

Classic Poetry Series

Aphra Behn
- poems -

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Aphra Behn(10 July 1640 – 16 April 1689)

Aphra Behn was a prolific dramatist of the English Restoration and was one of the first English professional female writers. Her writing contributed to the amatory fiction genre of British literature.

 Early Life

One of the first English women to earn her livelihood by authorship, Behn's life is difficult to unravel and relate. Information regarding her, especially her early life, is scant, but she was almost certainly born in Wye, near Canterbury, on 10 July 1640 to Bartholomew Johnson, a barber, and Elizabeth Denham. The two were married in 1638 and Aphra, or Eaffry, was baptized on 14 December 1640. Elizabeth Denham was employed as a nurse to the wealthy Colepeper family, who lived locally, which means that it is likely that Aphra grew up with and spent time with the family's children. The younger child, Thomas Colepeper, later described Aphra as his foster sister.

In 1663 she visited an English sugar colony on the Suriname River, on the coast east of Venezuela (a region later known as Suriname). During this trip she is supposed to have met an African slave leader, whose story formed the basis for one of her most famous works, *Oroonoko*, widely credited as the book which first brought home to England a sense of the horrors of slavery. The veracity of her journey to Suriname has often been called into question; however, enough evidence has been found to convince most Behn scholars today that the trip did indeed take place.

Though little is really known about Behn's early years, evidence suggests that she may have had a Catholic upbringing. She once admitted that she was "designed for a nun" and the fact that she had so many Catholic connections, such as Henry Neville who was later arrested, would certainly have aroused suspicions during the anti-Catholic fervor of the 1680s . Her sympathy to the Catholics is further demonstrated by her dedication of her play "The Rover II" to the Catholic Duke of York who had been exiled for the second time .

Behn was firmly dedicated to the restored King Charles II. As political parties first emerged during this time, Behn was a Tory supporter. Tories believed in absolute allegiance to the king, who governed by divine right . Behn often used her writings to attack the parliamentary Whigs claiming "In public spirits call'd, good o' th' Commonwealth...So tho' by different ways the fever seize...in all 'tis one and the same mad disease." This was Behn's reproach to parliament which had

denied the king funds. Like most Tories, Behn was distrustful of Parliament and Whigs since the Revolution and wrote propaganda in support of the restored monarchy .

Life in England, Writing Career, Work as a Spy

Shortly after her return to England in 1664 Aphra Johnson married Johan Behn, who was a merchant of German or Dutch extraction. Little conclusive information is known about their marriage, but it did not last for more than a few years since her husband died soon.

By 1666 Behn had become attached to the Court, possibly through the influence of Thomas Culpepper and other associates of influence, where she was recruited as a political spy to Antwerp by Charles II. Her code name for her exploits is said to have been Astrea, a name under which she subsequently published much of her writings. The Second Anglo-Dutch War had broken out between England and the Netherlands in 1665. Her chief business was to establish an intimacy with William Scott, son of Thomas Scott, the regicide who had been executed 17 October, 1660, since William was ready to become a spy in the English service and to report on the doings of the English exiles who were plotting against the King.

Behn's exploits were not profitable, however, as Charles was slow in paying (if he paid at all) for either her services or her expenses whilst abroad. Money had to be borrowed for Behn to return to London, where a year's petitioning of Charles for payment went unheard, and she ended up in a debtor's prison. By 1669 an undisclosed source had paid Behn's debts, and she was released from prison, starting from this point to become one of the first women who wrote for a living. She cultivated the friendship of various playwrights, and starting in 1670 she produced many plays and novels, as well as poems and pamphlets. Her most popular works included *The Rover*, *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, and *Oroonoko*. In 1688, the year before her death, she published *A Discovery of New Worlds*, a translation of a French popularisation of astronomy, *Entretiens sur la Pluralite des Mondes*, by Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, written as a novel in a form similar to her own work, but with her new, thoughtful, religiously-oriented preface.

