Workshop Title:

Money, Women and Song: Femininity and the Homosocial Marketplace in Street Literature and City Comedies

Organizers:

Devon Wallace and Lara Wagner

Description:
As public marketplaces expanded in early 17th century London, women—frequently excluded from other aspects of public life—became essential to the commercial success and cultural relevance of a space that both catered to and shaped their desires. To what extent did the power of their purses create new possibilities for female autonomy? This panel will analyze the intersection of femininity and consumer identity in the homosocial marketplace through close readings of street literature, including songs, images and city comedies.

Key Questions:
- To what extent did women have purchasing power in 17th century London?
- What can we learn about women’s role in the marketplace from early modern popular music?
- How do early modern playwrights represent women’s purchasing power?
- What kind of consumers were early modern women? What did woman purchase? Can their purchases be connected to female agency?
- How was the early modern marketplace gendered?
- To what extent did the access to the marketplace shape female agency?
- How did the products available in the marketplace allow women to shape, perform, enact, reconsider and fashion their gender?
Reading 1:

Ben Jonson, *Epicene, or The silent woman*

ACT 4. SCENE 4.1.

A ROOM IN MOROSE’S HOUSE.
ENTER TRUEWIT AND CLERIMONT.

TRUE: Was there ever poor bridegroom so tormented? or man, indeed?

CLER: I have not read of the like in the chronicles of the land.

TRUE: Sure, he cannot but go to a place of rest, after all this purgatory.

CLER: He may presume it, I think.

TRUE: The spitting, the coughing, the laughter, the neezing, the farting, dancing, noise of the music, and her masculine and loud commanding, and urging the whole family, makes him think he has married a fury.

CLER: And she carries it up bravely.

TRUE: Ay, she takes any occasion to speak: that is the height on’t.

CLER: And how soberly Dauphine labours to satisfy him, that it was none of his plot!

TRUE: And has almost brought him to the faith, in the article.
Here he comes.
[ENTER SIR DAUPHINE.]
–Where is he now? what’s become of him, Dauphine?

DAUP: O, hold me up a little, I shall go away in the jest else. He has got on his whole nest of night-caps, and lock’d himself up in the top of the house, as high as ever he can climb from the noise. I peep’d in at a cranny, and saw him sitting over a cross-beam of the roof, like him on the sadler’s horse in Fleet-street, upright: and he will sleep there.
CLER: But where are your collegiates?

DAUP: Withdrawn with the bride in private.

TRUE: O, they are instructing her in the college-grammar. If she have grace with them, she knows all their secrets instantly.

CLER: Methinks the lady Haughty looks well to-day, for all my dispraise of her in the morning. I think, I shall come about to thee again, Truewit.

TRUE: Believe it, I told you right. Women ought to repair the losses time and years have made in their features, with dressings. And an intelligent woman, if she know by herself the least defect, will be most curious to hide it: and it becomes her. If she be short, let her sit much, lest, when she stands, she be thought to sit. If she have an ill foot, let her wear her gown the longer, and her shoe the thinner. If a fat hand, and scald nails, let her carve the less, and act in gloves. If a sour breath, let her never discourse fasting, and always talk at her distance. If she have black and rugged teeth, let her offer the less at laughter, especially if she laugh wide and open.

CLER: O, you shall have some women, when they laugh, you would think they brayed, it is so rude, and–

TRUE: Ay, and others, that will stalk in their gait like an estrich, and take huge strides. I cannot endure such a sight. I love measure in the feet, and number in the voice: they are gentlenesses, that oftentimes draw no less than the face.

DAUP: How camest thou to study these creatures so exactly? I would thou wouldst make me a proficient.

TRUE: Yes, but you must leave to live in your chamber, then, a month together upon Amadis de Gaul, or Don Quixote, as you are wont; and come abroad where the matter is frequent, to court, to tiltings, public shows and feasts, to plays, and church sometimes: thither they come to shew their new tires too, to see, and to be seen. In these places a man shall find whom to love, whom to play with, whom to touch once, whom to hold ever. The variety arrests his judgment. A wench to please a man comes not down dropping from the ceiling, as he lies on his back droning a tobacco pipe. He must go where she is.

