Moving Miniatures and Circulating Bodies in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*[1]

Ashley Brookner Bender
University of North Texas

In *The Sign of Angellica,* Janet Todd argues that Aphra Behn's "professional literary concern is with the portrait, with the social construction of woman, the woman in business, in activity, in story, and in history, the female persona not the unknowable person" (1). Indeed, most criticism on *The Rover* (1677) at least mentions "the sign of Angellica," the large portrait that hangs below Angellica Bianca's house and to which Behn refers in the postscript to the play. How fitting, then, that Behn's use of miniatures as stage properties—props, slangily—becomes the means through which she explores identity and self-expression in the play. She criticizes the commodification of women by linking the movement of her props to the movement of the bodies of her female characters. The men in *The Rover* control the movement of female bodies by controlling the movement of miniatures that depict those bodies. Behn demonstrates how the men—especially Wilmore—deny Angellica and Florinda ownership of their pictures and, more importantly, of themselves once they make their pictures public. Behn employs the miniatures to criticize the use of women as props and property, both in and out of the marriage market.

Behn furthers her critique with the example of her heroine Hellena by suggesting that women can maintain some autonomy, even within the confines of marriage, by controlling the movement of their images and their bodies. Hellena has no miniature to represent her, and she monitors who can and cannot see her. She can choose to move where and when she wants. Moreover, much as the men move women, Hellena sees Willmore and, at least metaphorically, controls the movement of his body—making him her prop. Behn ultimately spoofs Restoration comic convention by inverting the process through which men move women.

Restoration Volume 31, No. 1, Spring 2007

As works of art, miniatures figuratively miniaturize the objects that they depict. Yet these "portraits in little" are often big with meaning. Susan Stewart suggests the presence of an inverse relationship between a miniature's size and its significance:

> Minute description reduces the object to its signifying properties, and this reduction of physical dimensions results in a multiplication of ideological properties. The minute depiction of the object in painting …reduces the tactile and olfactory dimensions of the object and at the same time increases the significance of the object within the system of signs. (47-48)

Behn exploits this relationship between literal size and figurative meaning in *The Rover* by emphasizing the relationship between the painted object and its original. Angellica's and Florinda's miniatures substitute in diminished form for the bodies that they depict. What happens to their pictures also happens to their bodies. Behn's stage directions are of special importance in this regard. Willmore does not just "look" at the pictures of Angellica: he "*gazes on the Picture*" (18); he "*[t]urns from the Picture*" (19); and then "*having gaz'd all this while on the Picture, pulls down a little one*" (22).[2] According to Richard Brilliant, "Portraits can elicit responsive behaviour from viewers as if the art works presented themselves in the form of a proposition, 'This is so and so', and the viewers then behaved accordingly" (24). While Blunt, Belvile, and Frederick discuss the picture, Willmore reacts to it because the miniature induces in him a series of physical and emotional responses, from awed silence to frustration and anger. After more silent gazing, Willmore claims ownership of the picture. He explains his reactions to Angellica when he meets her in person: "I saw your Charming Picture and was wounded; quite through my Soul each pointed Beauty ran; and wanting a Thousand Crowns to procure my remedy—I laid this little Picture to my Bosom" (23).

Yet Willmore does not limit his actions to the picture. By acting on the miniature, Willmore is able to transfer his actions from Angellica's picture to her body. He mimics his interactions with the miniature when he meets Angellica: he "*[h]olds her, looks on her, and pawses and sighs*"; he "*[t]urns her away from him*"; he "*turn[s] from her in Rage*"; and then "*he holds her*" again (26-28). Willmore's doubled actions emphasize the connection between Angellica's representation and her body. If miniatures are "a stage on which we project … a deliberately framed series of *actions*" (54), as Stewart argues, then Angellica, like her miniature, becomes a stage on which Willmore re-projects a series of actions.

In both instances, Willmore controls the movement of Angellica's miniature and body. The correlation between image and body is so pronounced that even Blunt's unrealized proposal that the men take down the large picture of Angellica leads to similar threats against her body. Blunt says, "we'll have the great one too; 'tis ours by Conquest.—prithee help me up and I'll pull it down" (23). Moving the picture—now the spoils of the Englishmen's battle with the Spaniards—becomes a violent group enterprise. In the next scene, Willmore repeats the threat by insinuating that the group might take Angellica's body. Lacking the money to buy Angellica for the month, Willmore says that he and his friends can "put in for a Share, we cannot lose much by it, and what we have no use for, we'll sell upon the *Frydays* mart at—*Who gives more?*" (26). Willmore implies that each of the men will first have his turn with Angellica (much like the later gang rape attempt on Florinda), and then they will sell her to the highest bidder. Angellica would again lose the ability to move herself because the men would be in charge of selling her and of moving her from man to man.

This process through which moving miniatures lead to circulating bodies suggests that once a woman makes her picture public, she loses her freedom of movement because she, like her picture, becomes a commodity for public consumption. Florinda does not hang her picture from her window in order to attract men as Angellica does; but by putting her miniature into circulation, she often encounters analogous obstacles. When Florinda gives her jewel (a miniature in a jeweled case) to Belvile, he shows her picture to Frederick and Willmore (37). Willmore is the first to comment on her picture, and he is also the first to attempt rape. The men reenact in the rape scenes the previous circulation of the miniature. When Florinda walks out alone in search of Belvile, she assumes an autonomy that her moving miniature invalidates.

