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THE RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF APHRA BEHN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, SPEECH, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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DENTON, TEXAS

May, 1990

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have been instrumental in the completion of my thesis, and to name and thank them all would be impossible. Nonetheless, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to a few people whose influence has been priceless. The members of my committee at Texas Woman's University, Lavon B. Fulwiler, Joyce Thompson, and William E. Tanner, for their invaluable time and expertise, I thank them. I extend a special thanks to William E. Tanner who not only introduced me to Aphra Behn but also taught me much about good writing and clear thinking. My appreciation goes to Maureen Duffy for her scholarship on Aphra Behn. Her biography of Behn and her introduction to Love Letters have helped make Aphra Behn and her work more accessible to the reading public. For the Duffy-autographed copy of Love Letters requested and delivered by William E. Tanner, I am truly grateful. To my friends and colleagues throughout the Howe Independent School District in Howe, Texas, goes my gratitude for their support in my endeavors. My special appreciation goes to Pat Stewart for her expertise, patience, and good humor in the seemingly endless process of revision and attention to form. To my parents, Harry and Dreau Jarma, and my seven brothers and sisters for their

ever-present care and interest, I offer my deepest gratitude. Finally, to Kristen Coffey, my closest friend, whose youth has kept me young and whose help and encouragement have given me strength and endurance, I extend my heartfelt appreciation.

ABSTRACT

THE RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF APHRA BEHN

For centuries the work of Aphra Behn has been denied the recognition and credit it deserves. Through this study of her epistolary novel, Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister, her talents, especially with regard to the use of rhetorical devices for characterization, are illuminated. Furthermore, this study highlights Behn's contributions to the development of the English novel. Characters from the novel are divided into two categories. Examples and discussion of Behn's application of rhetorical strategies to develop each character illustrate Behn's skills. Though the novel itself is the major source of data, information from such studies as The Growth of the English Novel [Richard Church, London: Methuen, 1957] and Women, Letters, and the Novel [Ruth Perry, New York: AMS Press, 1980] provide authority for the discussion of Behn's place in literary history. Evidence and arguments presented in this study establish Behn as a pioneer in the development of the epistolary novel and as an artist in the area of characterization.

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May 1990

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CHAPTER I

ARGUMENT AND DEFENSE

Aphra Behn, the underated seventeenth-century playwright and novelist, has been woefully neglected by both reader and critic. The persistence of the quality of her works has warranted her inclusion and credit within many reputable histories and criticisms. Nonetheless, her skillful use of language, her exceptional ability in storytelling, and her pioneering contributions to the development of the novel have gone virtually unnoticed and unappreciated. This study of her epistolary novel, Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister, will help to remedy her underated status as an artist. Within this novel alone, the reader experiences Behn's command of language and in particular her use of rhetorical devices to characterize. Specific examples and discussion will question those experts who have berated Behn's talents and contributions. Furthermore, evidence from this single work will encourage students of the novel to investigate, read, and judge for themselves the value and quality of Behn's work.

Literary handbooks often define the epistolary novel as "A novel in which the narrative is carried forward by letters written by one or more of the characters." The

benefits of such a form include the presentation of characters' thoughts and feelings without the intrusion of the author and a sense of immediacy since the letters are usually written in the thick of the action. The detachment of the author, however, prevents commentary on the characters' actions though multiple points of view can be presented through the convention of letters from several correspondents. Behn takes advantage of each of these devices. Not only do her characters reveal their thoughts and feelings, but their words also give structure to their personalities. Though the story revolves around Sylvia and Philander, many other characters add a variety of points of view, and at times the authorial voice intrudes to comment upon the narrative. Behn's epistolary novel, therefore, accepts the challenge of developing specific characteristics for a cast of players rather than just the one or two necessary for the epistolary form. Contrary to the opinion of many literary experts, Behn meets this challenge with a genius worthy of recognition. Through selected rhetorical strategies applied with craft and artistry, Behn creates a list of memorable characters. Her novel, therefore, meets and exceeds the definition of the epistolary form.

What, then, does recent scholarship say about Behn and her epistolary novel? Behn's recognition has grown in

recent years through the work of a handful of researchers; nevertheless, her skill with language and particularly her epistolary novel are still sorely neglected. Progressive references reflect long-held opinions. Earnest A. Baker, in his 1929 edition of The History of the English Novel, alludes to Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister published in 1684 and notes that Behn followed the famous form of the anonymous Portuguese Letters published five years before. Although Baker mentions Behn, he lends her little credence as an artist or as a pioneer of the epistolary form. In 1933 Pelham Edgar's Art of the Novel declares the epistolary form "dead beyond all hope of resuscitation" and fails to even mention Behn's novel (46). Edgar's omission might have been preferable to Edward Wagenknecht's comments in his Cavalcade of the English Novel (1943). Wagenknecht does credit Behn's imagination before he proceeds to accuse her of "using none of her talents very consistently, nor, indeed, very intelligently" and of having "no artistic principles" (22).

As time passed in which research on the novel continued, focus on the epistolary form brought further attention to Behn's novel. In 1957, Richard Church credited Behn's epistolary skill: "The method of the epistle, with its air of continuous intimacy, suited her genius, which

was one expert in the handling of the crime passionel [sic]" (38). Church also noted that her romance was not of her own period but of the early nineteenth century "with a revolutionary undercurrent that aimed at freeing not only the passions, but also the mind from the dogmas and restraints of authority" (38). Regardless of Church's testimony, a 1965 study of the novel by Harrison R. Steeves precariously recognizes Behn as contributing something to what was finally to be called the novel of manners; but he added, "even at their best, her novels are no more than tastelessly smart, and to the average reader of today they must inevitably seem limited and dull" (16). With conclusions such as these, is it any wonder that Behn's reputation has suffered?

With the help of a few determined students of the novel and undaunted admirers of Aphra Behn, Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister is gaining for Behn a prominence among the early masters of the epistolary form. Women, Letters, and the Novel, a 1980 study by Ruth Perry, includes extensive discussion of and examples from Behn's novel. Perry comments that in the epistolary genre "for the most part, thought is action, and characters are their words" (124). Behn's awareness of this basic premise is obvious in her careful development of each character through his or her words. Finally, in the 1986 edition of A Handbook to

Literature, Behn is actually included in the definition and discussion of the epistolary novel. Although she is referred to as merely a precursor of the form, her inclusion brings a deserved recognition heretofore denied.

What may prove the most powerful argument for further appreciation of Behn's talent appears in the introduction of the 1987 edition of Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister. The first text available to the public since the original publication, this edition includes remarks by Behn biographer Maureen Duffy. According to Duffy, within Behn's epistolary novel comes "the first authorial female voice in English prose" (xiv). Duffy further comments that within Behn's prose, especially Love Letters, "we can hear in a uniquely intimate way . . . the unmistakable voice of the Restoration. No other writer of the time gives us this quite so clearly" (xvii). Noting Behn's undeniable place in literary history, Duffy concludes, "There remains quite simply a gap and, without Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister in particular, we are led to suppose that the eighteenth century novel sprang unmothered from the thigh of Robinson Crusoe" (xvii). Duffy's remarks within this accessible edition of Behn's epistolary novel may provide impetus to renewed study of Behn's contributions and talent. In fact, the fall of 1990 will see the Blackwell publication

of selected works by Aphra Behn. Edited by Paddy Lyons, this collection will present Behn's original work with modern spelling and punctuation. Both Duffy and Lyons recognize the importance of making Behn's work accessible to the general public.

