The Rover

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF APHRA BEHN

It is unclear where exactly Aphra Behn was born, or even what her maiden name was. She is believed to have married a man with the last name Behn in the mid-1660s, but little is known about him, and she may have made him up completely. After becoming a spy for the English monarchy (also in the mid-1660s), Behn was deeply in debt; in fact, a warrant was even issued for her arrest. It was then that Behn began writing plays (she also wrote poetry and fiction). By the 1670s and 80s, Behn was one of the most prolific and successful playwrights for the British stage. Still, Behn faced sexism, and was often accused of bawdiness and unfemininity both because of her work and the mere fact that she was a women writer. After a disastrous flop called Like Father Like Son, the prologue of which caused Behn to be sued for libel, she stopped writing plays. Although she died poor, and suffering terribly from rheumatoid arthritis, her fame was so great that she was buried in Westminster Abbey.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Restoration Comedy came into being in England after the overthrow of Oliver Cromwell's republican government (which itself came after the execution of Charles I in 1649) and the reestablishment of the monarchy in 1660. Cromwell had banned all theater during his reign, and Restoration Comedy stood in direct defiance to his austere, severe beliefs, embracing extravagance, vulgarity, and immorality. Behn was a staunch supporter of the monarchy, and spied for King Charles II after he came back into power. Restoration Comedy also brought with it the first appearance of actresses on the modern English stage (as opposed to the cross-dressing men of Elizabethan theater); in fact, one of Charles II's mistresses was the famous Restoration actress Nell Gwynn. With the introduction of actresses came "the breeches role," in which a plot twist required a female character to disguise herself as a boy—such a twist takes place in The Rover when Hellena disguises herself as a servant boy in order to spy on Willmore. This device was supposed to pique the interest of male audience members, who enjoyed admiring an actress's legs in the revealing, tight breeches; later scholars, however, have also considered the breeches role subversive, because it allowed for playwrights such as Behn to explore gender roles within their works.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

For another madcap adventure including the character of Willmore, read The Rover, or the Banished Cavaliers, Part Two, which Behn wrote in 1681 in response to the massive success of the first play, and which continues her exploration of gender, violence, and comedy. A very different facet of Behn's work shines through in *Oroonoko* (1688)—a novella set in Surinam and centering around the life of an enslaved African, this work is not only considered one of the early examples of the English novel, but also reflects Behn's forward-thinking understanding of race (just as *The Rover* reflects a similar understanding of gender). William Wycherley's The Country Wife (1675), a sex farce about a rake who pretends to be impotent in order to seduce married women, represents another example of popular Restoration Comedy, indulging in even more promiscuity and vulgarity than *The Rover* although it overlooks the issue of sexual violence (an omission that further highlights *The Rover*'s concern with the issue). A more problematic example of Restoration Comedy is The Provoked Wife (1697) by John Vanbrugh, about a deeply unhappy (and often unfaithful) married couple named the Brutes. Unlike the figures within *The Rover*, its main characters do not find happiness or fidelity at the end of the play. For a modern example of a sex farce, read Boeing-Boeing, which depicts a man with three fiancées, all of whom are airline stewardesses. Like *The Rover*, this play indulges in both farce and extravagance, creating an environment in which impossible (and immoral) actions seem completely plausible and acceptable.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Rover, or the Banished Cavaliers, Part One
- **When Written:** 1677
- **Where Written:** London
- **When Published:** Premiered at the Duke's Theatre in London in 1677
- **Literary Period:** Restoration (17th century England)
- **Genre:** Restoration Comedy
- **Setting:** Naples, Italy
- **Climax:** After a farcical chase, the three pairs of lovers are reunited
- **Antagonist:** Don Pedro and Don Antonio, two Spaniards who seek to keep the cavaliers from their lovers

EXTRA CREDIT

Desperate Times Call for Desperate Measures. Aphra Behn was a spy for King Charles, but the monarchy never paid her for her service; she began playwriting in part to pay off her debts.

A Feminist Patron Saint. Virginia Woolf praised Aphra Behn in

the book A Room of One's Own, whom she believed "earned [women] the right to speak their minds," and paved the way for all female authors who followed her.

PLOT SUMMARY

The play opens in Naples, where two Spanish sisters Helena and Florinda, discuss love. While their father is away, they are under the watchful eye of their brother, Don Pedro. The ladylike Florinda is in love with the noble but impoverished British cavalier Belvile while witty Hellena is supposed to become a nun, but longs for love. Don Pedro enters and announces that their father wishes Florinda to marry the elderly, wealthy Don Vincentio; he, however, wants his sister to marry his friend Don Antonio. Hellena attempts to argue. Meanwhile, Pedro orders the girls' governess, Callis, to keep Hellena from the **Carnival**. The girls scheme to escape, accompanied by their cousin Valeria.

On a street in Naples, Belvile enters, melancholy with love for Florinda. His friends, Ned Blunt and Frederick, tease him. The three of them encounter Willmore, the Rover for whom the play is named; he is overjoyed to see Frederick and Belvile, and the two introduce him to Blunt. The four Englishmen watch and marvel at a group of revelers at the Carnival.

Florinda, Hellena, and Valeria, disguised as gypsies, enter with Callis and Stephano, accompanied by a group of revelers including Lucetta and Sancho. Florinda recognizes Belvile, while Hellena notices Willmore. She tells his fortune, and their exchange becomes flirtatious. Meanwhile, Lucetta, a prostitute, plots with her pimp Sancho to rob the wealthy Blunt. Florinda cannot reveal herself to Belvile because of Callis; when she finally does, Don Pedro enters and she flees. Once she leaves, Belvile begs his friends to help rescue her, while Blunt leaves with Lucetta. Willmore asks if there are more willing women in Naples, and his friends tell him of Angelica, a beautiful prostitute who charges a thousand crowns per month.

The group reenters later in the day, intending to seek out Angelica. They encounter Blunt, who believes himself in love with Lucetta. While they mock him, servants enter and place pictures of Angelica around the stage, so that all can observe her beauty. Don Pedro enters, sees the pictures, and resolves to pay Angelica's thousand-crown price. Angelica herself appears with her servant Moretta. Don Antonio, also masked, enters and decides to purchase Angelica despite his betrothal to Florinda. Hearing his sister's name, Pedro is upset—his friend is his rival for Angelica's affections, and does not care for his sister. The two men duel; the Englishmen part them, but the Spaniards resolve to fight the next day at a public square, the Molo. Pedro declares that they are fighting not for Angelica, but for Florinda, and exits.

Willmore pulls down a picture of Angelica. Antonio, believing that the cavalier is insulting the courtesan, draws his sword and the two fight. Antonio's comrades join in, as do Willmore's, and the Englishmen beat the Spaniards. Angelica, displeased at having lost a potential customer, commands Willmore to come up and face her in person.

Inside the house, Willmore scolds Angelica for putting a price on love, and the two begin to flirt. After miscommunications and jibes, Angelica and Willmore admit that they have feelings for each other, and Angelica tells the cavalier that the only payment she wants is the exchange of his heart for hers; he agrees, and they rush to Angelica's bedchamber.

Florinda, Valeria, and Hellena, still masked, enter the same street so that Hellena can meet Willmore. Valeria, meanwhile, reveals that she fancies the English stranger (Frederick) whom she met earlier. The Englishmen enter without Willmore, and the girls hide. The men worry about Willmore's fate; Hellena grows curious. Willmore enters triumphantly, revealing that Angelica has given him a great deal of money.

Belvile reminds Willmore of the gypsy girl he had liked earlier (Hellena in disguise), but the Rover protests that he does not want to think of any other woman. Yet when Hellena emerges in her gypsy disguise, he immediately begins flirting with her again. Angelica enters with her bravoes and, seeing the couple, responds jealously. Meanwhile, Hellena takes off her mask, and Willmore is struck by her beauty. Angelica orders one of her servants to follow Hellena and discover her identity. Simultaneously, Frederick courts Valeria, while Florinda attempt to discern whether or not Belvile is faithful to her by tempting him with jewels. As the ladies leave, Florinda gives Belvile a jewel although he has refused to take it. She exits, and he discovers that it contains her picture, realizing that he has been talking to his beloved. He decides to rescue her later that evening.

Blunt enters Lucetta's home, and the two prepare to sleep together; Blunt undresses and takes off his fine clothing and jewels. When he enters Lucetta's chamber, she uses the darkness to slip out and open a trapdoor, through which Blunt falls. With the help of Sancho, and her lover Philippo, Lucetta steals his belongings and exit. Blunt enters, dirty, unclothed, and cursing not only Lucetta, but all women. He exits, still enraged.

Later that evening, Florinda enters her family's garden in her nightgown and unlocks the door for Belvile. Willmore sneaks in, masked, drunk and belligerent. She struggles as he attempts to assault her. Belvile and Frederick enter, also masked, and pull Willmore off of Florinda—enraged, he draws his sword. Drawn to the commotion, Don Pedro enters with his guards, Florinda flees, and the Spaniards force the Englishmen out.

Belvile confronts Willmore, telling him that he has nearly raped Florinda and demanding a duel; Willmore refuses. Belvile grows despairing, remembering that Florinda will marry Don

Antonio tomorrow. As they talk, they reach Angelica's house, and Willmore makes to enter it. Before he can, however, Antonio enters, announcing that he has paid Angelica's fee. Willmore, enraged, draws his sword, challenges Antonio to a duel, and wounds the Spaniard. Assuming that he has killed Antonio, the cavalier staggers away. A group of soldiers enters, believing that Belvile has hurt the Spanish nobleman. Antonio orders them to take Belvile to his house, mistaking him not only for Willmore, but also for Pedro (with whom he had dueled previously).

Belvile, imprisoned in Antonio's house, is surprised when the Spaniard gives him a sword. Antonio wishes the Englishmen to fight in his place in his duel against Pedro (since he is wounded). Belvile realizes that he is speaking to Antonio—his rival for Florinda's hand—and reacts with dismay. As Antonio explains that the duel is over Florinda, Belvile becomes even more upset, believing that Florinda has another suitor. The two agree that Belvile will duel disguised as Antonio.

A masked Florinda arrives at the Molo to watch the fight. Stephano reveals that the duel is for her honor and she becomes upset, believing that Pedro is fighting against Belvile. When Pedro enters, he remarks that Antonio is late, and Florinda is relieved. Belvile enters, dressed as Antonio, and Pedro berates him both for insulting Florinda and finding favor with Angelica. The duel proceeds. Fearful for her brother's life, Florinda intercedes, begging Belvile to stop in the name of his love; he does so immediately. Pedro believes that this is a sign of "Antonio's" love for Florinda, and gives his now unmasked sister to his opponent. Florinda is dismayed at the prospect of marrying Antonio, but Belvile reveals himself to her. Disastrously, Willmore and Frederick enter, calling out Belvile's name. Pedro realizes his mistake and takes his sister back.

As they exit, Belvile draws his sword on Willmore, who runs away just as Angelica enters with her servants. She reveals that she knows Hellena's identity as a noblewoman. When Sebastian reenters with Willmore, she berates him, accusing him of courting Hellena for money. Willmore is thrilled that his gypsy girl is actually wealthy, and plots to leave. Hellena enters dressed as a pageboy, and tells Angelica that she comes from a noblewoman who loves Willmore. The cavalier grows intrigued, believing that a third woman adores him. While Angelica grieves, he begs Hellena to reveal more about her mistress. She refuses and, realizing that she is his gypsy girl, Willmore resolves to torment her. Angelica commands him to remain faithful, and though he scoffs at the idea that she is jealous of a gypsy girl (thus torturing Hellena), he refuses; enraged, she sends him away. Hellena also exits, and Willmore vows to find her. Angelica vows revenge.

Florinda and Valeria have escaped from Don Pedro, and are attempting to find the Englishmen. Valeria reveals that she has contacted Belvile, and that he will stall Pedro. Seeing both men (along with Wilmore), the women put on their masks. Willmore begins to harass Florinda and she exits. Frederick enters and tells the group about Blunt's escapades; Belvile offers to show Pedro his hapless companion. Florinda reenters, and hides in a house (coincidentally Belvile's lodgings), only to encounter Blunt. Enraged against women, he attempts to rape her, and asks Frederick to help. The two pause when she offers them a jewel to prove her wealth, and mentions Belvile's name. They resolve to lock her up until they can discern whether she is truthful.

Blunt hides in his room as his friends and Pedro besiege the door, finally breaking it down. As they tease him, he reveals that he has taken a woman prisoner, showing off her jewel, which Belvile recognizes. He attempts to extricate Florinda without alerting Pedro, but cannot. The men resolve to draw their swords, deciding that whoever carries the longest sword will determine whether Florinda is noble. Pedro proves to have the longest sword, and ends up threatening his own sister. At this point, Valeria enters, distracting Pedro by telling him that Florinda has escaped. Relieved, Belvile and Florinda resolve to marry, as the other men beg forgiveness. She grants it, and Frederick and Valeria decide to marry each other as well. A page enters with a convenient priest, and the four leave to be married, with Willmore remaining behind to guard the house.

Blunt exits to meet his tailor, and Angelica enters, masked. Willmore believes her to be the gypsy girl, but quickly realizes his mistake when she unmasks and threatens him with a pistol, calling him a traitor. She expresses her pain at his abandonment, asserting that she must kill him for all womankind. Antonio enters and offers to kill Willmore for Angelica, while Pedro enters and hides. Angelica decides to show contempt for Willmore by letting him live. She exits, and Pedro confronts Antonio, accusing him of not caring for Florinda. Antonio exits angrily and Pedro questions whether he should give Florinda to Belvile. Willmore informs him that the deed is done and threatens Pedro, saying that he will kidnap the Spaniard if he does not bless Florinda's marriage.

Belvile reenters and Don Pedro congratulates him; the two exit to tell Florinda the happy news as Hellena enters, disguised again in boys' clothes. When Hellena still refuses to go to bed with him, Willmore agrees to marry her; the two at last tell each other their names. The two married couples enter, along with Pedro, who is dismayed by but resigned to Hellena's union with Willmore. Blunt enters in Spanish clothing, looking ridiculous, as do a group of revelers. As the other couples dance, Hellena and Willmore admit that they are frightened to marry each other, but resolve to do so anyway.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Willmore – An upper-class soldier called a cavalier, Willmore is

loyal to the English monarchy, and has therefore been exiled from his homeland (the story takes place during Oliver Cromwell's reign in England after the execution of Charles 1). He comes to Naples excited about the free-for-all atmosphere of **Carnival**. A classic rake, and the Rover of the play's title, he is called so not just because of his travelling, but also because of his roving eye. He constantly lusts for women, and seeks out different ways to seduce them, leaving a trail of broken hearts wherever he goes. Reckless and rash, Willmore often quarrels with other men, and is quick to draw his **sword**. During the play, he wins the love of both the noble, unladylike, intelligent Hellena and the high-priced courtesan Angelica. Witty and charming, Willmore also has a dark side, which becomes obvious when he almost rapes Florinda, the beloved of his friend Belvile. Although he eventually vows to marry Hellena, his intellectual equal, it is difficult to believe that wedding vows will end Willmore's promiscuous behavior.

Hellena – The strong, witty, brave heroine, and sister to Florinda and Don Pedro, Hellena starts the play determined to venture out into the **Carnival** and fall in love, although her brother Don Pedro wishes for her to become a nun. When she meets Willmore, she is entranced by his wit and charm, and seemingly unafraid of his flirtatious, promiscuous ways. As the plot progresses, she repeatedly uses different **masks** and disguises (such as a gypsy girl and even a page boy) in order to ensnare her faithless beloved, even as she repeatedly fends off his attempts to seduce her and take her virginity. At the play's end, Hellena has apparently gotten what she wants—Willmore's hand in marriage. Their bantering and bickering, however, along with their vows to be unfaithful to each other, makes it clear that they will have, at the very least, an interesting union.

Angelica – A beautiful and wealthy courtesan, Angelica is desired by all men in Naples, including Don Antonio, Don Pedro, and Willmore, all of whom duel over her at various points throughout the play. Although she initially vows to charge one thousand crowns a month for her company and sexual favors, putting out **pictures** of herself to display her own beauty, she succumbs to Willmore's charms, and ends up falling in love with him and giving him money. When she finds that Willmore has been courting Hellena (who is rich and noble), the humiliated Angelica vows revenge, almost shooting her former lover with a pistol.

Florinda – The sister of Hellena and Don Pedro, Florinda is ladylike and modest, in contrast to her sister's nontraditional forwardness. She is in love with the cavalier Belvile, who saved her from rape at the hands of soldiers during the Spanish civil wars, but has been forbidden to marry him by her father (who wishes her to marry the elderly Don Vincentio) and by her brother (who wants to wed her to his highborn friend Don Antonio). Florinda shows bravery as she tries to reunite with Belvile using various **masks** and disguises, but is constantly menaced by men like Willmore and Blunt, who repeatedly attempt to rape her. Despite these obstacles, she does end the play happily married to her beloved.

Belvile – A dashing cavalier, and the epitome of a gentleman, Belvile is in love with Florinda, a noblewoman whom he met during the Spanish civil wars. Belvile's attempts to reunite with Florinda, who has been forbidden to marry him by her family, are repeatedly foiled by his indiscreet companions, especially the foolhardy Willmore. After a series of misadventures, during which he is mistakenly forced to fight Florinda's brother Don Pedro, Belvile is at last joined in matrimony with Florinda.

Don Pedro – The main antagonist of the play, the rigid and controlling Don Pedro wishes for his sister Florinda to marry his friend Don Antonio, and for his sister Hellena to become a nun, in order to safeguard their virtues. He, hypocritically, desires the beauteous prostitute Angelica, and eventually quarrels with both Antonio and Willmore over her affections. After being tricked and threatened by the Englishmen, Don Pedro is forced to allow his sisters to marry Belvile and Willmore—but only after, at one point, he unintentionally menaces the disguised Florinda, unaware that she is his sister.

Frederick – An English gentleman who is good friends with Willmore and Belvile, Frederick is the common sense of the group, often trying to get his friends out of scrapes and duels. Even he, however, can act impulsively and maliciously, as when he almost helps the oafish Blunt to rape Florinda. His romance with Valeria, Florinda's and Hellena's cousin, is one of the subplots of the play, and he ends up marrying her at its end.

Ned Blunt – An English gentleman like Frederick, Blunt is an oafish idiot, mocked and disdained by his friends, and valued only for his money. During the play, he believes himself in love with Lucetta, a prostitute, who tricks him out of his clothes and money with the help of her pimp Sancho and her lover Philippo. Humiliated and naked, Blunt attempts to revenge himself on the female sex by raping and beating Florinda but, upon learning that she is of noble birth and Belvile's beloved, begs her forgiveness.

Don Antonio – Although Don Pedro wishes for Antonio, the highborn son of a viceroy, to marry his sister Florinda, Antonio only has eyes for the seductive prostitute Angelica. He pays her thousand-crown price, and even duels for her, although he is wounded in the process, and ends up asking Belvile to fight in his place. In fact, his devotion to Angelica is part of the reason that an angry Pedro finally stands aside and allows Florinda to marry Belvile.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Valeria – Cousin to Florinda and Hellena, Valeria is braver than the former, but more ladylike than the latter. Providing her relatives with **masks** and helping them in their romantic schemes, she eventually finds herself in love with Frederick,

and marries him in a double ceremony with Florinda and Belvile.

Lucetta – The prostitute who tricks Blunt out of his clothes and money, Lucetta is a scheming, wily, and seductive woman; exactly the kind of woman whom the men of the play fear and loathe.

Moretta – The elderly servant of Angelica, and a former prostitute herself, Moretta hates all men, and is dismayed when her mistress succumbs to Willmore's charms.

Callis – The softhearted governess of Florinda and Hellena, Callis initially allows them to go out to the **Carnival**, despite Don Pedro's orders to the contrary. Later in the play, when she tries to stop the girls from leaving, Valeria locks her in a wardrobe.

Sancho – Lucetta's pimp, who helps her to rob Blunt.

