

THE WORKS OF
APHRA BEHN

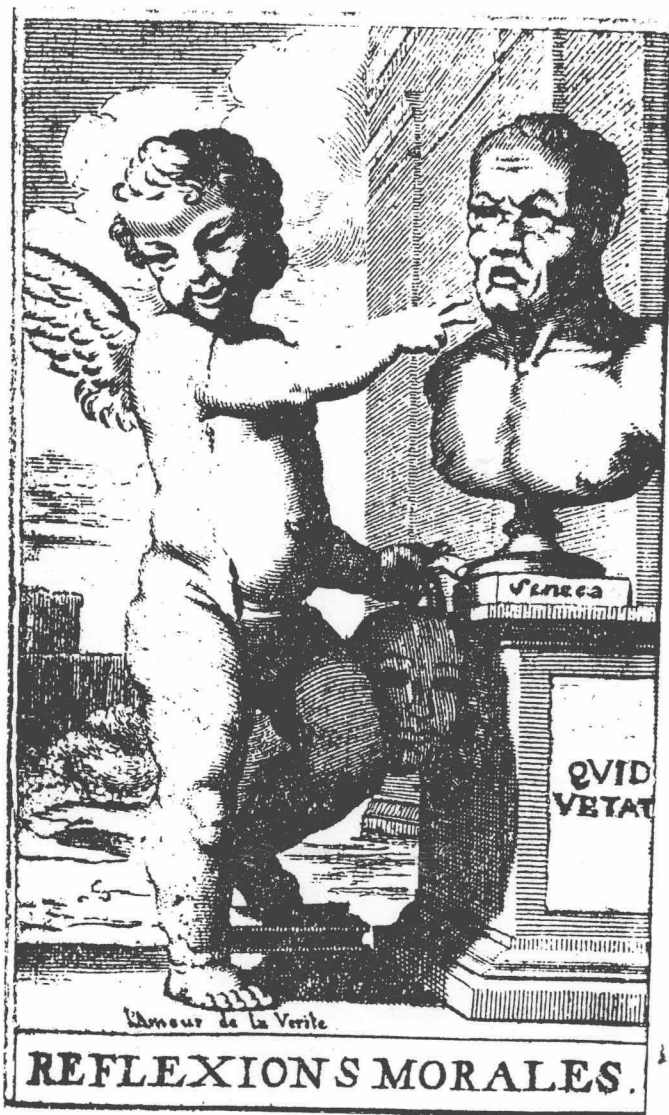
EDITED BY
JANET TODD

VOLUME
4

SENECA UNMASQUED
AND OTHER
PROSE
TRANSLATIONS

LONDON
WILLIAM PICKERING

1993



The frontispiece used in the first four editions
of La Rochefoucauld's *Réflexions et Maximes*

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CONTENTS

Copy Texts used	vi
Textual Introduction	vii
Acknowledgements	xix
Preface to Lysander	1
Seneca Unmasked	11
A Discovery of New Worlds	71
The History of Oracles	169
La Montre	279
Lycidus	379
Appendix I	423
Appendix II	429
Appendix III	430
Emendations	431

ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece to La Rochefoucauld's <i>Réflexions et</i>	
<i>Maximes</i>	<i>frontispiece</i>
Original title page of <i>A Discovery of</i>	
<i>New Worlds</i>	<i>between pages 69 and 70</i>
Original title page of <i>The History of Oracles</i>	167
Original title page of <i>La Montre</i>	277
Original title page of <i>Lycidus</i>	377

COPY TEXTS

William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles

MISCELLANY Being A COLLECTION OF POEMS By several Hands. Together with REFLECTIONS ON MORALITY OR SENECA UNMASQUED. London, printed for J. Hindmarsh (1685); *PR1209 B41 (-a4).

Cambridge University Library

A DISCOVERY OF NEW WORLDS. London, printed for William Canning (1688); CUL M.11.70.

THE HISTORY OF ORACLES. London, printed . . . and sold by most booksellers (1688); Cul.N.5.82.

LYCIDUS . . . With a MISCELLANY OF NEW POEMS by Several HANDS. London, printed for Joseph Knight and Francis Saunders (1688); Cul. Syn. 7.68.204.

Bodleian Library, Oxford

LA MONTRE, OR THE LOVERS WATCH. London, printed by R.H. for W. Canning (1686); Bod. Vet. A.3. f.1311.

TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION TO TRANSLATIONS

I

In *Moral Epistles*, No. 84, Seneca compares literary imitation to the image of bees gathering honey, pointing to the transformation of the substance from its original state into nectar:

We also, I say, ought to copy these bees, and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading . . . we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origins, yet . . . it is transformed . . . by a process of preserving and careful storing away, aided by what might be called fermentation – whereby separate elements are united into one substance.^a

He then goes on to argue that the human body does something similar in the process of digestion:

This is what we see nature doing in our own bodies without any labour on our part; the food we have eaten, as long as it retains its original quality and floats in our stomachs as an undiluted mass, is a burden; but it passes into tissue and blood only when it has been changed from its original form. So it is with the food which nourished our higher nature – we should see to it that whatever we have absorbed should not be allowed to remain unchanged, or it will be no part of us. We must digest it; otherwise it will merely enter the memory and not the reasoning power.^b

In his preface to *Ovid's Epistles, Translated by several Hands* (1680), which included the first appearance of Behn's lengthy 'Oenone to Paris' (*Works of Behn*, I, no. 6), John Dryden subsumed Seneca's transformation into translation. He then divided the category into three classes: 'metaphrase' or word by word

^a Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, 3 vols. trans. Richard M. Gummere, London: William Heinemann, 1930, 2: 278–81.

^b *Ibid.*, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, 2: 278–81.

translation, 'paraphrase' or translation 'with latitude', and finally 'imitation' which assumes for the translator 'the liberty not only to vary from the words & sence; but to forsake them both as he sees occasion . . . '.

Translation of all three kinds was an important activity for Aphra Behn, as it was for most ambitious Restoration writers. The large number of treatises and prefaces on the subject, such as the Earl of Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse* (1685) and Dryden's earlier *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* (1668), indicate that it was also controversial in its practice and in its results, for this was an age much given to religious and political contention. Both Roscommon and Dryden suggested the need for translators to choose a source with which they felt their own views and temperament compatible, accepting that the translator could not efface him or herself completely; as Roscommon poetically expressed it:

The first great work, (a Task perform'd by few)
Is, that your self may to your self be True:
No Masque, no Tricks, no Favour, no Reserve;
Dissect your Mind, examine ev'ry Nerve . . .

