The Rover Study Guide

The Rover by Aphra Behn

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

The Rover, published and first produced in 1677, was Aphra Behn's most successful play. The original full title, *The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers*, indicates that the play was a tribute to the formerly exiled cavalier and newly reinstated king, Charles II. *The Rover* is a dark comedy that mixes themes of prostitution and rape with comic buffoonery. The play expresses its author's objections to the vulnerability of women in Restoration society. Perhaps ironically, it also appeals to the prurient interests of the audience by putting women in morally compromising situations. Based loosely on her contemporary Thomas Killigrew's 1564 *Thomaso; or, The Wanderer* (1664), Behn's play is leaner, less lewd, and more profound. The plot follows the fortunes of opposing lovers, one a woman of quality masquerading as a courtesan and one a wandering rake whose philandering days end when he falls in love with her. Several near-rapes and the tragic case of a jilted courtesan, another character in the play, balance the comic treatment of sexual politics in the seventeenth century. The rover of the title is either Willmore, an exiled English sea captain on shore leave to enjoy the carnival, or Hellena, a young woman hoping to experience life and love before being committed to a convent by her brother. These two rovers meet and fall in love amid witty debates and sexual maneuvering. Willmore has many parallels to Charles II, whose exploits during his twenty-year banishment from England were well known. Charles II enjoyed the play so much that he commissioned a private viewing of it.

Author Biography

Aphra Behn, a favorite of feminist literary critics, is considered to be the first woman to have made a living through her writing. There were other women writers before Behn, but few of them enjoyed financial success. Behn turned to her literary talent after the death of her husband, and she quickly proved her merit as well as her perseverance. Behn suffered from the biases of her time against women writers in general and women dramatists in particular. She was assumed by many of her contemporaries to be a prostitute; because of her connection to the theater and because at the time, women who sold their writing were seen as selling themselves. In her prefaces, Behn sometimes commented on her unique status as a woman writer and asked to be taken seriously as a writer, with equal right to freedom in what she wrote. For example, in her preface to *The Lucky Chance; or, An Alderman's Bargain* (1686), she wrote, "All I ask, is for the privilege for my masculine part, the poet in me . . . to tread in those successful paths my predecessors have long thrived in . . . If I must not, because of my sex, have this freedom, but that you will usurp all to yourselves; I [will] lay down my Quill and you shall hear no more of me."

Born in 1640 in Kent, England, Behn learned French and Dutch as she grew up. In 1663, she traveled with her family to Surinam, West Indies, where her father was to take an administrative post, but he died on the voyage there, and the family eventually returned. Young Behn kept a journal during her stay in Surinam, which she transformed into the novella *Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave* (1688). By the time she was twenty-six, she had lost her husband of three years, a Dutch merchant named Behn about whom little else is known. She briefly held a position as a spy in Antwerp for King Charles II, during the war against the Dutch (1665-1667) but was not paid for her work and returned to London a pauper in the year following the Great Fire of 1666. Having unsuccessfully appealed to various friends for financial assistance, Behn served time in debtor's prison and, upon release, began her writing career. Her first play, *The Forc'd Marriage; or, The Jealous Bridegroom* (1670) established her reputation, and she continued to produce enough substantial work each year to make a living. Despite this success, Behn's reputation suffered because of the topics she chose. Many of her eighteen extant plays portray various forms of prostitution, and some of her novels and poems contain frank eroticism that shocked early audiences. Being one of the earliest female playwrights, she was seen as someone who, like an actress, displayed herself to the public. Since actresses were viewed as—and some were—prostitutes, it was assumed by many that Behn was a prostitute, too.

Like her role model, William Shakespeare, Behn often mined ideas from existing works and vastly improved upon them. She often complained that her works never attained the fame they deserved because they were "writ by a woman." However, her achievement survived her, for by the nineteenth century, Virginia Woolf would exclaim in *A Room of One's Own* that a woman *could* live the writer's life, since "Aphra Behn had done it!"

Aphra Behn died in April of 1689. Engraved on her tombstone, perhaps at the request of her lover, John Hoyle, are the words, "Here lies a proof that wit can never be / Defence enough against mortality." She is buried in Westminster Abbey.

Plot Summary

Prologue

The prologue in rhyming couplets portends a play that is not just "good conversation," as conventional plays present, but is full of "wit" and "deboches" [debauches], as is life.

Act 1

The scene untraditionally opens on two women. Sisters Hellena and Florinda are discussing love, which the younger sister Hellena wants to experience before her brother sends her to a nunnery, and Florinda coyly tells about her beau, an English colonel. They are interrupted by their brother Don Pedro, who announces that, to prevent Florinda from having to marry her father's choice for her, an old man, she must marry Don Pedro's friend Don Antonio the next day. The girls decide to go to the carnival that night in masks and costumed as gypsy whores, to exploit their independence before it is stifled by their prearranged futures, and Florinda hopes to encounter Belvile to tell him that she loves him. Their cousin Valeria and their governess, Callis, accompany them. Very soon they meet four English gentlemen who are also heading to the carnival.

Hellena meets and sets a date with an English sailor, Captain Willmore, who shares her goal of enjoying as many fleeting encounters with the opposite sex as he can during his two-day leave. Florinda is also successful, for she meets Colonel Belvile, the man she had fallen in love with when he protected her and her brother during the siege of Pamploma. Behind her mask, she pretends to tell Belvile his fortune, hands him a letter, and whispers to him to meet Florinda at the garden gate that night. Valeria flirts with Frederick, and the fourth English-man, a simple country squire named Ned Blunt, wanders off with a real harlot, Lucetta. The other three joke that she will probably rob him, as they happily head off for dinner, anticipating an evening of physical pleasure.

Act 2

Blunt comes back from setting a date with what he thinks is a woman of quality, who acts as though she is in love with him. He has not bothered to learn her name. He has high hopes of paying nothing for his time with her. The others, now donning carnival masks, take their common purse of money from him, convinced that she is a common whore who will fleece him of his valuables. Walking the streets, they come across the house of the famous courtesan Angellica. Three portraits of this beauty hang outside, advertising her charms for one thousand crowns a month. Willmore falls in love with her beauty and takes one of the portraits, since he does not have the money to enjoy the original. Don Pedro and Don Antonio arrive wearing masks and vie over which of them will buy Angellica's favors. Don Pedro recognizes his friend Don Antonio, who shows no shame over betraying Florinda as he presses his case with Angellica. Pedro challenges

him to a fight, but he allows Don Antonio to think it is Belvile who challenges him. After they depart, Willmore manages to get Angellica to fall in love with him so that he may enjoy her pleasures without paying. Her servant Moretta is disgusted that she would give away her charms to such a "pirate beggar." Such folly, Moretta proclaims, "is the fate of all whores."

Act 3

Hellena, Florinda, and Valeria discover that Willmore has a love interest in Angellica. Willmore then proceeds to navigate between Hellena and Angellica, professing undying love to each in turn. Angellica becomes jealous of Hellena, while Hellena takes his betrayal in stride, for she shares his trait of an inconstant heart. Meanwhile, Florinda tries Belvile's faithfulness by courting him in her mask. He proves his fidelity, so she hands him her locket as she leaves. Seeing her picture in it, he realizes it was she.

On another street, Lucetta has her servant, Sancho, lead Blunt to her bedroom, where she tricks him into removing his clothing as she slips away in the dark. Her partner and lover, Phillipo, is pleased with the haul and inflamed by the idea of her going to bed with another man. Blunt, lost and in his undergarments, realizes his folly. Meanwhile, Florinda is waiting for Belvile, but a very drunk Willmore appears instead and nearly rapes her, taking her for a common wench. Belvile and Frederick happen along just in time to save her, but the appearance of her brother causes her to retreat to her room, with a promise to meet Belvile later. In the meantime, Don Antonio has paid his thousand crowns to Angellica. Willmore, in his drunken state, fights Don Antonio and leaves him for dead, while Belvile happens on the scene in time to take the blame. Don Antonio, wounded, takes Belvile home with him to assign a punishment.

Act 4

Belvile bemoans his miserable luck, and Antonio releases him on the condition that he fight Antonio's rival (Don Pedro) in his place, masked and wearing Don Antonio's clothes. Belvile does not bother to ask the rival's identity, assuming that Don Antonio means Belvile himself as his rival for Florinda. But since Don Antonio is more concerned about his rival for Angellica, Belvile will have to duel with Don Pedro.

Florinda watches the duel, not realizing that Belvile is in Don Antonio's clothes. She thus cheers on the wrong man. At the end of the fight, Don Pedro gives in to "Don Antonio" (really Belvile) and agrees to let him marry his sister. Florinda gasps and tries to flee, until Belvile reveals himself to her. Don Pedro sees this and grudgingly admits that Belvile has proved himself worthy, though he takes his sister off to ponder the decision further. Meanwhile, Angellica has her servant fetch Willmore, who charms her once again despite her jealousy. Hellena appears, dressed as a boy, to plead her "master's" case with Angellica to release Willmore. Willmore loves the idea of a wealthy patroness, though he recognizes his "little gypsy," actually Hellena, under the disguise. Once again, Angellica is "undone" by jealousy. However, Willmore thinks that Hellena is acting out of

her own gypsy interest, so he professes his love to Angellica, thinking to gain more financially with a relationship with the rich courtesan. Willmore claims that if he ever marries, it will be to someone who "has wit enough to manage an intrigue of love." The challenge thrown, Hellena departs. Willmore insults Angellica, which inflames her desire for revenge, and follows Hellena. Florinda and Valeria, in different costumes, are nearly caught by Don Pedro, but Florinda escapes into a side door, which happens to be the lodgings of the English gentlemen, where Blunt is nursing his pride and waiting for a new suit of clothes to be delivered. When Blunt sees her, he determines to seek revenge on her, as reparation for his humiliation at the hands of the harlot Lucetta. He nearly rapes Florinda, with assistance from Frederick, until the latter hears Florinda mention Belvile's name and stops the process. The other Englishmen arrive, ready to enjoy a laugh at Blunt's expense, not realizing that Florinda is being held captive in Frederick's room.

Act 5

The English gentlemen return to their quarters as they mock Blunt. Willmore, however, pities the man since Blunt did not at least enjoy the lady's favors. Blunt, desperate for a shred of respect, announces that he is holding another woman hostage. Don Pedro offers to help him discover whether she is "of quality, or for [their] diversion." Willmore proposes that the man with the longest sword take her, which falls to Don Pedro and his Toledo blade. Don Pedro is about to unveil his own sister before Belvile recognizes her ring, now in Blunt's possession. However, Belvile dares not reveal her identity, for fear of her brother's wrath. At the eleventh hour, Valeria comes running in and rescues Florinda, allowing just enough time for Belvile to marry her in a hasty wedding. Valeria marries Frederick in the same ceremony.

Now Angellica arrives, wearing a mask and threatening to kill Willmore with a gun. He easily charms her out of her resolve. Don Antonio comes to her rescue and offers to take care of her. When Don Pedro returns, he graciously approves Florinda's marriage to Belvile. Finally, the two rovers negotiate a unique nuptial agreement, based on mutual mistrust, and then Willmore marries Hellena, only afterwards learning of her wealth. Don Pedro once again demurs; the nunnery is not for Hellena. A final laugh ensues when Blunt's clothes arrive, for they are the costume of one from the nation he now "abominate[s]": Spain.

Epilogue

A cheeky epilogue in rhymed couplets dares the audience to recognize the fact that the comic antics in the play have their basis in real sexual politics.

Act 1, Prologue

Act 1, Prologue Summary

This restoration comedy follows three couples, two of which involve the same man, as they struggle to live and love in the way they're inclined to, as opposed to the way that others intend them to. Written by a woman at a time when women were meant to be seen and not heard, the play's challenges to beliefs about gender roles and stereotypes form a potent thematic subtext to the action.

In varied language that vividly contrasts what people say and how they behave with what they truly feel, the speaker refers an incident in which he asked the play's male author, what he should say in welcome to the audience, and the playwright said it doesn't matter. The audience, the playwright says, is only there out of interest in what witty comments they can make about the play, in what debauched fun they can have while they watch, and in who will see them at the theater.

Act 1, Prologue Analysis

It's impossible to analyze this play without taking into account the fact that its author was a woman. In the 1600s, a time when writing in general and playwriting in particular were almost exclusively male occupations, Aphra Behn was a rebel and a pioneer. In the Prologue, she indicates an awareness of that status in her many references to the contrast between what is said and what is truly felt - she knows that audiences react differently to her plays because she's a woman, and that they're more critical and also more inclined to say one thing to her face and another behind her back. This means that the prologue's reference to the playwright being male and to the "male" playwright's comments are pointed references to the fact that she knows they know she's a woman, but she also knows they'd prefer her to be a man. These comments also refer to Behn's belief that the audience sees what it wants to see, and interprets what it sees in its own terms and on its own agenda. This idea is thematically relevant to the play as a whole, in which much of the plot and many of the characters behave according to what they believe they see as opposed to what is truly in front of them.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

Hellena and Florinda argue over whether Hellena, who is about to go into a convent and become a nun, should be as interested as she is in love, romance and relationships. Conversation reveals that there are three men interested in marrying Florinda - the elderly Don Vincentio, whom Florinda can't stand and who her father hopes that she'll marry; the well born Don Antonio, whom Florinda and Hellena's brother Pedro favor; and Captain Belvile, a British officer with whom Florinda is in love. Their teasing banter also reveals that there's a carnival in town, and that Hellena is resolved to find herself a lover there.

Pedro and the maid, Callis, come in. As Pedro dresses to go to the carnival, he and Florinda discuss Vincentio, whom Florinda says again that she can't stand and whom Pedro says would be a good husband. Hellena interjects with witty comments on Florinda's behalf, speaking at length about how miserable Florinda would be if she married Vincentio. Pedro reminds Florinda that Belvile has no fortune and has been banished from his home in England, which leads Hellena to comment that even Antonio would be a better match than Vincentio. Pedro tells Callis to lock Hellena in her room. Hellena says she doesn't care what happens to her, adding that she'd be happy to become a nun if it meant escaping the kind of marriage that Pedro has planned for Florinda. Pedro again tells Callis to lock Hellena away, reminds Florinda of the good qualities of Antonio, and says that she'll be married the next day.

As Pedro goes out, having delivered his ultimatum, Florinda comments that she could have no good arguments against the marriage with Antonio because he's of a good family and has money. The only problem is she doesn't love him. Meanwhile, Hellena convinces Callis to not lock her up but to help her dress in masquerade and attend the carnival, saying she wants to wear something similar to a dress her cousin Valeria has. Callis admits to wanting to go herself and says she'll let Hellena attend, as long as she goes along to keep an eye on her. Florinda agrees, and as they go out, reveals her plan to send a note to Belvile asking him to meet her.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

There is a clear and thematically relevant contrast here between how Florinda and Hellena are treated and how they intend to act. The men in their lives, their father and brother and suitors, clearly see them as commodities to be traded, almost pet-like in their need to be told how to behave. They see themselves, however, as having every right to love whoever and live however they choose. This contrast is a key component of one of the play's secondary thematic statements; women can and should be independent in terms of feeling, sexuality, and intellect. The struggles Florinda and Hellena face to achieve that independence, and most importantly the games they're

forced to play within the context of that struggle, motivate the play's plot and define its theme even further.

Another important contrast apparent in this scene is that between the characters of the two sisters, with Hellena being the wittier, the more outspoken and the more aggressive and Florinda being the quieter, the more thoughtful, and the more reactive. It's worth noting that both women get into difficulties because of who they are, a good example of how character can motivate and delineate plot. A key example of this is that the romantic Hellena has the idea to dress up and attend the masquerade, while it's the more practical Florinda who agrees to Callis' coming along and keeping an eye on them. This shows Florinda's wisdom in contrast to Hellena's impulsiveness.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

Frederick and Blunt tease Belvile about being melancholy because of his love for Florinda and because of Pedro's resistance to their relationship. They talk in superficial, patronizing terms about women in general and Florinda in particular, saying Belvile could get just as much enjoyment out of a cheap prostitute. As Belvile makes ironic comments about how his friends would know all about that kind of enjoyment, Blunt jokes about how he doesn't spend money on prostitutes because of the chance they'll rob him when he's finished with them.

Willmore comes in, and is greeted happily by the other men, particularly by Belvile, who refers to him as a rover and asks how he came to be in town. Conversation reveals that he's a sailor, and that he's come to enjoy the carnival. At that moment participants in the carnival appear, all wearing masks, playing musical instruments, and dancing. The women are dressed as courtesans (high class prostitutes) and all carry baskets of roses and other flowers. The men make very crude jokes about how much they'd enjoy being with them, referring to bushes from which the roses came from. Several men appear dressed as comic cuckolds, or men whose wives have had sex with other men. The men joke about how serious the men are compared to the joyful women.

A third party of carnival partiers comes in, this one including Hellena, Florinda, Valeria, Callis, Lucetta, Sancho, and others, all dressed in masks and in the clothing of gypsies. As Hellena points out Belvile to Florinda, Willmore approaches and pulls her away from the crowd, asking her to tell his fortune. Willmore and Hellena banter about whether Willmore should or shouldn't be afraid that Hellena will pick his pocket like all gypsies do. They speak flirtatiously about whether Hellena needs Willmore's help in losing her virginity, and make pointed comments about whether there's a difference between asking permission to love and asking permission to make love. Meanwhile, Lucetta speaks with Sancho about which of the men should be her victim, decides on Blunt, and walks past him flirtatiously several times. Blunt is instantly smitten.

Florinda and Belvile make arrangements to meet that night at the garden gate. As Pedro appears, Callis warns Florinda, who gives Belvile a letter and runs off. Frederick warns Belvile that she may be setting him up for a confrontation with Pedro, but Belvile tells him that the letter is a love letter asking him to marry her and deliver her from Pedro's control. Willmore flirts with Hellena, and after she leaves, he joins Belvile, overhears the contents of the letter, and suggests that Belvile simply let Florinda go. Belvile convinces him to help them accomplish their plan.

As Blunt is led away by Lucetta, Belvile and Frederick comment crudely on what they believe she wants him for, and about their hopes that she'll teach him a lesson for being so lazy and arrogant. When Willmore asks why they dislike Blunt so much, they talk about how useless he is and complain that he's got all their money with him. Frederick

says they've got no reason to worry that he'll spend all the money on Lucetta, referring to how stingy he is. He then comments on how much time Willmore spent with "the little gypsy" (Hellena). Willmore says she must be a person of quality; she spoke so cleverly and so well. He then asks whether the other men have made any female acquaintances, and Frederick reveals that they all came to town to spend time with Angellica, a famous courtesan. Willmore suggests that they all go to see her. Belvile reminds him that they agreed to help him rescue Florinda, and as they all go out, as Willmore promises that he can be relied upon.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

The general attitudes of the men in the play towards women are defined further in this scene, as we see how Frederick, Blunt and particularly Willmore all reveal their lusty territorialism. Another aspect to their attitude is revealed by Frederick's caution to Belvile that Florinda is trying to trap him, a manifestation of the male belief that women aren't to be trusted. At the same time, Belvile's clear-eyed perspective on Florinda and her situation provides a clear contrast to the negative attitudes of the men around him, perhaps setting him up as a kind of ideal.

Female attitudes are also defined further in this scene, most notably through Hellena's determination that she not be seen just as someone to be flirted with, and also through Lucetta's determination to take advantage of a man's lusty determination to take advantage of her. The attitudes and actions of both women represent the play's thematic point that women in general should take more control over their lives, and where necessary, teach men a lesson for thinking so little of them.

There are several important moments of foreshadowing in this section. Blunt's comment about being robbed by prostitutes, Frederick's comment that he hopes Lucetta will teach Blunt a lesson, and Belvile's reference to Blunt carrying their money all foreshadow what will happen later in the play when Blunt is, in fact, robbed by Lucetta. Also, the way Belvile refers to Willmore as a rover foreshadows the way his attentions move, or "rove", back and forth between Hellena and Angellica.

A key component of the language and style of the play appears for the first time in this scene, the "double entendre". This is a word or phrase that when spoken, has a clear, simple meaning, but in context is understood as having a sexual meaning as well. Specifically, the men's comments about roses and bushes in their discussions of the courtesans can be interpreted as barely disguised comments about female sexual organs and pubic hair. Such use of language was common in plays of the Restoration period, plays in which thinly disguised sexual commentary and intention formed the core of a great deal of dialogue and action.

The play's most important symbol appears for the first time in this scene, and plays a key dramatic and thematic role in the story's development. That symbol is the mask. There are several layers of meaning to this symbol, the first of which is the most

obvious - the way the mask conceals physical identity and therefore leads to complications in the plot.

A second layer of meaning can be found in the masks' thematic resonance with the observations about two-facedness contained in the prologue. While the literal masks in *The Rover* conceal physical identity, the characters' words and actions while they're wearing the masks conceal their emotional identity in the same way as the playwright concealed her identity as a woman in the prologue. Examples of this can be found in the way Hellena's flirtatious mask as a gypsy hides her identity as an intelligent, strong-willed woman, while Willmore's mask of flattery and passion conceals his identity as someone who sees women as a commodity to be used and discarded.

