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Carnival Politics, Generous Satire, and Nationalist Spectacle in Behn's *The Rover*

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In the epilogue to *The Rover. Or, the Banish't Cavaliers* (1677), Aphra Behn demarcates a set of faulty interpretive practices and directs the audience to the proper reading of her play by negative example. The unidentified speaker begins by performing a hysterical, puritanical reaction to the basic elements of the play: "The Banisht Cavaliers! a Roving Blade!/ A Popish Carnival! a Masquerade!"[1] Here, Behn attempts to school her audience in the politics of reading by anticipating, parodying, and therefore dismissing, a particular anti-Catholic, anti-court hermeneutics of paranoia that she associates with the "Conventickling" Dissenters of the "Mutinous Tribe" (ll. 5, 7). Even more moderate members of the audience rule "With th' Insolence of Common-Wealths" (l. 16) when they presume to judge the play, which is a classic formulation of Behn's Royalist politics. Two members of this caviling commonwealth are singled out for Behn's particular scorn, and their negative pronouncements are also mockingly quoted by the speaker of the epilogue. The first is the "Politick grave Fool" (l. 17) who derides contemporary plays like *The Rover* as "slight airy Toys" (l. 25); the second is one of the "younger Sparks" (l. 30), who proclaims, "Damn me, I'm sure 'twill never please the Court" (l. 33). These disparaging utterances about Behn's play are lifted from their supposed origins, repeated in a new context, and essentially altered and turned back on their fictive sources by

the parodying delivery of the epilogue's speaker. Behn is telling her audience to disregard the judgment of those who underestimate the serious political message of *The Rover* and who erroneously believe that the Stuart court would not be pleased by her nationalist and Royalist depiction of the Cavalier exile during the Interregnum.

The interpretive guidance offered by Behn's epilogue has not been heeded by modern critics, who have neither fully addressed the play as a serious rewriting of the Stuart exile nor accounted for its remarkable appropriation of Elizabethan nationalist discourse in the service of a pro-Stuart agenda. Because *The Rover* was performed just before the eruption of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis, it has not been included in recent considerations of Behn's more strident political plays written during those turbulent times.[2] In general, most scholars have viewed it as primarily concerned with gender politics and have only peripherally considered, or excluded altogether, national political and religious issues.[3] In fact, much recent work follows a critical approach that confirms the young Spark's assessment, which Behn herself derides in the epilogue. Focusing on Willmore's drunkenness and blundering, his attempted rapes of Florinda, and his creating difficulties for Belvile, many scholars have argued that Behn's play represents an earnest feminist attack on the character of the rake and the sexual audacity of the Stuart court, while others have asserted a more general ambivalence about Cavalier libertine ideology.[4] Janet Todd argues that Willmore's character is ambiguous, both "macho and sexually attractive to desperate southern women" and a "ridiculous" and nearly "villainous" drunk; but, unlike other critics, she suggestively remarks that "Some of the serious ambiguity in *The Rover* may have been gained by time."[5] Given Todd's discussion of James' admiration for the play (221), along with the fact that there were three known performances of *The Rover* at court, it is difficult to believe that the work was viewed by Charles II or James II as a serious or even ambivalent depiction of their experience in exile or of the conduct of their court.[6]

The fact that the play was embraced by the court suggests that *The Rover* expresses a pro-Stuart ideology, yet its position was moderate and flexible enough to allow its survival beyond its historical moment and, unlike her plays of the later Exclusion Crisis period, stay in the repertoire well into the eighteenth century. In this regard, *The Rover* is possibly Behn's most daring expression of Royalism because it acknowledges opposition concerns about the raging sexuality of the Stuart court in the scenes

where Willmore stupidly blunders, but this does not mean that the play is ambivalent in its politics. Whatever critique Behn directs at the court, it is lodged by a playwright boldly assuming the role of court jester and is infused with the spirit of both carnival and forgiveness. By performing what I call a "generous satire" of Cavalier sexuality in the safe critical space provided by carnival, Behn creates a fascinating political comedy that asks its audience to laugh away its concerns about the court's sexual behavior or, like Hellena, to have a tolerant and even admiring attitude about the court's audacity.

At the same time, we should recognize that a large part of the play's appeal, both before and after the Glorious Revolution, derives from its earnest creation of a nationalist spectacle that fantastically recasts the Stuart exile as another chapter in the venerable English tradition of anti-Spanish privateering. Because of the influence of *Oroonoko* (1688), Behn scholars have had much more to say about her imperialism than her nationalism, leaving unexamined *The Rover*'s patriotic sensibilities and Behn's attempt to create goodwill toward the Stuart court through the auspices of traditional anti-Spanish feeling in England. The semiotics of English nationalism are particularly important in the play and are developed powerfully through Behn's sharp stagecraft, in particular her presentation of English Cavalier dominance in several fight scenes, her strategic manipulation of national costume, and her invitation to the riotous spectators of the Restoration theatre to ratify vocally the rule of the Cavalier court. These multiple interpretive investigations will peer behind the carnivalesque surface of the text and explore the serious partisan, conservative, and nationalist impulses that made it possible for *The Rover* to be repeatedly performed at court despite the reservations of Behn's fictional young sparks.

