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## 2. A Roving Woman

*The Rover, Part I* and Hellena's Self-Creation of Youth

Sarah Morris

### Abstract

Hellena's antics in Aphra Behn's 1677 play, *The Rover*, are explored in this essay through the lens of the grand tour. This lens allows for a more focused investigation of the play's preoccupation with youthfulness, and also demonstrates how Hellena's antics fit within the tradition of not just carnival but also rogue literature. Facing life in a nunnery – a path determined for her by her father and brother – Hellena uses rogue tactics and the carnival season to carve out a space for youthful experiences for herself; and, in doing so, she ultimately alters that patriarchal predetermined path to fit her own desires, which include marriage to Willmore.

**Keywords:** Aphra Behn; *The Rover*; carnival; rogue; grand tour, female youth

'Have I not a world of youth?' This question, posed by Hellena to her sister Florinda in the opening scene of Aphra Behn's *The Rover, Part 1*, highlights a central but often overlooked theme of Behn's text.<sup>1</sup> The 1677 play, set in Spanish-controlled Naples, certainly presents a youthful world of revelry, masquerade, and love affairs. The play, like so many of Behn's works, stands as proto-feminist in that it features strong female characters who take action in the face of opposing patriarchal forces. One of the central storylines involves three young women – Hellena, Florinda, and their kinswoman, Valeria – who use disguises to interact more freely with the English cavaliers currently visiting Naples. This plan, spearheaded by Hellena, stands as only one of several cunning plots that Hellena orchestrates throughout the play.

1 Behn, *The Rover, Part I*. Subsequent references to the play are cited parenthetically.

To escape the watchful eyes of her brother, Don Pedro, and her governess, Callis, Hellena readily employs both clever disguises and cunning wit, not unlike the female rogue figures often found in early seventeenth-century works.

Hellena's rogue-like antics throughout the play have traditionally been read in terms of carnival, and rightfully so.<sup>2</sup> Other productive lenses for reading Hellena's high jinks, and the play as a whole, include the maid/whore juxtaposition<sup>3</sup> and Behn's apparent proto-feminist rewriting of her source material, namely Thomas Killigrew's *Thomaso, or, the Wanderer* (1664).<sup>4</sup> Behn purposefully sets her play during the festive season, as illustrated in Don Pedro's command in the first scene ordering Callis to 'lock [Hellena] up all this carnival' (1.1.137). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, carnival often served as an opportunity for social disorder, controlled chaos, and sensual indulgence. The focus of scholars on the carnivalesque in *The Rover, Part 1* has certainly paved the way for investigations of topics such as market culture, gender dynamics, and social disorder in Behn's work. For the purposes of this essay, though, I propose a different lens for interpreting Hellena's actions: the grand tour.

Reading Behn's play through the lens of the grand tour allows for a more focused exploration of the text's preoccupation with youthfulness, and such a reading also allows for a look at how Hellena's antics fit within the traditions of not just carnival but also rogue-literature. The grand tour, which was emerging as a popular pastime during the period when the play was written, primarily served as an opportunity for young English gentlemen to experience the world before settling into the trials of adult life. Hellena's adventures throughout Behn's text do more than just upset the status quo for a short time; Hellena actually uses the carnival season to 'go rogue' against patriarchal desires by carving out a space for youthful experience between a sheltered childhood and a (future) cloistered adulthood.

Such a 'carving out' stands as particularly significant since the youth of upper-class women in early modern drama is generally elided; girls from aristocratic families often move straight from the parental household into marriage, usually without ever experiencing the world outside of the home. Those who do 'go rogue' – consider Shakespeare's Portia or Rosalind, for example – generally do so to follow or aid their beloved, or to flee danger. In carving out a youthful experience for herself, and the worldly education that

2 See Beach, 'Carnival Politics'; and Boebel, 'Carnival World'.

3 See Pacheco, 'Rape and the Female Subject'.

4 See DeRitter, 'The Gypsy, *The Rover*, and the Wanderer'.

goes with it, Hellena ultimately changes the predetermined direction for her life. In the play's opening scene, Hellena appears as a young, inexperienced, inquisitive woman who desires to experience love and other worldly sensations before resigning herself to life in a nunnery. By the play's end, she has recreated herself as an equal to Willmore – the Rover himself – and, in doing so, has prepared herself for a different form of adulthood: married life.