The third layer of meaning in the mask symbol evolves in parallel with the action of the play as it becomes clear that both men and women assume the masks/roles that society expects them to wear but are often different from the image those masks present. This paradox is first glimpsed in Act 1 Scene 1, in which Florinda and Hellena both appear to be behaving in the way Pedro demands, but are in fact willfully determined to do things their own way. The paradox also appears quite notably in the character of Angellica, who at first behaves in the way that society expects a courtesan or prostitute to behave, but then turns out to have something unexpected in her soul. Yet another layer of meaning to the masks appears at the beginning of the following scene, in which the men use masks to avoid the potential for blame for whatever wrongs they might do.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

Belvile and Frederick, wearing masks and costumes, meet Willmore, who carries his mask. Belvile comments that the masks free them from potential repercussions of anything they might do, while Willmore says he chose to not wear a costume because he was afraid the gypsy girl, Hellena, wouldn't recognize him. He confesses that he can't get her out of his mind, and then also confesses that he's longing to embrace a woman, saying that he has hopes of embracing Angellica. Belvile says that won't be possible just yet, the painting advertising her availability hasn't yet been hung outside.

Blunt comes in, speaking ecstatically about the woman whom he was just with. When he's asked what her name is he says he doesn't know, adding that knowing she's fair, young, and kind is enough. Frederick insists that Blunt return their money and Blunt happily agrees, handing over his own as well because he's now beloved and has no need of anything else. Frederick hands that money back, saying he'll need it when the girl reveals her true colors as a prostitute. Blunt reacts indignantly, saying there's plenty about him that's appealing other than his money.

Angellica's picture is hung out by two servants, and the men all comment on how beautiful she is. Blunt becomes indignant, saying that being with a prostitute is indecent and becoming outraged at her fee. Pedro comes in, masked and in costume. The other men withdraw as Pedro sees Angellica's picture and vows to have her. As he goes out, Angellica and her maid Moretta appear and discuss the various men who've passed by. Angellica dismisses Belvile and the others as not being worth her time, and proclaims her intention that "nothing but gold shall charm [her] heart". She sees Pedro returning and calls for her lute, saying that either he or Antonio is the man she's most interested in.

Pedro re-appears at the same time as Antonio comes in from another direction, both in disguise and both referring to Angellica's beauty. A chance remark from one of Antonio's companions makes Pedro realize who he is, as Antonio comments that nothing, including thoughts of Florinda, can dissuade him from his passion for Angellica. Pedro comments in an aside that all his hopes for possessing Angellica are now lost.

Angellica plays her lute and sings a romantic song about young love. Antonio removes his mask and blows her a kiss, confirming Pedro's suspicions about his identity. Antonio asks where he can pay Angellica's fee, Pedro says that he was there first, and they argue and begin to duel. Blunt and Willmore rush in and separate them. Pedro challenges Antonio to duel again, saying he also has Florinda's honor to avenge. Antonio agrees to meet him early in the morning. Pedro suggests they come disguised, so that whoever wins he may escape unchallenged (this was necessary since dueling was illegal at the time the play was written). Antonio agrees, Pedro goes off, and Antonio assumes he was Belvile, whom he knows to be involved with Florinda.

Willmore, meanwhile, has pulled down a smaller version of Angellica's picture. Antonio demands that he put it back, Willmore refuses, and they challenge each other and duel. Angellica commands that they stop and for a moment they do. Willmore confesses that he only wanted to keep the small picture and Angellica gives him permission to do so, but Antonio angrily restarts the duel. Belvile and Frederick return, they and friends of Antonio draw their swords as well, and soon the whole street is filled with brawling and fighting. Angellica again stops them, and Antonio and his friends are chased off.

Belvile, Willmore and the others complain about Antonio's temper, with Willmore saying all he wanted was the picture. Blunt says that because they have won the fight the large picture is theirs by right and starts to take it down. Angellica asks that he stop, Belvile holds him back, and Willmore speaks flatteringly to her and asks to see her. Frederick tells him it's dangerous to be with an angry courtesan, but Willmore insists, saying he believes she'll be with him as a favor rather than charging him. Belvile says it's not possible, but Angellica says she's got no weapons but her eyes. Willmore goes in, and Frederick comments that he's gone mad.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

Masks and disguises, both literal and metaphorical, play a pivotal role in this scene. In terms of literal masks, the mistaken identities that result from the confrontation between Antonio and Pedro, in which Antonio believes Pedro is Belvile, lays the groundwork for plot complications later in the play. At the same time, the revelation that Antonio's mask is ineffective and his identity is easily apparent to Pedro is the first time the play makes its secondary thematic point - that masks are all ultimately flimsy and easily discarded. This point is reiterated later when the metaphorical mask worn by Angellica, seen for the first time here as she pretends to be interested in only money, disappears as she falls quickly and deeply and passionately in love with Willmore. This mask, in turn, seems to be as easily discarded as Willmore's own mask of devotion to "his little gypsy" (Hellena), which disappears as soon as he sees Angellica. As a result, his true identity as a woman chaser is clearly revealed. Blunt's foolishness is also revealed, the depth of which is illustrated by his instantaneous infatuation with Lucetta, which the play later reveals is, itself, a response to a mask - her appearance as a reputable woman. All in all, the layers of masking and lies and truths become more complicated throughout the play, creating comic conflict in the plot but more importantly, reinforcing the play's thematic point that masks, and reliance upon them, cause more harm than good.

An "aside" is a commonly used narrative device in which a character speaks his thoughts aloud to the audience. The difference between an aside and a soliloquy, another device in which a character speaks his thoughts also used frequently in this play, is that an aside is generally spoken when there are other characters onstage that are understood to be unable to hear. A soliloquy is spoken when a character is alone. Another general rule about asides is that they tend to function to reveal the truth behind what a character is saying to other characters. In other words, they reveal what is behind their verbal mask. This means that in this play, asides function within the parameters of the play's theme, revealing the falseness of characters which is at times

manipulative and at other times a mere act of self preservation. Pedro's asides in this section are more manipulative, in that it's possible to understand from his asides that he's planning to keep his knowledge of Antonio's identity a secret in order to gain advantage over him. This is also true of Antonio's aside and his intent - he clearly plans to take advantage over the man he thinks is Belvile by keeping his identity a secret.

There is an important piece of foreshadowing at the end of the confrontation between Antonio and Pedro. The duel they arrange plays a key role later in the play after Belvile has been arrested, serving as a negotiating point over which Belvile wins his freedom.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

In Angellica's bedchamber, Angellica demands to know why Willmore took down her picture. Willmore, in turn, banteringly demands to know why she tempted him by putting it up. They argue briefly, and Moretta comments that Willmore is obviously poor, saying Angellica doesn't give out her favors for free. Willmore tries to charm her, Moretta refuses to be charmed, and Willmore offers to join forces and finances with other merchants of the town to gain Angellica's time. In an aside, Angellica comments that if it were any other man making those plans she'd be furious. Willmore reveals that as a gentleman he's repulsed by the idea of selling oneself, but as a man is so passionate about her, he's prepared to pay any price because he sees how "divinely powerful" she is. In an aside, Angellica comments that his words are very moving to her, but then begins to dismiss him. He interrupts her, talking again about how passionate his feelings are. Moretta tries to get him to be quiet and leave, but Angellica tells Moretta to leave instead,and suggests to Willmore that in using women for his own pleasure, he's as guilty of the same crimes as she is. Willmore says he despises that kind of behavior in both men and women. Angellica believes him, saying she'll spend time with him without payment. Willmore says he needs time to consider whether to believe her, but in an aside reveals that he's resolved to accept what she says as the truth.

Angellica asks Willmore to speak more about what he believes. In an aside he comments that he believes she's manipulating him, and tells her he believes everything she says is a lie. Angellica says she's telling the truth, Willmore says that he's been cheated so often that he can't believe her, and Angellica turns away, saying she's got her pride which won't be dominated by her love. Willmore takes her in his arms and insists that she do exactly the opposite - to let herself be governed by love, not pride. She resists, referring to the intensity of his charm and her surprise at how tender he can be, saying that his looks are those of a rough, insensitive warrior. He says she's raising his hopes, she asks whether he'll pay what she asks, he demands that she conceal the hard, money hungry side of herself, and she says all she's asking is for him to return her love. Willmore promises to do exactly that, and together they go out to talk even more romantically.

Moretta, left alone, complains in a brief soliloquy about how Angellica has fallen for the charms of a poor man and a rogue, saying that everything a woman wins from a gullible man is lost as soon as someone charms her.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

Asides are used to great effect here, defining the two masks come off in this scene. Only one, however, reveals a truth. Angellica's mask as a hard, unloving businesswoman stays on for a long time, but is eventually removed against her will to

reveal a warm, passionate, perhaps lonely side to her character. On his part, Willmore's removal of his mask (the rough, poor warrior with nothing to offer) is almost thrown aside as he reveals a sensitive, equally passionate side to his nature. As the play eventually makes clear, however, this side of him is also a mask, concealing his basic contempt for everything female in order to get what he wants.

This is another aspect to the play's thematic point - that sometimes there are masks within masks, and the removal of one layer of disguise doesn't mean there aren't more beneath it. It's interesting to note that Moretta is one of the few characters in the play who doesn't wear a mask of any kind, literal or emotional. Her feelings, attitudes and beliefs are right up front for anyone and everyone to see. As such, she is a defining contrast to the other characters, illustrating how complicated their motivation and reasoning are by showing how simple motivations can be.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

On the street outside Angellica's home, Hellena, Florinda, and Valeria, still in disguise as gypsies, briefly discuss why Pedro is in such a bad mood and that Florinda is unhappy being away from her lover. They then turn their attention to Hellena's attraction to Willmore, who courted her while she was dressed as a gypsy. Hellena protests that she's not in love, and then speaks in language that indicates the opposite is true. Valeria teases her that her man is probably the kind who courts a number of women, and Florinda makes a crude joke about how Hellena will one day ride him. She comments that Hellena is foolish and impulsive to fall in love at first sight, saying that it wasn't until she knew what kind of man Belvile was that she fell in love with him. Hellena sees Belvile coming, wonders where her own lover is, and withdraws with Florinda and Valeria in the hopes of overhearing their conversation.

Belvile, Blunt, and Frederick appear, commenting that Angellica's picture has been taken in and wondering what kind of time Willmore is having with her. Willmore appears, bragging happily about good a time he had. Hellena, watching from a hiding place, speaks in aside that now she's got good reason to play a trick on Willmore. Blunt comments that he had a good time with the woman he was with, and looks forward to being with her again. Sancho, Lucetta's servant, appears, whispers to Blunt, and they both go out.

Belvile asks Willmore whether he's forgotten his gypsy. Willmore confesses that he had, causing Hellena to come out of hiding. In aside, Willmore comments that he hopes she didn't hear him, and then aloud says he's spent the whole day looking for her. Also in aside, Hellena confesses she can't be angry with him because he lies so flatteringly, and aloud wonders what reward she can give him for searching so diligently. As Willmore pleads with her to remove her mask, Angellica, accompanied by Moretta, comes in, and reacts with shock when she sees Hellena flirting with Willmore and Willmore professing that he loves only her. Hellena removes her mask, and Willmore again speaks rapturously, this time about Hellena's beauty. This leads Angellica to become furious, and she tells one of her servants to follow Hellena to find out who she is, tells another servant to tell Willmore she wants to speak with him right away, and then goes into her house.

All this while, Frederick is flirting with Valeria and Belvile is having an argument with Florinda. It must be remembered that Florinda and Valeria are both still in disguise, meaning that neither Frederick nor Belvile knows who they are. Florinda offers Belvile a ring as a token of her affection and then says in aside that if he takes it she'll know he's not a true lover. Meanwhile, Hellena asks Willmore why he has just come out of Anjellica's house. Willllmore says he was visiting a friend, Hellena quotes back to him some of the rapturous things he said when he first came out, Willmore can't think of anything to say, Hellena says she will never see him again unless he refuses to see

Angellica. Willmore promises, and Hellena goes out. Meanwhile, Florinda gives Belvile a photograph of herself and also goes out. Belvile realizes whom he was courting and that she knows he flirts with other women. He becomes upset. Willmore and Frederick calm him down and offer to take him drinking. Belvile agrees, saying they need to fill the time until they can implement their plan to rescue Florinda from her brother.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

Masks, literal and emotional, continue to define the action and relationships in this section of the play. Florinda employs her literal mask to test the fidelity of Belvile, and Willmore assumes an emotional mask to convince Hellena that he loves only her. This is exactly the same kind of mask he used to convince Angellica of exactly the same thing. Most interestingly, Hellena herself puts on a mask of indifference as she pretends she's not as deeply in love with Willmore as she obviously is. Not only do all these masks create further plot complications, it becomes even clearer in this scene that their increasing importance in the play makes a comment about human nature - the idea that it's difficult for people to function without some kind of mask, or disguise. It's possible, in fact, to see these masks, both literal and emotional, as a kind of armor, a way of not being too vulnerable. The need for this kind of protection is very real, as is dramatized in the next scene in which the narrative illustrates what happens when the mask is dropped and a character is vulnerable, literally and metaphorically naked. Advantage can and will be taken. The suggestion here is that masks prevent advantage from being taken, but the suggestion by the end of the play is that sometimes, expressing vulnerability and honest emotion is worth the risk.

The device of double entendre is used again in this scene, as Florinda's comment about Hellena "riding" her man is an obvious reference to sexual activity.

Act 3, Scenes 2, 3, and 4

Act 3, Scenes 2, 3, and 4 Summary

Scene 2 - Blunt comes in with Lucetta and they speak flatteringly and lovingly to each other before Lucetta goes out to get undressed. Blunt speaks in soliloquy about his desires to take her back to England with him, that there are already a lot of prostitutes there, but they're all greedy and could use a lesson in generosity from Lucetta. He also comments that her home is richly decorated. Sancho comes in and leads Blunt to Lucetta's bedchamber.

Scene 3 - Lucetta is already in bed as Sancho leads Blunt in. Sancho leaves and Blunt quickly undresses, saying that if Lucetta's rich old husband were dead he would marry her. As he approaches the bed, Lucetta asks him to blow out the candle. He does, climbs into bed, realizes she's gone, calls out to her, and then falls through a trap in the bottom of the bed and disappears! Lucetta and Sancho then come in, accompanied by her husband, or pimp, Phillippo, who says that originally he was concerned that since Blunt has money, Lucetta might be truly attracted to him. He then says that once he realized Blunt was a complete fool, he relaxed. Together they go through Blunt's clothes and jewelry, taking what's valuable and saying that they are safe because Blunt doesn't know Lucetta's name or where she lives. Phillippo comments that he's become aroused, and takes Lucetta to bed.

Scene 4 - Blunt emerges from a sewer, speaking in soliloquy about how angry he is with himself and with Lucetta, that he dreads his friends hearing what happened, butis able to console himself with the thought that he's not the first person this kind of thing has happened to.

Act 3, Scenes 2, 3, and 4 Analysis

Aside from serving as a comic interlude in the action, and aside from giving the foolish Blunt the lesson he deserves, this sequence of scenes functions primarily to illuminate aspects of the play's theme. On one level, it illustrates the dangers of believing too completely in masks, and in what one wants to see. This thematic point was first touched on in the prologue, and is repeated throughout the play. On another level, this section illustrates the parallel dangers of allowing oneself to be too vulnerable and too trusting, since on both levels Blunt is clearly manipulated and taken advantage of. This motif, or repeated action, appears again in the following scene, in which Florinda prepares herself to be taken away by her true love, Belvile, and therefore makes herself vulnerable, and is consequently assaulted. The result is the thematic suggestion that honesty, directness and clear perception are by far the safer and more responsible choices.

On yet another level, this scene also functions to lay the groundwork for Blunt's important role in the play's climax, in which he attempts to take revenge on Florinda for the wrongs done to him by Lucetta. The extremity of this reaction is a thematically-related consequence of the events here. The suggestion is that not dealing with honesty and integrity causes pain and upset to the point of triggering extreme and irrational reactions such as Blunt's reactions in a later scene. This point will be discussed further in relation to Act 4, Scene 5, when the attack on Florinda occurs.

Act 3, Scene 5

Act 3, Scene 5 Summary

This scene is set in Pedro's garden. Florinda comes to unlock the gate, carrying with her a case of jewels and ready for Belvile to take her away. Willmore comes in, very drunk, very angry at Belvile and Frederick for leaving him alone, and very eager to find a woman. He sees Florinda, and in spite of her protests and resistances, talks at length about how attractive she is, how honest he is, and that it doesn't matter that he doesn't know her name - he just wants to have her. He physically and verbally attempts to get her to have sex with him, becoming increasingly violent as she continues to resist. Just as Willmore is about to rape her, Belvile and Frederick appear and pull him off without recognizing him. Florinda sees Pedro coming and runs off, telling Belvile to come to her window so she can give him further instructions on how they can get away.

Willmore recognizes Belvile just as Pedro comes in. Pedro sends a servant to see if Florinda is all right, draws his sword, and fights Willmore. Frederick and Belvile attempt to defend Willmore, but Pedro fights them all off. After they've gone, the servant returns to say Florinda is perfectly safe. Pedro wonders who the attackers were, the servant suggests they were masqueraders, and Pedro comments that masquerading is a disgusting custom, leading to debauchery.

Act 3, Scene 5 Analysis

This brief but very intense scene reiterates the point discussed in relation to Act 3, Scenes 2 through 4 - that sometimes masks and disguises are necessary to protect vulnerability. Florinda in this scene is clearly prepared to be vulnerable, to live the truth of her love and commitment to Belvile without the masks and games she earlier employed. Willmore's attack, like Lucetta's manipulation of Blunt, suggests that such vulnerability is extremely dangerous. There is also the sense here that for the first time, Willmore is seen without his masks. His drunkenness has rendered him no longer polite, no longer able to lie and manipulate, no longer able to use a mask to get what he wants. "In vino veritas", as the saying goes, or in wine is truth - in other words, liquor has removed his inhibitions (masks) and who he truly is becomes apparent, a violent user and abuser of women. The warning again, this time from the other side of the mask, is that some masks are both necessary and safe. In other words, Willmore may be a user but at least when he's drunk he's not violent. This means there's irony in Pedro's final comments. He's right that sometimes masks lead to debauchery, but while he's referring to Willmore's debauchery, he's forgetting his own near-debauchery upon seeing Angellica's sign.

Act 3, Scene 6

Act 3, Scene 6 Summary

This scene is set on the street, and it immediately becomes clear that Belvile has just told Willmore whom he assaulted. Belvile is inarticulate with fury, Willmore tries to justify himself, Belvile demands to know what he thinks he was doing. Willmore makes jokes, Belvile loses his temper and threatens to draw his sword, Willmore tells him to wait until tomorrow, and Belvile suddenly remembers that tomorrow Florinda is supposed to marry Antonio. He angrily says he wishes he could meet and confront him and Willmore offers to confront him instead, but Belvile says he wouldn't actually know Antonio if he saw him.

Willmore comments that they've arrived outside Angellica's and that he has an appointment to sleep with her. Antonio confirms with his servant that he's paid Angellica's fee. Belvile goes out to wait under Florinda's window as Moretta appears, ready to show Antonio into the house. Before he goes in, Willmore becomes outraged that Antonio is going to spend time with his woman, challenges him, duels him, and wounds him. Moretta runs into the house in a panic, Belvile comes back to see what all the fuss was about, Willmore flees, and Belvile tends Antonio's wounds. Soldiers appear, assume Belvile is the man who assaulted Antonio and arrest him. He protests but is led off. Antonio says Belvile has attacked him twice, and orders him to be taken to his rooms. He then goes out with the soldiers.

Act 3, Scene 6 Analysis

While its focus in this scene is almost exclusively on developing the plot through confrontation, it's also possible to see once again the necessity of at least some kinds of masks. Once again unrestrained and unmasked emotional humanity is challenged and/or put in danger as Belvile's compassion for the wounded Antonio gets him arrested, albeit mistakenly. Furthermore, Willmore's naked passion for Angellica gets him into the confrontation with Antonio. More than ever, it's possible to see a positive aspect to emotional masks, a sense of self control, restraint and responsibility. In short, the action of this scene follows the example of earlier scenes as it illustrates how the most intense conflict and confrontation in the play are fueled by unmasked emotions and desires.

Act 4, Scene 1

Act 4, Scene 1 Summary

Alone in the dark, Belvile complains in soliloquy that destiny seems to be working against him, saying the torture he finds himself in at the moment is nothing compared to the torture he would feel if he lost Florinda.

Antonio comes in, his arm in a bandage and carrying a sword. He asks what he did to provoke Belvile to attack him. Belvile says he's innocent, but Antonio says he not only attacked him the night before but also earlier in the day, at the same place, referring to Wellmore's attack in the second duel Antonio (fought in Act 2 Scene 1). Belvile admits that he fought in defense of a friend, and also admits his belief that Antonio is too much of a gentleman to kill without giving him a chance to defend himself. Antonio hands him the sword he brought in, tells him he's the viceroy's son, and says Belvile can win his freedom if he takes his place at a duel to be fought the following morning at the Molo, the duel he arranged with Pedro after their duel in Act 2 Scene 1. Antonio says he's unable to fight because of the injury he suffered, and when he refers to the duel being fought over the honor of a woman, Belvile assumes he means Florinda. He therefore agrees to the arrangement, Antonio tells him he must appear in his clothes and fight in his name, and again Belvile agrees. Antonio goes out, and Belvile speaks in soliloquy about how he now suddenly respects destiny for giving him a chance at freedom.

