APHRA BEHN (c. 1645-1689), POET, PLAYWRIGHT, AND NOVELIST. For a brief biography and selections from some of her other works, see the print anthology, pp. 514-18.

EDITIONS:

FROM THE AMOROUS PRINCE, OR, THE CURIOUS HUSBAND (1671)

A NOTE ON THE TEXT: A more than usually complicated Restoration comedy, The Amorous Prince’s main plot concerns Frederick, son and heir of the duke of Florence, an amoral man who has seduced and abandoned the lovely Cloris, after promising to marry her, before moving on to the attempted seduction of his best friend Curtius’ beloved, Laura. Having rejected Cloris because of what he supposes is her lowly social rank, Frederick begins to change his mind when he discovers Cloris is Curtius’ sister. Discovering that Frederick has been attempting to seduce Laura, Curtius issues a challenge and the two men fight a duel, in which Curtius wounds Frederick, forcing Curtius into hiding. The Prince’s wounds are tended by Cloris, who has disguised herself as the country boy, Phillibert, and entered Frederick’s service. Determined on revenge, Curtius disguises himself as an aged pimp, and uses Laura’s brother, the amoral Lorenzo, to inform the Prince of the beautiful courtesans he has available for purchase. Warned of Curtius’ plot to lure the Prince with these women and then kill him, the nobleman Antonio and his friends replace the hired killers, and the play’s chaste women the courtesans. Frightened into virtue and repentance, Frederick grieves when he is told that Cloris has killed herself in despair over his inconstancy, but his repentance is simply the prelude Cloris’ unmasking, and their joyful reunion. The play ends with Frederick promising to marry Cloris, Curtius promising to marry Laura, and Lorenzo forced to marry the waiting-gentlewoman, Isabella.

ACT 4, SCENE 3.

[...]

FREDERICK.
’Tis much, methinks, a boy of so dejected,
Humble birth should have so much of sense
And soul about him.

CLORIS.
I know not that. But if I have a thought
Above that humble birth or education,
It was inspired by love.

FREDERICK.
Still you raise my wonder greater:
—Thou a lover?

CLORIS.
Yes, my lord, though I am young,
I’ve felt the power of beauty.
And should you look upon the object, sir,
Your wonders soon would cease:
Each look does even animate insensibles\(^1\)
And strikes a reverent awe upon the soul;
Nothing is found so lovely.

FREDERICK.
Thou speakst prettily. I think love
Indeed has inspired thee.

CLORIS.
These were the flatteries, sir, she used to me,
Of her it was I learned to speak and sigh,
And look as, oft you say, I do on you.

FREDERICK.
Why, then, it seems she made thee returns?

CLORIS.
Ah, sir! ’Twas I that first was blessed;
I first the happy object was beloved,
For ’twas a person, sir, so much above me,
It had been sin to’ve raised my eyes to her,
Or by a glance, or sigh, betray my pain.
But oh! When with a thousand soft expressions,
She did encourage me to speak of love,
My God, how soon extravagant I grew!
And told so oft the story of my passion
That she grew weary of the repeated tale,
And punished my presumption with a strange neglect.

[Weeps.]

FREDERICK.
How, my good Phillibert?

CLORIS.
Would suffer me to see her face no more.

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\(^1\) insensibles i.e., those things without senses (inanimate objects).
FREDERICK.
That was pity. Without a fault?

CLORIS.
Alas, sir, I was guilty of no crime
But that of having told her how I loved her,
For all I had I sacrificed to her,
—Poor worthless treasures to any but a lover,
And such you know accept the meanest things
Love and a true devotion do present;
When she was present I found a thousand ways
To let her know how much I was her slave,
And absent still invented new ones,
And quite neglected all my little business,
Counting the tedious moments of the day
By sighs and tears, thought it an age to night,
Whose darkness might secure our happy meeting,
But we shall meet no more on these kind terms.

[Sighs.

FREDERICK.
Come, do not weep, sweet youth. Thou art too young
To have thy blooming cheeks blasted with sorrow;
Thou wilt outgrow this childish inclination,
And shalt see beauties here, whose every glance
Kindles new fires, and quite expel the old.

CLORIS.
Oh, never, sir!

FREDERICK.
When I was first in love, I thought so too,
But now with equal ardour, I dote upon each new and beauteous object.

CLORIS.
And quite forget the old?

FREDERICK.
Not so, but when I see them o’er again,
I find I love them as I did before.

