Pinto, Sedley, pp. 176-179.

⁴⁰Pinto, Sedley, pp. 130-131.

⁴¹Waith, p. 235.

to the confusion surrounding the play through errors in scholarship. One might indeed consider the number of misstatements about the play as a measure of its obscurity. For example, Sir A. W. Ward in his History of English Dramatic Literature⁴² and F. E. Schelling in his article on the drama in The Cambridge History of English Literature⁴³ incorrectly state that Beauty the Conquerour, or The Death of Marc Antony is merely a reprint of Antony and Cleopatra under a new title. In truth, Beauty the Conquerour is an unfinished rewrite of Antony and Cleopatra. The Short Title Catalog II makes the same error. John Geneste errs in asserting that Sedley "borrowed nothing from Shakespeare";⁴⁴ Pinto, for example, has shown that Sedley's Antony and Cleopatra contains echos of Othello and Julius Caesar.⁴⁵ Ruth Wallerstein confuses Sedley's characters, saying that Cleopatra is wooed by Photinus (she means Thyreus; Photinus plots against her).⁴⁶ What the confusion and misinformation surrounding the play seem to show is that this play has fallen victim to the same kind of critical biases--

⁴²A. W. Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne (London: McMillan, 1899), III, 446, cited in Pinto, Sedley, p. 279.

⁴³F. E. Schelling, "The Restoration Drama I," The Age of Dryden, Vol. VIII in The Cambridge History of English Literature (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1952), p. 139. Schelling also incorrectly states that Antony and Cleopatra was performed in 1667. The correct date of performance is 1677.

⁴⁴Geneste, I, 208.

⁴⁵Pinto, Works, I, 190.

⁴⁶Ruth Wallerstein, "Dryden and the Analysis of Shakespeare's Techniques," Review of English Studies, 19 (1943), 168.

against the author and his works--that have stood in the way of appreciating his comedies.

Much of the scholarship, despite its failings, raises legitimate questions about the play that must be answered. Why would Sedley attempt to approximate the neoclassical unities and then deliberately violate these rules by adding love interests and subplots? Why does he allow these love interests and subplots to "swamp" the all-important love-honor dilemma? Why indeed does he exalt protagonists who reject the conventional placement of honor before love? The answer to all of these questions lies in a recognition, once again, of Sedley's moral design. Instead of a "gay couple" like Olivia and Wildish, Sedley employs two protagonists of epic proportions--Antony and Cleopatra--who, like their comic counterparts in the earlier play, serve as exemplars of good government, and with whom he contrasts blindly acquiescent idealistic characters on the one hand and blindly obsessive characters on the other. The love interests and subplots that seem to violate the conventions of heroic-neoclassical drama actually form an important part of an elaborate network of contrasts; these love interests and subplots which receive so much attention in the play allow Sedley to indicate, through negative examples, what constitutes bad government as well as what constitutes good government. And as we shall see, these "distractions" from the love-honor dilemma play an important role in the audience's changing attitude toward the protagonists.

The skeptical attitude and careful technique which contribute to the design of The Mulberry Garden figure also in the design of

Antony and Cleopatra. Skepticism prevents Sedley's unquestioning acceptance of convention and enables him to discriminate between illusion and reality. Derek Hughes has recently singled out this kind of skeptical attitude as a significant feature in the heroic plays of Sedley's friend Dryden:

On the whole, their significance has been badly represented, for they reveal profound skepticism about the utility and practicability of heroic endeavor. This is not to say . . . that they are primarily farcical in character: Dryden does . . . create episodes of anti-heroic comedy, but these make a very subordinate contribution to his serious, humane study of the disparity between aspiration and mortal reality.⁴⁷

Sedley's play shares this skepticism and is, as Hughes points out, to some degree anti-heroic. Sir Charles' emphasis on the schemes of the play's villains--Caesar and Photinus--allows him to mitigate Antony and Cleopatra's culpability in their decline by showing that it results less from any ignoble passion than from villainous sabotage. Skepticism allows us to discern this sabotage. Consequently, the play diminishes the importance of the conventional (and unrealistic) view of the story as primarily a conflict between love and honor and allows the audience to admire the lovers with less reservation. In other words, Sedley's skeptical attitude allows him to challenge the conventional portrayal not only of the love-honor conflict but also of the protagonists who appear to place love before everything else in their lives. The type of rigorous analytical methodology that one associates with the mechanical philosophy and the Platonic-Pythagorean

⁴⁷Hughes, p. viii.

tradition accounts for Sedley's use of the unhistorical love interests and the subplots involving the schemes of the villains. Anne Barbeau has recently singled out this kind of methodology in the heroic plays of Dryden:

There is clearly a connection between scenes of argumentation in which he [Dryden] exposes the several sides of political and philosophical issues and the action in Dryden's heroic drama. The usurpations, assassinations, rebellions and suicides are not the result of momentary impulses but are the logical outcome of attitudes concerning man's responsibilities within the state set forth in previous scenes of discourse. It is in the acting out of Hobbesian and other views that moral judgement on the part of the author is demonstrated.⁴⁸

The same concerns and techniques discussed by Barbeau obtain in this semi-heroic play by Sedley. The love relationships form part of Sedley's contrast not only of political attitudes but of attitudes toward love and honor. The relationships seen by so many critics as redundancies, flaws distracting attention from the love-honor dilemma, actually help Sedley present a more realistic picture of the various factors in issues of government. The careful contrasts, all part of his moral design, lead to a recognition of the superiority of his protagonists to other characters.

A systematic and rather elaborate contrast of characters and attitudes similar to the tripartite contrast of The Mulberry Garden allows Sedley one means of challenging the conventional view of Antony's love-honor dilemma. In Sedley's account, resolution of serious issues involves more than a simplistic choice between love and honor or between patriotism and villainy. Between the extreme

⁴⁸Barbeau, p. 56.

individualism of selfish Hobbesian characters, Sedley offers Antony's more realistic and more reasonable (though far from perfect) position.

Interestingly, Sedley presents not just one or two idealistic patriots as part of the contrast but a variety of idealistic patriots representing a variety of loyalties. Although this variety may offend the sensibilities of critics expecting simplicity and greater unity in the heroic drama, the variety helps Sedley show that his play emphasizes a conflict of attitudes, transcending political loyalties, rather than a conflict of nations or armies. Despite the differences in loyalties (Agrippa to Caesar, Canidius and Lucilius to Antony, and Memnon and Chilax to Egypt), each of the play's patriots displays stoic idealism, loyalty, and honesty. The idealism appears early in the play as various characters react to Antony's apparent dereliction of duties in favor of a more sensual existence. Agrippa's complaint could easily be attributed to any of the play's patriots:

Our souls did once our conquer'd Bodies loath,
And seldome did one world contain 'em both.
Yet now by hopes we're flatter'd to live on,
And with the Common Herd of Mankind run,
Crouching to Fate, which we by death might shun.
(I. i. ll. 5-9)

Agrippa's belief in the necessity of loyalty to the state appears later in the same act:

Love of our Country and our Interest,
Is the true passion of a Roman Breast,
All others are Usurpers--
(I. i. ll. 36-38)

Canidius, though Agrippa's enemy, expresses the same beliefs in loyalty and Roman honor, and his speech shows the characteristic

honesty of the patriots as well when he reveals what he considers to be the source of Antony's problems:

Sir, I am blunt, unknowing to deceive,
 I'll say you cannot Cleopatra Leave:
 That you in her defence alone can fight,
 And blest in love, the Roman Empire slight.
 (I. ii. ll. 101-104)

Even more interesting than the sharing of idealistic beliefs by enemies is the similarity between the patriots' attitude and the political philosophy endorsed by Robert Filmer and Edward Hyde, who argued for an absolute English monarchy based on the divine right of kings. One obeys a sovereign, according to this view, not because of the king's power but because he is the king and deserves to be obeyed.

Throughout the play Agrippa offers Caesar advice based on his patriotic idealism, and he remains loyal to Caesar whether Caesar accepts his advice or not. Even though he advises against Caesar's plans for crushing Antony (I. i. ll. 18-23), seizing sole control of the empire (III. i. ll. 80-81), and treating Antony as a slave (I. i. ll. 75ff), Agrippa accepts Caesar's plans for confronting Antony. Canidius, though he often disagrees with Antony, remains loyal to his sovereign to the end, in spite of Antony's obvious failings. When Antony finds that he has been betrayed by land and sea, Canidius replies, "Let's fight and die in Arms upon the Foe" (V. i. l. 114).

The Egyptian lords Memnon and Chilax are essentially Egyptian versions of Agrippa and Canidius, manifesting the same idealism, loyalty, and honesty, although their feelings of loyalty to Egypt cause them to plot against Antony, the ally of their queen. They

too advise their sovereign honestly, but Cleopatra proves unwilling to accept honest advice that at the same time undermines her relationship with Antony. Chilax complains,

The Time our honest Councils cannot bear,
And men their Thoughts must in disguises wear.
(I. ii. ll. 12-13)

These Egyptian lords also exhibit stoic idealism when they recognize the dangers of their patriotism:

Let us die warm, and at an Army's head.
The Romans will not ever be thus strong.
(I. ii. ll. 29-30)

For reasons purely patriotic, Memnon and Chilax plot against Antony; Chilax justifies plans to assassinate his queen's lover by observing,

He's not our Prince; for public good he dies,
And for our Country falls a Sacrifice.
(I. ii. ll. 38-39)

Realizing that patriotic opposition to Antony involves deceiving Cleopatra, he admits, "I love my Queen and to rebel am loth" (I. ii. l. 34). When their revolt is quashed and they are captured, Memnon and Chilax exhibit bravery in the face of certain death, which contrasts strikingly with their countryman Photinus' cowardice and deception. Photinus attempts to lie and beg for mercy, but Chilax curses him and tells Antony,

We scorn thy Mercy, and our Country love,
And gladly from her dying Cries remove.
(IV. vi. ll. 108-109)

Sedley's contrast of Antony's failings with the qualities of these patriots, each from a different camp in the conflict, underscores the importance of similarities in the patriots' attitudes over

differences in their political loyalties. In traditional heroic drama of this period, the audience focuses on the protagonist's conflict between love and honor; the selfless honor of these patriots makes Antony's sins seem even blacker. However, the play's questioning of these heroic virtues becomes apparent when we look beyond Act I at the play as a whole, particularly when we regard the limitations of these patriotic characters and when we recognize the machinations of the play's other extreme group: the self-centered Hobbesian characters.

Whereas idealism, loyalty, and honesty characterize the patriots, Sedley's Hobbesian villains are, by way of contrast, cynical (though probably more realistic than the patriots), selfishly ambitious, and markedly dishonest and deceitful. Octavius Caesar and Photinus are the most clearly Hobbesian characters, although there are lesser characters, such as Iras and Mecoenas, who share the villains' selfish traits to some degree. There had been Machiavellian villains very similar to these in pre-Restoration plays, but whereas these earlier villains either "denied morality or opposed it," according to Louis Teeter, the Hobbesian villains created their own morality.⁴⁹ For the Hobbesian, sovereignty rests on power, and he does not assume that human nobility will allow for the maintenance of social order. Photinus' cynical Hobbesian attitude, a major characteristic of these villains, is particularly noticeable when he urges Cleopatra to betray Antony:

⁴⁹Teeter, p. 160.

When two fierce Bulls contend, the doubtful Herd
 Stand gazing by for a while of both afear'd:
 But soon as one the fatal strife declines,
 The Captive number with the Victor joyns.
 (V. i. 11. 54-58)

When Antony learns that Photinus fabricated the story of Cleopatra's death and asks him why, Photinus reveals the second major characteristic of the villains in the play:

Ambition Sir, I had no Armies I;
 Nor was I born of Royal Progeny.
 No crown descended on my Lazy Head,
 I cou'd no open path to greatness tread:
 But none despis'd that to a Throne did Lead.
 (V. i. 11. 207-211)

The herd analogy in the earlier quotation reflects the Hobbesian view that power more than anything else justifies a government. Photinus admits that he does not merit the throne: he calls himself "lazy." And because the path to the throne is not "open" to him, he cannot claim divine right. The analogy suggests also that such a view of man makes him little better than any other animal--surely a cynical view. Implicit in the Hobbesian view of government, also, is the importance of fear, which makes men willing to sacrifice their liberty. Teeter calls fear "the dominant emotion behind Hobbes's political thought" and suggests that Hobbes saw the origin of government "in the selfish desire of man to escape from the insupportable war of the state of nature."⁵⁰ Fear makes the herd join the victor; it also explains why Photinus thinks he will never be despised once he gains Egypt's throne: others will fear him. In such a system,

⁵⁰Teeter, pp. 142-143.

politics and government become a matter of expedience. Photinus is more than willing to join Memnon and Chilax's rebellion against Antony in the fourth act and is just as willing to rejoin Antony, or to seem to rejoin him, when the rebellion is crushed and he is captured with Memnon and Chilax (IV. vi.).

Caesar shares with Photinus a fierce ambition and a Hobbesian view of power as the ultimate source of authority. Octavia's marriage to Antony makes her merely a tool in Caesar's master plan to take sole control of the world. He is willing to keep her a virtual prisoner when she threatens to side with Antony in the war (IV. i. l. 158), and her death of a broken heart (V. i. ll. 292-296) is attributable partly to his shameless treatment of her. Caesar considers himself an absolute sovereign, above the law because he is the law. When Agrippa advises against his plan to seize complete control of the Roman Empire, Caesar responds,

He that can do no ill, can do no good,
And if in one, in both may be withstood.
The actions of a Tyrant I abhor,
But as things stand I cannot want the power.
(III. i. ll. 82-85)

Caesar's response is a far cry from the concept of divine-right monarchy espoused by many seventeenth-century royalists in England, men like Filmer or Hyde; rather it is Hobbes's idea that the legitimacy of the monarchy rests on its absolute power. When Agrippa argues,

Our Laws the art of ruling best contain;
(III. i. l. 86)

which accords with the view that the king himself is under the law, Mecoenas responds with the Hobbesian position endorsed by Caesar,

Photinus, and other stage villains of the period:

Fools find it there, wise Princes in their Brain.
(III. i. l. 87)

Caesar's outbreak at the end of this scene cuts through his diplomatic pretense of patriotism and fairness:

The thoughts of humane chance should make us bold.
Ile seize the Empire, which Ile die or hold.
(III. i. ll. 110-111)

And Agrippa's final comment in this scene confirms the ulterior Hobbesian motives behind Caesar's plans:

Born under Kings our Fathers freedom sought,
And with their blood the Godlike treasure bought,
We their vile issue in our chains delight,
And born to freedom for our Tyrants fight.
(III. i. ll. 112-115)

These clear indications and admissions of Hobbesian attitudes function as more than popular heroic ornament, more than intrigue elements designed to cater to the audience's desire for stage villains.

Photinus, Caesar, and the other Hobbesian characters allow the careful student of the drama to recognize that the play concerns more than just the love-honor struggle of the protagonists: these villains gradually emerge as important parts of Sedley's careful tripartite contrast of philosophies of government--all part of his moral design. That Caesar and Photinus fight on opposite sides of the conflict illustrates once again that the play emphasizes a conflict of attitudes, transcending political loyalties, rather than a conflict of nations or armies. Sedley rejects the attitude of the villains, just as he rejects the attitude of the patriots; each is

extreme, to some degree unrealistic, and thus ill suited for the ideal of government, or behavior, Sedley endorses.

In the fabric of Sedley's play, the tripartite contrast of character attitudes acts as the woof to the warp of the unfolding plot. The play's design, in which the contrast plays a vital role, escapes attention at the beginning because the heroic accouterments lead the audience to expect conventional heroics. If one regards the play in conventional terms, as a story primarily of the protagonist's struggle between love and honor, the overall design is overlooked completely and the subplots seem mere distracting flaws. Recognizing the movement of the plot from illusion to reality, however, allows the reader to recognize the villains as villains, to see the decline of the protagonists as the result of a complex combination of factors, including the villains' schemes, and to sympathize with the formerly scorned protagonists. More specifically, one appreciates Antony and Cleopatra as golden means in the tripartite contrast by tracing the role of the villains in various setbacks experienced by the protagonists.

The first and perhaps most salient setback experienced by Antony's forces is the famous defeat at Actium, a battle which stands in the minds of most characters as a kind of microcosm for Antony's problems and their causes. Although the battle itself never appears in Sedley's play, the audience probably would have been familiar with Antony's ignominious retreat in pursuit of Cleopatra and with the conventional conclusion to be drawn from his disgraceful behavior: that his obsessive passion for Cleopatra accounts for his increasing

irresponsibility and declining leadership. These two weaknesses--passion and irresponsibility--continue to be significant issues in the play as various characters judge Antony and consider their positions in the conflict between him and Caesar. In the first scene of the play, for instance, Caesar, Agrippa, and Mecoenas confer to decide what actions they should take against Antony, and their discussion of Actium allows Caesar to bring up a related issue in the play--Antony's abandonment of his wife Octavia, which is also an affront to Caesar, her brother. In the second scene Memnon and Chilax, cognizant of the dangerous position Antony's defeat at Actium has placed Egypt in, consider Egypt's alliance with Antony. Canidius blames Cleopatra for the defeat, the Egyptians blame Antony, and Antony accuses himself for his "Lethargy of Honour" (1. 227). The Battle of Actium thus conveniently introduces the conventional conflict between love and honor as well as providing the basis for several plot lines in the play which develop in reaction to the protagonists' behavior at Actium.

Antony undeniably deserves most of the blame for the defeat at Actium, a point that he himself acknowledges. However, Sedley apparently takes pains to present factors (other than Antony's irresponsibility) which also contributed to the defeat at Actium, circumstances about which Caesar is, not surprisingly, silent. One such factor, the chance of the weather, contributes significantly to the defeat; Antony laments the fate of his

Ships, whom the winds more than their Pilots sway,
Where eager courage for a wave must stay.

The Valiant cannot board, nor Coward fly,
 But at the lust of the unconstant sky.
 (I. ii. ll. 48-51)

Sedley seems in this passage to suggest that the weather, more than courage or cowardice, led to defeat and that, to some extent, the course of the battle was beyond Antony's control. Another factor in the battle, the inexperience of the men in Antony's fleet, appears to have played no small part in the defeat. Many of the Egyptian boats were manned by "Reapers and Ploughmen" who never had "tug'd an Oar" or been at sea (I. ii. l. 72). Canidius explains that his Roman soldiers were "rude in ships and sea affairs untaught" (I. ii. l. 53) and argues that "victorious Romans [are] to land conquest born," despising "Trophies at sea" (I. ii. ll. 82-83). Despite these handicaps and Antony and Cleopatra's desertion, Antony's fleet "bravely fought" for six hours (I. ii. l. 54). Rather than acknowledging these other circumstances, Caesar draws attention to Antony's ignominious retreat and offers an interpretation of the battle that reinforces the conventional attitudes toward love and honor: "Our Arms as easie Victory have found/ Over a Foe, in love and pleasure drown'd" (I. i. ll. 1-2). Agrippa and Mecoenas echo this view in succeeding speeches, and the audience, expecting a conventional play, are inclined to agree. However, as the play proceeds, the audience realize, in retrospect, that Caesar cares more about putting Antony's behavior in the worst possible light than about the conventional view of love and honor.