Philippo – In love with Lucetta despite the fact that she is a prostitute, Philippo helps to fool and rob Blunt.

Don Vincentio – Although he never appears onstage, Vincentio is the wealthy but elderly man whom Florinda's father (also never onstage) wishes her to marry. Hellena repeatedly mocks both his age and his dark complexion.

Stephano – The servant of Don Antonio, but an ally to Florinda, for whom he occasionally lies.

Biskey and Sebastian – Angelica's servants (called "bravoes"), who put the pictures of her outside her house and report about the various men who stop to admire them.

Diego – Don Antonio's page.

Pages – The servants of Hellena and Willmore.

Blunt's man – In a comic scene, Blunt's manservant attempts to help him dress in Spanish clothes, to ridiculous effect.

Officers and soldiers – During a duel outside Angelica's house, these keepers-of-the-peace part the fray and mistakenly arrest Belvile (when in fact it was Willmore who caused the disturbance).

Bravos – Angelica's servants.

Priest – A priest who is fetched at the end of the play in order to marry Valeria and Frederick and Belvile and Florinda.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

GENDER ROLES

In many ways, the characters of *The Rover* conform to the traditional gender roles found in comedies of the Restoration period: the dishonorable men, like Willmore, seek pleasure; the honorable men, like Belvile, seek to protect women; the honorable women, like Florinda, seek matrimony; and the dishonorable women, like Angelica and Lucetta, seek to ensnare men. Men bear **swords** and seek out violence; women are peaceful and are threatened by violence.

Within her somewhat clichéd structure of her play, however, Aphra Behn is able to explore the nuances and consequences of such prescribed and exaggerated roles. An obvious example of this exploration is Hellena, who desires marriage, as all honorable women Restoration Comedies do. She does so, however, in a thoroughly nontraditional and unfeminine way, and is rewarded for her behavior. The character of Willmore, too, reveals problems with traditional gender roles. The audience finds his lustful antics charming and hilarious when they are directed towards Hellena, but threatening when he accosts Florinda; reconciling these two sides of our supposed hero is difficult and disturbing. Florinda's vulnerability, too, reveals flaws with traditional femininity. She may be a perfect lady, but she is completely unprotected from men with bad intentions. Angelica, too, a traditionally "wicked" woman, ultimately inspires pity within the audience, making clear the problematic nature of her role as well.

By pushing gender roles to such extremes, Behn uses her drama to reveal their disturbing and even destructive nature. *The Rover* is a comedy, but it depicts a troubling reality: that rigid adherence to gender roles may lead to serious and far-reaching consequences.

LOVE VS. LUST

The characters within *The Rover* constantly try to distinguish whether they are feeling love or lust. The line between the two is a blurry one, but an incredibly vital question within the play. In fact, each character can be defined by their attitude towards these two emotions. In general, men prefer lust while women seek out love, but the play complicates matters. The rakish Willmore uses the ambiguity between love and lust to his advantage, vowing love when he actually only feels physical lust. Angelica begins the play preferring lust to love (and profiting from the lust her beauty inspires), and suffers greatly when she finally succumbs to the second emotion. Hellena, for all her boldness, wishes for love rather than lust, and succumbs to Willmore's advances only after she is convinced hat he loves for her, rather than simply lusting. For the more traditional Florinda, lust is dangerous, making formerly honorable men threatening and dangerous.

The question of the divide between these two concepts is

important because essentially every action within *The Rover* can be attributed to one of them. Characters are largely helpless against the forces of both love and lust, and often act solely based on their emotional and/or physical desires. Because of their great power, it becomes even more important to distinguish between the two; doing so is the only way to truly understand the actions of the characters.

DECEIT AND DISGUISE

The Rover takes place at **Carnival** time, and brims with **masks** and disguises, from the gypsy costumes that Hellena, Florinda, and Valeria wear to Don Antonio's and Don Pedro's comedy of mistaken identities to Lucetta's robbery of Blunt. Fascinatingly, however, the play does not take a moral stance on disguise, since it is used by moral and immoral characters alike. The play does, however, create a strong connection between disguise and love, the prevalence of masks and lies implying that while deceit may often be harmful, some measure of deceit may be necessary in order to help love flourish.

Of course, deceit, disguise, and the confusion they cause also illuminate interesting issues surrounding identity. While some characters (such as the honorable Florinda and Belvile) are terrible at dissembling, others (Hellena and Willmore) excel at it. Identity is fluid for these figures; they can try on many different roles until they find one that fits. Other characters may engage in amusing mishaps involving mistaken identity, but for the true masters of deceit, identity is something that can be shaped and formed at will. The smartest characters—Hellena and Willmore—are also the best actors. The prevalence of deceit and disguise is therefore also meta-theatrical, exists on a plane outside the plot of the play, because it reminds the audience that they are watching a play, that all of these "people" on stage are in fact wearing "disguises" as they act their roles.

CLASS AND MONEY

Although not a particularly romantic topic, the issue of money runs throughout *The Rover*. The cavaliers constantly bemoan the fact that they do not have sufficient funds, while Don Pedro picks a husband for his sister based almost solely upon fortune. Angelica, too, is obsessed with money, and must crucially decide whether she will give her heart to Willmore for free, or hold out for the highest bidder. In fact, the themes of money and love often become intertwined in the play, as characters speak about purchasing love, or giving each other credit. The world in which they live is a capitalistic one, and money pervades even the most emotional of issues.

Class, meanwhile, creates even deeper issues, since it is the main barometer by which men decide whether or not a woman is worthy of respect. When Willmore attempts to rape Florinda, he does so because he does not know that she is a woman of "quality," and the same pattern occurs later in the play with Florinda, Blunt, and Frederick. Hellena, meanwhile, is able to attract Willmore because, although she is dressed in a low class costume, she displays noble manners (and because she has a large fortune). For the same reason, Angelica will never be truly valued; for all her riches and beauty, she is still a prostitute, and therefore at a lower rung on the social ladder.

In this way class and money subtly shape many of the interactions within the play, exerting their influence even when the characters do not explicitly mention them.

WIT AND LANGUAGE

In the largely immoral world of *The Rover*, wit and facility with language are the most highly prized virtues that a person can possess. The characters constantly reference wit, and the audience is invited to judge the inhabitants of the play based on how clever they are. Blunt, for instance, is instantly a figure of fun as soon as the audience hears his dull, plodding speech; he becomes even more so when he foolishly allows himself to be taken in by the clever Lucetta. Willmore, in contrast, can act immorally, yet will always be forgiven because of his eloquence and charm. When he meets Hellena, the two are attracted not to each other's looks, but to their perfectly matched wits. Despite the problems with their union, their meeting of two like minds is presented in an incredibly positive and romantic light. There is an implication that because the two have matching wits, they are also fundamentally compatible.

This obsession with wit and language reflects the atmosphere of seventeenth-century England. Plays were judged based solely by their facility with language rather than the inventiveness of their plots or the morality of their lessons. Aristocrats, too, assessed each other based on wit, each striving to be the quickest and the cleverest. The importance of wit within *The Rover* may be exaggerated compared to the real social world of that time, but it is undoubtedly true to the values of the time period.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

CARNIVAL

Italian cities such as Venice and Naples (where *The Rover* takes place) were famed for their Carnivals, huge, city-wide festivals during which many of the rules of ordinary life were temporarily suspended. Within the play, Carnival symbolizes a world of inverted values and freedom in

which noblewomen can roam the streets and impoverished cavaliers can court them and win their hands. Yet the world of the Carnival—a world without consequences—is not without its dark side. Predators such as Willmore and Blunt take advantage of the free-for-all atmosphere in order to accost and even assault women, while belligerent men often end up dueling each other on the streets. In depicting both the positive and dark sides of Carnival, Behn is displaying both the comic and the troubling aspects of the topsy-turvy, consequence-free genre of Restoration Comedy.

MASKS

Hellena, Florinda, and the cavaliers all use masks and disguises in order to plan and carry out their various liaisons. On a deeper level, however, masks represent the confusion of identity that takes place within this play. Willmore and Hellena fall in love without even knowing each other's names. Belvile, meanwhile, repeatedly does not recognize Florinda even when she is right in front of him. Masks, therefore, are emblems of confusion and deception, and proof that identity is not as stable or singular as it seems.

ANGELICA'S PICTURE

Every day, Angelica commands her servants to display pictures of herself in front of her house, so all the citizens of Naples can admire her beauty. Once she falls in love with Willmore, however, she ceases to do so. These pictures represent not only her vanity, but also her sense of self. The courtesan stops displaying them because she has fully given herself to Willmore and so is no longer "giving herself" to anyone else—a disastrous decision, as she soon learns.

SWORDS

Throughout *The Rover*, swords are associated with masculinity, virility, and power. Belvile is a true man in part because of his skill with a sword. Much of Blunt's humiliation comes from being robbed of his sword, and then being forced to wear a rusty one. At one point the cavaliers and Don Pedro draw their swords, and much is made of the fact that Pedro's Spanish blade is longer than their English swords. Willmore, in particular, often uses swordplay as a metaphor for intercourse. The connection between masculinity and violence is a traditional but disturbing one, and Behn takes care to show the consequences of such a belligerent and dangerous atmosphere.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *Oroonoko, The Rover, and Other Works* published in 1993.

Act 1, Scene 1 Quotes

I am resolv'd to provide myself this Carnival, if there be e'er a handsom Fellow of my Humour above Ground, tho I ask first.

Related Characters: Hellena (speaker), Florinda

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 160

Explanation and Analysis

As the play opens, Hellena is immediately established as brave, impertinent, and un-traditional. Her stereotypically unfeminine attitude contrasts with that of Florinda, who is gentle, modest, and demure. Thus playwright Aphra Behn has immediately introduced a complication to her play's presentation of gender roles. Florinda may be the "ideal" woman, but it is Hellena for whom the audience will root and with whom we will identify.

Hellena's statement in this passage is particularly transgressive, as she vows to "provide" for herself, and to find herself a handsome man during Carnival season. During this period in England, women were supposed to be passive objects of men's advances; the idea of a woman seeking out a man would have been shocking to those viewing the play.

It is significant, too, that Hellena has picked Carnival time to begin this mission. During Carnival in *The Rover*the world turns upside down, and untraditional behavior such as Hellena's becomes far more possible than it would be at any other time during the year. This theme of the topsy-turvy nature of Carnival will continue to expand throughout the play.

Act 1, Scene 2 Quotes

I dare swear I have had a hundred as young, kind and handsom as this Florinda; and Dogs eat me, if they were not as troublesom to me i'th' Morning as they were welcome o'er night.

Related Characters: Frederick (speaker), Belvile, Ned Blunt

Related Themes:

Page Number: 165

Explanation and Analysis

The vulgar Frederick makes fun of his chivalrous friend, Belvile, for being in love with the virtuous and beautiful Florinda. In so doing, he reveals an important truth about the play: the elegant and proper facade of *The Rover*actually masks a highly sexual and misogynistic undertone.

Here, Frederick refers to the act of sexually pursuing women, saying that while females are "welcome" during the night, they become "troublesome" during the morning (when, presumably, he wants them to leave). Essentially, Frederick thinks of all women as the same; they are fit to be objects of lust, but should not be regarded as anything more than that.

> Love and Mirth are my Business in Naples; and if I mistake not the Place, here's an excellent Market for Chapmen of my Humour.

Related Characters: Willmore (speaker), Belvile, Ned Blunt, Frederick

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 166

Explanation and Analysis

This passage introduces Willmore, the dashing but promiscuous "Rover" of the title. Unlike the proper Belvile or the contemptible Ned and Blunt, Willmore is both attractive and immoral. He is witty and daring, but also views women as objects to be used for pleasure and then thrown away.

It is important to note, in this passage, that Willmore uses the word "love" to actually mean "lust." He means to physically pursue women, but certainly does not intend to lose his heart to any one of them. He has confused physical desire with emotional feeling, and will continue to do so over the course of the play.

Willmore also introduces a second vital idea: the link between love and money. Throughout the play, we will witness how characters think of love as something that can be bought and sold. By referring to Naples as a "Market" in which he will be able to take part in the "Business" of "Love and Mirth," Willmore reveals that he fully buys into this mindset.

> *Hellena*: If you should prevail with my tender Heart (as I begin to fear you will, for you have horrible loving Eyes) there will be difficulty in't that you'll hardly undergo for my sake.
> *Willmore*: Faith, Child, I have been bred in Dangers, and wear a Sword that has been employ'd in a worse Cause, than for a handsom kind Woman—Name the Danger—let it be any thing but a long Siege, and I'll undertake it.

Related Characters: Willmore, Hellena (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 169

Explanation and Analysis

Soon after Willmore is introduced, he meets his match in the disguised Hellena, who has escaped her chambers dressed as a "gypsy." It is immediately obvious to the audience that Hellena and Willmore are meant for each other. The two wittiest characters in the play, as they banter they fill their conversation with puns and double entendres. Thus their immediate physical attraction to each other is made clear through language.

It is also vital to note that both Willmore and Hellena participate in a sexually charged way of speaking. While this would be expected of the rakish Willmore, it is surprising in the well-bred Hellena. Yet again we see this character's non-traditional nature, as she tempts Willmore with her "tender Heart" and notes his "loving Eyes."

Wilmore, for his part, rises to the occasion as he sees that Hellena can match his wit. Chivalrously--so it seems--he swears to wield his sword for her, but then adds that he will not undergo "a long Siege." What he means, of course, is that he hopes Hellena will quickly give up his virtue to him and let him sleep with her.

Act 2, Scene 1 Quotes

Willmore: But why thus disguis'd and muzzl'd?
Belvile: Because whatever Extravagances we commit in these Faces, our own may not be oblig'd to answer 'em.
Willmore: I should have changed my Eternal Buff too: but no matter, my little Gypsy wou'd not have found me out then: for if she should change hers, it is impossible I should know her, unless I should hear her prattle—A Pox on't, I cannot get her out of my Head: Pray Heaven, if ever I do see her again, she prove damnably ugly, that I may fortify my self against her Tongue.

Related Characters: Willmore, Belvile (speaker), Hellena

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 174

Explanation and Analysis

The cavaliers here discuss the subject of masks, as Belvile explains how a mask can allow for bad behavior, since they keep one's true face hidden. The concept of mistaken identity and deception is a common one in *The Rover*. The characters constantly lie to and manipulate each other, as they fight for dominance while also trying to keep their reputations (outside of the Carnival atmosphere) intact.

Willmore, meanwhile, is baffled by his sudden strong feelings towards the disguised Hellena. He feels that he is at a disadvantage, since she has seen his true face and he has not seen hers. In fact, he even hopes that she might be ugly, because he is so entranced by her wit. Willmore's emotion towards Hellena underscores the importance of banter and language within the play. Although he is extremely superficial in terms of appearance and lust, Willmore here finds himself falling in love with a woman whose face he has never actually seen, merely because of her intelligence and wit.

How wondrous fair she is—a Thousand Crowns a Month—by Heaven as many Kingdoms were too little. A plague of this Poverty—of which I ne'er complain, but when it hinders my Approach to Beauty, which Virtue ne'er could purchase.

Related Characters: Willmore (speaker), Angelica

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

Willmore now becomes entranced by a picture of the courtesan Angelica--a highly expensive prostitute who costs "a Thousand Crowns a Month" to employ. Once again, we witness how closely Willmore associates love and money. By saying that Angelica is worth even more than a thousand crowns, Willmore is paying her the highest compliment he can imagine.

It is important to note the difference between Willmore's emotions towards Hellena, and his attraction to Angelica. He feels strongly about Hellena without ever having seen her face; meanwhile, he desires Angelica without ever actually having met her. Yet in both cases, he still views the women as objects to be won or "purchase[d]" rather than as actual people.

Oh! Fear me not, shall I not venture where a Beauty calls? A lovely charming Beauty? For fear of danger! When by Heaven there's none so great as to long for her, whilst I want Money to purchase her.

Related Characters: Willmore (speaker), Angelica

Related Themes:

Page Number: 183

Explanation and Analysis

As he incites a fight outside of Angelica's home, Willmore here articulates what is essentially his life's philosophy: that he will do anything for "Beauty," and that if he cannot "purchase" Angelica's attentions, there is nothing "so great as to long for her." This obsession with female beauty in fact governs most of his actions in the play.

By now, the fickle Willmore seems to have utterly forgotten Hellena. He is entranced by Angelica's beauty and her price, and enjoys the idea of fighting other men for her. All of his worst impulses have come together in his quest to win Angelica at any cost, and he returns to his stereotypical role as the charming but immoral libertine.

Act 2, Scene 2 Quotes

Yes, I am poor—but I'm a Gentleman,
And one that scorns this Baseness which you practise.
Poor as I am, I would not sell my self,
No, not to gain your charming high-priz'd Person.
Tho I admire you strangely for your Beauty,
Yet I contemn your Mind.
—And yet I wou'd at any rate enjoy you;
At your own rate—but cannot—See here
The only Sum I can command on Earth;
I know not where to eat when this is gone:
Yet such a Slave I am to Love and Beauty,
This last reserve I'll sacrifice to enjoy you.
—Nay, do not frown, I know you are to be bought,
And wou'd be bought by me, by me,
For a mean trifling Sum, if I could pay it down.
Which happy knowledge I will still repeat,
And lay it to my Heart, it has a Virtue in't,
And soon will cure those Wounds your Eyes have made.
—And yet—there's something so divinely powerful there—
Nay, I will gaze—to let you see my Strength.

Related Characters: Willmore (speaker), Angelica

Related Themes:

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

In this long speech, Willmore gathers all of his rhetorical powers of persuasion in order to convince Angelica of his sudden love for her. This passage exemplifies both the good and the bad of Willmore. On one hand, he is obsessed with money and with the idea of "conquering" women. Superficially, he thinks that lust and love (and, in a way, business) are one and the same, and he prizes beauty above all else.

On the other hand, Willmore is not simply a passionate man, but a deeply eloquent one. He explains to Angelica that he would "sacrifice" everything for her, chiding her for wounding him with her eyes, even as he praises her "divinely powerful" gaze.

Given Willmore's skillful command over language, combined with his physical bravery and his sincere passion for living, it makes sense that both Hellena and Angelica would fall in love with him. While he may be an immoral rake, he does not pretend to be anything but what he is: a poor yet dashing man who lives by his wits, and who will stop at nothing to possess the various objects of his affections.

But Madam, I have been so often cheated
By perjur'd, soft, deluding Hypocrites,
That I've no Faith left for the cozening Sex,
Especially for Women of your trade.

Related Characters: Willmore (speaker), Angelica

Related Themes:

Page Number: 187

Explanation and Analysis

As Willmore continues to wrestle with his feelings for Angelica, he also reveals his own hypocrisy. As a poor cavalier with expensive tastes, Willmore must marry a rich woman (like Hellena) if he is to continue leading his extravagant life. Yet despite his need to exchange love for money, he condemns Angelica for doing the same, telling her that he cannot trust "Women of your trade"--prostitutes--because they are "deluding Hypocrites" who deceive him.

The calculating and aggressive Willmore here plays the victim, acting as if he has been wronged by mercenary women who use and abuse him. In fact, however, Willmore is often on the deceptive end himself, using whatever tactics necessary in order to persuade women to sleep with him. He seems to have conveniently forgotten this fact, however, in his strange but effective seduction of Angelica.

Act 3, Scene 1 Quotes

O' my Conscience, that will be our Destiny, because we are both of one humour; I am as inconstant as you, for I have considered, Captain, that a handsom Woman has a great deal to do whilst her Face is good, for then is our Harvest-time to gather Friends; and should I in these days of my Youth, catch a fitch of foolish Constancy, I were undone; 'tis loitering by da-light in our great Journey: therefore declare, I'll allow but one year for Love, one year for Indifference, and one year for Hate—and then—go hang yourself—for I profess myself the gay, the kind, and the inconstant—the Devil's in't if this won't please you.