Such a project must begin with an examination of the carnival in Restoration society. It is beyond the scope of this essay to revisit the intense debates about carnival and masquerade that have so fruitfully explored Mikhail Bakhtin's theories and adapted them for early modern studies. At the same time, we should pay heed to critics like Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, whose engagement with Bakhtin's work is most forceful during their delineation and critique of his utopian desires for the political subversiveness of carnivalesque inversions. Stallybrass and White alert literary critics to a massive body of historical and sociological work that cautions against placing too much emphasis on carnival as resistant to political hierarchy, and they conclude in the following manner: "It actually makes

little sense to fight out the issue of whether or not carnivals are *intrinsically* radical or conservative, for to do so automatically involves the false essentializing of carnivalesque transgression."[7] By heeding Stallybrass and White's warnings about essentializing the carnival as subversive, we can approach Behn's use of carnival in a fuller historical context.

In general, critics of *The Rover* have failed to consider that the rubric of carnival had, quite possibly, never been as closely aligned with an English ruling class as it was in Restoration society. Stallybrass and White themselves point out that carnival was theorized by the Restoration elite as a means to maintain social order (72–73) and argue that the court reveled in carnivalesque inversions of "its inherited forms of public representation" (101). James Grantham Turner's recent work exhaustively catalogs how the Restoration court appropriated the "festive-violent gestures" of the English carnival tradition for its own aristocratic frolics.[8] Of course, the Restoration theatre reveals another court-sanctioned carnivalesque venue, which Stallybrass and White identify as an unruly space whose collective attendees were almost the exact opposite of a modern "deferential and receptive bourgeois audience" (84). In his comprehensive survey of the wild behavior of Restoration spectators, Montague Summers reveals an environment that included, among other things, fights and dueling, constant noise from the orange-ladies and prostitutes selling their wares, a general masquerade in which women from all classes donned the vizards, and a clamor of wits loudly criticizing the play or the actors.[9]

This is not to say that the court had a lock on the political meanings of carnival, either inside or outside the theatre. Turner consistently documents how the anti-Stuart Opposition could speak through the festive-violence of public-shaming rituals and traditional holiday disorders. His prime example is the "Bawdy House" Riots of 1668, in which the traditional Shrove Tuesday anti-brothel disturbances quickly metamorphosed into a political attack on the king (174–81). Turning back to the carnival atmosphere of the theatre, we might recall Susan J. Owen's recent argument for the presence of Whig drama, along with a minority Whiggish component of the audience, during the Exclusion Crisis: "The dramatists address a politically divided audience, and they seek to persuade, not just to celebrate a monolithic absolutism" (15).[10] Behn certainly occupied a similar position in 1677; and by mirroring in her play the carnival atmosphere of the theatre itself she attempts to align this increasingly divided audience with the exiled Cavaliers on stage, to break down the already fragile "fourth wall" that

separates spectators from actors in Restoration theatre, and to channel the unruly energies of the crowd into a nationalistic, unruly Royalism.

The court's investment in the rubric of carnival also allows Behn to open a powerful, yet provisional, space of critique in the play. There is much evidence that the Stuarts did not mind being generously satirized and, in the venerable tradition of the court jester, allowed and forgave ridicule. Nearly all modern biographers comment on Charles' ability to take a joke or to forgive those who criticized him, especially Buckingham, Rochester, and Clarendon. Hester Chapman argues that Charles "sustained the illusion of carefree idleness . . . combined with an unmoved acceptance of the most insolent censures." She then relays the famous story of the time when Charles was "publicly rebuked" in a sermon but said, "Tell Dr. Frampton that I am not angry for to be told of my faults—but I would have it done in a gentlemanlike manner."[11] She concludes, "Such stories went the rounds, and so endeared him to the people that they became far more royalist than the King, who rejected reverence, and mocked at the pomposity of his fellow-monarchs" (396). Behn was clearly counting on such a demeanor when she presented *The Rover* to the public and was further emboldened by Thomas Killigrew's savage mockery of the poverty of the exiled Stuart court in *Thomaso, or The Wanderer: A Comedy* (1664).[12]

By weaving a language of playful critique into the fabric of an otherwise nationalist and Royalist play, Behn opened her work to the anti-court readings of contemporary criticism. Her own masquerade in the prologue as a young male playwright could possibly be construed as an acknowledgment of Behn's fear that the court might be offended. As several critics have noted, Willmore is a member of Charles' fictional exiled court, and he also seems to be a double, both "mimetically and semiotically," of Charles himself.[13] The adoption of the play by both James and Charles, however, indicates that the court accepted Behn's criticisms as playful carnivalesque inversions, ultimately conservative and celebratory, a generous satire that distances itself from the critical languages that it contains. Rather than detracting from Behn's celebration of Stuart rule, this maneuver allows her to create a politically flexible version of Royalism, one that simultaneously concedes some of the excesses of Charles' reign as monarch while arguing that those very excesses should not only be forgiven, but should also contribute to an appreciation for the king and his court.