For almost every movement between actor and prop, Behn creates a similar moment between actor and actress. The actresses actually become stage props themselves during the course of the play because the men move them for theatrical effect. Douglas Bruster argues that "hand props testify by their size and portability to an open potential. They can be variously possessed, traded, lost, found, concealed, and evaluated" (70-71). The actresses take on the portable characteristics of stage props as the actors possess, trade, lose, find, conceal, and evaluate them as if they were also inanimate objects. Behn's stage directions again highlight this relationship. During the scene in which Belvile and Don Pedro fight one another, Belvile "*draws her* [Florinda] *aside* (51); Don Pedro "*gives him* [Belvile] Flor[inda]" (50) and then "*takes* Flor[inda] *from him*," so Willmore suggests that they "fetch" Florinda back (52).

The dual circulation of miniatures and bodies in *The Rover* suggests multiple interpretations of Angellica's and Florinda's "signs." Todd contends that "[i]t is the sign of woman, not an essence of womanhood that can be studied, for Angellica, like her author, did not hang out herself, but a sexual, social, historical and artistic artefact" (10).[3] Even so, the women make their miniatures public in order to display their private, self-created identities—in effect, the essence of their selves. Florinda wants Belvile to regard her as a chaste, marriageable woman; Angellica wants men to think of her as an expensive mistress, attainable only by a very few. Thus she is "not displeas'd with their rallying; their wonder," she says, "feeds my vanity, and he that wishes but to buy, gives me more Pride, than he that gives my Price, can make my pleasure" (19). For the women, then, miniatures are the means to achieve agency.

Nevertheless, as public objects, the miniatures invite interpretation. They stand not only for the women's perceptions of themselves but also for how the public sees, or reads, the pictures. According to Patricia Fumerton, in a discussion of miniatures and Elizabethan sonnets, the "'publication' of the miniature...while creating a sense of inwardness—and thus appearing to respond to a real need for expressing the inner, private self—could only be arrived at through outer, public rooms" (98). Angellica and Florinda must display their private selves in public fora in order to make those identities available to others; as a result, the men can construct their own interpretation of the women's images. For the women in *The Rover*, the need for publication leads to a constant deferral of the private self. Because portraits are "denotative," as Brilliant argues (46), Angellica and Florinda essentially give the men who view their pictures the power to name—or rename—them, metaphorically speaking. The women represented in the miniatures forfeit the ability to name or define themselves once they present themselves publicly. The pictures consequently become sites of conflict over which the women's understandings of themselves contest the public, specifically male, interpretations projected back onto the miniatures.

When Angellica would have Willmore read her as a high-priced whore, for example, he does not yield to her as the other men do. He criticizes Angellica's image and steals her picture:

> This Posture's loose and negligent,
> The sight on't wou'd beget a warm desire,
> In Souls whom Impotence and Age had chill'd.
> —This must along with me. (22)

Willmore reads into the picture an illicit sexuality that a man even as poor as himself can attain. If "violence and aggression" in Restoration drama become the means to "contain female identity," as Cynthia Lowenthal has argued (30),[4]

then Willmore's theft, a violence he enacts on the picture in place of the absent woman, contains both her identity and her sexuality. He reduces perfection to imperfection, the unattainable to the already attained. In the next scene, Willmore suggests that he has removed the picture, so Angellica can no longer "tempt poor Am'rous Mortals" (24). Willmore decreases the number of pictures available for men to view, and in doing so, he regulates and limits Angellica's identity by stifling her ability to "beget a warm desire" in those who view her. He suppresses her ability to display her interpretation of herself.

Anita Pacheco argues that the images hanging below Angellica's balcony become "rather than her body...the site of conflict" for which Don Pedro, Don Antonio, and the Englishmen fight for Angellica (399). Yet Pacheco's focus on the male conflict ignores the more tenuous relationship between the women's self-authorizing intentions and the men's resistance to those intentions. Moreover, Angellica's body becomes an object of contention when Willmore transfers his reading of her miniature to her body when they meet face-to-face. Whereas Angellica sees herself as a unified, inviolable whole, Willmore implies that she is divisible, that her body can be sold part by part; he suggests that she overestimates her value. Willmore asks Moretta, "pray how much may come to my Share for a Pistole.—Bawd take your black Lead and Sum it up, that I may have a Pistoles worth of this vain gay [thing]" (25). Although Willmore's "pistoles worth" may very well refer to the amount of time he could spend with Angellica, underlying his demand is the assumption that Angellica is a petty "thing" that he can buy by the pound. Willmore threatens to contain Angellica's sexuality and her identity when he insinuates that the men will buy her piecemeal because they would also take away her power to sell her own body. He ascribes to her the status not of kept mistress but that of a commonplace prostitute, an object that the men can sell at market.

Readers should not take too seriously Willmore's boastful assertions in this scene. He has no direct authority over Angellica's business. By the end of the play, Angellica still represents for other men, especially Antonio, the elusive prize that she did at the play's beginning. In fact, Willmore's braggadocio could very well be the result of what Helen Burke argues is Behn's satirization of cavalier masculinity. Willmore, like Blunt, "demonstrates the classic boastfulness of the mock-chivalric or false knight" (Burke 123) by insisting upon his imagined authority over Angellica and her body. His attempts, however, do highlight the ways in which men assume control over women and their identities and attempt to disallow women control of themselves. Behn thereby calls into question all types of masculinity and the ways in which men use their positions of power to classify women; indeed, she exposes the artificiality of these constructions.

Willmore's greatest threats to Angellica are not his "mock-chivalric" boasts but his distancing of Angellica from her interpretation of herself when he turns her into a lover, a would-be wife. By falling in love with Willmore, Angellica contradicts her resolution "that nothing but Gold, shall charm [her] heart" (20). Rather, Willmore ends up with the un-charmed heart; his jingling gold is a dowry without the baggage. He has, as he says, "All the honey of Matrimony, but none of the sting" (32). And when he roves after Hellena, Willmore eventually turns Angellica into a lover scorned. This, the courtesan argues, makes her most vulnerable. She insists that falling in love made her a slave to men (75)—a position that she did not previously see herself holding—which threatens her reputation and could ultimately jeopardize her business (76).