Nonetheless, the fluctuating attitudes toward Behn's epistolary novel and her talent in general reflect a lack of serious consideration and study of her works. In fact, the 1986 book entitled His and Hers by Ann Messenger notes that in her search for female Restoration writers, she found that many persons had heard of but few had actually read Aphra Behn. Therefore, those uninformed readers need to have their eyes opened through a positive, intellectual view of one of her works, in this case Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister. Behn's novel easily meets the basic requirements of the epistolary form, but what makes her effort unique, worthy of scholarly recognition?

First, Behn was an innovator. Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister was published in 1684; only the anonymous Portuguese Letters, which were reportedly a translation, preceded Behn's work. Between Behn and Samuel Richardson, who is widely accepted as author of the first English epistolary novel, are only admittedly poor imitations of Behn's model. Ahead of her time in both content

and form, Behn should be recognized as one of the first authors to use effectively the epistolary form and as an important contributor to the overall development of the English novel.

Second, students who study any of Behn's works, especially her epistolary novel, will discover the fallacy of adverse criticism. For instance, Steeves claims that Behn's novels are at best "dull and limited" (16). An author who can create an intricate plot like that of Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister can maintain and intertwine more than ten major and minor characters and can keep the action at a near sexual peak, for the entire narrative can hardly be called "dull and limited." Evidence included in this analysis will refute Steeves' damaging and damning opinion through concrete examples and careful discussion. Furthermore, it will refute Wagenknecht's outrageous accusation that Behn has no artistic principles. In fact, Behn's uniquely artistic application of rhetorical devices comprises the core of the analysis. The opinions of critics and historians who have maligned and ignored Behn's abilities and contributions, especially with regard to the epistolary novel, must be questioned and reevaluated in the light of documented scholarship.

Third, Behn's epistolary effort lives up to the expectations and requirements of the experts in the field. For instance, Perry points to the core of the epistolary novel as "a self-conscious and self-perpetuating process of emotional self-examination . . ." (117). Behn's characters, both major and minor, not only evaluate their own attitudes toward such matters as love and honor, but they also draw the fine lines of their personalities through those evaluations. Furthermore, Perry's all-encompassing comment that in an epistolary novel "thought is action and characters are their words" (117) particularly applies to Behn's genius. Though letters tend to confine action and character development, Behn's mastery accomplishes the engaging strategy of drawing action from thought and characters from words. Another point to be made from Perry's study stems from a somewhat negative remark about women and the epistolary novel. The author notes that early female writers were encouraged to use the epistolary form because it required no formal education (17). Behn's artistic use of language reflects her intelligence and sophistication in a time when women were poorly educated. The letters of Philander, of Sylvia, and of the characters who surround them are anything but simple, personal letters.

Finally, the most specific issue addressed in this analysis, Behn's use of rhetorical strategies to develop her characters, will engage the reader with the undeniable genius of Aphra Behn. Within the framework of fifty-two letters and a carefully constructed transitional narrative, Behn not only develops an intricate plot of love and deceit but also creates a cast of sharply defined characters. Though the devices she employs are common, her strategy, her application, and her artistry are extraordinary and noteworthy. The following chapters present evidence of Behn's rhetorical prowess and narrative genius. Such evidence will validate her deserved place among masters of the novel not only as a pioneer of its epistolary form but also as an artist in the craft of characterization.

CHAPTER II

WARNERS, COMFORTERS, HELPERS, AND GUIDES

Although Love Letters Between a Gentleman and His Sister displays many aspects of Behn's skills, the most evident and noteworthy is her crafty characterization through a variety of rhetorical devices. She employs these devices with the ease and preciseness of a Richardson and a bounty only Behn could effectively execute. With rhetorical richness, she shapes her characters through passion and pity, anger and disappointment, and rejection and acceptance. This study of Behn's characterization reveals her masterful use of the words spoken by and about the characters. As if he were a member of a series of fine paintings, each character takes his place in the plot of this study of passion and deceit. Each flash of color, each shade, each line--all deliberate strokes of Behn's pen and genius--contributes to her finished portraits.

An effective way to study the rhetorical prowess of Behn within this particular novel is to classify characters and, through example, to exhibit her development of those characters through her rhetorical strategies. This analysis centers on Sylvia Beralti because her character serves as a touchstone for all others. However, to facilitate this

analysis, each character will be assigned to a particular category. The first one, "Warners, Comforters, Helpers, and Guides," will deal with the minor characters who surround Sylvia and who act and react in deference to her dilemmas.

The chapter title ("Warners, Comforters, Helpers, and Guides") identifies the functions of the characters of the novel. All members are directly or indirectly involved with the fates of Philander and Sylvia. Myrtilla, principally a warner, has a great impact early in the novel, as does Melinda, who first carries letters between Philander and Sylvia. Also Sebastian begins as a warner, but he changes to lover while Fergusano functions as a guide to Cesario. Fergusano also serves as warner early in the novel. Antonet, Brilliard, and Octavio, all of whom are more directly and intricately involved with Philander and Sylvia, function in all four of the areas described in the title. To develop each of these supportive roles, Behn employs selected rhetorical devices such as allusion, metaphor, alliteration, symbol, and anaphora. Her strategic use of each device brings credibility and influence to the characters. These supportive roles have an impact on the progress of the main narrative.

The first warner to appear in the novel is Myrtilla, Philander's wife and Sylvia's sister. When she senses

Sylvia's interest in Philander, she tries in vain to reason with Sylvia through a sensible, argumentative, soundly logical, yet passionately concerned letter. The letter reports that once Philander had pledged his undying love to her:

He once thought me as lovely, lay at my feet, and sighed away his soul, and told such piteous stories of his sufferings, such sad, such mournful tales of his departed rest, his broken heart and everlasting love, that sure I thought it had been a sin not to have credited his charming perjuries; in such a way he swore, with such a grace he sighed, so artfully he moved, so tenderly he looked. (71)

Through alliteration, Myrtilla reveals her weakness to the manipulative powers of Philander. As she lists his artful ploys, she shows her willingness to be thought the fool of false love in order to save Sylvia. Continuing her letter, Myrtilla utilizes the metaphor of "the beaten road" to focus the picture being blurred by Sylvia's youthful passion: "Alas, dear child, then all he said was new, unusual with him, never told before, now it is a beaten road, it is learned by heart . . ." (71). She strengthens her argument by pointing out that Sylvia deserves more than secondhand

love: "[H]e can say no new thing of his heart to thee, it is love at second hand, worn out, and all its gaudy lustre tarnished . . ." (71). Finally comes the compelling plea for Sylvia's flight, complete with repetition's rhetorical rhythms: "[T]hink, think of this, my child, and yet retire from ruin; haste, fly from destruction which pursues thee fast; haste, haste and save thy parents and a sister, or what is more dear, thy fame . . ." (71). With Myrtila's letter to warn Sylvia, Behn introduces the first of her minor characters, all of whom participate in the narrative of Sylvia's adventure.

