



Aphra Behn: The Comedies

KATE AUGHTERSON

palgrave
macmillan

ANALYSING TEXTS

General Editor: Nicholas Marsh

Published

- Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales* *Gail Ashton*
Aphra Behn: *The Comedies* *Kate Aughterson*
Webster: *The Tragedies* *Kate Aughterson*
John Keats *John Blades*
Shakespeare: *The Comedies* *R. P. Draper*
Charlotte Brontë: *The Novels* *Mike Edwards*
E. M. Forster: *The Novels* *Mike Edwards*
Shakespeare: *The Tragedies* *Nicholas Marsh*
Shakespeare: *Three Problem Plays* *Nicholas Marsh*
Jane Austen: *The Novels* *Nicholas Marsh*
Emily Brontë: *Wuthering Heights* *Nicholas Marsh*
Virginia Woolf: *The Novels* *Nicholas Marsh*
D. H. Lawrence: *The Novels* *Nicholas Marsh*
William Blake: *The Poems* *Nicholas Marsh*
John Donne: *The Poems* *Joe Nutt*
Thomas Hardy: *The Novels* *Norman Page*
Marlowe: *The Plays* *Stevie Simkin*

Analysing Texts

Series Standing Order ISBN 0-333-73260-X
(outside North America only)

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and the ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Palgrave Ltd
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

Aphra Behn: The Comedies

KATE AUGHTERSON

江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

palgrave
macmillan



© Kate Aughterson 2003

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2003 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 0-333-96319-9 hardback
ISBN 0-333-96321-0 paperback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Aughterson, Kate, 1961-

Aphra Behn : the comedies / Kate Aughterson.
p. cm. — (Analysing texts)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-333-96319-9 — ISBN 0-333-96321-0 (pbk.)

1. Behn, Aphra, 1640-1689—Comedies. 2. Women and literature—England—London—History—17th century. 3. Comedy.
I. Title. II. Analysing texts (Palgrave Macmillan (Firm))

PR3317.Z5A94 2003
822'.4—dc21

2002193072

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03

Printed in China

For Jacob William

Contents

<i>General Editor's Preface</i>	viii
<i>A Note on Editions</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	1
Part 1: Analysing Behn's Comedies	
1 Openings	7
2 Endings	31
3 Discovery Scenes	57
4 Heroines and Whores	80
5 Rakes and Gallants	104
6 Multiplying Plots	127
7 Staging	147
8 Carnival and Masquerade	167
9 Politics and Society	186
General Conclusions to Part 1	202
Part 2: Context and Critics	
10 Behn's Literary Career	207
11 Restoration Contexts	221
12 Sample Critical Views and Performances	237
<i>Further Reading</i>	253
<i>Index</i>	256

General Editor's Preface

This series is dedicated to one clear belief: that we can all enjoy, understand and analyse literature for ourselves, provided we know how to do it. How can we build on close understanding of a short passage, and develop our insight into the whole work? What features do we expect to find in a text? Why do we study style in so much detail? In demystifying the study of literature, these are only some of the questions the *Analysing Texts* series addresses and answers.

The books in this series will not do all the work for you, but will provide you with the tools, and show you how to use them. Here, you will find samples of close, detailed analysis, with an explanation of the analytical techniques utilised. At the end of each chapter there are useful suggestions for further work you can do to practise, develop and hone the skills demonstrated and build confidence in your own analytical ability.

An author's individuality shows in the way they write: every work they produce bears the hallmark of that writer's personal 'style'. In the main part of each book we concentrate therefore on analysing the particular flavour and concerns of one author's work, and explain the features of their writing in connection with major themes. In Part 2 there are chapters about the author's life and work, assessing their contribution to developments in literature; and a sample of critics' views are summarised and discussed in comparison with each other. Some suggestions for further reading provide a bridge towards further critical research.

Analysing Texts is designed to stimulate and encourage your critical and analytic faculty, to develop your personal insight into the author's work and individual style, and to provide you with the skills and techniques to enjoy at first hand the excitement of discovering the richness of the text.

NICHOLAS MARSH

A Note on Editions

References to act, scene and line numbers and extracts from the three comedies studied in this volume are from *Aphra Behn: 'The Rover' and Other Plays*, edited by Jane Spencer, Oxford University Press World's Classics edition, 1995.

Introduction

Analysing Behn's Plays

This book aims to enable students to approach and understand Behn's plays without being hindered by a surplus of technical and theoretical terminology. Nevertheless, when we read an old play its literary and social conventions are necessarily alien. It is useful to outline some of the analytical terms used in the analyses in this book. These may be divided into three areas: linguistic form; imagery; and dramatic form and performance.

