Shadow and Substance in Aphra Behn's *The Rover:* The Semiotics of Restoration Performance

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In his book, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama,* Keir Elam argues that every aspect of theatrical performance is governed by a denotation-connotation dialectic of signs. The mise-en-scène, the physical presence of the actors, what they say and the things they do "determine and are determined by a constantly shifting network of primary and secondary meanings" (11). The understanding or uncoding of these signs depends upon a series of "correlational rules" between the thing signified and its sign, and these rules, or *codes,* depend, in turn, upon sociological, political, accoustical, semantic, and theatrical constructions or conventions (50).[1] Late in her picaresque comedy *The Rover Part I,* produced 24 March 1677 at Dorset Garden Theatre by the Duke's Company, Aphra Behn introduces a song that is pivotal to the decoding of the play and that draws our attention specifically to the correlation between sign and referent:[2]

> Stay gentle Shadow of my Dove,
> And tell me e'er I go,
> Whether the Substance may not prove
> A fleeting Thing like you.
>
> (IV, 67)

Is the substance the same as its shadow? Is the referent the sign?[3] This ambiguity is especially potent in a play where all the characters are masked to one another. Both audience and character are asked to differentiate between the sign vehicle, or *signifier,* and its referent. Throughout the play, Behn reencodes this relationship in such a way that nothing can be taken for either its face or its mask value. As a result, *The Rover,* portrayed by critics as a play "about sex in its several manifestations" (Duffy 148), is really a work in which masculine and feminine roles are not clearly defined but constantly reinvented. This ambiguity in the correlation of sign and referent certainly reflects the work of Poulain de la Barre whose feminist tract, *The Woman as Good as the Man,* published in English in 1677 (the same year *The Rover* was produced), argues that "Men and women out of custom and habit assume what really ought to remain open to the test of reasoned analysis" (Seidel 503).[4] By setting her play during the interregnum and calling the reader's attention to Killigrew's *Thomaso,* a work produced in and about the earlier decade in which traditional rules of conduct were called into question, Behn is not only challenging the "Puritan ideology of self-denial[,] ... the masculinizing of desire—the creation of women as other and as object" as Robert Markley suggests (Hutner 104), but is also providing a context for the reexamination of contemporary patterns of behavior.

Certainly Behn was also drawn to the biographical aspect of Killigrew's play, a characteristic of which she made good use in her own work. To some critics, Colonel Belville is a representation of Belville Grenville, the hero of the battle of Lansdowne, a good friend of Aphra Behn (Duffy 146). Blunt is a common English name, and as Blunts fought on both sides during the Civil War, the character is given no strong political or moral association. Rather, his mercenary outlook and propensity for whoring (along with the fact of his carrying the cavaliers' money) characterize him as Thomas Osborne, the Earl of Danby and Charles II's Minister of the Treasury. The anonymous satire, *The Chequer Inn,* published in 1675, implies a romantic liaison between Danby and the Duchess of Portsmouth (Lord 260). Marvell's *The Statue at Charing Cross* alludes to Danby's wealth and the king's poverty:

> Though the king be of copper and Danby of gold,
> Shall a Treasurer of guineas a prince grudge of token? (Lord 272)

Is it purely coincidental that Danby should have managed the House of Commons through bribery and corruption and Blunt should come "creeping out of a common shore" shouting, "I have a Bill of Exchange at home wou'd have sav'd my Credit" (III, 52–53).

As we shall see below, Angelica bears a strong resemblance to both Aphra Behn (whose initials she shares) and Louise Kéroüalle, the Duchess of Portsmouth, Charles II's "Catholic" whore, whom Nell Gwynn dubbed the "weeping willow" when Charles left her for the charms of Hortense de Mancini, Cardinal Mazarin's witty and effervescent niece (Hutton 336), represented by Hellena in the play.

Usually described as a characterization of John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester (Diamond 528; Goreau 226; Duffy 146), Willmore, the Rover, is likewise a representation of King Charles himself who, like the Rover of the play, disguised himself in buff (a leather doublet) when he was forced to flee England and wander disinherited through Europe in search of his fortune (Goreau 226). Willmore's first few lines (I, 15) refer directly to the off-stage prince and suggest a metonymic association between the two of them, making Willmore the king's representative in the world of the play.