In order to chart the strategies of Behn's carnivalesque generosity, we must mark the ways in which Behn's text itself includes, but immedi-

ately disperses, critical discourse about Willmore's sexual depravity. We shall begin with a consideration of the aftermath of Willmore's first major faux pas—his attempted rape of Florinda—which inadvertently destroys her design to escape Pedro's control and elope with Belvile. To his credit, Willmore appears, as the stage directions indicate, "*Melancholy*" and, as he mentions, "endu'd with patience" (III.ii.200) as Belvile rails:

> BELVILE: A Curse upon his thin Skull, he was always before-hand that way.
>
> FREDERICK: Prithee Dear Colonel forgive him, he's sorry for his Fault.
>
> BELVILE: He's always so after he has done a mischief—a plague on all such Brutes.
>
> WILLMORE: By this Light I took her for an Errant Harlot.
>
> BELVILE: Damn your debaucht opinion! Tell me Sot had'st thou so much sense and light about thee to distinguish her Woman, and coudst not see something about her Face and Person, to strike an awful Reverence into thy Soul?
>
> WILLMORE: Faith no, I consider'd her as meer a Woman as I cou'd wish. (III.ii.211–21)

Through Frederick's charitable interpretations and forgiving impulses Behn models for her audience the proper bemused response to Cavalier blundering. Because his mistakes derive from the single-minded sexual rapacity that, in other venues, provides so much pride to the English contingent in Naples—especially in his glorious conquest of Angellica, which is collectively celebrated by the beleaguered Cavaliers (III.i.85–118)—Frederick must be generously forgiven. Because the women in the play find him so audaciously sexy, and because he is given so many good comic lines in both the rape scene and the scene that follows, he cannot be the target of aggressive satire.[14]

As Belvile reluctantly observes, Willmore is always sorry after he has been at fault; and Florinda, just moments after nearly falling victim to a sadistic gang rape, also generously forgives his transgressions at the beginning of the final act, a pardon that does not seem to be undermined by Willmore's continued sexual innuendos (V.i.143–46). In fact, she forgives the entire cadre of would-be-rapists, Blunt included, and asks one of them, Frederick, to marry her cousin (ll. 148–72). All of the sadistic nastiness of

the previous act is washed away in an outpouring of carnivalesque good will. Despite Florinda's forgiving impulses, however, it is Hellena who becomes the ultimate model for a generous understanding of Cavalier sexuality in the play, a woman who has no illusions about Willmore but loves him nonetheless. When Hellena witnesses Willmore conversing with Angellica, a clear violation of his earlier vow to renounce the prostitute (III.i.244–55), her reaction flies in the face of modern sensibilities: "This must be *Angellica*! I know it by her mumping Matron here—Ay, ay, 'tis she! my Mad Captain's with her too, for all his swearing—how this unconstant humour makes me love him!" (IV.i.279–81). Reminiscent of Harriet in Etherege's *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676), who does not wish Dorimant to "turn Fanatick" and renounce his other amours,[15] Hellena becomes a model for the perfect Stuart subject, a person who is desperately attracted by the very outrageousness of Cavalier sexuality.

We shall return to the ways in which Angellica represents another model for Royalism in the play—one that opens up space for those who are more alarmed at Willmore's inadequacies than is Hellena—but for now, we need to account more fully for the political importance of the Blunt-Lucetta subplot in which Behn quotes, and then disperses, a major claim of Charles II's political opposition: the charge that his sexual extravagance was making him effeminate and unworthy to lead the nation. Lucetta's initial assessment of Blunt strongly reinforces our understanding of the play as a heterogeneous structure that poaches from multiple discourses, even those of Charles' avowed enemies: "If I understand my Trade, he's mine, he's English too; and they say that's a sort of good natur'd loving People, and have generally so kind an opinion of themselves, that a Woman with any Wit may Flatter 'em into any sort of Fool she pleases" (I.ii.194–97). In this passage, Behn invokes an entire range of oppositional discourses that focused on the supposed effeminacy of the king and his enslavement to his French, Catholic mistresses. Already suspicious of Charles because of his French tastes and his openly Catholic brother, many critics thought the libidinous king was being led by his French lovers to abandon cherished English ideals of Protestantism and Parliament for an absolutist, papist, French monarchism.[16]

If scholars have long understood Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) as a powerful Royalist response to oppositional discourses about the effeminacy of the king, they have not included Behn's *The Rover* in the same ideological counter-discourse in which Dryden participated. Instead of coyly

reading the voracious sexual appetite of the king and his court through the epic patriarchal language of Dryden, Behn skillfully injects ideas of the political opposition into the body of her text and performs what could best be described as a textual inoculation. The hazardous discourse, introduced in a weakened state, is eventually destroyed, thereby strengthening the ascendant discourse that was challenged by its presence. How, exactly, does Behn debilitate Lucetta's thesis about the effeminacy of Englishmen? In what ways is this discourse, which was so often leveled at the king and his court, crippled and eliminated from the body of the text? Behn accomplishes this delicate ideological procedure by demonstrating that the effeminacy thesis works only on Cromwellian dunces like Blunt, whose Essex background also associated him with the puritanism for which that region was well known.[17] Another of her transformations of *Thomaso* is the alignment of the dunce figure in the play with Parliament, as in the following exchange:

> BLUNT: Gentlemen . . . you have been kept so poor with Parliaments and Protectors, that the little Stock you have is not worth preserving—but I thank my Stars, I had more Grace than to forfeit my Estate by Cavaliering.
>
> BELVILE: Methinks only following the Court, shou'd be sufficient to entitle 'em to that.
>
> BLUNT: 'Sheartlikins, they know I follow it to do it no good, unless they pick a hole in my Coat for lending you Money now and then, which is a greater Crime to my Conscience, Gentlemen, than to the CommonWealth. (I.ii.44–53)