Act 4, Scene 1 Analysis

Another kind of mask is at work in this scene, the kind placed on one person when another makes assumptions, reacting to what he believes the first person to be instead of trying to understand who they truly are. This situation arises throughout the play from the prologue on, as people repeatedly react according to what they believe to be true instead of what actually IS true. As such, this is a core theme - in essence, don't judge by appearances.

The series of mistaken identities that drives the action of this scene can at first appear complicated, but is actually fairly simple. Antonio thinks Belvile is Willmore (whose name he doesn't know), and sends him to fight Pedro (whose identity he hasn't realized). Belvile knows neither who Antonio believes him to be nor who he's supposed to go and fight. The audience, however, knows he's fighting his beloved's brother. This means that there is now a sense of suspense to the action, knowing that by fighting this duel he's endangering his chances for a happy life with Florinda, since chances are when she learns he fought with her brother she'll be much less inclined to be with him.

Act 4, Scene 2, Part 1

Act 4, Scene 2, Part 1 Summary

Florinda comes in with Callis and another servant. In an aside Florinda reveals how afraid she is as the result of Belvile not coming to her window as they planned. She asks the servant who it is that Pedro is about to duel, and the servant says he can't tell because both men are masked, but adds that he's sure they're fighting over her. This leads her to assume, in an aside, that the duel is being fought with Belvile, since no other would fight for her. Florinda now knows the truth about who's fighting, although she doesn't realize that she knows. Neither Belvile nor Pedro know who is actually fighting.

Pedro enters, disguised and wondering where Antonio is. In an aside, Florinda wonders if she heard the name wrong. Belvile, dressed as Antonio and masked, comes in. Florinda assumes he's Antonio, Pedro greets him by Antonio's name, and Belvile realizes he's come to fight Pedro. Pedro refers to the attention "Antonio" paid to Angellica, Belvile in an aside responds with confusion, Pedro gets ready to fight, and Belvile realizes he's got no choice but to fight back. Just as he's drawing his sword, Florinda, fearing for her brother's life, rushes in and tries to stop them, but they push her aside and fight. She runs in again, insisting that they stop. Belvile lays his sword at her feet. Pedro, who believes he's fighting Antonio whom he believes dishonored Florinda by courting Angellica, says that he now believes "Antonio" truly loves Florinda, since he's willing to end a fight at her request. Pedro takes off his mask, and demands to know whether "Antonio" will renounce all other women. Belvile, who has yet to reveal himself, agrees whole heartedly. Pedro says the wedding between himself and Florinda will take place immediately. Florinda, who still thinks Belvile is Antonio, panics and tries to talk her way out of it, calling her brother a tyrant. Belvile takes her aside and reveals his identity.

As Florinda asks herself why she didn't recognize the voice of her beloved, Willmore comes in with Frederick, recognizes Belvile, and greets him heartily. Pedro realizes who Belvile is and takes Florinda from him. Belvile protests he won her fairly. In support of Belvile, Willmore draws his sword and starts to attack Pedro, but Belvile steps between them. Willmore sheaths his sword as Belvile says he's reluctant to let someone Florinda loves so much be hurt. Pedro says he recognizes Belvile's bravery and honor, but then takes Florinda out and vows to prevent their marriage.

In the same way as he was inarticulate with anger at Willmore in Act 3 Scene 6, Belvile is again furious at what Willmore has done - ruined his chance to be with Florinda. Willmore is bewildered and asks for an explanation. Belvile draws his sword and runs at him, he runs out, Belville follows, and Frederick follows both of them.

Act 4, Scene 2, Part 1 Analysis

The complications arising from the characters' various mistaken identities become more and more comic in this scene. Confusion piles upon confusion and anger piles upon anger, all as the result of people assuming that what they see, and believe to be true, actually IS true. Once again the core element at the heart of both the play's theme and its narrative, right from the beginning of the prologue, is dramatized - the complications that arise when assumptions are made.

Another core element, repeated throughout the play, is the resentment Florinda feels at the way she's being treated by Pedro, basically as a piece of property. It's not too much of a stretch to suggest that in the context of the playwright's identity and agenda, when Florinda calls Pedro a tyrant she's speaking on behalf of all women angry at being dominated by men.

Act 4, Scene 2, Part 2

Act 4, Scene 2, Part 2 Summary

Angellica comes in with Moretta and another servant, whom she tells to bring Willmore to her. As he goes, Angellica speaks angrily to Moretta about how she believes Willmore is in love with Florinda and about how he failed to be with her last night as he promised. Moretta says she warned her against him, but Angellica says she doesn't understand, adding that if she'd given him money she'd be less upset but she gave him her heart. The servant brings Willmore back. When he sees Angellica walking away from him, he sings a love song to bring her back. Angellica listens angrily, speaks in aside about how she's going to be revenged, and again starts to leave, saying Willlmore will be much happier with his more "virtuous" mistress. Willmore says he has no use for a virtuous woman, but Angellica says that's not really the issue, suggesting that she wishes she could believe it was his young woman's money that he courted and reminding him of the woman he was with the night before. In an aside, Willmore realizes she's referring to his "gypsy" and recalls his longing to be with her. Angellica sees his attraction to "the gypsy" in his face, and angrily reminds him of the vows he made her. In an aside, Willmore wishes she was angry enough to leave him alone.

Hellena, now dressed in man's clothing, comes in, recognizes both Angellica and Willmore, whose name she still doesn't know, and resolves to tease Willmore by flirting with Angellica. Angellica, eager to get revenge on Willmore, flirts back. Willmore tries to leave, revealing in an aside that he's got a date with "the gypsy". Angellica demands that he stay, as Hellena begins her story, talking about a young woman in love with a gentleman. Angellica suggests that because the story evidently doesn't concern Willmore, he can go. However Willmore, who in an aside assumes the story is about him, says he'll stay. Angellica tells "the boy" (Hellena) to continue, and Hellena goes on to say that while the young woman believed her lover, she also heard that he had paid court to Angellica. After banter between Willmore and Angellica, in which they argue over whether "the boy" is talking about him, "the boy" entreats Angellica to see the gentleman no more.

In an aside, Willmore reveals his belief that someone has seen him with Angellica and told "his gypsy", who then told "the boy". Angellica asks what man is being spoken of, "the boy" describes his clothes in terms that resemble Willmore's, and Willmore becomes angry and paces. Angellica and "the boy" accuse him of being unfaithful and a rogue, but when Angellica turns away and weeps it becomes possible to understand that she takes his unfaithfulness seriously and personally, while Hellena is using it to both goad him and convince him to love her completely.

Willmore asks "the boy" (Hellena) who sent him, but she refuses to say. Willmore tells Angellica he can't discover the truth, Angellica becomes angry at his courting another woman after saying he'd given his heart to her, Willmore recognizes Hellena, and immediately prepares to tell Angellica his version of the truth. Hellena worries in an

aside that all her hopes for love from him are about to be destroyed, but Willmore speaks so negatively of "the gypsy girl", whom he believes to have sent "the boy", that Hellena becomes furious. Angellica, who thinks he's talking about the high-born Florinda, tells him he has no reason to speak ill of the woman he loves. Willmore tells "the boy" to go away, Angellica asks Willmore to promise not to marry the other woman, and Willmore says if he ever marries it will be to a roguish young woman with enough integrity to state her desires directly.

Angellica's servant comes in and announces Antonio. Hellena hurries off, revealing in an aside that she's convinced he'll reveal her true identity. Angellica resolves to meet Antonio, telling Willmore she never wants to see him again. Willmore angrily says he's better off without her and, in an aside, resolves to find "the gypsy". After he's gone, Angellica speaks in soliloquy about her anger at Willmore because he was so eager to get away, about how frustrated she is that all her usual ways of getting men to love her have failed, and about her plans to have revenge on Willmore because he has proven to her that she is unlovable.

Act 4, Scene 2, Part 2 Analysis

As if there aren't enough masks and semi-truths already in this play, the introduction of Hellena in man's clothes adds yet another layer of misunderstanding and confusion to the plot. On one level it's yet another example of the way characters in this play seem unwilling to reveal their truths, even for good reason. For example, a lie leads to truth as it becomes clear that Angellica has let herself become more vulnerable than she usually is. On another, more ironic level, it's interesting to note that as the result of this latest disguise, two central characters reveal more information about themselves than they had previously.

Willmore's complete insensitivity to Angellica's feelings and his obsession with his own feelings appear, completely undisguised, for the first time. The contrast between these characters' reactions to being confronted with their truths is vividly defined - she's heartbroken, he's selfish, her vulnerability has been taken advantage of, and it's very apparent that his masks and lies were what manipulated her into that position. Once again, the play's central thematic points are made- that putting aside masks and allowing vulnerability can lead to suffering, and that what's seen or heard or perceived in any way should not necessarily be believed.

The question at this point is why Hellena persists in her attraction to Willmore, even though he's proving to be more two-faced and more unreliable every time she encounters him. The answer lies in the fact that she hasn't yet seen what has been seen by everyone else, including the audience. Her only experience of him has been as someone devotedly, flatteringly attractive to her, and who has a weakness for other women that she apparently thinks she can tame. In other words, in spite of all her cleverness and apparent wisdom, she's been taken in by a mask in the same way as everyone else in the play has - she believes what she's been told, a belief that persists through to the play's final moments in which she and Willmore agree to make a go of

their relationship. In this entire relationship, then, the play repeats its thematic warning about buying too much into people's masks.

In terms of the larger, gender-related question about relationships in general, the warning here is simple - women, beware the charms of men. This warning plays out in the relationship between Willmore and Angellica as well as in the relationship between Willmore and Hellena. The relationship between Florinda and Belvile serves as a defining and contrasting ideal, a suggestion of the constancy and integrity that should be a hallmark of a relationship. The relationship between Blunt and Lucetta is also a contrast, but one which serves the play's theme on yet another level - as a warning against what can happen to a man if he crosses a woman once too often.

Act 4, Scenes 3 and 4

Act 4, Scenes 3 and 4 Summary

Scene 3 - Florinda and Valeria run in, discussing how Valeria helped Florinda escape the room where Pedro locked her up, how Hellena has disappeared, and how Valeria carried a message to Belvile for him to meet Florinda while Pedro was out at church. They see Belvile coming, accompanied by Pedro and Willmore. Florinda and Valeria put on their masks, and walk by them. Willmore comments on how attractive Valeria seems and follows her out. Belvile comments on how Willmore is always going after women.

Frederick runs in, laughing with the news of what happened to Blunt. In an aside, Belvile reveals his plan to use Blunt as a distraction for Pedro, to give Florinda time to escape. He then leads Frederick and Pedro off to find Blunt and tease him. Florinda sees Pedro returning and runs off in another direction. Willmore returns, followed by Valeria, and goes out again, commenting that she's pursuing him. Hellena, still wearing her men's clothing, comes in, recognizes Willmore and comments that he's being followed by a woman, and tells a servant to follow them. She also sees Pedro coming, and runs off.

Scene 4 - On another street, Florinda panics at the way Pedro continues to follow her, and ducks into a nearby open doorway. Hellena's servant comes in, and reveals in an aside, his belief that Florinda was Valeria, and follows her. Valeria appears, comments in aside that she saw Florinda and that she has unknowingly gone into Belvile's house. She then sees Willmore and hides. Willmore appears, complains about having lost track of Valeria, and goes out looking for her.

Act 4, Scenes 3 and 4 Analysis

In this brief section, the narrative style of the play veers temporarily into farce, a genre of comedy in which increasingly desperate characters behave in increasingly desperate ways in order to achieve a goal or to keep a secret. In general, the climax of farce involves a lot of fast-paced entrances and exits, near misses, and increasing plot complications resulting from mistaken identity. All those criteria are met in this section, the style of which serves mostly, at this point, to increase suspense. Who is going to run into whom? Who is going to discover which truth about whom? Who is going to confront whom about which mistaken identity? The point here is that suspense arises because the security of everyone's masks is extremely precarious - one false move and Hellena will know Willmore is a libertine, Pedro will know Florinda has escaped, and Belvile will be challenged about his plans to elope with Florinda. In other words, the suspense is a result of the way the play's themes are dramatized. The stage is now set for a series of confrontations that shifts the action and intent of the play in yet another, somewhat more serious, direction.

Act 4, Scene 5

Act 4, Scene 5 Summary

Blunt, wearing his underclothes and a rusty sword, speaks in soliloquy about how unhappy he is with his tailors for not providing a good suit of clothes, and then about how he hates all women in general because of what Lucetta did to him. He speaks of his wish to have a woman present so he could take his revenge, and then sits down to read a book that will instruct him on how to avoid falling victim to women's wiles in the future.

Florinda comes in, speaks in aside about how nervous she is in this empty house, and about how increasingly nervous she becomes when she sees Blunt. She gets up her courage and asks Blunt for help. He reacts first with happiness because he thinks he's now got the chance for the revenge he prayed for, and then, as Florinda asks again for help, he becomes angry, verbally and then physically attacking her as part of his revenge.

Frederick comes in, and Blunt explains what he's doing and why. Florinda protests, but Frederick agrees that Blunt is justified, referring to a woman who stole the false teeth of a friend of theirs while he slept and later made him buy them back. He and Blunt join forces and begin to drag Florinda to the bed. Florinda says she recognizes them as friends of Belvile and begs them, in his name, to treat her better. They say that Belvile would be on their side. Florinda then offers them a valuable ring as proof of her value and virtue. This makes Frederick pause, as he realizes they could be in trouble for raping a woman of quality as opposed to a prostitute. Blunt, however, refers to how Lucetta gave him a bracelet as a token of her value and virtue, saying that when he attempted to pawn it to get money to buy clothes but it turned out to be counterfeit. Frederick convinces him to wait until Belvile comes in.

A servant comes in, announcing the arrival of Belvile and Pedro. Blunt tells Frederick to hide Florinda, and then tells the servant to say that Blunt is not at home. As they go, Frederick tells Florinda she has nothing to fear.

Act 4, Scene 5 Analysis

As mentioned in the Analysis of the Prologue, it's impossible to analyze this play without keeping in mind two facts - that it was authored by a woman, and that at the time it was written, women were thought of as little more than chattel, commodities to be traded and used. This was true both of high born women like Florinda, who entered into marriages more often for the money or status they could bring to them rather than for love, and also for low-born women, prostitutes in particular, who had no choice but to live like the commodity they were believed to be. In that light, therefore, this scene can easily be interpreted as a statement against that way of valuing women, as a symbolic

representation of the way society in general, and men in particular, viewed the female gender - with mistrust, resentment, anger, lust, and the capacity for violence. It is a dramatization of the way women were viewed as something to be dominated and controlled, and as such makes the same point as Act 1 Scene 1 but in a much more visceral, less polite and ultimately less comic way. It's at this point that the play turns quite serious for at least a moment, raising the dramatic stakes and creating even more tension.

Act 5, Part 1

Act 5, Part 1 Summary

After a long, loud knocking at his door, Blunt comes in and talks with Belvile and Willmore, who are outside trying to get in. At first Blunt says he's praying, but the men outside don't believe him. He then says he's with a woman, and Willmore suggests they be allowed to come in and participate. He and the others break down the door and come in, followed by Pedro and Frederick. Willmore jokes about how Blunt is dressed, but Blunt angrily tells him he's in no mood for that kind of humor. Belvile and Willmore make jokes about the kind of woman Blunt must be with and Blunt loses his temper, saying he will not be laughed at.

Pedro apologizes for their bad manners, and says that if there was any way he could help, he would. Blunt comments that of all of them, Pedro is the only one talking sensibly, and then tells them he's got a woman with him on whom he plans to take revenge for everything that's happened, saying she attacked him and offering the ring as proof. In an aside, Belvile recognizes it as a ring he gave Florinda, and whispers to Blunt to give up both the ring and his revenge. Willmore, meanwhile, insists upon seeing the woman, and Pedro agrees, saying he's the one who can best judge whether she's a woman suited for marriage or mere diversion. Frederick starts to hand over the key, Belvile tries to take it, they argue over which of them has the best right to get the woman, and decide by drawing swords to see who has the longest. Pedro wins and goes out, Belvile frets about what will happen when Pedro discovers Florinda, and Willmore pouts because he wasn't the one who got to go.

Florinda runs in, still wearing her mask and speaking in aside about her fear of being discovered. As the men are each expressing their reactions (Belvile's fear, Willmore's confusion at seeing the woman he thinks he followed, and Pedro's determination to find out Florinda's identity), Valeria comes in. At first surprised to see Pedro, she improvises a story about how Florinda fled, disguised as one of her servants. Pedro angrily goes out in search of her, telling Belvile that he knows she'll eventually make her way to his home and that once she's there, he's to keep her there so he (Pedro) can take her home.

After Pedro goes out Florinda impulsively embraces Valeria, thanking her for the rescue. The men are confused, but then Florinda reveals herself and Valeria urges her and Belvile to marry quickly before Pedro returns. Belvile introduces Florinda to Willmore, who comments in an aside on how attractive she is. As Belvile sends a servant out to find a minister, Frederick apologizes to Florinda. She accepts the apology on the condition that he finds a woman to settle down with. As Belvile jokes that Frederick is not that kind of man, and Frederick confesses his attraction to Valeria, who reveals that they had an agreement - that if Florinda and Belvile married, they would as well. Blunt also apologizes, Florinda forgives him, and Blunt returns the ring. The servant returns with news that he's brought a minister. Belvile, Florinda, Valeria and Frederick go out to

get married as the servant tells Willmore there's a woman who's come to see him and then tells Blunt that his tailor has arrived. Blunt and the servant go out, as Willmore eagerly awaits the arrival of his visitor, whom he assumes to be his "gypsy".

Act 5, Part 1 Analysis

The action of this act, unfolding as it does in one long scene, contains the play's many climaxes, one for each subplot - the Florinda/Belvile plot, the Willmore/Angellica plot, the Blunt plot, and the Willmore/Hellena plot. This section features the climax of the Blunt plot, as his revenge on women is thwarted by Florinda's escape. It also lays the groundwork for the climax of the Belvile/Florinda plot, as they go out to get married. This is not the Belvile/Florinda subplot's climax, however. That comes later in the act, when Pedro discovers what's happened and is placed in a situation of having to choose how to act. The play's previously discussed sense of suspense continues, however, since it's not yet clear how Pedro will react, and it's not yet clear how the relationship between Willmore and the masked woman, who is clearly Angellica, will play out. The climax of that relationship forms the core action of the following section.

There is a notable double entendre in this scene - a visual one, found in the moment in which the men draw their swords as they quarrel over who has the right to retrieve the woman captured by Blunt. In essence, they're arguing over who has the right to control her. In the world of the play, and the society in which it was written and performed, control over women means sexual control, which means that drawing their swords becomes an expression of their right to take that control. This in turn means that the gesture is an expression of who has the most sexual power, which means that the swords are phallic symbols. It's the age old belief - whoever has the biggest is the most powerful. In short, this moment embodies part of the play's perspective on gender relations - that for men, it's all about whose is the biggest.

Act 5, Part 2

Act 5, Part 2 Summary

Willmore greets the masked woman happily, but then she draws a pistol and reveals herself to be Angellica, there to take revenge on him for betraying her love. She holds the pistol to his heart, he tries to convince her to calm down, she refuses, and he says he deserves to be given time to redeem himself. She demands to know how many other women he's betrayed, and then speaks at length about her pain at being taken advantage of, manipulated, and falsely loved. He protests that there's not a man alive who hasn't broken his promises to women, adding that she's too beautiful not to have broken a few hearts herself. She says he's ruined her, adding that if he hadn't convinced her to love him, she'd have remained secure and strong in the belief that men could, and should, be dominated. Willmore says he wishes he were the kind of man she seems to want, and that he hopes he can be the kind of woman to which he can return after he's had experiences with other women. He offers her a bag of gold but she refuses it, saying she has a duty to protect others of her gender from him. She draws closer with the gun.

Antonio suddenly comes in, having seen and recognized Angellica's carriage. He takes the gun from her, saying there must be someone among all the men she's been with that she could have asked to act on her behalf. He recognizes Willmore as the man who dishonored Angellica by taking down her picture, and aims the gun at him. Angellica tries to stop him, but Willmore takes out his sword and prepares to defend himself. Angellica tells Antonio again to stop. Pedro comes in, unnoticed, recognizes Antonio, and watches as he agrees to spare Willmore because Antonio loves her so much. Angellica comments that that was exactly the way Willmore talked to her, and then turns to Willmore and says because she has so much contempt for him, she's going to let him live without the chance to defend his honor ... such as it is.