Aphra Behn died on 16 April 1689, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Below the inscription on her tombstone read the words: "Here lies a Proof that Wit can never be / Defence enough against Mortality." She was quoted as once stating that she had led a "life dedicated to pleasure and poetry."

Status among other Writers

In author Virginia Woolf's reckoning, Behn's total career is more important than any particular work it produced. Woolf wrote, "All women together, ought to let flowers fall upon the grave of Aphra Behn... for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds." Vita Sackville-West called Behn "'an inhabitant of Grub Street with the best of them, . . . a phenomenon never seen and . . . furiously resented.' She was, as Felix Shelling said, 'a very gifted woman, compelled to write for bread in an age in which literature . . . catered habitually to the lowest and most depraved of human inclinations. Her success depended upon her ability to write like a man.' . . . She was, as Edmund Gosse remarked, 'the George Sand of the Restoration,' and she lived the Bohemian life in London in the seventeenth century as George Sand lived it in Paris in the nineteenth."

Ironically then, it was after a hiatus in the 19th century (when both the writer and the work were dismissed as indecent) that Behn's fame underwent an extraordinary revival. She dominates cultural-studies discourse as both a topic and a set of texts . Much early criticism emphasized her unusual status as a female writer in a male-dominated literary world; more recent criticism has offered more thorough discussions of her works.

In an age of libertines, Behn undertook a rebellious approach to proclaim and to analyze women's sexual desire, as manifested in her characters and in herself. She has since become a favorite among sexually liberated women, many of bisexual or lesbian orientation, who proclaim her as one of their most positive influences.

Today, the affinities between Behn's work and that of Romantic writers seem more pronounced than the different level of publicly acceptable discussion of sexuality. According to scholars,

<i>"Behn's writings unveil the homosocial role of male rivalry in stimulating heterosexual desire for women and explores the ways in which cross dressing and masquerade complicate and destabilize gender relations. Behn also analyzes female friendships and, more rarely, lesbianism."</i>

One source of speculation has been the identification of Behn with some of her characters. For instance in *The Rover*, the similarity in names between Behn and the prostitute Angellica Bianca is interesting.

"I, vainly proud of my personal judgement, hang out the Sign of Angellica."

In several volumes of writings by author Janet Todd, Behn's explorations of some of the key issues in Romantic studies, such as the role of incestuous and homosocial bonding in romance, the correlations between racial and gender oppression, female subjectivity, and, more specifically, female political and sexual agency are detailed.

The noted critic Harold Bloom calls Behn a "fourth-rate playwright" (in comparison, however, to Shakespeare) and notes her resurgent popularity as a case of "dumbing down".

Another of her critics was <http://www.poemhunter.com/alexander-pope/> Alexander Pope, against whom she has been defended.

She appears as a fictional character in Daniel O'Mahoney's Faction Paradox novel Newtons Sleep.

Her exploits as a spy, and the misuse of the intelligence she gathered is alluded to in Patrick O'Brian's novel Desolation Island.

She also appears as a fictional character in volume 4 The Magic Labyrinth and volume 5 Gods of Riverworld of the series Riverworld by the noted science fiction writer Phillip Jose Farmer.

A Congratulatory Poem

While my sad Muse the darkest Covert Sought,
To give a loose to Melancholy Thought;
Opprest, and sighing with the Heavy Weight
Of an Unhappy dear Lov'd Monarch's Fate;
A lone retreat, on Thames's Brink she found,
With Murmuring Osiers fring'd, and bending Willows Crown'd,
Thro' the thick Shade cou'd dart no Chearful Ray,
Nature dwelt here as in disdain of Day:
Content, and Pleas'd with Nobler Solitude,
No Wood-Gods, Fawns, nor Loves did here Intrude,

Nor Nests for wanton Birds, the Glade allows;
Scarce the soft Winds were heard amongst the Boughs.
While thus She lay resolv'd to tune no more
Her fruitless Songs on Brittain's Faithless Shore,
All on a suddain thro' the Woods there Rung,
Loud Sounds of Joy that Jo Peans Sung.
Maria! Blest Maria! was the Theam,
Great Brittain's happy Genius, and her Queen.