DAUP: Yes, and be never the nearer.
TRUE: Out, heretic! That diffidence makes thee worthy it should be so.

CLER: He says true to you, Dauphine.

DAUP: Why?

TRUE: A man should not doubt to overcome any woman. Think he can vanquish them, and he shall: for though they deny, their desire is to be tempted. Penelope herself cannot hold out long. Ostend, you saw, was taken at last. You must persever, and hold to your purpose. They would solicit us, but that they are afraid. Howsoever, they wish in their hearts we should solicit them. Praise them, flatter them, you shall never want eloquence or trust: even the chastest delight to feel themselves that way rubb’d. With praises you must mix kisses too: if they take them, they’ll take more—though they strive, they would be overcome.

CLER: O, but a man must beware of force.

TRUE: It is to them an acceptable violence, and has oft-times the place of the greatest courtesy. She that might have been forced, and you let her go free without touching, though then she seem to thank you, will ever hate you after; and glad in the face, is assuredly sad at the heart.

CLER: But all women are not to be taken all ways.

TRUE: ’Tis true; no more than all birds, or all fishes. If you appear learned to an ignorant wench, or jocund to a sad, or witty to a foolish, why she presently begins to mistrust herself. You must approach them in their own height, their own line: for the contrary makes many, that fear to commit themselves to noble and worthy fellows, run into the embraces of a rascal. If she love wit, give verses, though you borrow them of a friend, or buy them, to have good. If valour, talk of your sword, and be frequent in the mention of quarrels, though you be staunch in fighting. If activity, be seen on your barbary often, or leaping over stools, for the credit of your back. If she love good clothes or dressing, have your learned council about you every morning, your French tailor, barber, linener, etc. Let your powder, your glass, and your comb be your dearest acquaintance. Take more care for the ornament of your head, than the safety: and wish the commonwealth rather troubled, than a hair about you. That will take her. Then, if she be covetous and craving, do you promise any thing, and perform sparingly; so shall you keep her in appetite still. Seem as you would give, but be like a barren field, that yields little, or unlucky dice to foolish and hoping gamesters. Let your gifts be slight and
dainty, rather than precious. Let cunning be above cost. Give cherries at time of
year, or apricots; and say they were sent you out of the country, though you bought
them in Cheapside. Admire her tires: like her in all fashions; compare her in every
habit to some deity; invent excellent dreams to flatter her, and riddles; or, if she be
a great one, perform always the second parts to her: like what she likes, praise
whom she praises, and fail not to make the household and servants yours, yea the
whole family, and salute them by their names: (’tis but light cost if you can
purchase them so,) and make her physician your pensioner, and her chief woman.
Nor will it be out of your gain to make love to her too, so she follow, not usher her
lady’s pleasure. All blabbing is taken away, when she comes to be a part of the
crime.

DAUP: On what courtly lap hast thou late slept, to come forth so sudden and
absolute a courtling?

TRUE: Good faith, I should rather question you, that are so
harkening after these
mysteries. I begin to suspect your diligence, Dauphine. Speak, art thou in love in
earnest?

DAUP: Yes, by my troth am I: ’twere ill dissembling before thee.

TRUE: With which of them, I prithee?

DAUP: With all the collegiates.

CLER: Out on thee! We’ll keep you at home, believe it, in the
stable, if you be
such a stallion.

TRUE: No; I like him well. Men should love wisely, and all women; some one for
the face, and let her please the eye; another for the skin, and let her please the
touch; a third for the voice, and let her please the ear; and where the objects mix,
let the senses so too. Thou would’st think it strange, if I should make them all in
love with thee afore night!

DAUP: I would say, thou had’st the best philtre in the world, and couldst do more
than madam Medea, or doctor Foreman.

TRUE: If I do not, let me play the mountebank for my meat, while I live, and the
bawd for my drink.
DAUP: So be it, I say.