As Angellica goes out Antonio starts to follow, but Pedro stops him, asking why he didn't show up at the appointed time for their duel. At first Antonio doesn't recognize him, but then explains that he sent someone in his stead. Pedro says that this shows how little esteem he has for Florinda and her honor, and challenges him to another duel. Antonio agrees, and goes out. Pedro comments that he might actually be well disposed to approve the marriage of Florinda and the apparently more honorable Belvile. Willmore tells him they're in the process of getting married, Pedro erupts with anger and threatens to attack Belvile for taking such a liberty, but Willmore says he's got a crew of sailors nearby who'd be more than willing to subdue Pedro until the marriage is complete.

Belvile returns. Pedro congratulates him and wishes him joy. At first Belvile reacts with surprise, but Pedro says he'll explain later. They go out to join Florinda. As Willmore is about to follow them, Hellena comes in, still disguised as a man.

Act 5, Part 2 Analysis

There are two climaxes in this section. The first is the climax of the Angellica/Willmore plot, in which it's revealed that Angellica's feelings, both about Willmore and about her status as an independent woman are revealed to have more depth than originally believed. But as was the case with the Blunt/Florinda confrontation in Act 4 Scene 5, there is a deeper level of meaning here. Again within the context of awareness of both the playwright's gender and agenda, it's possible to see Angellica's revenge as representing the revenge that all women would like to take or should be prepared to take, at least in the playwright's mind. What's interesting to note is the way Angellica not only stops Antonio from taking her revenge for her, but refuses to follow through herself. There is perhaps a commentary in this on women's changeability, but it's also possible that in that moment Angellica becomes aware that Willmore is as unworthy of her anger as he is unworthy of her love. As a result, there is a possible comment here that women are above the petty, sexually-oriented intrigues and conflicts triggered by men's desires.

The second climax in this section resolves the Florinda/Belvile plot, as Pedro finally realizes that his attempts at controlling Florinda have come to naught. There are echoes here of the resolution of the Willmore/Angellica plot, and also a foreshadowing of the resolution yet to come of the Hellena/Willmore plot. In all three plots, the women end up living their lives on their terms, thereby again expressing the playwright's gender-defined perspectives on the value of women. It's interesting to note that Hellena sets the final climax of the play in motion while still wearing her disguise as a man. It's possible to see that here the playwright is making yet another point about gender relations - that women have to act like men, decisively and aggressively in the way Hellena does, in order to achieve their goals.

A key aspect of all the climaxes in this scene is the removal of masks, literal, emotional, and metaphorical. Everyone eventually knows everything about the other, everyone is free to love whom they've always wanted to love, and everyone is free to live their lives on their own terms. The thematically relevant point here, another aspect to the relationships between people and their masks, is that honest truth and perspective can lead to freedom from the necessity for masks and self-protection.

Act 5, Part 3

Act 5, Part 3 Summary

Willmore greets Hellena happily, saying he'd given up hope of seeing her again. It must be remembered that at this point he still doesn't know who she truly is, believing that she's the gypsy girl. She quizzes him on how good a husband he'd be, and he admits that he wouldn't be perfect. He then asks what she'd bring to the marriage, and she says she'd only bring herself, having no money, family or name. He says it doesn't matter, adding that he adores her for her good nature. She urges him to hurry, he urges her to join him in bed, and she says she will as soon as they're legally married. He says he doesn't want to be married, only to enjoy love. She refuses, saying all she'll get out of that is a baby and loneliness. He tries to kiss her into doing things his way, but she refuses and starts to go out. He agrees to marry her and kisses her hand, suggesting that they reveal their names to each other. Willmore refers to himself as "Robert the Constant", and Hellena refers to herself as "Hellena the Inconstant".

Belvile, Pedro, Florinda, Frederick, and Valeria come in and each recognizes Hellena. Hellena tells Willmore to defend their right to love. Pedro becomes angry with her for deceiving him, and for deceiving heaven but Hellena says there will be plenty of time to make peace with both. Pedro then accuses Belvile of convincing Hellena to be as false as Florinda, but Belvile says he had nothing to do with it, adding that Wellmore may be just a sailor but he's still a good man. Willmore says he loved Hellena before he knew who she was or how much money she had, and that he still desires to marry her. Hellena says she's decided that the money left to her by her uncle will be better used in marriage than in convent life, and calls for the others to support her. They do, and Pedro agrees to the match, warning that Willmore had better treat her well or he'll be in trouble.

Blunt appears, dressed foolishly in exotic and ill fitting clothes and complaining loudly about it. As Belvile tells him to not worry so much, a servant appears and announces the arrivals of masqueraders. They come in and dance, Belvile offers them a meal, and Willmore says he and Hellena will join them later, after they've been married. As the others go, he and Hellena joke about how fearless they both have to be, since there's nothing more dangerous than marriage.

An Epilogue comments pointedly on how fickle and difficult to please audiences are, but then suggests that nowhere will they see people more like themselves than on the stage.

Act 5, Part 3 Analysis

This section contains the play's final climax, in the confrontation between Hellena and Willmore. As previously discussed, there are similarities here to the other climaxes, with

Hellena insisting, in the same way as Angellica and Florinda, that she live her life on her own terms. She refuses to give in to Willmore's sexual temptations, she refuses to give in to Pedro's bullying, and there's little doubt that in her married life she'll be continuing along the same path. Here again is reinforcement of one of the playwright's central premises; women can and should be in control of their own destinies. It's interesting to note that Hellena makes the particular point that she's not only in control of her heart but also her money, something that at the time would have been quite revolutionary. At the same time, the names by which she and Willmore refer to themselves are clearly ironic, as they each seem to be more appropriate to the other person. This can be interpreted as Willmore making a kind of vow to Hellena to be the way she wants him to be, while her reference to herself as inconstant can be seen as an indication that she knows exactly what he's all about, and will make sure that he doesn't act that way with her.

The question is, at this point, whether it's truly possible for Willmore to be a good and faithful husband, whether he's changed or whether he's still the same libertine he's been throughout the play. It must be remembered that even though he flirted with and followed other women, he's always indicated the desire to come back to his "little gypsy", suggesting the possibility that on some level he truly does feel something for her he's never felt for the others. It's also important to remember that he did, in fact protest that he longed to love a woman who dealt with him with integrity (Act 4, Scene 2, Part 2). Another point to consider is that the play is called *The Rover*, the nickname by which Belvile referred to Willmore in Act 1 Scene 2. This suggests that on some level the play is about him, that it's possible to interpret the story as being at least partly about his journey of transformation from a sexually aggressive and needy user of women to a happy and contented married man. It may be, in fact, that the core question of the play is which is Willmore's mask, the libertine or the husband-to-be? Which aspect of himself was he putting on, and which was the truth? Given that at the conclusion of the play all the other characters seem to be without their masks, it's possible to infer that Willmore, too, is without his, meaning that his repeated lusting after women was just a pose, or a habit - a false and foolish mask.

This idea is reinforced by the appearance of Blunt in clothes that would, it's safe to assume, provoke laughter in both other characters and the audience. He is, essentially, coming in wearing another mask or disguise, the foolishness of which reinforces the play's thematic point about the foolishness of masks, particularly since nobody else is wearing theirs anymore. The Epilogue takes this point one step further, suggesting that audiences are themselves blinded by masks if they can't see themselves, their foibles and characteristics, when they appear on stage in front of them. Here the play is essentially saying that anyone watching the play is, in his or her own way, a "rover" - avoiding who both they and the people they look at truly are by seeing only what they want to see.

Characters

Don Antonio

Don Antonio, a Spanish nobleman and the wealthy son of a Viceroy of Spain, has been betrothed to Florinda, through an agreement with his good friend, Florinda's brother, Don Pedro. However, Don Antonio is intrigued with the courtesan, Angellica. It is apparent that if he marries Florinda as planned, he will keep Angellica as a mistress, too. Don Antonio fights with the English gentlemen over the right to visit Angellica and is wounded by Willmore in a brawl. Eventually, Don Antonio gives up his claim on Florinda and forms a bond with Angellica, whom he nobly undertakes to support, after her career as a courtesan is ruined.

Colonel Belvile

Belvile is an honorable and steadfast English colonel who fell in love with Florinda when he protected her from an attack during the siege of Pamplona. Belvile is one of many exiled English-men traveling around Europe during the Interregnum, the period after the beheading of Charles I and before the reinstatement of his son, Charles II. Unlike his English fellows, Belvile is not interested in any of the many courtesans in Naples but pines away for his true love. He hopes to find her in Naples and marry her. However, it is Belvile's bad luck to get himself into countless situations that make it difficult for him to meet Florinda and elope with her as they had planned.

Angellica Bianca

Angellica is a famous courtesan who at the time of the play's events has just lost her benefactor, Don Pedro's wealthy uncle, who had been paying her monthly expenses of 1,000 crowns. Now she is advertising for a new lover, so she has placed three portraits of herself on the outside of her palatial home, along with the price. Angellica is accustomed to a life of luxury, but she has paid for it by sacrificing her honor and virginity for the riches she extracts from the men who fall prey to her seductive beauty. For Angellica, being a courtesan is a matter of survival and independence; to fall in love would ruin her, for then she would be at the mercy of the men she uses. Unfortunately, she falls hopelessly in love with one of the worst sort of men, Captain Willmore, who wants only physical satisfaction and not a love relationship. After being "undone" by Willmore, Don Antonio graciously offers to be her lifelong companion, thus removing her from the need to market her body.

Ned Blunt

Blunt is a country gentleman and not as sophisticated as his friend Belvile. His favorite oath, "adsheartlikins" gives him away as a landed country bumpkin, a stock character.

Blunt foolishly believes that a courtesan has fallen in love with his manly physique, and thus he proves an easy mark for her ruse to take him to her house and defrock him of his valuables and clothing. Blunt fears that his friends will laugh at him for his misfortune, since he had bragged overmuch of his conquest before he went with the "wench." This fuels his desire for revenge, which he nearly takes upon Florinda, the next woman he meets in the street, whom he mistakes for a harlot and whom he intends to rape brutally to avenge his wounded pride. When his friends do in fact laugh at him, Blunt goes into a rage, spluttering that he is "not an ass to be laughed at." He lacks their gentlemanly power of restraint and decorum. Blunt is further humiliated when, ironically, a local tailor sews him a Spanish costume, "the mode of a nation [he] abominate[s]," instead of a "proper" English one.

Callis

Callis is governess to Florinda and Hellena. She is sympathetic to their plights, and so she willingly assists them in deceiving their brother Don Pedro so that they can enjoy the carnival in Naples. They are not so loyal to her, however, for when Florinda decides to run away from her brother's home to find and marry Belvile, Valeria pushes Callis into a chest and locks her in, to give Florinda time to escape. Neither Florinda nor Hellena shows any remorse for this subterfuge.

Florinda

Florinda is the only pure and innocent young woman in the play. Florinda is a noblewoman who has been betrothed to wizened old Don Vincentio by her father, but since she and her sister and brother are away in Naples, she has been able to put this out of her mind. In the meantime, she has fallen in love with the English Colonel Belvile, who protected her and her brother when they were besieged in Pamplona and whom she hopes to marry. Her brother, however, has different plans. Being out of the purview of their father, he hopes to confer his sister and her sizeable dowry on his friend Don Antonio. Don Pedro thinks his plan will please his sister, since Don Antonio is young and handsome. To this plan Florinda is blithely unaware, until she gets a rude awakening when her brother announces that she must marry Don Antonio the next day. Thus Florinda is willing to accompany her more adventurous sister Hellena in a final night on the town so that they each can experience a taste of love and so that Florinda can hopefully speak to Belvile of her plight. During their adventure, Florinda is twice nearly raped, first by a drunken Willmore and then by Blunt, bent on revenge against women in general and harlots in particular.

Frederick

Frederick is an English gentleman and friend to Belvile and Ned Blunt. Frederick shares Blunt's anger at the courtesans of Naples who strip Blunt of his belongings and his clothes. Thus, he is easily convinced to help Blunt rape the innocent Florinda in

revenge, when they mistake her for a whore. However, he convinces Blunt to stop when Florinda mentions that she knows Belvile, and thus proves she is a "maid of quality" and not a harlot.

Hellena

Florinda's younger sister, lively Hellena, is destined for the nunnery, a common destination for younger sisters since the Medieval period. Before being carted off to a life of devotion devoid of men and fun, Hellena intends to spend an evening on the town in Naples, searching for "a saint of [her] own to pray to" so that she can experience the "sighs" and "wishes" of being in love. She and her sister don masks and colorful clothing so that they can masquerade as courtesans and flirt openly in this society that frowns on such behavior from "women of quality." Hellena feels confident in her ability to play with love and not be smitten, but smitten she is, by the quintessential rover himself, Captain Willmore. Both of them espouse a policy of loving and leaving, and in this they prove a perfect match for each other. So perfect is their match that even the dour Don Pedro approves their marriage, and therefore Hellena does not have to cloister herself in a nunnery after all.

Lucetta

Lucetta is a common whore who seduces the naïve Ned Blunt into meeting her at her house to consummate their passion. He fails to recognize the harlot's trick, and she gets him to remove all of his clothes, while she steals out of the room and locks him in it. Although she enjoys stealing his belongings, she expresses some regret that he did not at least get a chance to enjoy her favors before he was stripped of his possessions. Her paramour Phillipo has no such regrets and in fact finds his passions inflamed by the thought of her being with another man.

Moretta

Moretta is Angellica's servant and is herself a courtesan to less wealthy patrons. Moretta tries to steer Angellica away from Willmore, for she sees that he does not have a noble heart. Her warnings go unwarranted and unwelcome.

Don Pedro

Don Pedro is a Spanish nobleman who has been left in charge of his two sisters in their father's absence. Don Pedro follows the European tradition of marrying off the older sister, Florinda, and committing his younger sister, Hellena, to the nunnery. Florinda's sizable dowry makes her an excellent gift for his good friend, Don Antonio. Don Pedro tries to protect his sisters' virginity by keeping them out of society.

Phillipo

Lover of the whore Lucetta, Phillipo feels fully justified in bilking an Englishman, due to the long rivalry between Spain and England. The idea that Lucetta nearly went to bed with Blunt makes Phillipo feel "wanton," so he goes to bed with her himself.

Sancho

Lucetta's pimp, Sancho leads the naïve Blunt to Lucetta's house, for what Blunt thinks will be an amorous tryst but which Sancho knows will be his undoing.

Valeria

Valeria, whose name connotes the Latin-based word "valiant" is cousin to Florinda and Hellena. Valeria finds the costumes and masks that the three of them wear to disguise their noblewoman's demeanor and masquerade as courtesans. Valeria falls in love with the English gentleman Frederick, and they marry at the end of the play.

Captain Willmore

Captain Willmore, the rover, is an English sailor traveling with the exiled Prince (Charles II) and who is on leave after many months at sea without any women. A man without a conscience, Willmore wants nothing more than to enjoy the pleasures of as many women as possible during his brief stay in Naples. Willmore is a smooth talker, who charms both lady and courtesan, and he repeatedly manages to earn back their love even after they catch him in another tryst. Nor does he scruple to take their money. While drunk, he attempts to rape a noblewoman. He meets his match in Hellena, who shares his appetite for adventure and love and whose streak of bold independence may inspire him to fidelity.

Themes

Marriage and Courtship

Women in seventeenth-century Europe had few options in terms of marriage and courtship. They could not initiate relations with men, and often their parents made the final decision about whom they would marry. Families sometimes used marriages to seal business and political relationships, ignoring the daughter's interests. The practice of paying a dowry (by the bride's family to the groom's family) was also still common. Most families would invest their dowry money in the eldest daughter, vying to marry her into the best family possible. Younger daughters often were consigned to a convent, thus reducing expenses, while at the same time "contributing" to the church. In poorer families, prostitution became a viable option. Once married, often to a man she neither knew nor liked, a woman became his property, as did all of her belongings. With no means to prevent pregnancies, the wife became a baby "machine," producing heirs for the family and very often mourning their early deaths, since child mortality rates were shockingly high. Nevertheless, men expected sexual gratification from their wives (as well as from their mistresses) and required obedience and fidelity. This restrictive state of affairs inspired Mary Wollstonecraft over a hundred years later to quip that for women marriage was little more than "legalized prostitution."

In *The Rover*, Aphra Behn portrays the typical pattern of options available to women. As the eldest, Florinda is to be married to a man of her father's choosing. Hellena wryly describes the loveless marriage-bed that lies in store for Florinda if she marries the aging Don Vincentio. However, since their father is away, her brother has jurisdiction over her and has chosen his best friend as her mate. Hellena, he has dispatched to a nunnery. She has come home for a brief visit before taking her vows. Neither Florinda nor Hellena wants to obey Pedro's wishes, yet they have no recourse but to try to enjoy a day and night of freedom before their fates are sealed. That they both end up with the man they love and the freedom to marry him is nothing more than a matter of blind luck.

Prostitution

For women without a man or a family fortune to keep them, with no education and no money of their own, prostitution was a way to capitalize on their youth to try to gain a measure of independence and to avoid downright poverty. Across Europe, trade in female virtue was tolerated by the public and by the church. In England, Puritan pressure had resulted in parliamentary acts making "fornication" punishable by three-month prison sentences, even in remote villages. Cromwell's moral strictures resulted in a dramatic reduction in prostitution. However, Charles II ended this period of moral restraint by setting a personal example of licentiousness and by expressing permissiveness in his rule. Prostitution was not only reinstated, it was actually embraced as a form of "sophisticated" behavior associated with the court. For women

who aspired to a wealthy clientele, the new career of the actress offered the perfect opportunity to display their "wares" and attract new clients.

The social and moral climate of Restoration England explains the centrality of the beautiful Angellica to the plot of *The Rover*. As a sought-after courtesan who can name her own price, she represents the idealized/romanticized version of prostitution that tempted women of all classes and titillated men's fantasies. At the same time, the moral lesson she receives after having fallen in love with a potential client would have appealed to the Puritan sympathizers in the audience. Also apparent in Behn's play is the clear distinction that was made between "ladies of quality" and "whores." Frederick, who nearly gang-rapes Florinda, along with Blunt, exclaims that he would not want to be "trussed up for a rape upon a maid of quality when we only believe we ruffle a harlot." The shift in terminology from "rape," which is an act of violence, to "ruffle," which connotes a harmless trifle, aptly represents the vast difference in social responsibility between the two classes of women. The distinction between women seeking men for marriage and women who sell themselves for money lies at the heart of Behn's play. As Elin Diamond explains in her essay "*Gestus* and the Signature in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*," this play "thematizes the marketing of women in marriage and prostitution."

Style

Masks

It is not surprising that, when in 1790 playwright John Kemble revised *The Rover* to remove its distasteful elements for the more prudish audiences of a later century, he renamed the piece *Love in Many Masks.* Many of the characters, but especially the roving females, wear masks in *The Rover* to hide their identity and allow them to move freely in a different environment. Characters in masks may cross social boundaries with ease and play-act different social roles from their usual ones. Thus, the character may live out a fantasy or intrude upon a scene to which he or she would otherwise be denied.

Behn's characters use their masks both for freedom of movement and to hide their identity. Hellena and Florinda, two noble ladies, want to explore the underworld of the carnival and experiment with sensuality, without being detected. Unmarried young ladies were not permitted to visit the carnival, and their brother kept them under strict control. By wearing masks, Hellena, Florinda, and their cousin Valeria attend the carnival without his knowledge. In addition, the masks allow them to behave like prostitutes and be accepted as such, even though they are not competent in the world of the courtesan. The mask frees them to experiment with the provocative language, dress, and gesture of the prostitute and to express their sexuality in a freer environment, where such behavior is not only acceptable but expected.

The mask also affects the audience's view of the character. Because the mask is rigid and therefore does not convey the nuances of facial expressions, the actor must compensate with dialogue and with clear, even exaggerated, pantomime actions. This behavior would have heightened the audience's experience of the female body on display, while the mask would free the viewers to gaze on the actresses' bodies without a sense of shame. The same dynamics were repeated in the audience, where a number of women in the disguise of the mask could be seen but not identified.

Discovery Scene

The discovery scene, often called the "screen scene," involves one or more characters eavesdropping on other characters. The construction of the Restoration theater offered several places where an eavesdropper could be visible to the audience yet seemingly undetected by the other actors on the front of the stage. The theater at Dorset Garden introduced several innovations, including archways on either side of the proscenium, with doors below and balconies above. From one of these spots, an eavesdropping actor could listen and watch, pantomiming reactions to the other characters. Before such changes were introduced to the theater, an actor might hide from the other characters behind a screen or piece of furniture, thus the alternate term "screen scene."

Discovery scenes abound in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*. From her balcony, Angellica observes Willmore's infatuation with his gypsy beauty (Hellena) as he flirts with her immediately after vowing his undying love for Angellica. This undetected observation confirms Angellica's suspicion that Willmore is an inconstant lover. It also communicates to the audience the depth of Angellica's feelings.

