

Aphra Behn's Untold Story: Secret Response to the Queen and King

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I

In 1685, when Charles II passed away, Aphra Behn dedicated a series of poems to the late King, the widowed Catherine of Braganza, and to the new King, James II. In "A Poem" to Catherine, Behn shows her deep admiration for the Queen's patience and grace:

Methinks I see, You like the Queen of Heav'n,
To whom all Patience and all Grace was giv'n;
When the Great Lord of Life Himself was lay'd
Upon her Lap, all wounded, Pale, and Dead; (lines 106-09)

With a metaphor of *pietà*, Catholic sounding imagery, Behn represents Charles as Christ lying on the lap of Catherine as the Virgin Mary. Though "[t]o *vulgar Eyes*," the Queen's agony of her husband's death "must not be reveal'd" (line 141), it can be shared with readers through this well-known imagery. Moreover, this poem not only depicts the grief of an individual woman but also celebrates the birth of a new King, and the succession of the right King based on the Resurrection of Christ. This poetic sequence of three poems begins with a Pindaric on Charles II, and a poem to the Queen is followed by the Pindaric poem on James II. Placing the Queen between the late King and the new monarch, Behn intends to emphasise the importance of Catherine's role in this poetic sequence. Though Catherine

does not bring a successor to the throne, Behn insists that her presence itself secures the royal succession to James II, rightfully, in her opinion. Not Catherine as an individual, but Catherine as a public figure functions to maintain the Stuart Dynasty.¹

It is extremely unusual even for Behn, a devoted royalist, to overtly refer to Catherine in her publications. However, in contemporary texts, we can find some representations of Catherine that reveal her important effects on the culture of seventeenth-century England. For example, Linker points out that Anne Killigrew dedicates some poems to Catherine, admiring her as "Virtue's Cause" and sympathising with her sufferings in her *Poems*, posthumously published in 1686 (Linker 91-93).² Moreover, in recent historical studies, the fact has been attracting more attention that, by the marriage of Charles and Catherine, Tangier and Bombay were ceded to England from Portugal and that tea drinking habits were brought in, later becoming widespread among the public (Watkins 42-43). Therefore, by re-evaluating the importance of Catherine's role in the English culture of the age, reconsidering Behn's texts from different perspectives is helpful.

However, in former studies, Catherine's influence, either direct or indirect, on Behn's dramatic texts has not drawn much attention. Their characteristics are regarded as the opposite: virtuous Queen and erotic Behn. When she entered the theatrical world in 1670 as the first professional woman writer, the London stages offered "in tragedy a rising pulse of lurid violence, frequently erotic; in comedy a concatenation of intrigues and cross-purposes, always erotic" (Roach 33). As the so-called sex comedy was gaining great popularity, the actress's body eroticised by sex-comedy's ideology was heavily used to attract audiences, along with libertine heroes and cuckold husbands (Howe 66-79). Some libertine characters were suggestive of royal brothers or court wits, and some sexually unbridled female characters were suggestive of King's mistresses, which might have pleased the audience who could understand its implications and the very person imitated. In the Restoration Court, and in the theatres loved by the King and his courtiers, diversity, [im]possibility, and dangerousness of (sexual) desire concerning sexualised bodies came to be foregrounded largely by the licentious court culture.³ Owing to this theatrical culture featuring sexual pleasure, Behn was regarded as being compliant with male-dominant misogynistic comedies. However, with the rise of feminist criticism in the 1990s, she came to be analysed differently: "she portrays rakes and

whores with the kind of ambiguity that can be disturbing—as well as funny” (Todd, *Aphra Behn* 119). Behn has been highly esteemed in feminist criticism in that she gives the joy of love to women who were traditionally ridiculed and excluded and raises questions about social customs concerning marriage and other social systems (Rubik 75). Evaluating Behn as positively portraying prostitutes or whorish women might differentiate her from contemporaneous male playwrights; however, justifying and praising women’s wanton sexuality might let her be captured in the conventional framework of the licentious Restoration comedy.

It would then be possible to re-examine Behn’s dramatic texts and their characters by paying attention to the traits of Catherine of Braganza, which has not been adequately examined. Being a foreign Catholic Queen, Catherine’s miscarriages in the 1660s made her powerless and criticised as “a barren Queen” by her enemies (Pepys 269). She was often regarded as a sociocultural, political, and religious other. In dramatic texts of that age, such otherness is represented as a sub-character such as courtesans, foreigners, or heathens who are conventionally suppressed or expelled.