[ENTER OTTER, WITH HIS THREE CUPS, DAW, AND LA-FOOLE.]
OTT: O Lord, gentlemen, how my knights and I have mist you here!
CLER: Why, captain, what service? what service?
OTT: To see me bring up my bull, bear, and horse to fight.
DAW: Yes, faith, the captain says we shall be his dogs to bait them.
DAUP: A good employment.
TRUE: Come on, let’s see a course, then.
LA-F: I am afraid my cousin will be offended, if she come.
OTT: Be afraid of nothing. Gentlemen, I have placed the drum and the trumpets, and one to give them the sign when you are ready. Here’s my bull for myself, and my bear for sir John Daw, and my horse for sir Amorous. Now set your foot to mine, and yours to his, and–
LA-F: Pray God my cousin come not.
OTT: Saint George, and saint Andrew, fear no cousins. Come, sound, sound.

[DRUM AND TRUMPETS SOUND.]
Et rauco strepuerunt cornua cantu.

[THEY DRINK.]
TRUE: Well said, captain, i’faith: well fought at the bull.
CLER: Well held at the bear.
TRUE: Low, low! captain.
DAUP: O, the horse has kick’d off his dog already.
LA-F: I cannot drink it, as I am a knight.

TRUE: Ods so! off with his spurs, somebody.

LA-F: It goes against my conscience. My cousin will be angry with it.

DAW: I have done mine.

TRUE: You fought high and fair, sir John.

CLER: At the head.

DAUP: Like an excellent bear-dog.

CLER: You take no notice of the business, I hope?

DAW: Not a word, sir; you see we are jovial.

OTT: Sir Amorous, you must not equivocate. It must be pull’d down, for all my cousin.

CLER: ’Sfoot, if you take not your drink, they will think you are discontented with something: you’ll betray all, if you take the least notice.

LA-F: Not I; I’ll both drink and talk then.

OTT: You must pull the horse on his knees, sir Amorous: fear no cousins. Jacta est alea.

TRUE: O, now he’s in his vein, and bold. The least hint given him of his wife now, will make him rail desperately.

CLER: Speak to him of her.

TRUE: Do you, and I will fetch her to the hearing of it. [EXIT.]

DAUP: Captain He-Otter, your She-Otter is coming, your wife.
OTT: Wife! buz! titivilitium! There’s no such thing in nature. I confess, gentlemen, I have a cook, a laundress, a house-drudge, that serves my necessary turns, and goes under that title: but he’s an ass that will be so uxorious to tie his affections to one circle. Come, the name dulls appetite. Here, replenish again: another bout. [FILLS THE CUPS AGAIN.] Wives are nasty sluttish animalls.

DAUP: O, captain.

OTT: As ever the earth bare, tribus verbis. Where’s master Truewit?

DAW: He’s slipt aside, sir.

CLER: But you must drink, and be jovial.

DAW: Yes, give it me.

LA-F: And me too.

DAW: Let’s be jovial.

LA-F: As jovial as you will.

OTT: Agreed. Now you shall have the bear, cousin, and sir John Daw the horse, and I will have the bull still. Sound, Tritons of the Thames. [DRUM AND TRUMPETS SOUND AGAIN.] Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero–

MOR [ABOVE]: Villains, murderers, sons of the earth, and traitors, what do you there?

CLER: O, now the trumpets have waked him, we shall have his company.

OTT: A wife is a scurvy clogdogdo, an unlucky thing, a very foresaid bear-whelp, without any good fashion or breeding: mala bestia. [RE-ENTER TRUEWIT BEHIND, WITH MISTRESS OTTER.]

DAUP: Why did you marry one then, captain?
OTT: A pox!—I married with six thousand pound, I. I was in love with that. I have not kissed my Fury these forty weeks.

CLER: The more to blame you, captain.

TRUE: Nay, mistress Otter, hear him a little first.

OTT: She has a breath worse than my grandmother’s, profecto.

MRS. OTT: O treacherous liar! kiss me, sweet master Truewit, and prove him a slandering knave.

TRUE: I will rather believe you, lady.