Audience Aside

Aphra Behn made liberal use of the "aside" to convey the fears and thoughts of her characters. In fact, there are sixty-five of them in *The Rover*. An aside is a comment directed toward the audience in a stage whisper that the other characters do not hear. Thus, there is an assumption of candor from a character who breaks the action to address a comment to the audience. Often, Behn uses the aside to chronicle the emotional reactions of an eavesdropping character to the action he or she witnesses. This way, the audience hears the character's disposition to what has happened. When Hellena discovers Willmore's interest in Angellica, the audience does not yet know she has fallen in love with him, so her jealousy, communicated in brief asides, conveys her feelings and also helps to move the plot forward. In other places, Behn's use of the aside reinforces the physical action, making sure that the audience understands them. For example, when the lovers parlay with each other from behind masks, the asides help the audience distinguish the characters from each other. At other times, the aside serves to communicate a character's intention, which may not turn out as he or she expects. For example, when Angellica remarks, "His words go to the very soul of me," the audience can tell that she is truly falling in love with him, that her seductive manner is not simply motivated by the usual goals of a courtesan with a prospective client. Behn uses the aside in the manner typical of Restoration dramatists. The technique would later evolve into one that underscored the comedic elements of the play, but throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the aside served to inform the audience of a character's true inner feelings and intentions.

Historical Context

The Restoration

The Restoration refers to the reinstatement of a monarch as the seat of government in England, following twenty years of civil war. Charles II, who had spent eleven years in exile after the overthrow and beheading of his father, Charles I, was restored to the throne, with his rule now officially constrained by a reinstated Parliament. This Parliament had gained power from the fact that wealthy landowners had successfully toppled a king. No longer would a king of England enjoy the independence of absolute rule.

Charles I had brought this crisis of royal authority on himself when he unilaterally dismissed Parliament and attempted to run the country alone in 1629. Although he succeeded in strengthening the financial and social unity of Britain through his personal leadership during the next eleven years, his decision had grave consequences. Unfortunately, Charles I, a cold and calculating man but not an insightful one, had failed to recognize the need for a "safety valve" for contrary opinions that the Parliament had provided. Despite his obvious skill in administration, public resentment grew, fanned by the king's attempt to increase the power of the Anglican Church over the realm.

The first crack in his authority occurred when he attempted to institute Anglican practices in Scotland. This and other unwanted authoritarian measures there sparked an uprising that he could not suppress, for without funding from the wealthy landowners of the Parliament his armed forces were outnumbered by Scottish forces, and he had to back down. He needed Parliament to help him raise funds and support, but he was too proud to reconvene it. The angry Scots actually invaded England, further deteriorating his authority. Forced to call upon a new Parliament to buy them off, Charles had to bargain with an empowered group of landowners. His brittleness in doing so led to civil war between Royalists and Parliamentarians. This conflict ended with his public beheading in 1649 and the establishment of the "Commonwealth" under Oliver Cromwell, a Puritan. Cromwell wielded unprecedented power over the Parliament and ultimately declared himself "Lord Protector," granting himself almost monarchic power. During this period, Puritan values held sway. Cromwell's tyranny ended with his death in 1658, and his son's brief and ineffective rule led the Parliament to request that the exiled son of Charles I return to rule them.

Charles II came to power knowing that his regime would be unlike that of any previous monarch in England. His father had been killed by Parliament, through a "legal" process. Now an empowered Parliament, the one that had restored him to the throne, would act as a check on his rule. His power lay in his ability to negotiate with this institution. In this he succeeded, and although he secretly yearned for the absolutist rule of his forbears, he was, in many ways, too lazy to achieve it.

Restoration Theater

During his exile, Charles II had been a cavalier, roaming the continent with a band of royalist followers. When Charles II regained the throne after eighteen years of the Puritan government led by Oliver Cromwell and Cromwell's son, he restored the theater in London. During the time of Puritan rule, theaters had been burned down and stripped of their property, and those actors who dared to present informal dramas were publicly whipped for encouraging "immoral" behavior. Charles II also established two acting companies, led by Thomas Killigrew and Sir William D'Avenant. They built two royal theaters and set up a system of actors' contracts, thus creating a monopoly on acting that would last for almost two hundred years. A dozen other smaller theaters sprouted up very quickly, but the Duke's Theatre in Dorset Gardens was the largest of the new theaters and one of the best. Most of Aphra Behn's plays were produced there, including *The Rover*, her most popular play. The larger theaters probably seated about five hundred spectators.

One of the innovative attractions was a new system of scenery. Now that theaters were enclosed under a protective roof, semipermanent scenes were built and moved about on the stage by a series of tracks. A sense of depth was created by a layering of these painted scenic walls. Ropes and other devices hanging from the ceiling made it possible to lower actors and props from the "heavens," and devices mounted within the two side wings could propel items across the stage. A pit in the front of the stage contained an orchestra, for music was played before, after, and sometimes during the plays. Numerous candles were placed along the front and sides of the stage for footlights. Because of the candles, the audience was just as illuminated as the stage, and often the presence of royalty would distract from the performance. The audience enjoyed the portrayal of stock characters held up for their ridicule as much as they enjoyed watching the pretensions and antics of the audience members around them.

Either bowing to popular sentiment or due to his own fascination with the opposite sex (he had more than fifteen mistresses, some of whom were actresses), Charles II defied theatrical tradition by declaring that women not only could but should play the parts of female characters. However, to become an actress, in fact to have any association with the theater, amounted to social suicide for women. Acting was equated with prostitution, for both avocations involved portraying oneself in public. Many actresses were treated as prostitutes and in fact became them, out of financial necessity or as a result of being rejected by society. On the stage, women's roles were often treated as an opportunity to put women on display as sexual objects. For example, a female character might be caught in a state of undress or might be pushed provocatively onto a bed. In *The Rover*, Willmore expresses great delight when he learns that his "gypsy" (Hellena) is a nun, for this makes his conquest of her even more titillating, for him and for the audience.

Naples, Italy

Compared to England with its considerable Puritan influence, Naples in the seventeenth century was a den of iniquity. Having lost some of its affluence after a series of conflicts with other city-states that began a period of recession, Naples, a town of about three thousand people, was in decline. Spain took control of it, and wealthy Spanish rulers owned the finer homes and swaggered around town, bringing with them their culture of the vendetta. Bandits roamed the streets, and many women resorted to prostitution as a profitable way to earn a living. The port of Naples brought many clients to them. In general, the town-dwellers were slightly better off financially than the peasants from the surrounding area, who barely had enough to eat and who dressed in rags.

The cavaliers of *The Rover* represented the gentlemen and nobles who were exiled along with Charles II when his father was executed. Because their money went farther in towns like Naples, they were able to live out a fantasy life of adventure there with little expense.

Critical Overview

Aphra Behn wrote and staged five plays before producing *The Rover* on March 24, 1677. Her reputation as a woman of letters was established enough for her to be included in a published list of playwrights called *Theatrum Poetarum,* compiled by her contemporary Edward Phillips. Despite her reputation, Behn published *The Rover* anonymously, perhaps because her play was an adaptation of another contemporary playwright, Thomas Killigrew. Behn had condensed his ten-act drama and turned it into a comedy, but as a woman writer, she was especially vulnerable to charges of plagiarism. It was not until the third issue of the printed play that she dared to include her name as its author. She did, however, append to her next anonymously published comedy the phrase "the Author of the *Rover*."

The Rover was an immediate success and a constant favorite in major theaters for the next sixty years. Charles II loved the play and arranged for a private viewing of it. *The Rover* became so popular that in 1730 it was simultaneously being produced in three different London theaters, and leading actors played encore performances year after year. At times, audiences considered Captain Willmore to be the title character, whereas other audiences thought Hellena was the rover. The sensibilities of the age also dictated the way the roles were played and understood. Early Willmore characters were handsome and dashing, and he was seen as the hero of the play. At times, the performances emphasized the tragic victimhood (eighteenth century) of the women, whereas at other times the women were seen as plucky heroines (nineteenth century). A famous eighteenth-century actress, Elizabeth Barry, played the role of Angellica more than forty times and occasionally received equal or higher billing than her male counterparts, a rare honor for an actress. However, as the morals of the eighteenth century became more conservative, the play was produced less often, and when it was produced, the bawdier elements were edited out. John Kemble adapted *The Rover* to create a less racy version called *Love in Many Masks* (1790) that was produced in place of Behn's play. The nineteenth century continued to disparage Behn; a nineteenth-century woman writer, Julia Kavanagh (as quoted in Todd's *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn*) stated in her 1863 book, *English Women of Letters: Biographical Sketches,* that Behn's plays are "so coarse as to offend even a coarse age." A reviewer for the January 1872 *Saturday Review* (as quoted in Janet Todd's *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn*) marveled that anyone would bother to publish her work, exclaiming that "if Mrs. Behn is read at all, it can only be from a love of impurity for its own sake, for rank indecency of the dullest, stupidest, grossest kind, unrelieved by the faintest gleam of wit and sensibility."

Behn was rescued by nascent feminists in the early twentieth century. In 1927, Vita Sackville-West published the famous Behn biography called *Aphra Behn: The Incomparable Astrea.* Sackville-West's good friend Virginia Woolf mentions Behn in her book *A Room of One's Own,* noting with pleasure that after Aphra Behn, "shady and amorous as she was," a woman could "earn five hundred a year by [her] wits."

More recently, beginning in the 1970s, critics consider Behn an early feminist, and by 1985 Behn merited inclusion in the *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women,* edited by feminists Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. A 1986 revival of the play, with Jeremy Irons as a lovable rake, inspired a reviewer in London's *Daily Mail* (as quoted in Janet Todd's *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn*) to pronounce the playwright "no longer a has-Behn." Feminists generally have not admired Willmore, seeing him as a sinister villain who flourishes in what Jane Spencer describes in *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* as a "'rape culture' in which men are defined by their power over women and other men, and women are unable to escape being defined by men's views of their sexuality." At the same time, they view Hellena as a heroine; Heidi Hutner praises Behn for "rescu[ing]" Hellena—a washed-out, aging whore in Killigrew's play—and making her a strong and bold female protagonist who rebels against the patriarchal system. Feminist critics continue to debate whether Behn can be termed an early feminist or not. In fact, some contemporary critics find that Behn is overused by feminists; in her 1998 article, "Appropriating Aphra," Elizabeth Schafer accuses feminists of appropriating Behn for their own purposes, "because there is money to be made through feminism in our culture at the moment." Some of these feminist critics, according to Schafer, distort Behn's original purpose as they bend her text to their own critical purposes. Aphra Behn's profound and saucy play continues to strike a responsive chord in contemporary audiences and to inspire critics to ponder her motivation and intention in writing this provocative comedy.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5
- Critical Essay #6
- Critical Essay #7
- Critical Essay #8

Critical Essay #1

Hamilton is an English teacher at Cary Academy, a private college preparatory school in Cary, North Carolina. In this essay, Hamilton examines the use of the concept of a "performative space" in Behn's play as a means for the expression of illicit desires.

The setting of carnival time in Naples in Aphra Behn's play *The Rover* allows two sets of characters to explore their sexual desires in a "performative space" that grants them an unusual amount of freedom from external constraint, from public view, and from suffering the consequences of their actions. The term "performative space" refers to the way that characters on and off the stage respond to differing expectations that are associated with place and dress. *The Rover* explores three performative spaces: the carnival world, the theater, and London society. Carnival time is the epitome of a special performative space. Carnival goers for various reasons take advantage of the anonymity of this masked affair to engage in relationships that would otherwise be denied to them, because of their class or gender. Since the carnival represents the world turned upside down, carnival time in Naples is a time for experimenting with role reversals. In Behn's play, some of the reversals "stick," generating actual changes in destiny. Just as these role reversals are enacted within the plot of Behn's *The Rover*, the theatrical space presents a performative space for audience members, too, as a place to experiment with role modification. Aphra Behn understands this function of theater, and she provides models on the stage for audience members eager to learn the seductive ways of, for example, the professional courtesan. Finally, Behn is attuned to the limited and limiting performative space occupied by women in London society. She defiantly uses her skill as a writer to create a new, public performative space for female playwrights.

During carnival time, a mood of licentiousness descends upon Naples, a city that in the seventeenth century was not known for its prudishness in the first place. Wearing costumes and masks to hide their identities, the participants are free to act on impulses they would otherwise suppress. The carnival offers a perfect opportunity for two unmarried sisters, according to critic Heidi Hutner in "Revisioning the Female Boyd," to "ramble: to leave the house, to speak their minds, to approach men of their choice." Going against her brother's command that she be locked up in the house until Lent, Hellena goes to the carnival to find a man and feel "the vanity and power" of being desirable to him. Dressed as a gypsy, she acts like one, displaying her body provocatively and pretending to read Willmore's palm, while hiding behind her mask. The freedom of carnival time lets her act upon impulses that a young lady would not normally indulge. For the male characters, too, carnival time gives people license to act out sexual desires. As Willmore exclaims to his fellow cavaliers, "'tis a kind of legal authorized fornication, where the men are not chid for't, nor the women despised, as among our dull English." They, too, wear masks to avoid being held accountable for the consequences of their dallying. Captain Willmore and his friends plan to take advantage of the sexual freedoms of young ladies in a carnival mood. The men drink, too, and drunkenness opens up a performative space that excuses swinish behavior. When Willmore blames his attempted rape of Florinda on the "influence" of the "cursed sack"

he had been drinking, the others readily accept this excuse. But it is not just drink that influences Willmore: he responds to the influence of the performative space he occupies. The setting of the carnival is a catalyst that compels the characters to act compulsively. The mask, too, plays a role. As renowned theater director Peter Hall describes in his book *Exposed by the Mask,* even actors playing a part discover the liberating effect of the mask: "He [the actor] can change his age, his bearing, his physique, even his sexuality. The change comes from using parts of himself that perhaps he did not know existed and from suppressing others irrelevant to this new person." Each of the masked characters in *The Rover* is freed by his or her mask to explore new ways of behaving. And the transformations are sudden: Valeria expresses amazement at how quickly they fell into the role of a gypsy, seeming to have "learnt this trade of gipsies as readily as if we had been bred upon the road to Loretto." Hellena has so quickly found the love she sought that she is still spinning from the experience, and she asks herself, "What the deuce should this be now that I feel?" She has been smitten by love but also by a way of being, of taking control over her own life. She would like to occupy this performative space for longer than a day.

Hellena, like her namesake from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* awkwardly plays the role of the huntress, thus reversing the traditional roles in the amorous battle of the sexes. Behn's Hellena would prefer a permanent carnival-like performative space, a world turned upside down in terms of courtship. She says, "I don't intend that every he that likes me shall have me, but he that I like." Behn fashioned her Hellena after Shakespeare's Helena, not the Hellena from Thomas Killigrew's play *Thomaso; or, The Wanderer,* the play she adapted. Behn replaced Killigrew's Hellena, "an old decayed blind, out of fashion whore . . . that has neither teeth nor eyes," with a young miss who knows herself to be "well shaped," "clean-limbed," and "sweet-breathed." The playwright also reversed the old Hellena's fortune so that the young noblewoman could express what Behn (and the aging prostitute) knew to be true: that "a handsome woman has a great deal to do while her face is good." Therefore, Behn's Hellena dons the costume and inhabits the performative space of a prostitute, pinning advertisements to her clothing to underscore her purpose, in case anyone missed it. To all eyes, Hellena *is* a whore. From the perspective of the viewer, the "play-acting . . . and reality. . . collapse into each other, and the boundaries of performative and essential self becomes indistinct," as Derek Hughes explains in his work *The Theatre of Aphra Behn.* To Willmore, Hellena really is his "gipsie girl," and he does not comprehend that she is a titled lady until he hears it twice.

For Hellena's part, performance and reality have merged, for she continues the relationship as a hybrid of her gypsy persona with her identity of a mischievous nun-to-be. She has merged the two identities by enacting the gypsy part in the performative space of the carnival, and the resultant woman is equal to the challenge of taming the Rover's wandering habits. Although, as Heidi Hutner points out, she is "brought back into the patriarchal fold," when she requires and gets her brother's approval, she occupies her own performative space within the marriage. In *The Rover*, Behn raises significant questions about the extent to which the social/sexual self truly represents the essential self. In seventeenth-century London, the traditional performative space for marriageable women was confining; even a gypsy, common prostitute, or high-priced

courtesan had more freedom. Behn also demonstrated that in the courtship marketplace it was often difficult to distinguish one mode of performance from the other, for the lady and the prostitute had to employ similar tactics to get by in life.

As in the carnival, within the performative space of the theater itself, it was also often difficult to distinguish between prostitute and lady of quality. The theater was the other public forum where masked prostitutes masqueraded as ladies of quality. In the theater, they could rub shoulders with women of quality, some of whom wore masks to playact as prostitutes. Thus, the audience was, in some ways, another world turned upside down. Charles II had reinstated the theater after twenty years of grim Puritan suppression, and here he wanted to celebrate his triumph over them. Many of the plays he supported legitimized his own licentious behavior by staging it for the audience to celebrate with him. His interest in theater created a new performative space for women, too, one that was both liberating and problematic. He had proclaimed through an act of Parliament that women must play women's roles, thus inventing the career of the actress. However, by putting themselves on display in this fashion, they were instantly considered prostitutes, and the treatment they received at the hands of gentlemen at the back door of the theater usually succeeded in transforming them into such. Meanwhile, in the audience, prostitutes wearing masks were easily confused with ladies of quality, also wearing masks. The mask lent the woman an air of mystery and sophistication that was useful to prostitutes and ladies alike. However, as Anne Russell points out in her introduction to the Broadview edition of *The Rover*, "the distinctions between prostitutes and 'respectable women' became blurred. The mask became a sign of the prostitute but a sign which, with its offer of anonymity, could offer some freedom from conventional roles for any woman who wore it." That inveterate playgoer of the seventeenth century, Samuel Pepys, frequently observed the confusion. In one diary entry, he records his reaction to a lovely woman in a mask, saying that "one of the ladies would, and did, sit with her mask on all the play; and being exceedingly witty as ever I heard a woman, did talk most pleasantly with him; but was, I believe, a virtuous woman and of quality.... A more pleasant rencontre I never heard. But by that means lost the pleasure of the play wholly." He was more entertained by the masked audience member than he was by the play, and it would have been difficult for him to ignore her, since the Restoration theater was lit uniformly, such that the audience was as visible as the play. Sophisticated banter and sexually provocative behavior being in fashion at this time, the theater was itself a performative space for enacting, watching, and practicing the sophisticated actions of the royal court. Prostitutes could learn to be witty, like the lady Pepys observed, and ladies could learn how to display themselves, like—and not like—prostitutes.

During the Interregnum, when few theater productions were allowed, people read printed plays and imagined the scenery. The restoration of theater created cause to celebrate visual scenery again, and this time stages were more opulent than ever. Scenery went center-stage. Elaborate devices trundled across tracks inlaid in the floor so that intricately painted scenes, complete with perspective, could be rolled into place on cue. The result was an opulence never before seen, a riot and celebration of the theatrical performance space on stage, while the real-life intrigues offstage made for

equally entertaining scenarios. This was just as Charles II wanted it—he actively promoted theater as a means of anti-Puritan propaganda.

To a large extent, Aphra Behn produced exactly what Charles II and his audience wanted: an erotic and sophisticated entertainment. Yet, because of the social bias against female playwrights, she could not at first take credit for her achievement. She, too, was "masked," for in her prologue she refers to the playwright as an anonymous "he," and she refuses to identify herself as the author of her work. Nevertheless, Behn opened up a new performative space for women writers, not just as "the professional woman writer as a new fangled kind of whore," as Catherine Gallagher claims in her essay "Who Was That Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn," but as a woman writer with, like her heroine, Hellena, the wit and power to control the theatrical performative space through establishing her own ground rules. She created this space, and by doing so, she invited other female writers to populate it.

Source: Carole Hamilton, Critical Essay on *The Rover,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

In the following introduction excerpt, Lomax analyzes Behn's use of Carnival for her play's setting as one of escapism from the reality of the English Restoration.

Killigrew's *Thomaso,* on which *The Rover* was based, is set in Madrid in late November. There are disguises, and the Feast of St Cecilia, patron saint of music, is associated with Thomaso himself, but there is none of the pre-Lenten urgency to eat, drink, and be merry which characterises *The Rover*, and no mention of the pervading spirit of carnival which Aphra Behn introduced when she adapted and altered Killigrew's play. Behn also moved the action to Naples, where a carnival setting was associated with Roman Saturnalian revels as well as with opposition to the restrictions of the Christian tradition's Lent, which included a ban on sexual intercourse as well as the eating of meat.

Critical Essay #3

When Behn produced *The Rover* the monarchy had been reestablished for seventeen years. Mikhail Bakhtin has observed that 'Moments of death and revival, of change and renewal always led to a festive perception of the world'—but neither renewal nor change could be said to be being celebrated in 1677. If it was not pure nostalgia, on what was Aphra Behn's use of carnival based?