The rift between Antony and Caesar which precipitated the war, an ongoing issue rather than an isolated setback, also deserves

clarification because the conventional view of the rift differs from Sedley's view and because Caesar misrepresents the rift. At first glance it appears attributable solely to Antony's passion, but closer examination shows it following, actually, from several factors. By conventional standards of the genre, Antony's obsessive passion is a sufficient cause for the rift. This passion drives him to abandon reason, honor, and responsibility when he abandons his wife Octavia (whose marriage to him symbolizes his peace with Caesar) and when he goes to live with Cleopatra in Egypt. The most objective audience would recognize this passion as a significant factor in the conflict.

Caesar blames Antony's mistreatment of Octavia when he accounts for his war with Antony, and he refers also to the judgement of Fate:

Against all strokes of fate who can prepare?
That Match [Antony's with Octavia] is half Th' occasion of
this War

(I. i. 11. 24-25)

Later he argues once again that he is submitting to Fate:

Heaven chooses me the fittest instrument [to rule the Empire]
And on that glorious Task I'm wholly bent.

(IV. i. 11. 118-119)

So far Caesar's representation of the war in conventional terms appears reasonable. To bolster his public image in the conflict, Caesar carefully assumes a pose of magnanimity and suggests that Antony alone has the power to end the war. Caesar will offer Antony peace, let him decide whether to accept it, and let the world judge that decision:

Peace we will offer, that he may refuse,
And the whole world his bloody mind accuse.

(I. i. 11. 81-82)

On the surface Caesar's peace offering suggests that he will let Antony decide whether or not there will be peace; then the world can judge Antony's decision. However, Caesar plans so to manipulate circumstances, as we shall see, that Antony must inevitably refuse the peace offering; to the world Antony's mind will indeed appear "bloody" for having refused peace. This is not just Caesar's prediction; it is his aim, but the world will not fully appreciate the various circumstances of this decision.

When Mecoenas recommends total subjugation of Antony (Caesar's secret goal), Caesar assumes a pose, once again, of innocence and fairness, seemingly coming to Antony's defense:

The man was once my Friend, my Brother still:
What are these thoughts that wou'd ambition chill?
(II. ii. ll. 27-28)

Yet as the previous discussion of Caesar as Hobbesian villain shows, such feelings of friendship and brotherhood seem highly unlikely, a point later confirmed by Antony himself (III. ii. ll. 33-34). Caesar's deception masks his relentless ambition, the true source of the war with Antony, as even Octavia, Caesar's sister, recognizes:

Your Love! your Pride and endless Thirst of sway
To gain my friends, my Quarrel you pretend,
But universal empire is your end.
(IV. i. ll. 96-98)

The conventional perception of Antony's culpability in the Battle of Actium and in the rift with Caesar colors to some extent perception of other incidents in the play. Caesar and Photinus thus easily

exaggerate and misrepresent the failings of Antony and manipulate sentiment against him.

Mecoenas's love for Octavia, a fiction which has so far confused the play's critics, also contributes to the obfuscation of Antony's role in the war with Caesar. As one of Caesar's counsellors, Mecoenas recommends total subjugation of Antony--advice not entirely unreasonable if one accepts the conventional view of Antony's behavior. By offering advice, Mecoenas lends credence to Caesar's pose of fairness; and in comparison with Caesar, in the first scene, Mecoenas seems to be the vengeful and ambitious member of the group:

On petty Kings you trifling Conquests make,
 Antonius brings you here an equal stake;
 The World to be divided at one blow,
 And Fate already has declar'd for you.
 (I. i. ll. 69-72)

Although Mecoenas appears ambitious in the speech above, his hatred for Antony is based on envy and on his love of Octavia, rather than on ambition. More than likely the speech reveals that Mecoenas recognizes and appeals to Caesar's ambition--a way of facilitating the elimination of a rival.

Once aware of Mecoenas's affection for Octavia, one can see that his feelings for her underlie his advice to Caesar and his attack on Antony. For example, Mecoenas argues that Caesar should avenge Octavia's humiliation, comparing "that fair Princess" to "blasphem'd Deities" (I. i. ll. 51, 54), and warns against Antony's ambition with a curious comparison:

Ambition's never safe till pow'r be past,
 As men till Impotent are seldom Chaste.
 (I. i. ll. 65-66)

The sexual nature of this comparison is appropriate not only because of Antony's reputation as a lover but also because his sensuality stands in contrast to the ideal, platonic love Mecoenas apparently feels for the wronged Octavia, his "blasphem'd Deity." Mecoenas warns against a military threat, but Antony threatens him primarily as a rival in love. Mecoenas seeks to make Antony impotent in love as well as in war.

The true motivation for Mecoenas's actions and advice appears in the second act when he confesses his love to Octavia and says,

if this treaty be confirm'd to day,
I must at Rome, and you in Asia stay.
(II. ii. ll. 113-114)

The love Mecoenas feels for Octavia, Sedley's fiction which Pinto and Wilson find odd and unjustifiable, in fact serves an important purpose. It provides more evidence that Antony and Cleopatra's downfall is not totally attributable to their passionate love. It also underscores, once again, the inadequacy of critics' conventional perception of the story.

The ambition and schemes of the villain Photinus also figure very significantly in the downfall of Antony and Cleopatra. During the course of the play Antony must deal with two riots and three instances of desertion or mutiny; in three of those cases, Photinus bears much of the blame. In Act II some of Antony's men have deserted ostensibly because they have not been paid, because they lack provisions, and because they resent Cleopatra's influence over Antony (ii. ll. 11-15). Gradually, however, it becomes apparent that Photinus was somehow responsible. Canidius reports that "Photinus in the camp

was seen" (II. i. l. 21), and soon afterwards Photinus enters pursued by six men, one of whom calls him a villain before being killed by Photinus (l. 48). In the second scene of Act II, Agrippa confirms that Photinus engineered the desertion; even Caesar recognizes Photinus for what he is: "Yee Gods! Why am I to a villain bound?" (II. ii. l. 20). In the fourth, fifth, and sixth scenes of the fourth act, Memnon and Chilax lead a riot against Antony, demanding that (the all-too-willing) Photinus join them. When the three conspirators are caught, Photinus admits his role but explains that he was driven by fear (IV. vi. ll. 72-99). Antony lets him go free. In the fifth act, Photinus causes Antony's fleet to desert to Caesar and, by fabricating the story of Cleopatra's suicide, causes Antony to commit suicide (V. i. ll. 169-171). Because Cleopatra commits suicide in response to Antony's death, Photinus is indirectly responsible for her death also.

In addition to helping Sedley challenge the conventional interpretation of Antony's decline, the character Photinus also helps him offer a more positive portrayal of Cleopatra. Sedley shows that the actions of this villain, whose presence in this part of Cleopatra's life has no historical basis, account for much of the suspicion directed at the heroine. Canidius suspects her of betraying Antony on more than a few occasions--after the fleet deserts in the fifth act, for example. Although other versions of the Antony and Cleopatra story present her as Antony's temptress and corrupter, representing

the sensuous, luxurious East,⁵¹ and although her complicity in this and other setbacks would seem plausible in these other accounts and by conventional standards, Sedley is careful to reveal Photinus' responsibility in these setbacks. It is particularly important, in evaluating how Sedley uses Photinus, to compare various versions of Antony's suicide. In Plutarch, Antony blames the desertion of his fleet on Cleopatra, who flees in fear to her monument and sends word that she has died, news which precipitates Antony's suicide.⁵² In Shakespeare's version the story remains essentially the same, except that Shakespeare tells us she sent word of her death by her eunuch Mardian (IV. x-xiv). But in Sedley's version, Antony does not blame Cleopatra for the desertion of his fleet, and she knows nothing of Photinus's story of her death; consequently, Photinus removes much of the suspicion and culpability traditionally associated with Cleopatra.

Antony's rejection of Caesar's peace offer and abuse of Caesar's ambassador seem to confirm the conventional view of him as irresponsible and as a slave to passion. However, here as elsewhere, Sedley challenges the view that the love-honor struggle is simple and clear-cut by revealing the role of the play's villains in Antony's decline. Although Caesar appears magnanimous in offering Antony peace in the first act, it later becomes apparent that Caesar knew Antony would

⁵¹Maynard Mack, "Introduction" to *Antony and Cleopatra*, William Shakespeare *The Complete Works*, ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 1169-1170.

⁵²Perrin, IX, 311.

not accept the terms--and for several good reasons. First, although Antony's jealousy and mistreatment of the ambassador Thyreus in III. ii. are inexcusable, Caesar bears some of the blame, having correctly predicted that Thyreus's affection for the queen would turn Antony against the peace Thyreus presents. Caesar's offer to send Thyreus as ambassador (I. i. l. 84) seems innocent enough, but (after Caesar exhibits proper indignation for Antony's mistreatment of Thyreus) Mecoenas points out, "Thyreus was ill chose, he long has been/ A secret servant to th['] AEgyptian Queen" (IV. i. ll. 3-4). In light of this information, Caesar's seemingly magnanimous peace offer is seen to be only an attempt to manipulate public opinion. When Caesar offers peace to Antony "that he may refuse," Caesar expects Antony to refuse and the world to "accuse" him of obstructing peace (I. i. ll. 81-82).

Caesar expects Antony to refuse peace also because the terms are unreasonable: Antony complains,

He offers Peace, but upon terms so high,
At the great rate I'd not an Empire buy:
My former gifts I meanly must resume,
And give accounts of all my acts to Rome.
My faithful friends from their Commands remove.
And place such as the Senate shall approve.
(III. ii. ll. 3-8)

Even Caesar's faithful and honest advisor Agrippa recognizes early in the play that someone like Antony cannot accept such terms:

Men that have once an equal pow'r enjoy'd,
May see the Ballance chang'd, but not destroy'd.
He that is lessen'd to a Slaves degree
Still conscious of the first equality,
Must hate the other, and himself much more.

Who ever saw a Captive Emperor?
 With honor treat and yield perhaps he may
 But he can never like a Slave obey.
 (I. i. 11. 73-80)

Octavia, too, recognizes that her husband, Antony, could never accept such terms. Caesar can promise to spare Antony if he conquers him, but Octavia knows "He will not spare himself . . ." (IV. i. 11. 39-40).

Compounding Antony's indignation and unwillingness to accept Caesar's peace terms is the knowledge that Caesar owes much of his power and authority to Antony, and now Caesar plans to strip Antony of any real power and authority. Antony complains to Canidius,

The Common-wealth for him I overthrew,
 Now in effect he claims my Empire too.
 (III. ii. 11. 41-42)

And Caesar's own sister, Octavia, argues to the same effect:

Ingrateful Rome! but most ingrateful you!
 Can you forget whom Cassius overthrow?
 Who first to Rome a Parthian triumph show'd,
 And the long pride of that great Empire bow'd?
 Who the first Caesar made, revenged his death,
 And fixt that Empire, which he did bequeath,
 On you almost unknown . . .
 (IV. i. 11. 54-60)

So although Antony's rejection of Caesar's peace terms seems unreasonable, Antony has good reason to reject them. Caesar's ambition, his Machiavellian scheme to block peace even as he appears to promote it, and his political maneuvering of public sentiment, are significant factors in Sedley's account of Antony and Cleopatra's decline.

Similarities between Sedley's play and an importance source, Corneille's La Mort de Pompée, clarify Sedley's purpose and technique and underscore the attempts at apotheosis of his famous lovers.

In fact, the plot of Corneille's Pompée follows the same pattern of movement from illusion to reality, here also in support of a contrast and clarification of attitudes. Like Corneille, Sedley appears to subordinate the actions of his title character to intrigue actions. Corneille titled his play La Mort de Pompée, but Pompey never appears in the play and the focus is on other characters' involvement in and reaction to his death. Sedley's Antony and Cleopatra (later rewritten and retitled The Death of Marc Antony) focuses also on the involvement in and reaction to the fate of the title characters. In each play these other characters act according to their interpretation of recent events immediately preceding the play's opening. In Corneille's play, Ptolemy, Photinus, Achilles, and Septimus decide whether to befriend or betray Pompey by analyzing the significance of his recent defeat at Pharsalia and his flight from Julius Caesar. In Sedley's play, Mecoenas, Agrippa, and Octavius Caesar debate their response to Antony in light of his recent defeat at Actium. In each case, the ostensibly patriotic and unselfish motives of the title character's opponents at the beginning of the play strike a sharp contrast to their true motives--envy and ambition--evident at the end of the play. At first Ptolemy and his advisors seem genuinely concerned that befriending Pompey would bring Caesar's wrath down on Egypt, but it becomes apparent eventually that they are merely protecting Ptolemy's sole sovereignty in Egypt, fearing that Pompey, entrusted to execute the will of Ptolemy's father, will make Cleopatra co-ruler of Egypt with her brother. Ironically, Ptolemy accuses Cleopatra of being ambitious when it is he and his advisor Photinus who are ambitious.

In Sedley's play, Caesar and his advisors seem genuinely concerned that Antony's passion has made him unreasonable, incapable of ruling effectively, and that it has steered him away from Roman honor. In fact, of course, Caesar and Photinus care only about furthering their own ambitions and Mecoenas wants only to eliminate a rival in love. Sedley also presents the irony of accusations against the protagonist: Antony is accused of being unreasonable and ambitious, yet his accusers are guilty of ambition and dishonorable deception. In each play, the group deciding the fate of the title character has an honest character: Achilles in Corneille's play, Agrippa in Sedley's play.

Sedley's use of Corneille's villain merits particular attention. Although Photinus appears in Plutarch and in Fletcher's The False One (c. 1620), which is about the earlier part of Cleopatra's life, Sedley's undoubted source is Corneille's Pompée, which the Wits translated as Pompey the Great. Actually, Sedley's placement of Photinus in the latter part of Cleopatra's life, as previously noted, is without historical basis, for Julius Caesar executed him after learning about the plot against himself and the assassination of Pompey. That Sedley makes Photinus an even greater villain in Antony and Cleopatra than he is in Pompey only underscores Sedley's purpose and technique: to make Antony and Cleopatra look better by showing that they are victims.

The differences between Sedley's play and Corneille's also prove instructive. While each moves from illusion to reality, Sedley's purpose differs slightly from Corneille's. The French playwright

upholds conventional standards of honor. Pompey's actions appear unambiguously honorable from the beginning of Corneille's play; the playwright uses gradual revelation to highlight the scheming of the villains with whom he contrasts Pompey and other honorable characters. Because Sedley intends more than a simple contrast of honorable patriots and dishonorable villains, however, and because he employs a tripartite contrast with complex title characters, Antony and Cleopatra appear much more ambiguous, at least at first, than Pompey. As the plot unfolds, not just the villains but the other two groups also become more clearly defined. And by effectively reversing our expectations about Antony and the other characters, Sedley succeeds in challenging the conventional focus on the love-honor dilemma. At the beginning of the play we focus on Antony's sins resulting from his choice of love over honor, and we side with Caesar and the patriots. As the play progresses, however, we recognize our blindness to the truth, and we side with Antony and Cleopatra.

Though he devotes much of the play to putting Antony's setbacks into perspective, exposing the villainies of Caesar and Photinus and the blindness of the patriots to those villainies, Sedley does not, like Corneille, dispose of his title character early in the play. In fact, much of the admiration that the audience feels for the protagonists derives from Sedley's unusually positive portrayal of them. Comparing other accounts of the Antony and Cleopatra story to Sedley's allows us to see just how positively he portrays his famous lovers.

May's Tragoedy of Cleopatra Queene of Egypt (1626) presents a scheming Cleopatra secretly plotting with Caesar to defeat Antony. In May's play, Cleopatra returns to Egypt pretending to have won the Battle of Actium "to deceive/ The credulous people" (III. ii. p. 41).⁵³ To win the alliance of the Parthian king, she has his enemy Artavasdes beheaded (III. ii. p. 41), and to win Caesar's favor and preserve the throne for herself and her children, she tells him that she has gold to offer him, a treasure "Unknown t'Antonius" (III. ii. pp. 43-44). Both Plutarch and Shakespeare present her ambivalently but more positively than May does. Plutarch's account says nothing of her treachery. Maynard Mack calls Plutarch's Cleopatra "all siren, every effect calculated to ensnare the senses of the conquering Roman" but concedes, "possibly she rises to genuine love before the end (Plutarch leaves this point undecided)"⁵⁴ The same ambivalent attitude pervades Shakespeare's play. Though Mack describes Shakespeare's Cleopatra as "a very unqueenly queen," he recognizes the poet's "sympathy and even admiration . . ." for the famous lovers.⁵⁵ The most positive portrayal of Cleopatra, aside from Sedley's appears, not surprisingly, in Corneille's Pompée, where her choice of honor over love for Caesar, ambition for the throne, and expediency contrasts with the ambition, treachery, and

⁵³Denzell S. Smith, ed., The Tragoedy of Cleopatra Queene of Aegypt by Thomas May: A Critical Edition (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1979). All further references to May's play are to this edition.

⁵⁴Mack, p. 1169.

⁵⁵Mack, p. 1169.

rationalizations of Ptolemy, Photinus, and the other Egyptian conspirators.

Although Cleopatra certainly appears more virtuous in Sedley's account than in most others, the playwright allows her enough faults to make her believable, or realistic, perhaps suggesting in this portrayal some of the ambivalence of Plutarch's and Shakespeare's accounts. Significantly, these faults appear almost exclusively in I. ii., where Cleopatra makes her first appearance in the play. Fearing that she will be blamed for Antony's defeat at Pelusium resulting from the treason of Seleucus, she asks Antony to have Seleucus's son executed; by executing the son for his father's crime, she reasons, the odium of guilt will be removed from her. To his credit, Antony refuses (ll. 179-200). In the same scene she encourages Antony to turn command of his forces over to Canidius--this after Canidius has chided Antony for his dereliction of duties and Antony has decided to assume responsibility once more (ll. 217-235). Her selfish behavior at the beginning of the play contributes to the audience's initial impression that this is a conventional heroic play, and, of course, this portrayal allows her to undergo the same kind of transformation into an exemplar of the golden mean of government that the protagonists of The Mulberry Garden undergo.

Much of Cleopatra's virtue consists of the selflessness we associate with the patriots. After Antony has rejected Caesar's peace offer and she recognizes how her relationship with Antony has antagonized Romans, she offers to return "to that griping Senate" all the gifts from Antony that Rome begrudges her, everything but

Antony (III. ii. ll. 82-86). Unlike the deceitful Cleopatra of May's play, Sedley's heroine refuses to save herself through a secret treaty with Caesar (III. ii. ll. 135-168) and accepts responsibility for the lovers' demise. In Act V she seems more concerned for Antony than herself:

O that betimes he Antony had my Cause forsook!