Serving as a guide and comforter for both Philander and Sylvia, Melinda enters the narrative early when she carries letters between the two and serves as Sylvia's "faithful confidante, and too fatal counsellor . . ." (22). Immediately characterized as trustworthy and painfully truthful, Melinda continues her role by reporting Sylvia's dismay through a graphic letter to Philander: "[S]he rose in rage from her seat, tore first the paper, and then her robes and hair, and indeed nothing has escaped the violence of her passion; nor could my prayers or tears retrieve them . . ." (45). Melinda shows herself both eloquent and observant, caring and understanding. Further, her loyalty and willingness to aid the two illicit lovers finds her handling a

rather uncomfortable situation when she must quickly hide a letter from Sylvia's father. She refers to the situation in the Beralti household as "the sudden storm which ever rises in that fatal quarter" (45). The metaphor of the "sudden storm" characterizes Melinda's inner turbulence and reflects her direct association with Sylvia's precarious situation and her concern for their safety. Melinda applauds Sylvia's covering the actual content and intent of the letter and continues to portray Sylvia's guarded state as she awaits instructions from Philander.

In a later incident, Philander writes Melinda and greets her, "Oh thou dear advocate of my tenderest wishes, thou confidante of my never dying flame, thou kind administering maid . . ." (48). Anaphora, one of Behn's favorite devices, rhythmically provides a vision not only of Philander's passionate impatience but also of Melinda's value as a guide and comforter and further of Sylvia's effect upon him. Evidence of Behn's ability to uncover the traits of several characters within the words of one occurs throughout the novel. Her strategy reinforces her deliberate and masterful use of the language.

The final reference to Melinda as a helper comes from the hand of Sylvia as she writes to Philander, "But oh, be wondrous careful there, do not betray the easy maid that

trusts thee amidst all her sacred store" (49). Alliteration and metaphorical description establish Melinda's blind trust and unexamined service to these two lovers.

Of all the characters who fit the category of warners, comforters, helpers, and guides, Antonet, who joins Sylvia as she flees with Philander, exhibits all the desirable qualities of this classification. If an author can show a partiality to a minor character, Behn certainly does when she blesses Antonet with significant philosophical insight and admirable logical powers of reasoning. Yet through the subtleties of her own flowing speech and the continued trust and reliance of Sylvia, Antonet emerges the epitome of the category.

Octavio's suggestion of Philander's dalliance affords Antonet her first role as guide and helper. With amazing wisdom, she advises Sylvia, "You yourself have armed my Lord Octavio with these weapons that wound you . . ." (181). These "weapons" articulate fears and jealousies Sylvia already feels. Antonet points out that Octavio, who has realized his feelings for Sylvia, must do what he can to dull his rival. When Sylvia dismisses the possibility of anyone besides Philander, Antonet explains her position:

Love in the soul of a witty person is like a skein of silk; to unwind it from the bottom, you must

wind it on another, or it runs into confusion, and becomes of no use, and then of course, as one lessens the other increases and what Philander loses in love, Octavio, and some one industrious lover, will most certainly gain. (181)

This extensive analogy establishes the depth and experience of Antonet and her ability to apply that experience. Her clear view of what is happening to Sylvia and her eloquence in picturing it lends stature and believability to her character. The reader, as well as Sylvia, heeds and trusts Antonet, who continues with her philosophy of love:

I am indeed of that opinion, that love and interest always do best together, as two most excellent ingredients in that rare art of preserving of beauty. Love makes us put on all our charms, and interest gives us all the advantages of dress, without which beauty is lost, and of little use. (182)

Combining emotional and material images confirms Antonet's understanding of the benefits of the upper class, even in matters of love. Of course, love flourishes in the presence of vanity: "Oh, madam, there is no friend to love like vanity; it is the falsest betrayer of a woman's heart of any passion . . ." (183). Thus vanity is identified by the

philosophical Antonet as Sylvia's most persistent nemesis.

Established as a solid source of wisdom, Antonet serves as an active listener throughout the escalating troubles she and Sylvia face. Also, Antonet guides Octavio when he is devastated by Sylvia's *soirée* with the wayward Philander. "He [Octavio] found the maid dying with grief for her concern for him" (364). Antonet replenishes Octavio's strength and pledges her silence as his "absolute, devoted slave" (364). A rare commodity in any age, Antonet remains loyal to all parties, but she clearly allies herself with the morally just.

A rather minor, ill-fated, yet interesting character is Sebastian, Octavio's misogynistic uncle. Sebastian becomes a lover when he meets Sylvia, but he first serves as a warner to Octavio. Although Sebastian's advice stems from his distrust of and distaste for all women, Octavio might have been spared his undeserved pain had he heeded Sebastian's rather abrasive, misguided, crossgrained reasoning: "Cannot honest men's daughters serve your turn, but you must crack a Commandment? Why, this is flat adultery: a little fornication in a civil way might have been allowed, but this is stark naught" (286). Sebastian admits that though he bends he does not break commandments; nonetheless, he has allowed little temptation to validate his wisdom.

More than likely his choler originates in his wanting the "best" for Octavio, who stands to inherit his uncle's fortune. Sebastian uses this fact to try to dissuade Octavio and threads the threat with political observation:

In fine, sir, quit me this woman, and quit her presently; or, in the first place, I renounce thee, cast thee from me as a stranger, and will leave thee to ruin, and the incensed States. A little pleasure--a little recreation, I can allow: a layer of love, and a layer of business--But to neglect the nation for a wench, is flat treason against the State; and I wish there were a law against all such unreasonable whore-masters--that are statesmen--for the rest it is no great matter.

(286)

Not only is Sebastian's scolding laced with alliteration and repetition to pinpoint his rather skewed opinion, but his reference to "unreasonable whore masters--that are statesmen" also foreshadows Cesario's involvement with Hermione and his subsequent fall from grace in her arms.

Trying in vain to warn his nephew of the dangers of women, Sebastian continues his assault on the race as Octavio pleads with him to at least meet Sylvia. "Whip them, whip them . . . I hate the young cozening baggages,

that wander about the world undoing young and extravagant coxcombs; gots so they are naught, stark naught . . ."

(291). Again, the sound and symbolism spell out the old man's fear, anger, and concern; for he honestly believes in his philosophy. When Sebastian finally agrees to see Sylvia, he spends the entire coach trip railing "against the vices of the age, and the sins of villainous youth; the snares of beauty, and the danger of witty women" (291). In a final damnation, shortly before his hypnotic meeting with Sylvia, he proclaims that "If he were to make laws he would confine all young women to monasteries, where they should never see man till forty, and then come out and marry for generation-sake, no more . . ." (291). His malice dwindles to impotent irony within the next few lines when the striking Sylvia transforms his railing to desire.

Some characters who seem to fit the "helper" category are in truth disguised. For instance, on the dark side lies Fergusano, whom the reader encounters in Part III of the novel only. Cesario, the prince-who-would-be-king, totally obsessed with Hermione, refuses practical advice and turns to Fergusano, a conjurer of the Black Art: "Hermione undertakes nothing without his advice; and as he is absolutely her creature, so his art governs her, and she the Prince . . ." (416). Through a series of enchantations and

conjurations, Cesario falls into the same trap as Shakespeare's Macbeth, at the hands of a Scot. Fergusano with the help of a German sorcerer guides the duped Cesario, "flattering his easy youth with all the vanities of ambition" (417). An inveterate enemy of France, Fergusano self-centeredly continues "inspiring him [Cesario] with new hopes of a crown, and laying him down all the false arguments imaginable, to spur the active spirit . . ." (417).

