

appearances). A comparison between Fowler's text and these printed versions yields important points of difference: most noticeably, Fowler's text cuts many of the bawdier lines (including "A Turd in Cupid's teeth," and "I'll rend her smock asunder") and, as a consequence, offers a relatively decorous verse (although the poem is still discordant among the manuscript's other inclusions). Fowler's text also omits several lines that construct a female object of love: in her text, only one reference to "Her" remains. Such considerations raise important questions about the degree to which Fowler's transcriptions were in fact active, even creative acts, rather than simple mechanisms of duplication; they invite reflection on the significance attached to early modern ideas of authorship and the original; and they raise notions of how "public" verse was appropriated and rendered "private."

These are just the kinds of important questions that Aldrich-Watson's careful editing and meticulous scholarship has enabled. It is in some ways regrettable that her edition did not fully embrace such issues, but the vital point is that her work has brought out into the public an otherwise secluded text. The use of editions like *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler* in research and, crucially, in teaching, will certainly help reorientate the early modern canon and bring previously neglected texts, compilers, and readers to scholarly attention.

Jane Spencer. *Aphra Behn's Afterlife*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. ix + 307 pp. \$72.00.

Derek Hughes. *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. xiii + 230 pp. \$65.00.

Reviews by ROBERT MARKLEY, WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY.

Almost a decade ago in her Introduction to *Rereading Aphra Behn*, Heidi Hutner suggested that critics could not understand Restoration literature without taking into account the significance

of Aphra Behn as a dramatist, poet, translator, and novelist. Two recent studies by Jane Spencer and Derek Hughes build on Hutner's insight to consider, in very different ways, what the canonization of Behn tells about the course of eighteenth-century literary history and the give-and-take of theatrical controversy during the 1670s and 1680s. Both scholars succeed in redefining the literary and historical contexts in which we read Behn's works, and both consequently offer challenges to the ways in which Behn is taught and discussed.

Spencer's *Afterlife* concentrates on the ways in which Behn was read, adapted, rewritten, praised, and dismissed in the eighteenth century. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Barbara Herrnstein Smith, among others, Spencer argues that literary history encodes masculine models of inheritance, lineage, and influence, and therefore is ill-equipped to acknowledge the sophisticated—and often antagonistic—interplay between popular success and aesthetic value. In place of traditional source studies or Bloomian invocations of Oedipal warfare, she explores “the complex effects of gendered beliefs on the creation of literary and cultural histories” (15). Spencer then diligently traces Behn's contemporary reputation as a dramatist, poet, and novelist to produce a detailed account of the vagaries of her reputation between her death in 1689 and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Behn was both celebrated for her “wit” and disparaged for her violations of proper feminine morality. Women writers looked to her both as an “enabling model” (164) and as a negative example of the kind of writing they should avoid. Spencer devotes significant attention to the effects of this complex legacy on writers such as Mary Pix, Catherine Trotter, Delariviere Manley, Anne Finch, Susanna Centlivre, and Eliza Haywood. In different ways, these women appropriate, transform, or try to distance themselves from the mythology of Behn as both foremother and inappropriate role model. There are noteworthy analyses of these writers throughout Spencer's study as well as a first-rate discussion of Samuel Richardson's vilification of Behn and what she had come to represent. *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* concludes with valuable case studies of

the receptions of *The Rover* and *Oroonoko* in the eighteenth century. Rather than sinking quietly into oblivion, Behn's most popular comedy held the stage into the 1750s; its popularity belied the moralistic denunciations of critics and the best efforts of would-be reformers. The afterlife of *Oroonoko* as an abolitionist text, by comparison, is well known, but Spencer's chapter on Southerne's tragicomedy and the republication of Behn's novel contributes significantly to our understanding of the politics of race and reception in the eighteenth century.

Hughes's study of Behn's drama is the most comprehensive to date. *The Theatre of Aphra Behn* pays close attention to stage craft, casting, discovery scenes, and the theatrical repertory of the 1670s and 1680s. Hughes offers analyses of all of the extant plays, and he is particularly good on those works such as *Abdelazer*, Behn's only tragedy, that are seldom read and almost never performed. The portrait of Behn that emerges is a dark one. Rather than the female wit or the feminist champion of women's desire, Behn is portrayed as the skilled anatomist of a masculine-dominated society. Her heroes invariably succumb to their lusts for power and possession; her heroines recognize their limited options in a social worlds in which "all women are classed as whores" (87). For Hughes, Behn's plays derive their edginess and satiric bite by refusing to give in to comic cliches and conventionally happy endings. In her early plays such as *The Forc'd Marriage* (1670) and *The Dutch Lover* (1673), masculine violence is never far from the surface of political, social, and economic interactions, and although Behn is deeply critical of the values and assumptions that underlie masculine prerogatives, she offers no agenda for social change. In her mature comedies, such as both parts of *The Rover* (1677, 1681), the threat of violence hovers over the female characters, and the witty banter and playacting of carnival always verges on degenerating into gang rape. Blustering male characters such as Blunt may be the butt of the joke in *The Rover*, but their response to being duped is to assume that all women are fair game for sexual revenge. Hughes's argument is a necessary—if contro-

versial—corrective to critics such as Catherine Gallagher who have emphasized Behn's witty identifications between female playwright and prostitute.

The Theatre of Aphra Behn thus makes a different kind of contribution to Behn studies from *Behn's Afterlife*. If Spencer's study contributes to our historical understanding of the reception of women's writing in the eighteenth century, Hughes's work challenges our conceptions of the ideological underpinnings and overtones of Behn's comedy. For the record, I should note that I disagree with more than a few of the readings that Hughes offers. Willmore may have the attention span of a three-year old and the introspection of a *GQ* model, but Behn dedicated the second part of *The Rover* to the future James II and explicitly identified her exiled Cavalier with the exiled heir apparent. Behn's prefaces and dedications suggest a shrewd and widely read intellectual who was skilled in negotiating the complexities of Restoration politics. One wonders, then, what Hughes would make of her elegy on John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester or her preface to her translation of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Cheats of the Pagan Priests*. The great virtue of Hughes's study is that it leads us to ask such questions about the shape of Behn's career, her theatrical and political alliances, and her significance for our understanding of the literature of the late seventeenth century. Like Spencer's *Afterlife*, it is a provocative study.

Karen Raber. *Dramatic Difference: Gender, Class, and Genre in the Early Modern Closet Drama*. Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 2001. 338 pp. \$49.50 cloth. Review by JULIE D. CAMPBELL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY.

For anyone teaching or simply interested in closet dramas, Raber's book is an excellent resource. The study covers plays from the sixteenth-century through the Restoration, from those of Mary Sidney and her circle to those by John Milton and Katherine Philips. Raber especially provides good discussions of the contexts for these