Hellena's rogue-like actions, then, serve as a levelling of the playing field between the text's young aristocratic men and women. She grants herself a similar sensual education and youthful experience to that of the play's young English men. Hellena differs from her female counterparts in the play in that she decides to disguise herself not to flee or to pursue her beloved, but to forge her own path of worldly experiences and pleasures. In creating Hellena as a rogue-like figure, Behn demonstrates the need for young women, as well as their young male counterparts, to receive a worldly education to be better prepared for adult life. Reading Behn's text through the lens of the grand tour, then, ultimately allows us to see how Hellena, through her rogue-like tactics, creates a space for youth between her cloistered girlhood and the equally cloistered adulthood designed for her. Youth appears in Behn's play as a space where Hellena's natural curiosity can flourish and where that curiosity can help shape her for the trials of adulthood, albeit a different version of adulthood than the one envisioned by her father and brother.

### Creating a '[W]orld of [Y]outh'

Behn depicts Naples in her play as a space where young men and, notably, women can experience life and love before settling into adulthood responsibilities. For the play's men, life in Naples consists of one fleeting engagement after another, with little interest in pursuing long-term investments. Frederick, for example, acts mainly as a companion to Willmore's and Belvile's exploits in love; Willmore has come ashore 'only to enjoy [himself] a little this carnival' (1.2.66), since 'love and mirth are [his] business in Naples' (1.2.73); Blunt is a 'raw traveller' who gets caught in Lucetta's bed-trick scam and thus learns about greed and avarice the hard way (1.2.67); and Don Antonio and Don Pedro, the play's two Spanish lords, both vie for the attention of the courtesan Angellica throughout the play, with both willing to pay the excessive price of 1000 crowns for such a 'sweet' (if fleeting) affair. Only Belvile, the English colonel who has travelled to Paris, Pamplona, and other places before arriving in Naples, appears interested in pursuing

something substantial and long term. He is caught in the throes of love, enraptured by the Spanish Florinda. The play's young women also take advantage of the youthful atmosphere around them. Hellena, Florinda, and Valeria enjoy the freedom of carnival, aided in their exploits by the use of various guises and a desire to experience love. Angellica, for her own part, enjoys the attentions of 'all the youth in Naples' (1.2.308). In short, Behn creates in *The Rover, Part 1* a world ruled by youthful ambitions and desires.

In most early modern texts, such a world of youthful vigour would normally be tempered by the wisdom (or, conversely, avarice) of an elder generation. Behn's text, however, remarkably lacks an elder's presence. While several patriarchal figures are mentioned in the play – including the viceroy, Don Pedro's father, Don Pedro's uncle, Don Vincentio, and the exiled son of Charles I – none of these characters actually appears in the play, nor do their wills or desires play any central role. The desire of Florinda's father for her to marry the old Don Vincentio is soon supplanted by the desires of the son, Don Pedro, for her to marry the young Don Antonio instead. The play's oldest figures would be Callis, the young women's governess, and Philippo, Lucetta's co-conspirator in the bed-trick against Blunt. Callis, while ordered by Don Pedro to keep a watchful eye over Hellena, is soon infected with a 'youthful itch' and decides to accompany the young women on their exploits (1.1.181). Later, she is easily misdirected by one of Hellena's schemes. Philippo, as a rogue figure himself, stands as more of a social outcast than as a patriarchal figure within the text.

The play's conflict between 'old' and 'young', therefore, appears largely biased in favour of youth. The play as a whole demonstrates a preoccupation with youthfulness. The words 'youth', 'young', or 'youthfulness' appear over 40 times in the text, and over ten times in the first scene alone. These terms are applied most often to the play's young women. Hellena is described in the *dramatis personae* as 'a gay young woman design'd for a Nun', and is later called both a 'young devil' (1.2.126–27) and a 'young saint' (1.2.167–68) by Willmore. Hellena's sister, Florinda, is termed 'the young wife' (1.1.106–07) and 'a young lady' (1.1.118), while Callis, the governess, has a 'youthful itch' to participate in carnival with her charges (1.1.181). The women's youth often appears as a valuable commodity throughout the play, although the men value female youthfulness for different reasons than the women. For the men, women's youth is valuable for its connection to beauty. When Hellena questions whether Willmore 'would impose no severe penance' on a woman who decided to 'console herself' before resigning to nunnery life (1.2.171–72), Willmore indicates he is willing, 'if she be young and handsome' (1.2.173). Blunt, a fellow Englishman, demonstrates a similar preoccupation

with youth and beauty when asked about the name of the prostitute with whom he has become enamoured and believes to be a 'person of quality'. He exclaims, 'What care I for names? She's fair, young, brisk and kind, even to ravishment!' (2.1.46–47).