Language

Verse, metre, rhythm and rhyme

Behn's plays use a combination of verse and prose. The former is sometimes what is called **blank verse**. Blank verse is unrhymed and consists of a ten-beat (or ten-syllable) line, in which there are five stressed syllables, and five syllables which are not stressed (de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum**, de **dum**). Each 'de dum', the combined stressed and unstressed syllable, is called a **foot**. A ten-beat line with five stresses is called a **pentameter** (from the Greek, meaning 'five feet'). Where those stresses fall regularly in an alternating beat, the line is called an **iambic pentameter**, which is often said to be the 'natural' rhythm of the English language. 'Hello' stresses the second syllable, and not the first. Where Behn uses blank verse it rarely conforms precisely to a regular iambic pentameter, but there are key occasions where it does so, and we draw attention to these in our analysis. Her songs often use an eight-beat line.

Behn frequently makes two adjacent lines rhyme. These pairs of lines are referred to as **rhyming couplets**. This occurs at key points in scenes: for example, at the end, or at the exit of a major character.

Behn occasionally uses them to make emphatic points. The couplet often sounds like a summative statement.

Behn's plays, however, are mainly in prose. It is important to note the places where she uses both prose and verse, because these are a good indicator of a change of pace, tone and emotion. Behn's prose is usually an indicator of natural speech, and she adapts her rhythms within prose to signal changes in gender, class and character. The landlady's prose in *The Lucky Chance* is a good example.

Imagery

Throughout this book, we analyse the imagery in particular extracts. Imagery is a word, or group of words, which self-consciously creates an image or picture for the purposes of comparison to something else.

There are several different kinds of imagery noted in this book. The first is **metaphor**. A metaphor is an image which claims identity, rather than just comparison, with the idea, thing or concept to which it is referring. The two parts of a metaphor are called the **vehicle** (the actual image of the metaphor) and **tenor** (the meaning of the metaphor), respectively.

The second kind of image is a **simile**. A simile is an image which explicitly compares itself to something else, using 'like' or 'as' to signal the comparison. In a simile, both vehicle and tenor are present: in a metaphor the vehicle is what we see, and we have to intuit the tenor from the surrounding contexts.

The third type of image is **metonymy**. A metonymy is a particular kind of metaphor, where the vehicle is linked by sense to the tenor. One example is the use of 'sail' to refer to a whole ship.

The fourth type of image is a **synecdoche**, where something adjacent to or connected to the tenor becomes the vehicle.

Drama and Performance

You will notice as you read through this book that we talk about the play text both as a dramatic structure and as a performance, trying

to envisage it in three dimensions on the stage. There are a few analytical and technical terms we have used, which are defined below.

Blocking is the arrangement of characters on and about the stage during a scene.

Deus ex machina is a term used by drama critics, originating from Greek drama where the god (the *deus*) literally descended from a machine (*ex machina*) in order to produce the dramatic resolution and end the play. It is therefore a term applied by critics to any unexpected arrival who magically brings about a resolution of conflict or problems in a play.

Discovery is used to mean the revealing of events, characters, scenes or action either behind one scene, or as a result of the plot's action. We shall discuss this further in Chapter 3.

In medias res is a latin term meaning 'in the midst of the action'.

Intertextuality is the self-conscious use by one text of themes, language, actions or ideas from another text.

Meta-theatrical literally means 'above' or 'beyond' the theatre, and is used to refer to plays which incorporate a sense of their own theatrical or fictional status within the action, dialogue or structure of the play.

Theatricality is used to denote Behn's self-conscious usage of the devices and machinery of the theatre as an integral part of the play.

PART 1

ANALYSING
BEHN'S COMEDIES

1

Openings

Plays tend to open in the middle of a conversation, or piece of action (in classical dramatic theory referred to as *in medias res*, literally, in the middle of things). There are good reasons for this, all of them signalling how distinct drama is from other literary forms, such as the traditional novel. Drama is predicated on action: for the plot to move forward, for characters to clash, to conflict and to come together during the short space of the performance time, the narrative and dramatic structure must foreground action and conflict. The audience needs to be involved and engaged from the beginning. The best way of doing this is to plunge into the middle of a situation encapsulating the themes and conflicts of the whole play. We are then ready to recognise such themes as they develop, and often encouraged, from this very early stage, to take sides.

In studying a play, we should remember that it is a performance, a three-dimensional production, not just a flat text on the page. To help think in this way, it is important that you always ask yourself how the words work in a theatrical context. How are the actors moving around the stage (if at all)? How do costume, setting and lighting affect meaning? Are these explicit in the stage directions, or implicit in the dialogue? What is the relationship between audience and characters, and how does this affect our interpretation of the scene? What is the significance of the scenic structure?

Let us now move on to consider the openings of three of Behn's comedies. How, why and to what extent does she engage our allegiances and opinions in these opening scenes?

* * *

The Rover opens thus:

[Act 1, scene i]

A chamber

Enter Florinda and Hellena.

Florinda. What an impertinent thing is a young girl bred in a nunnery! How full of questions! Prithee, no more, Hellena, I have told thee more than thou understand'st already.