By allowing for various interpretations, the "sign of Angellica" and Florinda's jewel signify both the characters—Angellica and Florinda—and the "characters" *of* Angellica and Florinda: that is, their reputations. Just as miniatures are props that actresses held and actors acted upon during a production of the play, the reputations that the miniatures symbolize, Behn intimates, are also props that women carry with them. The women's reputations are no longer theirs to control once they offer them up for public scrutiny. Florinda surrenders her reputation when she gifts her picture to Belvile, and he then shows it to his friends. In each attempted rape scene, the men read her not as a gentlewoman but as, to employ the language used on one of these occasions, "an Errant Harlot" (44). Willmore's defense to Belvile when chastised for not "see[ing] something about her Face and Person, to strike an awful Reverence into [his] Soul" is telling: "I consider'd her," he says, "as meer a Woman as I cou'd wish" (44). The word "meer" indicates a reduction in size and significance. Much as the women's miniatures miniaturize their bodies for male consumption, the men's readings of the pictures metaphorically miniaturize the women's interpretations of themselves. By suggesting that Florinda is a "meer" woman, Willmore implies that she—and how she perceives herself—is irrelevant, that she lacks significance beyond what Willmore allows her because she is "only" a woman. Florinda's resistance and her complaints that she deserves better treatment because of her social position do not matter. Willmore's reply also suggests that how the men want to use the women affects their interpretation of the women.[5] This and the other attempted rapes of Florinda—the violent movements of her body or, seen another way, the inhibition of her movement—parallel the violent repression, or containment, of her identity. Interpretation of public display will always supersede private meaning.

When Belvile suggests that Florinda should have power over Willmore, that something in her should have struck "an awful Reverence into [his] soul," he aligns himself with older forms of the gaze. Laura J. Rosenthal argues that

"the Restoration stage marked a transition from an earlier power dynamic in which the object of the gaze held authority to the emergent eighteenth-century dynamic in which power belonged to the spectator" (96). The play presents both forms of the gaze. At times, the women have power as objects of the gaze as Florinda does when Belvile gazes after her. Florinda does not move Belvile in this instance, but she does control where he looks. Although Belvile acknowledges the importance of keeping one's identity private in order to attain more freedom of movement—he tells Willmore that they should wear masks "[b]ecause whatever Extravagances we commit in these Faces, our own may not be oblig'd to answer 'em" (16)—he still ascribes power to Florinda as an object of the gaze in the scene in which Florinda gives him her miniature and after the garden rape scene. Angellica, too, relies on older notions of the gaze for her power. She exhibits her picture and displays herself on her balcony not to see others but to be seen by them so that they will desire her, thus bringing them within the realm of her influence. Part of the men's and women's power struggle in *The Rover* consequently stems from the contesting concepts of the gaze. Belvile does not realize that he inadvertently endangers Florinda by showing her picture to his friends. Furthermore, Willmore relies—unlike Angellica, Florinda, and at times Belvile—on developing ideas of the gaze that associate power with the viewer. As he tells Angellica during their first meeting, "Nay I will gaze—to let you see my strength" (26).

The discrepancy between Belvile's and Willmore's understandings of the gaze parallels the differences between their character types. Belvile is a hero much more in keeping with traditional comic plots in which the hero "must undertake a journey through . . . the male homosocial order where the obstacles to his happiness lie" (Rosenthal 100). The greatest obstacle that Belvile must overcome is not Don Pedro's acceptance but Willmore's continual frustration of his attempts to save Florinda from her brother. Behn suggests, then, that this new type of masculinity that Willmore represents—the rake hero who is peculiar to Restoration drama—is for all his apparent sexiness, dangerous to women, men, and the functioning social order. As much as Behn might mock Willmore for his hypermasculinity, the precarious situations that Florinda and Angellica find themselves in as objects of his gaze suggest that this new notion was finding more currency in Restoration society. For the women, and sometimes for the men in the play, identifiability leads to vulnerability.

Seeing therefore becomes the means through which the men, or more specifically Willmore, commandeer the women's images and bodies—hence Willmore's belief that he has a right "of Possession" (22) after he has gazed upon Angellica's picture. By looking at the women, the men can reinterpret, redefine, and rename them. This pattern helps explain *The Rover's* obsession with seeing

and being seen. Behn uses a form of the verb "to see" approximately eighty-six times in the play. Blunt's coercion of Florinda reveals the power of sight: not only does he threaten to "kiss and beat thee all over," but he also says that he will "kiss, and see thee all over" (65). Having himself been duped by Lucetta after being the subject of her gaze (12), Blunt realigns himself with the more powerful side of this subject-object dynamic. Seeing Florinda—not only her face but "all over"—gives Blunt the power of ownership: he can define her as a prostitute and then treat her as such (even though he ultimately fails to follow through with his threats).