Considering Catherine’s public role and her “modest popularity, probably because many people sympathised with her difficult position” (Boxer 78), a royalist Behn might secretly diffuse the Queen’s traits among some characters in her dramatic texts, although she did not use decipherable expressions. Paying attention to these characters, I would like to elucidate the ambivalent attitudes of Behn in her comedies: approval of / disapproval against female private desire, sympathy / distancing to persevere the female other, and approval of / disapproval against dissipation of libertines. Then, I would like to examine her dramatic work written in her late career to consider Catherine’s influence. In the unstable society of England, Behn tended to write more political works, directing her attention to public space rather than private love affairs.⁴ Taking into consideration the traits of Catherine as a public figure, we can address the continuity of her comedies and tragicomedy.

In section II, I would like to examine the fate of sexually licentious female characters in Behn’s comedies. Their perseverance and sufferings will be reconsidered, mainly in the heroine of *The Revenge: Or, A Match in Newgate. A Comedy*, to elucidate Behn’s awareness of and ambivalent attitudes toward female outsiders. The relationship between female private (sexual) desire and her

authority in the public space will be closely considered. Moreover, in examining this relationship, we should not overlook the role of heroic libertine characters and Behn's ambivalent attitudes toward them.

In her comedies, heroic characters are indeed heroic but only in the private space of romantic relations. In her late career, Behn addresses the [im]possibility of heroic character in the public, political/colonial space in her tragicomedy. Therefore, in section III, I will consider how Behn explores the possibilities of a heroic figure in the public space in *The Widdow Ranter, or, The History of Bacon in Virginia. A Tragi-comedy*. Since the play was written around 1688, when James II was about to be exiled, Behn tries to write the Virginia Colony as the place for prospering England as had Portugal's colonisation of Brazil. However, its plot has been interpreted as a warning of tragical consequences to the nation (Ferguson 19-28). In this play, her dilemma for heroism is represented in the failure of a heroic character, letting us notice, even here, the perplexing and ambiguous relationship between private desire and public interests.

In this way, I would like to clarify Aphra Behn's restriction of female sexual laxity in the public space where Restoration libertines were fashionable, on the one hand, and her search for a valid male subject that could form, manage, and enrich the nation in the colonial space, on the other. To elucidate her ambivalence or dilemma, we must examine how female private desires are allowed or denied and how the value of the male (libertine) hero is confirmed or defeated in the public (colonial) space. This examination will unveil Behn's covert response to the meaning and effects (absence and presence) of Catherine of Braganza in her texts.

II

In this section, I would like to examine the representation of whorish characters in Aphra Behn's comedies, paying attention to the traits of Catherine whom Anne Killigrew regarded to be a symbol of "anti-libertinism" (Linker 97). Suffering and perseverance, which are seemingly opposite characteristics of whores in Restoration comedies, play an important role in some of Behn's comedies. As mentioned in the previous section, feminist critics in the 1990s re-evaluated Behn, because she calls a gendered social system into question by focussing on the desires of various female characters.⁵ Behn's comedies are indeed full of various

whorish women or mistresses, from a ridiculed vile, common woman to a tricky woman married to an old man of property. This section, however, focusses on a courtesan represented as a tragic heroine in *The Revenge* (1680). I would like to examine to what extent a courtesan heroine could achieve with and be distressed by her personal desires in Behn's dramas. I will consider the courtesan heroine's two sides as well as the libertine who she loves and by whom she wants to be loved.

Before considering *The Revenge*, let us begin with an example of flirts utilising her sexualised body, a mistress in *The City-Heiress: Or, Sir Timothy Treat-all. A Comedy* (1682). A libertine hero's kept mistress Diana requires "a hopeful Reformation" from her lover Wilding by his marriage to "a rich Wife, whose Fortune" she will lavish (2. 2. 66-72). However, not his marriage but hers, designed by Wilding to marry her off as a false heiress to his uncle, will enable her to enjoy her future life, as she has declared if she "must marry him, give him patience to endure the Cuckolding" (5. 1. 266). In this way, Behn's whorish woman can seemingly fulfil her personal desire and gain her social status by hook or by crook. However, it is uncertain whether Diana wins and will secure a wealthy life and a sexual relationship with Wilding as she has wished. Marriage between an old wealthy man and a young charming woman is one of the conventional patterns of Restoration comedies, which pleases the audience but never makes the couple happy. The answer has already been implied in *Sir Patient Fancy: A Comedy* (1678). The play presents a future image of Diana, Lady Fancy who is married to an old rich alderman, and her impoverished lover whom she has a mind to flirt with. Lady Fancy has apparently secured her social status and her own space where she could enjoy her lover; however, she is finally to be dispelled and loses everything she has gained, when she proves to be wicked and adulterous.⁶ In this way, Behn uses sexually unmoral women as sub-characters to create a comic atmosphere, while showing diversity and the possibility of female sexual desires. Yet, what is more noteworthy is that their private desires should be frustrated at the end. Female figures exerting licentious sexuality that is marked as a characteristic of Restoration comedies are also punished and banished from society in Aphra Behn's comedies. With no traits of perseverance and virtue, a woman's self-interest and immodest personal desires are denied.