Hellena. The more's my grief; I would fain know as much as you, which makes me so inquisitive; nor is't enough I know you're a lover, unless you tell me too who 'tis you sigh for. 5

Florinda. When you're a lover, I'll think you fit for a secret of that nature.

Hellena. 'Tis true, I never was a lover yet; but I begin to have a shrewd guess what 'tis to be so, and fancy it very pretty to sigh, and sing, and blush, and wish, and dream and wish, and long and wish to see the man, and when I do, look pale and tremble, just as you did when my brother brought home the fine English colonel to see you – what do you call him? Don Belvile. 10

Florinda. Fie, Hellena. 15

Hellena. That blush betrays you. I am sure 'tis so; or is it Don Antonio, the viceroy's son? Or perhaps the rich old Don Vincentio, whom my father designs you for a husband? Why do you blush again?

Florinda. With indignation; and how near soever my father thinks I am to marrying that hated object, I shall let him see I understand better what's due to my beauty, birth and fortune, and more to my soul, than to obey those unjust commands. 20

Hellena. Now hang me, if I don't love thee for that dear disobedience. I love mischief strangely, as most of our sex do, who are come to love nothing else. But tell me, dear Florinda, don't you love that fine *Inglese*? For I vow, next to loving him myself, 'twill please me most that you do so, for he is so gay and so handsome. 25

Florinda. Hellena, a maid designed for a nun ought not to be so curious in a discourse of love. 30

Hellena. And dost thou think that ever I'll be a nun? Or at least till I'm so old, I'm fit for nothing else: faith, no, sister; and that which

makes me long to know whether you love Belvile, is because I hope he has some mad companion or other that will spoil my devotion. Nay, I'm resolved to provide myself this Carnival, if there be e'er a handsome proper fellow of my humour above ground, though I ask first. 35

Florinda. Prithee be not so wild.

Hellena. Now you have provided yourself of a man, you take no care for poor me. Prithee tell me, what dost thou see about me that is unfit for love? Have I not a world of youth? A humour gay? A beauty passable? A vigour desirable? Well-shaped? Clean-limbed? Sweet-breathed? And sense enough to know how all these ought to be employed to the best advantage? Yes, I do, and will; therefore lay aside your hopes of my fortune by my being a devotee, and tell me how you came acquainted with this Belvile; for I perceive you knew him before he came to Naples. 40 45

Florinda. Yes, I knew him at the siege of Pamplona: he was then a colonel of French horse, who, when the town was ransacked, nobly treated my brother and myself, preserving us from all insolences; and I must own, besides great obligations, I have I know not what that pleads kindly for him about my heart, and will suffer no other to enter. But see, my brother. 50

Enter Don Pedro, Stephano with a masking habit, and Callis.

Pedro. Good morrow, sister. Pray when saw you your lover Don Vincentio? 55

Florinda. I know not, sir – Callis, when was he here? – for I consider it so little, I know not when it was.

Pedro. I have a command from my father here to tell you you ought not to despise him, a man of so vast a fortune, and such a passion for you. – Stephano, my things. 60

[Don Pedro] puts on his masking habit.

Florinda. A passion for me? 'Tis more than e'er I saw, or he had a desire should be known. I hate Vincentio, sir, and I would not have a man so dear to me as my brother follow the ill customs of our country, and make a slave of his sister; and, sir, my father's will I'm sure you may divert. 65

Pedro. I know not how dear I am to you, but I wish only to be ranked in your esteem equal with the English colonel Belvile. Why do you frown and blush? Is there any guilt belongs to the name of that cavalier?

Florinda. I'll not deny I value Belvile. When I was exposed to such 70

dangers as the licensed lust of common soldiers threatened, when rage and conquest flew through the city, then Belvile, this criminal for my sake, threw himself into all dangers to save my honour: and will you not allow him my esteem?

Pedro. Yes, pay him what you will in honour; but you must consider Don Vincentio's fortune, and the jointure he'll make you. 75

Florinda. Let him consider my youth, beauty and fortune, which ought not to be thrown away on his age and jointure.

Pedro. 'Tis true, he's not so young and fine a gentleman as that Belvile; but what jewels will that cavalier present you with? Those of his eyes and heart? 80

Hellena. And are those not better than any Don Vincentio has brought from the Indies?

Pedro. Why how now! Has your nunnery breeding taught you to understand the value of hearts and eyes? 85

Hellena. Better than to believe Vincentio's deserve value from any woman: he may perhaps increase her bags, but not her family.

Pedro. This is fine! Go, up to your devotion: you are not designed for the conversation of lovers.

Hellena. (Aside) Nor saints, yet awhile, I hope. — Is't not enough you make a nun of me, but you must cast my sister away too, exposing her to a worse confinement than a religious life? 90

Pedro. The girl's mad!

(*The Rover*, 1, i, 1–93)

By the play's opening in the middle of a conversation (signalled clearly by the exclamatory and exasperated opening line) we are involved immediately in the disputes and lives of the characters. What do these opening lines tell us about the play and characters?