 The Romans against me declared the War,
 But caught Antonius Vertue in the snare.
 (ll. 49-54)

In her monument, defeat a foregone conclusion, Cleopatra again takes the blame for the lovers' demise and demonstrates her concern, not for herself, but for Antony:

'Twas I that lost you in each Roman mind;
 And to your ruine can you still be kind?
 How can you bear this Tyranny of Fate,
 And not the Cause, your Cleopatra hate.
 (ll. 5-8)

Cleopatra's selflessness extends beyond her love for Antony, however. She pleads clemency for her subjects after they have rioted against Antony (III. ii. ll. 291-294). In doing so she risks her relationship with Antony as well as her safety, for his jealous suspicions of betrayal immediately preceding her request have enraged him. Through everything, though, she remains faithful and loving, and her willingness to die with the man she loves, even after Antony has encouraged her to make peace with Caesar, provides the supreme illustration of her selflessness. So virtuous does Cleopatra appear in Sedley's play that John Harold Wilson complains that she "squeaks,"⁵⁶ and Neville

⁵⁶Wilson, Court Wits, p. 168.

Like his Cleopatra, Sedley's Antony appears selfish and unreasonable at the beginning of the play, leading the audience to expect a conventional heroic play. Antony removes Memnon, Cleopatra's advisor, from office for criticizing battle strategy (I. ii. ll. 5-9), blasts Memnon for revealing public sentiment against Antony and for offering honest advice (I. ii. ll. 113-140), and rebukes his loyal advisor Canidius for suggesting that Cleopatra ordered Seleucus's treason at Pelusium: "Monster, such horrid blasphemy forbear" (I. ii. l. 146). Undeniably, Antony has neglected his duties, abandoned Octavia, and allowed Cleopatra undue influence in his military strategies. She convinces him to fight Caesar at sea and occasions his ignominious retreat from the battle of Actium. Still Sedley manages to portray Antony positively enough to compensate for these weaknesses. Here as in The Mulberry Garden, Sedley transforms his protagonists gradually from characters flawed with selfishness and unreason to worthy exemplars whose effective government of themselves and others contrasts with the blindly idealistic or blindly obsessive behavior of other characters.

In Sedley's account, Antony does not blame Cleopatra for the defeat at Actium or for the desertion of his fleet, even though Canidius suspects and accuses her of treason (I. ii. ll. 75-78; V. i. ll. 79-90, 102-113). In these episodes, Cleopatra is blameless and Antony has no real occasion for suspicion or anger. However, Sedley does maintain the ambivalence of Antony's character by transferring his suspicion of Cleopatra to the episode involving Thyreus, Caesar's ambassador. The incident precipitating Antony's jealousy,

anger, and suspicion--Thyreus' kissing Cleopatra's hand--does not appear in Plutarch; actually, Shakespeare invented it. In Sedley's account, Antony interprets the kiss as a sign of betrayal in love as well as in global politics (perhaps Sedley's way, once again, of suggesting the parallel between domestic and national government), orders Thyreus whipped, and orders those who riot in response to the mistreatment of Thyreus killed (II. ii. ll. 212-304). However, before carrying out his rash intentions, Antony recognizes and repents the inappropriateness of his behavior:

Just Heaven, what am I,
Whom the rude People, teach Humanity?
(III. ii. ll. 331-332)

As previously noted, John Geneste feels that "Sedley has made a mountain out of a molehill." Certainly, however, the incident allows Sedley the opportunity to show Antony growing, open to reason and, eventually, able to control his passions. Also, of course, the incident brings Caesar's treachery more clearly into focus, by showing the disastrous results of Caesar's choosing Thyreus, and affords the opportunity for the romantic reconciliation of the famous lovers.

As the play progresses, Sedley's portrayal of Antony demonstrates, more and more, the injustice and inaccuracy of other characters' portrayal of Antony as selfish and unreasonable. In addition to refusing to execute Seleucus' son and admitting his poor judgement in the Thyreus incident, he quite reasonably defends Cleopatra from Canidius's accusations. In the fifth act, he argues,

Her people's Love, her Love to me haw lost;
And now her Faith, is by their Treason cros't.

Pity, not blame the Queen, who sinks this hour,
 Crush't with the ruines of an Emperor,
 (V. i. ll. 109-112)

Antony cuts off Canidius's criticism of the "vain Queen" and defends his association with her very persuasively:

her love is stronger than her fears,
 Her country she has made the Seat of War,
 'Tis just her safety be our early'st care:
 (I. ii. ll. 92-94)

Like Cleopatra, Antony selflessly tries to accept responsibility for his demise, refusing to blame her:

'Twas I that pull'd on you the hate of Rome,
 And all your Ills past, present, and to come.
 It is not fit nor possible I live,
 And my dear Queen, it grows unkind to grieve.
 (V. ii. ll. 1-4)

Antony shows willingness to sacrifice his life "if [Caesar] his Grace will to the Queen extend,/ And let the Crown upon her sons descend" (III. ii. ll. 92-95). Photinus's false story of the queen's death prompts perhaps the greatest indication of Antony's selfless devotion to Cleopatra. And like her, Antony demonstrates generosity outside the bounds of his relationship with her. For example, cognizant that he has lost the war and that further resistance will only result in more bloodshed, he orders his soldiers to cease fighting and give themselves up to Caesar (V. i. ll. 122-132).

As important as the gradual revelation of true character traits and the general contrast of characters are, they play a subservient role in this play to Sedley's examination of a more specific concern: the role of reason and love in the establishment of good, effective government. The villains and patriots of this play, because of their

extreme attitudes, suffer the same kind of blindness, or inability to exercise reason effectively, that their counterparts in The Mulberry Garden suffer from. Ironically, these apparently opposite groups share an important attitude: the belief that love necessarily interferes with, rather than supports, government.

The honest patriots of the play--Agrippa, Canidius, Memnon, Chilax, and others--view the love between Antony and Cleopatra as almost a disease, something antithetical to the patriotism they espouse. All of them would agree with Agrippa's criticism of the affair:

Love of our Country and our Interest
Is the true passion of the Roman Breast.
All others are Usurpers--

(I. i. ll. 36-38)

Memnon and Agrippa see romantic love as a monster, threatening good government. The former complains,

Was ever Queen like Cleopatra curst?
Of Egypt's Monsters sure her love's the worst.
(I. ii. ll. 1-2)

And according to Agrippa,

Nature that Monster Love does disavow:
In all her kinds only fantastic Man
Finds ways of folly which no other can.
(III. i. ll. 40-42)

Canidius also contrasts romantic love with patriotism. In the argument with Antony over whether to accept Caesar's peace terms, Canidius advises,

It is not Caesar, not our blow at Sea,
That to these terms incline me to agree:
But this the love of Rome which you have lost,
And that your Ryots here and Loves have cost.
(III. ii. ll. 29-32)

For each of these men, government is possible because of patriotism: in their eyes, the unquestioning loyalty and obedience to ideals and authority. Anything which displaces patriotism, such as romantic love, threatens government.

Not surprisingly, these honest characters, who base their concept of good government on patriotism, lack the capacity to appreciate or understand women or romantic love. Memnon and Chilax seem surprised that Cleopatra is not a deceitful, manipulative woman, controlling Antony and thus advancing Egypt's interests:

Where is that falsehood does the Sex pursue,
Or are they only to their ruine true?
(I. ii. ll. 3-4)

Agrippa seems equally surprised that Antony does not keep Cleopatra under his thumb:

But above all his dotage on the Queen
Employs my wonder: was it ever seen
A Woman rul'd an Emperor till now?
What Horse the Mare, What Bull obeys the Cow?
(III. i. ll. 36-39)

For his part, Canidius seems to share Memnon and Chilax's view of women as conniving creatures, as his numerous accusations against Cleopatra show. Each of these patriots views love in conventional terms and consequently misinterprets the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra which, as we shall see, consists of more than slavish, selfish passion. The conventional view of the story suggests that love blinds the protagonists, a view to some extent accurate at the beginning of the play. Ironically, however, the conventional view results in the patriots' partial blindness to reality. Unwilling to exercise skepticism, they prove unable to discern the true nature

of characters like Caesar and Photinus, and thus they act inappropriately. True, Canidius suspects Photinus, but while the patriots blame the protagonists' decline on their love, for the most part the villains succeed in undermining the protagonists. The blindness of Memnon and Chilax, who place their trust in Photinus rather than Antony or Cleopatra, results in their being betrayed by Photinus. Agrippa realizes, too late, Caesar's ambition and the tyranny that will result from it. After Caesar declares his resolution to seize the empire, no matter what (only this direct declaration of selfish ambition allows Agrippa to see what kind of man Caesar really is), Agrippa remarks,

Born under Kings our Father[s] freedom sought,
And with their blood the Godlike treasure bought,
We their vile issue in our chains delight,
And born to freedom for our Tyrants fight.

(III. i. ll. 112-115)

Agrippa recognizes Caesar as a tyrant; yet, though he recognizes this tyranny, he does nothing about it. Like Althea and Diana in Sedley's earlier play, he submits to tyranny because of a mistaken notion of honor--here Roman honor instead of family honor. The chains mentioned in the quotation refer to the consequences of tyrannical government, but they might refer with equal appropriateness to the unreasonable stance of the patriots--their unwillingness to challenge authority, their inability to do so.

Although the villains' goals in life are antithetical to the goals of the patriots, ironically, they embrace the same simplistic, unrealistic view of love. Because the Hobbesian attitude of the play's villains implies a self-interested, driving ambition, they

regard love as unimportant, as a hindrance to their goals, or as a political tool. Caesar, for example, regards love as something in which Antony "drowns" (I. i. 1. 2), the cause of his fall from power, a "vile flame" (I. i. 1. 39). He contrasts this romantic love with the "Bond of lasting love" (I. i. 1. 31), Antony's marriage to Octavia; the marriage, for Caesar, serves as a political expedient, a means of cementing peace until he can attack Antony and further his own ambition. Despite the similarities between Caesar's and the patriots' characterization of Antony's love and its consequences--surely a pose for Caesar--Caesar does see love as an impediment to ambition. He criticizes Antony's love for Cleopatra not because it goes against military decorum or because Antony has done anything wrong but, in truth, because such criticism is politically advantageous, giving Caesar the excuse he needs to seize more power. Although Caesar feels no need to love someone else, Sedley's portrayal of him suggests that he could not understand Antony and Cleopatra's love for each other even if he tried, especially as he shows himself insensitive to and unable to comprehend the love his own sister has for Antony.

Photinus's understanding of love differs from Caesar's, even though he shares Caesar's Hobbesian ambition and self interest. Whereas the patriots confuse the protagonists' love with passion, or lust, Photinus confuses it with ambition. In fact the fictitious romance between Photinus and Iras seems to serve no other purpose than to demonstrate this confusion. Ambition has such an obsessive grip on Photinus that he, like other Hobbesians, expects his own

cynical attitude in other people; consequently, he expects to win Iras's love by appealing to her self-interested ambition:

This gentle Maid all other ways have try'd,
 Hopeless of Love, I'll now attempt her pride.
 (II. i. ll. 84-86)

Ironically, Photinus appeals only too successfully to her ambition and learns, too late, that driving ambition leaves very little room for the kind of sharing true love requires. Iras sees love only as a "Disorder," a "disease," a "mighty ill," which "makes errant Fools of men" (II. i. ll. 91, 105, 111, 132). She apparently has never experienced it and is probably right in claiming, "If any one escap't, I may" (II. i. l. 118). When Photinus offers her the throne, her replay shows ambition rather than love:

I will do any thing, to be a Queen;
 I could love one whom I had never seen.
 (II. i. ll. 162-163)

Unlike Caesar, Photinus, for a brief time at least, has some chance to break from his obsessive ambition. However, when he recognizes the futility of his suit to a woman as ambitious as he is, Photinus rejects love forever:

My Love a fierce Convulsion did endure,
 And in the pain I talkt I know not what:
 But rest for ever of that heart secure,
 Where too much Love did the short storm create.
 (IV. iv. ll. 76-79)

Here blindness to love results both from an unwillingness to confront reality, as in the passage just quoted, and an inability to do so--the consequence of obsessive ambition.

The consequences of blinding, obsessive ambition extend beyond matters of love, even though love constitutes a major concern in the

play. Ambition blinds Iras, for whom love represents an expedient means to power, to the danger of an alliance with Photinus. At the end of the play, Photinus murders her to save himself (V. ii. ll. 158-167). Ambition also blinds Photinus, so much so that he expects Caesar to greet news of his role in Antony's death with happiness. For this particular episode, Sedley depends, once again, on an important source: Corneille's Pompée. In each play, Photinus expects Caesar to reward subterfuge. On the advice of Photinus, Ptolemy offers Julius Caesar the throne of Egypt and Pompey's head. In Sedley's play, Photinus offers Octavius Caesar the sword with which Antony slew himself (V. i. ll. 254-255) and implies that he is responsible for Antony's suicide (V. i. l. 261). In each case the conspirator is surprised at the reaction to his offer. Julius Caesar is angry, sad, and surprised (yet inwardly happy to have his foe out of the way) (III. i. p. 22). Octavius Caesar exhibits similar emotions in Sedley's play:

Thou hast not kill'd him Villain! quickly speak,
Thy Limbs upon a Thousand Racks I'll break,
To find the Truth--

(V. i. ll. 256-258)

In fact, the verbal similarities of the two Caesar's responses are striking. Corneille's Caesar says,

Has fate made me Triumphant over my Foes,
That Egypts King the Conquest should dispose?
My too destructive Sword did I unsheath,
That you might Judge of Romans Life or Death?
(III. i. p. 24)

Sedley's Caesar complains,

Thou has the pow'r of pardoning from me tane,
 And empty Wishes now alone remain.
 (V. i. 11. 263-264)

The parallel is the more striking because other accounts say nothing about Caesar's anger. In Sedley's main source, Plutarch, Dercetaeus presents Octavius with the sword, although he had no role in Antony's death. Octavius makes no direct reply to Dercetaeus, shows no anger: "He retired within his tent and wept for a man who had been his relation by marriage, his colleague in office and command, and his partner in many undertakings and struggles."⁶⁰ In Shakespeare's play, Dercetus presents the sword but, again, claims no role in Antony's death and is not met with anger. Rather, Octavius is shocked and sad. The attitude of Corneille's Photinus has been described by Claud Abraham as "self-defeating Machiavellianism."⁶¹ In the case of Sedley's Photinus, "self-defeating Hobbesianism" would be a more appropriate label. In his later play Bellamira, Sedley presents this kind of character figuratively as a eunuch because of just such a self-limiting blindness, and one wonders whether Sedley thought of the eunuch Photinus as he wrote the later play.

Even Caesar fails to escape the consequences of obsessive ambition, although he proves a much subtler and more astute villain than Photinus. Caesar accuses Antony of letting obsessive passion obscure his reason and of becoming a pawn to sycophants and

⁶⁰Perrin, IX, 315.

⁶¹Claud Abraham, Pierre Corneille (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), p. 79.

flatterers (I. i. ll. 41-45; III. i. ll. 3-4), yet, ironically, Caesar suffers from the same solipsism he accuses Antony of having. His sister Octavia, one of the more reliable sources of information in the play, recognizes this failing:

Rome's once great Senate now is but a name;
While some with fear, and some with Bribes you tame.
Men learn at Court what they must there repeat,
And for Concurrence, not for Council meet.
(IV. i. ll. 99-102)

In a similar way, but for different reasons, Mecoenas's advice and Agrippa's advice serve no real purpose. Caesar does what he wants to do. For example, when Mecoenas points out that Thyreus was a bad choice for ambassador because of his love of Cleopatra, Caesar accuses him of cowardice (IV. i. ll. 3-8). By surrounding himself with yes men, Caesar not only insulates himself from the truth, when it becomes disagreeable, but also blinds himself to dangers which could undermine the Roman Empire. Octavia observes that his puppets in the Roman Senate "blindly labour at their own ill fate,/ And dig up by the roots the tottering State" (IV. i. ll. 104-105).

In this play which challenges much of the conventional wisdom of heroic drama, the presentation of love as a very positive element, one that the protagonists understand and use to their benefit, constitutes one of the most important of many ironies. Although at the beginning of the play love appears as a blinding passion indicative of selfish gratification in the protagonists, Sedley shows it to be a healthy part of Antony's life. Granted, Antony is ambitious; certainly he could not have conquered so much of the world without ambition. However, his ambition differs from that of

the villains in that love, not self-interest, motivates it. He tells Cleopatra that love inspires his achievements:

Courage and Love shall sway each in their Turn,
 I'll fight to conquer, conquer to return.
 Seeming Ambitious to the public view,
 I'll make my private and dearer, You.
 (I. ii. ll. 244-247)

Once he had become co-ruler of the world, he tells her, "Your Love was all the joy that I cou'd tast" (V. ii. ll. 12-13); in other words, love was more important than selfish ambition. The empire that Antony built and shared with Caesar, then, was built on love. And the gifts to Cleopatra and others that Rome begrudged him suggest not so much excess passion as genuine generosity--the antithesis of ambition like Caesar's or Photinus's.

The good government between Antony and Cleopatra stands on a foundation, not of deceit or ambition, but what Antony calls "a secret sympathy" (III. ii. l. 70)--that is, on mutual love. Sedley clarifies this distinction in relationships toward the end of the play when Cleopatra compares her relationships with Antony to that with Julius Caesar:

He [Caesar] lov'd me not! he was ambitious he;

 But my Antonius lov'd me with his Soul.
 No cares of Empire did his Flame controul.
 I was his Friend, the Partner of his mind;
 Our days were joyful, and our nights were kind:
 He liv'd for Me, and I will die for Him.
 (V. ii. ll. 114, 120-124)

Antony loves with his soul; she is the partner of his mind, just as she is his virtual partner in government. Their relationship rests, then, not on ambition or on blind, unquestioning loyalty, but on

honest and reasonable love. This is the same kind of love we find in the relationship between Olivia and Wildish, the protagonists of The Mulberry Garden.

The similarity of Sedley's ideas about love and government in Antony and Cleopatra to the ideas about love and government in poems written to Ann Ayscough suggests a possible biographical source for his moral design in the play. The first poem, "To Cloris," addressed to Ann before their marriage, presents a situation similar to Antony's:

Cloris, I justly am betray'd
 By a design my self had laid;
 Like an old Rook, whom in his cheat
 A run of Fortune does defeat,
 I thought at first with a small sum
 Of love thy heap to overcome;
 Presumably on thy want of art,
 Thy gentle and unpractis'd heart.

 My hand, alas, is no more mine
 Else it had long ago been thine.
 My heart I give thee, and we call
 No man unjust who parts with all.
 What a priest says moves not the mind,
 Souls are by love, not words, combin'd.⁶²

Sedley, like Antony, is married yet loves another woman. Whether Antony, like Sedley, began his relationship without true love is unclear, but ultimately each loves a woman he cannot legally take as his wife. Antony, like Sedley, realizes that any meaningful relationship is based on love, not mere words. There must be consent--"heart"--before there can be true commitment--"hand"--in love or in government. This consensual type of relationship

⁶²Pinto, Sedley, p. 129.

contrasts sharply with the predatory, Hobbesian kind of relationship (here expressed using the analogy of a card game) with which Sedley began. Neither does Sedley condone relationships of mere expedience. He does not want his marriage to his legal wife, Katherine, whom he does not love, any more than Antony wants his marriage to his legal wife Octavia. It is easy to see how Sedley would be attracted to the Antony and Cleopatra story.