Related Characters: Hellena (speaker), Willmore

Related Themes:

Page Number: 193

Explanation and Analysis

Hellena, in her gypsy disguise, has discovered Willmore

leaving Angelica's house. Although she first reacts with anger, she quickly slips back into her flirtatious banter with him. In this section, Willmore has just jokingly threatened to marry Hellena. In response, she says that they are equally "inconstant," because young, beautiful women like herself must also take advantage of their youth. She says that even if she fell in love with him, she would then quickly move on to "Indifference"and then "Hate" so as not to waste time.

Once again, Hellena and Willmore have proved themselves the wittiest characters in the play. In the midst of their conversation, Hellena has once more reversed traditional gender roles. Of the pair of them, Willmore is the only truly inconstant one, attempting to seduce Angelica and Hellena almost simultaneously, while Hellena (secretly) wants only him. Here, however, she plays hard-to-get, telling Willmore that she would never be faithful to him because to do so would mean wasting her youth. This is a stereotypically masculine mindset, and not one that the audience--or Willmore--would expect from a highborn young lady. The cavalier, though, is delighted by Hellena's attitude towards love, lust, and romance. He is entranced by the very aspects that make her seem "un-feminine," and believes that he has truly met his match, in female form.

❝ Ah Rogue! Such black Eyes, such a Face, such a Mouth, such Teeth—and so much Wit!

Related Characters: Willmore (speaker), Hellena

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 196

Explanation and Analysis

Near the end of their banter, Hellena finally shows Willmore her face, before exiting. The cavalier is spellbound by her beauty, and is glad that it matches her linguistic abilities.

Here the usually eloquent Willmore is reduced to listing Hellena's admirable features, ending with the most important one of all: her "Wit." His lovestruck attitude here contrasts with his usually witty words, showing the audience that he may have sincere feelings of love for Hellena.

This passage also shows how closely Willmore relates beauty and wit. For him, they are essentially two sides of the same coin; beauty is the physical side of an attractive person, while wit is the linguistic side. Willmore's ideal woman--Hellena--possesses both.

Act 3, Scene 3 Quotes

❝ *Florinda*: I'll cry Murder, Rape, or any thing, if you do not instantly let me go.
Willmore: A Rape! Come, come, you lie, you Baggage, you lie: What, I'll warrant you would fain have the World believe now that you are not so forward as I. No, not you—why at this time of Night was your Cobweb-door set open, dear Spider—but to catch Flies?—Hah come—or I shall be damnably angry...

Related Characters: Willmore, Florinda (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 202

Explanation and Analysis

As a drunken and aggressive Willmore attacks the helpless Florinda, audiences and readers alike must confront the darkest side of the world of *The Rover*: the threat of sexual violence.

In a world in which men are encouraged to be violent, dominant, and sex-obsessed, while women are forced to be meek and submissive (while also guarding their virtues), sexual violence is a real and present danger. What makes this instance so upsetting, however, is that it is our hero, Willmore, who is attempting to rape the virtuous Florinda. His charming wit has transformed into misogynistic violence, as he asserts that Florinda left the gate of her home open in order to "catch" men like him.

The truth, of course, is that Florinda has done nothing wrong, while Willmore has crossed the line from amusing rake into aggressive predator. In making her hero attempt to engage in a truly evil act, Aphra Behn is displaying how blurry that line truly is, and how quickly the men of this society can transform into violent and brutal aggressors.

Act 3, Scene 4 Quotes

❝ *Belvile*: Damn your debaucht Opinion: tell me, Sot, hadst thou so much sense and light about thee to distinguish her to be a Woman, and could'st not see something about her Face and Person, to strike an awful Reverence into thy Soul?
Willmore: Faith no, I consider'd her as mere a Woman as I could wish.

Related Characters: Belvile, Willmore (speaker), Florinda

Related Themes:

Page Number: 204

Explanation and Analysis

Enraged by his friend's attempt to violate his beloved, Belvile confronts Willmore, demanding to know why he attempted to rape Florinda. He asserts that Florinda's goodness and virtue must have shown in her "Face and Person," and that Willmore should have shown "Reverence" to such a chaste and noble (and wealthy) woman.

Willmore, however, responds that he did not see any such signs about her; and that, instead, he "consider'd her as mere a Woman" as he could want. What he means, essentially, is that in his drunken and sexually aggressive state, women become interchangeable to him. He did not care what Florinda looked like or who she was; he cared only that she was a female, and therefore an object for him to conquer and possess. Once again, we see the darkness and the misogyny that underly Willmore's supposedly amusing antics.

Act 4, Scene 2 Quotes

Oh, name not such mean Trifles.—Had I given him all
My Youth has earn'd from Sin,
I had not lost a Thought nor Sigh upon't.
But I have given him my eternal Rest,
My whole Repose, my future Joys, my Heart;
My Virgin Heart. Moretta! Oh 'tis gone!

Related Characters: Angelica (speaker), Willmore, Moretta

Related Themes:

Page Number: 213

Explanation and Analysis

Having fallen in love with Willmore, Angelica now finds that he is pursuing the rich, noble Hellena. A worldly woman, Angelica knows that even her beauty and sexual skills cannot compete with Hellena's high birth and riches. Bereft, she (like many of the characters) puts love in terms of money, realizing that she would rather have given him all her wealth ("all/ My Youth has earn'd from Sin") than her heart. She also refers to her heart as "Virgin"--for although Angelica has given her body to many men, Willmore is the first to whom she has given her love.

Although up until now we have viewed Angelica as a romantic rival for Hellena, here she becomes an example of the human cost of Willmore's rakishness. Giving in to his professions of love and his verbal eloquence, Angelica has bestowed her trust and her love on someone who did not truly deserve or desire it.

Angelica: Thou, false as Hell, what canst thou say to this?
Willmore: By Heaven—
Angelica: Hold, do not damn thy self—
Hellena: Nor hope to be believ'd.
Angelica: Oh perjur'd Man!
Is't thus you pay my generous Passion back?
Hellena: Why wou'd you, Sir, abuse my Lady's Faith?
Angelica: And use me so inhumanly?
Hellena: A Maid so young, so innocent—
Willmore: Ah, young Devil!
Angelica: Dost thou not know thy Life is in my power?
Hellena: Or think my Lady cannot be reveng'd?
Willmore: So, so, the Storm comes finely on.
Angelica: Now thou art silent, Guilt has struck thee dumb.
Oh hadst thou still been so, I'd liv'd in safety.

Related Characters: Angelica, Willmore, Hellena (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 217

Explanation and Analysis

A furious Angelica and a disguised Hellena both turn on Willmore, ripping him apart for his faithlessness and deceit. This is a highly comic scene, as both women are able to verbally abuse their disloyal lover. At the same time, it gives the audience a chance to see how truly hurt both Angelica and Hellena are by Willmore's actions--and how utterly unrepentant the rakish cavalier continues to be.

This scene is also notable for Hellena's skillful manipulation of the circumstances. A master of disguise, the highborn lady is here dressed up as a servant boy, able to fool her lover into revealing his true, sinful nature, and to chide him without revealing to him who she is. She also manages to turn Angelica against him, thus potentially ridding herself of a romantic rival.

If it were possible I should ever be inclin'd to marry, it should be some kind young Sinner, one that has Generosity enough to give a favour handsomely to one that can ask it discreetly, one that has Wit enough to manage an Intrigue of Love—oh how civil such a Wench is, to a Man that does her the Honour to marry her.

Related Characters: Willmore (speaker), Hellena

Related Themes:

Page Number: 220

Explanation and Analysis

The jealous Angelica here attempts to force Willmore to promise that he will never marry another woman. In response, Willmore paints a verbal picture of a woman whom Angelica believes does not exist: a "young Sinner" who is generous, beautiful, discreet, and as witty as he himself.

What Angelica does not understand, of course, is that Willmore has described Hellena, using both his wit and his sincere admiration for the slippery noblewoman to fool Angelica. Once again, we see both Willmore's good and bad intermingled. On one hand, he continues to use and deceive Angelica; on the other, he is clearly entranced by Hellena, and seems to recognize her as his true match. While his treatment of Angelica is contemptible, it is up for readers to decide whether or not Willmore redeems himself with his genuine love and admiration for Hellena.

He's gone, and in this Ague of My Soul
The shivering Fit returns;
Oh with what willing haste he took his leave,
As if the long'd for Minute were arriv'd,
Of some blest Assignation.
In vain I have consulted all my Charms,
In vain this Beauty priz'd, in vain believ'd
My eyes cou'd kindle any lasting Fires.
I had forgot my Name, my Infamy,
And the Reproach that Honour lays on those
That dare pretend a sober passion here.
Nice Reputation, tho it leave behind
More Virtues than inhabit where that dwells,
Yet that once gone, those virtues shine no more.
—Then since I am not fit to belov'd,
I am resolv'd to think on a Revenge
On him that sooth'd me thus to my undoing.

Related Characters: Angelica (speaker), Willmore

Related Themes:

Page Number: 221

Explanation and Analysis

Realizing that Willmore has abandoned her for good, Angelica realizes that she has ruined herself for the faithless cavalier. While her beauty and seductive charms are famed around the city, there is nothing that she can do to bring her lover back. As Angelica grieves, she looks back to when she fell in love with Willmore, realizing that she has forgotten that she is a courtesan, and therefore is not worthy of loving or being loved.

In this mindset, Angelica vows--since she cannot be beloved, she will be revenged. Humiliated and heartbroken, it makes sense that Angelica takes this dark turn. She has met Willmore's passion with generosity, sincerity, and love. He has undoubtedly sinned in deceiving her (whatever her profession) and, in the eyes of both Angelica and the audience, he deserves to pay. Once more, we see the ruin that our supposed hero's lust and dishonesty can cause.

Act 4, Scene 3 Quotes

A fine Lady-like Whore to cheat me thus, without affording me a Kindness for my Money, a Pox light on her, I shall never be reconciled to the Sex more, she has made me as faithless as a Physician, as uncharitable as a Churchman, and as ill-natur'd as a Poet. O how I'll use all Women-kind hereafter! what wou'd I give to have one of 'em within my reach now! Any Mortal thing in Petticoats, kind Fortune, send me; and I'll forgive thy last Night's Malice

Related Characters: Ned Blunt (speaker), Lucetta

Related Themes:

Page Number: 224

Explanation and Analysis

Having been deceived by a woman who turned out to be a prostitute--and who stole all his money and his clothes--Ned Blunt is furious. A stupid but violent man, he decides that since his lover, Lucetta, was dishonest, all women are therefore so. In fact, he goes even beyond mistrust, vowing to "use" them violently and abusively from henceforth.

This misogynistic and deeply disturbing attitude is characteristic of the men in *The Rover*. Despite going to great lengths to seduce and possess women, the men also

deeply distrust and even despise the opposite sex, believing that women are deceitful creatures out for all they can steal. Although this mindset may explain Blunt's hateful, violent treatment of women for the rest of the play, it by no means excuses his behavior. Instead, playwright Aphra Behn is offering her audience yet another example of how quickly a seemingly humorous objectification of women can turn into a misogynistic, violent worldview.

> Cruel, adsheartlikins as a Gally-slave, or a *Spanish* Whore: Cruel, yes, I will kiss and beat thee all over; kiss, and see thee all over; thou shalt lie with me too, not that I care for the Injoyment, but to let you see I have ta'en deliberated Malice to thee, and will be revenged on one Whore for the Sins of another; I will smile and deceive thee, flatter thee, and beat thee, kiss and swear, and lye to thee, imbrace thee and rob thee, as she did me, fawn on thee, and strip thee stark naked, then hang thee out at my Window by the Heels, with a Paper of scurvey Verses fasten'd to thy Breast, in praise of damnable Women—Come, come along.

Related Characters: Ned Blunt (speaker), Florinda

Related Themes:

Page Number: 225

Explanation and Analysis

The virtuous (and luckless) Florinda stumbles into Ned Blunt's rooms, looking for Belvile. Blunt believes that he has found the answer to his prayers: a woman for him to rape and abuse. Here we find the most naked and disturbing instance of misogyny yet within the play. Blunt tells Florinda that he will force her to lie with him solely so that she can experience his "Malice." He will do so, he explains, in order "to be revenged on one Whore for the Sins of another." In other words, since one woman has wronged him, he has turned against the whole sex.

This marks the second time in the play that the chaste Florinda is mistaken for a "whore." Playwright Aphra Behn does this deliberately, showing how men, with their violent and misogynistic mindsets, can believe even the most virtuous of women to be promiscuous and worthy of abuse. In truth, the men who act in this manner don't care what type of woman they abuse. Believing all females to be essentially the same--passive objects to be seduced or abused--they may claim to value virtue, but in truth, they value violence and domination more.

> I begin to suspect something; and 'twou'd anger us vilely to be truss'd up for a Rape upon a Maid of Quality, when we only believe we ruffle a Harlot.

Related Characters: Frederick (speaker), Ned Blunt, Florinda

Related Themes:

Page Number: 228

Explanation and Analysis

About to help Blunt to rape the helpless Florinda, Frederick pauses when Florinda desperately speaks Belvile's name. Although Blunt wishes to continue, convinced that Florinda is lying, Frederick orders him to stop. If they rape a virtuous (and wealthy) maiden, he explains, they will get in far more trouble than if they merely "ruffle[d] a Harlot."

Although it is this mindset that saves Florinda, we can also clearly see the deep immorality and misogyny that underlies it. The moment that Frederick believes that Florinda might have some value to another man--Belvile--he no longer wishes to violate her. To harm a highborn maiden in that manner would be a violation of both her betrothed (Belvile), as well as her noble father. In contrast, were Florinda a "harlot"--a lowborn woman or a prostitute--it would have been completely excusable, in Frederick's eyes, to rape her.

This belief that women are only valuable in relation to men underlies much of the action of *The Rover*. Women must be protected by their fathers, brothers, and lovers, who vouch for their virtue and their nobility. Women who have no value to such men, or who sell their sexuality (as prostitutes do), are worthy of contempt at best, and sexual violence at worst.

Act 5, Scene 1 Quotes

Angelica: All this thou'st made me know, for which I hate thee.
Had I remain'd in innocent Security,
I shou'd have thought all Men were born my Slaves;
And worn my Pow'r like Lightning in my Eyes,
To have destroy'd at Pleasure when offended.
—But when Love held the Mirror, the undeceiving Glass
Reflected all the Weakness of my Soul, and made me know,
My richest Treasure being lost, my Honour,
All the remaining Spoil cou'd not be worth
The Conqueror's Care or Value.
—Oh how I fell like a long worship'd Idol,
Discovering all the Cheat!
Wou'd not the Incense and rich Sacrifice,
Which blind Devotion offer'd at my Altars,
Have fall'n to thee?
Why woud'st thou then destroy my fancy'd Power?
Willmore: By Heaven thou art brave, and I admire thee strangely.
I wish I were that dull, that constant thing,
Which thou woud'st have, and Nature never meant me:
I must, like chearful Birds, sing in all Groves,
And perch on every Bough,
Billing the next kind She that flies to meet me;
Yet after all cou'd build my Nest with thee,
Thither repairing when I'd lov'd my round,
And still reserve a tributary Flame.

Related Characters: Angelica, Willmore (speaker), Willmore

Related Themes:

Page Number: 237-238

Explanation and Analysis

The heartbroken and vengeful Angelica confronts Willmore, attempting to get him to admit wrongdoing. As the cavalier continually refuses, saying that he only treated her the way she would have treated him, Angelica protests that this is not true. She explains that falling in love made her realize that her power over men (her clients) was worthless, because she had sacrificed her honor. She has now lost both her self esteem and her power, since she knows that as a prostitute, she has no real value. Essentially, Angelica has internalized the misogynistic worldview of the men around her. Because she is a woman who has sold her virtue, she believes she has no real worth in the world, and no real power.

Hearing Angelica's deep grief, Willmore seems to display remorse. Despite his regret, however, he explains that he can never be "constant," as Angelica wants him to be. Instead, he must constantly chase after women, like a bird going from bough to bough. This is as close as Willmore ever comes to acknowledging the immorality of his behavior. He still genuinely admires Angelica (and here even considers returning to her after loving his "round"), but having won her, he feels compelled to move on to the next conquest.

Nay, if we part so, let me die like a Bird upon a Bough, at the Sheriff's Charge. By Heaven, both the Indies shall not buy thee from me. I adore thy Humour and will marry thee, and we are so one of one Humour, it must be a Bargain—give me thy Hand—and now let the blind ones (love and Fortune) do their worst.

Related Characters: Willmore (speaker), Hellena

Related Themes:

Page Number: 243

Explanation and Analysis

Reunited with Hellena, Willmore swears that he will marry her. Still as mercenary as ever, he proposes it as "a Bargain" to her, and swears that nothing will "buy thee from me." He wishes to marry her, he says, because they are "so of one Humour": both witty, passionate, and ultimately inconstant.

Although the marriage of Hellena and Willmore represents a classic romantic comedy ending, it is unclear from this speech whether the couple will actually remain faithful to each other--or whether they even want to. The very "humour" (inner nature) that attracts them to each other has its roots in deception and rootlessness. Willmore loves Hellena because she constantly keeps him guessing, while Hellena loves Willmore because she must constantly chase and deceive him and order to keep him. They may be the perfect match, but it is highly doubtful that they will have the perfect marriage.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PROLOGUE

The author analyzes the state of modern drama, asserting that this new play is going to be judged harshly by audiences and fellow playwrights alike. She goes on to say that the playwrights who judge her work actually have been stealing their witty material from mothers. She reminds her audience that wit takes work, and that even a play that seems easy and effortless is actually the product of hard work on the part of the playwright. She ends by poking fun at those who watch her play, saying that they have come in order to see reflections of their own antics and debauchery on the stage.

Audiences (who were mostly the nobility) during the Restoration period in which the Rover was written understood that they would be seeing an over-exaggerated parody of their own extravagant behavior. They expected wit and comedy rather than plot or strong emotions. With this prologue, Behn is assuring audience members that her play will be clever, bold, and merciless in its mockery of modern society

ACT 1, SCENE 1

A pair of Spanish sisters, Florinda and Hellena, bicker in their chamber. They are living in Naples, where it is **Carnival** time, under the care of their brother Don Pedro, as their noble father is currently away in Rome. Florinda is appalled at Hellena's impertinence, reminding her that she is destined for a nunnery. Hellena, meanwhile, teases her sister about being in love, and asks to know what man is the object of her affections.

As soon as the play opens, it establishes that Florinda is a traditional, modest noblewoman, whereas Hellena is bold and adventurous. Their talk also reveals how sheltered they are; as highborn women, they are rarely allowed outside, and their futures have already been decided for them by their father.

Florinda says that she will not tell Hellena until Hellena is in love herself. Hellena retorts that she has not been in love, but she knows of all the silly behavior that love causes. She continues teasing her sister, saying that Florinda displayed all these symptoms of love when her brother brought home an English cavalier colonel named Belvile, who has been exiled from his homeland due to his allegiance to the British monarchy (which was briefly overthrown during the (17th century).

A major question within The Rover *has to do with the definition of love (especially in contrast to lust). Here Hellena begins a discussion about the physical symptoms of love, which Florinda shows when they speak of Belvile. This passage also introduces an important Restoration comedy trope: the virtuous couple (here Belvile and Florinda) torn apart by circumstances.*

Hellena goes on, asking if Florinda loves one of two Spanish noblemen: Don Antonio the viceroy's son or the rich but elderly Don Vincentio, whom their father wishes for Florinda to marry. Florinda blushes "with indignation," saying that she will never marry Vincentio because he does not deserve her.

As a noblewoman, Florinda is supposed to marry a wealthy, highborn man. Although Don Vincentio is far older than Florinda, this makes no difference to her father, because of her suitor's wealth.

Hellena applauds Florinda for her defiance, saying that she loves "mischief," as most women do. She asks Florinda once again if her sister loves the Englishman, praising his personality and looks, and adding how happy she will be if her sister is in love.

The more courageous of the two, Hellena often encourages Florinda to defy societal expectations and to follow her heart. She knows that Florinda loves Belvile, and wishes to use trickery to make the match.