The association with Charles and the reflection of an earlier revolution is certainly well timed. By 1677, the king was again having little luck eliciting funds from Parliament and, as in the time of his father, Charles I, a system of proroguing that body was the rule rather than the exception. Significantly, on 13 October 1675, the king addressed the House of Commons and admitted that he had wasted revenues and mismanaged the royal budget. This admission of guilt caused a great deal of unrest in that august body, since it called into question the doctrine that the king cannot err (Ogg, 535). The following year, needing yet more money, Charles entered into secret negotiations with France and signed a treaty diametrically opposed to the will of Parliament (which wanted the king to break off all relations with France in favor of an alliance with Spain and the Netherlands). At the same time, the country was plunged into even greater religious unrest since James, the Duke of York, openly avowed his conversion to Catholicism and refused to permit the Anglican Bishop of London to confirm his daughter Mary. From this point on, any doubts as to James's religious beliefs were over, and "the nation was confronted with the certainty that in the natural course of things it would fall under the rule of a popish

king.... As the time approached for parliament to reassemble, it became evident that the two strongest forces to be reckoned with were antagonism to France and dread of Roman catholicism" (Lodge 138). It is this background of political ambiguity that contextualizes Behn's play and provides an historical basis for the recurring ironies of the work.

I

In "*Gestus* and Signature in *The Rover*," Elin Diamond identifies the ambiguity between the illusion and essence of painted scenery (521–22), an illusion which, in the earlier days of Restoration theatre, extended to the actress and actor as well.[5] In his diary entry on 5 October 1667, Pepys remarks:

> and to the King's House: and there, going in, met with Knipp, and she took us up into the tiring-rooms and to the women's shift, where Nell was dressing herself, and was all unready, and is very pretty, prettier than I thought.... But, Lord! to see how they were both painted would make a man mad, and did make me loathe them; ... and how poor the men are in clothes, and yet what a show they make on the stage by candle-light, is very observable. (III, 74–75)

The Rover trades on the inability to distinguish between sign and referent, on the illusions created through shadow and mask, paint and artifice. Florinda, Hellena, and Valeria appear in different disguises in each of their entrances, creating difficulty for both their lovers and the audience to distinguish them in a crowded masquerade.[6] And, as Hellena reveals, the mask is not only a costume but the role a person plays:

> I don't intend every he that likes me shall have me, but he that I like: I should have staid in the Nunnery still, if I had lik'd my Lady Abbess as well as she lik'd me. No, I came thence, not (as my wise Brother imagines) to take an eternal Farewel of the World, but to love and be belov'd.... I have the more Inclination that way, because I am to be a Nun, and so shall not be suspected to have any such earthly Thoughts about me—But when I walk thus—and sigh thus—they'll think my Mind's upon my Monastery, and cry, how happy 'tis she's so resolv'd!—But not a Word of Man. (III, 40–41)[7]

By a clever manipulation of signs, Behn veils the distinction between shadow and substance in her play, but such manipulation, in addition to veiling, compels activity. In the first masking scene, women enter, "drest like Curtezans," and proceed to make love to the men (I, 15). Does Behn mean that these are actually courtesans or that they are women disguised as courtesans? Belville pointedly draws attention to the dichotomy: "They are, or wou'd have you think they're Curtezans" (I, 16).[8] Because only Angelica Bianca is specifically referred to as a "curtezan" in the play, it is likely that Behn means these are courtesan disguises. But since the women proceed to behave as courtesans, Behn is suggesting that, in the ontologically ambiguous environment of the carnival, the mask is equivalent to essence. In this case, the mask of the harlot both disguises and creates identity.

Manipulating theatrical devices, Behn takes this concept of ambiguity even further. In her "Computer Analysis of Restoration Staging," Dawn Lewcock has catalogued the various stage devices used by Behn in *The Rover*. These include an above or balcony, discoveries, double disclosures, curtains hanging to disclose fur-

ther action, masks and disguises, action as if in the dark, and stage traps. While the metaphoric interpretation of these devices—discoveries, disclosures, disguises, traps—is certainly illustrative of the play, a practical comparison with the stage fitments of other plays produced at Dorset Garden during the same period is even more telling. Based on theatre craft alone, Behn's comedy is comparable to *The Fatal Jealousy, The Empress of Morocco, Love and Revenge, Alcibiades,* and *The Libertine,* plays which were all considered tragedies (Lewcock 149–50). This clearly infers that, in terms of stage production, Behn was consciously fitting her play with serious resonances that would both contrast and reinscribe the essence of her comedy and that would produce a work whose genre was purposefully ambiguous.[9]