Act five, scene one, in which Angellica confronts Willmore with a pistol, exemplifies this process. Angellica arrives in order to take her revenge on Willmore for being unfaithful to her. It appears that Angellica is in control of Willmore's movement because she "*follows him with the Pistol to his Breast*" (74, 75). She forces him to move backward away from her. Yet the moment Angellica "*Pulls off her Vizard*" (74), she begins to lose control over Willmore. Willmore's gaze functions according to Kevin J. Gardner's definition of the word in his discussion of Congreve's *Way of the World* (1700): it "operates as a powerful disciplinary force regulating the conduct and normalizing the behavior of the person who is the object of the gaze, pinning him or her down for a scrutiny which will compare, differentiate, hierarchize, and exclude" (61). When Angellica removes her mask, she allows Willmore to "normalize" her behavior, to control both her and her identity. Although Angellica had previously been resolved "[b]y all [her] hopes to kill" Willmore (74), when he sees her and names her, Angellica's determination wavers. Willmore denigrates her by calling her "child," implying a lack of self-sufficiency and intellectual and emotional maturity.[6] In his next line, he further diminishes Angellica's worth by condescendingly calling attention to her monstrosity: "Hold, *dear* Virago!" he tells her (74, emphasis added). Willmore then patronizes her and undermines her authority when he offers her sex in order to placate her. Unmasked and open to interpretation, Angellica's resolve dwindles: she says, "Oh, if I take not heed, my coward heart will leave me to his mercy." Angellica might have the pistol, but Willmore restrains her with his words by telling her that she is no better than he is. As she says, Willmore "destroy[s] my fancy'd pow'r" (76).

For all the similarities in the circulation of Florinda and Angellica's miniatures, audiences should not overlook the very real differences between them. Each woman chooses to put her own image into circulation; yet Florinda, unlike Angellica, means for Belvile alone to see her picture in hopes of a greater degree of privacy and anonymity. Perhaps we could consider the differences in the circulation of their miniatures similar to the differences between the publication of literary works and the circulation of manuscripts within a coterie.

The former potentially allows anyone access to a work, but fewer people have access to works within the latter, therefore allowing an author more control in the dissemination of his or her text. Angellica has less ability to regulate who sees her portraits because anyone walking by her house has the opportunity to view them, which only increases her fame. Florinda, however, maintains some power in the circulation of her miniature because she gives it to a specific person. Her more discrete circulation allows her eventually to overcome her obstacles unscathed while the too-promiscuous Angellica suffers the indignity of being written out of the play by its end.[7]

Because the movement of miniatures and women in *The Rover* is in keeping with other Restoration plays, Angellica's and Florinda's frustrated attempts at autonomy draw attention to Behn's critique of women as property. In Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) and Manley's *The Royal Mischief* (1696), as in *The Way of the World*, women circulate their miniatures in anticipation of sexual satisfaction—not the personal freedom that Angellica and Florinda seek. They give their images to men in hope that the men will take their bodies as well. The reduction of a woman to an object and her subsequent circulation for male use does not occur against the woman's will. Wycherley's Mrs. Squeamish allows Old Lady Squeamish to give Horner her miniature (which Lady Squeamish had previously shown him). She wants Horner to claim her body so that she, too, can have some of his "china" (59). Homais, in *The Royal Mischief*, cannot fulfill her desires that a life-size portrait of Levan Dadian, her husband's nephew, arouses. Instead, she has Acmat, her eunuch, show Levan a miniature of herself. Lowenthal also notes Acmat's use of ekphrasis to create a verbal picture of Homais to enhance Levan's desire for the princess (132). Unlike Behn's female characters, Homais willingly becomes the circulating object in order to fulfill her sexual desires. Manley's play, like Behn's, emphasizes the fact that when a playwright uses pictures to represent characters, size does matter. Homais cannot physically move the large picture, so she is unable to act on the person the picture represents in the same way that Willmore and Behn's other male characters are able to do with Angellica and Florinda.

In a slightly more complex example, Congreve's Lady Wishfort also circulates a miniature in the hope that its movement will lead to the movement of her body. Although the miniature's circulation is part of Mirabell's ruse, Lady Wishfort's assent to the use of the miniature to persuade Sir Rowland to court her suggests that she wants men, specifically Sir Rowland, to view her body as a commodity. She circulates her miniature as the means through which she can put herself back into circulation on the marriage market. She establishes herself as an object of sexual availability by marketing herself as a potential wife—and as a result, potential male property, the anxiety that drives Fainall's

counterplot. Lady Wishfort willingly concedes the agency that she already has as a widow, a woman with the legal right to own property. She gives up what Angellica, Florinda, and Hellena seek.

Lady Wishfort deliberately turns herself into an object when she paints herself to resemble her picture. Whereas miniatures usually act as stand-ins for absent bodies, Lady Wishfort becomes the stand-in for her miniature. Just as she once sat for her picture, her "picture must sit for" her (280). She—not her miniature—becomes the painted object on display. When she decides to receive Sir Rowland *en tableau*, Lady Wishfort emphasizes her painted-ness and her self-objectification: she says, "I'll lie—aye, I'll lie down—I'll receive him in my little dressing-room; there's a couch—yes, yes, I'll give the first impression on a couch. I won't lie neither, but loll and lean upon one elbow, with one foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way" (292). She will briefly hold the pose of a reclining woman in a pretty disorder, a pose not uncommon in early modern painting. This "loose and negligent" posture is supposed to be alluring—the kind that Willmore proposes can "beget a warm desire, / In Souls whom Impotence and Age had chill'd" (22).[8] Lady Wishfort wants to seduce Sir Rowland by allowing him a glimpse of her stretched-out, open, and inviting body (and thoughtful foot). She turns herself into a picture in order to further Sir Rowland's interpretation of her as an object that can inspire and gratify his sexual desires.

Through her bodily reproduction of her picture, Lady Wishfort, like her picture, becomes an object available for Sir Rowland's "possession" (302). She consequently has no complaints when Foible tells her that Sir Rowland has "worshipped" her miniature and kissed it so much that Foible returns to Lady Wishfort "all that is not kissed away" (279). These kisses are the prelude to those she hopes to receive from him in person. Not only does Lady Wishfort want to marry Sir Rowland to revenge herself on Mirabell, but she is also interested in the match for the sexual pleasure it will bring her. Like Mrs. Squeamish and Homais, Lady Wishfort circulates her miniature specifically for her own sexual gratification.