Blunt's preoccupation with youth and beauty, coupled with Willmore's candour, demonstrates the lustful and lascivious appetite with which this group of young English visitors view the Spanish women. Only Belvile, who appears throughout the text as Florinda's chaste beloved, questions this lustful pursuit of youth and beauty. When Willmore demonstrates his amazement over Blunt's luck, Belvile remains suspicious: 'Dost thou perceive any such tempting things about him that should make a fine woman, and of quality, pick him out from all mankind to throw away her youth and beauty upon; nay, and her dear heart, too?' (2.1.88–91). Belvile's addition of 'her dear heart' to youth and beauty demonstrates his ability not only to find value in something other than the women's looks, but also to recognize and sympathize with their perspective. This ability aligns him with his pure and innocent beloved, Florinda.

The play's female characters also frequently connect youth to beauty and, like Belvile, they view youth as something that can be wasted. In their initial discussion with their brother, Don Pedro, both Florinda and Hellena bemoan Florinda's impending betrothal to Don Vincentio. When told that she must consider the older man's fortune, Florinda posits her own youth as more valuable: 'Let him consider my youth, beauty, and fortune; which ought not to be thrown away on his age and jointure' (1.1.77–78). Hellena starkly supports her sister, claiming that she would 'rather see her in the Hostel de Dieu, to waste her youth there in vows and be a handmaid to lazars and cripples, than to lose it in such a marriage' (1.1.126–29). The fact that Florinda foregrounds youth in her statement and Hellena makes it the focus of hers indicates the value of youth for these women, and that value, Behn suggests, lies in the potential of youth for creating alternative opportunities for self-fulfilment and advancement. Hellena highlights this idea in her questioning of her sister about her fitness for love in the opening scene:

Have I not a world of youth? a humour gay? a beauty passable? A vigour desirable? Well shaped? Clean limbed? Sweet breathed? And sense enough to know how all these ought to be employed to the best advantage?  
(1.1.41–44)

Hellena acknowledges here the close connection between her youth and beauty, and while her assertion that she knows how to use them to 'the best

advantage' suggests her fitness for the world of love (and love-making), she employs her youthful vigour, beauty, and wit throughout the play to navigate various social positions and alter her predetermined path for adulthood.

## The Grand Tour

For noble English families of the late early modern period, the grand tour served as the crowning jewel in a young (male) aristocrat's formal education. Including extended visits to major cities on the Continent – and generally occurring in the years between attending university and starting a career – the grand tour provided young men with an educational experience that both supplemented and reinforced their classical training. The terms 'educational' and 'experience' should both be emphasized here, since the tour allowed its participants not only to come face to face with the various monuments, landscapes, and works of art featured in traditional classical studies, but also to experience a manifold sensual palette derived from both interaction with other cultures and freedom from strict parental control. James T. Boulton and T.O. McLoughlin point to this sensual experience in *News From Abroad*, claiming that while serious students would have taken advantage of the educational opportunities the tour offered, 'others saw the Tour as simply an opportunity to enjoy a different culture, particularly a more liberal, even sophisticated lifestyle, with fashion, manners and women the focus, rather than monuments'.<sup>5</sup> Lynne Withey further emphasizes this point in *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours*, commenting that the grand tour 'provided a socially acceptable form of escape, a way of sowing wild oats, in the parlance of a later time'.<sup>6</sup> The grand tour, then, provided young men with a way of experiencing all the sensual pleasures of the world before settling down into marriage, career, and model citizenship, even if the cultural rite itself was touted as purely educational.

This 'Grand Tour' has traditionally been treated by literary and historical scholars as an eighteenth-century phenomenon. Certainly, the tradition came into its own as a cultural rite during this period, aided by large-scale improvements in roads across the Continent and by the flourishing of the English mercantile class.<sup>7</sup> As Withey points out, 'by the middle of the eighteenth century the continental tour [...] had expanded to become a

5 Boulton and McLoughlin, *News from Abroad*, 6.

6 Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours*, 3.