Let us first consider setting, costume and structure. The opening setting is intimate (the stage direction indicates 'a chamber'), replicated in the first 53 lines by the nature and tone of the two women's conversation. We gain a sense of an easy, friendly and open relationship between Hellena and Florinda over which we have a privileged view. The first 53 lines stand in marked contrast to the next 40, when their brother arrives in the chamber, bursting in with his own agenda, claiming to dominate both the stage and their lives. It is unusual in this period, even in Behn's work, to find two female characters opening the play. What is its effect? The audience observes

women's points of view from the opening, a perception confirmed as the scene progresses, when we credit Hellena's critique of arranged marriages to older men, not just because it is so witty, but because we have known her and her perspective intimately first.

The scenic division (between women alone, and men invading) mirrors both themes and events which occur later in the play, and establishes a point of view on those themes and events for the audience. By contrasting young, intelligent and likeable young women, with older, rapacious men, Behn utilises a conventional comic device (the young versus the old), and then genders it. This comic device is a serious theme the whole play examines. Their brother's entry, in the process of masking himself, provides a visual contrast to the women. His masked visage suggests a lack of openness, perhaps a hidden agenda, and a gap between public and private persona, particularly in contrast to the women's open and frank speech. Women of their class are not supposed to wander the streets during Carnival (although they break this stricture), whilst the men are free to 'ramble' (1, i, 178) and adventure at will. Pedro's habit and dress, therefore, further signal his privileged gendered position in contrast to the women, who are expected to be both obedient and at home.

How does the content and tone reinforce or alter these opening, more generalised perceptions? The conversation between Hellena and Florinda addresses the intimate and emotional subject of love and lovers, and is conducted in a tone which is both loving and humorous. Neither woman interrupts the other, but the pace of dialogue is fast, and mutually responsive. We gain a good sense of each woman's character, and the differences between them. Hellena teases Florinda, who acts as an older sister from the opening exclamatory and half-exasperated 'What an impertinent thing is a young girl bred in a nunnery!' to the later 'be not so wild' (l. 38). Florinda's initial reluctance to confide her love breaks down in the face of Hellena's persistence: character traits (of reticence and outspokenness, respectively) which are repeated later in the play for both women.

Yet this summary belies Florinda's strength of character, which is clear from her determined defence of Belvile. Hellena's outspoken and frank views on love initially look more radical than those of her sister, who appears to conform to a more conventional model of

femininity: modest and restrained ('Fie, Hellena', l. 15). Yet even Florinda speaks her mind on the subject of patriarchal control of marriage: 'how near soever my father thinks I am to marrying that hated object' (ll. 20–1). Both women use a language of justice, rights and self-determination to defend their views and choices. Applying this discourse to women's rights was unusual at the time, and is particularly striking coming at the play's opening. Thus, Florinda talks about what is 'due' to her, and her refusal to obey her father's 'unjust' commands (ll. 22–3), exposing a division between a world arranged by fathers and brothers, and the desires and agency of daughters and sisters. Florinda's language echoes the scenic, comic and visual contrasts we noted earlier. Hellena takes this language further in her delineation of her intended actions ('I'm resolved to provide myself', l. 35, and 'Yes, I do, and will', l. 44), using active declarative verbs, suggesting a woman who intends to be openly in control of her own destiny. Florinda's response to this ('Prithee be not so wild') suggests that the play may offer two divergent methods of resisting patriarchal authority. Both sisters express rational resistance to paternal orders (one against an arranged marriage, the other against confinement in a nunnery): but we will watch divergent approaches to such resistance. This opening scene initiates the question of which method will be best: a question answered by the play's events.

The intimate tone is emphasised by grammatical and syntactical forms: repeated rhetorical questions, where we assume agreement between the sisters; relatively lengthy sentences interspersed with far shorter ones, which engender a sense of informality; and cumulative listing (ll. 10–15 and 39–44) creating a sense of both parody and ebullient opinions. Stage directions are incorporated into the dialogue (for example, on Florinda's blush, and Pedro's entrance), which adds a sense of rapid movement to the scene, and enables actors to use dialogue to naturally construct and direct their physical actions and intimacy.

The tone and language of the second half of the extract differ in various and significant ways from those of the first half. Pedro speaks most frequently, although in the latter part of the extract, Hellena dominates in terms of volume of words. The women's language here is far more formal: they call their brother 'sir' or 'my brother',

whereas they called each other by their first names. In the first part, Hellena is silent, and the elder sister alone speaks with her brother. This conforms to convention. Florinda's sentence construction also is much more formal ('I'll not deny I value Belvile', l. 70) than when she was alone with her sister. Nevertheless, despite this formal and linguistic acquiescence to the authority and superior position of her brother, Florinda continues to defy her father's wishes: 'I would not have a man so dear to me as my brother follow the ill customs of our country, and make a slave of his sister' (ll. 62–4). Her continued insistence on self-determination establishes the nature of the subsequent comic conflict. She also refers to Belvile's salvation of her 'honour', a key word and concept for both men and women in the play.