CLORIS.
Oh, God forbid I should be so inconsistent!
No, sir, though she be false, she has my heart,
And I can die, but not redeem the victim.

FREDERICK.
Away, you little fool! You make me sad
By this resolve, but I’ll instruct you better.

CLORIS.
I would not make you sad for all the world.
Sir, I will sing, or dance, do anything
That may divert you.

FREDERICK.
   I thank thee, Phillibert, and will accept
   Thy bounty; perhaps it may allay thy griefs awhile too.

CLORIS.
   I'll call the music, sir.

[She goes out.

FREDERICK. This boy has strange agreements in him.²

*Enter CLORIS with music. She bids them play, and dances a jig.*³

This was wondrous kind, my pretty Phillibert.

*Enter PAGE.*

PAGE.
   Lorenzo, my lord, begs admittance.

FREDERICK.
   He may come in.

*Enter LORENZO.*

Well, Lorenzo, what’s the news with thee? — How goes the price of beauty, hah?

LORENZO.
   My lord, that question is apropos to
   What I have to say; this paper will answer your question, sir —

*Gives him a paper; he reads.*

[Aside.] Hah, I vow to Gad a lovely youth!

² *agreements* somewhat unclear: perhaps, ‘agreeable or attractive features/qualities’; or perhaps pointing to the lack of compatibility between two or more qualities or characteristics in Cloris-Phillibert’s personality?
³ *jig* a cheerful, lively dance.
LORENZO gazes on PHILLIBERT.

But what makes he here with Frederick?
This stripling may chance to mar my market of women now.  
'Tis a fine lad, how plump and white he is!
Would I could meet him somewhere i’th dark,
I’d have a fling at him, and try whether I
Were right Florentine.  

FREDERICK.
    Well, sir, where be these beauties?
LORENZO.
    I'll conduct you to them.
FREDERICK.
    What’s the fellow that brings them?
LORENZO.
    A Grecian, I think, or something.
FREDERICK.
    Beauties from Greece, man!
LORENZO.
    Why, let them be from the Devil!
    So they be new, and fine, what need we care?
    — But you must go tonight.
FREDERICK.
    I am not in a very good condition
    To make visits of that kind.
LORENZO.
    However see them, and if you like them,
    You may oblige the fellow to a longer stay,
    For I know they are handsome.
FREDERICK.
    That’s the only thing thou art judge of;
    Well, go you and prepare them,
    And, Phillibert, thou shalt along with me;
    I’ll have thy judgment too.

CLORIS.
    [Aside.] Good Heaven, how false he is!

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4 mar ... now presumably, because Lorenzo fears that Cloris-Phillibert’s sexual attractions and availability will make Frederick less likely to indulge in sexual pleasure with the courtesans he has come to bring word of.
5 Florentine a native of Florence, Italy; for the English, Italy was generally thought the birthplace and hotbed of sodomy.
LORENZO.

What time will your Highness come?

FREDERICK.

Two hours hence.

[Exit Frederick.]

LORENZO.

[Aside.] So then I shall have time to have a bout
With this gilting huswife, Isabella,6
For my fingers itch to be at her.

[Exit Lorenzo.]

[…]

ACT 5, SCENE 1.

[…]

LAURA.

Sir, ’tis Phillibert from the prince.

LORENZO.

Why, how now, youngster? I see you intend
To thrive by your many trades;
So soon, so soon, i’faith; but sirrah, —
This is my sister and your prince’s mistress:
Take notice of that.

CLORIS.

I know not what you mean.

LORENZO.

Sir, you cannot deceive me so;
And you were right served, you would be made fit
For nothing but the great Turk’s seraglio.7

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6 gilting  the action of gilding or painting in order to conceal physical defects (Isabella uses cosmetics).  huswife housewife; here, with negative connotations: disreputable or sexually loose woman.
7 the Great Turk’s seraglio  The supreme ruler of the ottoman empire had special women’s apartments in his palace for his wives, concubines, and female slaves, where it was death for any man other than the sultan and castrated eunuchs to be found. Lorenzo means that if Cloris-Phillibert were found alone there, as Lorenzo has found him alone with his sister Laura, Cloris-Phillibert would find himself castrated; in the West, the seraglio is an emblem of heterosexual and same-sex sexual vice and excess.
CLORIS.
You mistake my business, sir.