Florinda once again chides Hellena for being so interested in love when she is destined to be a nun. Hellena replies that she has no intention of taking the veil. She adds that she wishes for her sister to be in love with Belvile because she hopes that he has "some mad Companion" with whom she might fall in love. In fact, she vows to participate in the "Carnival" of love even if she has to make the first move.

Although the men in Hellena's family have dictated that she become a nun, she has no intention of doing so. She believes that love is something that she can seek out (rather than an external force out of her control), and wants to use the free-for-all atmosphere of Carnival—in which normal rules and roles are loosened or even upended—in order to find it.

Florinda tells Hellena that she cannot be so bold, but Hellena says that she has beauty, youth, and "Sense enough" to use them to find a lover.

Once again, the play emphasizes that Hellena is an untraditional heroine with unusual confidence.

Hellena asks once again how Florinda knows Belvile. She replies that during a recent war in Spain, in the city of Pampelona, the English soldier saved both her and Don Pedro from the violence. She says that she now feels obligated to him, but that some other mysterious force has caused her to fall in love with him as well.

During the play, Florinda will experience a great deal of violence from men; her story makes it clear that this has been a part of her past as well. Given her negative experiences with men, it is no wonder she has fallen in love with the gentlemanly Belvile.

Don Pedro enters holding a **mask** for **Carnival**, along with his servant Stephano. He brings along with him Callis, the sisters' governess. He reminds his sister that their father wishes for her to marry Don Vincentio for his fortune. Florinda in turn begs Pedro to change her father's mind, adding that she hates Vincentio.

Don Pedro, the girls' brother, is something of a hypocrite; he wishes for them to be honorable and chaste, yet attends the debauchery of Carnival, and lusts after Angelica, a prostitute. Yet one could also argue that basically all of the men are hypocrites in similar ways, though to somewhat different extremes.

Don Pedro mentions Belvile, and notices Florinda's blush when she hears the name. When he questions her, Florinda replies that she is grateful for Belvile's protection, adding that he saved her from rape at the hands of "common soldiers" during the wars in Spain.

Pedro, too, notices Florinda's physical symptoms of love, while Florinda makes even more explicit the sexual violence that she experienced during the Spanish civil wars

Although acknowledging Belvile's bravery, Don Pedro reminds Florinda of Don Vincentio's fortune, but his sister fires back, reminding Pedro of Vincentio's age. Pedro acknowledges that Belvile is young and handsome, but tells his sister that the cavalier has only the "Jewels" of "his Eyes and Heart" to give her.

For Don Pedro and his father, Belvile's poverty outweighs his virtue (Florinda's love for him, meanwhile, is completely inconsequential). His heart may have metaphorical value, but in the world of the play, only money can buy love.

Hellena jumps in, saying that the "Jewels" Belvile has to offer are just as valuable as Vincentio's wealth. Don Pedro mocks her, asking if she learned this in the nunnery. Hellena continues, saying that Vincentio may give her sister wealth, but is too old to give her children. Pedro continues to dismiss Hellena, saying that she is fit only for a life of chastity.

Hellena begins to verbally combat her brother, using her wit (and a hint of vulgarity) to illuminate how misguided he is. Despite her intelligence, however, Don Pedro has the upper hand; he has control over his destiny and over hers: Hellena is fated to become a nun.

Hellena expresses disbelief that Don Pedro will force her into a nunnery and force Florinda into the confinement of a loveless marriage. Pedro tells her that she is mad to think that a luxurious life with Vincentio is confinement.

Don Pedro is conventional and close-minded. He believes that his sisters should obey him without question, and that wealth is the same thing as happiness.

Hellena twists Don Pedro's words, speculating about the luxurious life to which he refers. She speculates about Don Vincentio's habits in his "Moth-eaten" bedroom, asserting that he will force Florinda to undress him every night before belching and falling asleep. As Pedro repeatedly asks her to stop, she goes on, imagining what it must be like to kiss Vincentio through his beard. She also mocks Don Vincentio's dark complexion, calling him an "Indian."

Once again, Hellena displays that she is wittier and more imaginative than her brother. She is also defiant, refusing to give in to his demands for silence. Despite her intelligence, however, she also displays a hint of racism, mocking Don Vincentio for the dark color of his skin—such casual prejudice was common in the drama of this time period.

For all Hellena's jibes, Don Pedro asserts that Florinda will marry Don Vincentio no matter what. When Hellena says that it would be better for them both to become nuns, Pedro replies that Belvile has no fortune, and is living in exile from his homeland. Hellena says that even marrying Don Antonio would be better than a life with Vincentio.

The argument reaches a stalemate; Hellena is smarter and more articulate, but Don Pedro has the force of society on his side. He insists that Belvile is not an option, at which point Hellena contests that surely a young rich man (Antonio) is better than an old rich one.

Enraged, Don Pedro tells Callis to lock Hellena up, keeping her from the **Carnival** until it comes time for her to become a nun. Hellena retorts that she would rather become a nun than enter into a forced marriage. Secretly, however, she vows to find a lover instead.

Hellena is not only intelligent, but also scheming. Although Don Pedro may attempt to lock her up, she is completely determined to seek out love no matter what.

Don Pedro, meanwhile, orders Callis to watch Hellena closely, while confiding in Florinda that he has been speaking of his father's will rather than his own—he has merely been testing her to see whether she wishes to marry Don Vincentio. Since their father is away, Pedro wishes to go against his orders, and to marry Florinda to his friend Don Antonio, who is "brave and young." He asserts that Florinda and Antonio will marry the very next day.

It turns out that Don Pedro is duplicitous as well: he has been scheming all along to marry Florinda to his young, rich friend Antonio (thus going against his own father's will—a grave sin during this time). This maneuver is another example of the freewheeling world of Carnival, during which such events can take place.

When Florinda expresses surprise, Don Pedro replies that he is doing this for her sake. She replies that she will try to act "as shall become your Sister," and Don Pedro exits with Stephano to attend the **Carnival**.

Don Pedro is more interested in attending Carnival than in his sister's welfare, while Florinda, is too meek to resist his orders as Hellena does.

In anguish, Florinda laments that she will not be able to escape Don Antonio, who is both young and rich. Hellena, meanwhile, begs Callis not to lock her away. When Callis says that she must obey her commands, even though she hates them, Hellena continues pleading, saying that she will become a nun if only she can first experience **Carnival**.

Both Florinda and Hellena find themselves restricted because of their gender. They view Carnival as an escape because of the suspension of rules that it brings, and they hope to find freedom outside of the bounds of society.

When Callis asks what she intends to do at the **Carnival**, Hellena replies that she will act "mad" but remain "innocent." She asks Florinda to accompany her, attempting to cheer her sister by telling her of all the adventures they will have.

Although Hellena is bold and intelligent, she is also sheltered and chaste. She and Florinda may find freedom at Carnival, but they will encounter danger as well. And as women, that danger will primarily be one of sexual violence.

Florinda and Hellena decide to attend **Carnival**, accompanied by their cousin Valeria; they persuade Callis to go with them. Stephano enters, telling them that their **masks** are ready. Florinda decides to write a note that she can give to Belvile if she sees him, letting him know that she returns his love.

The girls' decision to disguise themselves signals a shift from the constrained world of their house to the free-for-all of Carnival. Florinda's note to Belvile, meanwhile, is just the beginning of the complicated hijinks that are to come.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

A sad Belvile enters a long street along with two English gentlemen, Blunt and Frederick. Frederick teases Belvile for his melancholy, saying that it is uncalled for, especially during **Carnival** time, unless he is in love. Belvile says that he made no new conquests in Naples or Paris (the last city they visited).

Immediately, the male attitude towards love is depicted as very different than the female one: women seek love out, while men fear and mock it. The men seek to satisfy their lust without creating emotional attachments.

Blunt and Frederick speculate that Belvile must want either money or a woman. When Belvile continues to deny this, they question whether Belvile has reencountered Florinda—the woman he fell in love with in Pampelona (although they briefly forget her name). They rebuke Belvile for wanting a woman who is too virtuous to satisfy him.

In the minds of Frederick and Blunt, caring for a noblewoman is foolish because she will expect marriage (and lock you into the responsibilities of marriage) before engaging in sexual relations. This passage also brings up the fact of Belvile's poverty, the main obstacle that keeps him from Florinda.

Belvile tells his friends that they are wrong—he knows that Florinda loves him, but he has been barred from her house by Don Pedro in order to make way for the wealthy Don Antonio. He goes on to say that Florinda has signaled her love through letters, and by looking at him from her window.

The exchange of love letters and longing looks is a common way for couples to communicate in this type of comedy, especially when they are separated by fortune (as is the case for Belvile and Florinda).

Blunt and Frederick continue to mock, telling Belvile that while he may be in love, they would never allow a woman—who are "welcome" in the night but "troublesome" in the morning—to have such power over them. Belvile accuses them of preferring whores to women. Blunt does not disagree, implying that he at least has money to pay whores (as opposed to Belvile, whose cavaliering has made him poor).

Blunt and Frederick's mockery is ironic because, by the end of the play, both will have fallen in love (with very different degrees of success). Blunt shows himself as particularly vulgar and low class, bragging that his wealth can buy him all the women that he needs, and in this way asserting that all a woman is worth is the sex she offers.

Willmore, a reckless and promiscuous cavalier (hence the nickname "the Rover"), enters unexpectedly. Belvile and Frederick embrace him with delight, asking what business he has in Naples, and introducing him to Blunt. Wilmore replies that he is traveling on business, but has come ashore to enjoy himself at the **Carnival**.

Even the lusty Frederick and Blunt cannot hold a candle to Willmore, a mischievous and immoral cavalier whose only goal in life is to seduce as many women as possible. Restoration audiences would have recognized him as a character typed called a "rake."

Willmore expresses joy at finding himself in Naples, adding that his business for the time being is "Love and Mirth." As the men look on, a group of **masked**, reveling men enters the street, along with a group of women dressed as courtesans, though it is unclear whether they are actual prostitutes, or simply in disguise.

Carnival is the perfect environment for Willmore, as citizens throw morality to the winds in favor of debauchery and disguise. The confusion about whether the women are prostitutes foreshadows the events later in the play when the men believe that Florinda is a courtesan (a kind of high-class prostitute).

The Englishmen, especially Wilmore, engage the prostitutes in conversation, noting that they each have notes pinned to their breasts and flowers in their baskets. They all engage in witty and vulgar banter about flowers, promiscuity, and venereal disease.

During this passage Willmore begins to show off his wit, mixing lewd jokes with quips; Restoration audiences would have expected and enjoyed this type of dialogue, and Willmore as a character is both morally deplorable and exceedingly charming.

When a prostitute that Willmore admired leaves, he grows angry, complaining that he had just been about to fall in love with her. The others tease him, implying that his long voyage at sea has made him full of lust; Willmore does not disagree, expressing his longing for a woman.

Willmore uses the word "love" to mean "lust" because doing so allows him to fool many partners into sleeping with him. Throughout the play he will constantly seek out new women to seduce.

Two men enter in **masks**, covered in horns. They too wear signs on their backs, and the Englishmen engage in another series of puns. As the revelers dance, the group marvels at the madness of **Carnival** time.

Throughout the play, all of the Englishmen will take advantage of the mad and antic atmosphere of Carnival in their own ways.

Florinda, Hellena, and Valeria enter, disguised as gypsies. Callis, who has let them come to Carnival after all, accompanies them with Stephano, along with a group of revelers: Lucetta, Phillippo, and Sancho. All are masked.

The masks conceal the female character's identities, but also their nobility. This makes them more able to move freely through the streets, but less safe from molestation and even assault.

Hellena immediately notices Belvile and points him out to Florinda. She notices Willmore too, calling him handsome, and decides to tell him his fortune.

The meeting of Willmore and the disguised Hellena is a major event; they will spend the rest of the play struggling with their feelings for each other. Here Hellena decides to tell Willmore his fortune, his fate, but in a way they each are each other's fate.

Believing Hellena to be a gypsy, Willmore begins to banter and flirt with her, calling her a "young Devil." Correctly identifying him as a poor Englishman, Hellena matches Willmore's formidable wit with her own. The cavalier offers her his heart, but Hellena tells him that she knows he is "inconstant." His heart, she says, is worth little more than his purse. Willmore acknowledges his promiscuity, but says that since he has been at sea for so long, he has love to spare for her.

Although other moments in the play are witty and amusing, no dialogue matches the quips and innuendos that Willmore and Hellena share. Although she is a noblewoman, she is able to match his vulgarity with sexual jokes of her own, even as she refuses to sleep with him. It is this mixture of wit and chastity that both intrigues and frustrates him, as does her unknown identity.

Hellena retorts that she means to die a virgin, and Willmore tells her that she will damn herself by doing so, and that he will help to change her mind. Hellena, however, says that he will have to go to horrible difficulties for her sake, even if his "loving eyes" should capture her "tender heart." Willmore, in turn, swears that he would use his **sword** for her to conquer anything but a "long siege," meaning that he hopes it will not take long to seduce her and take her virginity.

Although both Hellena and Willmore use sexual language to speak to each other, and take on the traditional roles of male seducer and seduced female, both have already begun to feel genuine emotion for each other, in addition to their great attraction. They are each other's intellectual matches, as signaled by their back-and-forth banter. This won't be the only time in the play that "swords" are used as sexual metaphors.

After Hellena informs him that he will need to storm a nunnery to win her, Willmore tells her that she will be considered more virtuous if she tastes the pleasures of the world before leaving it and becoming a nun. Hellena responds by telling Willmore that she wishes him to divert her from nunhood entirely. She tells him that, since she has never loved before, she will love more strongly than ordinary women.

Even the fact that Hellena is becoming a nun does not deter Willmore, and he actually turns this fact into a seduction technique by arguing that only those who have experienced sex before giving it up can be considered truly honorable. Hellena, meanwhile, introduces the word "love," although it is unclear whether she means that deep emotion, or only lust.

Asking Hellena to give him "Credit for a Heart," Willmore asserts that he wishes to come first to her "Banquet of Love," and asks her to take him back to her house immediately. He tells her that if he does not have her, he will die.

The pair begins to use the language of money to talk about love, and Willmore uses hyperbole (extreme exaggeration) in order to seduce Hellena. This type of seduction is another expected cliché of Restoration comedies. And the point of such comedies was not to avoid such clichés, but rather to fulfill and revel in them with as much gusto as possible. Behn seems to push that fulfillment to such extremes that she can sometimes even seem to cause the clichés to explode from the inside—in other words her characters fulfill the cliché so powerfully that it reveals the complication and even awfulness of the cliché in the first place.

Hellena responds disdainfully, asking if he wishes her to be guilty either of premarital sex or of murder. She goes on to ask him whether there is a difference between love and lust. Willmore, in turn, tells her that the two go together.

Hellena turns the cliché on its head, accusing Willmore of exaggerating. She then brings up the play's central question: the difference between love and lust. Willmore's answer—that the two are the same—reveals a great deal about his worldview.

As Hellena and Willmore banter, Lucetta and Sancho plot—she is a prostitute and he is her pimp. They decide to target Blunt, and Lucetta begins to flirt with him; he flirts back.

This passage begins the comic (but disturbing) subplot in which Blunt is swindled by Lucetta and then swears revenge on all women.

In yet another part of the street, Florinda reads Belvile's palm, but laments that she still has not had an opportunity to reveal herself to her lover because Callis is watching her too closely. Belvile grows tired of the sport, and begins to walk away from her; but as he does, she asks him whether he has been true or false to his lover Florinda.

Although Belvile is talking to his beloved Florinda, he is unable to recognize her. This confusion of Florinda's identity will continue as the play goes on, and Belvile will speak to her many times, only to realize later who she actually is. This running joke also pokes fun at the idea that love conquers all, that loving someone allows a person to penetrate all obstacles to understanding them. Belvile loves Florinda, but can't recognize her at all.

Although Belvile had been walking away, he responds with excitement and puzzlement when he hears Florinda's name. Florinda, still pretending to be a gypsy, tells him to come to her brother's garden gate to receive her love. As Belvile attempts to question her, Don Pedro appears with other revelers; Florinda pulls away, but succeeds in giving Belvile a letter.

Just as the lovers are about to reunite for a moment, circumstance interferes, in the form of Don Pedro. Florinda, however, does manage to tell Belvile where and when to meet her—a significant feat for the modest noblewoman.

Belvile's friends urge caution, worried that the letter may be a trap, but the cavalier opens it anyway. Meanwhile, Willmore and Hellena have made plans to meet each other later in the evening; Hellena makes Willmore promise that he will not give his heart to any other woman until he sees her again. All the women exit, except for Lucetta, who stays behind to seduce Blunt.

Each arc represents a different kind of love/lust relationship: Belvile and Florinda's relationship is pure and innocent, Blunt and Lucetta's is completely sexual and deceitful, while Willmore and Hellena's appears to be somewhere between the two (and to thrive on the tension between the two).

Recognizing Florinda's handwriting, Belvile rejoices, and begs his friends to help him rescue his love from Don Pedro. Willmore, although he has essentially no idea what is going on, says that he is always willing to make "Mischief where a Woman's concerned." He begins to joke vulgarly about Florinda, and Belvile responds angrily. Frederick stops the quarrel, and the men resolve to aid Belvile.

Willmore and Belvile's relationship will become increasingly strained throughout the play because of Willmore's attitude towards women and his habit of getting himself (and his friends) into scrapes. This moment also introduces Frederick's role as the peacemaker.

Blunt, meanwhile, exits with Lucetta, and the other men snicker at his actions, speculating that Lucetta may trick him out of his purse, especially if she pretends to be in love with him (for Blunt is very trusting). When Willmore asks what kind of man Blunt is, Belvile and Frederick mock his stupidity and lack of culture, but explain that they are using Blunt for his money.

Restoration comedies like this play often included a stupid male character being fooled and manipulated by a clever, seductive woman. Blunt clearly fills this role. Even his friends do not truly like him, taking advantage of him for his wealth even as they mock his idiocy.

Willmore expresses jealousy that Blunt has found such a willing woman, and Frederick responds by asking him about the gypsy (Hellena) with whom they saw him speak. Willmore replies that he suspects her of being chaste and noble, because of her fine wit, essentially dismissing her because it would take too long to conquer her virtue. He asks his friends if they know any other women who would be more susceptible to his advances.

Even through Hellena's disguise, Willmore was able to discern that she was a noblewoman. This fact does not please him, however, because it means that she is less likely to sleep with him. Note how quickly his thoughts turn from Hellena as soon as she is gone—this is a frequent pattern for the immoral Willmore, who wants sex and adventure above all.

Frederick tells Willmore about the beautiful Angelica, the former mistress of a now-deceased Spanish general and the object of adoration of all men in Naples, many of whom perform outside her window every day in order to win her attention. They go on to explain that she is a very expensive prostitute, and at the mention of her high price, Willmore expresses disinterest—although he still wishes to see her. The three men exit to go find food, but not before Belvile reminds them once again that they must help in gain Florinda that night.

Angelica represents a very different kind of woman from Florinda and Hellena: she is powerful, independent, and wealthy, and she is all those things because she is overtly sexual, able to exert power over men using her beauty a tool of commerce. At the same time, however, she will never be respected as the noblewomen are because of her status as a prostitute. Willmore's poverty, meanwhile, is at war with his interest in Angelica's beauty.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Belvile, Frederick, and Wilmore enter the same street, intending to seek out Angelica—the first two are **masked**, while Willmore is not. When Willmore asks why they where masks, Belvile replies that they need to protect their identities from any misdeeds they commit.

Just as the noblewomen wore masks for their secret Carnival adventure, now the Englishmen wear masks so that they can perform secret deeds of their own.

Willmore says that he should have worn a mask as well, but then reflects that if he had, he would not have met his "little Gypsy" (Hellena), whom he has not been able to stop thinking about, much to his dismay. He says that since he cannot recognize her visage (since she was **masked**), he could still recognize her by her talk. He hopes that she may be ugly underneath her mask, so that he will not feel attracted to her intelligence and wit.