The principle of no hand without heart, or no government without open consent, applies to other relationships in this play, too. Some of Antony's soldiers remain loyal not just out of a sense of idealism but because they want to be. A major justification for including Lucilius, a virtual clone of Canidius or Agrippa, in the play is to illustrate this principle. Lucilius had not always been one of Antony's soldiers, and he tells the great general that he was "Subdu'd by Arms, since [then] by your kindness won" (III. ii. 1. 319). When Lucilius pledges his loyalty, the principle of consent is conspicuous: "Antonius shall both rule my heart and hand" (1. 326). It will be recalled that "heart" and "hand" are necessary adjuncts for legitimate marriages at the end of Sedley's The Mulberry Garden also.

In love relationships, reason distinguishes between true love and mere passion or envy or ambition. The consequences of confusing love with these other emotions is well illustrated in the behavior of the play's villains and patriots, and Sedley expresses the importance of reason in another poem he wrote to Ann Ayscough. Pinto notes, "For a moment, perhaps, she suspected that sir Charles would

revert to the habits of his youth."⁶³ Here is his reply, printed as "Constancy" in the Works.⁶⁴

Fear not, my Dear, a flame can never die,
That is once kindled by so bright an eye
For though thy Beauty first allur'd my Sight,
Now I consider it as but the Light
That led me to the Treasury of thy Mind,
Whose inward Vertue in that Feature shin'd.
That Knot be confident will ever last,
Which Fancy ty'd, and Reason has made fast;⁶⁵

The knot--their relationship--is based on true love, not on the ephemeral passion of a playboy (with a reputation like Antony's). Sedley places so much emphasis on love, or consent, in any relationship that two key lines, the last two above, appear in slightly different form in The Mulberry Garden also.⁶⁶

A brief review of the various relationships, or governments, in Antony and Cleopatra reveals the importance of reason and true love. The single-minded, self-centered ambition of Iras and Photinus and their confusion of love with ambition precludes the possibility of a stable, meaningful relationship. She cares only for power, not Photinus, and he kills her when it serves his purposes. Mecoenas's

⁶³Pinto, Sedley, p. 131.

⁶⁴Pinto, Works, I. 11.

⁶⁵Pinto, Sedley, p. 131.

⁶⁶Pinto, Works, I, p. 173. Philander says,

Think what a flame so bright a form must move:
That Knot be confident will ever last,
Which Passion ty'd, and Reason has made fast.
(V., i. 11. 161-163)

confusion of love with envy causes him to plot against Antony unfairly, and this fault draws Octavia's wrath and contempt instead of her love and sympathy. Both Mecoenas and Thyreus feel infatuation rather than true love for Octavia and Cleopatra. This unrealistic confusion of love with infatuation offers no basis, of course, for a successful relationship. Like Horatio in the previous play, Mecoenas recognizes his folly and takes the side of his former rival (he does not desert Caesar, but he does show greater sympathy for Antony). Antony's marriage to Octavia has as little chance for success as the bond of authority between Antony and Caesar for which the marriage stands as a visible reminder--because each depends on expedience and ambition rather than on love.

Antony, who does understand love, realizes that his marriage to Octavia is anything but a genuine bond:

Her [Octavia's] Hymen never did for a Moment please,
The hard condition of a needful Peace;
From every part I saw the growing storm,
A sudden shelter in her arms I took,
When when 'twas over I again forsook.

(III. ii. ll. 62-66)

This insensitivity to Octavia's feelings amounts to tyranny, as she herself points out:

Wives (like good Subjects, who to Tyrants bow)
To Husbands though unjust, long patience owe:
They were for Freedom made, Obedience We,
Courage is their vertue, ours is Chastity.
Reason it self in us we must not be bold,
Nor decent Custom be by Wit controul'd.

(IV. i. ll. 68-73)

Octavia resembles the honest patriots in making unquestioning obedience part of a conventional, idealistic formula for a lasting relationship.

Like Agrippa, she recognizes that such obedience operates as part of a tyranny, and this parallel underscores Sedley's larger and more general attempt to parallel domestic government to national government. Significantly, Sedley brings reason, a necessary part of consent, into the "political philosophy" of marriage expressed in these lines. Sedley disagrees, of course, with the attitude, or philosophy, expressed in Octavia's speech, which, not surprisingly, recapitulates almost exactly the speech of a similar character in similar circumstances--Althea (in The Mulberry Garden):

Under what Tyranny are Women born!
 Here we are bid to love, and there to scorn;
 As if unfit to be allow'd a part
 In choosing him, that must have all our heart;
(II. ii. ll. 1-4)

The political bond between Antony and Caesar, like the marital bond between Antony and Octavia, must necessarily fail because, again, each relationship depends upon expedience and ambition rather than on reason and consent, or friendship. Although Caesar claims Antony as a friend, Antony refuses to acknowledge this friendship: "Caesar and I you know were never friends,/ And only hung together for our ends" (III. ii. ll. 33-34). Just as Caesar enters into an agreement to share power with Antony, secretly intending to terminate the agreement and seize sole authority of the Empire, so Antony enters into an agreement with Octavia, secretly intending to abandon her and return to Cleopatra. Caesar tyrannizes over Antony and others in the same way that Antony tyrannizes over Octavia. And just as Antony's tyrannical deceit denies Octavia the opportunity to exercise her reason and enter their marriage relationship with a full knowledge

of his true intentions, so Caesar's tyrannical deceit denies Antony and others the opportunity to act reasonably, or knowledgeably, in the establishment of effective government.

The relationship between Antony and Cleopatra, which at first seems (and to some extent is) passionate and selfish and unreasonable, ironically turns out to be the most reasonable and responsible relationship in the play because the famous lovers base it on true love (not infatuation, envy, ambition, or deceit), on reason (not blind idealism or blind ambition), and on openness and trust. Whereas the patriots cannot initially recognize the dangers posed by Caesar and Photinus and will not do anything about these dangers once they do recognize them, and whereas Photinus dooms himself through his blind ambition and Caesar threatens the very existence of the empire, as Octavia observes, through his solipsism and ambition, Antony and Cleopatra know each other's hearts, and love inspires their successes. In the same way that Sedley's love for Ann Ayscough ties the knot of their relationship more securely than mere ceremony or legal procedure, Antony's love for Cleopatra cements their domestic relationship more surely than the legal ceremony that supposedly bound Antony to Octavia. Like the protagonists of The Mulberry Garden, they strike a reasonable balance between selfishness and selflessness, and the superiority of their political philosophy is evident in their recognition of the responsibilities of ruling.

Although the villains of the play see sovereign power as the fulfillment of obsessive ambition, Antony understands the responsibility that goes with power:

The higher place they Fate's "Drudges" fill, the greater Slaves
Princes have no retirement but their graves,
(III. ii. ll. 107-109)

A similar statement in the fifth act shows why Antony lacks the
selfish ambition of the villains:

What is Command, for which we so contend?
Danger and Envy the High Charge attend:
A few we please, and Multitudes offend.
(V. i. ll. 130-132)

Like Antony, Cleopatra is sensitive to the responsibilities of
sovereignty. She too understands the sacrifices expected of her:

Greatness most envy'd, when least understood
Thou art no real, but a seeming good.
Sick at the Heart! Thou in the Face look'st well,
And none but such as feel thy pangs can tell
By the exalted State we only gain,
To be more stretched than the Vulgar can.
(V. ii. ll. 86-91)

By the end of the play, then, the reversal of audience expectations
is complete; the protagonists appear more reasonable, more responsible,
and more admirable than the other character groups, and the inade-
quacies of the conventional ways of approaching life's problems have
become painfully apparent.

The significance of Sedley's prologue also becomes apparent
by the end of the play. The conflicts of the playhouse appear to
be the primary concern of the prologue; interestingly, however,
the audience realizes that Sedley focuses here, as in the play, on
the importance of reason, and that the characters of the prologue
correspond to the characters in the play.

The solipsism of blind patriotism or blind ambition finds
expression in the prologue through the comparison of a playwright to

a brisk Gallant dancing to his Glass [who]
Does here and there in nimble fleurets pass;
Likes every step, and wishes for a Ball,
Where he at once may shew his Parts to all:

Caesar, Photinus, and the patriots resemble the playwright and the Gallant of the prologue in that each in some way is cut off from reality. Caesar's "yes men," for example, feed his solipsism by acting as a "glass" which reflects only what he wants to perceive. Dissimulation links Caesar and Photinus to the prologue's pseudo-wit, who "affect[s] to be esteem'd a Wit" without really earning that label. He will

Write Songs and Prologues, show 'em up and down,
And tear applause from every Fool in Town;
Make Love to Vizards in a Wit-like Noise,
Dull in his Sense, yet aiery in his Voice,
Catch at each Line that grates, and keep ten good,
With his damn'd Noise, from being understood.

Caesar has the trappings, not the makings, of a great man. Antony has given him what power he wields, and he diverts attention away from his own shortcomings, like the pseudo-wit, by criticizing his opponent. Shakespeare and Dryden emphasize Caesar's boyish appearance more than Sedley does; still, Sedley manages to suggest that Caesar is not the man that Antony is.

Criticism born of envy links Mecoenas to the prologue's envious critic:

Cripples may judge of Vaulting he well knows,
Cowards of Courage; and of Verse and Prose
They that know neither; yet if too severe
Damning those gifts of which they have no share,
Their envy more than judgement will appear.

Quoting the first three lines through neither, N. J. Andrew argues that Sedley presents here a "democratic notion" showing that the crowd

may judge the hero in this kind of drama.⁶⁷ Yet the next two lines, which Andrews does not quote, reveal the weakness of his overly ingenious interpretation. Sir Charles presents the first three lines ironically, indicating that many theater critics, like Mecoenas, judge out of envy, not because the object of their criticism exhibits any real deficiency. In fact, Mecoenas is not better equipped to judge Antony than these envious critics are to judge the playwright. Antony comes closest to resembling

Our Poet [that is, Sedley, who]
all such hopes of Praise disclames,
[And] like a true Lover of the Sport . . . Games,
And to come off a Saver only aims.

Antony and Cleopatra do not seek to dominate each other, nor do they suffer from the selfish ambition to conquer the world exhibited by the villains. As Cleopatra observes, they are partners, and like the gambler, they hope only to break even, not win the entire world. Studying the prologue, we see that it also underscores the importance of distinguishing between illusion and reality in conflicts, and thus it underscores the irony of reversed expectations that the audience perceives at the end of Sedley's play.

To return to the questions raised by critics of Sedley's Antony and Cleopatra, Sedley violates the conventions of heroic-neoclassical drama because he uses the play to challenge these conventions and demonstrate their inadequacies, especially as those inadequacies appear in relation to questions of government. As a

⁶⁷Andrew, p. xxiv.

skeptic he cannot accept these conventions unquestioningly. By using enough generic accoutrements to suggest a conventional play, then reversing expectations, showing Antony and Cleopatra to be more reasonable, responsible, and admirable than the patriots or the villains, Sedley reveals the inadequacy of conventional wisdom to approach the conflicts of the story realistically. He includes love interests and subplots which detract attention from the love-honor conflict precisely because he recognizes the importance of showing the ill effects of the political philosophies espoused by the extreme groups as well as the positive effects of the political philosophy espoused by the protagonists. In addition, these "distractions" gradually contribute to the apotheosis of the protagonists by exposing the villainies of Caesar and Photinus. The careful contrast and revelation of characters certainly contribute to the admiration we feel for Antony and Cleopatra that disturbs critics. These techniques lead also to a clarification of love and honor. Love, Sedley realizes, is a complex emotion often confused with other feelings, such as jealousy or ambition. Ultimately, the protagonists achieve a love which eschews selfish passion and unrealistic idealism. Based on reason, openness, and honesty, this love offers the best basis for a strong relationship. And far from being at odds with honor, the protagonists' love, through its honesty and fairness, leads necessarily to honor.

The victory of the villain Caesar over the other characters does pose an apparent problem to the interpretation presented here, but the problem is only apparent. If Sedley truly does present

Antony's political philosophy as the play's paradigm, why does Caesar win? First, although he can take some liberties with history, Sedley certainly would not change the outcome of the war between Antony and Caesar. What counts in the play, however, is not which army wins but which political philosophy proves most sensible; as the experience during the interregnum showed, tyrants sometimes prevailed, but this did not prevent sensible Englishmen from distinguishing right from wrong and protection from repression. N. J. Andrew's view of the play as a commentary on contemporary politics offers another explanation for the defeat of the ideal political philosophy. Again, although Sedley could be paralleling Antony with Charles II, that parallel need not suggest, as Andrew does, that Sedley intended the play as a strong attack on Charles II's irresponsibility. The unmistakable admiration we feel for Antony at the play's conclusion seems to contradict Andrews' interpretation. We might see the play's conclusion as a realistic presentation of the weaknesses of Charles II's government, the kind of muted criticism Dryden uses in Absalom and Achitophel.

Whatever its weaknesses, Sedley's play certainly reveals, once again, a seriousness and a concern in the playwright which most critics would not have expected. Like The Mulberry Garden, this play seems to espouse a moderate political philosophy in many respects similar to that described years later by John Locke. And the play's moral design allows us to appreciate in the play an

organic unity and structural coherence previously unacknowledged by the play's critics.

CHAPTER III

BELLAMIRA; OR, THE MISTRESS

Moral design continues to be a major concern for Sir Charles Sedley in Bellamira; or, The Mistress, even though it appears ten years after Antony and Cleopatra and nearly twenty years after The Mulberry Garden. Because of their preoccupation with three issues--the play's manners, its pervasive cynicism, and its frank presentation of sexual dalliance and apparent immorality--critics have once again overlooked Sedley's serious examination of principles of human behavior and their consequences. The relative simplicity and elegance of this play, unencumbered by platonic elements and complicated contrasts, has made it a favorite among critics.¹ Still, moral design lies at its heart, and recognition of this design offers the fullest opportunity for understanding this play about physical, psychological, and moral impotence.

On the surface, the play does seem to emphasize immorality, manners, and cynicism. The title character, Bellamira, is a famous London courtesan, the kept mistress of a doting businessman, Keepwell. She, however, controls the relationship, delighting in bilking him of his wealth while carrying on secret affairs with several men, Keepwell's "friends" included. More specifically, she attempts to

¹Pinto, Sedley, p. 276; Nicoll, p. 235; Summers, p. 305.

convince him to leave town for a few days so that she can receive a former suitor, the miles gloriosus Dangerfield, and receive from him the present of a girl, Isabella. Born a free citizen, Isabella was stolen as a child, sold into slavery, kept in Bellamira's family almost as a sister, and eventually sold again, ending up as the property of Dangerfield. Bellamira hopes not only to regain this long-lost "sister" but also to be rewarded for reuniting her with her brother Eustace.

A second major action of the play also focuses on sex. Keepwell's younger brother, Lionel, disguises himself as Pisquil, the real eunuch promised to Bellamira, to gain entry to her residence, where he knows he will find Isabella, the object of his infatuation. Not only the rape of Isabella but also Lionel's very erotic description of it doubtless fueled much of the outcry against the play's immorality. At any rate, the rape threatens a number of relationships in the play. Though he rapes Isabella, Lionel does truly love her, and this love is threatened. Once Eustace discovers that the girl ravished by Lionel is his sister, he is no longer Lionel's friend. The rape sours Bellamira's relationship with Eustace because it took place in her house. And Keepwell fears losing Bellamira because of the rash actions of his younger brother.

Sedley's presentation of numerous relationships between men and women in the play is consistent with the so-called comedy of manners. Merryman, Keepwell's plainspeaking friend, and Thisbe, Merryman's ward and a close confidant of Bellamira, constitute the

"gay couple" of the play and provide much of the witty repartee so valued by manners critics. Rallying between Merryman, who over-indulges in food and drink, and Cunningham, a diseased, deluded, and worn-out rake, also provides much of the play's witty fun. Like many comedies, this one ends with several marriages and so seems happy. However, unlike The Mulberry Garden, this later comedy does not end in unqualified optimism.

Sedley tempers the happy marriages and resolutions of conflicts at the end of the play with a large dose of cynicism. Dangerfield becomes the dupe not only of Bellamira and his obsequious servant, Smoothly, but, at the end of the play, of several of the characters. And the audience realizes that as the play ends, Keepwell will continue to regard Bellamira as merely a possession and she will continue to manipulate him, bilking him of more of his wealth. The supreme expression of the play's cynicism appears in the final lines, in which Merryman regards all men as "Cullies." Sex, cynicism, and manners, because of their popularity in the comedy of the period, seem only to confirm the popular notion that Sedley catered to the tastes of his audience.

The tendency to regard Bellamira primarily as an adaptation of Terence's The Eunuch also contributes to the critical failure to discern any moral design. Sedley's own explanation of the genesis of Bellamira seems to support this assumption that the play is mere adaptation:

It was originally Maenanders in the Greek, Terence's in the Latin; whose great names gave me Curiosity to try how I cou'd

make it run in English: A Friend [Shadwell] came to my chamber as I was upon the first Act, he seem'd to approve my design: I told him I found it extream easie to go through with: And that if he cou'd get it Acted under his own or anothers Name I wou'd finish it for him: But for I know not what reasons he cou'd not do it; and I was oblidg'd to own it my self, or my friend has lost his third day.²

In fact, the following table of corresponding characters in Terence's and Sedley's plays indicates that Sedley does base much of his play on the Latin model.

Table IV. Corresponding Characters.

<u>The Eunuch</u>	Role	<u>Bellamira</u>
Dorus	the true eunuch	Pisquil
Chaerea	the false eunuch	Lionel
Phaedria	the keeper	Keepwell
Thais	the mistress	Bellamira
Thraso	the rival suitor	Dangerfield
Gnatho	the sycophant	Smoothly
Pamphila	the lost sister	Isabella
Parmeno	the honest advisor	Merryman
Chremes	brother of lost sister	Eustace
Pythias & Dorus	mistress's servants	Silence & Betty

Because so many critics regard Bellamira primarily as an adaptation, much of the scholarship is about how Sedley deviates from Terence and brings his drama up to date. Pinto, for example, observes that Shakespeare's Falstaff provides some of the play's humor and English flavor through two characters he partially inspires:

²Pinto, Works, II, 5.

Merryman and Dangerfield, "the latter receiving his cowardice and braggadocio, the former his conviviality and charm."³ The names Merryman and Cunningham, says Pinto, are borrowed from Thomas Betterton's The Amorous Widow, and the contrast between the two characters, one fat and one thin, probably comes from James Howard's All Mistaken.⁴ Montague Summers comments on Sedley's alteration of Terence's *Thais*, who "becomes the wanton Bellamira, [a courtesan] whose infidelities are traditionally said to be a satire upon the amours of the Duchess of Cleveland"⁵ Although Sedley probably knew of L'Eunuque (published in 1672 but never acted), La Fontaine's translation of Terence's play, Pinto feels that Sedley did not use the translation.⁶

Some of the scholarship examines Sedley's possible use of William Heming's The Fatal Contract (1654). Reprinted in 1687 under the title The Eunuch, Heming's play does contain a rape and someone disguised as a eunuch; but it is revenge tragedy and a woman, not a man, plays the disguised eunuch. Beyond these superficial similarities, there is no resemblance at all to Sedley's work. Elkannah Settle rewrote the tragedy with some minor modifications as Love and Revenge (1675), but it bears extremely little resemblance to Bellamira.