LORENZO.
Your blushes give you the lie, sirrah;
But for the prince’s sake, and another reason I have,
I will pardon you for once.

LAURA.
He has not done a fault, and needs it not.

LORENZO.
Was he not alone with thee?
And is not that enough? Well, I see I am no Italian
In punctilioes of honourable revenge;8
There is but one experiment left to prove myself so,9
And if that fail, I’ll ev’n renounce my country.
—Boy, harkey — there is a certain kindness10
You may do me, and get your pardon for being found here.

CLORIS.
You shall command me anything.

LORENZO.
Prithee, how long hast thou been set up for thyself, hah?11

CLORIS.
As how, sir?

LORENZO.
Poh, thou understand’st me.

CLORIS.
Indeed, I do not, sir. What is’t you mean?

LORENZO.
A smooth-faced boy, and ask such a question!
Fie, fie, this ignorance was ill counterfeited
To me that understand the world.

CLORIS.
Explain yourself, sir.

LORENZO.
Look, ten or twenty pistoles12 will do you

---

8 punctilioes small points or details; to be a man, here, who insists on taking revenge for the most miniscule slight to his honour and reputation.
9 Well I see ... prove myself so Italian men were stereotyped as hot-headed and ready to take offence at the smallest insult (real or perceived), but also as addicted to same-sex sexual intercourse, particularly with young, handsome boys.
10 harkey i.e., hark ye (listen).
11 Prithee ... hah? Lorenzo assumes that Cloris-Phillibert is a boy who is willing to offer sexual favours in exchange for money (an occasional male prostitute).
12 pistoles Spanish gold coins.
No hurt, will it?

CLORIS.
Not any, sir.

LORENZO.
Why so; ’tis well anything will make thee
Apprehend.

CLORIS.
I shall be glad to serve you, sir, without that fee.

LORENZO.
That’s kindly said —
[Aside] I see a man must not be too easy of belief: had I been so,
This boy would have been at ‘what do ye mean, sir,’
And ‘Lord, I understand you not.’
[To Phillibert] Well, Phillibert, here’s earnest to bind the bargain;
I am now in haste; when I see thee next,
I’ll tell thee more.

[Lo\nos\no whispers to Laura.]

CLORIS.
This ’tis to be a favourite now;
I warrant you I must do him some good office to the prince,
Which I’ll be sure to do.

[…]

ACT 5, SCENE 3
[…]

FREDERICK.
Alberto, would this court afforded
A lady worthy thee.

ALBERTO.
Sir, I’m already sped, I humbly thank you.\(^\text{13}\)

LORENZO.
Sped, quoth ye, Heaven defend me
From such a fortune.

FREDERICK.
Lorenzo, I had forgot thee; thou shalt e’en marry too.

\(^{13}\) *sped* successful (Alberto indicates that he is already committed to a woman).
LORENZO.
    You may command me anything but marrying.

ISABELLA.
    What think you then of a smooth-faced boy?

LORENZO.
    [Aside.] A pox on him! Sure he will not tell now, will he?

ISABELLA.
    My lord, I beg your leave to challenge Lorenzo.

FREDERICK.
    What, to a duel, Phillibert?

LORENZO.
    Phillibert, Phillibert, hold! Do not ruin the reputation
    Of a man that has acquired fame amongst the female sex!
    I protest I did but jest.

ISABELLA.
    But, sir, I’m in earnest with you.

FREDERICK.
    This is not Phillibert.¹⁴

ISABELLA.
    No, sir, but Isabella
    [Pointing to Cloris]—That was Phillibert.

CLORIS.
    Yes, sir, I was the happy boy to be beloved.
    When Cloris was forgot.

FREDERICK.
    Oh, how you raise my love and shame […]

[…]

ISABELLA.
    And now, sir, I come to claim a husband here.

FREDERICK.
    Name him and take him.

ISABELLA.
    Lorenzo, sir.

LORENZO.
    Of all cheats, commend me to a waiting gentlewoman!
    I her husband!

ANTONIO.
    I am witness to that truth.

¹⁴ There is no stage direction at this point, but it would seem that Isabella has unmasked herself, revealing that she is not Cloris-Phillibert, Frederick’s page.
FREDERICK.

'Tis plain against you: come, you must be honest.

LORENZO.

Will you compel me to’t against my will?
Oh, tyranny! Consider I am a man of quality and fortune!

ISABELLA.