This ambiguity is further developed by the amount of verse in the play—verse that usually marks the discourse of Angelica Bianca, whose signified identity as whore is in itself a mask for her real role as cast-off mistress. The verse scenes between her and Willmore, the Rover, suggest the tragicomedies of Dryden—a form that reached its heyday in the late 1660s—rather than the more modern comedies of manners of Etherege or Wycherley, both of whom had written their last plays before *The Rover* was produced.[10] Markley concludes that this return to an older dramatic form which had developed out of the "political ethos of idyllic royalism" is important, as it allowed Behn to produce an "idealized vision of a golden age of unrepressed sexuality ... against the economies of exile and repression symbolized by Roundheads and Whigs" (Hutner 104).

That Angelica Bianca goes beyond the parameters of the traditional comic cast-off mistress (in which she evokes both the king's mistress, Louise Kéroüalle, and the author herself) is clear from her murderous rage at the end of the play.[11] Driven to desperate measures, she threatens Willmore with a loaded gun in a long melodramatic episode that recalls Louise's infamous hysterics when Charles would attend to other mistresses (Fraser 312).[12] The role was originated by an actress named Anne Marshall (also known as Mrs. Quin) who had been cast in the same role in Killigrew's *Thomaso,* ten years earlier (Wilson 169).[13] This emphasizes the correlation between the plays and renders less ambiguous Behn's drawing attention to the "sign of Angelica" in her infamous post-script. Semiotically, as the actress playing the role, Mrs. Quin *was* the sign of Angelica. The fact that a Restoration audience would have been accustomed to seeing Mrs. Marshall (Quin) in virtuous roles (Howe 151) would also have added to the signed expectations of the part. As Angelica, like Zempoalla, her character in Dryden's heroic tragedy, *The Indian Queen,* Mrs. Quin falls in love with an enemy and responds with the use of violence, in both cases, threatening the life of her faithless lover. In heroic tragedy, this kind of role came to be known as the "darker woman" (Howe 149), and its resonances would not have been unknown to the audience when its signs were seen in the character of Angelica. By correlating the roles, Behn creates a semantic association between queen and whore (a device already employed in her *Abdelazer)* that is realized in the physical production of the play. First, a "great Picture of Angelica's" is raised, like a standard up on the balcony (II, 27); then Angelica and her woman appear behind a veil on the balcony, like a queen and her attendants on the dais above her subjects; and finally, in the first of the play's discovery scenes, Angelica "throws open the Curtains" and grants an interview (II, 30). Audience members recalling Zempoalla's entrance in II.ii of *The Indian Queen* would certainly appreciate this

semantic association between the plays as well as Mrs. Behn's multi-layered construct of signs.[14]

II

Behn also manipulates what Elam calls "Epistemic" and "Aesthetic" codes in *The Rover* by beginning the play with a discourse between women—the first of her plays to do so. In the Restoration, typically, plays began with male discourse, usually about manners or the pursuit of women. Behn's unveiling of a female sign at the outset would have been both titillating and innovative to a Restoration audience and would have called into question traditional interpretations of signs in the theatrical context just as the king's admission of wrongdoing to parliament on 13 October 1675 had called into question the infallibility of the king—the traditional application of signs in the historical context.

Behn also reinscribes the traditional theatrical usage of street scenes in *The Rover.* In earlier plays, such as *The Dutch Lover* (1673) and *The Town Fopp* (1676), Behn suggests a painted background for street scenes as a kind of *in-one* device to mask another setting. An examination of other plays of this period demonstrates that this was the typical practice. In *The Rover,* however, the author specifies a "Long Street" with characters said to "advance from the farther end of the scene" (I, 13, 16; Lewcock 153). As a result, the entire stage is in use for many of the street scenes in the play.[15] Functioning no longer as merely transitional devices, the street scenes become the central focus of the play—the locus of the carnival where sign and referent are most potent. Originally the term associated with the beginning of the Roman Catholic period of Lent, carnival lends a highly charged political atmosphere to the play. In addition, the pagan roots of carnival go back to the roots of theatre itself—the kommos—in which erotic discourse, sexual license, and role reversal were common.[16]