However, Behn creates a courtesan so different from the typical whorish women in *The Revenge*. Corina, like the mistress Diana, has been living by her body,

which engraves her sexual deviation on her body (and, the spectator assumes, on her mind). Corina also shares some settings with Diana in that her libertine lover plans to marry an attractive lady of fortune and that her sexual deviations cannot always deprive her of [re]gaining social status by her marriage. However, at the comic denouement, the restraint or punishment on the sexualised Corina is more complicatedly designed. What makes Corina's marriage possible is that she has been given sympathetic features, her honesty, suffering, and patience, in contrast to Diana. We can understand it in her following words to claim her constancy: "I have been false to Vertue, false to Honour, false to my Name and Friends; but was to *Wellman* what Heaven is to the Just and Penitent, all soft, all mercie, all complying sweetness" (1. 1. 298-301). Corina is a figure given sympathies by male and female characters in the play, and she so dramatically appears as to draw compassion from characters and the audience in the following scene. When Corina hears the rumour that Wellman is to marry a wealthy heiress, she verifies the truth:

And is it true, hast thou abandon'd me? Canst thou forget our numerous
Blisses past, the hours we've wasted out in Tales of Love, and curst all
interruption but of Kisses, which 'twixt thy charming words I ever gave
thee; when the whole live-long day we thought too short, yet blest the
coming night? Hast thou forgot, false are thy Vows, all perjurd, and thy
Faith broken as my poor lost forsaken heart? and wou'dst thou wish me
live to see this Change! Cou'dst thou believe, if thou hadst hid it from the
talking world, my heart cou'd not have found it out by sympathie! A foolish
unconsidering faithless man! (2. 2. 283-91)

Corina inquires whether Wellman could love her, while trying to remind him of their past sweet time full of "charming words." Blaming him for breaking his "Vows," she calls him faithless and recalls her "poor lost forsaken heart." Corina seems to be so poor a lover who could not "live to see this Change" and who might be given "sympathie" in "the talking world." The world, of course, contains malicious prejudice against a prostitute, but indeed shows compassion on a forsaken lover. Here is a girl who desires to love and be loved, and at last, Corina attempts to stab herself with a dagger, due to her excessive suffering. Wellman's friend manages to stop her and catch in his arms Corina falling in a faint. In such a

tragical way, Corina is described as a pitiful woman, whose distress lets her attempt suicide, and a wretched lover with which the reader could sympathise, but never as a mercenary courtesan.

On the other hand, she is given another feature that rejects the world's sympathies for her, that is, a cruel and revengeful mind. She intends to be revenged upon Wellman, as she utilises his friend's sensual desire for her body and drives him to murder her traitor. Her cruelty comes from her understanding of male sexual desire and perverting it to kill his friend. Although being a virtuous and persevering woman, she is also an illicit female villain, closer to the adulterous wives or mercenary whores punished or expelled in Restoration comedies, as in Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy*. She plots to kill the faithless Wellman as a revenge, as the play's title shows, and she expects it will alleviate her distress. Corina's excessive passion and selfish desire may prevent her from being sympathised with; however, she can be more delicately interpreted from the perspective of the body and the mind. It can be seen as Corina's earnest love and deep despair, which renders a clear contrast between her eroticised body and the chaste mind. By separating Corina's body (sensual desire) from her mind (chaste love), Behn transforms her into a woman who deserves to be relieved.⁷ Therefore, marriage with another man of fashion is prepared at the end, which Corina accepts. Thus, as a woman with a virtuous mind, she can gain her social status.