The River Nymphs their Crystal Courts forsake,
Curl their Blew Locks, and Shelly Trumpets take:

And the surprising News along the Shore,
In raptur'd Songs the wondring Virgins bore;
Whilst Mourning Eccho now forgot her Sighs,
And sung the new taught Anthem to the Skyes.
All things in Nature, a New Face put on,
Thames with Harmonious Purlings glides along,
And tells her Ravisht Banks, she lately bore
A Prize more great than all her hidden Store,
Or all the Sun it self e're saw before.

The brooding Spring, her Fragrant Bloom sent out,

Scattering her early Perfumes round about;
No longer waits the Lasie teeming Hours,
But e're her time produc'd her Oderous Flowers;
Maria's Eyes Anticipate the May,

And Life inspir'd beyond the God of Day.
The Muses all upon this Theam Divine,
Tun'd their best Lays, the Muses all, but mine,
Sullen with Stubborn Loyalty she lay,
And saw the World its eager Homage pay,
While Heav'n and Earth on the new Scene lookt gay.

But Oh! What Human Fortitude can be
Sufficient to Resist a Deity?
Even our Allegiance here, too feebly pleads,
The Change in so Divine a Form perswades;
Maria with the Sun has equal Force,
No Opposition stops her Glorious Course,
Her pointed Beams thro' all a passage find,
And fix their Rays Triumphant in the Mind.
And now I wish'd among the Crouds to Adore,
And constant wishing did increase my Power;

From every thought a New-born Reason came
Which fortified by bright Maria's Fame,
Inspir'd My Genious with new Life and Flame,
And thou, Great Lord, of all my Vows, permit
My Muse who never fail'd Obedience yet,
To pay her Tribute at Marias Feet,
Maria so Divine a part of You,
Let me be Just -- but Just with Honour too.

Resolv'd, She join'd her Chorus with the Throng,
And to the listning Groves Marias Vertues Sung;

Maria all Inchanting, Gay, and Young,
All Hail Illustrious Daughter of a King,
Shining without, and Glorious all within,
Whose Eyes beyond your scantier Power give Laws,
Command the Word, and justifie the Cause;
Nor to secure your Empire needs more Arms
Than your resistless, and all Conquering Charms;
Minerva Thus alone, Old Troy Sustain'd,
Whilst her Blest Image with three Gods remain'd;
But Oh! your Form and Manner to relate,

The Envyng Fair as soon may Imitate,

'Tis all Engaging Sweet, 'tis all Surprising Great;
A thousand Beauties Triumph in your Air,
Like those of soft Young Loves your Smiles appear,
And to th'Ungarded Hearts, as dangerous are:
All Natures Charms are open'd in your Face,
You Look, you Talk, with more than Human Grace;

All that is Wit, all that is Eloquence.
The Births of finest Thought and Noblest Sense,
Easie and Natural from your Language break,

And 'tis Eternal Musick when you speak;
Thro' all no formal Nicety is seen,
But Free and Generous your Majestick Meen,
In every Motion, every Part a Queen;
All that is Great and Lovely in the Sex,
Heav'n did in this One Glorious Wonder fix,
Apellis thus to dress the Queen of Love,
Rob'd the whole Race, a Goddess to improve.
Yet if with Sighs we View that Lovely Face,
And all the Lines of your great Father's Trace,

Your Vertues should forgive, while we adore
That Face that Awes, and Charms our Hearts the more;
But if the Monarch in your Looks we find,
Behold him yet more glorious in your Mind;
'Tis there His God-like Attributes we see.
A Gracious Sweetness, Affability,
A Tender Mercy and True Piety;
And Vertues even sufficient to Attone
For all the Ills the Ungrateful VWorld has done,
Where several Factions, several Intrests sway,
And that is still it'h Right who gains the Day;
How e're they differ, this they all must grant,
Your Form and Mind, no One Perfection want,
Without all Angel, and within all Saint.