As for my qualities, you know I have sufficient,
And fortune, thanks to your bounty, considerable too.

FREDERICK.

No matter. He has enough for both.

LORENZO.

Nay, sir, an you be against me,
'Tis time to reform in my own defence.
But 'tis a thing I never considered or thought on.

FREDERICK.

Marry first, and consider afterwards.

LORENZO.

That’s the usual way, I confess.
Come, Isabella, since the Prince commands it.
I do not love thee, but yet I’ll not forswear it,
Since a greater miracle than that is wrought,
And that’s my marrying thee.
Well, ’tis well thou art none of the most beautiful,
I should swear the Prince had some designs on thee else.

[...]

POEMS UPON SEVERAL OCCASIONS (1684)

OUR CABAL.17

Come, my fair Cloris, come away,18
Hast thou forgot ’tis holyday?19

---

15 an if.
16 designs on thee i.e., secretly planned to seduce.
17 cabal generally, a coterie or exclusive circle; in political terms, a group or faction understood to work within an existing government or institutional structure, appropriating to itself the powers that rightly belong to the wider constituency of this organization; specifically, perhaps, a satiric reference to a powerful faction within the Privy Council of the time. The initials stand for various members of Behn’s literary and personal circle. For some identifications, see the notes below, but for a full discussion, see the editions by Summers and Todd.
18 Cloris unidentified; Cloris was another name for Flora, goddess of flowers and the spring; it is a popular name for women in pastoral verse.
19 holyday i.e., a holiday, which traditionally occurred on a saint’s day or upon a day of special religious
And lovely Silvia too make haste,
The sun is up, the day does waste:
Dost thou not hear the music loud.
Mixed with the murmur of the crowd?
How can thy active feet be still,
And hear the bagpipes cheerful trill?

Mr. V.U. 21

Urania’s dressed as fine and gay,
As if she meant t’outshine the day;
Or certain that no victories
Were to be gained but by her eyes;
Her garment’s white, her garniture
The springing beauties of the year,
Which are in such nice order placed,
That nature is by art disgraced:
Her natural curling ebon hair,
Does loosely wanton in the air.

Mr. G.V. 25

With her the young Alexis came,
Whose eyes dare only speak his flame:
Charming he is, as fair can be,
Charming without effeminacy;
Only his eyes are languishing,
Caused by the pain he feels within;
Yet thou wilt say that languishment
Is a peculiar ornament.
Decked up he is with pride and care,
All rich and gay, to please his fair:
The price of flocks h’ has made a prey
To th’ usual vanity of this day.

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20 Silvia unidentified; another popular name for women in pastoral verse, ‘Silvia’ derives from the Latin word meaning ‘forest.’
21 Mr. V.U. unidentified.
22 Urania unidentified; Urania is the muse of astronomy and celestial knowledge; as the surname of Venus, it identified Venus as the goddess of beauty and generation.
23 garniture adornment.
24 nice particular, carefully arranged.
25 Mr. G.V. unidentified.
26 Alexis G.V. is given the name of the scornful young male beloved of the shepherd Corydon in Virgil’s ‘Eclogue 2.
27 Decked up adorned, turned out.
MY DEAR BROTHER J.C.  

After them Damon piping came,  
Who laughs at Cupid and his flame;  
Swears, if the boy should him approach,  
He’d burn his wings with his own torch:  
But he’s too young for Love ’t’ invade,  
Though for him languish many a maid.  
His lovely air, his cheerful face,  
Adorned with many a youthful grace,  
Beget more sighs than if with arts  
He should design to conquer hearts:  
The swains as well as nymphs submit  
To ’s charms of beauty and of wit.  
He’ll sing, he’ll dance, he’ll pipe and play,  
And wanton out a summer’s day;  
And wheresoever Damon be,  
He’s still the soul o’ th’ company.


MY DEAR AMORET, MISTRESS B.  