The play's period setting in the 1650s is very significant. Cromwell's Protectorate had suppressed pastimes and sports and, to Royalists, the period must have seemed like an indefinite extension of Lent. Joining in the festivities of carnival which were denied them at home, exiled cavaliers whiled away the time until the new order of the once-revolutionary Parliamentarians could be overthrown. Instead of being a wealthy, extravagant elite, the exiles had lost lands and money: they were now displaced and marginalised in foreign parts, and Behn's play continually stresses their 'outsider' status. Willmore is not just a rover—a pirate, one who wanders, an inconstant lover—he is a 'Tramontana rover', which, apart from signifying someone uncouth, indicates a foreigner or stranger. In fact, most of the characters are outsiders of one kind or another: Naples is under Spanish rule, Angellica Bianca is introduced as a native of Padua, even the English are divided into the impecunious cosmopolitan cavaliers and the wealthy traveller from the country, whom they befriend but constantly taunt because he never committed himself politically and kept his privileges and estate. Established incomers prey upon more recent arrivals: Lucetta exploits Blunt's ignorance of Naples and of her ways—though she does worry that her treatment of him may put paid to future dealings with foreigners if word gets around. The protagonists, then, are all away from their home ground and are vulnerable because of this. The usual social hierarchies are inverted. The Spanish, old enemies of the English, are either in power officially (Don Antonio is the viceroy's son) or unofficially (Philippo takes the spoils Lucetta tricks from Blunt and reminds us of the old quarrel about the Spanish Armada in his reference to 'old Queen Bess's' gold and the 'quarrel . . . since eighty-eight.' The English, who might have been gentlemen at home, are poor, riotous, and often despised abroad.

Although the victimisation of prostitutes was a common feature of traditional carnival, Behn does not condemn either Lucetta or Angellica Bianca but rather, at significant moments, gives them the upper hand over the English strangers, an even more disadvantaged and male social group. No matter how brave they may be, abroad they are distinguished principally by their lack of riches and often run-down appearance; even a courtesan's servant feels free to mock Willmore in his presence with 'I believe those breeches and he have been acquainted ever since he was beaten at Worcester.' Blunt has managed to retain his wealth, being no cavalier, yet he does not have the wit to keep it and escape abuse. Lucetta soon picks him out as a gullible fool:

> He's English too, and they say that's a sort of good-natured loving people, and have generally so kind an opinion of themselves that a woman with any wit may flatter 'em into any sort of fool she pleases.

This is gender specific, unlike the jibe in *Hamlet* that the English are all mad: Behn's joke implies that, at home and abroad, an English male is no match for any woman's wit. Both Lucetta and Angellica are victims of a male-centered society and an economy which treats them as a commodity, but each has her own methods of survival built on compromise, and they manipulate the men on whom they depend. The 'jilting wench', Lucetta, gains great wealth without giving any favours to a country gentleman, while the 'famous courtesan', who demands a ridiculously high price, eventually chooses to bestow herself for nothing on a penniless pirate and, when she cannot command his constant love, holds him at pistol-point to revenge her honour. Angellica may not win Willmore, yet she retains his admiration and the adoration and respect of someone as rich and powerful as the viceroy's son.

Behn's women are more certain of their intrinsic worth than Killigrew's female characters. They reserve the right to adjust their monetary price as it suits them, being more financially secure than many of the men in the play. Even the upright Belvile is dependent on marrying into money (the box of jewels which Florinda, his Spanish love, hides in the garden may be a metaphor for the virtue she has so much difficulty preserving, but since Jessica's flight to Lorenzo in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* it is also a symbol of the defiant woman who breaks through family and cultural opposition to give herself and her wealth to the man of her choice). The woman-shy Frederick also has his future determined by Florinda, who tells him:

> I'll be reconciled to you on one condition—that you'll follow the example of your friend in marrying a maid that does not hate you, and whose fortune (I believe) will not be unwelcome to you.

This world, where women can take the initiative, is the world of carnival. It is a time of misrule; everything is turned upside down, prohibitions are temporarily removed, and privileges and rank suspended. Everyone, however different, can be integrated by joining in. As Bakhtin wrote:

> Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom.

Carnival may have appealed to Restoration audiences because of its emphasis on sexual freedom, and to Aphra Behn because it extended this freedom to women as well as men. Male dramatists also created outspoken and daring women characters. Etherege's *The Man of Mode,* which was performed the year before *The Rover*, is part of a movement discernible in Restoration comedy away from a focus on the male lead and towards an awareness that 'his lady', in this case Harriet Woodvil, was the real 'centre of interest'. The fact that women were now playing women's parts, coupled with

Behn's influence in contemporary theatre, probably helped to bring about this transition. Certainly one topic which was close to Behn's heart was the issue of arranged marriages and a woman's right to choose her own husband: beginning with her first play, *The Forced Marriage,* she tackled the topic at least eleven times in her dramatic works.

Unlike *Thomaso, The Rover* does not begin by focusing on the men; it opens with Hellena and Florinda discussing their lack of independence. Both women display the confidence to have opinions and desires—and to express them. Only Lucetta, of all the females in the play, seems unable to do this—perhaps because she merely exploits the carnival spirit for financial gain at the command of Philippo and is always under his control. She never manages to break free and act as she would wish. As she tells him, speaking of Blunt: 'And art thou not an unmerciful rogue, not to afford him one night for all this? I should not have been such a Jew'. But she is not allowed to follow her own desires because, as Philippo reminds her, he wants 'to keep as much of thee as I can to myself'. Lucetta, like Angellica, demonstrates how difficult it is for women—especially kept women and prostitutes—to retain their sexual freedom. Dependent on men financially for their survival, they cannot afford the luxury of dispensing favours at will. Angellica, with her greater independence and wealth, fares better than Lucetta. She also, like Hellena and Florinda, has the advantage of a female ally. Her woman, Moretta, is probably motivated more by economic considerations than emotional attachment, but we feel sure that when Angellica finally turns her back on Willmore, Moretta will be there to help her return to her old, confident state. Similarly, in I.i. Hellena fiercely takes her sister's part in criticising their father's wishes and her brother's intentions to carry them out; later, Valeria rushes to the rescue when Hellena and Florinda find themselves under threat. Supportive, energetic women are Behn's speciality.

Behn has been credited with creating more daring dialogue between the sexes than many of her male contemporaries. In *The Rover* this could be due in part to her use of Killigrew's text (which is freer than most in this respect) and particularly to her reassignment to Hellena of certain speeches which Killigrew allocated to a male character—but the freedom with which her men and women converse is also due to the way in which another aspect of carnival is allowed to flourish. Hellena has already entered fully into its spirit when the play opens, 'Nay, I'm resolved to provide myself this carnival, if there be e'er a handsome proper fellow of my humour above ground, though I ask first.' She has resolved to find her own man and initiate a relationship: her father and brother may be planning to save the cost of a dowry by placing her in a convent, but she is quite aware of what she has to offer—and to gain by making other plans. Her sister, Florinda, has already determined to defy their father and refuses to marry 'the rich old Don Vincentio', being equally sure of her worth: 'I shall let him see I understand better what's due to my beauty, birth, and fortune, and more—to my soul, than to obey those unjust commands.'

Both are set for battle when their brother, Don Pedro, enters. He apparently does not notice Hellena at first and addresses only Florinda, which suggests that he believes

Hellena, the novice, to be elsewhere praying—an impression reinforced by his surprise when she cannot resist butting into the conversation to take Florinda's part. Hellena not only disobeys his command to 'Go—up to your devotion' (he leaves before she does), but she fiercely challenges everything he says, mocks Vincentio's lack of virility, and shocks Pedro with her tenacity ('Have you done yet?') and her outspoken language. Behn toned down Killigrew's description of the old prospective husband who 'farts as loud as a Musket for a jest' to 'sighs a belch or two, loud as a musket', but reserved the detail for greater impact later in Hellena's outraged, 'What then? The viceroy's son is better than that old Sir Fisty'. Pedro, shocked by his sister's disrespectful term ('old fart') for her father's choice of husband, orders her immediate incarceration for the duration of the carnival, followed at Lent by 'her everlasting penance in a monastery'.

For Hellena, the carnival has already begun: she is indulging in vigorous colloquial outspokenness—her free expression of oaths ('Now hang me if . . .') and her skills of witty mockery make her a natural sparring partner for the outspoken Willmore. Hellena looks to the carnival to provide her with experience of love and life and, as Elin Diamond aptly expresses it, 'She exercises her will only by pursuing and winning Willmore, for as it turns out he has the "more" she "would fain know"'. Unlike Lent, carnival is characterised by abundance and easy gratification. Willmore steps ashore in search of 'Love and mirth' in a 'warm climate' after having been deprived of women and good living on board ship. He may stink 'of tar and ropes' ends like a dock or pesthouse' but he has an abundance of persuasive rhetoric as well as desire: 'I have a world of love in store. Would you would . . . take some on't off my hands.' While he has been confined to male company at sea, Hellena has been pent up in a nunnery and, like him, she is eager to start making up for lost time: 'for when I begin, I fancy I shall love like anything; I never tried yet.' She has no intention of dying 'a maid, and in a captain's hands too', but the liberality of carnival does not mean that she has forgotten the realities of everyday life. Hellena's gipsy disguise *is* only a disguise: she does not really want a life of hardship and 'A cradle full of noise and mischief, with a pack of repentance at my back'. Her plain speaking and scorn of Willmore's attempts to win her persuade him into a marriage 'bargain' which, although both enter defensively, she has engineered. Perhaps marriage is as unattractive to her as it is to Willmore but, without it, the freedom to explore her sexual desires could take her back to the convent as an abandoned, unmarriageable young woman, with or without a child. Marriage may have its faults but a nunnery has few pleasures for a woman of her nature.

When Hellena first hears about Florinda's love for Belvile, she declares, 'I hope he has some mad companion or other that will spoil my devotion', and from that point on she exerts all her energies to provoke an assault on her virginity, advertising it at every opportunity, confident that she has the wit to handle the situation to her ultimate advantage. Florinda, on the other hand, is constantly fending off attempted rape from the time of her first meeting with Belvile, 'when I was exposed to such dangers as the licensed lust of common soldiers threatened when rage and conquest flew through the city.' The Englishmen like to think they are no common soldiers intent on rape and pillage, but in Willmore's drunken assault on Florinda in III.v and the mass rape planned in Act IV by Blunt with the compliance, at one point, of Frederick and the others, a modern audience may begin to doubt. While indecent behaviour towards women is part

of the carnival tradition and Restoration drama frequently incorporates a physical assault on a virtuous heroine (even Nahum Tate's rewriting of *King Lear* includes an attempted rape of Cordelia), Aphra Behn's treatment of the issue raises far-reaching questions concerning sexual violence against women (particularly of different social stations) and the problems involved in the way female chastity was prized, protected, and put under siege.

The Rover's carnival setting highlights the double standards normally practised by both men and women. A society in which rich old men take young wives they cannot satisfy encourages the latter to 'ramble to supply the defects of some grave impotent husband' and allows women like Lucetta to use this as a cover for deception and robbery. When, as Belvile insists, there are wealthy 'whores' who do not fit the traditional stereotype, and wealthy wives doing much the same but without the fee, how is a man like Blunt to discern whether he is predator or prey?

> Why yes, sir, they are whores, though they'll neither entertain you with drinking, swearing, or bawdry; are whores in all those gay clothes and right jewels . . . with those great houses richly furnished . . . are whores, and arrant ones.

The men perpetuate a situation where the honour of their own women is valued and fiercely defended, but a woman without an effective protector is seen as fair game or, as Willmore puts it, 'another prize'. When circumstances temporarily remove a woman from family or marital protection, the men become victims of each other's prejudices and lusts. For all his boasting, Frederick has little experience of women; he acts according to the primitive distinctions that governed much male behaviour at the time, 'I begin to suspect something; and 'twould anger us vilely to be trussed up for a rape upon a maid of quality, when we only believe we ruffle a harlot.' The 'harlot' is, of course, Florinda: Frederick's description of her earlier as 'that damned virtuous woman' is almost realised.

The farce, which provokes both laughter and unease as the masked Florinda is physically threatened by one male after another, reaches its climax when her own brother, who has been the fiercest defender of her honour, draws the longest sword in the contest to take possession of her body. Belvile is helpless, and only the timely intervention of Valeria saves the day. The ridiculous situation was brought about by Don Pedro's insistence that Florinda should marry the man of his choosing rather than her own, and that Hellena should be denied marriage altogether. Finally, Florinda's match is a *fait accompli,* and the strain of making a stand against that of Willmore and Hellena is too great. Don Pedro consents in the face of mass resistance, relieved to 'be free from fears of her honour'. 'Guard it you now, if you can', he tells Willmore, 'I have been a slave to't long enough.' Willmore's advice that 'a woman's honour is not worth guarding when she has a mind to part with it' could be said to be the message of the play.

One freedom of carnival is the opportunity to act foolishly without regard to social position. In not opposing his sisters' marriages, Don Pedro bows to the prevailing

pressures of festivity. It is a huge relief for him to relinquish the burden of patriarchal responsibility. Wickedly, Behn allows him to relish his liberation. When we first meet Pedro he is about to put on his masked costume and participate in revels he has forbidden to his sisters. By the end, in forgiving everyone, he has entered into the spirit of equality which characterises carnival life. One by one, male and female alike, the characters venture out: Florinda and Belvile to find each other, Hellena and Valeria to woo husbands, Pedro and Antonio to win Angellica, Blunt to seek an inexpensive woman, and Willmore to take any woman. Those who achieve their desires do so by complicated routes, often involving potential humiliation and risk: others are exposed to ridicule, danger, and defeat. Antonio is wounded, and Belvile, a victim of mistaken identity, is driven to participate in the equivalent of a carnivalesque mock duel. All are free to play the fool for a time, but if any person could be considered to have been elected King of Fools by his companions, that person must be Blunt.

He is victimised by Lucetta, Philippo, and Sancho in additional ways to those found in Killigrew's text, where his counterpart, Edwardo, is merely turned out of doors in his drawers in the night and is lost in the city streets by the equivalent of Sancho. Bakhtin notes that carnival hell included, amongst other things, a trap to catch fools, and Behn adds a Rabelaisian touch to Blunt's debasement by dropping him literally into excrement. On one level the foolish country fop becomes a hero of folk humour when he falls down the trapdoor into the sewer and undergoes a mock journey to the underworld, returning in the tradition of such folk heroes, to tell of the horrors he found there. At another level Blunt's fate can be seen as a veiled political comment. It is wished on him in I.ii by Frederick when, having noticed Blunt's disappearance in pursuit of Lucetta, he declares,

> I hope 'tis some common crafty sinner, one that will fit him. It may be she'll sell him for Peru: the rogue's sturdy, and would work well in a mine. At least I hope she'll dress him for our mirth, cheat him of all, then have him well-favouredly banged, and turned out naked at midnight.

The reason for Frederick's uncharacteristic vindictiveness becomes clear when Belvile catalogues details of Blunt's privileged upbringing. Never having known hardship or the sordid side of life, never having committed himself to a cause as they have done, and, therefore, never having risked life, limb, or fortune, the wealthy 'Essex calf' is a cause of deep-seated resentment—though this is usually overridden by good humour. It is as if the spirit of carnival allows Frederick's idle wish to be granted. Blunt is not sold to labour in a Peruvian mine, but he is forced underground and exposed to other nightmare experiences. He is also subjected to the carnivalesque removal of his fine clothes and their replacement with a clown-like costume—his underwear and 'an old rusty sword and buff belt'. His horrified response, 'Now, how like a morris dancer I am equipped!', and his equally disgusted view of himself in the Spanish habit he is forced to wear later signify his humiliation. Belvile's pronouncement on the new costume is telling: 'Methinks 'tis well, and makes thee look e'en cavalier'. Finally, even the Englishmen are equal—

Blunt, with his possible parliamentarian leanings and fastidious fussing about his clothes, has at last to make do like one of the cavaliers.

In carnival time costume is crucial, and from the first scene of *The Rover* characters are changing their clothes and exchanging identities for a variety of purposes. When characters lose control of their state of dress, as in the case of Blunt and, later, of Florinda, who escapes to the garden 'in an undress', their vulnerability is apparent. Hellena, however, always appears to have the situation in hand and makes successful transitions from novice's garb to gipsy costume, and finally to the boy's clothes she is wearing when Willmore agrees to marry her. Female cross-dressing was popular on the Restoration stage as a means of allowing the audience to view more of the woman playing the part, so Behn may have merely been catering to audience expectations here, but Willmore's possible associations with the Earl of Rochester and John Hoyle, both of whom pursued men as well as women, probably gave her choice an additional *frisson.* Historically, there is also a link between women who adopted male attire and certain prostitutes who used such dress to signal their profession. There is no indication that Hellena's appearance would have been viewed in this way, but the ambiguous natures of costume and masquerade in the play reveal the dangers of judging by appearances.

In I.ii Belvile explains to Blunt that the 'fine pretty creatures' he is admiring 'are, or would have you think they're courtesans, who . . . are to be hired by the month'. By drawing attention in the drama to a confusion that extended from carnival into life beyond the play, Behn makes her audience question notions of respectability and notoriety in relation to women's sexuality. Nancy Copeland sees Behn's juxtapositioning of Hellena and Angellica resulting 'in a narrowing of the distance between virgin and whore that complicates the final rejection of the courtesan and her ultimate exclusion from the play's comic conclusion'. In many ways these characters are two sides of the same coin: both advertise their attractions to Willmore and pursue him in different fashions; both are willing to subsidise his poverty with money from the same source (Hellena's fortune comes from her uncle who was Angellica's 'Spanish general'); and both offer themselves to him for love. They differ mainly in the way they view that concept in relationships between men and women. Ironically, the worldly courtesan is less astute than the convent girl in assessing the nature of a rover like Willmore. In depriving Angellica of her man, Behn is not taking a moral stand: Angellica, the romantic, must give way to Hellena, the realist, who will provide her revenge. Angellica's future is left undetermined. The opportunity Behn gives her to express herself so eloquently and the sympathy this provokes on her behalf are apt reminders that love, like carnival madness, has its darker side—and that, in carnival, everyone has a voice.

Source: Marion Lomax, "Introduction: *The Rover* and Carnival," in *The Rover,* edited by Marion Lomax, W. W. Norton, 1995, pp. xvii-xxvi.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Diamond examines the appropriation of females in The Rover *and, for Behn, in English society during her time.*

Where the dream is at its most exalted, the commodity is
closest to hand.
—Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*

Near the end of act 2 of *The Rover*, after the wealthy virgins and hungry gallants have been introduced, and the reader-spectator is made aware that comic symmetry is pressing toward chase and final reward, mention is made of a beautiful courtesan whom the gallants, including the affianced ones, are trying to impress. Angellica Bianca would seem to be a supplement to the intrigue plot—a supplement since one need not intrigue to visit a whore. Yet before the virgins are rewarded with the husbands they desire, they will traverse this whore's marketplace. In "scenes" and "discoveries," they will market themselves as she does, compete for the same male affection, suffer similar abuse. The courtesan herself enters the play not in the way the audience might expect, behind an exotic vizard, or "discovered" in her bedchamber after the parting of the scenes, but as a portrait, as *three* portraits, a large one hung from the balcony and two smaller ones posted on either side of the proscenium door designating her lodging. Willmore, the play's titular rover, arrives at her door, and in the absence of the courtesan he cannot afford, he appropriates her in representation—he reaches up and steals a portrait.

Willmore's gesture, I will suggest, contains information beyond the local revelation of one character's behavior. We might read Willmore's gesture as a Brechtian *Gestus* or "gest," a moment in performance that makes visible the contradictory interactions of text, theater apparatus, and contemporary social struggle. In the unraveling of its intrigue plot, Aphra Behn's *The Rover* not only thematizes the marketing of women in marriage and prostitution, it "demonstrates," in its gestic moments, the ideological contradictions of the apparatus Behn inherited and the society for which she wrote. Brecht's account of the *Gestus* is useful for alerting us to the vectors of historical change written into dramatic texts, but he makes no provision for gender—an unavoidable issue in Aphra Behn's own history. Educated but constantly in need of money, with court connections but no supporting family, Aphra Behn wrote plays when female authorship was a monstrous violation of the "woman's sphere." Since the reopening of the theaters in 1660, Frances Boothby and the Duchess of Newcastle each had had a play produced, but no woman had challenged the Restoration theater with Behn's success and consistency. Indeed, that she could earn a living writing for the theater was precisely what condemned her. The muckraking satirist Robert Gould wrote typical slander in a short piece addressed to Behn that concluded with this couplet: "For Punk and Poetess agree so Pat, / You cannot be This and not be That."

In her suggestive "Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text, and the Critic," Nancy Miller implicitly proposes a feminist version of the *Gestus;* texts by women writers, says Miller,

encode the signs or "emblems of a female signature" by which the "culture of gender [and] the inscriptions of its political structures" might be read. In a woman-authored text, then, the gestic moment would mark both a convergence of social actions and attitudes, and the gendered history of that convergence. Robert Gould's verse, with its violent, unequivocal equation of "poetess" and "punk," provides some evidence of the culture of gender in Restoration London. Like her male colleagues, Behn hawked her intrigue comedies and political satires in the literary and theatrical marketplace, and like them, she suffered the attacks of "fop-corner" and the sometimes paltry remuneration of third-day receipts. In her case, however, the status of professional writer indicated immodesty: the author, like her texts, became a commodity.