The allusion to Macbeth deepens as Cesario becomes more entangled in the web of deceit woven by Fergusano. Realizing Cesario's growing apprehension, Fergusano offers him a view of the future. Like Macbeth, Cesario scoffs when Fergusano warns him of the powers of the spirits: "If your devils be so nice, I doubt I shall find them too honest for my purpose" (423). Fergusano insists that "Such conscientious devils Your Highness is to converse with to-night; and if you discover the secret, it will not prove so lucky" (423). The conjurer respects the sources of his powers which to this point in the story seem strangely benign, not in their effectiveness but in their intentions. The reader understands from the strong resemblance to Macbeth and the connotation of Black Art that no good can come of Fergusano's dealings. If it were not for the earlier

reference to the Scot's hatred for France, one would recognize the power he held as an ally to the once-virtuous Prince. Behn veils his motives in the apparition which portrays Cesario's future correctly and identifies his downfall at the hands of a woman. Like Macbeth, Cesario ignores these apparitions, and he curses the forces that show him what he does not want to see.

The only hint of Fergusano's true evil comes as Brilliard tells Sylvia of Cesario's dealings. He insists, "He [Fergusano] is the most subtle and insinuating of all his non-conforming race, and the most malignant of all our party . . . it is he alone is that great engine that sets the great work a turning" (427-28). Through the powerful image of the engine, Brilliard depicts the danger presented by the manipulative sorcerer.

Later, Fergusano himself casts a shadow on his own character as he instructs Cesario on the art of inspiring common men:

It is by these gross devices you are to persuade those sons of earth, whose spirits never mounted above the dunghill, whence they grew like over-ripe pumpkins. Lies are the spirit that inspires them, they are the very brandy that makes them valiant; and you may as soon beat sense into their

brains, as the very appearance of truth; it is the very language of the scarlet beast to them. They understand no other than their own, and he that does, knows to what ends we aim. No matter, sir, what tools you work withal, so the finished piece be fine at last. Look forward to the goal, a crown attends it! and never mind the dirty road that leads to it. (429)

Fergusano's powerful speech, rich with metaphor, elaborates the dangerous idea that "The end justifies the means." With absolute disrespect for commoners that feeds the already bloated ambition of Cesario, Fergusano smoothly sets the basis of his art and the bias of his attitude.

As Cesario's moment of destiny approaches, he grows eager; and against Fergusano's advice, he plans to attack his enemy prematurely. At this point, Fergusano offers his final warning and persuades Cesario to "have a little patience; positively assuring him his fortune depended on a critical minute, which was not yet come" (451). Behn leaves the reader with a typical view of one who practices the Black Art though she never judges whether Fergusano would have been right or wrong. Since Cesario's future will never be known, Fergusano's character remains less than

totally evil. Like the witches in Macbeth, he simply relies on Cesario's own ambition to twist his fate.

Though love devastates Cesario by the end of the novel, early in the narrative he acts as an advisor. Ironically he warns Philander not to let love overshadow glory: "I'll permit love too to rival me in your heart, but not out-rival glory; haste then, my dear, to the advance of that, make no delay, but with the morning's dawn let me find you in my arms" (58). The metaphor of love, glory, and patriotism backfires as Cesario later becomes more of a slave to love than to his cause.

Among the major characters who cross over into the category of warners, comforters, helpers, and guides are Brilliard, Octavio, Philander, and Sylvia. As their personalities develop within the framework of love relationships, they also serve in roles outside those relationships.

Brilliard, though quickly smitten by Sylvia, has established himself as Philander's trusted servant and easily gains the praise of Sylvia: "And Brilliard, who has been all night in pursuit of thee, is now returned successful and distracted as thy Sylvia, for duty and generosity have almost the same effects in him, with love and tenderness and jealousy in me . . ." (100). Sylvia's comparison of Brilliard's concern to her love reveals his empathy and

devotion. In her anxious moments when she seems to have missed connections with Philander, Brilliard consoles her as she notes, "It is thus he feeds my hope, and flatters my poor heart . . ." (100). Later, she refers to "the unwearied care and industry of the faithful Brilliard . . ." (107). Nonetheless, when Philander suggests that Brilliard legally, but merely conveniently, marry Sylvia as an escape, trust is personified in Philander's actions as well as in his words:

Brilliard is a gentleman, though a cadet, and may be supposed to pretend to so great a happiness, and whose only crime is want of fortune; he is handsome too, well made, well bred, and so much real esteem he has for me, and I have so obliged him, that I am confident he will pretend no farther than to the honour of owning thee in Court; I'll time him from it, nay he dares not do it, I will trust him with my life. . . . (110)

Philander's faith in Brilliard is well-founded, for who else within the novel faces simple temptation without giving in? Brilliard not only found himself married to Sylvia, but beforehand he had been in earshot of Philander and Sylvia's lovemaking. Everyone else seems excused for loving Sylvia; and although Brilliard is not as penitent as Octavio, he

should not be scorned or pronounced unworthy of Philander's trust as a helper. Behn presents a fine young man who falls from grace only by the extraordinary attraction of Sylvia. As he declines in his role as helper, he rises in his role as lover, though his lofty motives drive him to deceit.

Octavio also grapples with the apparent paradox of friend and lover. He enters the story clearly as a helper who encounters Philander and Sylvia on the road and offers them refuge. He is praised as a gentlemen of extraordinary character with "a vivacity and quickness of wit unusual with the natives of that part of the world and almost above the rest of his sex" (114). Of particular importance to Behn's technique is stereotype, a strategy which allows the audience to draw upon common knowledge. In this passage, Behn individualizes Octavio as an exception not only to the norms of his countrymen but also to those of his sex.

Even after Octavio becomes the tormented lover, he continues to be a comforter and guide in the most sincere manner and under the most trying of circumstances. After Philander has strayed, Sylvia praises the ever-faithful and selfless Octavio:

Sure he was made for love and glorious friendship.
Cherish him then, preserve him next to your soul,
for he is a jewel fit for such a cabinet: his

form, his parts, and every noble action, shews us the royal race from whence he sprung, and the victorious Orange confesses him his own in every virtue, and in every grace; nor can the illegitimacy eclipse him: sure he was got in the first heat of love, which formed him so a hero. (189)

The established and sustained purity of Octavio both shades and illuminates his predominant role as that of lover, lover of his most trusted friend's scorned lady. No wonder Behn attributed such ethereal qualities to Octavio as comforter and guide.

Though almost exclusively characterized as lovers, Sylvia and Philander do have their supportive moments outside their passions. Sylvia, though using Octavio to get to Philander, shows true concern for his welfare, for she recognizes his value. Philander, watching Cesario's fortunes turn, tries to warn him of the consequences of his neglect and his involvement with the Black Art. Sylvia counsels Antonet and, in a roundabout way, tries to warn Calista of Philander's fleeting devotion. When in true, brave friendship Octavio tells Philander of his feelings for Sylvia, Philander, despite his jealous nature, wishes Octavio well. Though Philander and Sylvia serve as helpers in other instances, the true development of their electric

characters comes within the category of lovers and deceiv-
ers.

CHAPTER III

LOVERS AND DECEIVERS

The category of lovers and deceivers entails a varied group of characters including the mercurial Philander and Sylvia, whose development serves as both the touchstone and the catalyst for Behn's treatment of lesser characters. Delving into her store of rhetorical devices and utilizing her brilliant command of the language, Behn breathes life force into each personality. As human passions inflame and deepen the spirit, raging romance sets Behn's language aflame and fires her characters into full-blown figures, not of porcelain or stone but of flesh and desire.