The significance of the actualized role-playing on the street is tangibly impressed upon all the interior scenes of the play. Often this is done through simple devices, such as having Don Pedro put on his "masking Habit" in the first scene of the play (a visual correlation to the discourse about the carnival), or showing "several Men and Women in masking Habits" entering Blunt's rooms from the street at the end of the play. But Behn also employs more subtle sign-referent correlations such as Willmore's lusting after the "sign of Angelica" in the street and seducing the original inside. For Willmore, the two events appear to be part of the same action. The street scenes also permit the women a number of disguises, each of which would have a potent effect on both the spectators and the men in the play. Like Pinter in *The Birthday Party,* creating an ambiguity of causality for both spectator and participant (a unique reincoding of theatrical signs in order to make the audience experience the reality, or absurdity, of the play), Behn hides identity from both spectator and actor so that recognition is experienced by both simultaneously. In this way, neither audience nor actor can become comfortable with patent interpretations of signs but must constantly reevaluate discourse and activity to attain substance. This, of course, is precisely what Poulain advocates in his feminist treatise (Seidel 503).

Even the characters who would have been considered exemplary in Restoration comedy are not untouched by the ambivalence of signs. Despite his honest intentions, Belville is taken for a villain and murderer when he happens upon a wounded

Antonio. Out of doors, "undress'd," Florinda is taken for a whore by Willmore who responds to her protests with an offer of money. Willmore's attempt to purchase Florinda is significant, as it reinforces the mercenary-erotic praxis of the play in which money not only purchases (and maintains) the image of the female but supports the male image of self-worth.[17] All of Behn's plays deal, in some way, with forced marriages, jointures, and dowries, and *The Rover,* a comedy in which value is governed by the possession of money or property, is no exception.[18] Since Behn's cavaliers "have been kept so poor with Parliaments and Protectors," a remark focused on the king's inability to pay off a debt in excess of £1,000,000, romantic conquests become their most tangible possessions (Sedgwick 62–63). As a result, mercantile discourse between men and women in the play functions as a kind of signified foreplay.

When Florinda, Hellena, and Valeria enter "drest like Gipsies," the Restoration code for "loose women," Hellena responds to Willmore's advances with: "Have a care how you venture with me, Sir, lest I pick your Pocket, which will more vex your *English* Humour, than an *Italian* Fortune will please you" (I, 17). Mercenary discourse between Willmore and Hellena transforms into erotic discourse that climaxes in the discovery that Hellena is to be a nun:

> A Nun! Oh how I love thee for't! there's no Sinner like a young Saint—Nay, now there's no denying me: the old Law had no Curse (to a Woman) like dying a Maid; witness *Jephtha's* Daughter. (I, 19)

It is clear that Willmore is attracted to the sign of the virgin more than to the actual woman,[19] a point which is reestablished in Act II when, longing to "see the Shadow of the fair Substance" on which "a Man may gaze ... for nothing" (25), Willmore lusts after the portrait of the courtesan, Angelica Bianca. Since he lacks the money to procure the woman herself, but needs to possess the woman to verify his own self-worth,[20] he steals the portrait and is wounded because of his theft. This is an important event, as it represents male aggression over the effigy of a woman—not the woman herself! Nevertheless, the men on stage refer to the theft as "Rudeness committed to the fair *Angelica*" (II, 31) as if the effigy and its object were one and the same. When Willmore finally comes fact to face with the subject of the portrait, his words express passion and finance in almost the same breath: "How heavenly fair she is!—ah Plague of her Price" (II, 32). Yet when Angelica offers to yield her "Joys" to him gratis, the rake has difficulty seeing beyond the mask of whore and does not immediately accept her proposal. Only when Angelica agrees to Willmore's pay-back proposal does he concede to her offer. Since Angelica is a signed courtesan, only mercenary discourse will enable Willmore to achieve his self-fulfillment.[21]

Having consummated his relationship with Angelica, Willmore boasts about it to his companions and, simultaneously, complains about being poor. In a world where worth is defined by property, a lack of money must be balanced by a surfeit of erotic conquests.[22] Willmore's view of womankind as commodity is again in evidence at the end of Act III when the rake confounds the planned rendezvous between Belville and Florinda by nearly raping his friend's fiancée. To Willmore's excuse that he "took her for an errant Harlot" (a typically rakish response to the sight of a woman in a nightgown alone in the dark), Belville replies:

> Damn your debaucht Opinion: tell me, Sot, hadst thou so much sense and light about thee to distinguish her to be a Woman, and could'st thou not see something about her Face and Person, to strike an awful Reverence into thy Soul? (57)

Here, Behn is making a case for the value of woman as woman, a concept far removed from libertine psychology, for Willmore answers, "Faith no, I considered her as mere Woman as I could wish" (57).[23] Again, the rake reduces the referent to a manageable sign—an activity that the theatre in the Restoration did regularly to women.[24] Blunt will act in a similar fashion when he nearly rapes Florinda later in Act IV, saying that he "will be revenged on one Whore for the Sins of another" (80). The real person behind the sign is of no consequence. In Hobbesian fashion, person is the mask.

III

Up to this point in the play, Willmore is a Hobbesian rake in the company of John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, or King Charles II. However, as Dale Underwood suggests, the true Hobbesian libertine is possessed of an ambiguous personality "arising from the influence of contradictory traditions ... whose inconsistencies were sufficiently submerged to avoid practical embarassment" (26, 28).[25] After his attempted rape of Florinda, Willmore plays into the ambiguities of the Hobbesian libertine and begins to act and be treated as a fop, a character whose vanity, in terms of conquering the fair sex, leads him to become a blocking character in the path of true love.[26]

In the second scene of Act IV, Willmore acts the fop when he enters "finely drest" and proceeds to unmask Belville, who is in the process of spiriting away Florinda under the nose of her brother. When Willmore attempts to come to his friend's assistance by drawing on Florinda's brother Pedro, he is, once again, chastised by Belville:

> Stand off.
> Thou'rt so profanely leud, so curst by Heaven,
> All Quarrels thou espousest must be fatal. (65)

In this matter, the relation between sign and referent is significant since William Smith, the actor who originated the role of Willmore, had also originated the role of the prototypical fop, Fopling Flutter in Etherege's *The Man of Mode* the year before. The actor had killed a man in a quarrel ten years previously, and Behn is trading (once again) on a conventional semantic association to create dramatic irony and to emphasize theatrical illusion.

To his friend's reprimand, Willmore replies in typical fop discourse that recalls Fopling Flutter's exchange with Mrs. Loveit in the last act of *The Man of Mode*:[27]

> Egad, I'll speak to you, and will be answered too.... I know I've done some mischief, but I'm so dull a Puppy, that I am the Son of a Whore, if I know how, or where— (65–66)

Later in Act V, when the cavaliers and Don Pedro are about to descend upon Florinda, whom Blunt has locked away, Willmore again blocks Belville's plans to re-

lease the lady discreetly, first by a foolish and foppish remark, "No whispering, good Colonel, there's a Woman in the case, no whispering," and then by suggesting that the one with the longest sword should carry her off. Since Spanish swords are significantly longer than English blades, Willmore becomes the butt of Belville's renewed contempt: "Dost know, dull Beast, what Mischief thou hast done? ... Oh intolerable Sot!" (86–87). Finally, when Florinda and Belville manage to get married, Willmore is the one who lets the cat out of the bag (V, 95).

The ambiguities created by a libertine, whose foolish behavior all but divests him of his friends, and a novice, whose religious fervor lies in the conquest of men, resolve in the greatest of the play's incongruities: marriage.[28] Neither Hellena, whose name evokes the "Trojan" temptress, nor Willmore believes in marriage as an institution. In Act III, Willmore refers to marriage as revenge, and Hellena agrees with him:

> O' my Conscience, that will be our Destiny, because we are both of one humour; I am as inconstant as you, for I have considered, Captain, that a handsom Woman has a great deal to do whilst her Face is good, for then is our Harvest-time to gather Friends; and should I in these days of my Youth, catch a fit of foolish Constancy, I were undone; 'tis loitering by day-light in our great Journey: therefore declare, I'll allow but one year for Love, one year for Indifference, and one year for Hate—and then—go hang yourself—for I profess myself the gay, the kind, and the inconstant— (45)

Hellena's recapitulation of inconstancy in Act V, "I am call'd *Hellena the Inconstant*" (99), suggests as doomed a nuptual as Willmore's contention that "Marriage is as certain a Bane to Love, as lending Money is to Friendship" (V, 98). While the mention of some 200,000 crowns as a dowry, earlier in Act IV (68), had renewed Willmore's interest in his Gipsy, is it the money or the play's symmetry that requires them to marry?