7 Boulton and McLoughlin, *News from Abroad*, 5.

common experience among the sons of wealthy professional and mercantile families' (5). And the end of the eighteenth century, in particular, has widely been considered by scholars as the 'apogee of the age of the grand tour', as Brian Dolan phrases it in *Ladies of the Grand Tour*.<sup>8</sup> By the late eighteenth century, then, we can see the various ways in which the grand tour had become an established part of English aristocratic culture, particularly in the narrow definition of the tour's characteristics that appears during that period. The 'tour' itself has become well defined in terms of typical tourists and their destinations. The typical tourist was male and British, even into the late eighteenth century,<sup>9</sup> and grand tourists 'confined themselves mainly to France and Italy, concentrating on a handful of cities: Paris, Geneva, Rome, Florence, Venice, and Naples'.<sup>10</sup>

As several scholars have pointed out, though, the origin of this tradition actually derives from at least a century earlier, when it arose in the wake of the English Civil War, if not from the general travelling practices of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Withey traces the origins of the grand tour to the 'British aristocracy in the sixteenth century' (5), while Jeremy Black comments in his introduction to *Italy and the Grand Tour* that 'protracted travel for pleasure [...] developed greatly in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, becoming part of an ideal education and image of the social elite'.<sup>11</sup> He continues: 'such travel [for pleasure] became more common in the seventeenth century, although it was affected by the religious (and political) tensions that followed the Protestant Reformation of the previous century' (1–2). Italy, in particular, proved a potentially dangerous destination for English travellers in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries due to these religious and political tensions,<sup>12</sup> although these tensions had largely given way to hostilities with other countries by the English Restoration. By all accounts, the travelling practices of the English elite in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries helped shape the continental tour that emerged in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> Notably, the term 'Grand Tour' itself was first introduced into English popular culture by Richard Lassels, a Catholic priest who published the term in 1670, not long before the appearance of Behn's *The Rover, Part 1*.<sup>14</sup>

8 Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, 9.

9 Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours*, 6.

10 Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours*, 7.

11 Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, 1.

12 Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours*, 7.

13 Warneke, *Images of the Educational Traveler*, 1.

14 Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, 2; and Boulton and McLoughlin, *News from Abroad*, 4.

Behn's play represents the themes and motifs of the grand tour in several ways that, if only coincidental, appear to foreshadow the century ahead. The play demonstrates a certain preoccupation with learning and education through its dialogue, although the lessons its characters learn are centred on worldly experience rather than formal scholarship. These references to learning, knowledge, and 'lessons' throughout the play underscore the worldly education that several characters, particularly Hellena and Blunt, receive about the nature of love and lust. The play also features several women's portraits that are admired by the men. Angellica's decision to advertise herself through three portraits serves as a marketing scheme, but the men – especially Willmore – treat the portraits more like works of art than advertisements. Angellica's portrait functions in Behn's play not unlike the various monuments, sculptures, and paintings that young men would often encounter on the grand tour.

The setting of the play itself also speaks back to the grand tour. Naples often served as the final major stop on the tour, although the city did not emerge as a truly popular destination until the second half of the eighteenth century. Withey claims that 'Naples was a popular destination among grand tourists, one devoted almost exclusively to the pleasures of the senses' (28). Naples' (and Italy's) reputation is reflected in the spirit of Behn's play, which devotes the majority of scenes to pursuits of both love and lust. This setting in the Spanish-controlled Italian city of Naples also allows for a meshing of cultures, specifically English, Spanish, and Italian, with references to the French and the Dutch (all, notably, cultures that would have been experienced on the grand tour).

Finally, the play boasts a focus on travel and mobility. As the play's title indicates, its characters rove freely. Most of the English visitors, for example, have made multiple stops on the Continent before arriving in Naples. Belvile, it is noted, has been to Paris (usually the first stop on the grand tour) and Pamplona, while Willmore – a seasoned traveller – literally wanders into Naples in search of sexual gratification and general entertainment. Blunt, in contrast to Willmore, is a 'raw traveller' whose naivety about the world causes his gullibility. The play's women also rove freely, although in a much more circumscribed space. Hellena, Florinda, and Valeria are not allowed the same freedom to 'roam' as their male counterparts, and so must use their wit and cunning, via disguise, to wander through the play's various social circles.