Disguise is a major theme within Hellena and Willmore's relationship; the two do not exchange names until the play's end. Willmore is already conflicted about his feelings for her, bewitched by her wit but concerned by her chastity. Should she be beautiful, he fears that he will fall in love (which in his mind would be a terrible fate).

Belvile warns Willmore against falling in love with Hellena, saying that she is most likely too highborn to give her honor to Willmore. Expressing frustration, Willmore says that he must find another woman, like Angelica, who is not so virtuous, so that he can put the gypsy girl out of his mind.

Belvile assumes that even if Willmore falls in love with Hellena, he will still only want her body before leaving her brokenhearted. Willmore, meanwhile, seems to want to lose interest in Hellena entirely so that he can avoid what he sees as the trap of falling in love.

They arrive at Angelica's house, and Belvile notes that her **portrait** "is not out" (usually Angelica leaves a picture of herself outside of her door in order to remind the world of her desirability). Willmore expresses a wish to see the portrait, because it will allow him to gaze on beauty for free.

Angelica's picture represents her confidence in her own beauty, and her vanity. That she posts the picture out in the public world, displaying it as a salesman might display his wares, also establishes the way that she uses her beauty as an item of commerce. Willmore reintroduces the theme of money, appropriate since Angelica, a prostitute, sells her beauty for money.

Blunt enters in a state of sheer bliss, and calling himself an idiot for having avoided love for so long. He recounts how loving and attractive Lucetta was, even kissing Frederick in order to give him a taste of her lips. Expressing disbelief at how long he stayed in "dull England," he resolves to move to Naples in order to be closer to his mistress.

The idiotic Blunt immediately thinks himself in love with the seductive and deceitful Lucetta. He represents another kind of love, one that is foolish and dangerous, causing those who feel it to act in a blind and dangerous matter. Put another way, Blunt is falling into an exaggerated version of exactly the "trap" of love that Willmore fears. All the men fear falling in love with a woman who will ultimately make a fool of them.

When Belvile and Willmore question him further, Blunt reveals that he does not know the name of his new love. They ask if he gave her anything and he scoffs, saying that they exchanged gifts, as people of "quality" do. He shows them a bracelet that she has given him in exchange for the diamond that he used to wear, and reveals that she expects him again that very night.

It is obvious to both the characters and the audience that Blunt is being deceived. Although he believes Lucetta to be noble and chaste, she is obviously nothing of the kind, having already tricked him into exchanging his expensive diamond for a cheap bracelet.

When Willmore says that they should all go to meet Lucetta, Blunt responds jealously, saying that he cannot compete with their wit. Frederick warns Blunt to be careful of his purse, since it must support all of them. When Blunt offers to give Frederick the purse, however, Frederick refuses, saying that he must keep it in order to be tricked out of it, so that his friends can laugh at him.

Blunt (accurately) suspects Willmore of using his wit to seduce women. The smarter men, meanwhile, decide that the amusement that will follow when Blunt is tricked is more valuable than the money that has been supporting them all. The importance of amusement and hijinks is a common trait in Restoration comedy.

Frederick goes on to suggest that Lucetta may be a whore, and Blunt reacts with disbelief and anger, referring to Lucetta's fine clothes and beautiful house. Belvile responds that there are many prostitutes with fine clothes and beautiful houses. Willmore, with his one-track mind, asks where he can find such women.

Blunt fundamentally does not understand that appearances may be deceiving, and that Lucetta may be a prostitute despite her finery. The gap between appearances and truth is an important one throughout the play.

Blunt, still angry, tells his friends that many women are attracted to him although he is not witty as they are. He references his handsome form, his long torso, and other "nameless" attractive qualities.

Blunt is making himself ridiculous, attempting to imply that he has sexual prowess while only further exposing himself to mockery. He has no wit, and therefore within the world of a Restoration comedy is worthless.

The others continue to mock him, and blame Angelica for the choosiness of women—she has "rais'd the Price too high," they assert. Willmore expresses particular bitterness at Angelica's unattainability.

Although men desire Angelica, they also fear her power and resent the fact that they must pay for sexual intercourse (to which they believe they are entitled)

Two servants (called Bravos) enter and hang three **pictures** of Angelica up onstage: one on her balcony, and two smaller ones on each side of her front door; the pictures also include a price, since Angelica is a prostitute. Willmore is entranced by the picture, while Blunt scoffs, condemning Angelica as an immoral prostitute.

Angelica's picture, along with her price, neatly symbolizes the power that her beauty gives her to extract money and favors from men. Blunt's mockery, meanwhile, is ironic since he himself is under the spell of a courtesan (though he does not know it).

Ignoring Blunt, Willmore marvels at Angelica's beauty, saying that although she may cost a thousand crowns for a single month, even a thousand kingdoms would be too little to buy her love. He curses his poverty, which keeps him from attaining Angelica. Blunt and Frederick, meanwhile, question how the courtesan dares to charge so much money.

The formerly skeptical Willmore is so attracted to Angelica's picture that he changes his mind about the evils of buying love. Although he is usually witty about his own poverty, here he is genuinely frustrated and upset.

Seeing Don Pedro enter in his **mask** (along with Stephano), the Englishmen exit to watch the proceedings. Pedro, meanwhile, resolves to go fetch a thousand crowns in order to purchase time with Angelica. He too exits.

Here we see the depth of Don Pedro's hypocrisy: he wishes to keep his sisters cooped up in their house even as he uses their family's wealth to pay Angelica's exorbitant price.

Angelica herself appears at her balcony along with Moretta, her elderly servant, and a former prostitute herself. They ask one of the bravos about the men who have just left; the servant replies that the first were only admirers, but that they mocked the sum that she was asking. Angelica replies that even their attention adds to her vanity. The servant then tells her that he recognized Don Pedro through his mask; she responds with delight, knowing that his uncle (also her former lover) has left him a great sum of money.

When Angelica first appears, she is a highly mercenary and materialistic character. She does not care about love, and wishes only to use her beauty for her own financial gain. One of her weaknesses, however, is her vanity; she enjoys the attention of the Englishmen even though they will not provide her with any additional money or power.

Angelica reflects that Don Pedro is handsome and wealthy, but inconstant. She asserts that inconstancy is universal to all men though, and resolves that she will only be charmed by money. Moretta approves of her choice, calling love a disease.

Angelica is worldly and cynical (unlike Florinda and Hellena). She disdains love because she believes that men will always betray the women they love, and that therefore love is even more of a trap for a woman than it is for a man.

Seeing Don Pedro return, Angelica reveals that she means to seduce both him and Don Antonio. As if on cue, Antonio (also **masked**) attended by his page Diego and a group of musicians, enters. Antonio and Pedro both go to Angelica's picture and begin marveling at her beauty. Neither, however, recognizes the other.

The rivalry between Antonio and Pedro is an important subplot. The fact that the two friends do not recognize each other adds to the play's web of mistaken identities. Note, too, that these wealthy and powerful men are willing to go to great lengths because of their lust for Angelica.

Antonio wonders whether he should purchase Angelica's services, and Diego urges him to do so, saying that although his master will soon be married, his new wife—Florinda—will not miss a thousand pounds. Antonio tells his page not to name his future wife, since the thought of her will quench his lust for Angelica.

Like Pedro, Antonio cares far more about satisfying his own lust than he does about morality. Antonio is particularly careless and entitled because of his high birth, and his vast wealth.

Pedro now realizes that his **masked** rival is Antonio; he is appalled both because his friend has scorned Florinda, and because he himself may not now possess Angelica.

It is unclear whether Pedro is more upset about his sister's honor or his own thwarted lust—another example of this character's deep hypocrisy.

In order to draw the attention of her admirers, Angelica begins to play a love song on her lute. Antonio, in turn, pulls off his mask and begins to blow her kisses, promising her a thousand pounds. Enraged, Pedro counters, saying that he, too, will pay a thousand pounds. The two men quarrel and begin to duel. Willmore and Blunt enter to part the fray, and Willmore comments that if fighting were all it took to win Angelica, he would join the duel himself.

Angelica knows her power, and decides to feed her own vanity by seeking attention. The two men react exactly as she hopes, offering her money and praise. Things get out of hand, however, when the two Spaniards, fueled by lust, begin to duel—a common occurrence in a world in which men are supposed to be violent and women are supposed to be passive.

Pedro and Antonio resolve to duel the next day in the public square, called the Molo; Pedro says that they will fight not for Angelica, but for the honor of Florinda, whom Antonio has wronged. Furthermore, they vow to duel in masks. Having agreed on a time and place, Pedro and Stephano exit.

Note that Pedro knows Antonio's identity, but Antonio does not realize that he will be dueling Pedro. Their resolution to duel makes clear the power of Angelica's beauty, and of male lust.

Left behind, Antonio wonders who his rival for Florinda's heart might be (still not realizing that it is Don Pedro), and speculating that it might be Belvile (whose name he has heard from Pedro).

Antonio's anger about having a rival for Florinda—when he was just planning on hiring a prostitute—further emphasizes the hypocrisy of the men when it comes to lust and love. It also only increases the confusion, and will have comic consequences later in the play.

Seemingly entranced, Willmore pulls down one of the **pictures** of Angelica, explaining the desire it has incited in him. The bravo tells him to stop, but Willmore refuses.

Always driven by his desires, Willmore is so entranced by Angelica's beauty that he does not care whom he offends.

Believing that Willmore has insulted Angelica, Antonio threatens him with his **sword**; Willmore responds in kind, saying that while Antonio may have a thousand crowns to pay for Angelica himself, he will keep the **picture**.

The hot-tempered Antonio draws his sword once again, as Behn makes obvious the power of lust and her male characters' embrace of violence.

Hearing the commotion, Angelica asks Moretta what is happening. Although she commands the men to stop, Blunt and Willmore begin to fight Antonio and his companions.

Although Angelica enjoys men's attention, she does not want them to duel because it will be of no advantage to her. She wants them to pay her.

As he fights, Willmore continues to marvel at Angelica's beauty. Angelica calls down to ask whether he is the one who began the fight. Willmore explains to her that it is she who has wounded him with her beauty, and that only her **picture** can save him.

Even as he is engaged in a duel, Willmore still begins to use his seduction techniques to flirt with Angelica. His use of the metaphor of a wound is appropriate since he is fighting as he speaks. Note that his comment that only her beauty can keep him alive is a similar line to the one he tried to use to seduce Hellena earlier.

Angelica tells Willmore to keep the picture, but Antonio takes offense, and the fight continues. Belvile and Frederick enter, and together the Englishmen win the fight. Moretta laments that the Englishmen have scared away Angelica's potential customer.

Although Angelica attempts to make peace, the men are as attracted to violence as they are to her. Instead of feeding her vanity, the duel upsets her because it drives away a possible source of income.

The Englishmen discuss the duel; Blunt is proud of his sword fighting skills, while Belvile is concerned that that the Spaniards will seek revenge. Willmore, meanwhile, is slightly wounded. They mock the Spaniards for their apparently easy defeat.

The Englishmen are proud of their defeat of the Spaniards, believing it means that they are manlier than their opponents. To them, skill at violence and manhood are the same thing.

Angelica calls down to Willmore, telling him to come into her house and explain his insolence. When Willmore agrees, Belvile and Frederick warn him against entering the house of an angry courtesan, but Willmore ignores them, saying that he must go wherever beauty calls. He expresses a hope that she will give him a favor before he goes; his friends tell him that she is more likely to kill him. Angelica says that she will wound him only with her eyes, and Willmore enters her house as his friends mock.

Because Angelica is a powerful woman, the Englishmen fear her, believing that she may even use violence against Willmore. Willmore, however, is not in the least concerned; to him, following his desires is even more important than personal safety.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

Inside her house, Angelica demands to know why Wilmore pulled down her **picture**; he responds by questioning why she dared to leave it outside, asking if she meant to cause him despair by showing him what he could not buy.

In this world, a beautiful woman is dangerous because of the lust and violence she provokes in men. Angelica knows her power, while Willmore is attracted to it.

Angelica replies that she brought him in to beg her pardon, but Willmore counters, saying that he has come into her house to chide her for the sin of pride, and for bartering for love. Angelica refuses to be ashamed, and commands Moretta to bring in a mirror so that Willmore can observe his own charms.

Despite his poverty, Willmore is proud and fearless, using his wit to scold Angelica for her high price even as he compliments her beauty. Angelica, who is intelligent as well as beautiful, meets the challenge of his banter.

Moretta mocks Willmore for his poverty, but Angelica tells her to stop. Moretta, however, continues, attempting to force him to leave the house. Willmore jibes at her in turn, calling her stale and cheap. Moretta responds that by once again insulting his lack of funds.

Already Angelica begins to feel positively towards Willmore, despite his poverty and insolence. Moretta, meanwhile, cares nothing for Willmore's wit, believing him worthless because he cannot pay Angelica's price. Moretta is a constant reminder that Angelica's power and independence is based entirely on her complete disavowal of love and instead her focus on beauty and sex as items of trade.

Willmore asks if he may buy just a few moments of time with Angelica, but Moretta refuses, saying that he must purchase the whole time, or nothing. Willmore suggests that perhaps he and his countrymen can band together to buy Angelica, and then sell the time they do not want at the marketplace.

By asking Angelica to reduce her price, Willmore is essentially insulting her (since as a prostitute, she is defined by her monetary value). It is this willingness to offend her that Angelica finds intriguing.

Aside, Angelica remarks that Willmore cannot enrage her and that, indeed, she is falling in love with him. Out loud, however, she tells him that she despises his angry speech, and calls him poor. Willmore says that although he is poor, he is a gentleman. He relates that he feels conflicted about Angelica—he hates her for putting a price on love, but would sacrifice all he owns to have her. He says that the knowledge that she can be bought will help him heal the wounds that her **eyes** have made in her heart. Last, he holds her and stares at her in order to prove his strength, once more marveling at her beauty.

Angelica deals in lust, and believes love to be poisonous; she is dismayed, therefore, by the feelings that she has for Willmore. The cavalier, too, feels conflicted: he believes that he is entitled to sexual favors and should not have to pay for them, yet is deeply attracted to Angelica. The two continue to banter wittily even as they struggle with their emotions. Note that Willmore seems to have forgotten Hellena completely.

Speaking aside again, Angelica exclaims that his words have reached her soul. Willmore goes on to say that he feels only lust for her, not love, for he refuses to pine at her feet, instead standing strong in the face of her denial.

The two characters, each of whom believes in lust but not love, continue to grapple with their fast-growing feelings for each other, their pride at odds with their deep emotions.

Moretta notices her mistress's emotions, and once again tries to force Willmore out. Angelica, shaken out of her daze, snaps at Moretta, ordering her to leave. Turning to Willmore, she accuses him of being "mercenary" as well, asserting that he will not marry unless his wife is wealthy. Willmore denies this, saying that he will not marry for wealth.

Angelica is hostile to the object of her affections, disturbed by her own emotions. She reminds him that he needs money as badly as she does, and implies that he will become a kind of male prostitute if he marries a wealthy woman.

Angelica asks if Willmore could ever forget that her love and favor are for sale. She says that even if it is not true, he should tell her that it is, because he will please her in doing so. Aside, Willmore curses Angelica's charms, saying that she has found her way to his heart even though she is false. Enraged, he turns away from her.

As Angelica continues to speak, her cool and witty attitude begins to fail her. She is essentially asking if Willmore loves her enough to forget that she is a prostitute. Willmore, too, begins to lose his façade of detachment and skepticism.

Despairing, Angelica asks if Willmore will scorn the first vows of love that she has ever made. Willmore, not believing her, tells her that he has been cheated and fooled by many women, and that he no long has faith in any women, especially prostitutes.

Like Angelica, Willmore scorns love because he considers it to be dangerous and foolhardy. The courtesan, meanwhile, has abandoned dignity and detachment because of her feelings for the Englishman.

Angelica replies that Willmore has hurt her pride, and makes to leave. The cavalier physically restrains her, however, begging her to stay with him and vowing that he is her slave. Angelica tells him to stop talking, since his speech has the power to steal her heart from her. She goes on to urge him not to be soft, but to continue berating her, adding that if she does so, her love, too, will be "free." Willmore, too, laments how she has pierced his soul, even as he promises to "pay" with happiness for the rest of his life.

The two passionate characters misunderstand and hurt each other, but ultimately cannot keep their deep feelings for and attraction to each other hidden. Like Hellena, Angelica is attracted to Willmore's witty (and even insulting) banter. Willmore, meanwhile, appears to sincerely believe that he is in love with Angelica.

When Angelica still insists on payment, Willmore calls her a fiend, before promising to pay her in "vows" and kissing her hand. Angelica tells him that she only meant payment in the form of love. Willmore enthusiastically agrees, and suggests that they withdraw so that he can prove to her the strength of his affection—they do so immediately, presumably to consummate their passion.

Angelica once again uses the language of money to discuss love, because the two are so closely connected in her life. Unlike Hellena, she succumbs to Willmore's advances—rather than demanding to be married before having sex—and the two leave the stage in order to sleep together.

Moretta, who has remained silent until now, curses Angelica for falling pray to love. She abuses Willmore's name, but acknowledges that most prostitutes face a similar fate: they win riches from foolish men, only to foolishly give them back to men whom they love.

Moretta is a voice of greed, but also of reason. She mistrusts men, but with good reason, understanding that Willmore will ultimately betray Angelica, using and deceiving her only to move on to a new woman. Moretta believes women can only gain independent power and through independent wealth, and failing in love as the opposite of independence.

ACT 3, SCENE 1

Florinda, Valeria, and Hellena enter the same street on which Angelica's house is located later in the afternoon so that Hellena can meet Willmore. They are still **masked**. Having recently found Don Pedro in an ill humor, Florinda wonders whether he has discovered their recent escapade. Hellena reacts dismissively, saying that if he had, they would now be locked up.

Carnival continues, and so too do the adventures of the noblewomen. While Willmore has forgotten Hellena, she cannot stop thinking about him. Meanwhile, the women do not know that their brother is angry because of his quarrel over Angelica with Antonio.

Valeria recalls their antics in the guise of gypsy girls, revealing that she told a stranger (Frederick) his fortune but grew nervous and almost dropped her disguise completely. As Hellena begins to long for Willmore, Florinda and Valeria begin to mock her. Hellena acknowledges that she wishes she had never seen the "mad" cavalier, but insists that she is not in love.

Valeria's romance with Frederick is yet another subplot that the play juggles. The mention of this liaison reminds Hellena of Willmore. Intelligent despite her innocence, she knows that she should not fall in love with Willmore, but is unable to turn off her feelings for him (as a woman, she can't just go take another male lover the way Willmore has gone to Angelica as a way of avoiding thoughts of love).

Valeria speculates about Willmore's promiscuity, and Hellena realizes that he may not come to meet her. Wondering what she is feeling, she describes her anger and fear that Willmore may have met another woman. Valeria teases her about her confusion, asserting once again that Hellena is in love; Florinda joins in, and together they poke fun.

The girls' speculations about Willmore are, of course, correct: he has met another woman and apparently forgotten Hellena entirely. Florinda and Valeria, meanwhile, are amused that the witty Hellena is caught in the trap of love.

Hellena responds almost blithely, saying that she resolved to fall in love, and now she has. When Florinda reacts with disbelief, asking who Hellena expects to like her if she acts so madly. Hellena asserts that she does not care if a man likes her unless she likes him back. She then fires back at her cousin, reminding her of the many men who seek Valeria's hand.

Hellena views love differently than her female relatives, viewing it as a valuable life experience that she has now gained. This attitude is a surprisingly modern one (indeed, it shocks Florinda), and reflects Aphra Behn's skill and imagination as a writer.

Florinda expresses surprise and dismay that Hellena has learned to love so quickly. Hellena begins to describe what she thought love would be: flattery, admiration, and reassurance of her own desirability. She goes on to say that it is a good thing she is going to a convent, for there her sighs and tears for Willmore will be mistaken for piety.