Furthermore, these three women agree with the men's interpretations of the miniatures. They want to be and are seen as women with sexual desires. Except in the case of Lady Wishfort (who does not live up to her miniature and becomes, ironically, "the antidote to desire" [304] in her pretended-suitor's mordant reckoning), these women achieve the sexual satisfaction for which they circulated their miniatures. Like Behn's male characters, these women believe that women take pleasure in becoming objects for male use.

Wycherley's, Manley's, and Congreve's characters "enjoy" objectification; Behn's women, however, assert a right to intellectual authority and property

for themselves. Behn problematizes the assumption that women desire to be men's property, hence Willmore's assertion during the first rape scene that Florinda is "oblig'd in Conscience to deny [him] nothing" (42). He insinuates that though she says "no" now, she will thank him for his attention later. Because Florinda is in the garden at night by herself, she must, according to Willmore's logic, want him to use her against her will, for "there will be no sin in't, because 'twas neither design'd nor premeditated."(42)[9] Indeed, Willmore implies that he is the one doing Florinda a favor.

Unlike the shared interpretations of miniatures in Wycherley's, Manley's, and Congreve's plays, the men's and women's conflicting readings in Behn's play exposes a cultural disparity between male and female interpretations of women as property. The disparity arises when men, those with the legal right to own property, read women as potential property. If, as Laura Brace remarks, "property and self-ownership are about the capacity to exclude others, or to exercise a kind of mastery over ourselves," then the men's declarations of property in the women trump or "exclude" the women's right to "mastery over" themselves (3). Pacheco and Nash, among others, have argued that Angellica—like Mrs. Squeamish, Homais, and Lady Wishfort—enjoys her own objectification (she says as much to Moretta) (336; 80). But she only does so in those moments when the men—Don Pedro and Don Antonio, for instance—interpret her according to her own definition. This gives her the power in their interactions, allowing her to order the men to do her bidding. For example, Antonio tells Angellica, "When I refuse obedience to your Will, / May you destroy me with your Mortal hate" (77). Angellica may be objectified, but she owns the object in question: her reputation. As a self-employed prostitute, she also owns her body and leases it out to men at her discretion. Only when Willmore superimposes his reading of Angellica onto her must she fight to retain ownership of herself. The women unwillingly become props that the men use to assert their virility over each other, as the many fights that ensue over Angellica and the sword drawing to claim a right in Florinda demonstrate. Like props, the women "relate characters to each other, and to larger elements in their dramatic worlds" (Bruster 70-71). Florinda can only escape becoming a prop in the rape scenes when she establishes herself as already the property of another. She defines the relationships between Don Pedro and Don Antonio and Don Pedro and Belvile.

Behn characterizes as rape the loss of a self-created identity through visual and physical appropriation.[10] Blunt's assertion that he wants to "see [Florinda] all over," to return to a previous example, conflates the act of appropriation by sight with physical appropriation through sexual intercourse. They are equally invasive and equally dispossessing. Behn therefore condemns through the

plights of these women the state of selfless-ness for all women. In doing so, she illustrates for the audience and reader how women—those on the marriage market, "the mistress market" (Diamond 532), or any market in between—become props and property. She creates a unified category of woman, "making a case," as John Francesschina says, "for the value of woman as woman" (35). Though we should not forget the ambiguity of Angellica's absence at the end of the play, at least while Angellica is a lover and Florinda a whore, Behn collapses the distinctions between the male-enforced binaries.

At the play's end, prostitutes disappear, and virgins become wives. Behn observes comic convention and in so doing acknowledges the resilience of the social conventions that continued to define women in Restoration society. This is not to suggest, however, that she sees Angellica's and Florinda's struggles as unnecessary. Yet she does suggest that there may be more effective ways for women to seek agency. In order to demonstrate the different ways a woman can successfully assert authority over herself, Behn created, in Hellena, a character in some ways very similar to Angellica and Florinda. Hellena is aware of her own self worth, both physically and monetarily. She tells Florinda and Valeria,

> prithee tell me, what dost thou see about me that is unfit for Love—have I not a World of Youth? a humour gay? a Beauty passable? a Vigour desirable? well Shap't? 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, therefore lay aside your hopes of my Fortune by my being a Devote.... (2)

Hellena recognizes that she has the qualities to attract a man, both in her person and in the fortune she has to offer him. She understands, as her sister and Angellica do, her value as a commodity. Also like them, she wants to "realize the benefits of [her] own circulation" (Rubin 174). "I don't intend," she says to her sister and cousin, "every he that likes me shall have me, but he that I like; I shou'd have staid in the Nunnery still, if I had lik'd my Lady *Abbesse* as well as she lik'd me—no, I came thence not (as my wise Brother imagines) to take an Eternal Farewell of the World, but to Love and to be belov'd; and I will be belov'd, or I'll get one of your Men, so I will" (30). Hellena implies that because her opinion matters more than a man's, she will take upon herself the right of choice in a mate and provide herself with a man.

Rather than settle for the limits placed upon her, Hellena plays with the signs that confine her.[11] She understands the consequences of seeing and being seen, and she uses this to her advantage by controlling at all times who can and cannot see her. Hellena does not rely on mediating texts; she circulates no

miniature. Although Hellena demonstrates a wariness of showing herself too much in public from the outset of the play, her discretion does not stop her from going into public. She instead creates signs out of costumes that hide her "true" self. She might be a gypsy or a page, but she is never just Hellena. As a result, Hellena goes where she wants when she wants without the threat of sexual violation. She ensures that no men are able to discover her real identity. Hellena preserves her freedom of movement while avoiding the loss of her private identity. Angellica and Florinda, on the other hand, make themselves known, even if covertly as in Florinda's case.