Hellena's approach to her brother is in some contrast to that of Florinda. Although the effect is of a direct attack, she uses various indirect methods to signal her views. The first is an ironic question (ll. 82–3), maligning Vincentio's sources of wealth; the second a witty comment on his likely impotence due to old age (ll. 86–7); the third, an aside to the audience (l. 90), which prefaces a move into a direct appeal (ll. 91–2). This irritates Pedro the most and clearly such a direct attack on the authority of the male establishment is seen to be completely aberrant ('The girl's mad!'). The following exchange (if it can be called that) verbally illustrates Hellena's irritation, and Pedro's inability to impose his views and authority. His interjections to her satiric portrait of life in an arranged marriage are ineffectual and short. The energy of her account (which is both witty and horrific) dominates the scene and her brother, inverting the norm of hierarchical gendered relations. Pedro's character thus appears rigid, devious and inflexible from the opening.

Although Florinda modifies her linguistic register in the more public environment of conversation with her brother, Hellena does not. Her frank account of the probable nature of sexual relations with an elderly husband is explicit, and consequently funny. Hellena represents herself not as a potential nun (as her father designs), but as someone equal in language and attitude to the libertine men of Restoration England. This ambition and self-characterisation is tested in the play.

The play's key themes are signalled clearly in this opening through characterisation, staging, scenic structure and verbal content. The scene configures the conflict between a patriarchal ordering of the world and the needs and desires of an individual woman, in an inversion of conventional openings. Women characters are allowed both implicit and explicit defiance of the patriarchal imperatives: Florinda attacks the 'ill customs' which make women 'slaves', whilst Hellena parallels marriage to 'confinement'. This explicit view on the patriarchal trade in women is made by characters with whom the audience is asked to sympathise. In this extract, Hellena is the only character who speaks directly to the audience (l. 90). The play's opening therefore explicitly signals a radical attack on contemporary conventions. In addition, the opening raises questions about identity and social convention, through disguise; about forced and arranged marriage; and about the economic freedom of women.

* * *

This is the start of *The Feigned Courtesans*.

[Act 1, scene i]

[A street]

Enter Laura Lucretia and Silvio, richly dressed; Antonio attending, coming all in in haste.

Silvio. Madam, you need not make such haste away; the stranger that followed us from St Peter's church pursues us no longer, and we have now lost sight of him. Lord, who would have thought the approach of a handsome cavalier should have possessed Donna Laura Lucretia with fear?

Laura Lucretia. I do not fear, my Silvio, but I would have this new habitation, which I've designed for love, known to none but him to whom I've destined my heart. (*Aside*) Ah, would he know the conquest he has made! – Nor went I this evening to church with any other devotion, but that which warms my heart for my young English cavalier, whom I hoped to have seen there; and I must find some way to let him know my passion, which is too high for souls like mine to hide.

Silvio. Madam, the cavalier's in view again, and hot in the pursuit.

Laura Lucretia. Let's haste away then; and Silvio, do you lag behind; 'twill give him an opportunity of enquiring, whilst I get out of sight. Be sure you conceal my name and quality, and tell him – anything but truth – tell him I am La Silvanetta, the young Roman courtesan, or what you please, to hide me from his knowledge.

Exeunt Laura Lucretia [and Antonio]. Enter Julio and page, in pursuit.

Julio. Boy, fall you into discourse with that page, and learn his lady's name, whilst I pursue her farther.

Exit Julio. Page salutes Silvio, who returns it; they go out as talking to each other. Enter Sir Harry Fillamour and Galliard.

Fillamour. He follows her close, whoe'er they be: I see this trade of love goes forward still.

Galliard. And will whilst there's difference in sexes. But Harry, the women, the delicate women I was speaking of?

Fillamour. Prithee tell me no more of thy fine women, Frank; thou hast not been in Rome above a month, and thou'st been a dozen times in love, as thou call'st it. To me there is no pleasure like constancy.

Galliard. Constancy! And wouldst thou have me one of those dull lovers who believe it their duty to love a woman till her hair and eyes change colour, for fear of the scandalous name of an inconstant! No, my passion, like great victors, hates the lazy stay, but having vanquished, prepares for new conquests.

Fillamour. Which you gain as they do towns by fire, lose 'em even in the taking; thou wilt grow penitent, and weary of these dangerous follies.

Galliard. But I am yet too young for both. Let old age and infirmity bring repentance, there's her feeble province; and even then, too, we find no plague like being deprived of dear womankind.

Fillamour. I hate playing about a flame that will consume me.

Galliard. Away with your antiquated notions, and let's once hear sense from thee. Examine but the whole world, Harry, and thou wilt find a beautiful woman the desire of the noblest, and the reward of the bravest.