Examine how your Humour is inclin'd,
And which the Ruling Passion of your Mind;
Then, seek a Poet who your way do's bend,
And chuse an Author as you chuse a Friend.
United by this Sympathetick Bond,
You grow Familiar, Intimate and Fond;
Your thoughts, your Words, your Stiles, your Souls agree,
No Longer his Interpreter, but He.^a

Of great interest for Behn's theory and practice of translation is the digressive 'Essay on Translated Prose' which prefaces the translation of Fontenelle's *Discovery of New Worlds*. In this Behn showed herself aware of the controversy over whether translation should aim at fidelity or exact translation, or whether it should pursue what might be called cultural translation, where the sense and purpose of the original are transformed into the idiom of the day. Her long discussion of the differences between languages suggests the impossibility of the former in her view, although she does provide passages of fairly strict 'translation'

^a Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse*, London, 1684.

as well as much that could be termed 'paraphrase' and 'imitation' in Dryden's classification.

It is not known why Behn came to translate her philosophical and scientific works. Perhaps she had been commissioned by a publisher or bookseller or perhaps she urged one into publication, as suggested, in the case of *Lycidus*, by a letter to the publisher of Jacob Tonson in which she offers to translate the 'second voyage' (cf. *Works of Behn*, I, p. xxvii). Perhaps she had come into contact with the men she translated or had met their friends and had found the works both interesting and potentially saleable. Her admiration for Hortense Mancini, Duchess of Mazarine, to whom she dedicated *The History of the Nun* in 1689, suggests some contact with her circle which included French writers and thinkers such as Charles St Evremond. Clearly the texts she chose were of wide interest, since another translation by John Glanvill of Fontenelle's *Entretiens* appeared in the same year and, earlier, in 1670, J. Davis of Kidwelly had produced a translation of an embryonic and unapproved version of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* (1664).

In her prose translations Behn appears to have followed Roscommon and Dryden in choosing a source consistent with her own views and temperament. The rather iconoclastic views of Fontenelle appear to have inspired her to various intellectual positions in the 'Essay on Translated Prose', such as the defence of the Copernican system against the Ptolemaic, an insistence that the Copernican is compatible with Scripture, and, most audaciously, an assumption that the Bible can be investigated for historical authenticity. Likewise, she was probably attracted to La Rochefoucauld's libertine and anti-stoical maxims because they echoed some of her own sentiments.

It is often assumed that Behn turned to prose when drama failed to provide her with a satisfactory income, because of the amalgamation of the two licensed dramatic companies, the Duke's and the King's, in 1682 and the subsequent decrease in demand for original plays. It is not, however, clear exactly when she began writing either original prose fiction or prose translation. Beyond financial necessity, she may well have been attracted to the medium of prose translation for intellectual and personal reasons. Translated prose provided an opportunity for a woman to enter into controversies on science, religion and philosophy which, as an unlearned female, she apparently had to eschew in her poetry. In the case of Fontenelle's *Entretiens*,

she had the added advantage that the original was addressed to a lady and was thus suitable for a female translator who could only bring to bear her 'Woman's Reasoning' on the work.

Behn insisted that she was ignorant of the classical languages; she was, she claimed in her commendatory poem to Thomas Creech, the translator of Lucretius, 'unlearned in Schools' (*Works of Behn*, I, no. 11). The claim was echoed by Dryden in his preface to *Ovid's Epistles*: 'I was desir'd to say that the Authour who is of the Fair Sex, understood not Latine'.^a Because of this ignorance, when she wanted to enter the philosophical and scientific debates, which were frequently conducted in Latin and which alluded to classical texts, she must have relied a good deal on translators such as Creech. Her later poems reveal frequent use of *De Rerum Natura* to which he introduced her. But, if she were ignorant of Latin (by no means a certainty given the conventions of female disclaimer and her frequent translations from Latin), she was undoubtedly fluent in French and, in her philosophical and scientific translations, she may have paid to non-French speakers some of the debt she felt towards the classical interpreters.

All Behn's prose translations are from French. Nonetheless, her 'Essay on Translated Prose' declares that of the modern foreign languages French is the 'hardest to translate into English'. This difficulty was, she asserted, partly due to national differences, partly to rapid changes in French not paralleled in English and partly to the longwinded nature of French writers. In view of this last charge, it is interesting that Behn manages to 'translate' Bonnacourse's *La Montre* into a considerably longer English version.

II

François, duc de La Rochefoucauld (1613–80), published his *Réflexions ou sentences et maximes morales* in the first approved version in 1665. Four further editions followed in his lifetime, the 1678 one being the last he could have corrected. These editions vary in length as he subtracted and added maxims according to his apprehension of their sense and style. Behn

^a *Ovid's Epistles, Translated by several Hands*, London, 1680.

follows the text of the 1675 edition although she radically alters the sequence of the maxims. While her translations are generally faithful to the French text, it is interesting to compare her rendering of the work with that of J. Davis. La Rochefoucauld's maxims 15 and 16, for instance, read as follows:

15.

La clémence des princes n'est souvent qu'une politique pour gagner l'affection des peuples.

16.

Cette clémence dont on fait une vertu se pratique tantôt par vanité, quelquefois par paresse, souvent par crainte, et presque toujours par tous les trois ensemble.

Davis's 1670 translation renders these as:

Clemency is an intermixture of Repute, Sloth, and Fear, of which we make up a Virtue; and among Princes, it is only a political Intrigue, whereof they make their advantage to cajol the affection of the people.^a

Following La Rochefoucauld's preferred method of dividing the maxims by number, Behn presents them as follows:

4.

The Clemency of Princes is usually but a Policy to gain the Love of their Subjects.

5.

Clemency, which is made a Virtue, is commonly practised out of Vanity, sometimes out of Lasiness, oft times out of Fear, and for the most part by all three together.

In Behn's work various maxims are deleted from the original running order and are collected together towards the end of the text under the headings 'Love' and 'Self-Love'. Behn's alterations seem to reflect her personal view of love, coloured by the character of 'Lysander', who frequently appears in her works of this period. A table of Behn's numbering beside that of La Rochefoucauld is provided in Appendix I of this volume.