Maintaining control over her image allows Hellena to maintain control over her body. Hellena consequently insists on only projecting herself in person. Not until her second meeting with Willmore does she show him her face. She willingly subjects herself to Willmore's gaze, but only when she wants to. Willmore asks to see her face, and Hellena at first refuses. Only after Willmore ceases asking does she remove her vizard and show him her "desperate . . . lying look." After Willmore praises her beauty, Hellena replaces her mask, and according to the stage directions, Willmore "*seems to court her to pull off her Vizar: she refuses*" (34). Even though Willmore can physically act on Angellica and Florinda, he has no power over Hellena. Willmore's confusion when he fails to expose Hellena in their conversation with Angellica illustrates the accomplishment of her objective: only Willmore sees her; only Willmore "owns" her reputation.[12] By withholding herself from Willmore's gaze, moreover, Hellena eroticizes herself and entices Willmore even more. She engages in an erotic love play that sustains Willmore's desire for her and curiosity about her. She thus gains control of their relationship.

At times, Florinda enjoys the same freedom of movement as Hellena, such as when she enters the carnival in costume with her sister and cousin. Sometimes, she even has power to move men. In the scene on the Molo, Florinda breaks up the fight between Belvile and Pedro. "*She holds*" Belvile, impeding his movement. Yet the men's ability to contain Florinda's movements inevitably subsumes her attempts to move men. Not ten lines later, Pedro "gives" (50) Florinda to Belvile, who later "*[d]raws her aside*" (51). The difference between the women's success in their attempts to move stems from Hellena's acute awareness and manipulation of the differences between the gender roles. Threats to Florinda occur when she goes out alone either without a costume (the garden rape scene) or dressed as a courtesan (when she walks away from Valeria, and Willmore pursues her). When Hellena is in public alone, however, she dresses as a boy, thus attaining the freedom of movement normally associated with men. Another important distinction between Hellena's success and Florinda's many obstacles are the reasons that they enter public places.

Florinda does so in an attempt to elope with Belvile; Hellena does so to gain power. She wants a lover so that she will "have [her] Beauty prais'd, [her] Wit admir'd, . . . and have the vanity and *pow'r* to know that [she is] desirable" (31, emphasis added). Both women want to fulfill their desires, yet Hellena has the foresight to recognize that these desires are ultimately tied to power dynamics between men and women.

Hellena, more than Florinda, is the subject of the gaze, giving her control in her interactions with Willmore. By creating a female character who understands the power of sight and the need visually to repress herself in public, Behn transfers to Hellena the men's ability to move women. Hellena is able to pursue Willmore and control his movements because she has seen him. Not once during the play does Willmore hide himself with either a mask or a costume. He always wears his captain's uniform, making himself at all times identifiable. In act two, scene one, Willmore asks Belvile why he and Frederick are "thus disguis'd and muzzel'd" (16). Though he says that he "shou'd have chang'd [his] Eternal Buffe," Willmore decides that he is glad he did not because otherwise his "little Gipsie wou'd not have found [him] out then" (16). Willmore might adhere to the notion that the subject of the gaze has power, but he fails to consider his own vulnerability as a possible object of the gaze. When Willmore is about to follow Don Pedro and Belvile offstage, Hellena enters, "*as before in Boys Clothes, and pulls him back*" (79). She stops him from leaving in order to engage him in conversation.

Hellena also moves Willmore metaphorically. As she moves on stage (seeing Willmore but remaining unseen), Hellena corrals Willmore and entices him into marrying her. In some ways, she, just as much as Willmore, plays the man's part. She does to Willmore what he and the other men have done to Angellica and Florinda. Hellena treats men as interchangeable commodities. Just as Willmore roves in search of any willing (or unwilling) woman he can find, Hellena goes "a Captain-hunting" (59).[13] At the beginning of the play, she has no specific man in mind; she only hopes that Belvile "has some mad Companion or other, that will spoil [her] devotion" (2)—any willing man who suits her fancy will do. Once she chooses Willmore, she pursues him with the confidence that Willmore pursues Angellica. That she uses the phrase "a Captain-hunting" is also significant because it implies a violent chase, which parallels the violent movement of Florinda's and Angellica's bodies. Hellena reverses the powerful male trope of love poetry in which men chase unattainable women. She, not the man, is the hunter. Willmore becomes her prey. Hellena's use of the trope is more powerful, though, because her prey is not unattainable: she eventually catches Willmore in marriage.

Hellena parodies both the accepted masculine and feminine roles. She mocks a woman's role in a courtship: "'Tis true," she tells Florinda, "I never was a Lover yet—but I begin to have a shrew'd guess, what 'tis to be so, and fancy it very pretty to sigh, and sing, and blush, and wish, and dream and wish, and long and wish to see the Man; and when I do, look pale and tremble" (1). Nowhere in the play does she sigh and blush and wish and dream and tremble. Perhaps the only truth in this statement is Hellena's desire to "see the Man," so she can have power over him. While she might be very interested in love like "all living Creatures of [her] Age" (81), Hellena's insistence that Willmore's offer of one kiss is a "sneaking sum" (80) suggests that she recognizes and is perhaps more interested in physical pleasure. As she tells Florinda, "but since you have set my heart a wishing—I am resolv'd to know for what, I will not dye of the Pip, so I will not" (30). Yet Hellena recognizes that the only way she can achieve her sexual desires is within marriage.