Florinda believes, mistakenly, that Hellena's embrace of love makes her somehow wrong and sinful. Hellena, however, has a far more advanced idea of love: by articulating her former idea of love in clichés and platitudes, she is in fact describing how different love is in reality.

When Florinda once again calls Hellena mad, her sister responds sharply, telling Florinda that she, too, in in love and must act discreetly and honorably.

Although Hellena is blithe and witty, she reacts defensively and angrily when her sister continues to insult her feelings.

Noticing the Englishmen enter without her "inconstant" Wilmore, Hellena urges Valeria and Florinda to hide with her in order to see what is going on.

Hellena takes advantage of her disguise and the freedom it gives her, using it to learn about Willmore's antics.

Belvile, Frederick, and Blunt enter and immediately notice that Angelica's **picture** has been removed. Blunt believes that Angelica may have been kind to Willmore, while Belvile worries that the courtesan has murdered his friend. Aside, Hellena's heart speeds up as she realizes that they are speaking of "her Man."

Angelica is a powerful but unpredictable woman, leading the Englishmen to question Willmore's fate. Hellena, meanwhile, learns far more than she meant to about what Willmore has been doing in her absence. Note how love has made her possessive of Willmore, how there is some truth to the idea that love puts ties around those who fall into it.

The Englishmen knock, and Moretta answers from the balcony, asking what they want. When they ask after Willmore, Moretta curses him once again, but tells the group that he is coming to them.

With Angelica in love with Willmore, she has lost the ability to make money, because she will no longer sleep with her clients.

Willmore enters, having just exited Angelica's house; Hellena, still hidden, responds with anger. As Belvile questions him, Willmore replies triumphantly, hyperbolically praising Angelica's beauty, her eyes filled with cupid's arrows, and the joy that he has found in her arms. Sarcastically, Hellena notes that this description is "encouragement" for her.

Willmore is happy because his lust has been satisfied, and because he has managed to seduce the seemingly unattainable Angela with his wit. While the concealed Hellena, meanwhile, rather than angrily dismiss Willmore sees the love he has for another as a personal challenge.

Still boasting, Willmore praises the alcohol that he drank earlier in the day, calling it holy, and asserting that it gave him the confidence to succeed with Angelica. He says that no other woman will "raise a new Desire" in him, and offers to treat his friends to anything they want, because Angelica has given him gold to spend.

Angelica has not only slept with Willmore, but also given him money—a double victory for the penniless, lusty cavalier. Joyful and victorious, Willmore still seems to have forgotten about his seemingly strong feelings for Hellena.

Blunt asks if Willmore and Angelica have married, and Willmore answers that they have shared all the joys of matrimony, but none of the bitterness. He continues to rejoice in his luck and his newfound wealth.

The foolish Blunt does not understand the nature of Willmore's relationship with Angelica. The cavalier, meanwhile, remains convinced in his love for Angelica.

Expressing a wish to see his own beloved again, Blunt sees Sancho, who is masquerading as Lucetta's page. He tells the Englishman that Lucetta expects him as soon as possible and Blunt, elated, leaves with him immediately.

In contrast to the witty Willmore, Blunt has no power over the prostitute who has seduced him. His exit with Sancho begins his road to ruin, condemned by his own idiocy but also his belief in love.

Belvile asks Willmore if he has forgotten his gypsy girl. Willmore angrily responds that that he had forgotten her until this moment.

Willmore moves fluidly from one object of desire to the next, genuinely forgetting about women when he is not with them. Yet his anger at being reminded of Hellena suggests that there might be more to his feelings for her than for others.

Hellena immediately comes out of hiding, tapping him on the back and asking if this is true. Willmore initially responds with fear, but soon slips back into flirtatious banter, asserting that he has spent the whole day looking for and sighing after her. Aside, she laments that she cannot be angry with him, because he is dissembling so well.

Despite his seeming love for Angelica, Willmore remains attracted to Hellena's wit and vivacity. Even though Hellena knows that the cavalier is lying, she values his wit more than she values his honesty, demonstrating the gap between truth and appearance.

Asking how she may reward his devotion, Hellena takes up Willmore's flirtatious tone. He, in turn, asks if he may see her face. She responds that, if he were as eager to love now as he seemed this morning, he would not need to look upon her face to desire her. They continue to banter in a series of double entendres.

Hellena once again demonstrates how remarkable she is, responding positively to Willmore even though she knows he has betrayed her. Their sexual banter continues, and she keeps him interested even though he has not seen her beauty.

As the two converse, Angelica enters, accompanied by Moretta, and her servants Biskey and Sebastian. Expressing surprise at finding Willmore here, Angelica hides and wonders whether he is courting another woman. Moretta responds scornfully, saying that she expected no less. Angelica, deeply hurt, responds that she expected her love to make Willmore noble and true.

Although Angelica was reluctant to love, she now has strong feelings for Willmore. Like Hellena, she remains faithful to Willmore even as he seeks out and seduces other women—a huge difference between the promiscuous Willmore and the women who love him.

Taking her boldness to a new level, Hellena sarcastically tells Willmore that she knows soldiers (like himself) to be strict and chaste men. For this reason, she says, it will be difficult to get him to marry her. Willmore warns her not to go too far, lest he marry her out of revenge.

For a rakish man like Willmore, marriage is the ultimate defeat, because it would force him to be faithful to only one woman. Hellena knows this fact, and uses it to mock him.

Hellena counterattacks, telling Willmore that she is as inconstant as he is, and that she does not wish to remain faithful to any man while she is still young and beautiful. For this reason, she tells him, she will love him for one year, be indifferent for the next, and hate him for the third before ceasing to care about him altogether. Willmore responds that she has put a hole through his heart, and therefore he could not imprison her within it even if he wanted to.

The bold Hellena once again displays her nontraditional attitude, saying that she will be as unfaithful a woman as he is a man. Willmore is intrigued by this blithe and unexpected attitude, unused to meeting a woman whom he cannot seduce and betray.

Incensed, the hidden Angelica expresses rage at Willmore's inconstancy.

Unlike Hellena, Angelica cannot react carelessly and wittily to Willmore's promiscuity because she has already given herself to him.

Hellena tells Wilmore that they are alike, destined to fool men and women into loving them. She takes off her **mask**, supposedly showing him how deceptive her face is before asking him whether he likes it. Willmore responds with adoration, saying that her features are so "sprightly" and "fair" that they have stricken him. She puts her mask back on, and he immediately attempts to force her to take it off again.

Hellena plays the situation expertly, continuing to show Willmore how little she cares for him even as she finds an excuse to show him her lovely face. Willmore, who adores beauty, is genuinely moved by her fairness, and feels more attracted to her than ever.

Enraged beyond endurance, Angelica resolves to leave, since her jealousy will get the best of her if she stays. She orders one of her bravoes, Sebastian, to learn Hellena's identity, and commands Biskey to bring Willmore to her.

Although Angelica is in love with Willmore, she is still a powerful woman, able to discover activities that he wishes to keep secret, and to revenge herself.

Meanwhile, Frederick courts Valeria while Belvile talks with the disguised Florinda and sulks, still not understanding that the girl is in fact his beloved. Valeria urges Belvile to flirt with Florinda rather than sighing after his lost love, but the cavalier refuses.

Although Frederick is reasonable and intelligent, he is not as noble and faithful as Belvile, who, meanwhile, yet again does not know that he is speaking to a disguised Florinda.

Florinda decides to tempt Belvile further, offering him a jewel to show him that she is wealthy. When he asks why, she replies that she has often seen him from her window, and that women of quality like her have "few opportunities for Love." Frederick urges his friend to take the jewel, and Belvile seems to consider succumbing to her seduction. Aside, Florinda laments that if he is false, she will be ruined.

Given the promiscuity of men like Willmore, it is unsurprising that Florinda doubts the loyal Belvile's faithfulness. Frederick, practical but not entirely moral, tells Belvile to take the jewel because the cavaliers are so poor.

Belvile refuses, saying that taking the jewel would break his vow to his lady. Frederick is dismayed that Belvile would turn down such wealth.

Despite temptation from all sides, Belvile refuses to be unfaithful to Florinda, proving his nobility. Note how the other men can't understand such nobility.

Meanwhile, Hellena tells Willmore that she will **unmask** again only if he reveals what he was doing in Angelica's house. Willmore responds lamely, asserting that he went in to see a male friend. Hellena throws his words back at him, asking if he found cupid's arrows in his friend's eyes, joy in his arms, and gold in his purse. Willmore, in turn, asserts that some women are kinder than she is, and she fires back that there are men as handsome and inconstant as he is. She resolves never to see him again unless he gives up his affair with Angelica, and he swears to do so, kneeling before her and comparing her hand to a Bible as he kisses it.

Hellena uses her wit and her disguise to trap Willmore in a lie, revealing that she knows that he has been with the notorious Angelica. He responds by blaming Hellena's chastity for his unfaithfulness. Just as he forgot about Hellena when he was with Angelica, now Willmore seems to forget about the courtesan, swearing that he will remain faithful to Hellena. Although she most likely does not believe him, Hellena is once again drawn to his wit and eloquence.

Callis tells the ladies that it is growing dark and they must depart. Quickly, Florinda leaves Belvile the jewel, which as it turns out contains a **picture** of her. Wilmore, too, bids goodbye to Hellena, saying that he must see her tomorrow.

Willmore appears to switch his focus from Angelica back to Hellena, while Belvile yet again does not realize that he has been talking all along to his beloved.

Realizing that he has just been talking to Florinda, Belvile berates himself, and Frederick agrees, reminding his friend of how close they came to losing Florinda's jewel.

Belvile realizes his mistake while Frederick, ever practical, rejoices in the value of the jewel that Florinda has left.

Willmore praises Hellena's features and wit, while Belvile does the same for Florinda, cursing his own modesty; the two briefly misunderstand each other, believing that they are rivals for the same woman. Belvile clears up the misunderstanding by showing Willmore Florinda's picture, and the two men, plus Frederick, resolve to rescue her that very night.

Misunderstandings both big and small are a common occurrence within this play, and the two cavaliers are as quick to quarrel as they are to forgive each other. This squabble exemplifies the power of men's desires over their common sense.

ACT 3, SCENE 2

Later in the day, Blunt and Lucetta enter a room in her house. Lucetta tells the Englishman that they no longer have to worry about her (imaginary) old husband coming home, and can now focus solely on love. Blunt laments that he has no fine words with which to flatter her, but Lucetta reassures him of her love for him. Blunt resolves to kill her husband and marry her himself.

In another subplot, Lucetta's swindling of Blunt continues, Having brought him to her house, she now means to seduce and rob him, Although this arc is meant to be comic, it also exemplifies the kind of scheming, manipulative, promiscuous woman whom the men of the play fear and hate. Yet, at the same time, isn't there a similarity between Willmore, who seduced and took the money of Angelica, and what Lucetta is doing here? Lucetta's actions are more purposeful—she plans to betray Blunt from the beginning—but Willmore's betrayal of Angelica is just as predictable.

Lucetta excuses herself to go undress, and Blunt urges her to hurry. She exits, and Blunt begins to rejoice at his good fortune. Sancho enters, and tells Blunt to come into Lucetta's chamber, leading him there with a candle.

Blunt has completely confused love and lust, that he is in love with Lucetta, whom he barely knows, when he in fact simply desires her. Lucetta encourages this confusion because it makes Blunt easy to manipulate.

The scene changes to Lucetta's inner chamber, which contains a bed, a table, and an undressed Lucetta. Blunt takes the candle from Sancho, who exits. As Blunt undresses, he continues to swear his love; in only his shirt and drawers, he approaches the bed, but Lucetta urges him to put out the light, lest it betray their activity. Blunt asserts that the light from her eyes is enough for him. In the darkness, he attempts to find the bed, but fails—Lucetta has apparently given him the slip. As he grows increasingly agitated, a trap door opens, and he falls down into it.

Lucetta's plot reaches its climax as Blunt, believing that he is about to sleep with Lucetta, leaves all of his valuables unprotected. His fall through the trapdoor is high physical comedy, and would have been appreciated by the audiences of the day. The darkness of Lucetta's bedroom, meanwhile, represents Blunt's blindness in the face of his lust for the deceptive prostitute.

Lucetta enters with Sancho, and Philippo, who is in love with her. They rejoice at their fine catch, and begin to count their substantial booty, including even Blunt's **sword** and hat. They assert that they will not be caught, since Blunt does not know Lucetta's name, the street address, or even the way back to his own home. Lucetta says that she should have given him at least one night of pleasure, but Philippo responds that he is too jealous, and urges her to go to bed with him; she agrees, and they exit, along with Sancho.

Because of his trust in Lucetta, Blunt will have no way of identifying her or catching her—not even her name. Once again the characters discuss love and lust in terms of money, as Lucetta wonders whether she should have slept with Blunt in exchange for the theft. But Philippo's jealousy suggests either that he loves Lucetta, or that there is a double standard for men in which they view themselves as sexual free agents but the women with whom they have sex as needing to be monogamous.

Blunt reenters, dirty and unclothed. He curses Lucetta, and indeed, all women, and laments his own foolishness. Remembering his friends, he realizes that he will face their merciless mockery tomorrow. He can find comfort only in the fact that he is not the first man to be so fooled by a woman.

Lucetta's crime makes the slow and foolish Blunt leap to extremes, deciding that he hates all *women, rather than the one who wronged him. He believes that they are all deceitful, and blames the entire gender for his own stupidity. Yet while Blunt is ridiculous and extreme, there nonetheless is a note of similarity between his ridiculous outlook about women here and the other men's outlooks regarding women.*

ACT 3, SCENE 3

Florinda enters her family's garden for her rendezvous with Belvile; she is wearing only a nightgown, holding the key to the garden door, and carrying a box of jewels. After opening the door, she realizes that Belvile is late. While she goes to hide the jewels, a drunk, belligerent, and **masked** Willmore enters, annoyed that he has been unable to find Belvile or Frederick. He decides that the garden will be a good place to sleep.

A woman outdoors at night in her nightgown, Florinda is in an intensely vulnerable situation—a testament to her trust in Belvile. Willmore, meanwhile, has indulged in his other favorite pastime: drinking. His entrance only makes clearer how unsafe Florinda is.

Seeing Florinda, but with no idea who she is, Willmore accosts her, drunkenly demanding a kiss. When Florinda resists his advances, he persists, attempting to persuade her to sleep with him. Florinda continues struggling, telling him that she will cry, "Rape!" if he will not leave her alone. Willmore reacts violently and angrily, telling her that she has clearly opened her garden door in order to ensnare men. He attempts to pay her, as he would a prostitute, and wrestles her to the ground as he struggles.

While Willmore has acted immorally before, this is the first time that we see him engage in a crime as serious as rape. His response that Florinda was essentially asking for it exemplifies his intensely troubling attitude of male entitlement. He may pay court to Hellena and Angelica, but he has no qualms about acting violently towards a strange woman.

Belvile and Frederick enter (they are **masked**), looking for Willmore. Hearing Florinda's cries for help, they rush to her aid, pulling Willmore off of him. Still drunk and violent, he draws his **sword** on his friends.

Although Willmore is drunk, he has now attempted to violate Florinda and stab his friends; his hijinks have moved from comic to troubling, illuminating the dark side of the character, the play, and the social customs of the society watching the play (all of which is likely intended by the author, Behn.)

Seeing Belvile, but hearing her brother Don Pedro approach, Florinda quickly instructs her lover to come to her chamber window, and tells him that Willmore has ruined their plan. She flees in the nick of time, just as Pedro enters, ordering his servant Stephano to check on Florinda. The Spaniards fight the Englishmen, beating them out of the garden. Stephano reenters, telling Pedro that Florinda is safe, and blaming reveling servants for the open door; they exit, although Pedro remains suspicious about why the garden door was unlocked.

Willmore's actions have consequences for Belvile, who once again loses his chance to reunite with Florinda. Once again the men of the play engage in a fairly senseless duel, making clear their careless and casual attitude towards violence.

ACT 3, SCENE 4

Belvile, Willmore, and Frederick enter the street outside of Don Pedro's house; Willmore is dejected, Belvile furious, and Frederick is attempting to prevent a fight between them. Willmore protests that he had no way of knowing that he had accosted Belvile's beloved. Belvile insults Willmore repeatedly. Willmore blames the alcohol he drank, and Frederick urges Belvile to forgive their friend. When Willmore asserts that he had no way of knowing that Florinda was noble, Belvile only grows more enraged, demanding a duel. Willmore, ever practical, says that he is too drunk to duel, saying that he will duel tomorrow.

Frederick must play the peacemaker again, as Willmore attempts to weasel his way out of responsibility for his behavior. He then articulates yet another troubling attitude: that he would not have assaulted Florinda if he had known that she was noble. This belief, that a woman should only be safe from rape if she is highborn, is shared by almost all of the men in the play, and reflects an incredibly disturbing attitude at the time.

At the mention of tomorrow, Belvile remembers that Florinda is supposed to marry Don Antonio that day (not knowing about the rift between Antonio and Don Pedro). He wonders whether he may throw any obstacles in Antonio's way, and Willmore swears he will help, asking who Antonio is. Belvile reveals that he has no idea what Antonio looks like.

The Carnival atmosphere of disguises and concealment has consequences, since neither Willmore nor Belvile have any idea of what Belvile's rival for Florinda's hand even looks like. This confusion, too, will have consequences later in the play.

Seeing that they have reached Angelica's house, Willmore recalls that he has promised to spend the night with her, and is about to go in. As he does so, however, Antonio enters with his **sword**, and announces that he has paid Angelica's fee. He resolves to sit under her window and wait for her, or die trying.

Although he has recently flirted with Hellena, Willmore now appears to have transferred his affections to Angelica once more. Antonio's entrance with his sword, meanwhile, implies to the audience that there is even more violence to come. Yet that sword and Antonio's bravado is also connected to sex, as his announcement of paying for Angelica makes clear.

As Moretta enters to let Antonio into the house, Willmore reacts with rage that another man will be sleeping with Angelica. He and Antonio begin fighting as Belvile and Frederick watch, aghast that their "mad" companion has found even more trouble.

Moretta, whose concerns are wholly financial, vastly prefers Antonio to Willmore. The cavalier, however, doesn't care how much chaos he causes, and allows his lust to provoke yet another duel.

Three **masked** revelers enter, and cry out that a man has been killed (Willmore has injured Antonio). Still extremely drunk, Wilmore says that if a man is dead, he can go home to sleep. He exits, as do the masqueraders.

Willmore is so careless that he does not even know whether he has killed his opponent. He is the perfect representative of Carnival, since he is completely without morals and seemingly immune to consequences.

As Belvile attempts to find Willmore, worried about his friend despite their quarrel, a group of soldiers enter, having heard that there were **swords** drawn during **Carnival** (a terrible crime). Recognizing Don Antonio, and seeing that he is hurt, they believe that Belvile has done the deed; they carry Antonio out, and arrest Belvile. As he leaves, Antonio accuses Belvile of attacking him twice, mistaking him not only for Willmore, but also for Don Pedro (remember that Antonio didn't recognize Pedro when they were both outside Angelica's in Act 2, scene 1). He orders the soldiers to take the Englishman to his own house.

The idea of Carnival grows increasingly dark and chaotic as the noble and blameless Belvile is arrested for Willmore's crimes. This confusion is intensified by the fact that Antonio has confused Belvile not only with Willmore, but also with Don Pedro. As the play continues, the confusion of identity will become more and more complicated.

ACT 4, SCENE 1

Act 4 opens with Belvile alone, imprisoned in a darkened room in Antonio's house, bemoaning his ill fortune and the loss of his beloved Florinda. Antonio enters, wearing his nightclothes and holding a **sword**, despite his injured arm. He asks Belvile what he has done to earn Belvile's hatred; the Englishman pleads innocence, saying that he fought only in defense of Willmore. Honorably, Antonio gives Belvile a sword, saying that he has saved Belvile from being arrested. The cavalier expresses gratitude, and Antonio reveals himself to be the son of the viceroy. Belvile reacts with dismay, now knowing that Antonio is his rival for Florinda's hand.