## Hellena as a Female Rogue Figure

This disguised roving by the play's main female characters speaks back to the dramatic tradition of female roguery in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century texts. In *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz define the rogue figure as 'a cultural trope for mobility, change, and social adaptation'.<sup>15</sup> Of the various characteristics that generally define rogues – wit, cunning, and guile (including the use of disguises) – mobility was generally seen as the most threatening in the early modern era. Mobility, whether geographical or social, disrupted the established order. Female mobility proved particularly threatening, especially since women were closely connected with the (immobile) household. The female rogue first appeared in the rogue pamphlets of Thomas Harman and John Awdeley of the 1560s, but did not emerge as a strong dramatic figure until the 1590s and early 1600s, when vast political, cultural, and social changes (along with hardships such as disease and famine) allowed her to take centre stage. In dramatic texts, the female rogue generally appears as a cunning and sharp-tongued member of the lower orders who either wanders geographically or moves up and down the social ladder via disguise and wit. Such movements often proved threatening to the established social order. In Thomas Middleton's *Trick to Catch the Old One* (1608), for instance, the lowly Jane presents herself as a rich widow, and ultimately advances her personal station by becoming Hoard's wife. In a similar manner, Doll works with her two co-conspirators, Subtle and Face, throughout Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610) to swindle unsuspecting visitors. Other female rogue figures include Long Meg of Westminster, who wanders from place to place and often adopts the guise of a man in *The Life of Long Meg of Westminster* (1635); Bess Bridges, a tapster turned pirate to save her beloved in Thomas Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West, Part 1* (1631); and Lucetta, the jilting wench who pulls a bed-trick on Blount in *The Rover, Part 1*.

Hellena's antics throughout Behn's play – her disguises, sharp wit, and clever scheming – all paint her as a rogue figure. While the term 'rogue' generally carried a negative connotation, it is important to note that this was not always the case with female rogues. Take, for example, the case of Moll Cutpurse, the cross-dressing heroine of Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (1611). More so than the other women above, Moll has proven a particularly complex figure for scholars to tackle, generally because she often appears as both the epitome and the antithesis of a female

15 Dionne and Mentz, *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, 1.

rogue. Moll's cross-dressing and her ability to move through various social circles paints her as a potential threat to the social order, but she appears to do so out of preference for that particular style of dress rather than for an ulterior motive. Unlike Middleton's Jane or Jonson's Doll, Moll has no desire to marry or to swindle others out of their money. In fact, Dekker and Middleton continually work to present Moll in their text as a figure who is in touch with the English underworld, yet displaced from it. In Act 5, for instance, Moll demonstrates an intrinsic knowledge of rogue culture, including a mastery of cant (rogue 'language'), but when questioned about that knowledge, presents herself as a mere observer:

I must confess, in younger days, when I was apt to stray, I have sat amongst such adders, seen their stings – as any here might – and in full playhouses watched their quick-diving hands, to bring to shame such rogues, and in that stream met an ill name. (5.1.298–303)

Moll's use of phrases such as 'sat amongst', 'seen', and 'watched', as well as her assertion of 'as any here might', distances her from the actions of dangerous rogue figures, while at the same time highlighting her familiarity with their culture.

Moll, and her real-life inspiration, Mary Frith, both proved to be popular with early modern audiences, and such popularity was not fleeting. The English Restoration, which saw the rise of female actors, women playwrights, and more diverse audiences for the London stage, demonstrated a renewed interest in female rogue figures. Real-life figures such as Elizabeth Cellier, Mary Carleton, and even Mary Frith herself (whose biography, *The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*, was published in 1662, shortly after her death) fascinated the public, and often served as inspiration for Restoration literature. Rogue-like women appear throughout Restoration drama, especially that of Behn, who, as a female playwright, had a vested interest in portraying strong women who pushed back against social conventions. Roguish female characters litter her works, from the playful 'feigned courtesans' in *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679) to the vehement Widdow Ranter in *The Widdow Ranter or, the History of Bacon in Virginia* (1690).

The emergence of the female rogue figure in dramatic English literature, however, also coincided with rising portrayals of roguish upper-class women – a category to which Behn's Hellena more readily belongs. Examples of such women include figures like Shakespeare's cross-dressing heroines (particularly Julia from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Rosalind from *As You Like It*), Jonson's Grace from *Bartholomew Fayre* (1631), and Rachel

and Meriel from Richard Brome's *A Jovial Crew, or the Merry Beggars* (1652). These women often adopt rogue-like tactics to escape danger, pursue their beloveds, or free themselves from patriarchal restraints. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, for instance, Julia disguises herself in male attire and takes on a lower social position in order to pursue her beloved, the false Proteus. Jonson's Grace does the opposite; she flees into the company of rogues in order to escape an unwanted suitor. Rosalind and Imogen (from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Cymbeline*, respectively) each use disguises and wit to flee from danger. Brome's heroines, frustrated with the patriarchal restraints placed upon them by their father and by society in general, seek the comfort of simple beggarly life. All of these women go 'rogue' in the sense that they use disguises, wit, and silver tongues to move unfettered through various social situations and to achieve their own ends.