La Rochefoucauld was merciless in his analysis of the self-interest behind human conduct, even behaviour of the most

^a *Epictetus Junior, or Maxims of Modern Morality in Two Centuries*. Trans. by J. Davis of Kidwelly, London, 1670, p. 4.

idealistic type. He discovered some egoism in all the various protestations of love, friendship, loyalty and intended bravery, and he was sceptical of the power of reason and will to control the needs and desires of the body. Behn obviously found this philosophy compelling and, in her translation, she appears to have followed Seneca of the *Moral Epistles* in digesting La Rochefoucauld's philosophy and in producing her own additions.

The long-lived Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1667–1757) had, after some poetic and dramatic works which made no great mark, produced in 1686 his *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* which aimed to communicate to a non-learned readership the new philosophical and scientific theories of Descartes. The following year he published *L'Histoire des oracles* which popularised a Dutch work by the anabaptist Anthony Van Dale – *de Oraculis Ethnorum dissertationes duae; quarum prior de ipsorum duratione ac defectu, posterior de earundem Auctoribus. Accedit et Schediasma de Consecrationibus Ethnicis*. (1683), although Fontenelle claimed he had new cast and remodelled the whole. *L'Histoire des oracles* was especially controversial since, in claiming that oracles were not supernatural and that they did not cease with the Christian era, the work suggested some unseemly collusion of the early Church Fathers with paganism and hinted that all supernaturalism might be fraudulent. In addition it contradicted the position of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, which held that the early oracles were demonic and that they had ceased with the arrival of Christ. In France the work was attacked by the Jesuit, Baltus, and in England by George Hickes in *An Answer to Mr De Fontenelle's History of Oracles* (1709).

Despite his controversial material, however, Fontenelle was regarded by serious scientists and philosophers as certainly popular and skilful but also lightweight. In a review in *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, May 1686, Pierre Bayle, for example, described *Entretiens* as sensible enough, clever and charming, but not very solid:

Peu de gens auroient été capable de s'imaginer que les questions Astronomiques pussent être débrouillées avec toute la gayeté et avec toutes les imaginations singulières que l'Auteur a répandus dans son ouvrage.

On *L'Histoire des oracles*, he remarked enigmatically that to

compose writing where the matter is worth less than the manner is an under-estimated skill (*Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, February 1687).

In contrast to her renderings of La Rochefoucauld, Behn's translation of *Entretiens* and *L'Histoire des Oracles* followed Fontenelle very closely, perhaps because Fontenelle's popularisation of his subjects was difficult to better or perhaps she had apprehensions about the controversial nature of the material and wished, if necessary, to take refuge in the role of mere literal translator. Interestingly, Glanvil also produced a very faithful translation of Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, and it is revealing to compare his version of the opening of the first dialogue with that of Behn. Fontenelle's original reads:

Nous allâmes donc, un soir après souper, nous promener dans le parc. Il faisait un frais délicieux, qui nous récompensait d'une journée fort chaude que nous avions essuyée. La lune était levée il y avait peut-être une heure, et ses rayons, qui ne venaient à nous qu'entre les branches des arbres, faisaient un agréable mélange d'un blanc fort vif avec tout ce vert qui paraissait noir. Il n'y avait pas un nuage qui dérobait ou qui obscurcit la moindre étoile; elles étaient toutes d'un or pur et éclatant, et qui était encore relevé par le fond bleu où elles sont attachées. Ce spectacle me fit rêver, et peut-être sans la Marquise eussé-je rêvé assez long-temps; mais la présence d'une si aimable dame ne me permit pas de m'abandonner à la lune et aux étoiles.

Glanvil renders this as follows:

We went one Evening after Supper, to walk in the Park, the Air was extremely refreshing, because that day had been very hot; the Moon had been up about an hour, and as she shone between the Trees, made an agreeable mixture of Light and Darkness; the Stars were in all their Glory, and not a Cloud appear'd on the Azure Sky; I was musing on this awful Prospect, but who can think long of the Moon and Stars, in the Company of a Pretty Woman!^a

Behn translates the same passage as:

We went one Evening after Supper to walk in the Park, the Air was cool and refreshing, which made us sufficient amends for the excessive heat of the Day, and of which I find I shall be

^a *A Plurality of Worlds*, Trans. by J. Glanvil, London, 1688, pp. 3–4.

obliged to make you a Description, which I cannot well avoid, the fineness of it leading me so necessarily to it.

The Moon was about an hour high, which shining through the Boughs of the Trees, made a most agreeable Mixture, and checker'd the Paths beneath with a most resplendent white upon the green, which appeared to be black by that Light; there was no Cloud to be seen that could hide from us, or obscure the smallest of the Stars, which lookt all like pure polisht Gold, whose Luster was extreemly heightened by the deep Azure Field on which they were placed: These pleasant Objects set me thinking, and had it not been for Madam la Marquiese, I might have continued longer in that silent Contemplation; but the Presence of a Person of her Wit and Beauty hindered me from giving up my Thoughts intirely to the Moon and Stars.

Much was made in commendatory poems of the superiority of Behn's allegorical translations, *Lycidus* and *La Montre*, over the French originals of the Abbé Paul Tallemant and Balthazar de Bonnewcourse. One commendation by G.J. [possibly George Jenkins] credits Behn with actually making an author of Bonnewcourse who had little merit before she softened his coarseness: 'We owe to thee, our best Refiner, more / Than him, who first dig'd up the rugged Ore.' Behn's *La Montre*, it is claimed, has been raised from French 'Rubbish'. Certainly she 'transformed' it in the Senecan manner, as can be gauged from the section marked 'Visites d'Amies'. The French text simply reads:

Je ne voudrais pas que vous eussiez de ces amies, qui toutes les qualitez qu'on pourroit souhaitter à une Maistresse. Il arrive souvent qu'on a pour ces aymables personnes des sentimens un peu trop tendres; & alors ceux de l'Amitié sont tellement confondus avec ceux de l'Amour, qu'on ne scauroit les discerner.

