

date "this, Night at the Garden-gate" (1, 23). In Act III Scene I Belvile admits, "what a dull Dog as I" (1, 51), when discovering that he has just been tempted by Florinda in disguise.

The perspective shared by Belvile and Florinda is not available to the inconstant Willmore and the rest of the characters in *The Rover*. It validates itself by reciprocal acts of faith, but the intuitive recognition of virtue demanded by Belvile is simply not possible for a character like Willmore, and that disability separates most of the characters in the play from the two idealized lovers.

The difficulties encountered by Belvile and Florinda in their attempts to use the carnival setting to their advantage suggest that their attitudes represent an honorable, but also somehow inappropriate response to the world of *The Rover*. At first glance, the appropriate response to the carnival in Naples would seem to be Willmore's sensuous attempts.

The greed of the courtesans and the hypocrisy of the Spanish nobles who court Florinda and fight over Angellica at the same time seem to justify Willmore's evident desire to resist social conventions by acquiring everything and paying for nothing.

Criticism

The most powerful criticism of Behn's title character is suggested by the parallels between Blunt and Willmore. They are the only Englishmen interested in courtesans as Lucetta and Angellica. Blunt is lured in the first act by the whore Lucetta and her pimp Sancho. In the third act, he is led to Lucetta's bed chamber and in a state of undress is dispatched into a sewer by Sancho leaving his money and clothes behind. He climbs out into the street cursing his ill-fortune and his own folly:

Blunt's honest recognition of his own folly invites an amused and sympathetic response. Willmore's attempt to rape Florinda occurs immediately after Blunt's

The play well received by the Restoration audience that Behn "found herself carried by this single triumph into the first rank of Restoration writers" (Woodcock 127).

It might be that neither Behn nor her audience could have considered the play very radical or revolutionary; however, it is because it subtly and insistently shifts the basis of sexual and social power.

The critic Julie Nash, in her article "Visual Pleasure in Aphra Behn's asserts that one can find in the play clear points of resistance to the frustration which echoes through the voices of theorists "who can see no way out of the constrain in duality of active male and passive female" (86). Nash concludes her study by convincing that Aphra Behn portrays women characters who determine to use their senses, to choose their own mates, and to reject their fathers', or guardian prescriptions for their lives, while maintaining a love of play and a sense of honour. This delineation on the part of Behn indicates there can be some movement beyond apparently fixed boundaries.

In *The Rover*, Aphra Behn makes in a stronger form, the point she makes in her earlier plays about forced marriage. Heroines forced into, or about to be forced into, Loveless but profitable marriages felt themselves Prostituted the play opens with the two sisters Hellena and Florinda discussing how to outwit the intentions of their father and brother. Florinda is intended by her father for an old dotard Vincentio, and by her brother, Don Pedro, for Antonio, the Vicentio's son.

Hellena defends her interest in love on natural grounds. She describes her physical and natural attributes as the sufficient explanation for her interest.

... what dost thou see about me that is unfit for Love have not I a world of Youth? a Humor gay? a Beauty passable? a Vigour desirable? well shap'd? clean limb'd? sweet breath'd? and Sense enough to know how all these ought to be employ'd to the best Advantage. yes, I do and will.

Hellena's claim to have sense is a claim to a kind of 'common sense' about female beauty as a natural attraction to men and because natural therefore appropriately used to In Helena, Behn creates a character whose appetite combines with her and self-assurance to produce the most attractive and the most assertive character in the play.

The external pressures on the ladies' love that would force Hellena into a nunnery and Florinda into a loveless marriage are clearly condemned. Hellena explicitly draws a parallel line between a religious life and a forced marriage "Is't not enough you make a Nun of me, but you must cast my Sister away too, exposing her to a worse confinement than a religious Life? (1, 13) manipulated by Behn, the audience hopes that both girls escape from these pressures to allow the free development and satisfaction of their love.

The coy Florinda needs a man refined by love as she is. Her love is romantic and sentimental, not divorced from the physical, but threatened by its untransformed demands. For her, physical sex must be a part of the man's worship of the woman. The religious terms in which Belyile conceives of Florinda appear in his first speech about her. She is heaven dealing with a penitent (1,17), he would "sooner forfeit heaven than disobey" her (1,24), and to question her virtue is profanity, (1,26) this rarefied love requires protection and help.

The lady is susceptible to threats posed by male sexual animalist when Willmore comes close to raping her. Moreover, she faces male aggression when Blunt threatens to rape her in revenge against all womankind. She also must be rescued by her lover from the threatening figures of a father, brother and intended husband.

Unlike *Thomazo*, which is set entirely in Madrid during the Spanish Inquisition, *The Rover* takes place during carnival; a discursive setting which gives its heroines Hellena and Florinda freedom to ramble. They are able to leave the house, to speak their minds, and to approach men of their choice. Carnival offers the main female characters a chance to make their own destiny. Hellena, the youngest, is tom to a nunnery and Florinda is promised against her will to on Antonio; but the Carnival's disguises allow

He sees woman as one mass body to be taken, beaten, or abducted as a man desires. He wants to "pull off their false Faces", just as his mask has been removed (I, 87). He tells Florinda, "I will Kiss thee all over; kiss, and see thee all over; thou shalt lie with me too, not that I care of the Enjoyment, but to let you see I have ta'en deliberated Malice to thee, and will be revenged on one whore for the Sins of another ..." (I, 83). In effect, Behn suggests that Blunt finds it necessary to master a woman because he cannot master himself.

In order for the duped Blunt to regain his manly authority, he attacks a woman – any woman. Punning on the image of the highly priced portrait of Angellica, which none of the cavaliers can afford, Blunt then says he will strip Florinda "stack naked" and hang her out his window "by the Heels with a Paper of scurvey Verses fasten'd to thy Breast, in praise of damnable Women" (i 83). For Blunt, where a whore and a virgin are interchangeable in the market of the masquerade, Behn comically disrupts the masculinity discourse of the masquerade, by putting it in the mouth of Blunt, the powerless fool whom the baroque cavaliers associate with only for his money (I, 81).

Florida

Despite Florinda's traditionally feminine passive nature, she is ultimately subject to the same verbal and physical abuse and condemnation by the masculinity ideology of her culture as Hellena and Angellica – the desiring women who love a rake. Confronted by the would be rapists in the last act, including Florinda's brother, Willmore suggests that Pedro allow the "lady to ... chuse her Man" (I, 90).

Pedro does not realize the effect of what he has done when he says, " I am better bred, than not to leave her choice Free" (I, 90). Yet, significantly, what Pedro offers his sister is no free choice at all, Pedro does not know who Florinda is when he makes this offer. As far as he is aware, he merely allows a nameless and faceless woman to choose her own rapist. Thus, Florinda's less aggressive and more morally correct character, affords her no freedom or protection from men's violation and abuse. In this manner,