³Pinto, Works, II, 3.

⁴Pinto, Works, III. 3.

⁵Summers, p. 305.

⁶Pinto, Sedley, p. 269.

Frederick Link's mistaken contention⁷ that Sedley based his drama on Heming's probably derives from the similarity of the titles and dates of publication and possibly, too, from a statement in one of Etherege's letters suggesting a correspondence between the two plays. Pinto notes,

Apparently Etherege was originally under the impression that Sedley had merely adapted an older play called "The Eunuch": "I saw a play about ten years ago call'd The Eunuch, so heavy a lump, the Players durst not charge themselves with the dead weight. but it seems that Sir Ch. Sidley has animated the mighty mass and now it treads the Stage lightly he had always more wit than was enough for one man and therefore dos well to continue his Charity to one who wants it."⁸

The publication of Heming's play in 1687 seems intended to capitalize on the success of Sedley's, also about a eunuch, published and performed the same year. Although Sedley did not use Heming's play, the confusion of the two plays is understandable.

Similarities of Bellamira to other comedies of the period, many of them lacking Sedley's serious concerns, contribute also to the critical tendency to overlook moral design and to focus instead on manners, sex, and cynicism. For example, another Restoration play based partly on Terence's Eunuch, William Wycherley's The Country Wife (1675), also examines sexual intrigue and contains a pseudo-eunuch who uses his disguise to satisfy his lust. The important difference

⁷Frederick Link, English Drama 1660-1800: A Guide to Information Sources (Detroit, Michigan: Gale, 1976). Recent scholarship confirms this error. See Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, "Attribution Problems in English Drama, 1660-1700," Harvard Library Bulletin, 31, No. 1 (1983), 10.

⁸Pinto, Sedley, p. 171 n.

is that Horner does not love his conquests as Lionel loves Isabella, and the women Horner conquers are all too willing. In addition, whereas Lionel's rape proceeds from an infatuation, Horner's conquests are coldly calculated. Horner's selfish, predatory attitude toward the opposite sex more closely resembles Bellamira's attitude than Lionel's, and neither Horner nor Bellamira shares the caring attitude of Terence's Thais. Significantly, however, Sedley, unlike Wycherley, presents his selfish, predatory characters as negative exemplars, whose behavior ultimately proves self-defeating. Similarly, Sedley's cynicism, unlike Wycherley's, appears negatively, as something to be avoided. Thus, despite the similarities between the two plays, any attempt to equate the purposes of them results only in obscuring Sedley's moral design.

Bellamira has more in common with Dryden's The Kind Keeper, although, here again, superficial similarities should not obscure the important differences in purpose between the two plays. Neither Bellamira nor Dryden's courtesan, Tricksy, loves her keeper, and each has secret lovers on the side. Bellamira dallies with Cunningham, Merryman, and others; Tricksy with Woodall. Each keeper is jealous but unable to break away from his mistress or confront his rival. Keepwell fears Dangerfield the same way Limberham fears Woodall. Like Bellamira, Tricksy uses quarrels "to make him purchase peace."⁹ When each keeper attempts to assert his authority, the mistress

⁹George M. Saintsbury, ed., The Works of John Dryden (Edinburgh: W. Paterson, 1883), I. i. pp. 20-23.

threatens to go to a nunnery. An even more striking similarity is Woodall's story of an acquaintance who dressed as a eunuch to gain admittance to a lovely woman whom he admired and later enjoyed (though he did not rape her). So Sedley's play shares with Dryden's a number of specific similarities, elements which do not appear in Sedley's primary source, Terence's Eunuch. Ostensibly, Dryden's play condemns the sterility of the relationship between keeper and courtesans as other plays do. The scene with the indigent fifteen-year-old prostitute, Prue, her procuress mother, and the panderer Aldo (IV. i.) is particularly pathetic; Dennis Davison cites this particular scene and the play as a whole as "a ruthless exposure of the exploitation of women."¹⁰ However, most of the play seems closer to what James Sutherland calls "farcical comedy of copulation. If it is a satire on keeping, all that we learn is that an elderly and impotent roué cannot expect a young mistress to remain faithful to him, and we do not need five acts to tell us that."¹¹ Because Dryden's fourth act with Prue does not fit neatly into the plot, one suspects that it might have served primarily to help Dryden justify his argument that the play satirizes keeping. Although The Kind Keeper's courtesan-keeper relationship strongly resembles that in Bellamira, Dryden's play does lack the serious interest in loving relationships found in Bellamira and The Rover.

¹⁰Davison, p. ix.

¹¹James Sutherland, English Literature in the Late Seventeenth Century, Vol. VI in the Oxford History of English Literature, ed. Jack Buxton and Norman Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 102.

The sexual frankness and alleged immorality of the play, which manners critics accept unflinchingly as a fact of life, have attracted an unusual amount of criticism which, once again, distracts the reader's attention from the importance of moral design in Bellamira. What surprised Sedley was that previous plays like The Country Wife and The Kind Keeper suggested sexuality or presented it in wholly explicit terms without attracting the kind of condemnation directed toward Bellamira. In his "Preface to the Reader" Sedley admits, "after the Plays I have seen lately crowded by that fair Sex: the exception did not a little surprise me. . . . I am very unhappy that the Ice that has borne so many Coaches and Carts, shou'd break with my Wheel barrow" ¹² So great, in fact, was the exception taken to his subject that Sedley substituted Bellamira for the title of his main source, The Eunuch of Terence. The town damned Terence's title as too "lewd."

On the surface, the charges of "obscenity" and lewdness seem valid enough: the play contains rape, prostitution, cuckolding, and scenes that seem intended to appeal to the audience's prurient interest. In Act II, scene v, for example, Lionel describes watching Isabella enter the bath and fanning her as she lay naked on her bed. However, Pinto rejects characterizations of the play as "coarse and atrocious" by arguing that such a view represents "the criticism of and age which was quite unable to understand or appreciate the purely intellectual and non-moral view of life which the authors

¹²Pinto, Works, II, 5.

of the comedies of manners expressed in their plays. Any lover of fine English prose should be able to enjoy the manner of 'Bellamira.'¹³ Appreciating its matter, says Pinto, requires sharing Charles Lamb's view that the audience can enjoy the play's "privation of moral light" and "happy breathing space from the burthen of moral questioning."¹⁴ Seen this way, Bellamira appears "wholly free from the satiric and moral purpose of Wycherly's finest work"¹⁵ Unfortunately, while manners critics like Pinto succeed in deflecting the condemnation of the play's sexual intrigue, they also deny the possibility that Sedley examines any serious or profound issues. Looking very carefully at recent scholarship on Restoration drama, the play, and its history, one can make a case for taking Sedley's purpose and achievement in this play more seriously.

Dennis Davison's observations about Restoration comedy indicate that comedies like Bellamira are indeed serious:

Restoration sexual manners were boldly unpuritanical and where this led to grossness or cynicism their presentation on the stage could also be corrective. . . . Against the portraits of sensual young heroines . . . we must place those whose satirical sketches of lustful old widows, weary rakes, foppish would-be gallants, aged cuckolds, 'fumbling keepers', and drunken lechers. This gallery of sexual types is surely a valid achievement in social realism rather than an indulgence in pornography.¹⁶

¹³Pinto, Sedley, pp. 266-267.

¹⁴Pinto, Sedley, p. 267.

¹⁵Pinto, Sedley, p. 276.

¹⁶Davison, p. xi.

Davison suggests, in other words, that negative characters serve as negative examples. A lecher like Cunningham and a pitiful, infatuated keeper like Keepwell hardly merit the audience's admiration or sympathy; and someone like Bellamira, though renowned for her promiscuity and her ability to manipulate her keeper, appears finally as a tragic figure, isolated by her fear of establishing a truly loving relationship with anyone.

An understanding of Sedley's main source, Terence's Eunuch, also furnishes insights into the serious purpose of Bellamira. While Pinto characterizes Terence's play as "a typical production of the Athenian New Comedy . . . neat, elegant and a little bloodless,"¹⁷ other scholars take Terence's Eunuch more seriously. Douglass Parker feels that "the play, whatever its genealogy, is more than farce, more than loose-knit romp; it is a serious dramatic exploration, all of a piece."¹⁸ Gilbert Norwood offers a similar view: "Dull and brilliant, immoral and edifying, abjectly Plautine and splendidly Terentian--it is all these by turns."¹⁹ And Parker points out that Terence's play has elicited similar objections on moral grounds.²⁰

¹⁷Pinto, Sedley, p. 268.

¹⁸Douglass Parker, trans., The Eunuch, The Complete Comedies of Terence, Palmer Bovie, ed. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers, 1974), p. 149.

¹⁹Gilbert Norwood, The Art of Terence (Oxford: University Press, 1923), p. 57.

²⁰Parker, p. 148.

If Terence's play has been misunderstood, it is not surprising that Bellamira, which follows Terence very closely, should be also.

Historical and biographical evidence would tend to support the view that Sedley intended a moral purpose. By the 1670s and 1680s, Sedley had abandoned his rambunctious lifestyle and participated less in the activities of the Wits. The moderating influence of Ann Ayscough has been mentioned already in a previous chapter. He turned seriously to religion in 1680 when a tennis court roof collapsed on him and others, nearly killing him, and when Rochester converted just before dying.²¹ In 1686 he was again seriously ill, near death, and though he had been somewhat of a backslider since 1680, he is said to have converted completely, going as far as to write a defense of church doctrines, a defense now lost.²² Charles Montague, whom Sedley had patronized, "nearly yielded to the temptation of holding . . . [Sedley] up to public ridicule by means of a satire in verse on his 'conversion,'"²³ The satire was not finished or published, but the manuscript survives.²⁴ Pinto feels that Montague exaggerates Sedley's conversion: that it could not have been as much of an about-face as Montague suggests. "At any rate, it did not prevent him from writing and publishing an excellent

²¹Pinto, Sedley, pp. 146, 148.

²²Pinto, Sedley, p. 165.

²³Pinto, Sedley, pp. 165-166.

²⁴Pinto, Sedley, p. 166.

(but by no means edifying) comedy in 1687."²⁵ But of course Pinto would have to argue that Sedley's conversion was relatively insignificant; such a position would support Pinto's view that the play is not edifying and vice versa. What kind of man, after undergoing a serious religious conversion, would write an amoral and cynical sex comedy? By recognizing the serious moral purpose of Bellamira, we can accept the authenticity of Sedley's conversion.

Still other evidence for arguing serious intentions in the play exists in the "Prologue" which begins by comparing the influence of the pulpit with that of the stage:

Is it not strange to see in such an Age
The Pulpit get the better of the Stage?
Not through Rebellion as in former days,
But Zeal for Sermons and neglect for Plays.
(ll. 1-4)

and moves to the controversy of the outrage the play has provoked:

Your hearts are ours, and let whoever preach
The young and fair will practice what we teach.
Our Play old virtuous Rome the Eunuch nam'd
But modest London the lewd title damn'd.
(ll. 30-33)

Apparently, then, Sedley connects the controversy over his play to the issue of moral influence. When he says that the young will be more influenced by his teaching than by preaching from the pulpit, is he advocating amorality or even immorality over virtue? This hardly seems to be the case in light of the next two lines. "Modest London" has rejected the title that "old virtuous Rome" chose. In other words, the critics of London condemn the play because they are

²⁵Pinto, Sedley, p. 168.

modest, not because the play is immoral. After all, the Rome that named the play is "virtuous." Also, "teach" seems more than just a word to rhyme with "preach"; "teach" indicates that Sedley does intend the play to edify.

Sedley's edifying purpose seems apparent also in his ironic characterization of his unruly audience. The prologue's comparison of what behavior is allowed in church and what in the theater begins playfully enough:

Here's as good Ogling yet, and fewer spies.
For Godly Parents watch with whites of Eyes.
(11. 5-6)

But the description of ridiculous and unruly behavior in the theater leaves little doubt that he satirizes and disapproves of the excesses he describes:

Here you may give the Lye, or draw your Sword.
Be low'd and senseless, huff, dumbfound, and roar;
Till all the Lady's and some gallants scowre.
What free born subject, or true English heart,
Wou'd with such Rights and Priviledges part?
(11. 16-20)

On the surface, the lines seem to approve the kind of behavior not allowed in church, yet the description of the behavior--the lying, roaring, and general offensiveness--underscores the playwright's irony. Like the other prologues to Sedley's plays, this one suggests the themes and concerns of the play it introduces. In The Mulberry Garden Sedley presents selfish characters whose abuse of freedom is self-defeating and makes them appear ridiculous; they are unable to govern themselves effectively. The same proves true in Bellamira, another play about self-government, and the description in lines

sixteen and seventeen above seems intended to suggest characteristics of the play's miles gloriosus, Dangerfield, just as the prologue to The Mulberry Garden seems intended to suggest characteristics of Forecast and the fops. A careful examination of Bellamira shows, in fact, that Sedley once again demonstrates the self-defeating nature of selfish, Hobbesian behavior; abuses of freedom and attempts to deceive and dominate other characters illustrate the similarities between the play's characters and Hobbes's description of man in a state of nature or Hobbes's absolute tyrant. And here as in Sedley's other plays, the playwright condemns the behavior of his Hobbesian characters, who function as examples of how not to behave. Their sexual intrigues thus serve no immoral purpose for Sedley: quite to the contrary, they are an important part of his moral design.²⁶

Sedley's title also furnishes insights into the moral purpose of the play, and many critics have failed to recognize this purpose because they have not taken the trouble to understand the title. Though Sedley's play is named after her, Bellamira is not the play's central character. But neither is Pisquil, the true Eunuch, or Lionel, who pretends to be a eunuch--characters who might be associated with Terence's title. Pisquil is comically pitiful and accusations

²⁶Sedley's characters function like Dryden's in his plays of ideas where, says Ann Barbeau, "It is in the design of the plays that the instruction lies. . . . the dramatist creates two kinds of characters--'patterns' for imitation and 'patterns' for avoidance; by thus raising intellectual admiration and contempt in the viewer, the dramatist hopes to instruct him and make him more discerning of true merit in human nature" (p. 155).

that he committed the rape provide some of the play's humor, but he plays a very minor role in Sedley's comedy. Lionel, though a much more important character, is by no means the central one. Those who see Pisquil or Lionel as title characters will doubtless miss the message of the play.

The play's message, or moral purpose, becomes clearer when one understands that Sedley's original title--The Eunuch--refers as much to characteristics associated with eunuchs, such as incompleteness and lack of fulfillment, as it does to the characters who play eunuchs. In other words, those characters whose behavior limits them in one way or another, keeping them from living fulfilled lives, are in a sense eunuchs.

If Bellamira were about the literal eunuch (Pisquil) or even about the pseudo-eunuch (Lionel), why does Sedley (following the example of Terence) begin the play with the scene in which the courtesan so skillfully and so cleverly manipulates the indecisive keeper? The reason must be that Keepwell, like Phaedria before him, is a kind of eunuch. "Eunuch" in this sense means someone who allows others to manipulate him, who is not in charge of his own destiny, and who is less than a man. To emphasize this particular sense of the term, Terence and Sedley employ a series of ironic role reversals, which also contribute to their plays' humor and satire. Bellamira, the kept mistress, controls her keeper, Keepwell. By this definition, other characters are eunuchs, too. The sycophantic servant Smoothly controls and bilks his master, Dangerfield, in very much the same

Keepwell is very much like his original in Terence's play, only Sedley has painted a more colorful portrait and emphasized the characteristics that make him a eunuch even more than Terence did with his keeper. Here is Sedley's version:

Merry.: I ever told you, this Woman wou'd be the ruine of you: all must go to make her fine, and every New Gown you give, gets you a new Rival.

Keepw.: Thou thinkst all Mony thrown away, that is not spent in a Tavern: thou hast no tast of Love, scarce any remains of Lust, or thou woud'st never Rail at so Divine a Creature as Bellamira.

Merry.: You are resolved to go to her again; notwithstanding the damn'd trick she serv'd you with the Sea Captain and your noble resolution to the contrary?[: "]I'll see her hang'd first! No, tho she beg it a thousand times, and with a thousand tears, I'll n'e'r go hear her!["]

Keepw.: Did I say such bug-words?

Merry.: Yes, and a great deal more.

Keepw.: 'Twas when I was in my Altitudes, What? Rebell against my Lawful Sovereign Bellamira! I'll go to her tho, and shew her I am not such a Cully as she takes me for.

Merry.: Have a care what you do. If you once begin and don't go through with her, you settle her Empire for ever; and when she finds her own strength, that you are not able to leave her, she will use it like a Tyrant: And tho you be the injur'd party, after six kind words and a false tear to two, you must make your peace with a Present of China or a French Petticoat.

(I. i. ll. 1-27)

Sedley's improvements show not only his skill at adaptation but also his ear for dialogue. His version is wittier and livelier, and he has transformed much of Parmeno's speech, which tells about the relationship, into dialogue which shows Keepwell's infatuation, his irrationality, and his gullibility.

Evident in Sedley's version, too, is his ongoing interest in the relationship between domestic government and national government. Parmeno's speech in Terence's version suggests the relationship with terms like "parley," "peace," "terms," and "state." Sedley's expansion on, or elaboration of, the device derives from the Restoration neo-Platonic tradition and the anti-Platonic tradition that developed as a reaction to it. Thus Keepwell refers to Bellamira as "divine" and refers to her "Empire," calls her a "Tyrant," and says Keepwell will have to make his "peace." However, Sedley uses the convention unconventionally, as we shall see, just as he endows the concept of "eunuch" with new meanings.

Even more telling is his handling of the scene where the courtesan meets the two men at the door. Here is Terence's version:

Thais: Who's this? Why, Phaedria, darling!
Have you been waiting here--standing in the street?
Why didn't you come right in?

Parmeno (Aside): She threw him out,
Of course--but why bring that up?

Thais: Now what's your reason?

Phaedria (Clenched teeth): Because your door's never shut to
me.
Because I'm always first in your affections.

Thais: Let's forget that.

Phaedria: Forget? Oh, Thais, why is our love so lopsided? Why is our affair so unfair? Can't we adjust it-- Either you suffer the way I suffer ... or else I learn not to give a damn whatever you do?

Thais: Phaedria, darling, please don't torture yourself.
I adore you. I swear that I didn't do what I did
Because I prefer someone else. It was just--circumstances.
I had to do it.

Parmeno: Happens all the time.
So much in love she had to lock him out.

Thais: Is that the way; you're playing it, Parmeno? My, my.
(I. ii. p. 159)

Sedley's version goes this way:

Bella: Oh, my dear Keepwell! I am afraid thou art Jealous of me, because I did not let thee in sooner; the news of it put me into such Fits, all our maids were too few to hold me.

Keepw.: The news of what?

Bella.: Of a Duel I was told thou hadst fought: there was no body to run to the Door; but thou saw'st there was no man with me.

Keepw.: I saw no man indeed, but am much mistaken if I did not hear one leap out of your low Window into a Boat.