In Behn's much expanded version this becomes:

I shou'd be very angry, if you had any of those Friendships, which one ought to desire in a Mistress only; for many times it happens, that you have Sentiments a little too tender for those Amiable Persons; and many times, Love and friendship are so confounded together, that one cannot easily discern one for t'other. I have seen a Man flatter himself with an Opinion, that he had but an Esteem for a Woman, when, by some Turn of Fortune in her Life, as Marrying, or Receiving the Addresses of Men, he has found, by Spight and Jealousies within, that that was Love, which he before took for Complaisance, or Friendship. Therefore have a Care; for such Amities are dangerous. Not but that a Lover may have Fair and Generous Female

Friends, whom he ought to visit; and perhaps, I shou'd esteem you less, if I did not believe, you were valued by such, if I were perfectly assured, they were Friends, and not Lovers. But have a care, you hide not a Mistress under this Veil, or that you gain not a Lover by this Pretence; for you may begin with Friendship, and end with Love; and I shou'd be equally afflicted, shou'd you give it, or receive it. And though you charge our Sex with all the Vanity; yet I often find Nature to have given you as large a Portion of that comon Crime, which you wou'd shuffle off, as ashamed to own; and are as fond and vain of the Imagination of a Conquest, as any *Coquet* of us all; though, at the same time, you despise the Victim, you think it adds a Trophy to your Fame. And I have seen a Man dress, and trick, and adjust his Looks and Meen, to make a Visit to a Woman he lov'd not, nor ever cou'd love, as for those he made to his Mistress; and only for the Vanity of making a Conquest upon a Heart, even unworthy of the little Pains he has taken about it. And what is this, but buying Vanity at the Expence of Sense and Ease; and with fatigue, purchase the Name of a Conceited Fop, besides that of a dishonest Man? For he who take pains to make himself Belov'd, only to please his curious Humour, though he should say nothing that tends to it, more than by his Looks, his Sighs, and now and then breaking into Praises and Commendation of the Object, by the Care he takes, to appear well drest before her, and in good Order; he lies in his Looks, he deceives with his Meen and fashion, and cheats with every Motion, and every Grace he puts on: He cozens when he sings, or dances, he dissembles when he sighs; and every thing he does, that wilfully gains upon her, is Malice propense, Baseness, and Art below a Man of Sense, or Vertue: and yet these Arts, these Coz'nages, are the common Practices of the Town. What's this, but that Damnable Vice, of which they so reproach our Sex; that of Jilting for Hearts? And 'tis in vain, that my Lover, after such foul Play, shall think to apease me, with saying, 'He did it, to try how easily he cou'd conquer, and of how great Force his Charms were: And why shou'd I be angry, if all the Town lov'd him, since he lov'd none but *Iris*?' Oh Foolish Pleasure! How little Sense goes to the making of such a Happiness? And how little Love must he have for one particular Person, who wou'd wish to inspire it into all the World, and yet himself pretend to be insensible? But this, *Damon*, is rather, what is but too much practised by your Sex, than any Guilt I charge on you; though Vanity be an Ingredient, that Nature very seldom omits, in the Composition of either Sex; and you may be allow'd a tincture of it, at least. And perhaps, I am not wholly exempt from this Leaven in my Nature, but accuse my self sometimes, of finding a secret Joy of being Ador'd, though I even hate my Worshipper.

But if any such Pleasure touch my Heart, I find it, at the same time, blushing in my Cheeks, with a guilty Shame; which soon checks the petty Triumph, and I have a Vertue at soberer Thoughts, that I find surmounts my Weakness, and Indiscretion; and I hope, *Damon* finds the same; for, should he have any of those Attachments, I should have no Pity for him.

Not everyone was, however, pleased with Behn's expansions and in *A Session of the Poets* Matthew Prior mocked:

The Poetess Sung: at length swore She'd prove
That She and Jack Hoyle taught the whole Age to Love
And on with't She ran, nor had ended 'till now
But Phoebus reprov'd her, and gave her to know
That her Tongue went too fast, and her Love watch too Slow.^a

Lycidus, the mainly prose version of Tallemant's *Second Voyage*, appeared in 1688. In her letter to her publisher Jacob Tonson describing her enthusiasm for her poetic translation of the first *Voyage* (and asking for an extra £5 for her trouble), she offered to translate 'the second voyage, which will compose a little book as big as a novel by itself'. However, although she may have wished the work to appear independently, it actually arrived in print in the company of a miscellany of poems by Behn herself and several of her friends and fellow poets. The poetic company inevitably affects the prose. Several of her own poems, such as 'To the fair Clarinda, who made Love to me, imagin'd more than Woman' (*Works of Behn*, I, no. 80), are provocative and ambiguous, suggesting a sophisticated acceptance of sexuality in all its forms. This rather libertine atmosphere is appropriate for *Lycidus* which differs from the more sincere and romantic Part I of the *Voyage to the Island of Love*, much as the epistolary and apparently sincere Part I of *Love-Letters* differs from the false and feigning Parts II and III, where Love is replaced with amours and a lover with lovers.

Lycidus is less a continuation of the *Island of Love* than a new narrative (the heroine of *The Island of Love* died at the end of Behn's first work); it tends to be more suggestive than the original of Tallemant or Behn's first translation and the characters more knowing. Less pastoral and more comic than A

^a 'A Session of the Poets', *The Literary Works of Matthew Prior*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 63.

Voyage to the Island of Love, the work seems to take place on the Restoration stage and it is fitting that Tallemant's pastoral characters Sylvie and Iris become the more theatrical Bellinda and Bellimante.

... it was a mere cheat in Respect to conduct people to Love by Discretion, that being much the farthest way about, and under favor to Monsieur Respect he is but a troublesome companion to a Lover, who designs to cure those wounds the fair has given him, and, if he have no better counsellor, he may languish all his life without revealing the secret of his soul to the object belov'd, and so never find redress. But this Sir Formal (Respect, says Love,) is a very great favorite of the Lady's, who is always in fee with them as a Jilt with a Justice; who manages their Fools just as they wou'd have 'em; for it is the most agreeable thing in the World to them, and what the most feeds their vanity, to see at their feet a thousand Lovers sigh, burn, and languish; the fair are never angry to find themselves belov'd, nor ever weary of being Ador'd. I was extremely pleas'd at this frank Humour of my little Love who told me this.

Matthew Prior's criticism of *La Montre* and the long addition to the work, quoted above, may point to a personal element in Behn's choice of translations and in her expansions of them. In her poetry and prose of the mid 1680s she reveals a new intense passion which may, as Prior surmised, be for the lawyer John Hoyle or for a successor, possibly the Lysander of the dedication to *Seneca Unmasqued* and that text's more personalised sections 'Love' and 'Self-Love'.