Although the details are not exactly clear, Blunt has made contact with Parliamentarian authorities and has convinced them of his loyalty to the Protectorate. Perhaps we are supposed to see him as an informal agent for Cromwell's regime, which ran an effective spy network that carefully monitored the movement of the exiled court and that managed to infiltrate its inner circle in the notorious Manning affair.[18]

Behn extends this characterization of Blunt later in the same act when, after he has sauntered off the stage in pursuit of Lucetta, the Cavaliers are free to express their hatred of him. Realizing that Lucetta is out to jilt Blunt, the Cavaliers wish that she had the power to "sell him for *Perue*" to work as a slave in the gold and silver mines (I.ii.263–64). Belvile explains the sources of the Cavaliers' resentment, describing Blunt as a foolish

country squire "that knowes no pleasure beyond riding to the next Fair, or going up to *London* with his right Worshipful Father in Parliament-time" (ll. 270–72). While Blunt is certainly not an open Cavalier at home, his greatest desire is to emulate the Cavalier court abroad, especially in their sexual success with foreign women. It is this desire that leads him, in accord with Behn's stage directions (he "*struts and Cocks*" about the stage when Lucetta gazes at him) to muse, "'Tis so—she is taken—I have Beauties which my false Glass at home did not discover" (ll. 198–99). Lucetta's claim that Englishmen will quickly bend to the power of foreign beauty proves true only for Blunt, as the humbled Angellica and the overcome Hellena can attest at the end of the play. In another pointed contrast, the Cavaliers clearly understand the wily stratagems of Neapolitan prostitutes and accurately predict Blunt's fate at the hands of Lucetta. When Blunt steals away with her, Frederick remarks that "at least I hope she'll dress him for our Mirth, cheat him of all, then have him well-favourd'ly bang'd, and turn'd out Naked at midnight" (ll. 264–66). The motivations of predatory Catholic women are all too transparent to the savvy Cavaliers.

Blunt also absorbs the opposition fears about the effects of excessive sexuality on national identity, for as soon as Lucetta inflames his desire, Blunt contemplates the renunciation of England as his home: "What a Dog was I to stay in dull *England* so long,—How have I laught at the Colonel, when he sigh'd for Love! but now the little Archer has reveng'd him! and by this one Dart, I can guess at all his joys, which then I took for Fancies, meer Dreams and Fables.—Well, I'm resolv'd to sell all in *Essex*, and plant here for ever" (II.i.34–38). In this moment, Blunt proves a stark contrast to Willmore, who is clearly no more than a sexual pirate in Naples, ready to continue roving until the Restoration becomes a reality. Blunt's projected abandonment of England throws into relief this most enduring trait of the Cavaliers: no matter how dire their circumstances may be, they never lose sight of England as home and never abandon the rightful cause of Charles as its proper king. "Roving" from one Catholic lover to another never means moving away from English Protestant ideals, and there is a stability about the Cavaliers' identities that critics of the Stuarts so often questioned in Charles himself.

Blunt's weakness allows Philippo, Lucetta's lover and partner in crime, to exalt in a moment of imported Spanish nationalist discourse that represents the successful cozening of Blunt as revenge for the defeat of the Spanish Armada. While sorting through the loot recovered from Blunt's

pants, Philippo finds that "the Wasteband of his Breeches have a Mine of Gold!—Old Queen *Besse*'s, we have a quarrel to her ever since *Eighty Eight*, and may therefore justifie the Theft" (III.ii.69–71). Greater embarrassments remain for Blunt, however, since he is unable to procure English clothes immediately after his humiliating episode with Lucetta and Philippo. In a fitting, carnivalesque punishment for his sins against the nation, Blunt is paraded onto the stage "*drest in a Spanish Habit, looking very ridiculously; his* MAN *adjusting his Band*," and declares, "I had rather be in the Inquisition for Judaisme, than in this Doublet and Breeches" (V.i.519–20). In a scene reminiscent of Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1673), the narrative action of the plot ceases for a moment as Blunt instructs both the other actors and the audience to participate in a spectacle of ridicule: "Pray view me round, and judge" (l. 517). He is allowed to rejoin the community in the comic ending of the play, but he must be marked by his subjection to Lucetta. In the end, Behn's play performs a generous satire of Blunt as well, but the terms upon which that satire depend are deeply political.

Besides his raging desire for the bodies of Catholic women, there is very little that is exotic about Willmore; and he gains symbolic resonance by appearing for much of the play in his "buff," a strong leather coat worn by English soldiers of the period, which might recall the physical bravery of both James and Charles.[19] The stage directions at the beginning of Act II are quite explicit about the appearance of Willmore's costume: "*Enter* Belvile *and* Frederick *in Masquing Habits and* Willmore *in his own Cloaths, with a Vizard in his Hand*." Willmore remains sartorially outside of the carnival atmosphere, never appearing in a mask or disguise and changing his clothes only once. Near the beginning of Act IV, he enters "*finely drest*," presumably in English clothes, a transformation made possible by Angellica's generous gift of gold. In addition, Behn plays to the audience's nationalist sensibilities, allowing Belvile, and then Willmore, to cast joking aspersions on the martial abilities of the French, Dutch, and Spanish (I.ii.115–18; II.i.243–44). Even Willmore's taste in drink is politically correct, as evidenced by his response to the suggestion that the Cavaliers celebrate his assignation with Angellica over a bottle of French wine: "Damn the hungry Balderdash" (III, i, 100). Playing to the audience's anti-French sentiments, moments like these reinforce the notion that the Stuart court is English in its tastes and committed to the advancement of English national interests.