Deciphering Behn's authorial "signature" obliges us to read the theatrical, social, and sexual discourses that complicate and obscure its inscription. I am aiming here to open the text to what Brecht calls its "fields of force"—those contradictory relations and ideas that signify in Behn's culture and are, as this reading will indicate, symptomatic of our own. Like Brecht, in his discussion of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus,* I am interested less in interpretative truth than in exploring a complex textual system in which author, apparatus, history, and reader-spectator each plays a signifying role. The following section will consider Behn's authorial contexts, the Restoration theater apparatus, with its proto-fetishist positioning of "scenes" and actresses; the next two sections focus on multivalent signs of gender in *The Rover;* and the final section, returning to the theater apparatus by way of Behn's unique obsessions, poses the question of the woman dramatist's signature: How does Aphra Behn encode the conditions of her literary and theatrical production? How does she stage the relationship between female creativity and public calumny—between what Robert Gould, in darkly humorous euphemisms, refers to as "this" and "that"?

Critical Essay #5

The term "apparatus" draws together several related aspects in theater production: the hierarchy of economic control, the material features of machinery and properties, and, more elusively, the social and psychological interplay between stage and audience. When Aphra Behn wrote her seventeen plays (1670-1689), the theatrical hierarchy, like all cultural institutions, was patriarchal in control and participation. Charles II invested power in the first patentees, Thomas Killigrew and William D'Avenant; aristocratic or upper-class males generally wrote the plays, purchased the tickets, and formed the coteries of critics and "witlings" whose disruptive presence is remarked on in countless play prologues and epilogues. In its machinery and properties, the Restoration stage was not unlike Wagner's theater in Adorno's critique: dreamlike, seductive, and commodity-intensive. Though the technology was well established in Italian and French courts, and in English court masques before the Interregnum, the two new Restoration theaters gave Londoners their first view of movable painted "scenes" and mechanical devices or "machines," installed behind the forestage and the proscenium arch. Actors posed before elaborately painted "wings" (stationary pieces set in receding rows) and "shutters" (flat painted scenes that moved in grooves and joined in the center). When the scenes parted, their characters were "discovered" against other painted scenes that, parting, produced further discoveries. Built in 1671, The Duke's Theater, Dorset Garden, the site of most of Behn's plays, was particularly known for its "gawdy Scenes."

The movement of painted flats, the discoveries of previously unseen interiors, introduced a new scopic epistemology. Seated and unruly in semicircular areas of pit, boxes, first, middle, and upper galleries, Restoration spectators, unlike their Elizabethan counterparts, were no longer compelled to imagine the features of bed-chambers, parks, or battlefields. Like Richard Flecknoe, they could rely on scenes and machines as "excellent helps of imagination, most grateful deceptions of the sight. . . Graceful and becoming Ornaments of the Stage [transport] you easily without lassitude from one place to another, or rather by a kinde of delightful Magick, whilst you sit still, does bring the place to you." Assuming that Flecknoe's reaction is typical, and there is evidence that it is, Restoration stagecraft seems to have created a spectator-fetishist, one who takes pleasure in ornaments that deceive the sight, whose disavowal of material reality produces a desire for the "delightful Magick" of exotic and enticing representations.

I am deliberately conflating two uses of "fetishism" in this account of Restoration reception: one, Freud's description of the male impulse to eroticize objects or female body parts, which derives from a disavowal of a material lack (of the penis on the mother's body); and two, Marx's account of the fetishization of the commodity: at the moment of exchange, the commodity appears to be separate from the workers who produce it; the "specific social character of private labors" is disavowed. Nowhere are these meanings of fetishism more relevant than in discourse generated by that other ornament of the stage, the Restoration actress. In his preface to *The Tempest,* Thomas Shadwell links the new phenomenon of female performers with painted theatrical scenes, both innovative commodities for audience consumption:

Had we not for yr pleasure found new wayes
You still had rusty Arras had, and thredbare playes;
Nor Scenes nor Woomen had they had their will,
But some with grizl'd Beards had acted Woomen still.

That female fictions were to be embodied by beardless women would, Thomas Killigrew promised, be "useful and instructive." What the signifying body of the actress actually meant in the culture's sexual economy is perhaps more accurately suggested by metatheatrical references in play prologues and epilogues. The actress playing Flirt in Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing Master* satirically invites the "good men o' th' Exchange" from the pit into the backstage tiring-room: "You we would rather see between our Scenes"; and Dryden, in the Prologue to *Marriage A-la-Mode,* has the actor Hart refer to passionate tyring-room assignations.

The private writings of Samuel Pepys are even more suggestive of the sinful pleasures afforded by actresses. On October 5, 1667, he visited the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street:

and there, going in, met with Knipp [Mrs. Knep], and she took us up into the Tireing-rooms and to the women's Shift, where Nell [Gwyn] was dressing herself and was all unready; and is very pretty, prettier than I thought; and so walked all up and down the House above, and then below into the Scene-room . . . But Lord, to see how they were both painted would make a man mad—and did make me loath them—and what base company of men comes among them, and how lewdly they talk—and how poor the men are in clothes, and yet what a show they make on the stage by candlelight, is very observable.

Candlelight has the ideological function of suturing contradictions between "lewd" actors and an alluring "show," and even a habitual playgoer like Pepys is disturbed when the seams show. That actresses were pretty women was not surprising, but the transformation of women into painted representations beautifully exhibited by candlelight was both fascinating and disturbing. Pepys went behind the painted scenes, but the paint was still there. He hoped to separate the pretty woman from the painted actress, but it was the actress he admired—and fetishized—from his spectator's seat.

For Pepys and other Restoration commentators, the actress's sexuality tended to disavow her labor. Rather than produce a performance, she is a spectacle unto herself, a painted representation to lure the male spectator. In her professional duplicity, in her desirability, in her often public status of kept mistress, she is frequently equated with prostitutes or "vizard-masks" who worked the pit and galleries of Restoration theaters

during and after performances. In Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer,* Mrs. Hoyden is disparaged for being "As familiar a duck . . . As an Actress in the tiring-room."

The epistemological link between the theater apparatus and illicit female signs is not of course new to the Restoration. Jonas Barish, documenting the antitheatrical prejudice, notes that Patristic condemnation of the theater, typified in tracts from the third-century Tertullian's to those of Renaissance Puritans Phillip Stubbes and William Prynne, builds on the Platonic condemnation of mimesis as the making of counterfeit copies of true originals. Actors in paint and costume contaminate their true God-given identities: "Whatever is *born,*" writes Tertullian, "is the work of God. Whatever . . . is *plastered on* is the devil's work." To the Puritan mind the presence of women on stage was an affront to feminine modesty, but more damning was the fact that the means of illusionism—use of costume, paint, masking—involved specifically female vices. The nature of theatrical representation, like the "nature" of woman, was to ensnare, deceive, and seduce.

Given this cultural legacy, and the metonymic connection between painted female performer and painted scenes, it is not surprising that the first woman to earn money circulating her own representations had a combative relationship with the theater apparatus. As we will see, Aphra Behn, more than any other Restoration playwright, exploits the fetish/commodity status of the female performer, even as her plays seek to problematize that status. She utilizes the conventional objects of Restoration satire—the marriage market, sexual intrigue, masquerade, libertine flamboyance—even as she signals, in "gestic" moments, their contradictory meanings for female fictions and historical women.

Critical Essay #6

The Rover (1677) and *The Second Part of The Rover* (1681), both drawn from Killigrew's *Thomaso, or The Wanderer* (1663), are Behn's only plays to label a character a courtesan; in her wholly original *The Feigned Curtezans* (1679), witty virgins impersonate famous Roman courtesans and near-debauches occur, but, as befits the romantic intrigue, marriages settle the confusion of plots and the financial stink of prostitution is hastily cleared away. If courtesans figure by name in only three plays, however, the commodification of women in the marriage market is Aphra Behn's first and most persistent theme. Beginning appropriately enough with *The Forced Marriage; or The Jealous Bridegroom* (1670), all of Behn's seventeen known plays deal to some extent with women backed by dowries or portions who are forced by their fathers into marriage in exchange for jointure, an agreed-upon income to be settled on the wife should she be widowed.

There was a lived context for this perspective. The dowry system among propertied classes had been in place since the sixteenth century, but at the end of the seventeenth century there were thirteen women to every ten men, and cash portions had to grow to attract worthy suitors. As the value of women fell by almost fifty percent, marriage for love, marriage by choice, became almost unthinkable. Women through marriage had evident exchange value; that is, the virgin became a commodity not only for her use-value as breeder of the legal heir but for her portion, which, through exchange, generated capital. If, as Marx writes, exchange converts commodities into fetishes or "social hieroglyphics," signs whose histories and qualitative differences can no longer be read, women in the seventeenth-century marriage market took on the phantasmagoric destiny of fetishized commodities; they seemed no more than objects or things. As Margaret Cavendish observed, sons bear the family name but "Daughters are to be accounted but as Movable Goods or Furnitures that wear out."

Restoration comedy, from the earliest Etherege and Sedley through Wycherley, Dryden, Vanbrugh, D'Urfey, and Congreve, mocked the marketplace values of marriage, promoting the libertine's aesthetic of "natural" love, verbal seduction, and superiority over jealous husbands and fops. But Aphra Behn concentrated on exposing the exploitation of women in the exchange economy, adding vividly to contemporary discourse on the oppressions of marriage. "Wife and servant are the same / But differ only in the name," wrote Lady Mary Chudleigh. "Who would marry," asks Behn's Ariadne (*The Second Part of the Rover*), "who wou'd be chaffer'd thus, and sold to Slavery?" The issue arises repeatedly in plays and verse of the period: not only are marriages loveless, but once married, women lose both independent identity and control of their fortunes. Ariadne again:

> You have a Mistress, Sir, that has your Heart, and all your softer Hours: I know't, and if I were so wretched as to marry thee, must see my Fortune lavisht out on her; her Coaches, Dress, and Equipage exceed mine by far: Possess she all the day thy Hours of Mirth,

good Humour and Expence, thy Smiles, thy Kisses,
and thy Charms of Wit.

The feminist philosopher Mary Astell would have had no sympathy for the sensuous appetites of Behn's females, but Ariadne's sentiments receive astute articulation in Astell's *Some Reflections Upon Marriage.* The money motive for marriage produces in the man contempt and "Indifferency" which "proceeds to an aversion, and perhaps even the Kindness and Complaisance of the poor abused'd Wife, shall only serve to increase it." Ultimately, the powerless wife ends up "mak[ing] court to [her husband] for a little sorry Alimony out of her own Estate." Two centuries later Engels merely restates these comments in his observation that forced marriages "turn into the crassest prostitution—sometimes of both partners, but far more commonly of the woman, who only differs from the ordinary courtesan in that she does not [hire] out her body on piecework as a wage worker, but sells it once and for all into slavery."

Yet in order to launch *The Rover*'s marriage plot and to provoke sympathy for her high-spirited aristocrats, Behn dissimulates the connection between virgin and prostitute. When Florinda, Hellena, and Valeria don gypsy costumes—assume the guise of marginal and exotic females—to join the carnival masquerade, they do so explicitly to evade the patriarchal arrangement of law and jointure laid down by their father and legislated by their brother Pedro: Florinda shall marry a rich ancient count and Hellena shall go into a convent, thus saving their father a second dowry and simultaneously enriching Florinda. The opening dialogue of *The Rover* is also implicitly "gestic," raising questions about women's material destiny in life as well as in comic representation:

Florinda: What an impertinent thing is a young girl
bred in a nunnery! How full of questions! Prithee no
more, Hellena; I have told thee more than thou understand
'st already.
Hellena: The more's my grief. I would fain know as
much as you, which makes me so inquisitive.

Hellena dons masquerade because she desires not a particular lover but a wider knowledge. Given the conventions of Restoration comedy, this wish to know "more than" she already understands is troped as a wish for sexual adventure. But if we hear this dialogue dialogically—in its social register—other meanings are accessible. Women's lack of access to institutions of knowledge spurred protest from writers as diverse as Margaret Cavendish, Bathsua Makin, Mary Astell, and Judith Drake. Aphra Behn mocks a university fool in *The City Heiress* and a learned lady in *Sir Patient Fancy;* she criticizes neoclassical aesthetics in "Epistle to the Reader," appended to *The Dutch Lover*, for having nothing to do with why people write or attend plays. When she translates Bernard de Fontenelle's *A Discovery of New Worlds,* however, she reveals as passionate a hunger for esoteric knowledge as these early English feminists. Unfortunately, the controlling conceit of Fontenelle's work—a mere woman is informally taught the complexities of Copernican theory—produces an untenable and revealing

contradiction for Behn: "He [Fontenelle] makes her [the Marchionness] say a great many silly things, tho' sometimes she makes observations so learned, that the greatest Philosophers in Europe could make no better." Insightful yet silly, wise yet a *tabula rasa,* Fontenelle's Marchionness oscillates between intellectual independence and slavish imitation. She is perhaps less a contradictory character than a projection of a male intellectual's ambivalence about female education.

Aphra Behn's Hellena seeks knowledge "more than" or beyond the gender script provided for her. She rejects not only her brother's decision to place her in a nunnery, but also the cultural narrative of portion, jointure, and legal dependency in which she is written not as subject but as object of exchange. Yet Hellena, too, oscillates—both departing from and reinforcing her social script. Her lines following those cited above seem, at first, to complicate and defer the romantic closure of the marriage plot. To have a lover, Hellena conjectures, means to "sigh, and sing, and blush, and wish, and dream and wish, and long and wish to see the man." This thrice-reiterated wishing will result in three changes of costume, three suitors, and three marriages. As with the repetitions of "interest," "credit," and "value"—commodity signifiers that circulate through the play and slip like the vizard from face to hand to face—this repetition invokes the processes underlying all wishing, to desire that will not, like a brother's spousal contract, find its "completion."

If we incorporate insights from feminist psychoanalytic theory, the virgins' masquerade takes on added significance, or rather this discourse helps us decode what is already implied—namely, that in an economy in which women are dependent on male keepers and traders, female desire is always already a masquerade, a play of false representations that covers over and simultaneously expresses the lack the woman exhibits—lack of the male organ and, concomitantly, lack of access to phallic privileges—to material and institutional power. Unlike the theatrical mask, which conceals a truth, the masquerade of female sexuality subverts the "Law-of-the-Father" that stands "behind" any representation. Underneath the gypsy veils and drapes of Behn's virgins, there is nothing, in a phallic sense, to see; thus no coherent female identity that can be coopted into a repressive romantic narrative. Willmore, titillated by Hellena's witty chatter, asks to see her face. Hellena responds that underneath the vizard is a "desperate . . . lying look"—that is, she, like her vizard, may prevaricate; represented may mingle with representer—for the spectator (Willmore) there will be no validating stake.

Yet, as Behn well knew, there is means of validation, one that guarantees patriarchy's stake in portion, jointure, and the woman's body: the hymen. In Restoration comedy no witty unmarried woman was really witty unless she had property *and* a maidenhead. Behn's virgins may re-"design" their cast of characters but they cannot change their plot. Ultimately their masquerade is dissimulation in the classic representational sense, a veil that hides a truth. Hellena's mask merely replicates the membrane behind which lies the "true nature" of woman: the equipment to make the requisite patrilineal heir. Thus Willmore's masterful response to Hellena's "lying look" is a mock-blazon of her facial features, ending in a fetishistic flourish: "Those soft round melting cherry lips and small even white teeth! Not to be expressed, but silently adored!." The play in Hellena's

discourse between knowing and desiring, which extends through the masquerade, completes itself in the marriage game. She exercises her will only by pursuing and winning Willmore, for as it turns out he has the "more" she "would fain know."

Willmore acts not only as the rover but as signifier for the play's phallic logic. His name metaphorizes the trajectory of desire as he roves from bed to bed "willing more," making all satisfactions temporary and unsatisfying. Desire's subject, Willmore never disguises himself (he comes on stage *holding* his mask); until enriched by the courtesan Angellica Bianca, he remains in "buff" or leather military coat. In another sense, though, Willmore is already in disguise, or rather the entity "Willmore" covers a range of linguistic and social signifiers. Behn's model for Willmore (like Etherege's for Dorimont) was reputedly the womanizing courtier, the Earl of Rochester, whose name, John Wilmot, contains, like the rover's, the word ("mot") "will." Rochester was also the lover and mentor of Elizabeth Barry, the actress who first played Behn's Hellena. In Tory mythology Charles II, on the verge of fleeing England, disguised himself in buff—a leather doublet. Indeed, Willmore's first lines refer to the offstage Prince who, in exile during the Commonwealth, was also a rover. Doubled mimetically and semiotically with both Rochester and the Merry Monarch (who attended at least one performance of *The Rover* before the play was restaged at Whitehall), Willmore needs no mask to effect his ends: his libertine desire is guaranteed and upheld by patriarchal law. Hellena's playful rovings, on the other hand, and her numerous disguises, signal both ingenuity and vulnerability. Ironically, the virgins' first costume, the gypsy masquerade, represents their actual standing in the marriage market—exotic retailers of fortunes (or portions). Their masquerade defers but does not alter the structure of patriarchal exchange.

Critical Essay #7

In contrast to the virgins' "ramble" are the stasis and thralldom that attend the courtesan Angellica Bianca. While the virgins are learning artful strategies of concealment, Angellica's entrance is a complicated process of theatrical unveiling. She arrives first through words, then through painted representation, then through the body of an actress who appears on a balcony behind a silk curtain. She is also the site of a different politics, one that explores desire and gender not only in the text but in the apparatus itself.

The first references to Angellica situate her beyond the market in which we expect her to function. According to Behn's gallants, she is the "adord beauty of all the youth in Naples, who put on all their charms to appear lovely in her sight; their coaches, liveries and themselves all gay as on a monarch's birthday." Equated thus with sacred and secular authority, Angellica gazes on her suitors and "has the pleasure to behold all languish for her that see her." This text in which desire flows from and is reflected back to a female subject is immediately followed by the grouping of the English gallants beneath the courtesan's balcony. They wait with the impatience of theater spectators for Angellica to appear—not in person but in representation, as "the shadow of the fair substance."

At this point the problematic connection between shadow and substance preoccupies them. Blunt, the stock country fool, is confused by the fact that signs of bourgeois and even noble status—velvet beds, fine plate, handsome attendance, and coaches—are flaunted by courtesans. Blunt is raising an epistemological issue that Behn and her colleagues often treat satirically—the neoclassical assumption regarding mimesis that imitated can be separated from imitator, nature from representation, truth from falsehood, virgin from gypsy. By suggesting that whores are indistinguishable from moral women, Behn revives the problematic of the masquerade, casting doubt on the connection/separation of sign and referent. Significantly, when Hobbes constructed his theory of sovereign authority, he employed theater metaphors to distinguish between "*natural*" and "*feigned* or *artificial*" persons. But he noted that "person" was itself a slippery referent:

> The word Person [persona] is Latin . . . [and] signifies
> the *disguise,* or *outward appearance* of a man,
> counterfeited on the stage; and sometimes more particularly
> that part of it, which disguiseth the face, as a
> mask or vizard: and from the stage, hath been translated
> to any representer of speech and action, as well
> in tribunals, as theatres. So that a *person* is the same
> that an *actor* is, both on stage and in common
> conversation.

Since, as Christopher Pye notes, everyone is already a "self-impersonator, a mediated

representation of himself," the difference between "natural" and "feigned" rests on highly unstable assumptions about identity which, both "on stage" and "in common conversation" are capable of shifting. Blunt's confusion about the true status of apparently noble women may also be read as an extratextual reference to the Restoration actress and her female spectators. As kept mistresses, actresses often displayed the fine clothing and jewels of aristocrats like the notorious Duchess of Cleveland, who regularly watched the play in vizard-mask from the king's box. Yet the respectable Mrs. Pepys also owned a vizard-mask, and on her frequent visits to the theater occasionally sat in the pit near the "real" vizards.

Given the theatricality of everyday Restoration life, and the ambiguity of signs representing the status and character of women, Angellica's three portraits allow Aphra Behn to comment on the pleasures and politics of theatrical signification. Though I have ignored the specifics of Behn's adaptation of her source play, it is helpful here to compare her handling of the paintings with that of Killigrew in his ten-act semiautobiographical closet drama, *Thomaso, or The Wanderer.* In both plays, one portrait is prominent and raised, and two smaller versions are posted below, one of which is snatched by the rake—Thomaso in the source play, Willmore in Behn's. But there is an important difference in the disposition of the paintings vis-à-vis the woman they represent. In *Thomaso,* 2.1, anonymous parties of men pass in front of the paintings, react scornfully to the courtesan's high price, and wander on. But in 2.2, with the arrival of Killigrew's main characters, Angellica Bianca is sitting on the balcony in full view of her prospective buyers. Her bawd challenges the men to "compare them [the paintings and the woman] together." With neoclassical correctness, the men agree that the woman exceeds her representation: "That smile, there's a grace and sweetness in it Titian could never have catch'd." By the time the English Thomaso and his friends arrive, the viewing of the paintings and the viewing of Angellica are almost simultaneous:

Harrigo: That wonder is it I told you of; tis the picture
of the famous Italian, the Angellica; See, shee's now
at her Window.
Thomaso: I see her, 'tis a lovely Woman.