Bella.: This Summer one or other is leaping into the river all night long.

Keepw.: Oh, that you lov'd like me; or I like you!

Bella.: Why my dear Keepwell?

Keepw.: Why, then you'd never use me thus, or if you did, it wou'd not thus afflict me: my heart is as full of Jealousy as an Egg full of meat.

Bella.: I swear by all that's good there is no man on Earth so welcome to these Arms, as thy dear self.

Keepw.: Why did not you let me in sooner hen?

Bella.: I was just rising out of a Bath, and I will be seen naked by no man Living.

Merry.: Kind Soul! first she was in Fits for fear you were hurt; but now she was coming out of a Bath, and cou'd not in modesty let you in.

Keepw.: She fell into Fits just as she came out of her Bath.

Bella.: I have alwaies your good word: But I had rather you [that is, Merryman] shou'd say anything of me, than kill my dear Keepwell with Drinking.

(I. i. p. 11)

The degree of control that the courtesan exercises over her keeper in each play is clear, but Sedley has made some obvious changes to make the story more contemporary. Terence's play provides no indication that Thais is being unfaithful to her keeper, while in Sedley's version the keeper is kept waiting because someone is making a getaway from Bellamira's house. The last-minute escape of the secret lover, a stock situation in the comedy of the period, is made more interesting by Sedley's allusion to an infamous contemporary event: Jack Churchill's narrow escape from the quarters of Barbara Cleveland, Charles II's mistress.²⁸

The scene also makes an important point about the keeper's state of mind, a point suggested by Parmeno's comments on love in the first passage quoted from Terence's play: "A state without reason or rules cannot be ruled by reason." In Sedley's play, Keepwell is a eunuch not only because he allows his mistress to govern him but also because his infatuation leads to irrationality and stands in the way of effective self-government. Hence even when Merryman reveals Bellamira's obvious lies and contradictions, Keepwell rationalizes and refuses to acknowledge her deviousness and duplicity.

There are other examples of Keepwell's failure or unwillingness to see things as they really are. Sedley's second and third scenes in the first act are original, having no basis in Terence's play; Sedley uses them in part to underscore Keepwell's blindness to reality. In the second scene, Merryman tells his friend Cunningham,

²⁸Pinto, Works, II, p. 209n.

"I have told him of thy lying with her and Forty others, an hundred times, and he will never believe me; he is the most incorrigible Cully, I begin to be of her side" (ll. 81-84). In the same scene, Thisbe and Bellamira also marvel at Keepwell's unrealistic perception of his "romance." After Thisbe remarks, "All the young fellows that come out of France, pay Tribute to you as soon as to the Groom-Porter . . .," Bellamira says, "He has been told it a hundred times" (ll. 44-48). How does she keep him in the dark?: "I broke him of all his Censorius Acquaintance," says Bellamira (I. iii. ll. 53-54), and Thisbe comments, " Sure you, Think he can read no Book but his own, or you durst never use him so" (I. iii. ll. 16-17). Of course, in such a state, Keepwell will always be a less-than-equal partner in the relationship. Like Phaedria, although he has conjugal rights, the kept mistress owns him, and he is not more than a "eunuch."

Bellamira's old suitor Dangerfield has no conjugal rights, and in fact, this causes him to attack her house when he finds that she has tricked him into releasing Isabella. The ease with which she controls Dangerfield shows that he too is a eunuch of sorts. As it turns out, Dangerfield becomes the dupe of almost all the other characters. His servant Smoothly lives off of him by flattering his ridiculous and inflated opinions of himself. Smoothly tells Isabella,

I now am fain to Lye, and Flatter for my Bread, shift for my Cloaths, and humor every Idle Coxcomb to get a Piece or two: Does my Patron lose? Fortune favors Fools: Does he Win? sweet is his hand, and happy are his Servants. Is he Tall? such the first Monarch's were, when Kingdoms went by Choice: Is he Ugly, and Witty which must ever be? such

Ovid was, whom Julia so priz'd: Is he Hansom? such was
Adonis, whom fair Venus lov'd.

(II. i. ll. 58-68)

At the end of the play, Smoothly convinces the others to accept Dangerfield into their group by making him their dupe: "He loves Play: you may win his Mony, and he has abundance: if he refuse to Play, you may beat him till he will," and "You need not fear any woman should like him[;] he has been impotent these seven years: when you are weary of him you may Kick him out of doors" (V. i. ll. 468-470, 473-476).

Of course Dangerfield needs little encouragement from Smoothly to indulge in his own particular brand of solipsism. He seems to believe his own lies when he tells Smoothly, "'Tis my Comfort, that he that Shoots one Bullet into me, may chance to drive another out. The General wares me next his Heart, and often Trusts the Army to my single Conduct" (III. i. ll. 28-31). Like Forecast and the fops in The Mulberry Garden, Dangerfield has pretended for so long that he confuses his appearance with his true inner nature. Yet for all his braggadocio, when the time comes to attack Bellamira's house, he send his "army" ahead and says, "I my self will bring up the Rear, give the Sign for the on-set, and be ready to assist you with my Conduct, if need be" (IV. viii. ll. 13-15). Dangerfield fits the definition for eunuch in all the senses that apply to Keepwell: others manipulate him, he does not shape his own destiny, and his solipsism prevents his establishing any kind of meaningful relationship with anyone. To underscore the eunuch motif, Sedley lets his audience know that Dangerfield's impotence makes him a eunuch in a

very real sense. This last detail is absent in Dangerfield's original, Thraso.

Another deviation from his source helps Sedley emphasize the eunuch motif. In Terence's play, Gnatho, comparing his situation in life with that of another man who had a similar background, says,

I shall never cease my amazement at the qualitative
abyss
That yawns between man and man--the positive gulf that
partitions
Sage from clod.

(II. ii. p. 166)

Sedley's Smoothly expresses the sentiment similarly when he compares himself to Dangerfield: "There is as much difference between Man and Man, as between Man and Beast" (II. i. ll. 46-47). Ostensibly Smoothly is criticizing Dangerfield's preference for Bellamira over Isabella, but he is also saying that his master is less than a man. The similarity of these lines to the last line of Rochester's "A Satyre against Reason and Mankind"--"Man differs more than man, than from beast"--suggests a deliberate allusion to Rochester's poem. While "A Satyre against Reason and Mankind" is theriophilic, critical of all men, and Sedley's play criticizes only "eunuchs," the allusion does reinforce both the cynicism of Smoothly and Sedley's distinction between what men pretend to be and what they really are. Dangerfield proves as unreasonable and as hypocritical as the men satirized in Rochester's poem.

Sedley and Terence doubtless intended the comparison of Keepwell/Phaedria to Dangerfield/Thraso; despite their differences, all of these characters allow themselves to be manipulated, see

women as property, and suffer from a blindness to reality which keeps them from shaping their own destinies. But Sedley and Terence also intended a contrast between the keeper and his younger brother. Bellamira controls Lionel only in the sense that she treats him as the servant she assumes to be the eunuch. But Lionel, too, is hindered from establishing a meaningful relationship with the girl he loves, Isabella, because of a kind of irrationality, here expressed as madness. After overhearing Lionel rave about a beautiful girl he has seen, Merryman realizes that the boy has his older brother's malady:

Lost! Undone! Beautiful! I am sure I heard these words
plain: he is in Love, and after the manner of that
sort of Madmen is talking to himself, or his Mistress;
If he be we shall have fine work; there are Ten Keepwells
in that Lionel: he'll commit Rapes, Burglaries, Fire
houses, or any thing, but he'll have her
(II. i. 11. 151-157)

And Lionel admits, "I am mad; I am anything; I am in Love" (II. i. 11. 171-172). Like his older brother, Lionel sees his girl as a "Divine Creature" (l. 198) and he loves her at first sight. Unfortunately, he allows his mad infatuation to take hold of him, and he rapes Isabella. This madness which keeps him from behaving correctly makes him less than complete: a eunuch. Through Lionel's rashness Sedley demonstrates that domestic government, like national government, requires reason and moderation. Lionel appears a eunuch also in that he submits to his father's undue authority in the choice of his wife. He is unwilling to marry Isabella at first because in so doing, he would violate his father's wishes in a prearranged marriage.

Terence's Chremes and the corresponding character in Sedley's play, Eustace, are "eunuchs" too but in ways that make them different from each other. Fear makes Chremes less than a man. He fears the attempts of Thais's servants to seduce him, and in IV. vi., even after he learns that Pamphila is his true sister and that Thraso plans to take her back from Thais by force, he acts a coward. Thais must teach him courage and show him how to defend his sister. In Bellamira, Eustace does not fear Dangerfield, and Sedley's courtesan lacks the virtue and the compassion to help Eustace, even if he had needed help. Fear does not incapacitate Eustace the way that it does Chremes. Eustace does, however, suffer from an irrationality which, like that of Keepwell and Dangerfield, stands in the way of responsible self-government. In Sedley's play, he chases the courtesan's servant (III. ii.) instead of being chased, and when he hears Lionel describe the secret pleasures of playing a eunuch and raping the girl, he takes vicarious pleasure in the description (III. v.). However, when Eustace learns that the raped girl is his sister, he does an about-face, becoming furious and challenging the unsuspecting Lionel to a duel. When Eustace learns that Lionel wants and intends to marry Isabella, he changes his attitude once again and renews the friendship. Through Eustace, Sedley seems to criticize more than hypocrisy; he seems to criticize the kind of unreasonable inconsistency which allows a man to approve of a rape of a stranger but not of his sister. Sedley seems to be providing another illustration of the consequences of not being skeptical about attitudes and issues.

One of the more significant changes for emphasizing the eunuch motif involves Sedley's Merryman. As Pinto explains, if a character like Terence's cunning valet, Parmeno, had been used, he would have been

the most essentially un-English thing in the play. By changing this character into a person who is at once thoroughly English and characteristic of Sedley's own age, he has altered the whole tone of the play and, as it were, has brought it out of the close atmosphere of Levantine intrigue into the fresh air of the Park and the Mall.²⁹

The shortcomings which make Merryman a "eunuch" include both ethical and physical impotence. Merryman prides himself on his honesty and plainspokenness and at one point warns Bellamira that he will keep a confidence only if it is true: "but [if] it prove a Lye, a Flam, a Wheadle, 'twill out: I shall tell it the next man I meet" (I. i. 11. 99-101). Unfortunately, he betrays his friend Keepwell by succumbing to Bellamira's charms (IV. vi.) and attempting to cuckold him (if it is possible to cuckold an unmarried man). The stress is on attempt, for he is impotent, unable to perform his manly function. Merryman's physical impotence parallels his ethical impotence.

A lack of moderation in eating and drinking accounts for Merryman's physical impotence. His friend Cunningham calls him "a very Bacchus Incarnate" (I. ii. 1. 2) and comments, "For your soundness, if Palsie, Gout, and Dropsie may be called so, your drunken impotence is the reason of it" (I. ii. 11. 30-32). After the failure to perform his manly duties, Merryman tells Bellamira, "This Paunch

²⁹Pinto, Sedley, p. 270.

of mine shall down, I will no longer suffer my Virile virtue to be Eclips'd by this Globe of Earth, Bisket [will be] my Meat, Finnel Water and Vinegar shall be my Drink this twelve Months" (IV. vi. ll. 14-18). His penchant for strong drink also causes him to be disorderly around his ward, Thisbe, for whom he has no little affection. Even she is aware of the weakness that keeps him from being a complete man: "I must have no Morning Draughts, no Qualms that keep off Dinner till three a Clock, no tun-belly Rogues, that fright Chair-men from the house, no Noisie Fools to disturb the whole Street with Loyal Catches, and senseless Huzzah's" (III. iii. ll. 142-146). And even Thisbe suspects the consequences of Merryman's lack of restraint when she tells him in the proviso scene, "I would have you thought to get your Children if I Marry you" (III. iii. ll. 131-132).

Sedley adds the character Cunningham to the play for comic relief and, again, to underscore the eunuch theme. It is he who is busy with Bellamira at the beginning of the play when Keepwell comes to the door; it is Cunningham who jumps from the window into the boat on the river. Ironically, though he considers himself very much a man--a ladies' man--venereal disease has made him less a man than he once was. This physical incompleteness and his refusal to admit to himself or anyone else that he is no longer a great lover, a lack of self-awareness, make him a "eunuch" too. The insult matches between fat Merryman and lean Cunningham not only provide much of the play's humor but also point up the deficiencies that make both

characters "eunuchs," as the following excerpt illustrates:

Merry.: A good Coxcomb alwaies thinks well of himself;
why thou lean Rascal Deer, thou visible Pox; thou Common
shore of Physick, Reproach of Doctors, and Ruine of Apothe-
cari's, who Flux'st away thy Flesh as often as the Adder
casts his Skin, and art full as venemous.

Cun.: I am sure you look like a full Moon or a Fat Bawd
swell'd with the Tooth Ach.

Merry.: When I walk the Streets, men say there goes an
honest well natur'd Fat Fellow to drink a bottle with,
and a good Husband I warrant him.

Cun.: A good Cuckold perhaps: but the Ladies cry foh,
there goes a greasie Sot, a Chandlers Shop in the shape
of a man, a meer Lump, a Sponge full of terse: whose
mouth stinks worse than the Bung-hold of a Barrel, a Load
of manifest impotency, Guts and Garbage for the Bear-Garden.
(V. i. ll. 128-144)

Cunningham's weakness for women has affected his physical self-control in the same way that Merryman's weakness for food and drink has affected his self-control, and the play makes numerous references to Cunningham's venereal disease and its effects. Merryman calls him a "Scarrow" (that is, a scarecrow), a "walking Skelleton, that may'st be read upon alive . . ." (V. i. ll. 146-148). When Thisbe tells Bellamira that Cunningham "professes his Love and Soundness to me," Bellamira warns, "Believe him in neither, they say he is a false fellow" (I. iii. ll. 20-23). The play provides evidence also for Cunningham's unreasonable refusal to acknowledge his lost virility. When Merryman tells him that Thisbe thought he looked like a ghost, he replies, "Why, I am the same man I was twenty years ago; as vigorous, as Amorous, and I think as taking amongst Men and Women. I had three Maidenheads brought me last Week by their

parents" (V. i. ll. 33-37). And Thisbe says of Cunningham, "This fellow has vanity enough to extract Love out of an affront, and wou'd Kiss the pretty foot shou'd Kick him down Stairs" (III. ii. ll. 71-73). Cunningham's refusal or inability to face reality interferes with his ability to govern himself and thus makes him, too, a "eunuch."

To reinforce our awareness of the physical and psychological impotence of his characters, Sedley uses animal imagery. Merryman calls the true eunuch, Pisquil, a "Humane Gelding" (II. i. l. 15). At the end of the play, Smoothly comes right out and says that Dangerfield is impotent, but Bellamira evidently already knows, calling him "gelt" (IV. viii. l. 35). Although Keepwell is not physically impotent, Merryman's reference to him as a "Gib'd Cat" (that is, a gelded cat) indicates a more important kind of impotence: his lack of a meaningful role in his relationship with Bellamira. And Cunningham refers to himself as a "Capon" (V. i. l. 126) because a capon is lean; however, a capon, ironically, is a gelded cock. The animal imagery also reinforces Sedley's treatment of the idea of solipsism as it relates to the eunuch theme. When Silence sees the real eunuch, Pisquil, and realizes that he is not the one delivered to Bellamira, she says that he is no much their eunuch "than a Calf is to a Lion" (IV. v. l. 24). Later in the play, speaking to Smoothly of Dangerfield, Eustace says, "Persuade that Calf he is a Lion if thou canst . . ." (IV. viii. ll. 76-77), and Silence tells Keepwell that Dangerfield is a "Calf" (V. i. l. 196). Only Keepwell, who is as cowardly as the rival he fears, fails to see Dangerfield as he

really is. When Smoothly asks Keepwell and his circle to accept Dangerfield, Keepwell replies, "I would as soon receive a Roaring Lion" (V. i. 1. 459). Perhaps Lionel's name identifies him as the only character with a sense of daring and courage, impetuous and misguided though it be.

Similarities of situations, phrasing of ideas, and attitudes suggest an attempt to emphasize that these "eunuchs" share moral and intellectual impotence, even though each character differs from the others in many respects. For example, although Eustace is not nearly as gullible as Keepwell, his delight in Lionel's description of the rape of Isabella resembles Keepwell's delight in IV. vi. when he surprises Merryman with a woman. In each case delight would turn to anger if Eustace or Keepwell realized that the woman involved in the sexual intrigue was a loved one rather than a stranger. Not knowing that Bellamira, not a stranger, hides behind the screen, Keepwell says, "Prithee let me see thy Punk, thy Cockatrice . . ." (IV. vi. 1. 74). Just two scenes later, Dangerfield, who resembles Keepwell as little as Keepwell resembles Eustace, hurls the same exact terms, "Punk" and "Cockatrice" (1. 31), at Bellamira when he attacks her house to regain Isabella. These parallels reveal the eunuchs' tendency to regard certain women as sexual objects, and their attitude reflects not only insensitivity but also irrationality in the selective application of this attitude. It comes as no surprise, then, that the eunuchs often regard women merely as property. For all the silly Platonic conceits portraying Bellamira as some

deity, Keepwell regards her finally as his property, although he does not admit this even to himself. He has bought her with gifts-- clothes, an apartment, servants--and Merryman notes that Keepwell's waiting outside Bellamira's house makes him look as though he is "hovering like a Ghost, about . . . [his] Treasure" (II. i. ll. 1-2). He buys a eunuch and a Black womanservant as presents to give to Bellamira, and, like a good businessman, he expects a good return (satisfaction from Bellamira) on his investment (the eunuch, woman-servant, and other "things"). Dangerfield also regards people insensitively as things: Isabella is his slave, his present for Bellamira, and when Bellamira rebuffs him, he demands his property, Isabella, back. Though a servant, Smoothly proves equally insensitive to his fellow humans. He regards Dangerfield primarily as a meal ticket, a source of revenue; and Keepwell's circle accepts Dangerfield as such at the end of the play. Eustace regards the victim of Lionel's plot as something more than a slave only when he discovers that she is his long-lost sister, and Merryman launches, actually develops, Lionel's scheme knowing full well what the consequences could be and probably will be: "he'll commit Rapes, Burglaries, Fire houses, or any thing, but he'll have her . . ." (II. i. ll. 156-157). Lionel's rape of Isabella is cruel proof that he regards her, temporarily at least, as only the object of his lust, something less than fully human. That these "eunuchs," who are less than complete men for one reason or another, regard other people as less than human is one of the great ironies of the play.