Fillamour. And the common prize of coxcombs: times are altered now, Frank; why else should the virtuous be cornuted, the coward be caressed, the villain roll with six, and the fool lie with her ladyship?

Galliard. Mere accident, sir, and the kindness of fortune; but
a pretty witty young creature, such as this Silvianetta, and
Euphemia, is certainly the greatest blessing this wicked world can
afford us.

Fillamour. I believe the lawful enjoyment of such a woman, and 55
honest too, would be a blessing.

Galliard. Lawful enjoyment! Prithee what's lawful enjoyment, but
to enjoy 'em according to the generous indulgent law of nature;
enjoy 'em as we do meat, drink, air and light, and all the rest of
her common blessings? Therefore, prithee, dear knight, let me 60
govern thee but for a day, and I will show thee such a signora,
such a beauty; another manner of piece than your so admired
Viterboan, Donna Marcella, of whom you boast so much.

(*The Feigned Courtesans*, 1, i, 1–63)

This play's opening differs markedly from that of *The Rover*, with its confident display of female autonomy. Here, by contrast, the first speaker is a boy page, reassuring his mistress of her safety. Once again, the play opens *in medias res*, but here the action is dramatic: Laura Lucretia is being physically and unwillingly pursued by a cavalier. The street setting, in contrast to the domestic interior, suggests a woman displaced. The opening therefore signals a play in which women are physically vulnerable, rather than wittily self-contained, as they seem in *The Rover*.

The extract falls into two parts: the first focuses briefly on the pursuit of Laura by Julio, and the second on the relationship and conversation between the two gallants Fillamour and Galliard. The two parts are thematically related, since the topic of conversation in both cases is the pursuit of love and eros, but explicitly contrasted. In the first part we watch a woman's point of view, and in the second, two points of view from men. Let us concentrate briefly on the signals the play wants us to pick up from the structural contrast made between these two parts.

The first part visually displays a woman who is reluctant to be present on stage in two ways: she is fleeing from the action, and she is in disguise. This establishes female identity as something under threat and as absent or invisible from public view and public places, an impression reinforced by her evident fear of discovery. However,

this is partly counterweighed by her view that her disguise enables her to pursue her own desires, and her attempt to direct the action (ll. 17–19). Like Shakespearean comic heroines, she is in disguise in order to secretly find her beloved. Unlike them, however, she remains in flight and unsuccessful for the whole play. Thus Behn uses a comic convention (the woman in disguise to pursue her beloved), but refuses to allow it to work conventionally. Her disguised woman, rather than being empowered by feigning, is disempowered, and in flight. The opening thus signals a discordant note in comparison with the rest of the scene, which is determinedly in the comic vein. The feigning of the play's title is associated with women rather than with men, and in this first case, is seen as something adopted as a hasty expedient (to get rid of Julio), which later backfires (as we shall see).

This first part additionally contrasts with the second part in the nature of the relationship presented. In the second part we meet two gallants, who treat each other equally. In the first part, despite the fact that Laura is the mistress, Silvio takes the lead. Here the page's gender provides more authority than the aristocratic class status of the mistress, and femininity is literally demonstrated as something weak, powerless, and dependent on a man for credit and authority. Thus the physical arrangement of the whole scene and the action itself contradict Laura's self-perception as liberated by her disguise and intended actions. Stagecraft thus works both to undermine characters' self-presentation, and to display the inequity of gender hierarchies. Stage directions explicitly delineate the hasty movements and entrances and exits, echoing both action and dialogue.

By contrast, the second part of the extract is slower in pace and action. The two men observe the chase of Laura by Julio, but as if from a distance. They are likely to be at the front of the stage, and both their stage position and their commentary on the action ally them with the audience's view of the opening. This double vision of the action (first by ourselves, and then by the gallants) re-emphasises the fact of the pursuit, but this time from an explicitly male viewpoint. Fillamour's first words, 'this trade of love goes forward still' (ll. 23–4), suggest both that a woman on the streets is seen as easy prey, and that erotic encounters are figured as commercial enter-

prises, making explicit what is suggested by Laura's fear: the commodification of women's bodies.

The dialogue between the two gallants sets up a key debate within the play's action, initiated by Galliard's offer 'let me govern thee but for a day' (l. 60), which becomes the basis for the plot's intrigue. That debate is between libertinism and an older chivalric view of love. By making each of the two main male characters symbolise one side of this debate, Behn could be accused of crude allegory, with even their names signifying a representative function ('Fillamour' meaning the son of love, and 'Galliard' a lively dance). Yet, as we shall see, the plot allows this black-and-white model to be complicated through temptation and love.

