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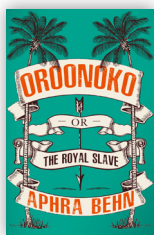
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## THE ROVER

APHRA BEHN

- One of the key texts in the Restoration Comedy literary canon.
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*The Rover, or, The Banish'd Cavaliers* is the most popular play by the Restoration playwright – and spy – Aphra Behn, first performed in 1677. Although Behn's work as a spy for Charles II came to an end when he cut off her income, she was a stout Royalist, and 'the banish'd cavaliers' refers to the period when Charles' court was living in exile on the Continent.

In the tradition of Restoration comedy, the play follows the wild exploits of a group of English gentlemen in Naples at carnival time, although many of the tropes of the genre are subverted to an extent which sent shockwaves through the theatre world. Behn's infamous libertine Willmore, the 'rover', was an instant hit, and *The Rover* catapulted her to overnight fame, and brought her an income from the box office, making her one of the first women to earn a living by their pen.

'All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn which is, most scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds.'

VIRGINIA WOOLF

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Aphra Behn (c.1640–89), or Astrea, was a poet, author and playwright, and is often cited as being one of the leading lights of the Restoration period. She is remembered today as being one of the first English women to earn a living with her pen, as well as for her work as a spy for Charles II. Her best-known works today are a Restoration drama, *The Rover*, and *Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave*, a short work of fiction.

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