The Murmuring World till now divided lay,
Vainly debating whom they shou'd Obey,
Till You Great Cesar's Off-spring blest our Isle,
The differing Multitudes to Reconcile;
Thus Stiff-neckt Israel in defiance stood,

Till they beheld the Prophet of their God;

Who from the Mount with dazzling brightness came,
And Eyes all shining with Celestial Flame;
Whose Awful Looks, dispel'd each Rebel Thought,
And to a Just Compliance, the wilde Nations brought.

Aphra Behn

A Thousand Martyrs I Have Made

A thousand Martyrs I have made,
All sacrific'd to my desire;
A thousand Beauties have betray'd,
That languish in resistless Fire.
The untam'd Heart to hand I brought,
And fixt the wild and wandring Thought.

I never vow'd nor sigh'd in vain
But both, thô false, were well receiv'd.
The Fair are pleas'd to give us pain,
And what they wish is soon believ'd.
And thô I talked of Wounds and Smart,
Loves Pleasures only toucht my Heart.

Alone the Glory and the Spoil
I always Laughing bore away;
The Triumphs, without Pain or Toil,
Without the Hell, the Heav'n of Joy.
And while I thus at random rove
Despise the Fools that whine for Love.

Aphra Behn

Epitaph On The Tombstone Of A Child

This Little, Silent, Gloomy Monument,
Contains all that was sweet and innocent ;
The softest pratler that e'er found a Tongue,
His Voice was Musick and his Words a Song ;
Which now each List'ning Angel smiling hears,
Such pretty Harmonies compose the Spheres;
Wanton as unfledg'd Cupids, ere their Charms
Has learn'd the little arts of doing harms ;
Fair as young Cherubins, as soft and kind,
And tho translated could not be refin'd ;
The Seventh dear pledge the Nuptial Joys had given,
Toil'd here on Earth, retir'd to rest in Heaven ;
Where they the shining Host of Angels fill,
Spread their gay wings before the Throne, and smile.

Aphra Behn

Love Arm'd

Love in Fantastique Triumph satt,
Whilst bleeding Hearts around him flow'd,
For whom Fresh pains he did create,
And strange Tryanic power he show'd;
From thy Bright Eyes he took his fire,
Which round about, in sport he hurl'd;
But 'twas from mine he took desire,
Enough to undo the Amorous World.
From me he took his sighs and tears,
From thee his Pride and Crueltie;
From me his Languishments and Feares,
And every Killing Dart from thee;
Thus thou and I, the God have arm'd,
And sett him up a Deity;
But my poor Heart alone is harm'd,
Whilst thine the Victor is, and free.

Aphra Behn

On The Death Of E. Waller, Esq.

How, to thy Sacred Memory, shall I bring
(Worthy thy Fame) a grateful Offering?
I, who by Toils of Sickness, am become
Almost as near as thou art to a Tomb?
While every soft, and every tender Strain
Is ruffl'd, and ill-natur'd grown with Pain.
But, at thy Name, my languisht Muse revives,
And a new Spark in the dull Ashes strives.
I hear thy tuneful Verse, thy Song Divine;
And am Inspir'd by every charming Line.
But, Oh! -----
What Inspiration, at the second hand,
Can an Immortal Elegic Command?
Unless, Me Pious Offerings, mine should be
Made Sacred, being Consecrate to thee.
Eternal, as thy own Almighty Verse,
Should be those Trophies that adom thy Hearse.
The Thought Illustrious, and the Fancy Young;
The Wit Sublime, the Judgment Fine, and Strong;
Soft, as thy Notes to Sacharissa sung.
Whilst mine, like Transitory Flowers, decay,
That come to deck thy Tomb a short-liv'd Day.
Such Tributes are, like Tenures, only fit
To shew from whom we hold our Right to Wit.
Hafl, wondrous Bard, whose Heav'n-born Genius first
My Infant Muse, and Blooming Fancy Nurst.
With thy soft Food of Love I first began,
Then fed on nobler Panegyrick Strain,
Numbers Seraphic! and, at every View,
My Soul extended, and much larger grew:

Where e're I Read, new Raptures seiz'd my Blood;
Methought I heard the Language of a God.
Long did the untun'd World in Ignorance stray,
Producing nothing that was Great and Gay,
Till taught, by thee, the true Poetick way.
Rough were the Tracts before, Dull, and Obscure;
Nor Pleasure, nor Instruction could procure.
Their thoughtless Labour could no Passion move;

Sure, in that Age, the Poets knew not Love:
That Charming God, like Apparitions, then
Was only talk'd on, but ne're seen by Men:
Darkness was o're the Muses Land displaid,
And even the Chosen Tribe unguided straid.
Till, by thee rescu'd from th' Egyptian Night,
They now look up, and view the God of Light,
That taught them how to Love, and how to Write;
And to Enhance the Blessing which Heav'n lent,
When for our great Instructor thou wert sent.
Large was thy Life, but yet thy Glories more;
And, like the Sun, did still dispense thy Power,
Producing something wondrous every hour:
And, in thy Circular Course, didst see
The very Life and Death of Poetry.
Thou saw'st the Generous Nine neglected lie,
None listning to their Heav'nly Harmony;
The World being grown to that low Ebb of Sense,
To disesteem the noblest Excellence;
And no Encouragement to Phophets shewn,
Who in past Ages got so great Renown.
Though Fortune Elevated thee above
Its scanty Gratitude, or fickle Love;
Yet, fallen with the World, untir'd by Age,
Scorning th'unthinking Crowd, thou quit'st the Stage.

Aphra Behn

Song

Oh love! that stronger art than Wine,
Pleasing Delusion, Witchery divine,
Wont to be priz'd above all Wealth,
Disease that has more Joys than Health;
Though we blaspheme thee in our Pain,
And of Tyranny complain,
We are all better'd by thy Reign.

What Reason never can bestow,
We to this useful Passion owe:
Love wakes the dull from sluggish ease,
And learns a Clown the Art to please:
Humbles the Vain, kindles the Cold,
Makes Misers free, and Cowards bold;
And teaches airy Fops to think.

When full brute Appetite is fed,
And choak'd the Glutton lies and dead;
Thou new Spirits dost dispense,
And fine'st the gross Delights of Sense.

Virtue's unconquerable Aid
That against Nature can persuade;
And makes a roving Mind retire
Within the Bounds of just Desire.
Chearer of Age, Youth's kind Unrest,
And half the Heaven of the blest!

Aphra Behn

Song : 'Love Armed'

Love in fantastic triumph sat,
 Whilst bleeding hearts around him flow'd,
For whom fresh pains he did create,
 And strange tyrannic power he shew'd;
From thy bright eyes he took his fire,
 Which round about in sport he hurl'd;
But 'twas from mine he took desire
 Enough to undo the amorous world.

 From me he took his sighs and tears,
 From thee his pride and cruelty;
From me his languishments and fears,
 And every killing dart from thee;
Thus thou and I the God have arm'd,
 And set him up a Deity;
But my poor heart alone is harm'd,
 Whilst thine the victor is, and free.

Aphra Behn

Song From Abdelazar

Love in fantastic triumph sat,
 Whilst bleeding hearts around him flow'd,
For whom fresh pains he did create,
 And strange tyrannic power he shew'd;
From thy bright eyes he took his fire,
 Which round about in sport he hurl'd;
But 'twas from mine he took desire
 Enough to undo the amorous world.

From me he took his sighs and tears,
 From thee his pride and cruelty;
From me his languishments and fears,
 And every killing dart from thee;
Thus thou and I the God have arm'd,
 And set him up a Deity;
But my poor heart alone is harm'd,
 Whilst thine the victor is, and free.

Aphra Behn

The Disappointment

1.