However, Corina's salvation of marriage must be reconsidered; we need to pay attention to the situation where she cannot be completely relieved. Wellman, a libertine, becomes an obstacle against her integration into society. Wellman chooses to marry for wealth, notices Corina's revengeful plot but enjoys it, and so generously forgives her that he arranges her marriage and dowry. Wellman's persuasion makes Corina accept Sir John Empty, a pseudo-libertine, as his name implies, who happily says he has mistresses "Some Nine, or thereabouts" (3. 1. 53). Her marriage enables her to regain a new social status, or more precisely, a rise. However, Corina is prepared for her future life in suffering, as she says, "since I must lose you, and am by your Commands obliged to Life, no matter how forlorn and wretched 'tis" (5. 1. 422-23). While her place is secured in society, she should hide and repress her love for Wellman. Corina, Wellman's sister, and Lady Empty may maintain a relationship with his future family within the limited upper-class society. Wellman seems to be positively represented as a reformed libertine who

has compensated for his cruelty to Corina's chaste love and arranged her marriage for her happiness. However, Corina is forced to persevere much harder in her married life, since she must endure more oppressive sorrows for her indelible love.⁸

As we have seen, Aphra Behn shows an ambivalent attitude toward whorish characters. She turns her sympathetic eyes toward courtesans with chaste love and deep inner sufferings, whose features are not usually lent to prostitutes or mistresses. It could be said that Behn covertly provides the audience with an enduring female figure, instead of a pitiful weak woman. She then experimentally produces a plot that sympathises with courtesans who have Catherine's traits, and finally relieves them. However, it turns out in the end that they cannot be entirely helped. Their desires can be fulfilled only in a limited way, because their marriage to a (pseudo-)libertine, a man of poor judgement, or an old man with sexual inability could not lend them any significance or influence. This could give the spectators a peace of mind that licentious women would not exert social and political power. The play describes a libertine hero in a contradictory manner; he is a privileged heroic figure in romantic relations who pursues his sexual pleasure, while he appears a cruel man who heartlessly discards his lover and forces her to endure severely restricted liberty and greater sufferings. Nonetheless, the libertine is not ostensibly blamed as the hero of the plot, and Corina's perseverance is not to be revealed as well. In this way, a woman playwright creates diverse representations to show or imply female private desire and distress, along with the conflicting images of a libertine. Thus, reconsidering Aphra Behn's comedies in terms of the Queen's traits enables us to clarify the playwright's dilemma in positively and negatively representing libertine heroes and suffering courtesans as a mirror of anti-libertinism.

III

The previous section confirmed how Aphra Behn contradictorily presents various and potential female private (sexual) desires in a (male) libertine-centered society. Behn, although being a royalist, assumes an ambivalent attitude toward female characters with Catherine's suffering and traits of perseverance, and positions libertine characters as causing them distress in her comedies. In this section, I would like to turn my attention from comedies to the tragicomedy written

at the end of Behn's career and examine the function of these traits of Catherine in different genres. As we have seen at the beginning of this thesis, in her poetic sequence, Behn depicts Queen Catherine's contribution to the succession to James II by suppressing her individual desire and perseverance and by remaining a public figure. In short, Behn admits Catherine's influence on the public sphere, which enables us to seek its trace in her dramatic texts dealing with public problems.

The Widdow Ranter is modified from the historical rebellion of Nathaniel Bacon in Virginia in 1676 into the tragic and comic plots of love.⁹ In a chaotic society of the colonial space, as if mirroring political turmoil in England, this play problematises ideal governance. Therefore, I would like to elucidate the relationship between male characters in this disorderly colony and Catherine's traits, which Behn appraises to some extent for maintaining the national regime. I will examine how Catherine's traits and libertine traits are embedded in a male character, not in a private romantic space in a comedy but in the public colonial space in this tragicomedy.

Having started from the beginning of the seventeenth century, colonisation of Virginia became even more important in the Restoration England when colonial management led by the King was seriously undertaken. One of the moments to push colonial management in England after the Civil War was the marriage of Charles and Catherine, the Princess of Portugal. Ceded as her dowry, Tangier was expected to be a commercial and military base under royal management.¹⁰ It was regarded as an important place which "would not only give us [England] the entire command of Mediterranean trade, but it would be a place of safety for a squadron to be kept always there for securing our East and West India Trades" (Boxer 82). Similarly, Bombay, along with Madras and Calcutta, was expected to be a city of great importance in English colonial strategy in India, after they had lost footholds in the East Indies by Amboyna massacre (1623). Moreover, Tangier and Bombay came to be closely connected with the culture Catherine brought into England: the culture of tea drinking habits increased the demand for tea, sugar, and Chinese porcelains, which were traded in East and West India Trades, respectively.