The lovers and deceivers in Behn's novel encompass those characters who are either lost in the throes of or in the search for passion. Some are merely lovers consumed by their passion; others fulfill their passion through devious action. Among the minor characters who fall into the category of lovers and deceivers are Myrtilia, Foscaro, Sebastian, and Alonzo, whose appearances, though brief, are colorful and affective. Cesario, Hermione, Calista, and Antonet, on the other hand, contribute significantly to the narrative. Major characters who serve as both lovers and deceivers include Brilliard, Octavio, Sylvia, and Philander.

To develop these characters, Behn employs a variety of rhetorical strategies. Repetitive devices such as alliteration, anaphora, listing, and rhetorical question intensify individual features of characters. Behn compares features through simile, metaphor, and personification and contrasts some elements with paradox and oxymoron. She adds depth and richness to her characters through symbolism and allusion while her ever-lurking irony adds a poignant twist at appropriate moments. From this list, Behn carefully selects particular strategies to create particular traits. Thus, Behn singularizes each character through her approach to and application of these rhetorical devices.

Within the category of lovers and deceivers several sustained symbols spin an intricate web of consistent reference. First, writing becomes both a release and a tool for the characters, and their personal styles and reactions serve to reflect their passions. Second, the image of the flame remains the symbol of love, anger, or righteousness as it either rages or flickers or inspires or consumes each lover and deceiver. Finally, the grove (or garden or woods) furnishes fertile ground for the growth of each new-found passion. Perhaps Behn's most ironic reference to writing occurs when Sylvia waits for a meeting with Philander. In

this passage Behn evaluates her own writing style as she has Sylvia worry:

There is a rhetoric in looks; in sighs and silent touches that surpasses all; there is an accent in the sound of words too, that gives a sense and soft meaning to little things, which of themselves are of trivial value, and insignificant; and by the cadence of utterance may express a tenderness which their own meaning does not bear; by this I wou'd insinuate, that the story of the heart cannot be so well told by this way, as by presence and conversation. . . . (31)

Behn intrudes through Sylvia with her commentary on the limitation of words without physical expression and vocal intonation. The author who depends on her descriptive powers for characterization controls her character's actions and speech. At the same time she provides an opportunity for the reader to observe the irony which exists between Behn's control of her rhetorical strategies and Sylvia's ability to recognize the power of that rhetorical control. This very passage characterizes both Sylvia's mistrust and Philander's reputation. Ironically, Behn both questions her own power and answers Sylvia's doubts.

Other references to writing surface throughout the development of each relationship. Philander and Sylvia both turn to writing when they are separated, when they have doubts or fears, or when forces around them squelch their passions. Their words shrive or relieve them; their epistles give them confidence or intensify their apprehension. Writings of this sort tend to identify innermost feelings and honest confusions to provide for the reader a peek inside the heart: "[A]nd finding still new occasion for fear, she [Sylvia] had recourse to pen and paper for a relief of that heart which no other way could find . . ." (135); and she later notes that "[T]here is no ease like that of writing . . ." (184). At one point the narrator interjects an explanation: "[F]or when a lover is insupportably afflicted, there is no ease like that of writing to the person loved . . ." (184). Later in the narration, Octavio is described as having "the courage to live on the rack without easing one moment of his agony by letter or billet, which in such cases discharges the burden and pressures of the love-sick heart . . ." (22). Thus the act of writing becomes an outlet for pent-up frustration and a balm for the pain of torment and doubt.

The letters themselves become players as Antonet steals them for Brilliard. Their importance is highlighted as

Brilliard, in turn, forges several to further his cause. The discovery of a letter sends Philander to the Bastille for rape of Sylvia while through a letter Octavio learns of Sylvia's infidelity. This knowledge leads Octavio to the monastery. Early in the narrative, Myrtila's warning letter nearly cancels Sylvia's surrender to Philander as Sylvia confronts the very real issue of honor and the very logical argument of Philander's repeated offenses. Behn's strategically placed correspondences reveal situations through which each character's virtues and flaws may be tested and demonstrated.

Another direct reference to and use of writing concerns style. When Philander's passion for Sylvia begins to wane, Sylvia immediately notices a change in his writing: "[T]hat never-failing mark of declining love, the coldness and alteration of the style of letters, that first symptom of a dying flame!" (178). When Octavio notes this change, Sylvia becomes defensive; and in essence, her defense establishes her as an independent woman. Thus, Behn uses this strategy to mature Sylvia and to prepare her for later battles. Sylvia stands stately as she answers Octavio's doubts: "[Y]our thick foggy air breeds love too dull and heavy for noble flights, nor can I stoop to them" (134). Sylvia does notice the decline in passion of Philander's words and

laments when she declares that "Methinks the charming softness of thy words remains like lessening echoes of my soul, whose distant voices by degrees decay, till they be heard no more" (184). In her desperation Sylvia suggests that Philander repeat his old letters since "such repetitions are love's rhetoric" (185). Philander's tell-tale shift in style signals his wavering passion and his ultimate betrayal of Sylvia.

The image of the flame serves as a multilayered symbol throughout the narrative. At one time the flame evokes love; at another, anger; and still another, spirit. The flame flares, grows, burns, or flickers as passions ebb and flood. Knowing the consequences of illicit love, Sylvia refers to her "criminal flame" (5) for Philander. Giving into their passions, Sylvia and Philander share their burning desire: "[S]till I protested, but still burnt on with the same torturing flame . . . I saw the ravishing maid as much inflamed as I; she burnt with equal fire, with equal languishment: not all her care could keep the sparks concealed . . ." (53). Later, Sylvia finds her feelings for Octavio growing and changing: "This suffering with Octavio begot a pity and compassion in the heart of Sylvia, and that grew up to love . . . and every hour was adding new fire to her heart, which at last burnt into flame" (269). Philander

complains that "the stifled flame burns inward" (13) as he waits to meet Sylvia. He also employs the fiery image when he first sees Calista, who, he says, "shot new flames of love into my panting heart" (236). Octavio, seeing an opportunity, bids Philander, "glut thy insatiate flame--rifle Calista of every virtue heaven and nature gave her, so I may but revenge it on Sylvia!" (173). Further, he describes his love for Sylvia as an inextinguishable flame. Behn's use of this symbol establishes a frame of familiar reference for levels and intensities of desire.

Behn also uses the flame to reflect anger. Octavio, driven to distraction by Sylvia, struggles to hold his anger: "Oh! what should he do to keep that fire from breaking forth with violence . . ." (373). When Sylvia finally realizes that Philander has indeed been untrue, she lashes out with a fiery pledge of revenge: "I have hell within; all rage, all torment, fire, distraction, madness . . . I should laugh in flames to see thee howling by" (220). With heated choler Behn pushes her characters to distraction and revenge.

Finally, the flame represents a spiritual fervor, a spark of righteousness. Intertwined with the constant themes of love and deceit, the theme of a quest for honor twists within the hearts of Behn's characters. Philander

refers to love as a "nobler fire" (92) in an attempt to convince Sylvia of the purity of their passion. When Octavio approaches the end of his patience and forgiveness with Sylvia, he alludes to his "religious flame" (385) with which he hoped to save them both. Although Octavio does end up taking Holy Orders, he first falls into the depths of despair at the hand of Sylvia: "Oh! thou hadst raised me to the height of heaven, to make my fall to hell the more precipitate" (386). The righteous flame had been consumed by the more powerful flame of passion.