Behn's Hellena fits nicely into this mould of the upper-class roguish woman. Throughout the play, Hellena adopts various disguises, including both male garb and a 'gipsie' costume, in order to move unhindered through the carnival festivities. Her choice of disguise in and of itself marks her rogue-like intentions, since the term 'gypsy' was widely used in the vagabond literature of the period to refer – often pejoratively – to itinerant people, especially Roma, in early modern Europe. Her scheming and roaming throughout the play match her well with the 'roving' Willmore, who follows his own lustful designs in pursuing Angellica, Naples' most desirable courtesan. In her initial discussions with Willmore, Hellena uses both wit and wordplay to enrapture him, and her rogue garb in this instance serves to make her a more mysterious, more desirable 'other'; after this first meeting, Willmore continually refers to Hellena as his 'little gipsie'. Like Julia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Brome's heroines, Hellena desires both love and freedom from the harsh patriarchal constraints placed upon her, and she adopts rogue-like tactics as a means to her end. She differs from these other female rogues, however, in that her primary motives align with the principal goals of the grand tour: to experience the world before settling into the responsibilities of adulthood.

## Hellena and the Grand Tour

In the opening scene of *The Rover, Part 1*, Hellena finds herself in a predicament. Growing up as the younger daughter of a Spanish lord, Hellena has lived a particularly sheltered life, as demonstrated by her persistent questioning of her older sister, Florinda, in the play's opening lines. Florinda

complains: 'What an impertinent thing is a young girl bred in a nunnery! How full of questions!' (1.1.1–2). The fact that Hellena has been 'bred in a nunnery' while Florinda was present at 'the siege of Pamplona' (1.1.48) – where she met the young English captain Belvile – further illustrates how little experience this 'young girl' actually has with the world. Hellena's predicament becomes more fleshed out with Florinda's assertion that she has not only been 'bred' in a nunnery, but that she is also 'a maid designed for a nun' (1.1.29), which implies that Hellena will spend the remainder of her life cloistered away from the world behind a convent's walls. The appearance of the young women's brother, Don Pedro, further emphasizes this idea; Don Pedro insists that 'at Lent she shall begin her everlasting penance in a monastery' (1.1.137–38). When Hellena remarks that she would rather be a nun than forced to marry according to her brother's choice, Don Pedro continues to emphasize her predetermined path for adulthood: 'Do not fear the blessing of that choice. You shall be a nun' (1.1.141). Hellena's fate, according to the dictates of her father and brother, then, has already been decided, and her predicament resides in the fact that this predetermined path runs contrary to her personal desires.

It is at this moment, when she is caught between her sheltered past and her equally cloistered future, that Hellena decides to take her education about the world into her own hands. Her conversation with Callis, the governess, after Don Pedro's departure clarifies her plans to go in masquerade during carnival. Callis asks Hellena whether she has considered the life set out for her by her brother and father, and Hellena responds: 'Yes [...] that of a nun: and till then I'll be indebted a world of prayers to you if you'll let me now see what I never did, the divertissements of a carnival' (1.1.169–71). The use of 'divertissements' here not only suggests the amusements of carnival, but also highlights the wandering nature of Hellena's ambitions, since to 'divert' is to 'turn aside from [a] (proper) direction or course'.<sup>16</sup> Hellena shirks her proper course for the diversions of the world around her, to 'see what [she] never did', with carnival and her rogue disguise serving as the means to her end. It is no coincidence that her first interaction with Willmore reintroduces the idea of diverting. When Willmore comments on her path to the nunnery, Hellena redirects his thoughts, claiming 'you design only to make me fit for Heaven' (1.2.179–80) and informing him that he should 'quite divert [her] from it' (1.2.180–81). He is the diversion she has been seeking, and the diversion for which she has set her plans in motion. The fact that the 'gypsy' outfits have already been laid out – as implied by

16 'Divert', *OED Online*.

Hellena's command to Florinda in the first scene to 'assume [a humour] as gay, and as fantastic as the dress my cousin Valeria and I have provided' (1.1.178–79) – suggests that Hellena has been planning this 'divertissement' for some time, and that her wit and cunning will help carry out that plan.