However, a century later, the heightening popularity of sugar-containing tea and Chinese porcelains had a major impact on industrial development, colonial management, and global trade (Smith 277-78). Though Portugal began sugar plantations in Brazil in the sixteenth century, England was not yet a powerful

country in the respect of colonial plantations in the late seventeenth century. It lagged behind in acquiring profitable colonies. With its small land and little natural resources, England needed to acquire territories and resources abroad to enrich the nation, similar to Portugal and Holland. However, Charles II and James II could not make use of Tangier and Bombay by themselves. Far from yielding profits, Tangier was notorious for "general beastliness," and Bombay also had a bad reputation for villainy that "very much outdoes Tangier" (Boxer 82).¹¹ As "people who had been sent to Tangier aimed only to fill their purses, not work for the common good" (Lincoln 422), colonisation was not related to the public interest. As a result, Tangier ended its short life in failure in 1684 (Beach 558-63), while Bombay was granted to the East India Company by the monarchy in 1668 by the ten pounds of "[p]epper corn rent" (Boxer 80).¹²

In this way, the English colonial policy in Tangier and Bombay led by the King did not succeed in the late seventeenth century, while colonial operations focussed on North America and the West Indies, since England gained New Amsterdam (later New York) in 1667 in exchange for Suriname as the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Dutch War (Roper 671-81). Nevertheless, at that time, the Virginia Colony was not yet developed and well-managed, and Behn's depiction of the colony reflects that situation.

The colony malfunctioned for various reasons. When Bacon's revolt broke out, it was home to the upper-class or wealthy plantation owners, many of whom lived in England and never crossed the ocean, leaving farm operations to their managers. Behn's *The Widdow Ranter* depicts a chaotic state of Virginia because of not only the Governor's absence but also its dysfunctional colonial congress. One of the reasons for the malfunction of the congress was its members: "a Councill, some of which have been perhaps transported Criminals, who having Acquired great Estates are now become your Honour, and Right Worshipfull, and Possess all Places of Authority" (1. 1. 107-10).¹³ Many of the celebrities in the play are represented as rogues that could never get out from the bottom of society in England. Their authority concerning the military, politics, or justice reflects the colony's wretched and bad management and simultaneously indicates the colony's exceptional opportunities that attract those who expect to get a better position and make a fortune.

Virginia's disorganised situation is represented as not only class confusion

but also confusion of gender difference. The title figure, the widow Ranter, is “a Woman bought from the Ship by Old Colonel *Ranter*.” As a wealthy widow, “the best Commodity this Country affords,” she understands her social value in the colonial marriage market (1. 1. 79-81; 84). Such rise of a poor, base-born person could be an extraordinary achievement, especially for women. Furthermore, she makes gender differences so ambiguous not only by her smoking and hard-drinking but also by her fighting in the battle as a cross-dressing soldier to win her beloved man, Dareing.

In this way, the Virginia Colony shows a topsy-turvy condition with respect to class and gender, so that, in this play, a heroic figure to confront and solve this difficulty is interpolated: Nathaniel Bacon as a hero.¹⁴ As a hero of the tragic part, Bacon is presented as “a Man indeed above the Common Rank, by Nature Generous; Brave, Resolv’d, and Daring” (1. 1. 113-14). On the colonial problem of armed conflicts with the natives, the council members intend to do nothing but drink and wait for the arrival of a new Governor with the English army. In the meantime, Bacon has won the colonists’ confidence and great popularity, thanks to his former defeat of the Indians for the settlers. However, his heroic act lacked a commission from the council. Through his defeat of the foe, though without permission, Bacon becomes a settlers’ hero and hopes for his heroic position to be formalised. Bacon demands “a Commission, to be made General against the *Indians*, which long was promis’d him” (1. 1. 125-26) so that he could formally defend inhabitants’ lives and domains. He persuades them into fighting against the enemy, and delivers an address to make himself a guardian of the community:

Shou’d I stand by and see my Country ruin’d, my King dishonour’d, and his Subjects Murder’d, hear the sad Crys of widdows and of Orphans. You heard it Lowd, but gave no pitying care to’t. And till the war and Massacre was brought to my own door, my Flocks, and Herds surpriz’d, I bore it all with Patience. Is it unlawfull to defend my self against a Thief that breaks into my door? (2. 4. 85-90)

