

Willmore. “Hark ye, where didst thou purchase that rich Canary we drank to-day? Tell me, that I may adore the Spigot, and sacrifice to the Butt: the Juice was divine, into which I must dip my Rosary, and then bless all things that I would have bold or fortunate” (Behn 41, 3.1).

In this passage from act three, scene one of *The Rover, or the Banished Cavaliers* (1677), the dramatist Aphra Behn shows her disdain for Catholicism. The tone she gives to Willmore’s words mocks Catholic sacraments. The syntax of the sentence draws the reader’s attention to what follows the colon: “the Juice was divine, into which I must dip my Rosary.” The word “Rosary” is a metaphor that stands for Willmore’s phallus. (Or, it could be a non-religious object, since “rosary” also connoted a counterfeit coin before 1800 [“Rosary”]). What follows—“and then bless all things that I would have bold or fortunate”—plays on Willmore’s libertine lustfulness, his Epicurean lifestyle.

Willmore desires not only sex, but also drink. Before 1800, the word “spigot” referred to some “one given to drinking or tipping” (“Spigot”). The word “butt” differs from its modern-day usage. Before 1800, it connoted “A cask for wine or ale, of capacity varying from 108 to 140 gallons” (“Butt”). The wine in the butt, in this case, is Canary wine, “a light sweet wine from the Canary Islands” (“Canary”). In this way, Willmore lives up to the meaning of his name, playing as it does on the famous libertine John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, the word “will” or want, and the French word for word (mot) (Ballaster 165).\*

Behn’s disdain for Catholicism is evident not only in this mockery of sacraments, but also in the rest of the play. Hellena and Florinda remain sequestered, and their brother Don Pedro controls their fates; Hellena, in fact, is destined to be nun, and even seeks to marry Willmore, a notorious rapist, in order to escape this fate. Behn’s anti-Catholic stance is no doubt influenced by her pro-Royalist stance and the religious tensions in England at time. By associating Willmore/Charles II with anti-Catholicism, she also reassures audiences fearful of the king’s religious loyalties.\*\*

#### Works Cited

Ballaster, Ros. “Taking Liberties: Revisiting Behn’s Libertinism.” *Women’s Writing* 19.2 (2012): 165–176.

Behn, Aphra. *The Rover, or the Banished Cavaliers*. London: W. Feales, 1735. Print.

“Butt.” *OED*. 2014. Web.

“Canary.” *OED*. 2014. Web.

“Rosary.” *OED*. 2014. Web.

“Spigot.” *OED*. 2014. Web.

\*Research is not required for the Close Analysis, but if you do glean knowledge from elsewhere (as I’ve done here), then you must cite it.

\*\*Please note that the word count (not including the citation or Works Cited, is at least 250 words).