At first glance, though, Hellena's actions do not seem that different from those of her sister and kinswoman. Willmore's 'little gipsie' serves as the ring-leader, certainly, but Florinda and Valeria also dress in disguise, and they also participate in carnival. I would argue that Hellena differs from the text's other female characters in intent rather than in kind. Florinda dons a mask like her sister, but her goals follow more traditional lines: she does so to pursue her beloved, Belvile. Hellena's elder sister remains a stock image of passive femininity throughout most of the play, falling into the role of damsel in distress at least twice (when she must be saved from being raped). Valeria's aims are perhaps the most closely aligned with Hellena's in the play (that is, she wants to have fun), and yet the young kinswoman almost appears like an afterthought in the text – as if she exists purely to be paired with Frederick or to serve as 'wing-woman' to her female companions, to turn a modern phrase. And while Callis also participates in carnival, she does so with a watchful eye. Of her female companions, Hellena alone remains centre stage as an active rogue-like figure.

At least one other central female figure in the play, though, rivals Hellena's rogueries: Angellica Bianca. Arguably, Angellica is the most roguish woman in the play (except, perhaps, for Lucetta, the jilting wench) due to her independent nature, her ability to turn her looks and wit for profit, and her occupation. At the play's end, the jilted courtesan even takes up arms and threatens to shoot Willmore. Once again, I will argue that Hellena differs from Angellica in intent rather than in kind. If both are arguably rogue-like, and both use their roguery as a means to an end, the ends they seek differ. Hellena adopts rogue-like tactics to experience the world and all its pleasures (especially love). Angellica is already a woman of the world, and she uses her charms – and her ability to sell love and lust – to turn a profit. The courtesan's rash decision to admit the penniless Willmore and her subsequent fall for him probably say more about her own youthfulness than her business acumen. Both young women adopt roguish tactics, but only Hellena embarks on her own grand tour.

In truth, Hellena's grand tour is a microcosm of the 'Grand Tour' experience of many young English gentlemen. Her travels are limited to Naples, not the various cities on the Continent. She does not visit famous monuments, landscapes, and works of art that she studied in her formal education. She is not male (although she does take on the guise of one), and she is certainly

not English. Hellena's grand tour, instead, aligns more closely with the young men's education and experience in the 'sensual palette'; her 'roving' throughout carnival allows her to experience not only other cultures, but also freedom from parental control (particularly after she has shaken off Callis) and a taste of the sensual pleasures of interacting with the opposite sex. Her 'gipsie' disguise and subsequent male disguise allow her to interact with both the English visitors and the (presumably) native Angellica Bianca, and these various encounters teach her valuable lessons about the perils of lust and the risk of inconstancy in love.

Hellena's desire to receive a 'sensual' education appears throughout the play – she often emphasizes the idea of the world or worldliness in her speech. When questioned about her plans for carnival, for instance, Hellena responds that she wants to do 'that which all the world does [...] be as mad as the rest and take all innocent freedoms' (1.1.174–75). While this comment certainly can be taken as a description of the mad world of carnival, it also rings true with the spirit of the grand tour, in which young people took advantage of the (supposedly) innocent freedoms offered to them by escaping watchful parental eyes. Despite her assertion to her sister that she 'came thence not, as [her] wise brother imagines, to take an eternal farewell of the world, but to love and to be beloved' (3.1.39–41), Hellena's discussions of love and courtship always return to the idea of earthly, carnal pleasures and knowledge. After all, she follows that statement with the bold assertion: 'and I will be beloved, or I'll get one of your men, so I will' (3.1.41–42). When questioned further by her sister and Valeria, Hellena proclaims that she does not want to be the 'considering lover' like her sister – the one who writes 'little soft nonsensical billets' (3.1.55) and follows all the proper rules of courtship. She doesn't have time! She is bound for the nunnery, where she 'shall not be suspected to have any such earthly thoughts about [her]' (3.1.60–61). And yet, even her conversation with her brother in the play's initial scene reveals her focus on such 'earthly thoughts' throughout the play, when she displays a keen interest in the happenings of the marriage bed. She presents Florinda's pending marriage to the old Don Vincentio as a bleak affair:

That honour being past, the giant stretches himself, yawns and sighs a belch or two, loud as a musket – throws himself into bed, and expects you in his foul sheets, and e'er you can get yourself undressed, calls you with a snore or two – and are not these fine blessings to a young lady. (1.1.114–18)

Her preoccupation with worldly pleasures, however, appears most fruitfully in her discussions with Willmore. Hellena flirts freely with Willmore in the

palm-reading scene, an action that notably would not have been allowed of a Spanish female youth, particularly one so guarded by her father and brother. When Willmore tells her in this initial conversation that it 'tis more meritorious to leave the world when thou hast tasted and proved the pleasure on't' (1.2.176–77), she responds by asking him to take her off her pre-appointed path and 'bring [her] back to the world again' (1.2.181). In a later conversation, after discussing marriage with Willmore, she comments that 'a handsome woman has a great deal to do whilst her face is good' (3.1.170–71), asserting that 'should I, in these days of my youth, catch a fit of foolish constancy, I were undone: 'tis loitering by daylight in our great journey' (3.1.172–74).