As in her poetic translations, Behn's additions in her prose works also tend towards an inclusion of politics and contemporary reference. In *La Montre*, for instance, she alludes to the work of Sir Samuel Morland and Sir Robert Gorden at Windsor for Charles II. In the translation from La Rochefoucauld her insistence that Stoicism, a philosophy much discussed in the Restoration, is the butt of the *Maximes* prompted her to use the famous Stoic, Seneca, and other heroic Romans as an organising principle. Meanwhile contemporary references, such as the one to Christoph Vratz the highwayman at the end of the work indicate that Behn was always a topical writer who, as a dramatist, a poet and a prose writer, took seriously the need to catch and sustain wayward attention, as well as to tie her words on to the interests of her reader. As Roscommon put it:

WORKS OF APHRA BEHN: VOLUME 4

Yet 'tis not all to have a Subject Good,
It must Delight us when 'tis understood. . . .
For who, without a Qualm, hath ever lookt,
On Holy Garbage, tho by Homer Cookt?^a

Norwich 1993

JANET TODD

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^a Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse*, London, 1684.

REFLECTIONS
ON MORALITY
OR
SENECA
UNMASQUED

LONDON

Printed for J. Hindmarsh
1685

EDITORIAL NOTE

Seneca Unmasked is a translation of La Rochefoucauld's 1675 edition of the *Réflexions ou Sentences et Maximes morales*. Behn presents the reader with a fairly literal translation of the French text although she occasionally replaces specific French allusions with an English equivalent. Her most radical transformation of the text lies in her reordering of the sequence of the *Maximes*, creating her own, more personal meditations on Love and Self-Love. Behn's work was published as *Reflections on Morality, or Seneca Unmasked* in conjunction with *Miscellany, Being A Collection of Poems By several Hands* (1685). The poems written by herself which Behn includes are printed in Vol. 1 of *The Works of Aphra Behn*.

TO
LYSANDER^a

LYSANDER^b having by chance met with a small Piece in French, Intituled Moral Reflections; and finding many things concerning Virtue, something contrary to your Notions of it, (fond of convincing all your little Errors of Judgment) I gave my self the Liberty (I cannot say Trouble) of putting it into English, as there is not one Sentence but is applicable to some body or other, so you will find many that will touch your self: and many more that I doubt not but you will lay at my door, especially any Satyr on our Sex: but since there is wherewithal to quit Scores, do your worst. I know too well you have abundance of Gravity, to the loss and destruction of many an honest hour, which might have been past more gayly if you had pleased to have laid by that (sometimes necessary) humour; and that face of dull business, enough to mortifie all thoughts of Mirth about one. I know you have a great deal of that which my Reflections tell you passes for Vertue, nay even your self it deludes with that Opinion, as well as the World: you should be a Lover too, if one will believe you or your Complexion; and to my knowledge you have goodness enough to pardon all the faults you will find here, at least you dissemble it well, and that will do as well. These Motives, joyned to the desire I have to let you see you are more in my head than

^a Behn's preface is partly a translation of the foreword to the reader which was printed in La Rochefoucauld's 1665 edition of the *Maximes* and subsequently dropped from all later editions. The foreword, written by the obscure Henri de La Chapelle-Bessé, defended the *Maximes* as a work in the Augustinian tradition of condemning self-love as detracting from the proper love of God. La Chapelle's essay does not seem to conform to the original spirit of the work as conceived by La Rochefoucauld and it may have been added to counter criticism from the Church when the book appeared. Behn amplifies the foreword considerably at certain points giving it a pronounced English context, while she paraphrases La Chapelle's more tedious closing arguments.

^b In *A Voyage to the Island of Love*, Behn's earlier verse translation of Tallemant's *Le Voyage de l'Isle d'Amour* the hero of the narrative is given the name Lysander by Behn while she retains the name Aminta for the heroine. (Cf. *Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 1, no. 51.) In *Seneca Unmasked*, the names are inserted into La Rochefoucauld's original text to frame the maxims within a lover's discourse. Cf. Behn's maxims nos. 338, 347, 378, 379 and 383.

you imagine, oblige me to chuse you from out the number of my few Friends, to address this part of my handy-work to; called Seneca Unmasq'd:^a whether good or bad you have them almost as I found them; but if it be necessary that I should render them acceptable by some better recommendation than barely telling you I translated them:^b I give you to understand they are charged on a Great Man, and a great Wit of the French Court, the Duke of Rushfaucave^c but since I always distrust the general voice, 'tis enough that the World has fixt 'em on him, to make me think that he knows nothing of 'em. So much for the original as to the Copy, (which I have drawn purely out of complacence to you, I can only say if it do not extremely resemble the Original, at least for ought I know it may be as good a Piece: and that may pass as well. I would give you my sentiments of the whole, but that I am affraid of shewing my self a Critick; but no matter, I am so us'd to be impertinent in Lysanders Company that 'twill appear no more strange than what he is entertained with every time I have the happiness of seeing him: where his grave silence, and scarcity of speaking (afflicting enough to me) gives me an occasion to run into the other Extreme of talking all, purely to prevent a dumb Entertainment, for which I have many times met with wise Reproofs, as tis very likely I may now, and which will as little work upon the temper of a Woman of my humour, as Mercy to a hardened Whig:^d but I was going to tell you my opinion, and you are like to hear it; which is

^a Behn's title for her translation alludes to the frontispiece of the 1675 French edition of the work in which a small cupid removes a mask from a bust of Seneca, the Roman philosopher. Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC-AD 65) was a follower of the Stoic philosophy which argued that the supreme good for man was to live in harmony with nature virtuously. Stoics also believed that the ability to act virtuously was determined by the power of man's reason. La Rochefoucauld has chosen to 'unmask' the rational and virtuous Seneca, demonstrating that virtue is inextricably linked to less savoury impulses such as self-interest.

^b Behn's translation of La Chapelle's text begins at this point with a reference to his opening lines:

Je ne saurais vous dire au vrai si les Réflexions morales sont de M. ***, quoiqu'elles soient écrites d'une manière qui semble approcher de la sienne; mais en ces occasions-là je me défie presque toujours de l'opinion publique, et c'est assez qu'elle lui en ait fait un présent pour me donner une juste raison de n'en rien croire.

The remainder of Behn's paragraph is a much looser précis of the French original, allowing her to sketch a description of her relationship with Lysander.

^c François, duc de La Rochefoucauld (1613-80). The *Maximes* were published anonymously but, in French courtly circles, it was generally known that La Rochefoucauld was the author.

^d The Whigs, staunchly Protestant and in favour of constitutional monarchy, were deeply opposed to the rule of the Catholic James II, who advocated religious tolerance. Behn was a supporter of the Tories and James II.