The eunuchs resemble one another also in their attempts to rationalize the faults that make them "eunuchs." Lionel is naive, certainly, but he attempts to rationalize his eunuch scheme nevertheless: "To save a Friend's life, is an honest action: nor can it be any wrong, to Cozen those that Cozen all the World" (II. i. ll. 326-328). The person he hopes to cozen is his brother's mistress, Bellamira; in his moral calculation, Isabella counts nothing at all: she is a nonentity, even though he claims to love her. The same kind of irrational rationalization figures into Cunningham's justification of betraying Keepwell, a man he pretends to befriend and from whom he borrows money: "A Pious Citizen that goes to Church twice a day, will play the Knave in a Bargain; a Lawyer takes your Fee, and for a good Sum of Mony, be absent when your Cause is try'd; a Parson Marry you to a great Fortune without a Licence . . ." (I. ii. ll. 119-123). When Isabella accuses Smoothly of prostituting himself with his insincere flattery of a buffoon like Dangerfield, he replies, "Don't Lawyers, Physitians, and Courtiers, when they take Mony for a good Turn, sell their words?" (II. i. ll. 95-97). The rationalizing of these characters reveals more than just an impotence of reason: it reveals a moral impotence as well.

One would expect Sedley to apply the eunuch motif only to his male characters, as it would seem ridiculous to refer to women as eunuchs. However, just as in The Mulberry Garden the men as well as the women wander in search of meaningful, effective government, so in Bellamira the figurative use of "eunuch" allows us to see social

psychological, and moral impotence not only in men but in the women characters as well, most noticeably in Bellamira.

The title character's numerous infidelities and her shabby exploitation of Keepwell serve as constant reminders of her moral impotence. She boasts to her friend Thisbe that "Keepwell is the Loyalist Cully! nothing will make him Mutiny" (I. iii. 11. 14-15). Thisbe congratulates her on her "absolute Dominion over him" and on her ability to "make him accessory to his own disgrace . . ." (referring to Keepwell's agreement to leave town so that Bellamira can receive her old suitor, Dangerfield) (I. iii. 11. 2-3). Sedley's references to Bellamira in political terms suggest associations with manipulative Hobbesian villains like Forecast in the earlier comedy. She is "a great Politician" (I. iii. 1. 63) to whom men from France "pay Tribute . . . as certainly as to the Groom-Porter . . ." (I. iii. 11. 45-46); she has her own "Empire" (I. iii. 1. 51) and in this scene with Thisbe, which has no basis in Terence, reveals what she has in common with the other eunuchs in the play:

Bella.: Does he [Merryman] not see that we govern the town? have Power and Plenty follow us? we Visit, Dance, Play at Cards, go to Hide-Park, St. James's, and Sup together, and are a World among our Selves.

This.: But like the Inhabitants of the other World, you neither Marry, nor are given in Marriage; and he wou'd have me fit for a Husband.

Bella.: Get Mony enough and you can never want a Husband. A Husband is a good Bit to Close ones Stomach with, when Love's Feast is over. Who wou'd begin a Meal with Cheese?

(I. iii. 11. 107-118)

Not only does Bellamira share the eunuchs' desire for sovereignty--the relationship of keeper to mistress or of master to slave are Sedley's examples--but she likewise treats people as means to material ends: why have a husband when you can be rich? The comparison of husbands to food is consistent with the Restoration penchant for this type of wit, but it also suggests the impersonal regard Bellamira has for relationships of this sort.

Ironically, in spite of her preeminence, Bellamira's attitude proves a limiting factor in her social relationships. Just as the eunuchs' poor regard for the opposite sex prevents them from establishing truly meaningful relationships with women, so Bellamira's view of men as means to wealth keeps her from enjoying the real fruits of marriage. Thisbe recognizes the consequences of this attitude when she compares Bellamira's world to a world of spirits where women cannot marry, have a husband, or enjoy love. Bellamira's disdain for marriage and desire for absolute authority offer her freedom, but that freedom isolates her. The passage just cited is reminiscent of the passage at the beginning of the next scene, in which Merryman compares Keepwell outside Bellamira's house to a ghost hovering over his treasure. Sedley describes Cunningham, also, as a "Ghost" (V. i. 11. 25, 33), and Bellamira shares with Keepwell and Cunningham a penchant for treating others as sexual objects. The ghost image works very appropriately in another respect, however. A ghost is less than a man, the mere image of a man: a description which fits the henpecked Keepwell and the diseased Cunningham well.

But ghosts can be female, and the image is appropriate to Bellamira and her world, too.

The extent of her isolation from the kind of love that a meaningful relationship with a man, not just a casual affair, would afford is apparent in the second scene of Act II, one of Sedley's original scenes. When Bellamira asks Isabella if she has ever been in love, she replies,

Isa.: I have so many defects already, why will you press me to own a weakness, perhaps you will despise me for?

Bella.: No, I myself have been in Love, and have had alwaies some one Friend to whom I wou'd gladly sacrifice what I got from others.

Isa.: If that be to be in Love, I never was.

Bella.: That's our way, who know the Perjuries and Villanies of Men; How they all begin alike, with vows Oaths, and Protestations; and end alike with Slights and Scorns and Falsehood: some difference there may be for a while, but no great matter.

(II. ii. 11. 23-35)

Even one as naive and inexperienced as Isabella recognizes that Bellamira fails to appreciate the true meaning of love. To Bellamira love is an emotion which prompts her to share her ill-gotten presents. Love, it seems, can never be really shared between Bellamira and a man because she regards all men as liars and cheaters. Apparently, men have given her a reason to distrust them: she tells Isabella that they are all of the "deceitful make" (II. ii. 1. 36) described above. Bellamira is the female counterpart of the "old Sinner" in Sedley's prologue to The Mulberry Garden who "in's youth has known/ Most Women bad" and thus "dares venture upon none." The fear and unwillingness to establish a loving relationship with a man make

Bellamira socially impotent. Like the hypocrite Forecast in Sedley's earlier comedy, Bellamira replaces love with greed; she tells Isabella that women should regard men as worthy only because of "their Presents" (II. ii. 1. 44).

The ease with which Bellamira justifies her shameless deceit of men illustrates another characteristic she shares with the male eunuchs of the play: psychological impotence. Implicit in her discussion of sovereignty with Thisbe and of love with Isabella is the same kind of rationalization that Keepwell, Lionel, Cunningham, and the others employed to justify their deceptions and manipulations. Someone as gullible and foolish as Keepwell, she reasons, deserves to be deceived; even Keepwell's friend Merryman is tempted to agree with this point of view. And according to Bellamira's reasoning, a woman should never chance falling in love with a man because all men are cheats and liars. This lack of confidence in mankind suggests the kind of pessimism, or cynicism, one finds in Hobbesian philosophy. Yet, though she seems to indicate that she does not truly understand love, the forcefulness of her denunciations of men's deceptions suggests that she has been in love before and has experienced the villainies she attributes so broadly to mankind as a whole. In other words, Bellamira will not admit to others, perhaps even to herself, that she has wanted love, and the continued affectation of scorn and indifference causes her to confuse her true feelings with the image she publicly projects--another example of irrational behavior. Both the failure to recognize her own need for love and the rationalizing

she employs to justify her deceit and manipulation make her just as psychologically impotent as the men she scorns.

A comparison of Bellamira to Terence's Thais underscores the failings of Sedley's courtesan. Although she too manipulates her keeper, Thais is kinder and less deceitful than her Restoration counterpart. Gilbert Norwood calls Thais "wise, gracious, affectionate, and resourceful" and observes that in Terence's society, being a courtesan was "far more a matter of social status than morals" ³⁰ Her moral superiority to Bellamira is even more apparent in the attitude of other characters to her. Whereas Thais's servants, Dorias and Pythias, respect her, Bellamira's servant Silence worries about the negative influence Bellamira will have on Isabella: "She [that is, Isabella] has nothing at present to depend upon, but the Friendship of Bellamira: and if she [Isabella] be vertuous, as I believe she is, what trouble that must be to her!" (II. ii. ll. 121-124). Chremes appreciates Thais's willingness to show him how to protect his sister from Thraso. Phaedria's impetuous younger brother, Cherea, also respects Thais and depends on her benevolence. She helps him win the wronged Pamphila as his bride, and she charms and placates his father into accepting the match. In Sedley's play, although Lionel apologizes to Bellamira (V. i. ll. 396-398), he calls on Eustace, not Bellamira, to be his advocate with Isabella (V. i. ll. 365-366). In sum, Thais is a "courtesan who guides and invigorates men instead

³⁰Norwood, pp. 58-59.

of debasing them" ³¹ Bellamira, in contrast, is jaded and does not seem to understand love and mutual respect; she manipulates Keepwell, Dangerfield, Merryman, and Eustace for her own selfish ends. Thais's compassion for others and her willingness to establish meaningful relationships allow her to become a whole, fulfilled person. Bellamira's egocentricity and mistrust of mankind make her a "eunuch."

While the eunuch motif allows Sedley to indicate how not to govern oneself and how not to establish meaningful relationships, his interest in good government in Bellamira is implicit. A tripartite contrast of characters, attitudes, and relationships once again allows Sir Charles to indicate his preferences in political philosophy, although, happily, he has eschewed the cumbersome multiplicity of plots, genres, and characters that marred The Mulberry Garden and perplexed its critics.

Many of the play's characters manifest traits popularly associated with Hobbesian philosophy: egocentricity, deviousness, tyranny, and predation. In their eagerness to deceive, manipulate, and prey upon members of the opposite sex, Bellamira and Cunningham come most readily to mind. Though himself a victim, Dangerfield is a tyrant, first over his slave Isabella and then, through his bellicose intentions, over Bellamira when he learns that she has deceived him. Keepwell, despite his schizophrenic idealization of the woman he treats as a sexual object, despite his gullible willingness to be bilked by her, also is a tyrant--at least in his intentions.

³¹Norwood, p. 69.

Silly romantic professions of love aside, Keepwell tries to treat Bellamira as his love slave. The gifts he heaps upon her represent nothing less than an investment in self-gratification, and he agrees to let her see Dangerfield only because he has no other choice. The self-defeating nature of the Hobbesian attitude adopted by these and other characters--all eunuchs--points to its unsuitability as a guide for self-government and the establishment of relationships.

Lionel and Isabella represent the opposite extreme in the contrast of characters and attitudes. True romantics, they fall in love at first sight and idealize each other, despite Lionel's rashness. His infatuation has been documented already in the discussion of the male eunuchs. Isabella's own infatuation appears in her description of Lionel as "The Divinest Form these Eyes had e're beheld. . . . We never met . . . but sure I never shall be won by another" (II. ii. ll. 72-73, 83-84). Lionel is slave to his passion; Isabella is Dangerfield's slave, merchandise to be bought and sold. Lionel's unrealistic infatuation leads to several conflicts. Isabella's unrealistic attitude prevents her from finding her way free of the ridiculous miles gloriosus while almost every other main character manages to manipulate him. Rather than escaping him, she defends herself from his advances in a suitably romantic manner: by holding a dagger to her breast and threatening to take her own life (II. ii. ll. 8-10).

Thisbe, one of Sedley's original characters, is the play's reasonable female character. Between the cynical, Hobbesian position of Bellamira and the highly idealistic position of Isabella, Thisbe

provides a level-headed view of self-government and of what makes a good relationship. It appears in a song which occurs just before Cunningham's disingenuous protestations of love, replete with Platonic conceits of the conquering power of her beauty. This is the scene in which Cunningham thinks Thisbe has written him a note asking him to attend her (actually Merryman had forged the note to get rid of Cunningham). The truth of Thisbe's song strikes a contrast to the ridiculous self-conceit of Cunningham.

SONG

Thyrsis unjustly you Complain,
And tax my tender heart
With want of pity for your pain,
Or Sense of your desert.

By secret and Mysterious Springs,
Alas! our Passions move;
We women are Fantastick things,
That like before we love.

You may be handsome, and have Wit,
Be secret and well-bred,
The Person Love must to us fit,
He only can succeed.

Some dye, yet never are believ'd;
Others we trust too soon,
Helping our Selves to be deceiv'd,
And proud to be undone.
(III. iii. ll. 3-18)

The first stanza presents the conventional Platonic love complaint. The last stanza presents possible responses. Like Bellamira, a woman might never believe a man's protestations of love; or a naive and idealistic girl like Isabella might believe and be taken unfair advantage of. But the middle stanzas present the only reasonable basis for a successful relationship. A woman (and a man, too)

like before loving; one must not mistake infatuation for love, and one must not be impetuous like Lionel. Also, social standing, wit, and beauty alone are not the bases for marriage; only love can "fit" us to another person. This contrast of the three female characters represents considerable deviation from Terence's play, for Terence does not tie the eunuch motif to the larger question of meaningful relationships.

In Bellamira as in The Mulberry Garden, the most significant treatment of the question of meaningful relationships occurs in the last act, where the conflicts of the play are resolved. Although Lionel's rape of Isabella creates a furor and although his father has arranged for him to marry a girl other than her, the idealistic couple finally find the way cleared for their marriage; significantly, this occurs not through their own efforts but through chance and the intercession of others. For financial reasons, Lionel's father had arranged for him to marry Theodosia: "Theodosia was my father's choice (her Bags were contracted to his Acres)" (V. i. ll. 614-615). However, Cunningham secretly marries this daughter of a wealthy goldsmith, thus leaving Lionel free to marry Isabella. When Eustace finds that Lionel has honorable intentions for his sister, the friendship between the men is patched, and Eustace agrees to be Lionel's advocate in his suit to her. Here as in Sedley's first comedy, the marriages between the romantic characters occur in spite of their unrealistic attitudes, largely through chance. Despite their moral superiority to characters like Bellamira, the romantic

characters, because of their lack of realism, do not illustrate Sedley's ideals of government.

The relationship between Bellamira and Keepwell at the end of the play befits their selfish, devious attitudes; each one's selfish desire for freedom and for domination of the other ensures that the couple will never escape their self-imposed isolation from true love and a meaningful relationship. Keepwell says,

My Bell. and I will lead a marri'd Life,
Bating the odious Names of Man and Wife;
In Chains of Love alone we will be ty'd,
And every Night I'll use her like a Bride.

Keepwell's description of their relationship demonstrates that he does not understand the meaning of married life or love. His juxtaposition of "Chains of Love" to his description of his sexual intentions suggests that he regards love primarily as physical gratification. In light of all that Bellamira has said and done, it seems unlikely that true love will have anything to do with binding the relationship. She will always be his mistress, and he her dupe.

The match between Merryman and his ward Thisbe shows the most likelihood of success and endurance. At first the marriage seems almost accidental: Thisbe jokingly promises to marry a mystery man whose generosity had prevented her being hauled away to jail for a debt, and this man proves to be Merryman. However, the match is not as much a matter of mere chance as it seems, for the two have genuine affection for each other. They enter marriage without the overwhelming romanticism of the young couple and the manipulative, deceptive selfishness of Keepwell and Bellamira. Theirs is a contract reasonably

entered into, each freely consenting to surrender some of his freedom, willing to become "Man and Wife." Like Olivia and Wildish, they represent a kind of golden mean between the extreme attitudes of the other characters. And like the "gay couple" of the earlier comedy, Merryman and Thisbe are complex characters who wander before discovering proper government. Thisbe, for example, seems at first to adopt some of Bellamira's attitudes toward men and society, for she congratulates the courtesan on her complete domination of Keepwell. Any Merryman allows himself to betray his friendship with Keepwell. However, their marriage marks their movement away from the selfish attitudes of Hobbesian characters like Bellamira.

One of the play's final relationships, one which underscores the apparent cynicism running through Sedley's story, complicates not only this otherwise happy ending but the play as a whole. Defeated in his attempts to take Bellamira and Isabella by force, Dangerfield resolves to be admitted to the circle of friends which includes Bellamira, Keepwell, Merryman, and Eustace. The group are reluctant to admit him until Dangerfield's devious servant, Smoothly, convinces them that his admission to their circle would be to their economic advantage:

He loves Play: you may win his Mony,
and he has abundance: if he refuse to Play, you may
beat him till he will.

.
Now, Gentlemen, take me
into your Protection, and then Eat, Drink upon, and
Laugh at the Fool my Master.

(V. i. ll. 468-470, 482-484)

At this point, even Merryman takes on the deceptive and predatory nature of the courtesan he lectures at the beginning of the play. He seems to have abandoned the honesty which he had so valued in himself earlier. This change of Merryman's character, or attitude, is paralleled earlier in another relationship based on deceit and betrayal: that between himself and his friend's mistress, Bellamira. His justification is purely Hobbesian:

. . . . Well I
 am a Rogue to betray my Friend thus; but, who
 wou'd not be taken off with such a Bribe? Besides,
 in matter of Women, we are all in the State
 of Nature, every man's hand against every man.
 Whatever we pretend.

(III. iv. ll. 112-117)

The final lines of the play, spoken by Merryman, prove the most perplexing not just because of their extreme cynicism but because they are spoken by the character who seems to represent reason and moderation in the play:

Merry.: Wits, Whore-Masters, Gamesters, Drunk-
 ards, Bullies,
 We in our several wayes are all but Cullies.

Seen in light of Sedley's development of the eunuch motif, these lines have a clear and direct application to the characters and situations of the play. Whoremasters like Cunningham, gamesters and bullies like Dangerfield, and drunkards and wits like Merryman, though they succeed to some extent in their manipulation or domination of other people, are themselves victims: "Cullies." Ironically, they are themselves "eunuchs," despite their apparent wholeness. More disturbing still, Merryman's pronouncement extends in its application

beyond the play's characters to the audience and, I think, to mankind as a whole.

Because of the prominence of these final lines and because of their importance to the play as a whole, especially to the eunuch motif and Sedley's exploration of a theory of government, we should carefully consider how Sedley uses them and what he really means to say. It would be a mistake, I think, to view Merryman as totally cynical. Sedley did, after all, pattern him after the jolly Falstaff and added to Terence's plot a scene right out of Henry IV; Merryman and Bellamira disguise themselves as robbers and pounce on Dangerfield and Smoothly. The cowardly behavior of the latter two, along with the fun derived from their exaggerated description of the robbery and how they dealt with the robbers, provides lots of comic relief, as do the insult matches between Merryman and Cunningham. For the most part, Merryman remains honest and loyal. His only two lapses are his betrayal of Keepwell, through his affair with Bellamira, and his willingness at the end of the play to deceive and prey upon the unsuspecting Dangerfield. Even these lapses, however, seem less nefarious in light of his serious commitment to marry Thisbe and his realization in these final lines that the group's actions are devious and unhealthy. Here as in his previous plays, Sedley refuses to oversimplify his protagonists, for he rejects the simplistic romantic notions of mankind and nature. Merryman and Thisbe, the play's exemplary characters, are not and must not be perfect.