Referring to the King’s honour, his subjects’ lands and lives in a noble and heroic manner, Bacon calls this problem a national crisis that demands he be appointed General not to endure but to overcome it. He insists that his request should not

derive from his personal desire but his public spirit. Nevertheless, objections against his request are interposed soon after his speech. The Council opposes to him and replies, "'Tis fear'd Sir, under this pretence you aim at Government" (2. 4. 103), since they think of his request as his ambition to rule Virginia for his private honour.¹⁵ Though Bacon insists on his public role for national benefits and his being "an honest Subject" (2. 4. 105), he is suspected to conceal his private desire to control authority under the honoured guise of public interests to protect Virginia. Not only the Council but also the Deputy Governor, Wellman, denies his hope, as he indirectly mocks Bacon's insistence and contradicts it in an offensive way. He denounces Bacon's former heroic act of defeating the Indians, due to its lack of formal permission. If it is admitted as a heroic deed, Wellman suggests, Bacon can forgive two of the Justice of the Peace who have attempted to murder him, because their crime is only "acting without Commission," which is equal to his heroic act (2. 4. 75-76). Wellman's identification of Bacon's and the attempted murderers' acts transforms Bacon's demanded commission into his personal interest, like the two men's self-interest or jealousy against Bacon.

Moreover, Bacon's hope to be a public hero is trivialised. It is the libertine, a stock character in the comedies, as we have seen in Section II, who subverts his hope. Two libertine characters, Hazard and Friendly, unconsciously reveal that Bacon's desire is based on his love for Semernia, the Indian Queen. They are characterised somewhat differently from conventional libertine figures. Friendly has inherited "a Considerable Plantation" from his uncle (1. 1. 35) and wants to marry a young heiress, while Hazard has come to the colony after wasting his younger brother's fortune, therefore, he is troubled by money but "was not born to work," which makes him a fortune hunter (1. 1. 230). As conventional libertine characters, both men desire women and property. However, in this colonial-staged tragicomedy, their wealth is closely tied up with colonial prosperity. Therefore, they cannot be uninterested in the war against the Indians and take part in the battle for the purpose of defending the colony and protecting the women with whom they are in love. Although guarding the colony appears to be a public act, their motives are private, or to put it another way, in the light of the economy, their private interest and public interest are closely interwoven.

These two libertines, on one occasion, discuss the necessity of a leader in the colony. Friendly says "This Country wants nothing but to be People'd with a well-

born Race to make it one of the best Colonies in the World” (1. 1. 105-06). They think about candidates such as an educated gentleman who has the potential to effectively control the Colony, and they agree that it should be Bacon. In this conversation, they cite Bacon’s monologue that Friendly has overheard before. It implies his secret wishes to “Conquer the Universe as well as *Alexander*,” and “like another *Romulus*” to “form a new *Rome*” (1. 1. 14-19). His envisaged map of the empire indicates that Bacon is clearly aware that a well-managed colony in his hands could be the new global empire. At this point, the libertines’ and Bacon’s dreams are in accordance.

Bacon wishes to be a hero to solve colonial problems, but he is enclosed in the romantic or heroic world as Friendly indicates: “no *Hero* ought to be without his Princess” (1. 1. 124). As love for a woman is an important factor for not only libertines but romantic heroes, almost everyone in the colony has noticed that Bacon is in love with the Indian King’s wife Semernia (2. 1. 21). Their conversation reveals that, despite Bacon’s emphasis on his public role, he is a romantic hero captured by private (sexual) desires. As a result, like the two libertines, what Bacon unconsciously regards the most important is his private desires.

However, Bacon’s desire to attain private and public interests ultimately fails. His last scene clearly shows the inability of the heroic character to protect his community. His desire to be a romantic hero for the Indian Queen and a military hero defending the colony renders him as an inappropriate figure for negotiating and adjusting conflicts with the natives. In consequence of a great war with the Indians, Bacon kills the Indian King in the toe-to-toe battle, and accidentally kills the cross-dressing Semernia. After killing her, Bacon, mistakenly convinced to have been surrounded by the enemy, drinks poison in a similar way to Hannibal. However, he is dying as a sorrowful lover, as he tells his follower, Daring, “never let Ambition—Love—or Interest make you forget as I have done—Your Duty—and Allegiance” (5. 1. 307-08).¹⁶ Bacon reveals that his private desires (ambition, love, interest) prevail in his public duty. His mock-heroic death simultaneously represents the inability of the heroic figure with much private desire in the colonial space. The heroic General of the country must die when he values his personal desire rather than public benefits and turns into a romantic lover. In this way, the plot shows the need to restrict and prohibit the private desires of male subjects in the public space, as well as female subjects, as we have seen in section II. As

Barbara Korte says, *The Widdow Ranter* “evokes and at the same time burlesques the Restoration heroic play” (449), and the play also indicates that the kingly figure can no longer function well in the process of forming and developing a colony.