That these Maxims, as 'tis easie to find at first sight, were not design'd to be made publick, neither by the Author, nor your humble servant:^a (only by the last, for your entertainment, if you think it fit to esteem it one) neither the one nor the other aspiring here to the Glory of an Author: yet if it happened that both have unwillingly contributed to their being exposed to the World, let me tell you, 'twill spoil neither of our Reputations: since we both of us pretend to some other Pieces, that have indured the Test, and passed for Good and Currant Wit, you will say, perhaps, I boast now, and take too great a Presumption on me, to name my self with this supposed great Author: but as to that 'tis no wonder for an Author to praise himself, and extol his own works: how else do you think witty things should be recommended to the unjudging part of the World, who by no other way can understand the true value of a thing: but if the author himself vouches for it; why (they civilly cry) it must needs be good, for the Poet says so, and who can tell better than him that made it? Well then, suppose it, the Duke of Rushfaucave's Original, and I speaking for him, and my self, in praise of it; which if you will believe me, (as you seldom do) I promise you, you will find here all the force and judgment of elevated thought (if I have not paul'd it in the part I managed, as 'tis very likely, being as you know very unlucky) a Circle of pretty Expressions and Observations, accompanied with a certain Air Gallant, which is not usual with common Writers; 'tis true, you will not find that exact Order which might have been observed in the placing of 'em, and as one might have taken care to have done if designed for publick view;^b but for Persons who write as Monsieur the Duke and I, (at this time) did, purely for Idleness, and our own Lazy Diversion (I can speak of nothing under Monsieur the Duke and I.)

I think they are not concerned in such a Case to follow Rules and Methods, it being as unnecessary where People write but to ease their minds, and just as things fall into their thoughts, as to make set Speeches in Love, and study for Eloquence when there is none in Love like that of Love it self: no, at this time we left Rule and Order to those

^a The *Maximes* evolved through La Rochefoucauld's correspondence with various friends to whom he sent manuscript copies of his work. He remained hesitant about the eventual publication of the text until 1664 when an unofficial edition of the *Maximes* was published in The Hague, based on one of the manuscripts in circulation. The first official edition of the work appeared in 1665.

^b Behn is here translating La Chapelle's original fairly loosely (Je demeure d'accord qu'on n'y trouvera pas tout l'ordre ni tout l'art que l'on y pourrait souhaiter...), and, by stressing the 'placing' of the maxims, she alludes to the way in which she has rearranged the order of La Rochefoucauld's work.

who write for advantage: the Dramatick poor Devils that depend on the uncertain Humours of the Stage and Town; or the Great who write for Honour, and make so dead a Trade of Wit, and are a sort of Interlopers who run away with all the Glorious Game that others toil in vain for. This Irregularity and disorder nevertheless has its Graces, and those Graces which Art cannot imitate, I know not whether you will be of my Opinion or not, but Lysander, if you are I ought to take it for the greater Favour, since you so seldom are so: but for my part I must own I always prefer that unstudied, and undesigned way of writing (tho not so approved of by the Learned) which is used by a Courtier who has Wit, as that of the late Lord Rochester^a and present Lord Mulgrave^b to the Regularities tortured, and wrack'd, by many other stiff Writers, whose Judgment is better than their Wit or Natural Fancy; all which are to admiration found in all the Writings of the above-named Great Men, as also in those little chance things of Sir Carr. Scroope,^c whose natural softness so infinitely exceeded all the flights and Industry of most of those who make a business of it, tho every where I must except the Charming and Incomparable Mr Dryden,^d where wondrous wit, and wondrous judgement meeting they have given him the Glory of having out-done all Ages past, and undone those that shall arrive. But as I said, there is nothing that a Witty Man of Quality says or writes (who scorns the Mechanick part the drudgery of dull Method) but has an Air of Gallantry, a tenderness Graceful, a softness unaffected, and an easiness inimitable; and if there be Art, it lies so delicately veiled under natural expressions, as 'tis not at all discernable; while this exactness of Rule, which all Poets so boast of, (and which the best do not always pursue) has always in it an Air of stiffness and constraint harsh and

^a John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647–80), glamorous court wit, poet and dramatist. Among his most famous poems are 'Upon Nothing', 'A Ramble in St. James' Park', and 'A Satire against Reason and Mankind'. Behn was an admirer of the man and his works. Cf. Behn, *Works of Aphra Behn*, 1, no. 53 – 'On the Death of the late Earl of Rochester' and no. 21 – 'To Mrs. W. On her Excellent Verses...'

^b John Sheffield, 3rd Earl of Mulgrave, later the 1st Duke of Buckingham and Normanby (1648–1721) was a prominent statesman and friend of John Dryden. Mulgrave's best remembered literary work is his *Essay on Satire* (c.1680), published anonymously, which contained a biting attack on Lord Rochester. Believing the poem to be by Dryden, Rochester had him thrashed in the street by hired men. Behn may have written 'Ovid to Julia' for, or about, Mulgrave. Cf. *Works of Aphra Behn*, 1, no. 63 – 'Ovid to Julia. A Letter'.

^c Sir Carrington Scroope (1649–80), wit and poet.

^d John Dryden (1631–1700), the most celebrated poet of the Restoration. Behn seems to have had a rather chequered relationship with Dryden whom she often praised but seems to have attacked in 'A Satyr on Doctor Dryden'. Cf. *Works of Aphra Behn*, 1, no. 71. The discussion of English Restoration poets in the dedication has been added by Behn.

disrelishable, and 'tis as easie to discern what belongs to a Man of Quality and Wit, and what to a trading Poet, as to distinguish a Citizen by his mien and dress from a Courtier tho all about him be as Rich and Fashionable as on the other; and doubtless the real Beauty of Poetry is, when Art disguises her self under natural appearances, and that's the Talent of Easie and Noble Writing, when 'tis like the description of Armidas Pallace^a as Tasso^b describes it, says he, Art has no share in this admirable Structure; Nature forming all the Place as if it were by chance, knows so well how to imitate the exactness of Art, that the Eye deceived with a fair Illusion, believes 'tis Art that follows the Dictates of Nature. This I could have given you in Verse if I had had a mind to it: but this will serve as well.^c

And this is my Opinion of the following Reflections in general: but what's my Opinion to you? we never accorded in that point hitherto, and you'll go near to carp at some of these Reflections for all my Opinion, and say many of 'em want weight, most of 'em wit, abundance of 'em Truth, and that they all tax even Virtue it self; but I believe neither the Author nor your assured friend had any such Malice to Mankind: tho he represents to you, that there are very few Virtues very pure in the World, and that in the greatest part of our Actions, there is a mixture of Error, and Truth, of Perfection, and Imperfection, of Vice and of Virtue. He finds the heart of villanous Man corrupted by Pride, and Self-love, and surrounded with ill examples; and as in Towns besieged, the Governor wanting Money makes it of Leather or Past-board, which bearing the Royal Image impressed of good and currant Money, passes at that rate amongst the Besieged in time of necessity, and for want of Gold or Silver: So do the Actions of the greatest part of Mankind, which are esteemed Virtuous, when most commonly they have but the Image and bare resemblance of it: nevertheless they have their value, and appear worthy (in some degree) of our esteem; it being

^a In Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, Armida is the niece of the king of Damascus. When Jerusalem is besieged by Christians, she helps to defend the city by luring Christian knights to a garden of indolence.