OTT: And she has a peruke that’s like a pound of hemp, made up in shoe-threads.

MRS. OTT: O viper, mandrake!

OTT: A most vile face! and yet she spends me forty pound a year in mercury and hogs-bones. All her teeth were made in the Black-Friars, both her eyebrows in the Strand, and her hair in Silver-street. Every part of the town owns a piece of her.

MRS. OTT [COMES FORWARD.]: I cannot hold.

OTT: She takes herself asunder still when she goes to bed, into some twenty boxes; and about next day noon is put together again, like a great German clock: and so comes forth, and rings a tedious larum to the whole house, and then is quiet again for an hour, but for her quarters. Have you done me right, gentlemen?

MRS. OTT [FALLS UPON HIM, AND BEATS HIM.]: No, sir, I will do you right with my quarters, with my quarters.

OTT: O, hold, good princess.

TRUE: Sound, sound!
[DRUM AND TRUMPETS SOUND.]

CLER: A battle, a battle!

MRS. OTT: You notorious stinkardly bearward, does my breath smell?
OTT: Under correction, dear princess: look to my bear, and my horse, gentlemen.

MRS. OTT: Do I want teeth, and eyebrows, thou bull-dog?

TRUE: Sound, sound still.
[THEY SOUND AGAIN.]

OTT: No, I protest, under correction–

MRS. OTT: Ay, now you are under correction, you protest: but you did not protest before correction, sir. Thou Judas, to offer to betray thy princess! I will make thee an example– [BEATS HIM.]

[ENTER MOROSE WITH HIS LONG SWORD.]

MOR: I will have no such examples in my house, lady Otter.

MRS. OTT: Ah!–

[MRS. OTTER, DAW, AND LA-FOOLE RUN OFF.]

OTT: Mistress Mary Ambree, your examples are dangerous. Rogues, hell-hounds, Stentors! out of my doors, you sons of noise and tumult, begot on an ill May-day, or when the galley-foist is afloat to Westminster!
[DRIVES OUT THE MUSICIANS.]
A trumpeter could not be conceived but then!

DAUP: What ails you, sir?

MOR: They have rent my roof, walls, and all my windows asunder, with their brazen throats.
[EXIT.]

TRUE: Best follow him, Dauphine.

DAUP: So I will.
[EXIT.]

CLER: Where’s Daw and La-Foole?
OTT: They are both run away, sir. Good gentlemen, help to pacify my princess, and speak to the great ladies for me. Now must I go lie with the bears this fortnight, and keep out of the way, till my peace be made, for this scandal she has taken. Did you not see my bull-head, gentlemen?

CLER: Is’t not on, captain?

TRUE: No; but he may make a new one, by that is on.

OTT: O, here it is. An you come over, gentlemen, and ask for Tom Otter, we’ll go down to Ratcliff, and have a course i’faith, for all these disasters. There is bona spes left.

TRUE: Away, captain, get off while you are well.

[EXIT OTTER.]

CLER: I am glad we are rid of him.

TRUE: You had never been, unless we had put his wife upon him. His humour is as tedious at last, as it was ridiculous at first.

[EXEUNT.]
Reading 2:

Fine Knacks for Ladies

Fine knacks for ladies, cheap, choice, brave and new! Good pennyworths - but money cannot prove. I keep a fair but for the fair to view. A beggar may be liberal of love. Though all my wares be trash, the heart is true, The heart is true. 

Great gifts are guiles and look for gifts again; My trifles come as treasures from my mind. It is a precious jewel to be plain. Sometimes in shell the orient'st pearl we find. Of others take a sheaf, of me a grain. Of me a grain.

Within this pack pins, points, laces and gloves, And divers toys fitting a country fair; But in my heart, where duty serves and loves, Turtles and twins, court's brood, a heavenly pair. Happy the heart that thinks of no removes! Of no removes.

Additional city comedies which may help shape discussion (certainly not required):

The Roaring Girl, by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton

A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, by Thomas Middleton

Bartholomew Fair, by Ben Jonson

Additional secondary sources which may help shape discussion (certainly not required reading):