In some ways, then, Hellena is like Harriet from Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676). Robert Markley argues that Harriet, like Dorimant,

> is an accomplished parodist, who "*Acts him*" (stage directions) to his face .... Her mimicking of Dorimant is both a pleasure and a form of control; it reflects both her struggle to master her attraction to him and her desire to outwit and out-perform him. By playing the part of the disdainful beauty, she is able to force Dorimant into the role of the dutiful suitor.... [H]er success in winning his love results from outplaying him at his own game.... (133)

Hellena acts Willmore by doing to him what he has done to Angellica and Florinda. She sees him and moves him. She gains control over him. After Hellena discovers Willmore's tryst with Angellica, she tauntingly acts him by turning his words against him: "Ah such a *Bona Roba*! to be in her Arms is lying in *Fresco*, all perfum'd Air about me." Hellena demonstrates her power over Willmore in their conversation by first not allowing him to explain his actions. And when he does tell her that "there are Ladies in the World, that will not be cruel," she says to him, "And there be Men too, as fine, wild Inconstant Fellowes as yourself, there be, Captain there be, if you go to that now" (36). Hellena is just as willing and able to be as inconstant as Willmore. Acting Willmore is for Hellena a form of pleasure and control though the control is not in an attempt to "master her attraction" but is instead an attempt to master his. Hellena proves herself better at playing Willmore than he is at playing himself. She is a female rake.

Indeed, Hellena ultimately beats Willmore at his own game of inconstancy. She repeatedly calls herself "inconstant." She tells Willmore,

> I am as inconstant as you, for I have consider'd, Captain, that a handsome 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 dayes of my Youth, catch a fit of foolish Constancy, I were undone; 'tis loitering by day-light in our great Journey: therefore I 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 my self the gay, the kind, and the Inconstant—The Devil's in't if this won't please you. (34)

Hellena knows that her professed inconstancy will please Willmore. Just as hiding herself from him emphasizes her body's erotic potential, playing the inconstant—not Harriet's "disdainful beauty"—becomes a turn-on for Willmore. This, too, sustains and intensifies his desire for her. It gives Hellena power over Willmore because she controls the object of his desire. Hellena verbally "holds out" on and titillates Willmore in the scene in which she mimics him. She says, "therefore, I'm resolved—

> *Will.* Oh!—
> *Hell.* To see your Face no more—
> *Will.* Oh!
> *Hell.* Till tomorrow.
> *Will.* Egad you frighted me.
> *Hell.* Nor then neither, unless you'll swear never to see that Lady more. (36)

Each pause becomes a way for Hellena to gauge Willmore's desire for her while simultaneously increasing his desire to see her again. Willmore wants what he cannot have. That Hellena suggests he will not be able to see her—or that she will be inconstant and that he cannot have her body—only makes him want her more.

Hellena "moves" Willmore socially (for example hypergamously) by enticing him to marry her. She controls who can and cannot see her (partially by not having a miniature), which allows her to manipulate successfully the categories that men use to contain women. She presents herself as inconstant and marriageable, an available gypsy and an off-limits virgin. Playing with signs eventually gives Hellena power in the marriage contract just as she has had power in her courtship. In what amounts to a proviso scene, Willmore yields to Hellena's insistence that they marry before they become more intimate. She makes Willmore tell her his name first—again demonstrating her power over him. Hellena can name Willmore before he can name her even though he was the first to suggest that they reveal their names. When Willmore announces

himself not as Willmore the Rover but as "*Robert the Constant*," he shows how Hellena has been able to reduce and contain him—at least for a little while. And in proclaiming herself "*Hellena the Inconstant*" (81), Hellena hints at the further power she will have as Willmore's wife. She alludes to the trouble to come.[14]

Behn has not written a tidy play: her hero's treatment of women, whether prostitute or virgin, is troubling. Some critics argue that Willmore chooses Hellena not because he loves her but because of her wealth.[15] Yet Willmore's actions, his failure to make a concerted effort to marry Hellena and secure her fortune, suggest that he is not solely interested in Hellena for her money. He continues roving after other women; and, even at the end of the play, he jeopardizes his access to Hellena's money by trying once again to sleep with her outside of wedlock. When Hellena insists upon marriage, Willmore demurs: "Hold, hold, no Bugg words, Child, Priest and *Hymen*, prithee add a Hang man to 'em to make up the consort,—no, no, we'l have no Vows but Love, Child, nor witness but the Lover" (80). In fact, it is Hellena's insistence that ensures and solidifies Willmore's acquisition of her fortune.

Readers consequently should consider the other side of the match. Hellena does not suffer from misapprehensions about marriage: she tells Willmore that she will be "as kind as [he] will . . . whil'st it lasts" (80). Hellena's marriage to Willmore is no more punishment for her than it is for him: his future wife promises inconstancy. Hellena seeks through marriage the continued freedom of movement that she has enjoyed throughout the play. It appears that Willmore has found his equal—if not his better. Hellena is by no means the weaker partner in this courtship. And though she will legally be the lesser advantaged partner in her marriage, this does not mean that her agency will diminish. Her social savvy allows her to recognize that marriage to the right partner—to a man who does not seem to mind a rakish wife—will give her the ability to categorize Willmore the way that she wants. When Hellena tells Willmore, "now Captain shew your Love and Courage; stand to your Arms and defend me bravely, or I am lost for Ever" (81), Burke argues that Hellena "directs the audience to forget her cavalier's demonstrated history of heroic failure and see him only as the traditional knight in shining armour" (127). Implicit in Burke's statement is the suggestion that Hellena also directs Willmore how to act "the role of the dutiful suitor" (Markley 133), which he obediently does. Perhaps this compels Willmore, though he has the last word, to tell Hellena, "Lead on" (83). She moves ahead of Willmore, and he follows; Hellena successfully makes Willmore her prop and her property in marriage.