Subjecting a noble and honest character to various undeserved trials and tribulations is another pattern within Restoration comedy. Antonio's sword, meanwhile signals his masculinity, even though he is wounded and has no idea who Belvile is. In giving the sword to the Englishman, however, Antonio essentially unmans himself. Belvile's upset when he learns that Antonio is his romantic rival increases the tangled web of identities that will persist throughout the play.

Antonio reveals why he has given Belvile the sword (even as Belvile secretly curses his name). Since the Englishman is in his debt, Antonio wishes him to fight the duel over Florinda's honor that he has set with Don Pedro (although neither Belvile nor Antonio knows that Pedro is the opponent). Belvile is incensed both by Antonio's desire for Florinda and by the idea of a new rival in addition to Antonio. He decides to fight in Antonio's place in order to kill this new threat, and agrees to wear Antonio's clothes and go by his name.

Faithful and noble himself, Belvile cannot understand why Antonio would prefer the courtesan Angelica to the pure and chaste Florinda. In agreeing to fight for Antonio against Pedro, Belvile is both adding to the confusion of identity and helping himself, since he believes that he is going to be fighting another rival for Florinda's hand (rather than Florinda's brother).

Antonio thanks Belvile and exits, telling him that his costume is within the house and day is near. Belvile resolves to give himself over to his fate, and exits as well to go put on his disguise.

Although Belvile is not deceitful or dishonest, he has no choice but to mask himself in order to prepare for the duel.

ACT 4, SCENE 2

The morning of the duel, Florinda enters the Molo with Callis and Stephano to see Don Pedro fight; the two women are disguised. Florinda is terrified because Belvile has not come to meet her. She begs Stephano to tell her whom her brother fights, but the servant knows only that the duel is about Florinda. She is dismayed, believing that her brother is going to fight Belvile; the only other man who loves her is Antonio, and she believes that he and Pedro's friendship is too strong for them to duel.

The idea of men dueling over a woman is, by now, a familiar one within the play. Florinda, meanwhile, faces a moral crisis: whether to pray for her brother or her lover, whom she fears may kill each other. Her grief and upset are a direct consequence of the male embrace of violence within the play and the social position of women as both constrained by and dependent on the men in their lives.

Stephano takes his leave of Florinda, because he sees Don Pedro coming; he tells her that Pedro is still suspicious about the events of last night, and she promises to reward the servant for his loyalty to her.

Even though Pedro is engaging in a duel, he still acts morally upright and strict towards his sisters; his hypocrisy persists.

Don Pedro enters, **masked**, and remarks that Antonio is late. Florinda is surprised to hear Antonio's name, as Pedro jealously imagines his former friend in the arms of Angelica.

Although Pedro claims to be fighting for Florinda, he is thinking only of Angelica; Florinda, meanwhile, is even more confused about whom her brother is fighting.

Belvile enters dressed as Antonio; Florinda is relieved, believing that her beloved is not fighting the duel. He greets Pedro (though he still does not know the identity of his opponent), who bitterly accuses him of finding favor with Angelica. Belvile is shocked that Antonio would be fighting for Angelica—a "common Prize"—rather than Florinda, but prepares to duel anyway.

Now it is Florinda's turn not to recognize Belvile, as she believes him to be Antonio. Belvile, finding that Pedro too is obsessed with Angelica, still finds it incomprehensible that these Spanish noblemen would be fighting over the affections of a common courtesan. There is perhaps an idea in the play that part of Angelica's lure, beyond her beauty, is the fact that her "price" is so high. In a way, by linking herself to a high price Angelica has made herself less attainable, thus making herself more "marketable" and desirable. A true nobleman like Belvile wouldn't be very aware of such things, as his values are not as driven by money.

Florinda runs into the duel, begging the two men to stop. Pedro refuses, and the two fight, until Belvile disarms Pedro. At this, a **masked** Florinda intercedes once again, attempting to save her brother. Belvile refuses, yet again not recognizing her. When she finally begs him in the name of his beloved, he stops, and lays his **sword** at her feet.

The confusion of identity continues, since Belvile does not know that he is speaking to Florinda. Even the mention of her name, however, is strong enough to force him to put down his sword, therefore rendering him defenseless against his enemy.

Don Pedro, impressed, believes that Antonio (in fact Belvile) has proved his love for Florinda. At the mention of her name, Belvile takes up his **sword** again, saying that he will fight for that truth until the death.

Now it is Pedro's turn to be fooled by a disguise, as Belvile demonstrates that even he, a calm and honorable man, is all too quick to fight over a woman whom he desires.

Don Pedro congratulates Belvile (still thinking him to be Antonio) on regaining Florinda's hand, and his own friendship. At last recognizing Florinda, Belvile swears to Pedro that he will remain faithful to his sister for the rest of his life, begging to make her his this very moment. Pedro agrees, since his father (who wishes for Florinda to marry Don Vincentio) will be returning that evening.

For a moment, it looks like Belvile's deceit will work in his favor, as Don Pedro offers him Florinda's hand. Although ordinarily a son going against his father would be impossible, Pedro believes that he can marry Florinda to Antonio (rather than Vincentio) because it is Carnival time.

Dismayed at having to marry the man she still thinks is Don Antonio, Florinda protests. Belvile draws her aside, and reveals his identity to her as Callis distracts Don Pedro. She expresses surprise that she did not know him from his voice alone.

The disguise fools Florinda too, until Belvile reveals himself. Even this decision, however will soon have consequences; the lovers cannot reunite just yet.

At just the wrong moment, Willmore and Frederick enter, looking for Belvile. Willmore is dressed in fine clothes that he has bought with Angelica's money. Seeing their companion, the ever-indiscreet Willmore runs to embrace him, calling his name. Don Pedro, realizing his mistake, attempts to take Florinda back; at this, Belvile draws his **sword** to protect her, as does Willmore. Belvile scornfully tells Willmore to put up his sword, since any quarrel in which he takes part will end badly; Willmore does so, his pride hurt.

Willmore is an agent of chaos wherever he goes, while Don Pedro again displays his disregard for his sister's feelings. Belvile, meanwhile, again reacts with violence, although the tension between the two Englishmen (formerly best friends) has become even more apparent and problematic.

Belvile, out of love for Florinda, refuses to hurt Don Pedro, who says that although the cavalier won Florinda by Antonio's sword, he fought bravely. Still, he refuses to give his sister to Belvile, and exits with her, accusing her of plotting against him.

Honorable to the core, Belvile would never harm a relative of Florinda's. By contrast, the hypocritical Don Pedro will not give Florinda to the cavalier because of his poverty and despite his obvious display of bravery and nobility.

Yet again enraged against Willmore, Belvile paces back and forth; Willmore knows that he has done something wrong, but does not know what. Incensed, Belvile draws his **sword** on his friend; Willmore runs out, with Belvile following him. Frederick tries to intervene, and fails.

As the play grows more and more chaotic, the Englishmen begin fighting against themselves. Behn again demonstrates how quick men are to jump to violence when they become angry and upset.

Angelica enters with Moretta and Sebastian, demanding to know if Willmore has just left. Frederick reveals that he has, but says that he is in danger, and quickly follows his friends offstage, with Sebastian following him. After they both are gone, Angelica reveals that she knows Hellena's identity as Don Pedro's sister, and believes Willmore to be in love with the noblewoman. She curses his unfaithfulness—he has not only left her, but has taken five hundred crowns from her—as Moretta scolds her for having placed her trust in a man.

All of Angelica's nightmares have come true: she is at the mercy of a man, and he has taken advantage of her. Despite her beauty (and probable sexual skill), the intelligent courtesan knows that she does not stand a chance against a wealthy noblewoman like Hellena. As much wealth as Angelica has built up, she will both never be as wealthy nor as alluring as a noble will be In Angelica's mind, love is as dangerous and harmful as she originally feared.

Sebastian reenters with Willmore, and Angelica turns away from him. Willmore asks why she flees when he pursues her and pursues when he flees, before singing to her. She responds scornfully, telling him that she knows he is false, and vowing to be revenged. The Englishman asserts that he is not a timid lover, and that he despises her sullenness. Angelica, in turn, says she does not care what he feels, since he has found a mistress more virtuous than she. Willmore responds that he does not desire a virtuous woman.

As always, Willmore does not believe that he has done anything wrong. Even though he cares about Angelica, he does not believe that he owes her anything, and refuses to believe that he has sinned by being unfaithful to her. This attitude is yet another example of his utter lack of morals.

Angelica remains furious, accusing Willmore of courting Hellena for her two hundred thousand-crown fortune, and revealing that she saw him flirting with the noblewoman the night before. Willmore is amazed that his gypsy girl is worth so much, and secretly hopes that Angelica will be angry enough to tell him to leave her, so that he can return to Hellena.

The realization that Hellena has a fortune has an instant effect on Willmore: although before he was dismayed that she was noble because of her virtue, now he is overjoyed because of her wealth. For the cavalier, love, lust, and money are all intertwined.

Hellena herself enters, disguised as a boy. She recognizes both Angelica and Willmore; Moretta notices her, and, hoping that she is a page for Don Antonio, points her out to Angelica.

To add to the confusion, Hellena now enters dressed as a boy; she is so unconventional that she has now begun to blur the lines between genders.

Angelica refuses to speak to Willmore, who offers to leave. Meanwhile Hellena approaches, anxious to torment Willmore for his faithlessness. Secretly, Willmore plots to escape Angelica so that he can keep his meeting with Hellena; he claims to have a friend who is sick, but Angelica orders him to stay.

Although Willmore is a master of deception, he is now unknowingly caught between two women whom he has wronged; a dangerous position for the immoral rake.

Hellena goes to speak to Angelica as Willmore repeatedly attempts to sneak off. The disguised girl tells the courtesan that she is a relation of a young noblewoman who has fallen in love with a charming, witty Englishman because of his eloquence; Willmore believes that she is speaking about him, as does Angelica. She now orders Willmore to go, but he now refuses, anxious to hear more.

Hellena, like Willmore, embraces subterfuge, and further confuses matters by making up an imaginary noblewoman who is in love with Willmore. Unsure whom she speaks of, Willmore's large ego causes him to assume that yet another highborn lady is in love with him.

Continuing on, Hellena relates how the Englishman jilted this noblewoman at the altar. Willmore now believes that she either speaks of a woman who is in love with him, or a woman he can seduce; he is confused, however, about the mention of marriage. Angelica bitterly notices Willmore's excitement.

Willmore cannot help himself; despite caring for both Angelica and Hellena, he is always interested in the novelty of an unknown woman—a fact lost on neither the noblewoman nor the courtesan.

Perceiving the hurt in Angelica's eyes, Hellena offers to stop her tale, but Angelica, hoping to quench her own love for Willmore, begs the disguised Hellena to continue. She does so, pleading with Angelica to stop seeing Willmore, who secretly rejoices (because he hopes to leave Angelica for the wealthy Hellena).

Although Angelica is Hellena's romantic rival, the intelligent girl feels pity and empathy for the jilted prostitute. Willmore, meanwhile, seems completely unconcerned about how deeply he has hurt Angelica.

Consumed with jealousy, Angelica asks if Willmore is the man of whom Hellena speaks. He attempts to defend himself and paces around the stage; the two women follow him, both cursing his falseness and faithlessness. The cavalier remains silent, and Angelica asserts that guilt has stopped his tongue before turning away to weep.

For once, Willmore is not able to talk himself out of a difficult situation, and both he and the audience must listen to the berating of the angry women. For a moment, Angelica and Hellena are pitted against their faithless lover rather than against each other.

With Angelica distracted, Willmore asks Hellena who her supposed mistress is, and how he can find her house. Hellena is amazed by his promiscuity. Angelica turns back around, and Willmore assures her that he is not the man in Hellena's story. Angelica bitterly says that the tale is true, but that the charming Willmore could easily persuade the boy to say otherwise; she storms away once more, and Willmore begs again to know Hellena's mistress's name. She asks if he has forgotten it, and he wonders if he has met this mystery woman before. As Angelica approaches again, he again begins to call Hellena a liar; the courtesan, however, refuses to believe him and turns away. A third time Willmore asks who Hellena's mistress is; and a third time, when Angelica turns back around, Willmore calls Hellena dishonest.

Despite being insulted and accused, Willmore still feels no guilt whatsoever. The scene that follows is comic and ridiculous, as Willmore repeatedly comforts Angelica only to act unfaithfully towards her as soon as her back is turned. This pattern is not only funny, but also makes obvious how bold and shameless the cavalier truly is. Note too that although Angelica knows that Willmore's wit is often deceptive, she is still unable to resist him.

Breaking the cycle at last, Angelica asks Hellena to look into Willmore's face and identify him. As their eyes meet, the cavalier at last recognizes Hellena as his gypsy girl; he laments that the mystery woman he hoped for is fictional, and decides to torment Hellena for her deception.

Unlike Belvile, the clever Willmore is able to identify the object of his affections without help. Also unlike Belvile, however, the mischievous Willmore feels no need to treat Hellena in a gentle or courteous manner.

Willmore announces to Angelica that he has uncovered Hellena's plot; Hellena worries that he has seen through her disguise and begs him not to reveal her, but he maintains that he is teaching her a lesson. The Englishman announces that the woman Hellena speaks of is not noble, but rather is a forward, irritating gypsy girl. He goes on to insult Hellena, saying that Angelica should not be jealous of such an unattractive creature. Hellena is secretly jealous, while Angelica reacts with disbelief.

Witty and sharp at all times, Willmore's treatment of Hellena is both insulting and flirtatious. He does not fully expose Hellena to Angelica, but instead uses the opportunity to fool the courtesan while also teasing the noblewoman. He is once again in control of the situation, due to his ability to manipulate the women with his language.

After Willmore tells Hellena to return to her supposed mistress with a scornful message, Angelica attempts to extract a promise from him to never marry the fictional gypsy girl, but he manages to avoid doing so, swearing only that if he ever does marry, he will marry a sinner as witty as himself. Angelica believes that no such woman exists.

Although Angelica believes that Willmore speaks of an imaginary woman whom he might one day marry, the audience understands that he is speaking of Hellena, who is his intellectual match, able to keep up with his banter and beat him at his own game.

Sebastian enters, announcing Don Antonio; hearing his name, Hellena flees, believing that he may see through her disguise. Angelica resolves to go see the viceroy's son, and Willmore pretends to react jealously, asking if he should leave her to his rival. Seeing through his pretense, she once again calls him false, and orders him to leave before she kills him. Willmore is glad of his banishment, and resolves to find his gypsy.

Since she has apparently given up on Willmore's love, Angelica chooses to go back to her profession, once again trading sexual favors for money. Although Willmore tries to convince her that he has not been unfaithful, she at last sees through his eloquence and refuses to be re-seduced.

With Willmore gone, Angelica mourns his loss, and reveals that she has lost faith in herself and in love because of his infidelity. She resolves, since she is "not fit to be belov'd" that she will revenge herself upon the cavalier.

Despite her beauty, Angelica has now lost her pride by making herself vulnerable to Willmore and being rejected by him. Believing herself worthless, she begins to shift from love to hate.

ACT 4, SCENE 3

Having escaped from Don Pedro's house, Florinda and Valeria walk down the street in a different pair of disguises. Florinda is afraid, but Valeria tells her that lovers never fear. She reveals that she is half in love (with Frederick), and wishes that Hellena were there as well. Florinda recalls that she left the house by pretending to go to the convent, while Valeria reveals that she has locked Callis in a wardrobe in order to keep her from sounding the alarm. Florinda warns that Valeria may never return home, and her cousin replies that her fate will depend upon her mysterious beloved.

In Hellena's absence, Valeria has taken on the role of Florinda's bold companion, throwing caution to the wind not only to help Florinda, but also because of her new affection for Frederick. The previously cautious Valeria's rash actions demonstrates how dramatically love can affect women as well as men.

Valeria reveals to Florinda that she has delivered a note to Belvile, who is desperate with anguish over the loss of his lover. He now knows that Florinda means to escape that very day, and that she would rather die than marry Don Antonio. Valeria has also told him that Florinda is currently confined to her chamber by Don Pedro, but that her brother is at church. Upon hearing this, Belvile has resolved to search every church in Naples until he can find Antonio and delay his return home (to give Florinda time to escape).

As the play reaches its comic climax, the plot becomes more and more tangled and confused. Although Valeria is trying to help Florinda, her attempts have only served to drive the lovers farther apart, since Belvile does not know that Florinda has left her house and is in search of him. Despite the characters' best efforts, the world of the play always moves towards chaos.

Seeing both Belvile and Don Pedro on the street, the women put on their masks. The men enter, along with Willmore, and notice Florinda looking at them. Mistaking her glance as an invitation, Willmore follows her offstage.

Once again, Florinda must conceal herself from her lover, this time because he is accompanied by her brother. Her disguise, however, once again puts her at the mercy of Willmore's lust.

Frederick enters with news of Blunt's misfortune. Don Pedro and Belvile are amused, and the Englishman offers to take Pedro to Blunt, in order to give Florinda more time to escape. He speculates about how enjoyable it will be to see the usually wealthy Blunt impoverished.

Just as Blunt's subplot has amused the audience, here it serves as a distraction for Don Pedro. The cavaliers, meanwhile, are delighted that their rich, stupid friend has been humbled.

Florinda reenters, chased by Willmore but still fearful of meeting her brother. She exits, only to be followed by both Willmore and Valeria. The Englishman, ever lustful, continues to misinterpret her backward glances as flirtation. Both characters exit. Next Hellena enters, accompanied by a page. Seeing that Willmore is pursuing a woman, she asks her page to follow Willmore and report on his activities. She then realizes that she is close to Don Pedro, and hastily exits. As she does so, Belvile, Willmore, and Don Pedro cross the stage together.

The play has now devolved into an actual chase scene, making the chaos and confusion physical. Willmore's lust, as always, is the cause of most of the problems, as he once again believes Florinda to be low class and thus rapable without any moral issue whatsoever. Hellena's entrance further adds to the confusion, as does that of the other men; the more characters come onstage, the more chaotic the action becomes.

On a different street, Florinda, believing that her brother is now chasing her, resolves to hide in a house with an open door rather than fall into his hands. As she exits, Valeria and Hellena's page enters; Valeria reveals that Florinda has just entered Belvile's lodgings, and wonders if she intended to do so. At this point, however, Willmore enters, and Valeria is too afraid of him to follow her cousin inside, instead hiding. Willmore believes that he has lost his prey, and exits to find her.

Alone and disguised, Florinda is once again vulnerable to Willmore's advances. Despite having attempted to assault Florinda once before, and his recent difficulties with Angelica and Hellena, he seems to have learned nothing—he is as immoral and lustful as ever.

The scene changes to the inside of Belvile's lodgings, where Blunt, in only his shirt and underthings, sits and reads a book about the dangers of traveling. Bitter and angry, he resolves revenge. He straps on a rusty **sword**, believing that doing so will keep the cavaliers from laughing at him. He then continues to rant against all women, saying that he will threaten any woman whom he comes across.

Blunt has become a full-blown misogynist, wishing to harm women everywhere in return for the hurt and humiliation that Lucetta has caused him. His rusty sword, meanwhile (since Lucetta has stolen his real sword) symbolizes that she has stolen his masculinity as well as his money.

In a massive stroke of bad luck, Florinda enters and begs Blunt to protect her from Willmore. Blunt is scornful and violent, telling Florinda that he would be more merciful to her if she were an animal or a devil. When she tells him that she is a "harmless Virgin," he begins to assault her, groping and kissing her as she begs him to stop, and ranting at her about Lucetta's crimes, believing that he will "be revenged on one Whore for the Sins of another."

Although Blunt has been a comic figure up until now, he now becomes genuinely menacing and dangerous, and clearly intends to rape Florinda. Having been deceived by one courtesan, he now believes that all *women are deceitful prostitutes, worthy only of cruelty and violence.*

Frederick enters, and rather than helping Florinda, he reacts with amusement, mocking Blunt for his nakedness. Florinda's pleas for help have the opposite effect; Blunt proposes that he and Frederick both rape her, and that he alone beat her. Frederick agrees, saying that he is always willing to help "in matters of Revenge" when there is added pleasure for him.