One Day the Amorous Lisander,
By an impatient Passion sway'd,
Surpris'd fair Cloris, that lov'd Maid,
Who cou'd defend her self no longer;
All things did with his Love conspire,
The gilded Planet of the Day,
In his gay Chariot, drawn by Fire,
War now descending to the Sea,
And left no Light to guide the World,
But what from Cloris brighter Eves was hurl'd.

2.

In alone Thicket, made for Love,
Silent as yielding Maids Consent,
She with a charming Languishment
Permits his force, yet gently strove?
Her Hands his Bosom softly meet,
But not to put him back design'd,
Rather to draw him on inclin'd,
Whilst he lay trembling at her feet;
Resistance 'tis to late to shew,
She wants the pow'r to sav - Ah! what do you do?

3.

Her bright Eyes sweat, and yet Severe,
Where Love and Shame confus'dly strive,
Fresh Vigor to Lisander give:
And whispering softly in his Ear,
She Cry'd - Cease - cease - your vain desire,
Or I'll call out - What wou'd you do?
My dearer Honour, ev'n to you,
I cannot - must not give - retire,
Or take that Life whose chiefest part
I gave you with the Conquest of my Heart.

4.

But he as much unus'd to fear,
As he was capable of Love,
The blessed Minutes to improve,
Kisses her Lips, her Neck, her Hair!
Each touch her new Desires alarms!
His burning trembling Hand he prest
Upon her melting Snowy Breast,
While she lay panting in his Arms!
All her unguarded Beauties lie
The Spoils and Trophies of the Enemy.

5.

And now, without Respect or Fear,
He seeks the Objects of his Vows;
His Love no Modesty allows:
By swift degrees advancing where
His daring Hand that Alter seiz'd,
Where Gods of Love do Sacrifice;
That awful Throne, that Paradise,
Where Rage is tam'd, and Anger pleas'd;
That Living Fountain, from whose Trills
The melted Soul in liquid Drops distils.

6.

Her balmy Lips encountring his,
Their Bodies as their Souls are joyn'd,
Where both in Transports were confin'd,
Extend themselves upon the Moss.
Cloris half dead and breathless lay,
Her Eyes appear'd like humid Light,
Such as divides the Day and Night;
Or falling Stars, whose Fires decay;
And now no signs of Life she shows,
But what in short-breath-sighs returns and goes.

7.

He saw how at her length she lay,

He saw her rising Bosom bare,
Her loose thin Robes, through which appear
A Shape design'd for Love and Play;
Abandon'd by her Pride and Shame,
She do's her softest Sweets dispence,
Offering her Virgin-Innocence
A Victim to Loves Sacred Flame;
Whilst th' or'e ravish'd Shepherd lies,
Unable to perform the Sacrifice.

8.

Ready to taste a Thousand Joys,
Thee too transported hapless Swain,
Found the vast Pleasure turn'd to Pain:
Pleasure, which too much Love destroys!
The willing Garments by he laid,
And Heav'n all open to his view;
Mad to possess, himself he threw
On the defenceless lovely Maid.
But oh! what envious Gods conspire
To snatch his Pow'r, yet leave him the Desire!

9.

Natures support, without whose Aid
She can no humane Being give,
It self now wants the Art to live,
Faintness it slacken'd Nerves invade:
In vain th' enraged Youth assaid
To call his fleeting Vigour back,
No Motion 'twill from Motion take,
Excess of Love his Love betray'd;
In vain he Toils, in vain Commands,
Th' Insensible fell weeping in his Hands.

10.

In this so Am'rous cruel strife,
Where Love and Fate were too severe,
The poor Lisander in Despair,
Renounc'd his Reason with his Life.

Now all the Brisk and Active Fire
That should the Nobler Part inflame,
Unactive Frigid, Dull became,
And left no Spark for new Desire;
Not all her Naked Charms cou'd move,
Or calm that Rage that had debauch'd his Love.

11.