To this end, in the play's multiple displays of swordplay we recognize that Willmore and the other Englishmen, even Blunt, are clearly superior fighters to any of the Spanish imperialists: the English rout the Spaniards to claim Angellica's picture (II.i); Willmore injures Antonio in a duel as both attempt to enter Angellica's apartment for a late-night tryst (III.ii); and Belvile, disguised as Antonio, disarms Pedro in another battle over rights to Angellica (IV.i). Each of these scenes is a pleasurable nationalist spectacle in which the Cavaliers resolutely subdue the Spaniards, who are physically dominated despite their longer Toledo blades. Even if we can only gesture at the semiotics of props as well as the staging of English dominance in sword fighting, we must mark these fight scenes as moments in which a plethora of extra-linguistic meanings erupt and in which successful conflict dispels concerns about the effeminacy of the over-sexed Cavaliers. Such a stage direction as "*The Spaniards are beaten off*" (II.i.232–33) would encompass untold minutes of stimulating physical action that would ask the unruly audience to identify with their English countrymen as they rout the martially impotent Spanish imperialists. Derek Hughes perceptively argues that the play "lays bare the male body in its violence and fascination" and highlights the "rough physical presence" and "consistent power" (88) of the Cavalier-as-soldier.[20] In this emphasis on bloody, masculine action, Behn unironically presents a virile court, as martially dominant over Spanish men as they are sexually irresistible to their women.

In a similar vein, Behn additionally modifies *Thomaso* by brilliantly casting the Cavaliers, and even Charles II himself, as anti-Spanish privateers, associating the Stuart court with the nationalist traditions of the Elizabethan Golden Age. The most cursory perusal of Richard Hakluyt's compendium of English nationalist tales reveals several generic elements that reappear in *The Rover*. Clearly and consistently, the familiar privateering discourse casts the Spaniards as mere braggarts who possess few martial resources to buttress their claims of dominance and who are particularly vulnerable in their imperial outposts in South America. Such claims are reinforced in Richard Hakluyt by the story of John Hawkins' voyage to the West Indies, the narration of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the narrative of Drake's circumnavigation, and Raleigh's story about a single English ship, the *Revenge*, that had beaten off an entire squadron of Spanish ships.[21] No matter how overwhelming the power of Spain, it is unable to conquer England in Europe or to defend its colonies from the depreda-

tions of English pirates. In his attack on another Spanish imperial territory, Willmore proves witness to the braggadocio, the military ineptitude and, ultimately, the cowardice of the Spanish imperialists, especially in Pedro's capitulation and fearful confession to the audience at the end of the play (V.i.500). In the fight scenes proper, the theatre becomes a historiographical dream factory, anachronistically overlaying the history of the Stuart exile with the semiotics of the anti-Hispanic privateering tradition.

This playful historical revision of the exile must have appealed directly to Charles II for a number of reasons, including the fact that he was well known as a lover of both boats and sailing. Rather than recreating his actual position as a landlocked and degraded "Pensioner of Spain" from 1656 to 1660, the fictional, sea-faring Charles celebrated in *The Rover* (I.ii.60–2; V.i.480–84) becomes the privateering scourge of Spain (Hutton, 100–32). Such a maneuver also allows Behn to counter another of the strategies of the political opposition, which, as Harold Weber notes, demeaned the supposedly effeminate Charles by "measuring his inadequacies against Elizabeth's idealized and irreproachable standard."[22] By associating Charles with anti-Spanish "rovers," which was another term for pirates in the period, Behn upgrades his image as a figure of nationalist, militant Protestantism; and this association is reinforced by the insertion of a discourse of piracy throughout the play: Willmore uses the language of privateering to describe his roving adventures (III, ii, 245–6; IV, i, 552–53) and threatens to kidnap Pedro on board his pirate ship (V.i.363–68); Moretta classifies Willmore as both a "Pyrate Beggar" and an "*English* Piccaroon" (II.i.425–26); and, as we have already noted, Philippo understands the cozening of Blunt as a reparation for the loss of the Spanish Armada. Behn also exploits the semiotic appeal of Spanish gold, and we witness its transfer from the Spanish imperialists to Willmore through his sexual conquests of both Angellica and Hellena. Willmore leaves Naples with an amount of Spanish gold that could have made Drake jealous.