At this point, however, their positions are opposed: Galliard mocks the idea and practice of constancy, and is given the wittiest lines in which to do so. Drawing on the *carpe diem* tradition, a convention of erotic love poetry, he argues that continual new conquests and experiences are the only antidote to boredom. The use of military and geographical metaphors (ll. 34–5, and 40) is conventional in seventeenth-century love imagery. Fillamour opposes this view rationally by pushing at the literal meanings of those metaphors, which are consequently exposed as both violent and exploitative. Thus, Galliard's talk of vanquishing women by conquest is demolished by Fillamour's 'Which you gain as they do towns by fire, lose 'em even in the taking' (ll. 36–7). The conventional libertine metaphors are rendered visible and explicit in the dialogue, as they had been by the opening action of the pursuit of Laura. Fillamour's oppositional views (dismissed by Galliard as 'antiquated notions', l. 43) are not only evident in his attack on Galliard's metaphors, but are explicitly expressed: 'the lawful enjoyment of [an honest] woman . . . would be a blessing' (ll. 55–6). The dramatic testing and conflict of these two opposing views of erotic behaviour and erotic codes are thus clearly delineated as both plot and character conflicts, and in the spectacle of the fleeing woman.

Despite the rhetorical eloquence of the libertine stance, it is radically questioned by self-conscious dramaturgy: first by the confusion and fear of the opening lines, and secondly by the emphatic literalising and questioning of the supposedly given erotic language.

In contrast to *The Rover*, this latter questioning is performed by a man.

There remains, however, a strong libertine and *carpe diem* argument which is not counteracted at this stage: that based on the 'law of nature' (l. 58). Galliard argues that men should enjoy women 'as we do meat, drink, air and light'. This premise of using natural resources appears to engender Fillamour's tacit agreement to be governed for a day, to test which philosophy will win. Nevertheless, despite his argument's apparent logic, the audience retains a sense of caution about his approach: partly because the debate is so obviously a comic device (it is so black-and-white), and partly because of the phrasing of the offer he makes to Fillamour. His words, 'let me govern thee but for a day', have self-conscious echoes of the devil's pact with Faustus, and therefore of transgressive action ending in tragedy or containment and reform. Given we know this is a comedy, we suspect Galliard's transgression may be answered by reform and marriage. The stage is set, then, for the development and complication of these tensions.

* * *

Before moving on to consider additional ways in which you might look at the opening scene, let us turn now to our last extract, from *The Lucky Chance*.

[Act 1, scene i]

The street at break of day.

Enter Belmour, disguised in a travelling habit.

Belmour. Sure, 'tis the day that gleams in yonder east;
The day that all but lovers blest by shade
Pay cheerful homage to –
Lovers, and those pursued, like guilty me,
By rigid laws, which put no difference
'Twixt fairly killing in my own defence,
And murders bred by drunken arguments,
Whores, or the mean revenges of a coward.

(*Looking about*) This is Leticia's father's house,
And that the dear balcony 10
That has so oft been conscious of our loves;
From whence she's sent me down a thousand sighs,
A thousand looks of love, a thousand vows!
O thou dear witness of those charming hours,
How do I bless thee, how am I pleased to view thee 15
After a tedious age of six months' banishment.

Enter [Mr Jingle and] several with music.

Fiddler. But hark'ee, Mr Jingle, is it proper to play before the wedding?

Jingle. Ever while you live; for many a time, in playing after the first
night, the bride's sleepy, the bridegroom tired, and both so out of
humour that perhaps they hate anything that puts 'em in mind 20
they are married.

[The musicians] play and sing

SONG

Rise, Cloris, charming maid, arise
And baffle breaking day,
Show the adoring world thy eyes
Are more surprising gay; 25
The gods of love are smiling round,
And lead the bridegroom on,
And Hymen has the altar crowned;
While all thy sighing lovers are undone.

To see thee pass they throng the plain; 30
The groves with flowers are strown,
And every young and envying swain
Wishes the hour his own.
Rise then, and let the god of day,
When thou dost to the lover yield, 35
Behold more treasure given away
Than he in his vast circle e'er beheld.

Enter Phillis in the balcony, and throws them money.

Belmour. Ha, Phyllis, Leticia's woman!

Jingle. Fie, Mrs Phillis, do ye take us for fiddlers that play for hire?
I came to compliment Mrs Leticia on her wedding morning 40
because she is my scholar.

Phyllis. She sends it only to drink her health.

Jingle. Come, lads, let's to the tavern then.

Exit music.

Belmore. Ha, said he Leticia?
Sure I shall turn to marble at this news: 45
I harden, and cold damps pass through my senseless pores.
– Ha, who's here?

Enter Gayman wrapped in his cloak.

Gayman. 'Tis yet too early, but my soul's impatient,
And I must see Leticia.

[Gayman] goes to the door.

Belmour. Death and the devil, the bridegroom! – Stay, sir; by 50
heaven, you pass not this way.

*[Belmour] goes to the door as [Gayman] is knocking, pushes him
away, and draws.*

Gayman. Ha, what art thou, that durst forbid me entrance? Stand off.

[Belmour and Gayman] fight a little, and closing, view each other.

Belmour. Gayman!

Gayman. My dearest Belmour!