Constancy and inconstancy serve as major sticking points in the play for Hellena and Willmore's relationship, and Hellena in her comments here demonstrates not only her interest in worldly pleasures, but also how much she has already learned both about the world and about Willmore in particular, since in presenting herself as inconstant she mirrors his own inconstant behaviour towards her. She presents herself as rogue-like as she perceives him to be, exclaiming 'Well, I see our business as well as humours are alike: yours to cozen as many maids as will trust you, and I as many men as have faith' (3.1.181–83). Acquiring such keen knowledge and insight into Willmore's character is significant, if only because such knowledge about a particular suitor would generally have been denied to a sheltered young woman in this period. Through her roving, Hellena grants herself a similar education about the constancy and inconstancy of the opposite sex that the young English gentleman, Blunt, receives in the play when he encounters Lucetta.

Hellena's general aptitude and willingness to learn throughout the play also links her to the grand tour, which was, above all else, supposed to be an educational experience. Talk of learning pervades several of her discussions, such as when she asserts to Valeria that 'if you are not a lover, 'tis an art soon learnt' (3.1.47–48), a comment that soon has Florinda exclaiming 'I wonder how you learned to love so easily' (3.1.49). Hellena's desire to know more about love, and about the world in general, appears in the first lines she speaks in the play. In response to Florinda's complaint that she has 'told thee more than thou understand'st already' (1.1.2–3), Hellena exclaims: 'The more's my grief. I would fain know as much as you, which makes me so inquisitive' (1.1.4–5). This inquisitive nature appears throughout the play in her questioning of Florinda about love, in her questioning of her brother's plans for Florinda's marriage, in the curiosity displayed in her exchanges with Willmore, and in her tendency to remain in the shadows in order to

observe the interactions of those around her. For example, in the third act, right before Belville and Moretta enter discussing Willmore, the disguised Hellena turns to Florinda and Valeria, remarking: 'Let's step aside and we may learn something' (3.1.70–71). And learn something she does in this scene, particularly about Willmore's roving eye.

One moment in the play that perhaps highlights these various ideas associated with the grand tour most vividly – learning, roving, and sensual desire – would be when Hellena and Willmore finally learn each other's names. This revelation, which would normally occur upon an initial meeting, comes at the play's end, after both of them have already learned everything else they need to know about each other. Such a late revelation calls into question which character the play's title – *The Rover* – actually refers to, especially since Hellena carefully paints herself as Willmore's equal throughout the text. Her ability to match him remains further underscored by the actual names each of them gives. When Willmore asserts 'I am called Robert the constant' (5.1.472), Hellena echoes him a few lines later: 'I am called Hellena the inconstant' (5.1.477). Her switch from 'constant' to 'inconstant' reveals her deep knowledge of his character, since she labels herself to match his own inconsistency throughout the play. Such knowledge would not have been possible without her youthful (and educational) adventures during carnival. Such knowledge is powerful too, since it ultimately alters her course for adulthood.

## Implications

In establishing Hellena as a rogue-like young woman who actively seeks worldly experience, Behn makes a powerful statement about the importance of such experience for young women, as well as young men. In allowing Hellena to create her own youthful space in between childhood and adulthood, Behn establishes that the space outside of the home, and even beyond the watchful parental (or patriarchal) eye, can prove fruitful for both sexes since – according to the logic of the play – more experienced young women can ultimately make better spouses. Much like the travels of the grand tour served as a way for young men to experience the world before settling into the responsibilities of adulthood, so Hellena's roving throughout the play actually prepares her to be a wife through allowing her to know her future husband before committing to him. Both the play and the carnival within end with order restored, and yet that 'order' has altered quite a bit from when the play started. Hellena ends the play dressed not as a young Spanish noblewoman, but as a young boy – a sign, perhaps, that she, like

Willmore, remains a bit rogue-like even in the restored order of the play. Parental and patriarchal desires have been subverted, and will remain so, since both Hellena and Florinda have chosen to follow their own paths. Alternative futures have been carved out, especially for Willmore and Hellena, neither of whom envisioned marriage at the play's start. Behn's 'world of youth' concludes with a new 'venture': adulthood.

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