^b Torquato Tasso (1544–95), Italian poet and dramatist. His epic poem *Jerusalem Delivered*, translated 1600 by Edward Fairfax, was a notable influence on many seventeenth-century English poets.

^c Behn refers to the lines from Tasso which are quoted in La Chapelle's text:

*Stimi (si misto il culto è col negletto),
Sol naturali gli ornamenti e i siti.
Di natura arte par, che per diletto
L'imitatrace sua scherzando imiti.*

The lines, slightly misquoted by La Chapelle, are taken from Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, XVI, V.10.

a most difficult thing to meet with better, according to the course of the World; and indeed my Author does wisely believe there is no Vertue true in Man, if you consider him in his Humane Nature. Nor is he alone of that Opinion. But if I did not fear to boast of too much Learning for my Sex,^a I could cite you many Authors, as well Fathers of the Church as great Saints, who were of Opinion that Self-love, Interest, and Pride, was the cause of the most Glorious Actions of the greatest Heroes of the World. Who applauded the Chastity of Lucretia^b (whom all the World now celebrates for a Vertuous Woman) till they made it a subject of private Revenge, and the occasion of the Liberty of Rome? and which drew the wonder of so many Ages. Do you think it was Virtue in Junius Brutus^c to Sacrifice his own Sons to set up a Commonwealth? Or that the last Brutus Murdered his supposed Father Julius Cæsar,^d meerly from the Dictates of Virtue: which appears to me no other than Self-love, or Ambition; and after Ages may as well celebrate the Actions of a Modern Prince for Virtuous;^e which

^a The French original reads 'Si je ne craignais pas de m'ériger trop en docteur, je vous citerais bien des auteurs'. Behn's revision highlights the disparity in education for the sexes in the Restoration period and reiterates her earlier comments in the preface to *The Dutch Lover*:

For waving the examination why women having equal education with men, were not as capable of knowledge, of whatever sort as well as they: I'll only say as I have touch'd before, that plays have no great room for that which is men's great advantage over women, that is learning...I dare to say I know of none that wrote at such a formidable rate but that a woman may well hope to reach their greatest heights.

Behn returns to the issue of the woman writer's status in the preface to *The Lucky Chance* (1687). Cf. *Works of Aphra Behn*, 1, General Introduction, p. xxix.

^b Wife of Tarquinius Collatinus. After being raped by Sextus Tarquinius, son of Tarquin the Proud, the Etruscan ruler of Rome, Lucretia told her husband what had happened and then took her own life. The rape and death of Lucretia sparked a rebellion by Junius Brutus and the Tarquin family was expelled from Rome. Having freed the city from Etruscan rule, Junius Brutus and Lucretia's husband, Tarquinius Collatinus, were elected consuls.

^c When Junius Brutus's two sons attempted to restore the Tarquins as rulers of Rome, he had them put to death.

^d Marcus Junius Brutus (785–42 BC) and Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 BC). After the Roman civil war and Caesar's defeat of Pompey in Pharsalus in 48 BC Caesar became dictator of Rome. He was murdered in 44 BC by a conspiracy which included Brutus, a supporter of Pompey in the civil war, who had been later pardoned by Caesar.

^e James Scott, the Duke of Monmouth. Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II led an invasion of England in 1685, shortly after his father's death. The Monmouth Rebellion was the culmination of several years of Whig unrest stimulated by the fear of the succession to the English throne of the Catholic James, Duke of York. Monmouth's troops were defeated in July 1685 and Monmouth was executed shortly afterwards. The third part of Behn's novel, *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister*, focuses on these events. [Cf. *Works of Aphra Behn*, 2] Behn has added the allusions to Junius Brutus and Caesar in order to provide a context for her reference to the Duke of Monmouth as an example of self-love and interest in the England of 1685.

in ours to all good Men appears a Monstrous Ingratitude and Folly,^a yet had he been almost Deifi'd with the new Saints, and Male-contents if his Designs had taken effect. Nay this sort of Vertue is so wide (with the greatest part of the People) from the appearance of Vice, that the delusion has even blinded the Ambitious deceiver himself, who is I believe so far from perceiving the Cheat, even in his own heart, so distant from the thought that his Treason is a Vice, that he really is persuaded 'tis a Meritorious Vertue: and possibly he may have advanced so far in this dull Error that he may really fancy that 'tis more to justifie his Vertue that he plays the ungrateful Traitor than to attain to the Glory of Empire; and there are thousands who will like him be abused into the same Error, blinded with the appearance of Vertue and Religion: so that 'tis not only the Error of the Heathens, but even those who have the advantage of professing Christ. Do you think Seneca who made his wise Man equal with the Gods was wise himself? or that he could impose that belief on others?^b in spite of his Pride he would confess 'twas impossible to find a Vertue so accomplished in Man, and that the most perfect amongst Men was he who had the least faults: he was of that belief that Socrates^c himself was subject to Reproach, for that he had but a feigned friendship for Plato^d and Aristotle:^e that they were Covetous, that Epicurus^f was Prodigal, and Voluptuous; but yet he says at the same time, that we should be too happy if we could but attain to the knowledge to be able to follow their Vices; this Grave

^a Behn's phrase 'to all good men' echoes the closing lines of *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* where she describes the pardon granted to Lord Grey for his part in the Monmouth Rebellion, saying he 'came to Court in as much Splendour as ever, being very well understood by all good Men'. [Cf. *Works of Aphra Behn*, 2, p. 439]

^b See note ^a, p. 2. Seneca was advisor to the Emperor Nero.

^c Greek philosopher (c.470–399 BC). Socrates wrote no philosophical works but his teachings had a strong influence on his pupil, Plato, who includes the figure of his mentor in many of his dialogues.