In a play full of movement—both of bodies and objects—miniatures help Behn demonstrate the ways in which women often lose their freedom of

movement and self-expression once they become male property in marriage. With Florinda and Angellica, Behn commiserates with those who have suffered from the social structures that deny women equal opportunities of self-expression and self-ownership. But Behn does not suggest an overhaul of the status quo. Through Hellena, she subtly points out how women can manipulate the system to their own benefit. She shows women, to use Stewart's terminology, how to reduce men to their signifying properties as well.

Notes

[1]A version of this paper was presented at the third Paul-Gabriel Boucé Colloquium in December 2006.

[2]In view of some objections regarding *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1992-1996), I have preferred to use the first edition of *The Rover* published in 1677. See Pettit and Widmayer.

[3]Though I apply to the miniatures Todd's assertions that a woman's writing reveals the writer's self, I am wary of the application of this connection to an author and her texts. Todd notes that Behn "would have none of the notion of transcendental art, morally efficacious and untrammeled by its age or the intention and personality of its begetter. . . .She knew that she was up against prejudice when she insisted that her art was not her life, that if her plays followed fashion, her private activities could be perfectly decent" (75). But even if this "was not a view of woman writers that many people held" during Behn's time, Todd fails to distinguish more subtly between a woman's texts (often a woman's attempts at financial and social agency) and her personal life.

[4]Lowenthal relates her discussion of violence to the figure of the monster (see chapter five).

[5]Behn's critique of Willmore's cavalier masculinity is strongest here when he all but admits that he cannot (or will not) differentiate between a prostitute and a woman of quality. He uses masculine constructions of femininity only when they are convenient for him. This moment brings Willmore into close alignment with Blunt who, throughout the play, fails to distinguish between types of women—thus satirizing Willmore all the more (see Burke 123, 124; Rosenthal 101).

[6]Willmore also calls Hellena and Florinda "child" on multiple occasions. See 10 and 79 for two instances.

[7]Todd argues, "Angellica Bianca is denied the hero: 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).

[8]See, for example, Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538) and Rubens's *Angellica and the Hermit* (1630). Manet's *Olympia* (1863) is a modern realization of this motif.

[9]See also 4.3: "she looks back as she were willing to be boarded" (63).

[10]This theme is in keeping with Behn's amatory fiction, in which she equates a

man's or a woman's inability to choose his or her spouse with rape. See *The History of the Nun* (1689) and *The Fair Jilt* (1688) for two examples.

[11]Much of Hellena's wit, like Behn's, "is in the appropriation," in the ways in which she uses male forms of power to her own advantage and complicates the "often corrosive effect of [masks or signs of femaleness] on the personality of the woman" (Todd 2, 79).

[12]Perhaps Hellena is more effective than this: maybe she shares her reputation with Willmore instead of consigning it to him.

[13]This reading is from *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Montague Summers, vol. 1 (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 76. The first edition actually reads "a Captain, Hunting."

[14]Obviously, this reading does not take into account Hellena's death in *The Rover, Part II* (1681).

[15]Rosenthal says that "the discovery of Hellena's fortune makes her more attractive as a marriage partner" and that Willmore "makes his choice of Hellena ... only after he learns of her financial value" (101).

Works Cited

Behn, Aphra. *The Rover, or, The Banish't Cavaliers.* London, 1677.

Brace, Laura. *The Politics of Property: Labour, Freedom and Belonging.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Brilliant, Richard. *Portraiture.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991.

Bruster, Douglas. "The Dramatic Life of Objects in the Early Modern Theatre." *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 67-96.

Burke, Helen. "The Cavalier Myth in *The Rover.*" *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn.* Ed. Janet Todd. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 118-34.

Congreve, William. *The Way of the World.* 1700. In McMillin. 251-319.

Diamond, Elin. "Gestus and Signature in Aphra Behn's *The Rover.*" *ELH* 56 (1989): 519-541.

Francesschina, John. "Shadow and Substance in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*: The Semiotics of Restoration Performance." *Restoration* 19 (1995): 29-42.

Fumerton, Patricia. "'Secret Arts': Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets." *Representing the English Renaissance.* Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988. 93-134.

Gardner, Kevin J. "Patrician Authority and Instability in *The Way of the World.*" *South Central Review* 19.1 (2002): 53-75.

Lowenthal, Cynthia. *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2003.

Manley, Delarivier. *The Royal Mischief.* London, 1696.

Markley, Robert. *Two-Edg'd Weapons: Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.

McMillin, Scott, ed. *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy*. 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997.

Nash, Julie. "'The sight on't would beget a warm desire': Visual Pleasure in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*." *Restoration* 18 (1994): 77-87.

Pacheco, Anita. "Rape and the Female Subject in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*." *ELH* 65 (1998): 323-345.

Pettit, Alexander. "Aphra's Bane." Rev. of *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd. 7 vols. *Seventeenth-Century News* 56 (1998): 1-5.

Rosenthal, Laura J. "Masculinity in Restoration Drama." *A Companion to Restoration Drama*. Ed. Susan J. Owen. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. 92-108.

Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. Ed. Rayna Reiter. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975. 157-210.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984.

Todd, Janet. *The Sign of Angellica*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.

Widmayer, Jan. "Critical Theory Catches up with the 'Problem Child' of English Literature: New Works in Restoration Drama." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 51.2 (1997): 35-42.

Wycherley, William. *The Country Wife*. 1675. In McMillin. 3-85.