The historical context of Bellamira furnishes probably the best means for understanding Merryman's cynicism. Just prior to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, England worried about the extreme policies of James II and about the course he charted in government and religion. The cynicism of the 1680s seems reflected in Sedley's comedy and strikes a sharp contrast to the optimism of the early Restoration. Sedley's apparent bitterness probably derives also from his dislike of James II, who kept his daughter, Katherine, as a mistress. The relationship between the king and Sedley's daughter may even have contributed to his decision to write this play about a mistress who manipulates her keeper. Interestingly, Pinto records that prominent Anglicans hoped to use Katherine to influence the king to abandon his Catholic sympathies.³² The cynicism which pervades the play reflects not the Hobbesian perspective of a jaded generation but the concern of Englishmen disillusioned by the failures of Charles II's policies and worried about the policies of his brother. Moreover, Sir Charles presents this cynicism ultimately as something to be avoided. Still, the apparent cynicism of the play is neither so extreme nor so thorough as critics have thought. First, the apparent inclusion of the audience among the "Cullies" Merryman laments at the play's end strongly suggests that Sedley intends to create a sense of uneasiness in his audience; they must turn their attention and their judgement from the play to themselves, determining to what extent they fit Merryman's cynical

³²Pinto, Sedley, p. 159.

description of humanity. The final speech functions, then, like the end of Jonson's Volpone, forcing a greater-than-usual involvement in the play's ideas. Sedley succeeds in forcing the audience to think seriously about his views on self-government and relationships. Rightly considered, these final lines and the play as a whole project more optimism than pessimism, despite the apparent cynicism. This optimism, implicit rather than explicit, develops through Sedley's use of exemplary characters. Those characters exhibiting extreme behavior--the romantics and the Hobbesian characters--appear negatively, not as patterns for imitation. We do not admire those characteristics which make Bellamira, Keepwell, and the others "eunuchs"; Sedley's satire instructs us to avoid self-destructive behavior. We can avoid attitudes and behavior that isolate us from love and meaningful relationships and that prevent proper control of our destinies. Sedley's tripartite contrast of characters and attitudes reveals what makes people physically, socially, and ethically impotent. The playwright illustrates what can make us cullies and thus offers hope for avoiding destructive attitudes and behavior. Here as in Sedley's first comedy, honesty and respect for other human beings and relationships based on free and reasonable consent, rather than deception and manipulation, emerge as significant components of the paradigm of behavior the playwright endorses.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The idea of moral design in Sir Charles Sedley's plays, though foreign to most literary critical approaches, can be justified in the same way that most critics justify their approaches: first by regarding the plays as reflections of the social and philosophic attitudes of the playwright and second by demonstrating that regarding the plays this way offers the best, most complete means of explaining the content and technique of the drama. Viewing plays like The Mulberry Garden and Bellamira either as immoral drama or as amoral drama might account somewhat for the so-called manners elements and might be justified through reference to popular notions of what Sedley and the Wits were like. Approaches like these prove limited and misleading, however, when they distort Sedley's complex attitudes and his reputation and fail to account adequately for the operation of his plays as a whole. How does one account for the heroic/platonic elements of The Mulberry Garden or for the fact that he wrote an entirely serious play: Antony and Cleopatra? How does one reconcile Sir Charles's Bellamira and its cynicism with his serious religious commitment at the time when he wrote it? Most critics answer these questions by regarding Sedley as a gentleman amateur whose inexperience and lack of control over his subject matter result in flawed drama. Sedley, they say, capitalized on popular trends, so Bellamira, for instance, allows him to cater to the popular taste for cynical

comedy, or it reflects the cynical attitudes of Englishmen in the 1680s. If, however, one recognizes the serious moral and intellectual concerns in Sedley's life and more generally in the intellectual milieu of the seventeenth century, and if one applies to the three plays in question five key elements of his moral design--skepticism, reason, individualism, love, and a rigorous methodology derived from the mechanical philosophy and the Platonic-Pythagorean tradition--the plays become much more intelligible, less flawed. Moreover, by comparing the ways in which moral design operates in these plays, one discovers that they share a surprising number of concerns and techniques--all this despite differences in mode and in their wide separation from one another in time.

While Sedley's occasionally riotous behavior, especially the episode at the Cock Tavern, lent credence to the stereotype of the Wits as shallow and frivolous, if not anti-social, this phase accounts for a relatively small portion of his life, probably ten to fifteen years. On the whole, Sir Charles exhibited responsibility, especially in his parliamentary career; knowledgeability, as Wilson and Pinto so ably demonstrate in their biographies of Sedley and other Wits; concern for truth and order; and a genuine love quite at variance with the predatory lust so often attributed to the Wits. These last two qualities emerge from a close study of Sedley's plays and poetry and also, by inference, from the recent scholarship of Susan Staves, Norman Holland, Earl Miner, Christopher Hill, and others. Sedley's firsthand observation of the extremism that tore England apart during its civil war, his familiarity with the political philosophies

of divine righters, of Hobbes, and of moderate constitutional theorists, and his continued concern over the unresolved constitutional issues following the Restoration account for the interest in government that pervades his drama. Sedley's devotion to Ann Ayscough, his platonic poems, and the pains he takes in his plays to distinguish true love from lust and from unrealistic infatuation belie the stereotype of the Wits and help put Sedley's attitude into perspective.

Sedley's new-philosophical skepticism accounts for much in the plays that has bothered and confused critics. In The Mulberry Garden, the heroic and low-comedy elements traditionally regarded as extraneous to the all-important manners plot actually contribute to a complex examination of competing political philosophies. Although critics have correctly identified the so-called manners plot as the most important plot in the play, they err in their reasons for doing so. Far from attempting to promote the social mode, Sedley questions it--in the same way that he questions the attitudes of heroic characters and low-comedy characters--as a means of determining the ideal political philosophy. Although rejecting blind adherence to the social mode of the manners plot, Sedley finds more to sympathize and agree with here than in the other two plots. The skepticism of the protagonists--Olivia and Wildish--allows them to avoid the blind idealism of the high-plot characters and the blind obsessions of the low-plot characters; it also helps them avoid the extreme attitudes and behavior of each group. Although Antony and Cleopatra differs from the other two plays in tone, mode, and other important

respects, new philosophical skepticism figures significantly in this play too. The love interests and villainous intrigues traditionally regarded as extraneous to the all-important struggle of the protagonist between love and honor actually allow Sedley once again to contrast political philosophies, and the skeptical differentiation between illusion and reality allows Sedley to demonstrate, once again, the negative consequences of blind idealism and blinding obsessions. Skepticism, in other words, allows the playwright to distinguish the relatively moderate attitudes of his protagonists--Antony and Cleopatra in this play--from the extreme attitudes of the villains and the patriots of the play. More specifically, skeptical questioning of the conventional interpretation of the protagonists' role in their decline (by exposing the villainous plots against them) and of their relationship (by showing the superiority of their love and responsibility overall) suggests a plausible explanation for the admiration we feel for the protagonists at the play's end; critics approaching the play as conventional, rather than as the challenge to conventions that it is, have failed to account for Sedley's generation of admiration for Antony and Cleopatra.

Bellamira succeeds in avoiding the bothersome heroic elements of the previous two plays--yet retains skepticism as a significant means, once again, of comparing the attitudes of characters. Here too, Sir Charles challenges the attitudes of predatory characters like Bellamira and Dangerfield and of unrealistically idealistic characters like Isabella. More subtle in this play is Sedley's

skeptical challenge of cynicism, an attitude which results in tyranny. Each of the three plays in question shows that those who refuse to question, to challenge, to be skeptical, fall victim to the tyranny of dissimulation; these victims include Althea, Diana, Agrippa, Canidius, and Isabella. One need not be hopelessly idealistic, however, to submit to the tyranny of blindness. Refusing to question their own Hobbesian attitudes, Forecast, Photinus, and Bellamira, for example, fall victim to the tyranny of their own obsessions. Placing ambition above everything else, they fail to perceive the advantages of meaningful relationships with others. Even protagonists like Olivia and Wildish nearly fall victim to unquestioning acceptance of convention--here, the social mode--by paying too much attention to the "rules" of the convention, as the fops Estridge and Modish do, rather than paying attention to other people as people.

The prominence of the skeptical attitude indicates the measure of its importance to Sedley. The Wandering Ladys, the original title for Sedley's first comedy, reflects the serious search for Truth, meaning, and order; for the men as well as the ladies, skepticism provides an important tool for the existential wanderers in the Mulberry Garden, allowing them the means for reaching their goals. The skeptical challenge of conventional heroic attitudes in Antony and Cleopatra, especially attitudes toward love, is central to understanding the play. Without recognition of this skeptical purpose, the play appears merely illogical, disunified, and amateurish. In Bellamira, Sedley shows us that failure to challenge and question, especially the cynical view at the end of the play that everyone is

somehow a cully, makes us socially, intellectually, and morally impotent--figurative eunuchs. The moral so many critics miss in this play is that challenging the cynical conclusion of the play--a skeptical response Sedley expects from his audience--leads to the same affirmation of loving relationships that one finds in The Mulberry Garden and in Antony and Cleopatra.

Sedley's skepticism leads necessarily to a reevaluation and redefinition of key terms and concepts in his moral design. Each play, for instance, examines the true meaning of love. Horatio in the first play, Thyreus and Mecoenas in the second, and Lionel in the third confuse love with a highly idealized but unrealistic infatuation. The Hobbesian characters in each play--predatory characters like Estridge, Modish, Agrippa and Canidius (as they interpret Antony's love), and Cunningham--confuse love with lust, ambition, or greed. Other characters confuse love, temporarily at least, with envy or jealousy--Wildish envies the fops for a time, Mecoenas's envy motivates his attacks on Antony, and Keepwell's jealousy reduces him to a simpering, fawning fool. True love, Sedley shows, strikes a balance between selfish, worldly lust and selfless platonic love.

As skepticism leads to a proper perception of love, it leads to a proper perception of honor also. The Mulberry Garden distinguishes the false honor binding Althea and Diana to their father's unreasonable commands from the true honor of serving the king of one's own free will. Honor, like love, cannot be forced.

Challenging the conventional view, Antony and Cleopatra presents honor not as a virtue automatically accorded a head of state, unearned; rather one earns love and honor, and in fact, love is not necessarily inconsistent with honor. If one regarded honor merely as unquestioningly selfless idealism and love as selfish lust, or passion, the simplistic conventional wisdom would obtain. But Antony and Cleopatra's true love for each other allows them to act honorably toward each other.

Skepticism also leads to a clearer perspective of the concept of freedom, and again Sedley presents an ideal between two extremes. The plays' Hobbesian villains confuse freedom with license--with unfortunate results. By giving free reign to lust or ambition or greed, they lose perspective on reality and, paradoxically, have less freedom to make important decisions rationally. Estridge and Modish fall into Wildish's trap for Forecast, Photinus miscalculates Caedar's response to the villain's role in Antony's death and is condemned to death, and Cunningham becomes incapacitated by venereal disease. On the other hand, freedom does not consist unquestioningly of turning one's responsibilities over to an authority figure. Again, the protagonists' moderate attitude, avoiding the extreme positions of the other two groups, allows them to behave more reasonably and thus more freely. As a tool for discerning the true nature of love, honor, and freedom, skepticism becomes an invaluable element of Sedley's moral design and of any form of government, domestic or national.

While skepticism is the willingness to search for truth, through questioning and challenging, reason is the ability to discern truth. Sedley shows each to be important in the governing process and each, to some extent, dependent on the other. His extreme characters--selfish or selfless--lose their ability to reason through a failure to exercise skepticism. For example, by blindly assuming that Antony and Cleopatra's passion alone leads to their decline (the conventional interpretation), Memnon and Chilax fail to perceive Photinus' Hobbesian attitude and his villainous role in the protagonists' decline. When arrested with Photinus for inciting a riot, they are betrayed by him. The villains who dissemble so long that they begin to believe their own lies--men like Forecast, who sometimes believes his own self-righteousness, and the fops Estridge and Modish, who consider themselves wits and leaders in fashion--eventually lose their perspective on reality and develop a solipsism of sorts which stands in the way of skepticism. Forecast, Estridge, and Modish not only cannot be realistic about themselves; they do not want to be realistic, for the reality surely would prove painful. Both skepticism and reason contribute to Sedley's tripartite contrasts of characters and attitudes, thus aiding in the characters' search for truth, meaning, and order.

Each of the three plays depends for its coherence on the new philosophical tendency to approach life's problems with the methodological rigor of the mechanical philosophy. This tendency appears perhaps most prominently in the careful, complex tripartite contrasts

of attitudes--toward love, freedom, honor, revenge, and so forth--and the results of those attitudes. Each play presents characters exhibiting an idealistic attitude: for example, Althea and Diana in the first play, Canidius and Agrippa in the second, and Isabella in the third. Similarly, each play presents characters exhibiting selfish, Hobbesian attitudes, such as Forecast and the fops in the first play, Caesar and Photinus in the second, and Bellamira and Smoothly in the third. Finally, each play presents protagonists who, to some extent, exhibit a moderate golden mean of behavior: Olivia and Wildish in the first play, Antony and Cleopatra in the second, and Merryman and Thisbe in the third. In these last two plays, Sedley places more emphasis on potential than actual merit, probably because these plays do not convey the unqualified optimism of the first. The optimistic conclusion of The Mulberry Garden reflects the euphoria and confidence England felt at the Restoration. As England came to recognize that the issues provoking the civil war had not been resolved at the Restoration and that Charles encountered more and more difficulties in dealing with Parliament--very good reasons for Sedley's continued pursuit of the government question in these other two plays--hope for continued peace grew more and more tenuous.

Sedley complicates the tripartite contrast further by establishing an analogy in each play between family, or domestic, government and national (sometimes international) government. In The Mulberry Garden, he compares Forecast's tyranny over Althea

and Diana to the Puritan Tyranny over England during the Interregnum. In Antony and Cleopatra, Caesar's and Antony's tyranny over Octavia parallels Caesar's Hobbesian tyranny over the Roman Empire. In Bellamira, the title character's shameless manipulation of her keeper parallels no actual tyranny of government on a national scale, but Sedley seems to imply such a comparison by referring to the courtesan as sovereign rule of her own empire and by using terminology of diplomacy.

The rigorous analytical methodology of the mechanical philosophy appears also in the manners of each play--that is in the examination of the causes, innate or acquired, of a particular character's behavior. Since the consequences of particular attitudes contribute significantly to Sedley's tripartite contrast, clear and logical causal analysis is an important prerequisite to drawing logical conclusions, choosing the ideal political philosophy. Slavish adherence to convention and selfish ambitions blind the extreme characters in each play to reality and interfere with their ability to act responsibly. On the other hand, the protagonists of each play employ skepticism and reason in such a way that they eventually become more realistic and more responsible than the other two groups. More than any of the other new-philosophical tendencies functioning in Sedley's moral design, this one contributes to the complexity that seems extraneous and that baffles and bothers most critics. That the mechanical contrasts and causal analyses are so very complex indicates how carefully the playwright attempted to be rigorously logical and scientific.

Inextricably bound up with the other new-philosophical tendencies, individualism also figures prominently in the search for truth, meaning, and order. Skepticism and reason necessitate individual action. Rather than slavishly following the mode, Wildish, for example, questions the conventions of the social mode, using his own reason to make his own choices. And the relationships between the protagonists--Olivia and Wildish, Antony and Cleopatra, Merryman and Thisbe--prove stable precisely because each partner freely, individually, and without coercion decides to enter into the relationship. The matter of individualism figures more importantly in the contrast of selfish and selfless characters in the play. What Sedley shows, and the preceding discussion should substantiate, is that the golden mean of behavior lies somewhere between the selfishness of the Hobbesian villains in each play and the selflessness of the idealistic characters. Here the protagonists can exercise the correct degree of freedom, skepticism, reason, and love. Moving too much in one direction leads to tyranny, in the other direction to slavery.

Though not a new-philosophical tendency, love contributes perhaps more significantly than the other elements to Sedley's moral design. While skepticism, reason, mechanical comparisons and causal analyses, and individualism prepare someone to form a government, domestic or national, there must also be a desire to form this government. Sedley expresses this desire as love in domestic relationships. Olivia and Wildish, Antony and Cleopatra, and Thisbe

and Merryman, whatever reasons are given for their unions, marry ultimately for love, and this accounts to some extent for Sedley's painstaking efforts to distinguish love from other emotions with which it is often confused. Every successful relationship in these three plays builds on this true love, whereas those built on expediency, such as Antony's to Octavia, or on deceit, such as Estridge's to the fake widow, seem doomed to failure. In the analogy between domestic government and national government, Sedley presents consent as the rough equivalent, or analog, to love, although the term consent does not adequately express the ideal Sir Charles attempts to convey. Antony and Caesar consent to form a government, each for expedience, but the latter never intends to honor the agreement and uses the first excuse he can find to break it. In other words, Caesar's insincere consent to form a government with Antony does not offer the kind of commitment and stability that Sedley suggests. Consent in these national governments, then, implies sincere desire to enter into an agreement. Monk's declaration for the king in the first play and Lucilius' respect for Antony and Antony's relationship with the queen in the second play promise stability because, in addition to building on the new-philosophical tendencies, they build on a sincere desire for political union. Sedley provides further support for his parallel between domestic government and national government by referring to the union in each case figuratively as hand and by referring to the desire for that union in each case figuratively as heart or, as in the case of Monk, referring to the breast where the heart resides.

Recognition of this moral design in Sedley's plays provides an opportunity not only for vindicating the plays and the man but also for commenting on critical attitudes toward Restoration drama. By offering further illustration of intellectual substance in the drama of the period, these plays offer further support to the work of Thomas Fujimura, Susan Staves, Normal Holland, Anne Barbeau, and Derek Hughes. The concentration on issues of government, in particular, not only supports their critical stance but also underscores the view that serious philosophical and political concerns account in large part for the intellectual substance. The prominence of love in Sedley's moral design leads me to disagree with Fujimura concerning the philosophical basis for the intellectual substance, but Fujimura's clarification and characterization of wit find support, I think, in these Sedley comedies. Wit discerns (through skepticism and reason) as well as entertains, and although I do not see entertainment in Hobbesian terms the way Fujimura does, I do see this use of wit as a constructive means of coming to terms with the trauma and disillusionment of the scientific and political revolutions in the seventeenth century. This particular use of wit seems evident in Sedley's frequent use of gaming and sporting imagery to describe various characters' attempts to establish a government, or relationship. And in his prologues it seems no coincidence that he compares himself, as a playwright, to a gamester. Unfortunately, critics have, for the most part, failed to distinguish the seriousness behind the playful surface. The Mulberry Garden and Bellamira

illustrate the view of Holland, Miner, and Dennis Davison that Restoration comedies often deal seriously with important issues and concerns.

Recognizing similarities of purpose and techniques between Sedley's comedies and his semi-heroic Antony and Cleopatra offers a means of explaining the odd Restoration taste for both of these seemingly incongruous modes. I think that Wits like Sedley could criticize a particular heroic drama for the same reason they would criticize any drama: because of slavish adherence to convention, pandering to audiences, and shallow, insubstantial analysis of complex issues. In fact, Sedley attempts in his drama to avoid precisely these weaknesses. Whether in the comic mode or in the heroic mode, Sedley uses conventions only to challenge them, and he examines issues thoroughly and logically. One might say that the three plays in question are variations on the theme of government. Superficial features of each play to some extent reflect dramatic trends of the decades in which they appear, but moral design lies at the heart of them all.

What Etherege once said in defense of The Mulberry Garden applies equally well, I think, to other Restoration plays of ideas: critics have attacked Sedley's drama and others as well only because "the fatness of the Soile produc'd to[o] big a Crop." The fatness of the soil--that is, the complexity of these plays--proves too much for many critics, not necessarily because of any inherent problems with the drama, but because the ideas and concerns behind moral

design are too formidable for the critics or escape their attention completely. However, the critic willing to devote time and careful attention to Sedley's "crop," his moral design, will find those efforts rewarded with a rich harvest of insights into the playwright and his period.

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