As lovers meet, deceivers connive, and passions swell, the grove furnishes a constant fertile ground in which each sprouting controversy may blossom. Any reference to the grove, garden, flowers, or trees suggests either a possibility for passion's growth, a hiding place for forbidden lovers, or a promise of new-found desire.

Sylvia and Philander meet secretly in the grove. When Philander leaves, Sylvia spends crazed moments visiting the place where they met: "I threw myself down on that bank of grass where we last disputed the dear, but fatal business of our souls: where our prints (that invited me) still remain on the pressed greens . . ." (6). From Sylvia's pilgrimage and throughout the narrative, these grounds become sacred, almost divine. Behn couches passion in the purity of nature

and gives the characters a defense for their errant behavior. What is more natural than spontaneous passion? Philander crowns Sylvia "the Goddess of the Groves, from whence they (with all the rest of their gaudy fellows of the spring) assume their ravishing odours" (41). Sylvia does remain the object of passion which grows and dies and grows again.

Throughout the narrative, numerous references to the grove sustain and utilize the symbol in various strategies. Nonetheless, this fertile ground (garden) bespeaks, above all, the growing, blossoming, and tenacious power of passion.

As the narrative continues and characters begin to develop, Behn draws on her store of figurative language. To intensify or explain feeling or situations, she uses repetitive devices such as anaphora, listing, and serial rhetorical questions. Growing impatient waiting to meet Philander, Sylvia explains her aggravation: "I hate to dress, I hate to be agreeable to any eyes but thine; I hate the noise of equipage and crowds . . ." [Italics added] (62). Philander, meanwhile, expresses his anticipation: "Silent with wonder, rage and ecstasy of love, unable to complain, or rail, or storm, or seek for ease, but with my sighs alone, which made up all my breath; my mad desires remained . . ." (51).

Octavio defends his right to love Sylvia: "[L]ove is my right, my business, and my province; the empire of the young, the vigorous, and the bold; and I will claim my share; the air, the groves, the shades are mine to sigh in . . ." (156). Probably the most morally admirable character in the novel, Octavio proclaims his passion with a purity of spirit, a righteous flame. As long as he does not act upon his passions, Octavio maintains his respectability, although his proclamation, delivered with a rhythm to underscore its power, includes a reference to the grove.

Lesser characters also reveal their passionate intensities through repetitive devices. Sebastian, Octavio's uncle, moves from woman-hater to enslaved lover when he meets Sylvia: "I cannot eat, nor sleep, nor even pray . . . or, if by chance I slumber, all my dreams are of her, I see her, I touch her, I embrace her . . ." (296). When Sylvia sets her sights on Alonzo, she realizes the possibilities of her power over him: "[S]he knew she could make him her slave, her pimp, her anything . . ." (414). When the innocent Calista admits to her passion for Philander she "knew not what dear name to call it by, but something in her blood, something that panted in her heart, glowed in her cheeks, and languished in her looks, told her she was not

born for Clarinau . . ." (241). These instances of repetition parallel those of major characters such as Sylvia and Philander.

Since the lovers and deceivers of this novel spend much of their time waiting, wondering, and anticipating the consequences of their actions, Behn often uses the rhetorical question to allow the characters to think out loud, in a sort of prosaic soliloquy. When Sylvia blames Philander's marriage for her reluctance, Philander questions her reasoning: "What is it to my divine Sylvia, that the priest took my hand and gave it to your sister? What alliance can that create?" (4). Sylvia, meanwhile, cries out against fate: "Oh! what pitiless god, fond of his wondrous power, made us the objects of his almighty vanity? Oh why were we two made the first precedents of his new found revenge?" (5). Such thought- and passion-provoking questions finally lead the two lovers to throw aside honor in favor of the privileges of true love. Rhetorical questions also reflect Sylvia's worldly knowledge. With logic and careful reasoning, Sylvia questions Philander's association with Cesario's cause. Though her motive is Philander's return, her method reveals her wisdom and craft.

The most frequent and effective use of the rhetorical question concerns both loving and deceiving. Lovers who

wait for reaction or instruction question the whereabouts, the motives, or the fidelity of their partners. Lovers who have discovered infidelity or decline of passion question the fates and their own foolishness. Each character who falls prey to passion also falls prey to deceit, either as deceiver or as deceived. Through impassioned questions, the reader experiences each frustration. Sylvia impatiently waits for word from Philander: "Oh, where art thou, my Philander? Where is thy heart? And what has it been doing since it begun my fate?" (139). Though she hungers for his return, she already suspects his dalliance. After a rhetorically placed silence, Philander answers Sylvia's veiled charges with indignant righteousness: "Is it possible, that for the safety of my life I cannot retire, but you must think I am fled from love and Sylvia?" (175). Although Philander's indignation is false, his argument is strong. Through questions left unanswered, he skirts the truth and keeps Sylvia conveniently deceived.

Behn inserts rhetorical questions at strategic moments to exhibit a depth of passion or despair. Octavio expresses his growing passion for Sylvia: "May not their [his eyes'] silent language tell you my heart's sad story?" (159), and when he finally acknowledges her rejection he pleads, "Will you, cruel maid, pursue me to my grave?" (373). As Cesario

declines from self-assured leader to a hopelessly consumed lover, Behn portrays the pitiful sight in a single query: "I say, who that beheld this, would not have scorned the world, and all its fickle worshippers?" (455). The moment is framed, the depth of emotion measured, and the character enriched through Behn's skill and timing.

Behn also employs more conventional strategies to develop her characters. Simile and metaphor add a poetic quality and an intellectual variety to Behn's portrayal. Instantly identified as one who knows the meaning of true love, Octavio explains that "love, like poetry, cannot be taught, but uninstructed flows . . ." (191). Antonet exhibits her philosophical view by likening love to a skein of silk when she suggests that to unwind it one must wind it on another (181). Antonet knows the guile of love and later proves the necessity of deceit as she steals letters and conceals evidence to further love's cause. Early in the narrative, Sylvia depicts her innocence in love as "fearful and timorous as children in the night, trembling as doves pursu'd . . ." (16). Philander likens his fluctuating passions to "one awakened from a dream of honour, to fall asleep again, and dream of love" (353). Octavio laments both his foolishness and Sylvia's deceit when he compares himself to a "false worshipper" who sees only the "gay, the

gilded side of the deceiving idol" (228). Octavio becomes a martyr for a false cause, but his devotion sanctifies his martyrdom. Behn's use of this religious simile foreshadows Octavio's entrance into the monastery.

Behn's practice varies in her use of simile and metaphor. Ordinarily, she uses a series of similes while she extends a single metaphor through a longer passage. In other words, Behn uses similes to spotlight moments; she employs her metaphors to illuminate an entire situation or to illustrate the traits of a character. For example, Sylvia sees her honor leading a mutiny against love (17). While Philander marks Sylvia as a murderer, a murderer of his passion, of his hope, she makes him wait for her treasures (76). These metaphors foreshadow the lovers' transformation into deceivers, for Sylvia's loss of honor to love draws her into her sister's deceit; and Philander's claim is ironic since he is the one who murders not only Sylvia's passion but her honor. Nonetheless, Philander recognizes the brevity of love and the signs of its demise. He refers to little jealous quarrels as "the very feathers of love's darts, that send them with more swiftness to the heart"; and when these little quarrels cease, love becomes more practical "as fencers fight with foils: a sullen brush perhaps . . . but nothing that can touch the heart" (165).