Schneider argues that Willmore undergoes a kind of conversion that arises "from a battle of wits in which the girl, Hellena, raises before our eyes the respect that causes the change in his attitude.... The relationship here established, based as much on mutual regard as on sexual attraction, is not unlike friendship" (180–81). Goreau, on the other hand, argues that *virtuous* Hellena "has understood that withholding her favors is the only way she can survive in the battle of the sexes" (227), and that "[t]he young woman is split between her own desire for sexual freedom and her instinct that it will make her [Willmore's] victim. So she tricks him, frustrates him, and outwits him until finally they negotiate a settlement" (227). In either case, both parties are struggling to resolve the ambiguities of image—a battle, the importance of which outweighs the encumbrances of matrimony. By competing with Willmore on the plateau of wit, Hellena adds other signifiers to her personality that transcend the sign of nun, or wealthy virgin, and render her more like a man. By accepting marriage, Willmore realizes that only the ambiguous is real—that the substitution of one mask for another is the only means of survival in an illusory world.[29]

NOTES

[1] As a result, Elam concludes that every play text is inherently ambiguous, and that such points of ambiguity enable actors and directors to "interpret" a play.

[2] The codes that identify sign and referent can range from something as simple as a green light on a street corner signifying "go" in traffic, to the more complex, though

conventional, acceptance of boy actors on the Elizabethan stage in women's roles. It is the actor/director's responsibility to identify and interpret the complex system of codes in every play in order to transmit them in terms of signs which are viable to an audience.

[3] This convolution of identity is central to Hobbes's analysis of what a person is:

> The word person is Latin: *persona* in Latin 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 the stage and in common conversation; and to *personate,* is to *act,* or *represent* himself, or another; and he that acteth another, is said to bear his person, or act in his name; in which sense Cicero useth it where he says *Unus sustineo tres personas; mei, adversarii, et judicis;* I bear three persons; my own, my adversary's, and the judge's.... (125)

[4] Behn further confutes gender distinctions with "To the fair Clarinda" in her *Poems Appended to Lycidus:*

> Fair lovely Maid, or if that Title be
> Too week, too Feminine for Nobler thee,
> Permit a Name that more approaches Truth:
> And let me call thee, Lovely Charming Youth. (*Works* VI, 363)

[5] Diamond describes what she calls a "new scopic epistemology" of the Restoration Theatre:

> 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. (521)

[6] Their first appearance "drest like Gipsies" (I, 17) is a significant sign, since "gipsy" was a contemptuous term for a woman "as being cunning, deceitful, fickle, or the like" (*OED* VII, 173).

[7] It is important to note that Elizabeth Barry, who introduced the role of Hellena, would go on to play the role of La Nuche, the courtesan, in *The Rover Part II.* Howe argues that "it was only when Barry's mesmeric talents were employed in the portrayal of prostitutes and mistresses that their problematic situation was given detailed consideration and their sufferings vividly realised. ... Thanks to Barry, the prostitute and the mistress became a source of conflict and debate in the theatre and so contributed to the fresh upsurge of interest in women and women's problems at the end of the century" (130). The semiotic associations between the real Mrs. Barry, as Rochester's mistress, as a nun seeking erotic discourse, and as a long-suffering whore, would be quite potent to a Restoration audience.

[8] Later in the play, Behn gives the following stage direction regarding Willmore: *Whilst he is seemingly courting Hellena, enter Angelica, Moretta, Biskey, and Sebastian, all in Masquerade* (III, 44). The use of the word "seemingly" is significant because of the ambiguity it suggests. Is Willmore really courting Hellena, or does it simply look that way? In the world of the play, does it matter? Is Behn drawing our attention to the fact that outward appearances are the issue, not the actual intention or essence of the character?