Although Frederick has been rational and kind up until now, he too sees no problem about raping Florinda since he believes her to be lower class and therefore worthless.

As the two men attempt to drag her into the bedroom, Florinda desperately mentions Belvile's name, saying that she knows they are his companions and asking them to treat her kindly for his sake. Blunt responds disgustingly, saying that they will feast on her and then leave Belvile the leftovers. Frederick, however, urges him to pause, and Florinda gives them a ring in order to prove her wealth and nobility (unbeknownst to them, it is a ring given to her by Belvile). Blunt covets the diamond, while Frederick worries that they have attempted to rape a noblewoman rather than a common harlot. Blunt still maintains that Florinda is a liar, but the two decide to wait for Belvile.

Blunt, enjoying Florinda's terror, becomes increasingly menacing and terrifying as she struggles. Only the mention of Belvile's name makes the men think that she may have some value, while her ring helps to confirm it. In the minds of both men, women are only valuable if they are noble and wealthy, or if they are loved by a man. This is worldview is totally disturbing, and yet it was incredibly common within the genre of Restoration comedy.

A servant enters, announcing Belvile's arrival along with that of Don Pedro. Blunt refuses to see either of them, while Frederick goes down to meet them—but not before locking Florinda away in his chamber.

Still unconvinced that Florinda is truly noble, the men lock her up, literally taking possession of her.

ACT 5, SCENE 1

The still humiliated Blunt hides in his room, but to no avail; his friends literally besiege the door, attempting to force it open. Although Blunt claims first to be praying, and then to be with a woman, no one believes him. In fact, hearing there is a woman within, Willmore jokingly comments that he must share her with his friends; he also betrays that Frederick has told them all about the captured Florinda (although no one knows her identity). Having broken down the door at last, Belvile, Willmore, Don Pedro, and a page enter, laughing at Blunt as he draws his **sword**.

Despite the various subplots swirling around them, the men still pause in order to tease Blunt, proving that, no matter what, amusement, mockery, and wit are the most important values within a Restoration comedy. Not knowing that Blunt and Frederick have captured Florinda, the men—Pedro and Belvile included—find the entire situation deeply amusing.

As Blunt reacts angrily, the others try to coax him into a good mood even as they continue mocking him. Willmore and Belvile express sympathy, while Pedro apologizes for the rudeness of his country, saying that if he can, he will help Blunt avenge himself. Blunt then reveals that he still has Florinda (who he doesn't know is Florinda) in his possession, and means to ruin her. He falsely tells the men that she attacked him, and attempted to rape him, but that he defended himself with his **sword**.

Although every one of these men is highborn, they seem to find Blunt's imprisonment of Florinda to be amusing rather than troubling. Once again, the play shows that the free-for-all attitude of Carnival has a dark side, since it allows men to think that they can abuse and violate lower class women without any consequences.

Frederick urges Blunt to show their companions Florinda's ring; when he does so, Belvile immediately recognizes it as the one he gave his beloved. He attempts to draw Blunt aside to avoid giving Florinda away to Don Pedro, but the indiscreet Willmore foils him, telling him that there can be no secrecy when a woman is involved. Belvile attempts trickery, telling him to hide the ring lest people think that prostitutes would rather bribe Englishmen than sleep with them.

After yet again failing to understand that his beloved Florinda is near, Belvile realizes his mistake, but to no avail; and as has happened so many times before, Willmore is to blame. Behn here is demonstrating the real consequences of Willmore's immorality and indiscretion, which is often amusing but is genuinely dangerous as well.

Willmore proposes that they go see Florinda to determine whether she is a noblewoman or not. As they are about to go, Belvile panics and demands the key. The men begin to argue, with Willmore saying that he wishes to go in first, and Frederick maintaining that he and Blunt still have custody. Willmore proposes that they all draw their **swords**, and that the man with the longest shall go in first; Belvile tries once again to intervene, and Willmore ignores him.

The men are convinced that they will be able to recognize Florinda as noble, even though they have misidentified her as a commoner multiple times throughout the play. The sword contest, meanwhile, is a vulgar joke: whoever has the "longest" sword is the most masculine, and therefore the most qualified to judge Florinda.

Because Spaniards traditionally carry longer **swords** than Englishmen, Don Pedro wins, and the other men give up their claim to Florinda. As Pedro exits, unaware that he is about to threaten his own sister, Belvile curses Willmore for his "mischief." Willmore reacts peevishly, disappointed that he has lost the contest; Belvile bemoans his friend's apparent stupidity.

The men still view the imprisonment of Florinda as a kind of game, especially Willmore, whose appetite for mischief and mirth has completely taken over his common sense.

Florinda reenters, still masked, chased by Don Pedro. He demands to know who she is and why she is here, implying that he thinks she is a prostitute. Simultaneously, Belvile and Florinda both worry that her brother will discover her identity, while Willmore wonders whether Florinda is the same woman whom he recently followed.

On one hand, this chase is a comic one of mistaken identity. On the other hand, the fact that Florinda is being menaced by her own brother is truly horrifying. This mixture of light and dark is characteristic of Behn's writing.

Valeria enters, and is surprised by Don Pedro. Thinking on her feet, however, she runs to Pedro and claims that Florinda has run away in the guise of a page, but that Callis believes they can still catch her. Pedro announces that he must leave Belvile, but demands that, if Florinda flees to him, he return her to her family. Belvile promises to follow the commands of his love and honor, and Pedro, satisfied, exits.

Valeria proves once more that she is a brave and intelligent woman in her own right. Don Pedro, meanwhile, proves himself completely oblivious, since he thinks that Belvile will remain loyal to him rather than to Florinda. Having made such a stupid decision, by the logic of the play, he deserves to be fooled.

A relieved Florinda embraces Valeria. Willmore and Blunt look on, confused, as Valeria urges Florinda and Belvile to marry each other quickly before Don Pedro returns. Realizing who Florinda is, Willmore begs her pardon and kisses her hand; she forgives him, and he notes her beauty. They send the page off to fetch a priest.

At last the tangled knot of identities begins to untie itself, as Florinda and Belvile are finally reunited. Realizing their mistake, the men are mortified; now that they know that Florinda is the noble beloved of Belvile, she once again has value in their eyes. That Florinda so easily forgives them is likely shocking for a modern audience, and shows how women too in Restoration comedies accepted the idea that lower-class women were simply acceptable targets of sexual attack (!).

Frederick, too, apologizes, and Florinda says that she will forgive him as long as he follows Belvile's example and marries the woman who loves him. Frederick reacts with confusion, and Belvile scoffs, saying that Frederick would never fall in love with a woman. Valeria, however, begs to disagree; she reveals that she and Frederick have decided that if Belvile and Florinda marry, the two of them will as well.

In keeping with the Carnival-esque atmosphere of the play, Frederick and Valeria decide to get married even though they barely know each other. This type of group marriage is a common pattern in this type of comedy, as it is assumed that romantic success and happiness are one and the same.

Lastly, Blunt begs Florinda's forgiveness, and she grants it immediately. He gives Belvile back Florinda's ring, too ashamed to hand it to her himself.

Even though Blunt has acted abominably, Florinda's noble breeding, and her feminine gentleness, means that she forgives him instantly.

The page reenters with a priest, and the four lovers exit to be married. Willmore remains onstage to stand guard against Don Pedro's return. The page enters once again, telling Willmore that a woman is here to see him, and adding that Blunt's tailor is here to make him new clothes. Blunt leaves, while Willmore asks that the woman be shown in.

While the arcs of these two couples have effectively ended, Willmore's plot continues on, a mark of his importance and magnetism as a character. Belvile and Frederick may be happy to enter into matrimony, but the same is not true of the lusty Rover.

Angelica enters, veiled and **masked**. Willmore runs to her, believing it to be his gypsy girl and demanding that she confess her trickery. Angelica, however, threatens Willmore with a pistol and advances upon him. Bewildered as to who she is, Willmore asks to see her face. Angelica removes her mask, saying that he has already forgotten her and calling him a traitor.

At last the audience and Willmore see the full consequences of his actions: he has driven Angelica to near madness and violence. Like the dueling of the men earlier, Angelica's actions again demonstrate the destructive powers of love and lust.

Willmore attempts to talk Angelica out of her murderous intentions and Angelica laments that, even now, his words have the power to sway her; she asks if he wishes to repent, asks him how many hearts he has broken, and accuses him of stealing her self-confidence and agency. She continues to threaten him with a pistol and once again tells him that he has broken his vows.

Even when his life is threatened, Willmore still has faith in his powers of persuasion. Angelica, meanwhile, is a broken woman; she no longer has any pride because Willmore has taken it from her.

The cavalier retorts that Angelica herself has broken hearts, but she maintains that she has always repaid her lovers' vows. Willmore asserts that Angelica has grown spoiled and lazy because of her long liaison with the elderly general, and that she does not understand the ways of young lovers. Angelica says that Willmore has robbed her eyes of power, and that she now understands her true inner weakness. She says that all the offerings and adoration she has received are worthless, because she has lost her honor.

Despite his terrible behavior throughout the play, Willmore still believes that he has acted no worse than any other character might. Yet while he maintains this, Angelica clearly believes otherwise. Having succumbed to love, she now finds it impossible to live without the flattery and validation that Willmore gave her.

Willmore seems to react with genuine remorse, saying that for her sake, he wishes that he could be constant and faithful. In a rare moment of self-knowledge, however, he admits that this will never happen; it is not in his nature. He adds that he will pay her back for her time, and offers her a purse of gold. Angelica says that she still must kill him for the sake of all womankind as well as her own grief, and she prepares to shoot.

At last Willmore exhibits some sense of decency, signaling that on some level, he understands the consequences of his unfaithfulness, and even wishes that he could behave differently. Angelica, however, is acting much like Blunt, wishing to avenge all of womankind upon a single man.

Don Antonio enters unexpectedly, having seen Angelica's coach at the door of the house. Though injured, he immediately takes away her pistol, only to offer to shoot Willmore himself, believing him to be a rival for Angelica's love. The courtesan, however, begs him not to shoot.

Faced with the actual idea of Willmore's death, Angelica cannot go through with it—she clearly still cares for him. Don Antonio's lust for her, meanwhile, is so strong that he would kill for her without question.

Don Pedro reenters, but hides when he sees Don Antonio with Angelica. Obeying Angelica's command, Antonio says that he will not shoot Willmore, for her sake. Angelica says that she will give Willmore life in order to demonstrate her utmost contempt for him, and orders him to go where her eyes will never see him, and to one day love a woman who will revenge their entire sex. At last, she exits.

Having chosen not to kill Willmore, Angelica instead wishes the worst thing she can imagine on him: that one day he will be humbled by a woman, as she has humbled him. Her exit is a disturbing one, and the audience is left with the sense that she has been somehow punished for her power and her sexuality, that the society depicted in the play (which is an exaggeration of the society watching the play) cannot abide any woman being independent in terms of power and sex and so humbled and defeated her.

As Angelica leaves, Don Antonio goes to follow her, but Don Pedro stops him, asking why he did not attend their duel on the Molo that morning. Antonio reacts with surprise that Don Pedro was his unknown opponent, and says that he could not hold a sword. Pedro persists, appalled that Antonio would send his rival—Belvile—to fight for Florinda's honor. Angrily, the two men agree to duel when Antonio is healed.

Another confusion of identities is at last cleared up, as Antonio realizes that he was supposed to duel Don Pedro. Behn leaves the future duel with them as a loose end; implying, perhaps, that while her play may end, the cycle of men committing violence for the sake of women (and for the sake of violence) will never be over.

The still angry Don Pedro resolves to give Florinda to Belvile in revenge against Antonio. Willmore reveals that the marriage has already taken place; he adds that if Belvile is anything like him, then the marriage has been consummated as well. Don Pedro, incredulous, asks if Belvile is afraid of his power; Willmore says that they do not fear the Spaniard, and threatens to employ the crew of the ship that brought him to Naples to kidnap Don Pedro unless he blesses the marriage.

Pedro still thinks of Florinda as an object to give to whomever he chooses. Willmore, however, finally uses his mischievous powers for good. He does not care about acting gentlemanly or courteous towards Pedro, and so is able to threaten and intimidate the Spaniard in a way that the noble Belvile cannot.

Belvile enters and is immediately suspicious of Willmore's actions. Don Pedro asks if Belvile has married Florinda and, hearing that he has, wishes them joy, embracing his new brother-in-law. The two exit to tell Florinda of this happy turn of events, with Willmore following them.

Knowing that he has been beaten, the ultimately cowardly Pedro gives in. Such an implausible reversal of fortunes is common within this genre of comedy, allowing its virtuous lovers to finally find happiness together.

As Willmore is about to exit, however, Hellena enters once again disguised in boy's clothes, and pulls him back onstage. Willmore responds with a string of effusive compliments, saying that all his friends have a woman except for him. He adds that if she had not come along, he would have thought of her alone in his empty cabin.

Left out of the coupling that is taking place all around him, and unattached to Angelica, Willmore responds enthusiastically to Hellena, even though most of what he tells her is completely untrue. Of course, part of his excitement undoubtedly has to do with Hellena's wealth.

Hellena asks whether he would have left her behind, and Willmore swears that they will never part again. She then questions whether an innocent virgin like herself can trust a friend like Willmore. He replies that she is far too beautiful for friendship. He maintains, however, that he is afraid of being in love, and that she has wronged him. She replies that she will not change her behavior until she has showed the whole world that Willmore is hers and hers alone—then, she says, he will love only her. She adds that she has no other virtues or nobility to recommend her, besides persistence. Willmore is delighted, saying that he would rather have a mad, good-natured mistress than a coy one.

Even after all that has happened, the pair still slip easily back into easy banter. Their dialogue now has a truthful ring to it, however, with both characters admitting apprehension about actually embarking on a relationship together. Despite this newfound honesty, they are still deeply attracted to each other; this connection is not simply a physical one, but intellectual as well. Mad and bold characters, they are happy to find those qualities mirrored in another.

Both Hellena and Willmore agree that they should lose no time, and the cavalier proposes that they go up to his chamber immediately. Hellena, however, insists that they be married first. Willmore resists, calling marriage the "Bane of Love," but Hellena stands firm, saying that if they do not marry, he will leave her with nothing but an illegitimate child and regrets.

The pair falls into the old pattern of the male seducer and the seduced female, as Hellena again refuses to sleep with Willmore before marriage. Note, too, that Hellena essentially proposes to Willmore, in a huge reversal of gender norms (and yet made appropriate in a twisted way since she is still dressed as a boy).

Willmore asks her for at least one kiss, but Hellena shows him only scorn, saying that if he can be satisfied by a single kiss, then he must not really love her. She attempts to go out, but Willmore stops her, saying that he adores her and wishes to marry her, because they are so alike. He kisses her hand and resolves to give his fate over to love and fortune. She reacts with shock.

Hellena brilliantly uses Willmore's lust for her against him, and at last her constant refusal works. Within this context, Willmore's agreement to marry her does not seem like a defeat; instead, it appears that he is happy to at last have met his match.

Willmore proposes that they tell each other their names, so that they may curse each other later in life. Hellena retorts by saying that she wants to know his name so that she can bless it. He tells her he is called "Robert the Constant," and she mocks it as a dog's name. In turn, she tells him that she is called "Hellena the Inconstant."

After this display of sincere emotion, the two quickly revert to insulting and teasing each other. In a somewhat shocking moment, they at last reveal their true identities to each other – reminding the audience that they didn't know these things about each other up until this moment and proving just how mad and bold these two characters really are.

Pedro, Belvile, Florinda, Frederick, and Valeria reenter; Florinda is shocked to see her sister, and Pedro attempts to pull Hellena away, but Willmore protects her. Hellena announces that she is in love with Willmore, despite her brother's anger.

Having at last tamed Willmore, Hellena is not fearful of her brother in the slightest. In falling in love, she appears to have become empowered; all thoughts of her joining a nunnery now seem implausible.

Don Pedro turns to Belvile, furious that both his noble, wealthy sisters have fallen in love with impoverished Englishmen. Belvile responds that his friends have fallen on hard times, but are still gentlemen. Willmore asserts that he can give Hellena only his **sword** to protect her, but says that he loved her before he knew her nobility or her name, and is resolved to marry her.

Although the characters have quarreled and fought throughout the play, they all agree that nobility is the most important quality to have in a spouse. Willmore, meanwhile, having fallen in love at last, has conveniently forgotten how much of his interest in Hellena stems from her wealth.

Don Pedro asks if Hellena really intends to give up the holiness of nunhood in favor of the sins of men. Hellena says that she is an independent woman, with three hundred thousand crowns of her own, and that she would rather use that money for love rather than religion. She asks the gathered characters (and presumably the audience) whether she should be faithful to Heaven or the Captain, and all cry out "the Captain!"

Although Pedro has power over Hellena because of his gender, he ultimately cannot take her wealth or her power away from her. The moment of Hellena's question, meanwhile, invites a certain amount of audience participation, which would have delighted Restoration audiences of the time. It also suggests that the society of the time took a perverse delight in not being all that religious.

Remembering Willmore's threatening group of sailors, Don Pedro concedes. He adds that at least he will no longer have to guard Hellena's honor. Now, that job will be Willmore's. The cavalier responds that Englishmen do not guard women's honor when the women wish to part with it. Lastly, Don Pedro forgives Valeria as well, and prays that they will all gain his father's pardon as well (though he fears they will not).

Seemingly as unconventional as Hellena, Willmore seems to trust his wife, believing that he will not need to force her to remain faithful to him. Behn also includes a brief reminder that this has all taken place during Carnival time, and will no doubt meet with Don Vincentio's disapproval. (Though you can imagine a good sequel involving Don Vincentio chasing down the lovers, and Behn actually did write a sequel to the Rover, that isn't the sequel she wrote.)

Blunt enters, looking ridiculous in Spanish clothes. He is furious about the new clothes, and the others mock him; Belvile at last appeases him by saying that he looks like a cavalier. Blunt then greets Hellena and asks her to forgive his Spanish clothes.

Of course the play would not be complete without one last moment of humiliation for the idiotic Blunt. This mockery, however, seems like a small punishment, considering his behavior towards Florinda.

From offstage, the assembled characters hear music; the page enters and tells them that revelers have come into the house to dance with them. The **masqueraders** enter, and Blunt wishes he could remove their masks to see if Lucetta is among them. As the other couples begin to dance, Willmore asks Hellena if she is frightened to marry him; she replies that she feels as he might before a battle or a storm. Calling her brave and declaring his love for her, Willmore says that those who brave "the Storms" of a "Marriage-Bed" should fear "no other Dangers." All exit.

Considering the importance of Carnival within the play, it is appropriate that it ends with revelry, merriment, and masquerade. Within the hubbub, the main couple shares a scene of quiet honesty. Both are apprehensive, and whether they will remain faithful is completely unclear. Within the ridiculousness of Restoration comedy, this is a clear-sighted and realistic acknowledgement on Behn's part that matrimony does not always lead to fidelity and happiness, a somewhat revolutionary point at the time.

In a rhymed epilogue, the author once again pokes fun at modern audiences, stating that if *The Rover* does not please them, it is because they have bad taste. She mocks modern drama, calling theatergoers fops and fools. She ends by saying that even the most popular actors can never act as foolishly as audience members.

Behn reminds her audiences that they have come to her play to see themselves mocked, and that no matter how exaggerated the action of the performance seems, real life will always be more ridiculous and outrageous.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Hoyt-Disick, Gabrielle. "*The Rover.*" *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 11 Aug 2015. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Hoyt-Disick, Gabrielle. "*The Rover.*" LitCharts LLC, August 11, 2015. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-rover.

To cite any of the quotes from *The Rover* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Behn, Aphra. The Rover. Penguin Classics. 1993.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Behn, Aphra. The Rover. New York: Penguin Classics. 1993.