Bacon's death seems to conversely suggest the importance of suppressing private desires and seeking public interest, Catharine's traits, as we have seen before. However, this text does not approve such traits but implies another possibility for ideal governance. The ending of the text suggests “a new form of authority” (Korte 449); the future of the Virginia Colony should be efficiently managed by a reorganised congress by such new gentlemen as Friendly, Hazard, and Dareing. While base-born members are expelled and return to their former work, the newly appointed General, Dareing, who has learned from Bacon's error, reconciles with Wellman, which implies that they should agree to compromise and negotiate with each other to control the country, based on popular support. For that, the cooperation of various people among military, politics, jurisdiction, and colonial management is called for. This shows that it is no longer possible for a hero (heroic governor) to rule the Virginia Colony, however austere he may suppress his private desires. A figure with new possibilities that could construct a new public space may be not a kingly nor heroic character, but Friendly or Hazard, former libertines who could obtain love, money, and council membership, as if private desires and public stability could be secured.

However, in the story of Virginia in 1676, adapted by Behn in 1688, she did not show how a colonising state could prosper under the administration of the new gentlemen or how the stabilisation of colonial society was brought about. Such a story might only be symptomatically or fragmentally represented in this text. What Behn cannot fully create may be a figure or story that ties private desires with public benefits. In this sense, Behn, at least in the later stages of her career, was a royalist but “not *merely* a royalist” (Mowry 296), showing her ambivalent evaluation to the Queen and King.

IV

As shown in Aphra Behn's poetic sequence, Catherine of Braganza bottles up her private desires and sufferings and perseveres with her public presence, so that

she brings about the succession to James II. Aphra Behn covertly incorporated Catherine's characteristics into her plays, while her libertine-centered plots enjoyed popularity. In the romantic story of her comedies, female private desires, such as those of a suffering and persevering courtesan with a virtuous mind, are partially accepted in the public sphere as long as they are limited and ruled by the male libertines' desires. In the public space of the colony, the kingly figure's desire to be a public hero is represented; however, it is finally denied, revealing its ineffectiveness because of his confusion of national and romantic matters. In her comedies and tragicomedy, Behn evaluates suppressing and exercising private desires, and simultaneously, she disapproves of them. These ambiguous attitudes toward the problematics of private desires and public benefits in the private and public spheres implies Behn's dilemma: supporting but questioning the traits of Catherine of Braganza and Charles II. Behn's dramatic texts vaguely show that, to synthesise public and private interests, the Queen's perseverance or the King's heroism will not fully be of service; a new form of governance is needed. However, this untold story could not fully materialise by Aphra Behn's hand.

Notes

¹ Charles II, though an unfaithful husband, did keep her public position as Queen: he insisted his brother, James, should be his heir, and refused to repudiate Catherine despite being frequently advised by courtiers and demanded by politicians, which repressed, for example, the hope of Louise de K  rouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth to replace her. In addition, he refused to admit illegitimate sons' succession to the throne (for example, Protestant Duke of Monmouth), thus James ascended to the throne (Watkins 69, 73, 84).

² "An Heroick Poem" dedicated to the Queen also praises Catherine's virtues and piety. It was published anonymously in 1685.

³ To keep a mistress was, in a sense, regarded as a royal tradition, thus not particularly unusual nor morally criticised. However, the excessive licentiousness of Charles II was notorious in that he loved various women randomly chosen from ladies at court to base-born women in London. At the time, being (treated as) a prostitute, some of the actresses did enter the court culture, such as Moll Davis and Nell Gwyn. From an orange woman in the pit, Nell became one of the King's favourites. Witty and Protestant, she was loved by the people, contrary to the Catholic foreign mistresses such as Duchess of Portsmouth and Hortense Mancini, Duchesse of Mazarin (Wilson 235-38, 248-50, 329-30).