Next Amoret, the true delight  
Of all that do approach her sight:  
The sun in all its course ne’er met  
Ought fair or sweet like Amoret.  
Alone she came, her eyes declined,  
In which you’ll read her troubled mind;  
Yes, Silvia, for she’ll not deny  
She loves, as well as thou and I.  
’Tis Philocles, that proud ingrate,  

---

28 The price ... day i.e., he has gone so far as to sell his income-generating property (in pastoral terms, his sheep) in order to dress himself finely.
29 My dear brother J.C. likely, John Cooper, poet and translator, who wrote a commendatory poem prefacing Poems upon Several Occasions. ‘Brother’ is an affectionate usage, and indicates their shared profession as poets, not any tie of blood or marriage.
30 Damon Cooper is given this common name from pastoral verse (Damon is a goatherd in Virgil’s Eclogues).
31 swains shepherds; young male country dwellers and lovers in the pastoral tradition. nymphs shepherdesses; lovely young female country dwellers.
32 wanton out spend carelessly and leisurely, with an eye to sensual and sexual pleasure.
33 My DEAR AMORET, MISTRESS B. Elizabeth Barry (c. 1658–1713), famous English stage actress and close friend of Behn, who performed major roles in several of Behn’s plays, including The Fair Jilt and The Rover, Part II (M. Duffy, The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn, 1640-89 [London: Methuen, 1989], p. 132).
34 Amoret Barry is given the name Amoret, most famously one of Spenser’s beautiful chaste women in Books 3 and 4 of The Faerie Queene; the name comes from the Latin word for ‘love.’
35 declined cast down, looking at the ground.
36 Philocles Mr. N.R.V.; see n44, below.
That pays her passion back with hate;
Whilst she does all but him despise,
And clouds the lustre of her eyes:
But once to her he did address,
And dying passion too express;
But soon the amorous heat was laid,
He soon forgot the vows he’d made;
Whilst she in every silent grove,
Bewails her easy faith and love.
Numbers of swains do her adore,
But she has vowed to love no more.

Next jolly Thyrsis came along,
With many beauties in a throng.

With whom the young Amyntas came,
The author of my sighs and flame:
For I’ll confess that truth to you,
Which every look of mine can show.
Ah how unlike the rest he appears!
With majesty above his years!
His eyes so much of sweetness dress,
Such wit, such vigour too express;
That ’twould a wonder be to say,
I’ve seen the youth, and brought my heart away.
Ah Cloris! Thou that never wert
In danger yet to lose a heart,
Guard it severely now, for he
Will startle all thy constancy:
For if by chance thou dost escape
Unwounded by his lovely shape,

37 laid  allayed.
38 easy  too credulous, naively trusting.
40 Thyrsis  James Boys is given the name of a shepherd who engages in a singing contest with his fellow Corydon (Virgil, ‘Eclogue 7’), and who laments the death of the herdsman and legendary creator of bucolic poetry, Daphnis (Theocritus’ ‘Idyll 1’).
41 Mr. Je. B.  Jeffrey Boys, a member of Gray’s Inn, whose private papers suggest that he was a friend of Behn (Duffy, *Passionate Shepherdess*, p. 133).
42 Amyntas  the name that Behn often gives to her lover John Hoyle. See n63, below. Here Jeffrey Boys is given the name of one of the shepherds who often appears in Virgil’s *Eclogues*.
43 Cloris  See n18.
Tempt not thy ruin, lest his eyes
Join with his tongue to win the prize;
Such softness in his language dwells,
And tales of love so well he tells,
Should’st thou attend their harmony,
Thou’dst be undone, as well as I;
For sure no nymph was ever free,
That could Amyntas hear and see.

With him the lovely Philocless,\textsuperscript{45}
His beauty heightened by his dress,
If anything can add a grace
To such a shape, and such a face,
Whose natural ornaments impart
Enough without the help of art.
His shoulders covered with a hair,
The sun-beams are not half so fair;
Of which the virgins bracelets make,
And wear for Philocless’s sake:
His beauty such, that one would swear
His face did never take the air.
On ’s cheeks the blushing roses show,
The rest like whitest daisies grow:
His lips, no berries of the field,
Nor cherries, such a red do yield.
His eyes all love, soft’ning smile;
And when he speaks, he sighs the while:
His bashful grace, with blushes too,
Gains more than confidence can do.
With all these charms he does invade
The heart, which when he has betrayed,
He slights the trophies he has won,
And weeps for those he has undone,
As if he never did intend
His charms for so severe an end.
And all poor Amoret can gain,
Is pity from the lovely swain:
And if inconstancy can seem
Agreeable, ’tis so in him.

\textsuperscript{44} N.R.V. perhaps, Nick Vernatty, an acquaintance of Jeffrey Boys and Behn (Duffy, \textit{Passionate Shepherdess}, p. 133).