Cloris returning from the Trance
Which Love and soft Desire had bred,
Her tim'rous Hand she gently laid,
Or guided by Design or Chance,
Upon that Fabulous Priapus,
That Potent God (as Poets feign.)
But never did young Shepherdess
(Garth'ring of Fern upon the Plain)
More nimbly draw her Fingers back,
Finding beneath the Verdant Leaves a Snake.

12.

Then Cloris her fair Hand withdrew,
Finding that God of her Desires
Disarm'd of all his pow'rful Fires,
And cold as Flow'rs bath'd in the Morning-dew.
Who can the Nymphs Confusion guess?
The Blood forsook the kinder place,
And strew'd with Blushes all her Face,
Which both Disdain and Shame express;
And from Lisanders Arms she fled,
Leaving him fainting on the gloomy Bed.

13.

Like Lightning through the Grove she hies,
Or Daphne from the Delphick God;
No Print upon the Grassie Road
She leaves, t' instruct pursuing Eyes.
The Wind that wanton'd in her Hair,
And with her ruffled Garments plaid,
Discover'd in the flying Maid

All that the Gods e're made of Fair.
So Venus, when her Love was Slain,
With fear and haste flew o're the fatal Plain.

14.

The Nymphs resentments, none but I
Can well imagin, and Condole;
But none can guess Lisander's Soul,
But those who sway'd his Destiny:
His silent Griefs, swell up to Storms,
And not one God, his Fury spares,
He Curst his Birth, his Fate, his Stars,
But more the Shepherdesses Charms;
Whose soft bewitching influence,
Had Damn'd him to the Hell of Impotence.

Aphra Behn

The Dream

All trembling in my arms Aminta lay,
Defending of the bliss I strove to take;
Raising my rapture by her kind delay,
Her force so charming was and weak.
The soft resistance did betray the grant,
While I pressed on the heaven of my desires;
Her rising breasts with nimbler motions pant;
Her dying eyes assume new fires.
Now to the height of languishment she grows,
And still her looks new charms put on;
– Now the last mystery of Love she knows,
We sigh, and kiss: I waked, and all was done.

`Twas but a dream, yet by my heart I knew,
Which still was panting, part of it was true:
Oh how I strove the rest to have believed;
Ashamed and angry to be undeceived!

Aphra Behn

The Willing Mistress

Amyntas led me to a Grove,
Where all the Trees did shade us;
The Sun it self, though it had Strove,
It could not have betray'd us:
The place secur'd from humane Eyes,
No other fear allows,
But when the Winds that gently rise,
Doe Kiss the yielding Boughs.

Down there we satt upon the Moss,
And did begin to play
A Thousand Amorous Tricks, to pass
The heat of all the day.
A many Kisses he did give:
And I return'd the same
Which made me willing to receive
That which I dare not name.
His Charming Eyes no Aid requir'd
To tell their softning Tale;
On her that was already fir'd,
'Twas Easy to prevaile.
He did but Kiss and Clasp me round,
Whilst those his thoughts Exprest:
And lay'd me gently on the Ground:
Ah who can guess the rest?

Aphra Behn

To The Fair Clarinda

Fair lovely Maid, or if that Title be
Too weak, too Feminine for Nobler thee,
Permit a Name that more Approaches Truth:
And let me call thee, Lovely Charming Youth.
This last will justifie my soft complaint,
While that may serve to lessen my constraint;
And without Blushes I the Youth persue,
When so much beauteous Woman is in view.
Against thy Charms we struggle but in vain
With thy deluding Form thou giv'st us pain,
While the bright Nymph betrays us to the Swain.
In pity to our Sex sure thou wer't sent,
That we might Love, and yet be Innocent:
For sure no Crime with thee we can commit;
Or if we shou'd - thy Form excuses it.
For who, that gathers fairest Flowers believes
A Snake lies hid beneath the Fragrant Leaves.

Though beauteous Wonder of a different kind,
Soft Cloris with the dear Alexis join'd;
When e'er the Manly part of thee, wou'd plead
Though tempts us with the Image of the Maid,
While we the noblest Passions do extend
The Love to Hermes, Aphrodite the Friend.v

Aphra Behn