Behn purposefully reiterates selected metaphors and similes to emphasize points or to underline ironies. For instance, both Antonet and Octavio refer to love as a game of chance. Antonet tells Sylvia that "a woman was like a gamester, if on the winning hand, hope, interest, and vanity made him play on, besides the pleasure of the play itself; if on the losing, then he continued throwing at all to save a stake at last . . ." (182). Octavio, realizing his foolish belief that Sylvia could be his, points out that "Beauty is more uncertain than the dice, and though I ventured like a forward gamester, I was not yet so vain to hope to win . . ." (385). Both characters realize the unavoidable chance one takes when love is the game, and the deceit practiced by this novel's lovers multiplies their confusions and misconceptions. The repetition of this comparison serves to underline the unpredictability of both situation and character.

Although many of Behn's comparisons come in series and extensions, singular touches also prove effective. Sylvia sits "as calm and still as death" (145) while Calista walks "like wind so swift and sudden" (242) and "smiling melancholy dressed her eyes" (169). As Octavio grows despondent, "death sat in his face and eyes," (366) and as he points out, "foolish passion hung upon my soul" (367). Upon seeing

only Sylvia's hand, Alonzo comments, "the whole piece must be excellent, when the pattern is so very fine . . ." (438). Similes, personifications, and metaphors such as these add subtleties to the structural outlines of each character.

Of all the comparisons Behn uses to develop her lovers and deceivers, the most poignant comes from the hand of Octavio, who serves as Behn's spokesman on behalf of love. In a letter to Philander, Octavio both admits his feelings for Sylvia and offers an explanation of the powers of love:

I thought it base to look upon the mistress of my friend with wishing eyes; but softer love soon furnished me with arguments to justify my claim, since love is not the choice but the face of the soul, who seldom regards the object lov'd as it is, but as it wishes to have it be, and then kind fancy makes it soon the same. Love, that almighty creator of something from nothing, forms a wit, a hero, or a beauty, virtue, good humour, honour, any excellence, when oftentimes there is neither in the object. . . . (161)

The impression of this passage epitomizes each lover and justifies each deceiver, for lovers become deceivers to make their love as they wish it to be. Therefore, unrequited love, though it does not condone, encourages deceit.

Contrast also plays an integral part in the development of Behn's characters. Pairs of contrasting elements such as innocence and experience, honesty and deceit, and loyalty and betrayal provide underlying struggles which affect and sometimes control characters' actions. The experienced Philander tempts and seduces the innocent Sylvia but not before Sylvia agonizes over the impending loss of her honor and the respect of her family. Philander's rebuttals to her concern for honor exhibit his disregard for the boundaries of both society and religion, a disregard he repeats with Calista. Ironically, Sylvia's innocence and Calista's innocence are themselves contrasting elements. Sylvia turns her loss of innocence into useful experience whereas Calista, unable to deal with her sin and Philander's lack of devotion, returns to the convent.

Just as experience often devours innocence, deceit hounds honesty throughout the novel. Octavio portrays the epitome of honesty while characters like Brilliard and Philander unashamedly employ every form of deceit to realize their goals. Perhaps the most striking contrast of these two elements comes as Octavio reveals his love for Sylvia to Philander. Though Philander admits to his new love interest (Calista), Octavio does not use this information to win Sylvia. The purity of Octavio's honesty highlights

both itself and the deceitfulness of others. Unaware that Sylvia is just using him to learn about Philander, Octavio refuses to take advantage of her vulnerability or of Philander's friendship. His idealistic honesty, like the innocence of his sister, contributes to his subsequent rejection of the ways of the world and to his entrance into holy orders. On the other hand, Brilliard lies, forges letters, and takes advantage of his position and of Sylvia's weak moments. He manipulates the faithful Antonet and implicates the honest Octavio. Though Octavio and Brilliard's goal (Sylvia) was common, their methods and morals were highly contrasting. This contrast lends to the development of each of their personalities.

Loyalty and betrayal also play an important part in Behn's characterizations. These elements battle within each relationship and reveal the trusting and trustworthy as well as the suspecting and suspicious characters. Sylvia and Philander represent the most striking contrast of loyalty and betrayal. Sylvia entrusts Philander with her honor and her love; although Philander pledges his undying devotion, that devotion is short-lived. Sylvia remains true to the undeserving Philander and sacrifices the affections of the trustworthy Octavio. The relationship of Cesario and Hermione also exhibits the consequences of twisted loyalty.

Cesario becomes so consumed with his love for Hermione, he forsakes his political followers. Though Cesario and Hermione remain loyal to each other, those who believed in Cesario's cause are betrayed. The contrasts within the relationships of both Sylvia and Philander and Cesario and Hermione emphasize the difficulties of conflicting passions.

Behn also uses contrast in the form of oxymoron and paradox. These strategies often depict a twisting inner turmoil or contradiction in a character's behavior or attitude. Mentioned earlier was the paradox of the flame which consumed itself in its intensity, and this reference is reinforced as flames of love which should be extinguished by the coolness or deceit of lovers are, on the contrary, blown to extremes by rejection and disappointment. Spurned or betrayed lovers find contradiction in their feelings. Try as they may, they cannot stop loving those who spurn or betray them. Sylvia, her honor compromised, knows she should feel shame. Nonetheless, she finds glory in her ruin; she calls the act "the dear charming sin" and Philander "the dear injurer" (90) and later "the lovely devil" (158). Clearly, Sylvia knows the wrong, but her overwhelming passion struggles to cancel it. Likewise, Philander, who impatiently waits for Sylvia's prize, calls her "lovely mischief and fair murderer" (95), and he pledges

to haunt her wedding bed if she should kill him with this denied passion.

One of the devices Behn uses most effectively is allusion. Evoking immediate images, these references provide instant common knowledge from which the writer develops the narrative and the reader perceives the meaning. Behn capitalizes on the universality and history of love's conventions by strategically selecting, placing, and applying a variety of allusions, which range from mythical to literary, from subtle to obvious.

Allusions to Cupid and Venus are commonplace in the seventeenth century; nonetheless, Behn's strategies go beyond those found in other places. For example, Octavio becomes angelic as his looks are "soft the while as infant Cupids" (250) though Sebastian becomes a caricature as "the most concerned dotard that ever Cupid enslaved" (309). The allusion evokes the picture, but in reference to Octavio it is saintly; in reference to Sebastian it is foolish. When Octavio hints at Philander's unfaithfulness, Sylvia accuses him of furthering his own cause. She claims that Philander has left her heart guarded by "young deities, who laugh at all your little arts and treacheries, and scorn to resign their empire to any feeble Cupids you can draw up against them . . ." (134). Later, Sylvia notes the coolness in

Philander's style of writing and encourages him to be "as wanton as a playing Cupid" (185). Nonetheless, she must finally admit that "no arts, obligations, or industry, could retrieve a flying Cupid . . ." (279); and with characteristic resiliency, she proceeds to survey Alonzo "as curiously as Psyche did her Cupid . . ." (413). While the allusion remains constant, each application sheds a singular light and creates the unique effect Behn desires for that particular characterization.