Willmore's straightforward Englishness and nationalist disposition also stand in sharp contrast to the more cosmopolitan ethos of Killigrew's *Thomaso.* For reasons of space a full investigation of Behn's modifications of that source text is not possible here, although I have already discussed some of her most significant alterations. In addition, it is important to note that the movement from Thomaso to Willmore is more complex than most critics have allowed. Certainly, Willmore blunders about in ways that the sophisticated Thomaso never would; yet Thomaso's behavior, in some

respects, would have served only to reinforce the concerns about the Stuart court that Behn's play works so hard to dispel. Two central episodes in *Thomaso*, if included in *The Rover*, would have undermined Behn's political project. The first episode concerns Thomaso's disguising himself as a Spanish don in order to play a trick on Saretta, a prostitute who openly dislikes him. Donning a black beard, a periwig, and a noble suit of Spanish clothes, the fair-featured Thomaso pretends that he is his "brother" from Salamanca, just the type of dark man that Saretta desires. Thomaso seduces her in his Spanish disguise, eventually bedding her, and justifies his behavior with a rhetorical question: "What Advantage do I get *by turning Catholick*, if a Saint cannot forgive such a sin?" (392). Given the fact that Behn's play was produced only a year before the Popish Plot erupted, such behavior in her hero would have been simply intolerable. Too many already feared that Charles was a Catholic in disguise, just as James had been; and Killigrew's text, written on the Continent during the actual exile, would have reconfirmed opposition suspicions that the king was too cosmopolitan to be properly English and that he was not averse to "*turning Catholick*" in order to advance his political position.

The ending of Killigrew's play, during which Thomaso sincerely reforms his roving ways and settles down to a life in Madrid, must also have been anathema to Behn's purposes. For example, Thomaso comes to understand that "this life of mine, that which some men may pass some moneths in for humour . . . [is] no trade for men of honour. . . . A gray Wanderer is but a bad Tragedy to himself, though an old Beggar may be a Comedy to others: These thoughts, and the noble nature of this vertuous Maid, have made me resolve to abjure this humour" (438). Indeed, at the end of the play, Thomaso agrees to remain in Madrid with the Spanish maiden Serulina, declaring that her virtue "has fixt the Wanderer" (464). Written during a time when the Restoration was only a dim hope, the presentation of Thomaso's renunciation of wandering was inoffensive in its contemporary moment. The uncertainty of the Restoration is written into the very fabric of Killigrew's play, and he charts a realistic course of action, a way for Thomaso to gain comfort despite the political and material hardships of exile.

In fact, Thomaso's assessment of his sexual philandering, if included in *The Rover*, might have insulted the court, whose members continued to rove despite becoming gray with older age. In contrast, Willmore allows no foreign woman "to fix" him; and even though he marries Hellena at the

conclusion, he is neither repentant nor settled. In the eyes of a man like Willmore, Thomaso's decision to emasculate himself for a foreign lover, to turn Catholic for his own personal profit, and to give up the sexual and geographical roving of the English privateer, would have implied effeminacy. In Behn's depiction of the exile, Charles II, the pirate prince, was waiting in his ship, just offshore, for Willmore to return with women and money, waiting for a continuation of their pirate adventures, which would last until the inevitable Restoration. An unrevised *Thomaso* thrust onto the stage in the turbulent 1670s would have simply reinforced the worst fears of the political opposition, necessitating the extensive revisions and adaptations of Behn's text and the creation of an essentially new work.

Into this tense political environment of the 1670s, Behn inserts Hellena, that wonderful model for generosity towards Cavalier shortcomings who attempts to rally the disruptive, carnivalesque audience into a vocal celebration of Willmore and an expression of Royalist good will:

> HELLENA: I have consider'd the matter Brother, and find, the Three hundred thousand Crowns my Uncle left me (and you cannot keep from me) will be better laid out in Love than in Religion, and turn to as good an account,—let most voyces carry it, for Heaven or the Captain? (V.i.493–98).

The spontaneous enthusiasm of the response—"ALL *cry*: A Captain [!], a Captain [!]"—projects a unanimous political community. "ALL *cry*" conjures up a vision of Hellena gesturing to the audience, asking them to roar their approval, along with the actors on the stage, in a celebration of the Cavalier court. This moment represents another way that Behn attempts to channel the unruliness of the carnivalesque crowd into support for that most carnivalesque of kings. If the Restoration spectators were always talking during the performance, here they are given a chance to participate vocally and productively in the creation of Royalist and nationalist meanings.

However, we must return to that famous courtesan, Angellica Bianca; for through her Behn offers another model of Royalism, a much angrier version that is not quite so forgiving of Stuart transgressions as Hellena's. Unlike Hellena, Angellica is in thrall to Willmore despite, not because of, his faults and has a fierce desire to scare him into proper behavior or even kill him. Angellica with a gun is perhaps the most dialogic figure in the play, as she comprehends both Royalist and oppositional discourses

about Cavalier sexuality: in her eyes, Willmore is both irresistible and sadistic, both exceedingly sexy and extremely disgusting. The semiotics of the pointed gun, even more than Belvile's running at Willmore with his sword (after IV.i.208–09), threatens the very structure of playful carnivelsque inversion and conjures up a vision of revolution and violent opposition to the court. This aspect of the scene, however, is contested and ultimately dissipated in several ways. In the versions that pleased the court, we can imagine that Angellica is shaky with the gun and that the actress would, through her performance, signify the underlying weakness and the "coward heart" (l. 214) that is behind her bloated rhetoric and, later in the scene, her pleas to Antonio to refrain from murdering Willmore. The tone is also lightened by Willmore's sexual jokes (ll. 206–08), his comic depiction of his "good sober, hopeful life" and religious outlook (ll. 222–24), and his dismissal of the whole episode as a mere "Amorous quarrel" (ll. 309–10). Finally, Willmore's speech at V.i.255–62 enacts another deflection of the Opposition thesis about Stuart effeminacy: it is the Spanish imperialists who allow women to "domineer" (l. 258) over them. The Cavaliers, by contrast, meet women "dart for dart" (l. 262) and destroy their fictions of power: they will not be manipulated, forced to change their minds, or abandon their roving principles, not even by angry Catholic women with guns. Later in the scene, Willmore's homosocial triumph over the Spaniards is complete as Antonio and Pedro renew their foolish struggle to be enslaved, like the dead Spanish general before them, to a woman that he has casually used and discarded (ll. 338–54).