^d Greek philosopher (c.428–c.348 BC). One of the founders of the Academy in Athens, Plato was the author of some of the most celebrated works in philosophy such as the *The Republic*, *The Phaedo*, *The Symposium*, and *The Parmenides*.

^e Greek philosopher and scientist (384–322 BC). A student at Plato's Academy and later tutor to Alexander the Great, Aristotle developed his own philosophic system which is outlined in his *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*.

^f Greek philosopher (341–270 BC). His atomist philosophy was later popularised by the Roman poet, Lucretius, and in the Restoration period Epicureanism held favour with many philosophers and writers. Behn herself expressed an interest in Epicureanism and praised Thomas Creech's translation of Lucretius' *De Natura Rerum*. [Cf. *Works of Aphra Behn*, 1, no. 11] In La Chapelle's text marginal notes quote various passages from Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius*, *De Tranquillitate animi* and *De Vita beata* in which these charges against the Greek philosophers appear.

Philosopher had reason to say so much of his friends, who was so happy to laugh, as he did, at all Worldly Blessings, as Honours, Pleasures, &c. Seeming to despise them, and yet to see himself Master of the Empire, as well as of the Emperor, and at the same time a lover of the Empress;^a to have Glorious Palaces, delightful Gardens, and all the joys of Magnificence and Love to use at his Pleasure. I should have loved to have been a Philosopher at this rate, and could be contented amidst such an abundance, to have recommended and extoll'd Moderation and Poverty to the World; whilst Riches, Power, and Love attended my desire; tell me, dear Lysander, do you think that this Learned Stoic^b who feigned so well to master his Passions, had not some Vices conceal'd under his Vertues? Or when he cut his Veins (when commanded to kill himself by the Emperor) do you think he did not more than once repent that he had not killed his Disciple, when in his power, that compelled him to it? and by His Death have prevented his own? Yes doubtless he did. Observe but the false bravery of this Man whose steady Vertue has been and is so cry'd up in the World, and you will see notwithstanding his great Reasonings of the Immortality of the Soul, what mighty pains he took to appear above the fear of death; he mustered up all his force to make a good show (as did a Modern Hero lately) he bit his tongue for fear he should confess that Death had a Sting; he who pretended that Reason can make a Man incapable of Suffering, instead of humbling his Pride, he raised it above a Deity. He would much more have obliged us to have freely and franckly confessed the corruption and weakness of Mans heart, than to have taken so much pains to have deceived us. The author of these Reflections does not cheat us so, he exposes to light all the failings and frailties of Man: he shews that in spite of all the efforts of his Sense and Reason, that Pride and Self-Love hide themselves in his heart, and from thence diffuse their Poison, unperceivably, into every of his Motions. Now perhaps you will be positive and assure me, that you know by experience a Man may be generous and good without design of Interest, or any other regard than to that of Goodness. Not considering the good or the ill, but meerly out of a natural generous goodness of the heart which leads you (without thinking) to that which is good: would I could believe this of any Man that boasts it upon his word; and that 'twere true that

^a Claudius came to power in AD 41, after the death of Caligula. In the same year, Seneca was banished from Rome after being accused of adultery with Julia Livilla, Caligula's sister.

^b Seneca expounded the philosophy of Stoicism which advocated virtue as the highest good. The doctrine encouraged a strict control of the passions and an indifference to both pleasure and pain.

humane Nature had but reasonable Motions, and that all our Actions were but naturally Virtuous: but how can we reconcile such a belief to the Opinion of the Fathers of the Church, who have asserted that all our Virtues are but imperfect, that our Will being born blind, our desires blind, and our conduct blind, 'tis no wonder that Man who wanders in so much darkness should often rove, stumble, and fall.^a They say that all the wisdom of Man is not able to foresee what shall happen; how then shall he be able to prevent it? what humane force is able to defend it self from an unwarning Enemy? how then shall we prevent an evil? Why, you'll say, by resolution: but, as I said before, self-love is so mixed with every motion of the soul that one cannot resolve without calling that to Counsel, and that can suffer nothing to hurt it self: that always insensibly debauches the Will, and you must take your Will along with you or you can do nothing: you'll say your temperance shall guide you, but there's so much self-love even in temperance that that can neither resolve nor condemn but what self-love permits, and secretly, even unknown to your own Reason approves. In fine, fix your resolve on what you will, you will if you with unbiassed judgment examine it, find self-love enough there to debauch your nicest Virtue; at least to find there is an alloy of self-love that renders it not so pure as it ought; upon this subject I could enlarge much, but this is enough to put you upon tedious dispute for a larger time than I am willing to lose on so dull a subject, therefore I commit 'em to your serious consideration, assuring you they have this good quality, that the more you look, the more you'll like, I wish I could say so much of,

LYSANDER,

Your real Friend and Servant

ASTREA.^b

^a Here, Behn cuts short her translation of La Chapelle's text and closes with her own statements.

^b Astrea was Aphra Behn's pseudonym, used frequently in her literary life and also as her codename when she was acting as a spy in Antwerp in 1666. The name is taken from the heroine of Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astree* (1607-27).

SENECA
UNMASQUED,
OR,
Moral Reflections.
FROM THE
FRENCH:

By Mrs. A. B.

Our Vertues are for the most part but Vice disguised.

1.

That which we take for Virtue, is most commonly but a mixture of divers Actions, and of several Interests, which Fortune, or our Industry knows how to set in order, and 'tis not Courage that makes a Man Brave, nor Chastity that makes a Woman Honest.

2.

The great and splendid Actions which dazle and amuse the wondring Crowd, and which are represented by Politicians as great and glorious Designs, are indeed the effects of Humour, and private Passions. As the War of *Augustus* and *Mark Anthony*,^a (which served and managed their Ambition, only to make themselves Masters of the Universe) was no other perhaps than an effect of Jealousie.

^a Gaius Octavius (63 BC-AD 14), the first Roman emperor and Marcus Antonius (c.83-31 BC), Roman general and politician. Following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, Octavius, Mark Antony and Lepidus formed a Triumvirate to govern Rome. This league collapsed with the retirement of Lepidus in 36 BC and Mark Antony's abandonment of his wife Octavia (the sister of Octavius) for Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt. In 31 BC Octavius' forces defeated Antony and Cleopatra in the battle of Actium and he assumed complete control of Rome and its territorial possessions, taking the name Augustus in 27 BC.