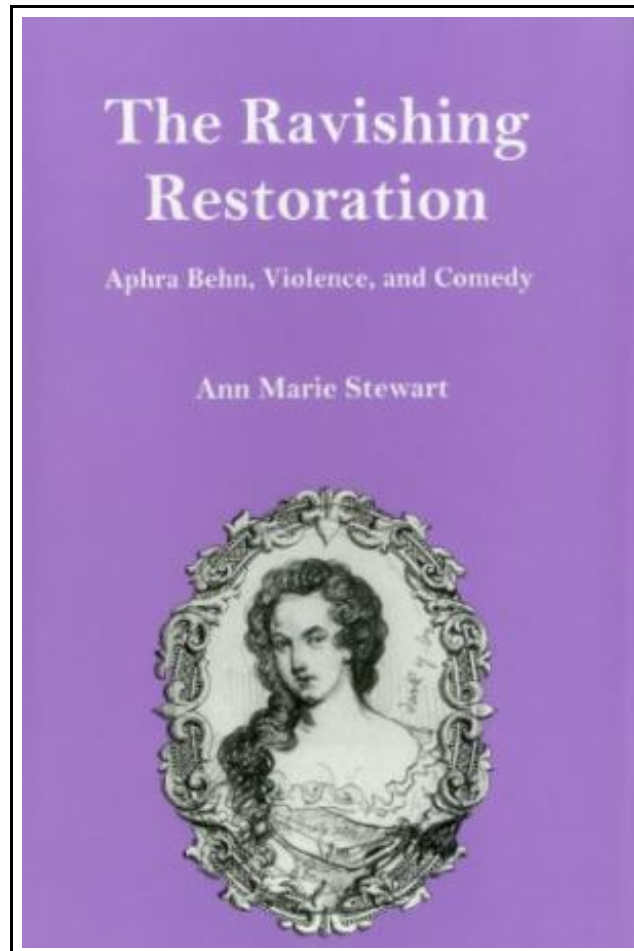


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Reviews

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(Elton Turner)

RAVISHING RESTORATION [THE]: APHRA BEHN, VIOLENCE, & COMEDY



Susquehanna University Press, Selinsgrove, 2010. Hardback/Cloth. Book Condition: New. 1st Edition. 136pp . [In 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 degrees of closure, but subscribe to the obligatory happy ending, and the return to patriarchal order is signified by marriage, and the economic and physical protection offered by a husband. Again and again, Behn's conclusions re-inscribe the system that she had previously turned to chaos. As a result, simultaneously, she appears both a feminist in her compassion for the powerless, as a voice for the oppressed, and anti-feminist in her seemingly cavalier return to the status quo. One of the purposes of this book is to deconstruct and analyse both interpretations of her work, while recognising that one of Behn's...



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