[9] Lewcock explains that Dorset Garden had begun to use the "spectacular set piece" (which had been a device typical of heroic drama to show scenes of death or torture) as "an ironic adjunct to comedy" (145). Diamond interprets Behn's obsession with such "discovery scenes" (*The Rover* has four) as a means to "activate scoptic 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" (535). However, in the intro-

duction to her book, *The Sign of Angellica,* Janet Todd suggests that such "distancing" was dangerous for the woman. Speaking of Angelica Bianca's portrait, the sign of her profession, Todd argues:

> The message of her portrait is too frank, too crude. Had she worn it close to her face as a mask, matters might have been different, but instead she chose to distance it and to draw attention to its construction. The action was conscious, blatant, unfeminine and professional. (1)

[10] This is not to suggest that Behn's use of this device is original with this play. Behn was fond of mixing verse and prose in all of her early comedies, but, while Bevis calls into question the verse in *The Town Fopp; or Sir Timothy Tawdry,* he admits that the characters in *The Rover* can sustain it (90).

[11] Like Behn, whose *Love Letters to a Gentleman* are filled with remonstrances against a false lover, John Hoyle (perhaps another model for Willmore), Angelica spends much of the play repenting a love "That made me humbly bow, which I ne'er did/To any thing but Heaven" (V, 91).

[12] It is significant that Angelica enters in disguise and begins to threaten Willmore while masked. When the mask is removed, however, she continues the *same action.* So doing, she is the only woman in the play to behave in exactly the same fashion with and without the mask.

[13] The editors of *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800* state that Anne Marshall had been Killigrew's choice for the role and had probably played it (XII, 243). Because Downes did not usually distinguish between the Marshall sisters (Anne and Rebecca), it is often difficult to ascertain which of the two played a particular role. But since Rebecca, the younger sister, did not come into her own as a performer until around 1666 (see Pepys's *Diary* 7 December 1666), it is not likely that she would have been Killigrew's choice for *Thomaso* which was slated for production in 1662 and 1664 when Anne was already an established actress. What's more, in her discussion of Rebecca Marshall, Elizabeth Howe begins listing significant roles with *The Chances* in 1667 and makes no claim that the actress participated, in any way, in *Thomaso* three years earlier (152–56; 187).

[14] Dryden's stage direction reads: "ZEMPOALLA *appears seated upon a throne, frowning upon her attendants; then comes down and speaks"* (MacMillan and Jones 34). If, as Diamond suggests, Angelica performs the "titillating masquerade required by her purchasers *and* by her spectators" (532), this is, after all, a method of rule over the mob, not unlike Zempoalla who controls through her use of magic. What is more significant is the fact that Angelica *does* attempt to "demistify and authenticate herself. She wants to step out of the paintings, to be known not by her surface but by her depth" (Diamond 533). In an odd, almost mannerist symmetry, Hellena seeks to extricate herself from her image to the opposite effect.

[15] In other plays, Behn exhibited a similar concern for theatrical effect. Lewcock counts several specific references to "Flat" scenery in Behn's plays, while only Orrery's *Guzman* (1669) and Lee's *Caesar Borgia* (1679) make specific reference to that device. In *The Roundheads* (1681), Behn requires a flat to cover a change of scene which Lewcock suggests is "the first indication of a clear intention to draw over a 'Flat' to enable tidying up and re-furnishing of the set to take place behind" (152).

[16] By locating her play in an environment which is indigenously theatrical (as well as political, given the popular concern over James's Catholicism), Aphra is capitalizing on Hobbes's person/actor praxis and providing an experience which is eminently metatheatrical (See Abel 59–61; Hornby 31 ff.).

[17] As Hobbes interprets human worth:

> The *value,* or WORTH of a man, is as of all other things, his price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing de-

pendent on the need and judgment of another.... For let a man, as most men do, rate themselves at the highest value they can; yet their true value is no more than it is esteemed by others. (73)

[18] The political resonances here are significant. Though Charles II had been voted a revenue of £1,200,000 a year after the Restoration, "this sum was never fully made up, nor were its deficiencies compensated by new and additional supplies. The King at the same time, not very economical, incurred many incidental expenses [sic] of so heavy a nature, that he was in perpetual distress" (Colquhoun 168).

[19] Hellena had entered the convent not "to take an eternal Farewel of the World, but to love and be belov'd" (III, 40). Obviously Hellena is not the young innocent she is supposed to be, but is Willmore's attraction based on this reverse coding (i.e., does he assume that the mask of a virgin hides a loose woman), or does he really perceive her as virginal? Ambiguities such as this give the play its real power.

[20] Diamond observes that Willmore appreciates the paintings because "they are not the original but an effective stand-in.... 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 chill'd.
> —This must along with me. (II, 31)

This speech and the act of appropriation occur before Willmore sees Angellica" (531–32).