⁴ Around 1680, when the great turmoil was caused by the Popish Plot, Behn staged so-called political plays in a row that present plots of love in Italy or Spain by the characters

whose sexual desire and the political interest are closely connected (Owen 68-71).

⁵ Although this paper focusses on whorish characters, Behn's comedy is basically featured by a young and beautiful heiress trying to escape her paternally designed marriage through tricks and disguise to secure her property and marriage with a man of her choice, namely a distressed libertine hero (Markley 99).

⁶ An adulterous wife or a flirt usually receives severe punishments, such as confinement, or is always watched by her husband or father (Marsden 51). Yet, Lady Fancy is treated more like a corrupted, common whore. This might be because she makes every effort to invite her lover into her bed, by which she ultimately has an affair with her daughter-in-law's lover, and she also attempts to steal Sir Patient Fancy's money, plates, jewels, and writings.

⁷ Such a distressed prostitute was pioneered by Angelica Bianca, a courtesan in Behn's masterpiece *The Rover* (1677). She insists on her separation of mind from her body, when she accuses her rover of his inconstancy to her "Virgin heart" (4. 1. 234). However, she must be excluded from the last comic denouement, where many marriages are happily fixed.

⁸ Corina's conclusion indicates another problem, considering that female sexual desires must be confined within the domestic space controlled by patriarchal figures. It is the pseudo-libertine, Sir John Empty, that will make Corina a lady of trivial importance in the public, due to his stupidity and inability. Simultaneously, it is his stupidity and inability that could destabilise the domestic space. Such causality, then, forces Corina into a much harder situation, since she must strictly control herself to repress her desire for Wellman.

⁹ *The Widow Ranter* was written in 1688, before the exile of James II, in a tragicomedy, which is a genre Behn hardly used. Staged in the fall of 1689, a few months after Behn's death, the play did not do well at the box office (Hughes 44).

¹⁰ In reconsidering the English pursuit of global dominance, Linda Colley points out Tangier's importance in its colonial history (23-32). Based on her indication, Adam R. Beach shows the English high interest in this city by examining three contemporary poems on Tangier and elucidates the features of early modern English colonialism and its failure (547).

¹¹ One of the reasons why Tangier did not thrive was that it was governed and defended mainly by Catholics, which made the parliament and the city fear that its success could empower Catholics. The parliament did not approve the expenditure budget Charles demanded and spoiled the apparently promising enterprise (Lincoln 422-25; Glickman 690-92).

¹² Bombay is now known for its important role in England's growth into the British Empire, as a central city for the company and for colonial rule in India in the eighteenth-nineteenth century (Colley 247).

¹³ Suriname's council members are similarly represented as "such notorious Villains as Newgate never transported" (Behn, *Oroonoko* 112). Behn's negative description of the parliament has been regarded as her denial of governance by the common people and not "by aristocratic control" (Todd, *Aphra Behn* 9406). *The Widow Ranter* and *Oroonoko* could be conventionally read as her criticism for the regime newly established after the "Glorious Revolution," as "the moral calculus of Whiggery is corrupt and politically irresponsible, for it privileges exchange value over virtue, commerce over justice, violence and barbarism over stability, and the rule of the wild and ignorant people over the rule of the educated and just"

(Visconsi 697). These evaluations may be based on Behn's royalist values, but this thesis will examine the playwright's ambiguous attitudes and dilemma on these matters in *The Widdow Ranter*.

¹⁴ Historical Bacon was reported as a xenophobic and aggressive person (Pulsipher 44); however, Behn turns him into a romantic hero who is in love with the Indian Queen.

¹⁵ This situation reminds us of the one in which the King and the parliament often confronted an anti-Catholic sentiment, leading to exclusion bills against his brother, conspiracy suspects, or assassination plans with increasing national anxiety and fear (Lincoln 422-25).

¹⁶ Royal characters are also represented to take their private desires rather than their public duties. A sort of duel between the Indian King and Bacon is a private fight, as Semernia is regarded as "a prize more valu'd than [his] Kingdom" (4. 2. 30). The Queen is killed because of her cross-dressing, which is a strategy frequently used by a comic heroine to overcome the problems of her love, as disguised Ranter succeeds in her winning Dareing during the battle. But the Queen's tragical death is inevitable, as Rebecca M. Lush indicates Semernia's secret hope that "her husband will die in battle so that she can freely desire Bacon" (152).

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