As a court jester, Behn does give voice to criticism of the libertine court, and she had even flirted more seriously with the opposition critique of the king's sexuality in an earlier play, aptly titled *The Amorous Prince, or The Curious Husband* (1671). Structurally, however, these critical discourses about Cavalier sexuality and political bumbling are deflected, dissipated, and ultimately dismissed in the face of Willmore's martial, phallic, and rhetorical dominance. For Royalists and the court itself, there was much appeal in this vision for the rest of the Stuart reign. It was even misappropriated for performance at court as part of William II's birthday celebration in 1690. No doubt, there was a certain cruel glee in using a play that James II clearly loved to celebrate William's first birthday after the crushing defeat of the Stuart forces in Ireland and the seemingly permanent exile of James. In a carnivalesque gesture, William was entertained by the

adventures of the Stuart court in exile. Colley Cibber discusses Queen Mary's "disapprobation of the play" on moral grounds, but perhaps she also thought it unbecoming to celebrate her father's dispossession in such an ironic and public fashion (*London Stage* 391). This was to be *The Rover*'s last performance at court.

The episode demonstrates the ultimate instability of a political drama that depends on carnival politics and generous satire; and the eighteenth-century popularity of *The Rover* no doubt rested, in part, on the play's ability to speak to both Jacobite and Whiggish politics.[23] For example, we can only imagine William and Mary's reaction to Belvile's hysterical assessment of Willmore: "Thou'rt so profanely Lewd, so curst by Heaven, / All quarrels thou espousest must be Fatal" (IV.i.180–81). Rather than a carnival jest at the failures of the Merry Monarch in his quarrels with Cromwell and the Dutch, Behn's line, after 1688, can also become a prophecy of the Glorious Revolution and the Battle of the Boyne and a shorthand Whig assessment of the reign of the late Stuarts. The parodic quotation marks that were necessarily situated around such oppositional discourse during its Restoration court performances would, by virtue of the new political realities of Stuart exile, have become illegible in the 1690 court production. Without much effort, Behn's carnivalesque text, at key moments, could be forced to speak against its own pro-Stuart position and to become the object, rather than the agent, of a parodic performance. The young Spark of the epilogue also clearly benefits from this development in productions after 1688: his assessment of the play's relationship to the court has also been freed of its disabling quotation marks—"Damn me, I'm sure 'twill never please the Court." In parodying the now accurate evaluation of the play's status after 1690—*The Rover* can no longer please the court, or can only please it for the wrong reasons—it is the speaker of the epilogue, and Behn herself, who appears to be a "Fool." If Behn had been alive to witness this reversal, the necessarily ironic production of 1690, and the ensuing "Disapprobation" of her play at court, she might have appreciated the self-parody now enacted by the Spark's line and, with a carnivalesque laugh, reclaimed his "Damn me" as her own.

Notes

1. *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd, vol. 5 (Columbus: Ohio State Univ., 1996), ll. 1–2.

2. See Robert Markley, "'Be Impudent, Be Saucy, Forward, Bold, Touzing, and Leud': The Politics of Masculine Sexuality and Feminine Desire in Behn's Tory Comedies," in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Theater*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah Payne (Athens: Univ. of Georgia, 1995), 114–40; and Susan J. Owen, "Sexual Politics and Party Politics in Behn's Drama, 1678–83," in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1996), 15–29.

3. In *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1993), Paula R. Backscheider remarks that "The most neglected part of Behn's career is what may have been most central to it: this refusal to be shut out of the public political sphere" (104), but brackets national politics in her reading of *The Rover* for a focus on "transgressive women" (91) and sexual politics. For similar critical moves, see Joseph Musser, "'Imposing Nought But Constancy in Love': Aphra Behn Snares *The Rover*," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture* 3 (1979): 18, and Dagny Boebel, "In the Carnival World of Adam's Garden: Roving and Rape in Behn's *Rover*," in *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama*, ed. Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky, 1996), 54–55.

4. For a recent argument for a feminist *Rover*, see Elaine Hobby, "No Stolen Object, but Her Own: Aphra Behn's *Rover* and Thomas Killigrew's *Thomaso*," *Women's Writing* 6 (1999): 113–27. Hobby claims that "Behn is suggesting to her royalist audience that in pursuing this way of relating to women they, too, are behaving like the political enemies they claim to be superior to" (123). Laura J. Rosenthal (in *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship, Literary Property* [Ithaca: Cornell Univ., 1996]) finds some ambivalence in that the play "both articulates a nostalgic loyalty to royalist politics *and* attacks the elite masculine privilege within this system" (126–27), but her main interest is in Behn's critique of masculine constructions of property. In *The Theatre of Aphra Behn* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Derek Hughes attends more closely to Royalist politics and argues that "the Cavaliers are certainly glamorized, but they also reveal Behn's habitual ambivalence towards the cause which she championed; her recognition that the cult of rank, male heroism, and male loyalties was one which intrinsically and inevitably produced injustice towards women" (83–84).

