



Ravishing Restoration [The]: Aphra Behn, Violence, & Comedy

By Ann Marie STEWART.

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stock in Australia, for immediate delivery] Aphra Behn used

theatre as a forum to highlight social issues, particularly those

regarding gender roles, sugar-coated within the genre of

comedy. Inequality for women, forced marriage, the sexual

double standard, and the perils of female powerlessness are

themes to which Behn returns repeatedly. She kept her

audiences captivated with clever plots and witty dialogue,

beautiful poetry and sophisticated intellectual arguments,

inventive use of staging and risqué romantic scenarios; and it

was from this platform that Behn drew attention to violence and

injustice against women. Altogether, nine of her plays include

scenes of sexual coercion, equating to almost half of her

dramatic work. The high instance of rape and attempted rape

seems to imply that Behn had a particular preoccupation with

seduction, domination, and victimisation, and the artistic

representation or recreation of ravishment. In her scenes, a

unique pattern arises in which she stages ideological debates

between male desire and female chastity; displays violent force

by men against women; and often provides an example of

women's ability to usurp male authority via escape. Her

comedies conclude with greater or lesser...



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