\textsuperscript{45} Philocless N.R.V. is given an unusual name here, since unlike the others in the poem, it is not based in the pastoral tradition. Philocles was the name of an Athenian admiral during the Peloponnesian War; of a general of Ptolemy, king of Egypt; and of two Greek tragic poets.
And when he meets reproach for it,
He does excuse it with his wit.

Next hand in hand the smiling pair,
Martillo, and the lovely fair:  
A bright-eyed Phyllis, who they say,
Ne’er knew what love was till today:
Long has the gen’rous youth in vain
Implored some pity for his pain.

Early abroad he would be seen,
To wait her coming on the green,
To be the first that t’ her should pay
The tribute of the new-born day;

Presents her bracelets with their names,
And hooks carved out with hearts and flames.
And when a straggling lamb he saw,
And she not by to give it law,
The pretty fugitive he’d deck
With wreaths of flowers around its neck;
And gave her ev’ry mark of love,
Before he could her pity move.

But now the youth no more appears
Clouded with jealousies and fears:
Nor yet darest Phyllis’ softer brow
Wear unconcern or coldness now;
But makes him just and kind returns;
And as he does, so now she burns.

Next Lycidas, that haughty swain,

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46 MR. E.B. AND MRS. F.M.  Duffy notes that the newsbook, *The Muses Mercury* (Jan. 1708), identifies this couple as ‘Mr. Edward Butler’ and ‘Mrs Masters’ (*Passionate Shepherdess*, p. 132). Duffy speculates that ‘Edward Butler’ may refer to a man from whom Behn had borrowed money while she was in Flanders (*Passionate Shepherdess*, pp. 92, 98); however, she acknowledges that the name is frustratingly common.

47 Martillo  Spanish, ‘hammer.’

48 Phyllis  a countrywoman in Virgil’s *Eclogues*.

49 the green  the public green space at the centre of English villages, used for celebrations, May dances, and other festivities.

50 hooks  shepherd crooks or staves.

51 to give it law  to scold it for straying.

52 Mr. J.H.  probably, John Hoyle (c. 1641-1692), lawyer, poet, and Behn’s lover in the 1670s.

53 Lycidas  Hoyle is here given the name of a famous shepherd-poet. Lycidas appears in Virgil’s ‘Eclogue 9,’ in which he praises the verse of his fellow poet Menalcas; and in Theocritus’ ‘Idyll 7,’ in which he is called an excellent piper, and is involved in a poetic contest with another respected poet, Simichidas; Lycidas is also a beautiful,
With many beauties in a train,
All sighing for the swain, whilst he
Barely returns civility.
Yet once to each much love he vowed,
And strange fantastique passion showed.54
Poor Doris, and Lucinda too,
And many more whom thou dost know,
Who had not power his charms to shun,
Too late do find themselves undone.55
His eyes are black, and do transcend
All fancy e’er can comprehend;
And yet no softness in ’em move,
They kill with fierceness, not with love:
Yet he can dress ’em when he list,56
With sweetness none can e’er resist.
His tongue no amorous parley makes,
But with his looks alone he speaks.
And though he languish yet he’ll hide,
That grateful knowledge with his pride;
And thinks his liberty is lost,
Not in the conquest, but the boast.
Nor will but love enough impart,
To gain and to secure a heart:
Of which no sooner he is sure,
And that its wounds are past all cure,
But for new victories he prepares,
And leaves the old to its despairs:
Success his boldness does renew,
And boldness helps him conquer too,
He having gained more hearts than all
Th’ rest of the pastoral cabal.

With him Philander, who ne’er paid58
A sigh or tear to any maid:
So innocent and young he is,
He cannot guess what passion is.
But all the love he ever knew,

admired Roman youth in Horace, Odes, 1.4.19.
54 fantastique whimsical, inconstant.
55 undone ruined.
56 list wishes.
57 MR. ED. BED. perhaps, the son of Captain Edward Bedford; the latter was head of the Nursery, a theatre for young actors (Duffy, Passionate Shepherd, p. 307 n3).
58 Philander Ed. Bed. is given a name that derives from the Greek, meaning ‘loving or fond of men.’
On Lycidas he does bestow:
Who pays his tenderness again,
Too amorous for a swain to a swain.
A softer youth was never seen,
His beauty, maid; but man, his mien:\nAnd much more gay than all the rest;\nAnd but Alexis finest dressed.\nHis eyes towards Lycidas still turn,
As sympathising flowers to the sun,
Whilst Lycidas, whose eyes dispense
No less a grateful influence
Improves his beauty, which still fresher grows:
Who would not under two such suns as those?