Belmour. Oh, thou false friend, thou treacherous base deceiver! 55

Gayman. Ha, this to me, dear Harry?

Belmour. Whither is honour, truth and friendship fled?

Gayman. Why, there ne'er was such a virtue. 'Tis all a poet's
dream.

Belmour. I thank you, sir. 60

Gayman. I am sorry for't, or that ever I did anything that could
deserve it. Put up your sword: an honest man would say how he's
offended, before he rashly draws.

Belmour. Are not you going to be married, sir?

Gayman. No, sir, as long as any man in London is so, that has but 65
a handsome wife, sir.

Belmour. Are not you in love, sir?

Gayman. Most damnably, and would fain lie with the dear jilting
gypsy.

Belmour. Ha, who would you lie with, sir? 70

Gayman. You catechize me roundly: 'tis not fair to name, but I am
no starter, Harry; just as you left me, you find me; I am for the
faithless Julia still, the old alderman's wife. 'Twas high time the
city should lose their charter, when their wives turn honest. But
pray, sir, answer me a question or two. 75

Belmour. Answer me first: what make you here this morning?

Gayman. Faith, to do you service. Your damned little jade of a

mistress has learned of her neighbours the art of swearing and lying in abundance, and is –
Belmour. (Sighing) To be married! 80
Gayman. Even so, God save the mark; and she'll be a fair one for many an arrow besides her husband's, though he's an old Finsbury hero this threescore years.
Belmour. Who mean you?
Gayman. Why, thy cuckold that shall be, if thou be'st wise. 85
Belmour. Away, who is this man? Thou dalliest with me.
Gayman. Why, an old knight, and alderman here o'th' city, Sir Feeble Fainwould: a jolly old fellow, whose activity is all got into his tongue; a very excellent teaser, but neither youth nor beauty can grind his dudgeon to an edge. 90
 (The Lucky Chance, 1, i, 1–90)

This extract teems with a succession of activity, divided into three distinct parts. The first is Belmour's arrival in disguise and soliloquy in front of the balcony; the second, the wedding song episode; and the third the encounter between Belmour and Gayman. Let us look at each in turn.

Belmour's opening speech self-consciously echoes the balcony scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (2, ii, 3), in actual words, setting and time. It thus immediately introduces both explicitly and intertextually the theme of thwarted and potentially tragic love. This is important because it casts a shadow over the play, and posits a darker ending than that suggested by either of the two openings we have just analysed. It forces the audience to ask questions about the forthcoming events. Are we to expect a tragic conclusion? Do Belmour's references to his killing of a man in self-defence presage further violence and conflict, as they do in Shakespeare's play? Thus, although his speech at the balcony is ostensibly about recollected love ('From whence she's sent me down a thousand sighs'), and the joy of his return, we suspect all will not be well. In addition, his presence in cloaked disguise, in the dark of pre-dawn, suggests his marginal status, as well as more broadly the theme of hidden identity.

The opening of this scene narrates some past history, often a sure-fire way to bore an audience. The narrative content here, however, is counteracted by the dramatic nature of the situation. As we learn

that this man's beloved is about to be married, but that he has returned to claim her, our interest is aroused in the potential for conflict and tragedy. Situation thus quickly overcomes lengthy narrative background.

Here Belmour's language distinguishes his character and point of view from others by its poetic content and form. The first sixteen lines are in blank verse, with a few exceptions and irregularities. Thus lines 3 and 10 only contain six beats, indicating by both content and rhythm a pause for recollection of past events. The two final lines each contain six feet, an alexandrine rather than a pentameter. What does the use of verse signify here? As we have already noted, the play deliberately echoes *Romeo and Juliet*, and the use of verse intensifies a poetic representation of doomed love. Nevertheless, it would sound old-fashioned to a Restoration audience, and also now to us, suggesting a nostalgic, archaic view of love. The self-conscious reference to a renowned Shakespearean play, in combination with the archaic verse, asks the audience to think further about genre: is this a comedy or tragedy? Such a question destabilises our response to what is ostensibly a comic opening, focusing on lovers' intrigues. By wrong-footing the audience's expectations, Behn forces us to pay attention and to ask questions.

The time of the opening is also critical: dawn was paradoxically a time of hope and of doom. Belmour's language plays with both the literal physical setting (the half-light of dawn) and the metaphorical meanings implicit in the lightness/darkness opposition. The conceptual and physical actions of the whole play continue and deepen this opposition, as we shall see.

Having opened in this ambiguous manner, Belmour must retreat to one side of the stage as the musicians enter beneath the balcony. The musicians, using the language of the 'mechanicals', offer a musical tribute to the bride. At one level, this is simply a dramatic device to tell both Belmour and the audience that his beloved is about to be married. At another, it signals Behn's more complex plotting in this play, the integration of ordinary people with the life of the gallants. Through short juxtaposed parts of scenes like this, Behn manages to convey a fluid representation of London street life. One of non-satiric comedy's functions is to suggest a festive world in