

What ever fool like me had been
 If I'd not done as well as seen?
 There to be lost why should I doubt,
 Where fools with ease go in and out?⁸⁰

Suckling can look up the rich lady's skirt, admire her thighs and 'parts more dear', but cannot know her, cannot give her a vocal or truly subjective part in his poem, and has no wish to. The testosterone levels are much vaunted, but the men are oddly monosexual creatures, and gaze on the woman as a curiosity, a being belonging to an alien species.

Another dialogue between Suckling and Carew over a woman took the form of an exchange of letters. They debated the question of whether Carew should marry a wealthy widow. Unsurprisingly Suckling advised his friend against the move:

'Tis not *love* (Tom) that doth the mischief, but *constancy* . . . Dost thou know what *marriage* is? 'Tis *curing of Love the dearest way*, or waking a *losing Gamester* out of a *winning dream*: and after a long expectation of a strange *banquet*, a presentation of a *homely meal*. Alas!

After all this, to marry a *Widow*, a kind of *chew'd-meat*! What a fantastical stomach hast thou, that cannot eat of a dish til another man hath cut of it?

Carew could have pointed out that it was Suckling rather than he who had been cured of mercenary courtships 'the dearest way'. As it was, he rebutted Suckling's arguments on less than idealistic grounds: 'there goes more charge to the keeping of a *Stable full of horses*, than *one onely Steed* . . . when, be the errand what it will, this *one Steed* shall serve your turn as well as twenty more.'⁸¹

These letters savour more of a rhetorical exercise on a set theme than a real episode in Carew's life. No record exists, at least, of his marriage or engagement to the widow. The situation served as an occasion for casually misogynistic set pieces. Rejecting Suckling's point about 'chew'd meat', Carew replied that he preferred an experienced sexual partner who knew, as he put it, how to chew. But a key skill in debating was arguing '*ut utramque partem*', from either point of view: and elsewhere Carew said he liked his women younger:

Give me a wench about thirteen,
 Already voted to the Queene
 Of lust and lovers, whose soft haire,
 Fann'd with the breath of gentle aire
 O'er spreads her shoulders like a tent,
 And is her vaile and ornament:
 Whose tender touch, will make the blood
 Wild in the aged, and the good.⁸²

In those 'sweet embraces I/ May melt myself to lust, and die'. Carew made the point often enough for it to stand as his motto: dismissing the 'worldling' for his love of money, the husband for his pleasure in wife and children, 'This is true blisse, and I confesse,/ There is no other happinesse.'⁸³

Traditionally, we might call such writings 'cavalier', and oppose them to the supposedly puritan attitudes espoused by William Prynne towards women. But Prynne and Suckling are essentially the same in their view of the opposite sex: both are sensible of the same charms, both similarly oblivious to women as people. To both, females are little more than walking temptations. The real difference between these writers lies in their attitude to the sensations and fantasies provoked in the male. Suckling and Carew permit the wishes Prynne prohibits, yet at root the thoughts of cavalier and puritan are identical.

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Even without the pride forfeited at Nottingham Bridge and Blackfriars, and the henchman's life lost at the latter, as a 'famous gamester' Suckling had no place in decent company for the civic-minded puritan. Yet gambling, as later during the Restoration, was a tolerated vice. The otherwise prudish Edward Hyde, for example, had nothing to say against the 'fair house for entertainment and gaming' which stood on Piccadilly, with 'handsome gravel walks for shade, and where were an upper and a lower bowling-green, whither very many of the nobility and gentry of the best quality resorted, both for exercise and conversation'.⁸⁴