Cloris you sigh, what amorous grown?
Pan grant you keep your heart at home:\nFor I have often heard you vow,
If any could your heart subdue,
Though Lycidas you ne’er had seen,
It must be him, or one like him:
Alas I cannot yet forget,
How we have with Amyntas sat
Beneath the boughs for summer made,
Our heated flocks and us to shade;
Where thou’st wond’rous stories tell,
Of this agreeable infidel.
By what devices, charms and arts,
He used to gain and keep his hearts:
And whilst his falsehood we would blame,
Thou would’st commend and praise the same.
And did no greater pleasure take,
Than when of Lycidas we spake;
By this and many sighs we know,
Thou’rt sensible of loving too.
Come, Cloris, come along with us,
And try thy power with Lycidas;
See if that virtue which you prize,
Be proof against those conquering eyes.
That heart that can no love admit,
Will hardly stand his shock of wit;

59 mien air or bearing; appearance or demeanour.
60 gay gaily dressed.
61 but excepting.
62 Pan god of the countryside, protector of shepherds and shepherdesses.
Come deck thee then in all that’s fine,
Perhaps the conquest may be thine;
   They all attend, let’s haste to do,
   What love and music calls us to.

LYCIDUS, OR, THE LOVER IN FASHION […] WITH A MISCELLANY OF NEW POEMS (1688)

TO AMYNTAS, UPON READING THE LIVES OF SOME OF THE ROMANS

Had’st thou Amyntas, lived in that great age,63
When hardly beauty was to nature known,
What numbers to thy side might’st thou engage
And conquered kingdoms by thy looks alone?

That age when valour they did beauty name,
When men did justly our brave sex prefer,
'Cause they durst die, and scorn the public shame
Of adding glory to the conqueror.64

Had mighty Scipio had thy charming face,
Great Sophonisbe had refused to die,
Her passion o’er the sense of her disgrace
Had gained the more obliging victory.65

Nor less would Massinissa too have done,
But to such eyes, as to his sword would bow,
For neither sex can here thy fetters shun,
Being all Scipio, and Amyntas too.

Had’st thou great Caesar been, the greater Queen,
Would trembling have her mortal asps layed by;
In thee she had not only Caesar seen,
But all she did adore in Antony.66

63 Amyntas  common shepherd’s name in Virgil’s Eclogues. Here, Behn refers to her lover during the 1670s, John Hoyle (c. 1641-1692), lawyer and poet.
64 The next six stanzas offer historical examples of conquered noblewomen and noblemen, who killed themselves rather than surrender to dishonour.
65 Had … victory  Sophonisba, wife of Syphax, prince of Numidia, was claimed as a spoil of war when her husband was conquered by a joint force of the Romans and Massinissa, king of Numidia. Although Massinissa fell in love with Sophonisba and married her, Scipio soon demanded that he surrender her to him. Instead, Massinissa counselled his wife to commit suicide to preserve her honour, which she did.
66 Had’st thou … Antony  Cleopatra (the greater Queen) committed suicide by allowing herself to be bitten by poisonous asps rather than be led in triumph by Octavius Caesar (later the emperor Augustus) through Rome; she
Had daring Sextus had thy lovely shape,
The fairest woman living had not died.
But blest the darkness that secured the rape,
Suffering her pleasure to have debauched her pride.67

Nor had he stol’n to Rome to have quenched his fire,
If thee resistless in his camp he’d seen,
Thy eyes had kept his virtue all entire,
And Rome a happy monarchy had been.

Had Pompey looked like thee, though he had proved
The vanquished, yet from Egypt’s faithless king
He had received the vows of being beloved,
Instead of orders for his murdering.68

But here, Amyntas, thy misfortune lies:
Nor brave nor good are in our age esteemed.
Content thee then with meaner victories,
    Unless that glorious age could be redeemed.

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67 Had ... pride Sextus was the son of Tarquinibus Superbus, the last king of Rome (534-510 BCE). Tarquinibus Superbus was deposed, ending the Roman monarchy, when his son Sextus raped the virtuous noblewoman, Lucretia.

68 Had ... murdering Pompey the Great (106-48 BCE), Roman military leader. He battled with Julius Caesar for control of the Roman Empire, and when he was defeated at the battle of Pharsalis, he fled to Egypt, where he was murdered.