Aphra Behn's Angellica Bianca never invites such explicit comparison. In fact, Behn prolongs the dialogue between titillated suitors and suggestive portraits: Angellica's simulacra, not Angellica, preoccupy her male audience. When the English cavaliers first view the paintings, Belvile, the play's fatuous moral figure, reads them as "the fair sign[s] to the inn where a man may lodge that's fool enough to give her price." That is, the iconicity of the paintings, their likeness to Angellica, which so impresses Killigrew's cavaliers, is in Behn's text suppressed. Gazing on the portraits, the gallants rewrite the courtesan's monarchial description, now figuring her as a thing, a receptacle for depositing one's body. To underscore the point, Behn has Blunt ask the ontological question to which there is a ready answer in commodity discourse: "Gentlemen, what's this?" Belvile: "A famous courtesan, that's to be sold." The infinitive phrase is curious. To be sold by whom? Released by her earlier keeper's death, Angellica and her bawd

seem to be in business for themselves. At this point, however, Blunt reminds us again of the object status of the woman, as of her painted signs: "Let's be gone; I'm sure we're no chapmen for this commodity."

Willmore, however, monarchy's representative, succumbs to the lure of the signs, believing not only in their iconicity but in their value as pleasurable objects—for the original one must pay one thousand crowns, but on the portraits one can gaze for nothing. Penury, however, is not the real issue. Willmore seems to understand that the appeal of the paintings is precisely that they are not the original but an effective stand-in. After the two Italian aristocrats draw swords in competition for Angellica, Willmore reaches up and steals one of the small paintings, in effect cuts away a piece of the representation for his own titillation. His intentions, like his actions, are explicitly fetishistic:

This posture's loose and negligent;
The sight on't would beget a warm desire
In souls whom impotence and age had chilled.
This must along with me.

This speech and the act of appropriation occur *before* Willmore sees Angellica. Only in Behn's text do the paintings function as fetishes, as substitute objects for the female body. When challenged why he has the right to the small portrait, Willmore claims the right "of possession, which I will maintain."

At the outset of this paper I described Willmore's acquisitive gesture as a Brechtian "gest"—that moment in theatrical performance in which contradictory social attitudes in both text and society are made heuristically visible to spectators. What does this gest show? Willmore removes Angellica's portrait the way a theater manager might lift off a piece of the set—because without buying her, he already owns her. Her paintings are materially and metonymically linked to the painted scenes, which were of course owned, through the theatrical hierarchy, by patentee and king—who, in Behn's fiction, validates and empowers Willmore. This "homosocial" circuit, to use Eve Sedgwick's term, extends into the social realm. As innumerable accounts make clear, Restoration theater participated in the phallic economy that commodified women, not in the marriage market, but in the mistress market: the king and his circle came to the theater to look, covet, and buy. Nell Gwyn is the celebrated example, but Behn's biographer Angeline Goreau cites other cases. An actress in the King's Company, Elizabeth Farley, joined the royal entourage for several months, then became mistress to a Gray's Inn lawyer, then drifted into prostitution and poverty. The answer to the question, "Who is selling Angellica?" is, then, the theater itself, which, like Willmore, operates with the king's patent and authorization. When Angellica sings behind her balcony curtain for her Italian admirers, and draws the curtain to reveal a bit of beautiful flesh, then closes it while monetary arrangements are discussed, she performs the titillating masquerade required by her purchasers *and* by her spectators. This is mastery's masquerade, not to demonstrate freedom, but to flaunt the charms that guarantee and uphold male power.

If Angellica's paintings stand for the theater apparatus and its ideological complicity with a phallic economy, what happens when Angellica appears? Is illusionism betrayed? Interestingly, Aphra Behn chooses this moment to emphasize presence, not only of character but of body; Angellica emerges in the flesh and offers herself, gratis, to Willmore, finding his scornful admiration ample reason for, for the first time, falling in love. In their wooing/ bargaining scene it becomes clear that Angellica wants to step out of the exchange economy symbolized by the paintings: "Canst thou believe [these yielding joys] will be entirely thine, / without considering they were mercenary?" The key word here is "entirely"; Angellica dreams of full reciprocal exchange without commerce: "The pay I mean is but thy love for mine. / Can you give that?" And Willmore responds "entirely."

A commodity, Marx writes, appears as a commodity only when it "possess[es] a double form, i.e. natural form and value form." Angellica's name contains "angel," a word whose meaning is undecidable since it refers simultaneously to the celestial figure and to the old English coin stamped with the device of Michael the archangel, minted for the last time by Charles I but still in common circulation during the Restoration. By eliminating her value-form, Angellica attempts to return her body to a state of nature, to take herself out of circulation. While the virgins of the marriage plot are talking "business" and learning the powers of deferral and unveiling, Angellica is trying to demystify and authenticate herself. She wants to step out of the paintings, to be known not by her surface but by her depth. As she "yields" to Willmore upstairs, the portraits on the balcony are removed—a sign that the courtesan is working. In this case, not only does the (offstage) "natural" body supplant its painted representation, but the courtesan, who has been in excess of, now makes up a deficiency in, the marriage plot: Angellica (with Willmore) labors for love.

Though the paintings disappear in act 3, however, the signs of commodification are still in place, or are metonymically displaced through properties and scenes to other characters in the marriage plot. We learn that Hellena's portion derives from her uncle, the old man who kept Angellica Bianca; thus the gold Willmore receives from the courtesan has the same source as that which he will earn by marrying the virgin. Like Angellica, too, the virgin Florinda uses a portrait as a calling card, and at night in the garden, "*in undress,*" carrying a little box of jewels—a double metonym for dowry and genitals— she plans to offer herself to Belvile. Unfortunately Willmore, not Belvile, enters the garden and nearly rapes her.

Florinda's nocturnal effort at entrepreneurship takes place in the upstage scenes, where Aphra Behn, like her fellow Restoration dramatists, situated lovers' trysts and discoveries. The thematic link between commodified "Scenes" and females is particularly crucial, however, in *The Rover*. In 4.4, a disguised Florinda flees from Willmore by running in and out of the scenes until she arrives in Blunt's chamber, where another near-rape occurs. Blunt has just been cozened by a prostitute and dumped naked into the city sewer; he emerges vowing to "beat" and "kiss" and "bang" the next woman he sees, who happens to be Florinda, but now all women appear to be whores. In fact Willmore, Frederick, and even Belvile arrive soon after to break open the door and "partake" of Florinda. If Angellica Bianca makes a spectacle of herself through

balcony curtains and paintings, Florinda's "undress" and her proximity to the painted scenes signify a similar reduction to commodity status.

Critical Essay #8

Angellica's paintings, I have argued, are the bright links in a metonymic chain joining the text of *The Rover* to the apparatus of representation. Angellica's portraits represent the courtesan in the most radical sense. They produce an image of her and at the same time reduce her to that image. Notwithstanding her passionate address, Angellica cannot exceed her simulacra. In effect she is doubly commodified—first because she puts her body into exchange, and second because this body is equated with, indeed interchangeable with, the art object. When Willmore performs the "gest" of appropriating the painted image of Angellica, he makes visible, on the one hand, the patriarchal and homosocial economy that controls the apparatus and, on the other hand, the commodity status of paintings, of their model, and, by metonymic extension, of the painted actress and the painted scenes.

Flecknoe and Pepys, we noted earlier, testify to the intensity of visual pleasure in Restoration theater. It is a fascinating contradiction of all feminist expectation to discover that Aphra Behn, more than any of her Restoration colleagues, contributed to that visual pleasure by choosing, in play after play, to exploit the fetish/ commodity status of the female performer. The stage offered two playing spaces, the forestage used especially for comedy, where actor and audience were in intimate proximity, and the upstage or scenic stage, where wing-and-shutter settings, as much as fifty feet from the first row of spectators, produced the exotic illusionistic discoveries needed for heroic tragedy. Writing mostly comedies, Aphra Behn might be expected to follow comic convention and use the forestage area, but as Peter Holland notes, she was "positively obsessive" about discovery scenes. Holland counts thirty-one discoveries in ten comedies (consider that Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden,* 1668, uses one; Etherege's *The Man of Mode,* 1676, uses two), most of which are bedroom scenes featuring a female character "*in undress.*" Holland reasons that such scenes are placed upstage so that familiar Restoration actresses would not be distractingly exposed to the audience. We might interpret Behn's "obsession" differently: the exposed woman's (castrated) body must be obscured in order to activate scopic pleasure. Displayed in "undress" or loosely draped gowns, the actress becomes a fetish object, affording the male spectator the pleasure of being seduced by and, simultaneously, of being protected from the effects of sexual difference.

Is it also possible that this deliberate use of fetishistic display dramatizes and displaces the particular assault Behn herself endured as "Poetess/ Punk" in the theater apparatus? The contradictions in her authorial status are clear from the preface to *The Lucky Chance* (1686). Behn argues that the Woman damns the Poet, that accusations of bawdy and plagiarism are levied at her because she is a woman. On the other hand, the literary fame she desires derives from a creativity that in her mind, or rather in the social ideology she has absorbed, is also gendered: "my Masculine Part the Poet in me." In literary history, the pen, as Gilbert and Gubar have argued, is a metaphorical penis, and the strong woman writer adopts strategies of revision and disguise in order to tell her own story. In Behn's texts, the painful bisexuality of authorship, the conflict between (as she puts it) her "defenceless" woman's body and her "masculine part," is

staged in her insistence, in play after play, on the equation between female body and fetish, fetish and commodity—the body in the "scenes." Like the actress, the woman dramatist is sexualized, circulated, denied a subject position in the theater hierarchy.

This unstable, contradictory image of authority emerges as early as Behn's first play prologue (to *The Forced Marriage, or The Jealous Bridegroom*, 1670). A male actor cautions the wits that the vizard masks sitting near them will naturally support a woman's play and attempt to divert them from criticism. He is then interrupted by an actress who, pointing "*to the Ladies*" praises both them and, it would seem, the woman author: "Can any see that glorious sight and say / A woman shall not prove Victor today?"

The "glorious sight" is, once again, the fetishized, commodified representation of the female, standing on the forestage, sitting in the pit, and soon to be inscribed as author of a printed play. If this fascinating moment—in which a woman speaking a woman's lines summons the regard of other women—seems to put a *female* gaze into operation, it also reinforces the misogynist circuitry of the theater apparatus: that which chains actress to vizard-mask to author.

At the outset of this essay we asked how Aphra Behn encodes the literary and theatrical conditions of her production. Behn's "Postscript" to the published text of *The Rover* provides a possible answer. She complains that she has been accused of plagiarizing Killigrew simply because the play was successful and she a woman. Yet while claiming to be "vainly proud of [her] judgment" in adapting *Thomaso,* she "hang[s] out the sign of Angellica (the only stolen object) to give notice where a great part of the wit dwelt." This compliment to Killigrew may also indicate what compelled Behn to embark on this adaptation. The "sign[s] of Angellica" both constitute and represent the theater apparatus, serving as metacritical commentary on its patriarchal economy, its habits of fetishistic consumption. They may also constitute Behn's authorial signature, what Miller calls the "material . . . brutal traces of the culture of gender." As a woman writer in need of money, Behn was vulnerable to accusations of immodesty; to write meant to expose herself, to put herself into circulation; like Angellica, to sell her wares. Is it merely a coincidence that Angellica Bianca shares Aphra Behn's initials, that hers is the only name from *Thomaso* that Behn leaves unchanged?

The "signs of Angellica" not only help us specify the place of this important woman dramatist in Restoration cultural practice, they invite us to historicize the critique of fetishization that has informed so much feminist criticism in the last decade. Certainly the conditions of women writers have changed since the Restoration, but the fetishistic features of the commercial theater have remained remarkably similar. Now as then the theater apparatus is geared to profit and pleasure, and overwhelmingly controlled by males. Now as then the arrangement of audience to stage produces what Brecht calls a "culinary" or ideologically conservative spectator, intellectually passive but scopically hungry, eager for the next turn of the plot, the next scenic effect. Now as then the actor suffers the reduction of Angellica Bianca, having no existence except in the simulations produced by the exchange economy. The practice of illusionism, as Adorno points out

above, converts historical performers into commodities which the spectator pays to consume.

If Restoration theater marks the historical beginning of commodity-intensive, dreamlike effects in English staging, Aphra Behn's contribution to contemporary theory may lie in her demonstration that, from the outset, dreamlike effects have depended on the fetish-commodification of the female body. When Willmore, standing in for king and court, steals Angellica's painting, Behn not only reifies the female, she genders the spectatorial economy as, specifically, a male consumption of the female image. Reading that confident gesture of appropriation as a *Gestus,* the contemporary spectator adds another viewpoint. Angellica Bianca's paintings appear to us now as both authorial "signature" and "social hieroglyphic," signs of a buried life whose careful decoding opens up new possibilities for critique and contestation.

Source: Elin Diamond, "*Gestus* and Signature in Aphra Behn's *The Rover,*" in *ELH,* Vol. 56, No. 3, 1989, pp. 519-41.

Adaptations

A 1986 Royal Shakespeare Company production of *The Rover,* produced by John Barton and starring Jeremy Irons, takes many liberties with Behn's text, replacing hundreds of lines with those of Killigrew, but the result is enjoyable.

Another performance can be seen in a 1995 British Broadcasting Company Production for the Open University in Association with the Women's Playhouse Trust. In this production, Behn's original text is presented in full. The actors, performing on a stage filled with sand, present the characters with energy and vivacity. The video recording is available through Routledge.

Topics for Further Study

Willmore must return to his ship after a brief holiday spent to satiating his physical desires, and Hellena hopes to "love and be beloved" before joining a nunnery. Despite their initial disinclination to seek permanent relationships, they marry. What bonds will hold their marriage together?

Faithfulness and inconstancy are persistent themes in *The Rover*, in love relationships, familial relationships, relationships among friends, and between servant and master. Trace this theme in one or more fictional or real-life relationships, and use this data to support your interpretation of the role of constancy in the play.

Willmore is a "rake hero" whose exploits conjure laughter in some characters and admiration from others. What is his ultimate impact on the audience? Is he to be admired or mocked? Why?

Angellica's portraits serve as advertisements to attract potential benefactors. The English travelers see the portraits and debate which is more lovely, the depictions or the woman herself, raising questions about art versus life and expectations versus reality. What other symbolic role(s) do the portraits serve in the play?

Naples, Italy, was a thriving seaport in the seventeenth century, a place where travelers from many lands mingled together in the sunny climate. How does Behn's choice of setting affect the viewer's expectations of how the play's characters will behave? Why does she set the play during carnival time as well?

From sword fights and robberies to the two near-rapes of Florinda, *The Rover* is full of violence, yet the main storyline revolves around love interests. What role does violence play in *The Rover*, and how does the fact that the play was written by a woman affect your assessment of the violent behavior that accompanies love interests in this play?

Compare and Contrast

Late Seventeenth Century: After Charles II comes to the throne in the Restoration of 1660, an act of Parliament invites women to be actresses in court-sponsored theaters. Puritans brand the early actresses as prostitutes because of their willingness to be displayed on stage. Fiction merges with reality when actresses are treated as prostitutes, and eventually many actresses resort to that way of life in order to make a living. King Charles II has several mistresses who are actresses. His support of women in the theater both helps and hurts their cause.

Today: Women hold positions as actresses, directors, playwrights, and stage managers.

Late Seventeenth Century: The turmoil caused by the English civil wars of the seventeenth century has little impact on most of England. This is because England consists of a conglomerate of small villages and towns, where news travels slowly and where the populace continue their rural existence with little interest in the affairs of the big town of London. Distinct regional dialects create a language barrier and roads are difficult to travel.

Today: National political debates in England as elsewhere in the world can be communicated instantly over the radio, television, and Internet so that England's populace can now be fairly well informed about issues of government, if they choose. Opinion polls measure popular support, and political turmoil is mild by comparison to the tumultuous seventeenth century.

Late Seventeenth Century: Theaters reopen to an eager public in 1660 with the Restoration, after having been closed officially during the Interregnum (1642-1660), a time dominated by enforced Puritan values. The theaters now have ceilings and special tracks for elaborate scenery. Audiences are large, consisting of people from all social classes.

Today: Live theater does not enjoy the popularity it once did, now that television, video, and Internet video streaming bring entertainment into the home. Ticket prices for major productions are costly so that only the well-off can afford to visit the theater regularly.

What Do I Read Next?

Aphra Behn's play *The Second Part of The Rover* (1681), although it lacks the wit and vivacity of the first play, is interesting reading for its portrayal of the fate of the marriage between Willmore and Hellena. Hellena has died at sea, and Willmore once again is a rover.

Aphra Behn's novella *Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave* (1688) describes the fate of a captured African prince. Behn based her story on a journal she kept while visiting Surinam when she was a young girl.

William Hogarth's 1735 engravings, *The Rake's Progress,* is a series of depictions about the consequences of immoral behavior, with each engraving portraying a different version of dissolute life. The series taken as a whole presents a cautionary moral tale.

Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) portrays a young woman who is seduced and betrayed but learns to use the power of seduction to her own advantage.

Further Study

Altaba-Artal, Dolors, *Aphra Behn's English Feminism: Wit and Satire,* Susquehanna University Press, 1999.

This is a scholarly analysis of Behn's major works, with a chapter including *The Rover.* Altaba-Artal finds significant evidence of Spanish influence in Behn's works.

Duffy, Maureen, *The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn 1640-89,* Cape, 1977.

This is an early twentieth-century biography of Aphra Behn by a feminist critic and author.

Hughes, Derek, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn,* Palgrave, 2001.

Hughes presents a chronological study of Behn's plays, putting them into historical context as well as demonstrating her development as a playwright.

Hutner, Heidi, "Revisioning the Female Body: Aphra Behn's

The Rover, Parts I and II," in *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory and Criticism,* edited by Heidi Hutner, University Press of Virginia, 1993.

This essay is a feminist reading of Behn's two Rover plays.

Kreis-Schinck, Annette, *Women, Writing, and the Theater in the Early Modern Period: The Plays of Aphra Behn and Suzanne Centlivre,* Associated University Presses, 2001.

With chapters on marriage, divorce, widowhood, affairs, and abstinence, Kreis-Schinck describes how the works of these two female playwrights portray women's issues of their time.

Owens, W. R., and Lizbeth Goodman, eds., *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon,* Routledge, 1996.

This work is actually a student text with chapters on three Shakespearean plays and one chapter on Behn's *The Rover.* This work describes various Open University (BBC) productions of these plays and their backgrounds and attempts to navigate between understanding the play in its original context and exploring its reflection of current critical interests. The book contains many black-and-white photographs of the 1995 Open University BBC production of *The Rover.*

Sackville-West, V., *Aphra Behn: The Incomparable Astrea,* Russell & Russell Publishers, 1970.

This slim volume is an early biography of Behn, containing some historical inaccuracies, written by a contemporary and friend of Virginia Woolf.

Spencer, Jane, *Aphra Behn's Afterlife,* Oxford University Press, 2000.

Spencer presents a history of the critical reception of Aphra Behn and her work, with a chapter on the reception of *The Rover* in the eighteenth century.

Todd, Janet, *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn,* Camden House, 1998.

In this scholarly work, Todd traces the critical reception and influence of Aphra Behn's plays, novels, and poems.

———, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn,* Rutgers University Press, 1997.

In this recent and very readable biography, Todd delves into the contradictions and complexities of Behn's life and work.

———, ed., *Aphra Behn,* New Casebook Series, St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Todd, a Behn specialist, edited this anthology of recent scholarly essays on the work of Aphra Behn, mostly comprised of feminist readings.

———, ed., *Aphra Behn Studies,* Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Todd presents a range of recent scholarly articles on certain of Behn's plays and poems, including one essay on *The Rover.*

Bibliography

Behn, Aphra, *The Lucky Chance,* Methuen, 1984, p. 2.

Diamond, Elin, "*Gestus* and the Signature in Aphra Behn's

The Rover," in *New Casebooks: Aphra Behn,* edited by Janet Todd, St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. 33.

Gallagher, Catherine, "Who Was That Masked Woman? The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn," in *New Casebooks: Aphra Behn,* edited by Janet Todd, St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. 13.

Hall, Peter, *Exposed by the Mask: Form and Language in Drama,* Theatre Communications Group, 2000, p. 35.

Hughes, Derek, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn,* Palgrave, 2001, p. 87.

Hutner, Heidi, "Revisioning the Female Body: Aphra Behn's

The Rover, Parts I and II," in *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory and Criticism,* edited by Heidi Hutner, University Press of Virginia, 1993, p. 103, 105, 107.

Killigrew, Thomas, *Thomaso; or, The Wanderer,* Part I, Henry Herringman, 1663, p. 363.

Pepys, Samuel, *The Diary of Samuel Peyps,* edited by Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols., University of Berkeley Press, 1970-1983, 7:71-72.

Russell, Anne, Introduction to *The Rover* by Aphra Behn, in *The Rover,* edited by Anne Russell, Broadview Press Ltd., 1994, p. 25.

Schafer, Elizabeth, "Appropriating Aphra," in *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn,* edited by Janet Todd, Camden House, 1998, p. 91.

Spencer, Jane, *Aphra Behn's Afterlife,* Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 25, 192, 197.

Todd, Janet, *The Critical Fortunes of Aphra Behn,* Camden House, 1998, p. 49, 57, 87.

Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own,* Harcourt Brace, 1957, p. 67, 69.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Drama for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Drama for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535