5. *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1996), 217.

6. For the popularity of the play, see *The London Stage, 1660–1800, Part 1*, ed. William Van Lennep (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois Univ., 1965), which reports that *The Rover* was first performed in 1677 and again at court in 1680. Between Jan. 1685 and Jan. 1687, the play was revived at the public theatres and was produced two more times at court (256, 284, 335, 343, 355).

7. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ., 1986), 14.

8. *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2002), 158.

9. *The Restoration Theatre* (1934; rep. New York: Humanities, 1964). Although somewhat dated, Summers' work is comprehensive, and he documents contemporary references from the plays, letters, diaries, and newspaper accounts to provide evidence about the atmosphere inside the theatre. See in particular the third chap., "The Audience, Pleased and Displeased; the Orange-Wenches; and the Vizard Masks," for an excellent discussion of the carnivalesque nature of the theatre.

10. For Owen's helpful introductory discussion of the Whig elements in the theatre, see her *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 15.

11. *The Tragedy of Charles II in the Years 1630–1660* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), 396.

12. *Comedies and Tragedies* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967). See esp. the Spanish discussion of Stuart poverty, including a description of their hunger-induced diminutive feces (342–45). All refs. will be identified by page number.

13. E.g., Elin Diamond, "Gestus and Signature in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*," *ELH* 56 (1989): 528, and John Franceschina, "Shadow and Substance in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*: The Semiotics of Restoration Performance," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture* 19 (1995): 30.

14. In her very helpful article "Rape and the Female Subject in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*," *ELH* 65 (1998): 323–45, Anita Pacheco persuasively argues that the first attempted rape could easily have been played as a comic scene that was "written with Behn's male spectators in mind" and that gave "the audience a titillating blend of knockabout comedy and naked female flesh" (328).

15. *The Dramatic Works of Sir George Etherege*, 2 vols., ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1927), 2: V.ii.147.

16. For a helpful discussion of the supposed effeminacy of Charles II, see chap. 3 in Harold Weber, *Paper Bullets: Print and Kingship under Charles II* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky, 1996). For a recent discussion of fears about Charles and France, see Steven Pincus, "The English Debate Over Universal Monarchy," in *A Union For Empire: Political Thought and the British Union of 1707*, ed. John Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1995), 37–62. For a helpful discussion of one of Charles' French mistresses, see Nancy Klein Maguire, "The Duchess of Portsmouth: English Royal Consort and French Politician, 1670–85," in *The Stuart Court and Europe: Essays in Politics and Political Culture*, ed. R. Malcolm Smuts (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1996), 247–73, which provides an excellent description of Portsmouth's political influence, her connections to the French court, and the voluminous satirical energy devoted to her person. The collection also contains several valuable studies of the cosmopolitanism of the Stuart court in its social, cultural, and political life.

17. For the reputation of Essex, see the editorial commentary and notes for the 1680 Tory poem "The Essex Ballad," in *Poems on Affairs of State*, vol. 2, ed. Elias F. Mengel, Jr. (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1965), 319–26.

18. Manning had arrived from England pretending to be sympathetic to the exiled court but was, in fact, a Cromwellian spy. He did great damage, leading to the deaths of as many as two hundred Royalist activists in England. For an examination of the "Manning affair," see Chapman, 287–300. See also Ronald Hutton, *Charles the Second: King of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 95–96.

19. Both Diamond and Franceschina incorrectly indicate that the military buff coat worn by Willmore was associated with the king's disguise after the Battle of Worcester. In "The King's Account of His Escape" (in *Charles II's Escape From Worcester: A Collection of Narratives Assembled by Samuel Pepys*, ed William Matthews [Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1966], 34–84), Charles explains that he changed out of military dress and took on the disguise of a "Country-Fellowes habbit" (40) and, later, that of a "Serveing-man" (50). Found in the same collection, "An Exact Narrative and Relation" (1660) reports that Charles' buff coat was understandably buried along with his other clothes (88). Thus, if the coat was associated specifically with Stuart history, it would have recalled Charles' famous bravery at Worcester.

20. I agree with Hughes' general argument that Behn scholars need to more fully situate her work in Restoration contexts and to better account for her staging and theatrical practices in interpretations of her plays.

21. *Voyages and Discoveries: The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, ed. Jack Beeching (New York: Penguin, 1972), 105–116, 312–26, 171–88, 355–59. For a general survey of anti-Spanish feeling in England, see William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558–1660* (Durham: Duke Univ., 1971). See also Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage, 1660–1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2001), 217–23, for a brief, suggestive discussion of several Restoration comedies, including *The Rover*, in which the seduction of Spanish women by Englishmen functions as "an amatory equivalent to the pervasive English piracy against Iberian shipping and possessions in the New World" (220).

22. Weber, 102. For discussions of both Tory and Whig attempts to appropriate the figure of Elizabeth, see Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics From the Restoration Until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1987), 113, 145.

23. See Jane Spencer, "*The Rover* and the Eighteenth Century," in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1996), 84–106, for an analysis of the play's performance history that, unfortunately, does not consider the play as one of Behn's "political comedies" (88). We still do not know to what extent the play was deployed to give expression to Jacobite political positions up through 1745.