Biblical or proverbial allusions also serve to reveal or reinforce characteristics. When Octavio realizes that his love for Sylvia has no future, he draws a graphic picture of his hopelessness; he admits that "Like a fallen angel now I howl and roar, and curse that pride that taught me first ambition . . ." (386). Sylvia decries Philander's marriage to Myrtilia saying, "It is a fine divinity they teach, that cry marriages are made in heaven . . ." (108). Later, she employs yet another proverb when Philander shows signs of losing interest: "[T]hy love is more familiar grown--oh take the other part of the proverb too, and say it has bred contempt . . ." (186). Not only do these allusions paint a vivid picture of the character's feelings, they define the depth and sharpness of those feelings and the character's ability and willingness to express them.

Behn also uses religious allusion to reflect Philander's passions, both false and true. When Myrtilia's letter causes Sylvia to hesitate in her affair with Philander, he makes an impassioned "last" plea: "I only beg, in recompense for all, this last favour from your pity; That you will deign to view the bleeding wound that pierced the truest heart that ever fell a sacrifice to love . . ."

(73). Sylvia becomes the doubting Thomas who must touch the wounds to believe; and ironically, Philander becomes the innocent who has suffered for her and now must prove that he has. Behn draws on this irony later when Philander alludes to the "first-born maid in Paradise" (240) when speaking of Calista. This second allusion completes the picture of deception and whim that is Philander's love.

Though Behn uses mythical and Biblical allusions quite effectively, her literary allusions, especially those to Shakespeare, particularly exhibit her skillful application of this rhetorical strategy. Behn's Shakespearean allusions are both direct and subtle, both brief and extensive, but their effectiveness is unquestionable. Trying to convince Sylvia that he no longer cares for Myrtilia, Philander uses the words of Othello while Foscario, Sylvia's suitor, parallels the character Paris and sees to Philander's welfare after their battle over Sylvia. In the first

example, Behn carefully chooses Othello's words to characterize Philander's sincerity and yet preserve his tender heart. This allusion shows but a facet of Philander's character while it defines Foscario's entire person through the likeness it bears to Paris. The reader immediately identifies Foscario's actions and feelings and accepts him as a catalyst to the passions of Philander and Sylvia.

Behn's most extensive Shakespearean allusion occurs late in the narrative when Cesario, the prince to whom Philander had pledged his allegiance, falls insanely in love with Hermione. As the relationship grows, Cesario begins to neglect his political responsibilities, and Hermione seizes the opportunity to take total control of the weakening prince. At this point the situation begins to bear an obvious resemblance to Shakespeare's Macbeth. Hermione seeks power; and although she does love Cesario, she desires assurance of his loyalty and her share of the crown Cesario will win. Fergusano, the sorcerer, works his Black Magic on Cesario and plays upon his ambitions. Behn strengthens the allusion with apparitions which display Cesario's future, apparitions which Cesario selectively accepts and rejects according to his desire. In the end, a premature attack sparked by blind ambition leads to Cesario's capture and death. Hermione lies down never to rise again, and her last

word is "Cesario." The parallels with the Macbeth characters enable Behn to develop an entire chain of events for her love story. This love story both rivals and accentuates that of Philander and Sylvia. The story of Hermione and Cesario, the story of passions out of control, shows the destructive force of unbridled love. Although Philander and Sylvia lose each other, they do not destroy each other because they are able to control their passion.

Examples cited in this chapter exhibit Behn's powerful use of language through particular rhetorical strategies. To create the lovers and deceivers who inspire and destroy, she applies these strategies with brilliant strokes of artistry. Each character rises from the page and emerges as a full-blown participant in life. At the point of Behn's pen, rhetorical strategies become shades and tints, shapes and depths which create portraits for her fiction.

AFTERWORD

Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister provides a wealth of evidence in favor of the unique skills of Aphra Behn. Through this novel, readers are introduced to Behn herself, for her comments as narrator suggest her political and social opinions and reflect her understanding of the manners of the day. Also, since Love Letters is virtually unknown, its story remains fresh and interesting. Within the intriguing story, readers encounter a memorable cast of characters who are artistically developed and craftily intertwined. The aim of this analysis has been to present the evidence of Behn's craft and talent and thereby to influence the student of the novel to consider the unlabeled merits of this dormant masterpiece.

Particularly exhibited in this analysis is Behn's use of rhetorical strategies to develop her characters. Selected examples and careful discussion highlight Behn's unique skill in this area. Not only does she employ a variety of rhetorical devices, but her strategic application of these devices reflects a singular talent with characterization. From the wayward Philander to the mesmerizing Sylvia, from the saintly Octavio to the faithful Antonet,

Behn's characters arise with the power of her figurative descriptions. The reader need only sample Behn's rich language and engage his imagination to experience with those characters passions, fear, or desperation. Although the reputation of the epistolary novel has been tainted by its depiction of overdramatic, long-suffering lovers, Behn's approach presents realistic characters without sacrificing the drama of passion. In fact, Maureen Duffy points out,

Her understanding of sexuality and her attempt to redefine the rules for its conduct along rational and humane lines without the dictates of religion is what makes Love Letters, in spite of its baroque dress, seem so contemporary to us and ultimately accessible to a new audience, perhaps more so than at any time since her death. (xvi)

Will Behn ever receive the credit she deserves?

Current trends are hopeful. Recent scholarship has begun to focus on Behn's fiction. Though her plays have enjoyed some attention and criticism, her novels, especially Love Letters, have remained undiscovered treasures. With the 1987 release of the novel, the first in two hundred years, comes the accessibility which will allow the reading public to sample Behn's fictional efforts firsthand. Encouraged by the Maureen Duffy introduction, readers will realize the

importance of discovering Behn "for herself . . . but also for the insight she gives into her own period and into the development of the English novel" (xvii). Furthermore, studies such as Ruth Perry's Women, Letters, and the Novel and the upcoming Blackwell edition of selected works of Aphra Behn help to capture critical attention for the author. Behn's talents speak for themselves; nevertheless, these talents have been mute for centuries. With new focus on Behn's works, the mute will speak and the critically powerful will listen.

Other trends will aid in the further recognition of Behn's contributions. Researchers have begun to review female writers of the past, especially those whose talent has been questioned. Scholarship in this area has uncovered victims of the times, women whose creditable work has been buried under slanted criticism or lack of publicity. Behn's works will enjoy the light of this type of study. Furthermore, there seems to be a renewed interest in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For the student who has read Love Letters, the movie Dangerous Liaisons must have conjured pictures of Philander, Sylvia, and Brilliard. In fact, an epistolary novel entitled Les Liaisons dangereuses by Choderlos de Laclos (Perry 194) was in all likelihood the basis for this very popular movie. One needs only the time

and the scriptwriting talent to bring to the silver screen the sultry saga of Philander and Sylvia. Perhaps the ultimate spotlight upon this unheralded genius would be the words "based on a novel by Aphra Behn" flashing across the movie screen.

What then should the reader take from this analysis? Above all, this analysis encourages students of the novel to experience Aphra Behn personally, to read her Love Letters, and to evaluate the validity of the arguments presented herein. In the light of this experience, readers will discover her undeniable artistry.

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