[21] Willmore replies to Angelica's generosity in verse:

> There's not a Joy thou hast in store
> I shall not then command:
> For which I'll pay thee back my Soul, my Life.
> Come, let's begin th'account this happy minute. (II, 38)

It is especially notable that when Angelica continues the mercenary discourse, Willmore interrupts her:

> Keep me but ignorant, and I'll be devout,
> And pay my Vows for ever at this Shrine. (II, 38)

Similar to his dealing with the portrait, Willmore's behavior shows more concern for the sign than the signifier. When Angelica reveals her true desire ("The Pay I mean is but thy Love for mine"), Willmore concludes the bargain with a single word, ostensibly relieved that an empty promise of love can seal the bargain. Again Behn appears to be trading on Hobbes who argues, in *Leviathan,* that forms of speech are not certain signs of passions "because they may be used arbitrarily, whether they that use them, have such passions, or not. The best signs of passions present, are either in the countenance, motions of the body, actions, and ends, or aims, which we otherwize know the man to have" (55).

[22] Wearing the mask of denial to Hellena who appears to him in the disguise of her true identity, Willmore succeeds in winning her affection and, after a discussion of marriage that resolves into further financial discourse, he promises "never to think—to see—to love—nor lie with any" but her. Moments later, however, shown a portrait of his friend Belville's beloved Florinda, Willmore contrives to add *her* to his possessions, until he is informed of Florinda's association with his friend. As in his relationship with Angelica, the rake assumes another pay-back position: "Oh, oh, here—I thought it had been another Prize—come, come, a Bottle will set thee right again" (III, 48).

[23] See Wehrs for an account of Behn's position "historically and intellectually, between the conceptual horizons of Renaissance humanism and New Scientific modernity" (462).

[24] See Diamond who argues that 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" (532).

[25] Weber identifies these contradictory traditions as the "naturalism of Machiavelli and Hobbes—a tradition concerned with human self-interest, aggression, and conquest ... and a belief in the individual's natural affinity for freedom, indulgence, and pleasure" (53).

[26] As Sharma suggests, "fops become comic primarily because of their failure to live up to their pretensions" (78). Hume classifies Willmore as an "extravagant rake" whose " 'wildness'—sexual, financial, or otherwise—is looked on with indulgence by all but the stuffiest old fathers" (156). While the association Hume makes between eroticism and finance is significant here, his suggestion that most members of the extravagant rake type are "far wilder in word than in deed" (157) certainly does not apply to Willmore. Neither does his suggestion that Willmore's activities are countenanced by his friends.

[27] In Etherege's play, the dialogue with Mrs. Loveit runs as follows:

> SIR FOPLING. What the devil makes her so reserved?—Am I guilty of an indiscretion, madam?
>
> MRS. LOVEIT. You will be—of a great one—if you continue your mistake, sir.
>
> SIR FOPLING. Something's put you out of humor?
>
> MRS. LOVEIT. The most foolish, inconsiderable thing that ever did.
>
> SIR FOPLING. Is it in my power?
>
> MRS. LOVEIT. To hang or drown it. Do one of 'em and trouble me no more.
>
> (MacMillan and Jones 127)

[28] In Act IV, the transvestite scene between Hellena and Willmore is a clever demonstration of Behn's manipulation of signs. When Hellena, dressed as a boy like Viola in *Twelfth Night,* attempts to trap Willmore by telling him a tale of a sister in love with him, Willmore is taken in by the narrative in accordance with true Hobbesian nominalism. Like a *miles gloriosus* from the old Roman Comedy (an antecedent of the fop), he fashions a sign of yet another love affair and is highly disappointed when he discovers the boy to be his Hellena, the woman about whose beauty he had rhapsodized a mere act earlier.

> Hah! do not I know that Face?—
> By heaven, my little Gipsy! what a dull Dog was I?
> Had I but lookt that way, I'd known her.
> Are all my hopes of a new Woman banisht? (IV, 72)

[29] Hutner suggests that the legal marriage between Hellena and Willmore, "symbolically at least, leads to Hellena's death" (117), and concludes that, while *The Rover Part I* ends with "the apparent restoration of patriarchal authority, *The Rover Part II* undermines the ideology evident in these conclusions" (103).

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