

Glossary for *Or*, by Liz Duffy Adams  
Prepared by Dan Smith for Kickshaw Theatre

If you like to read biographies, Liz Duffy Adams would probably recommend these two, which she cites as sources for this play: *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* by Janet Todd (Rutgers UP, 1996) and *Royal Charles* by Antonia Fraser (Alfred Knopf, 1979).

Adams plays fast and loose with history, myth, and popular history. I don't think it's important to figure out what is true and what is false in this play, but some of my notes here will gesture toward that anyway.

**Prologue:** Prologues and epilogues were significant in Restoration theatre, often written by other playwrights to support or comment on works by their colleagues. They were spoken by leading actors, typically from their celebrity persona rather than in the role they were playing.

**Stratagems** (p. 8): the play is full of references to titles of Restoration and eighteenth-century British plays. Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem* (1707) inspired a response by Hannah Cowley called *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780).

**The Great Fire of London** burned down much of the city, September 2-5, 1666. Charles II was active and visible in making decisions about how to fight the fire.

**Mask** (p. 11): The culture of masks in the Restoration is complex; vizards and full-face masks were worn (more often by women than by men) in public parks and theatres. Restoration comedy makes strategic use of masks for complicated situations, notably in Congreve's *The Way of the World*.

**New York** (p. 12): Obviously the New York jokes will play differently in Ann Arbor than they would in New York.

"You've been a **rover**" (p. 13): Charles makes a reference to Aphra Behn's best-known play, *The Rover*, or *The Banished Cavaliers* (1677...it hasn't been written yet).

Charles's **mistresses** (p. 13) included Elizabeth Killigrew, sister of Thomas Killigrew (Davenant's competing theatre manager), Nell Gwynne, and Louise de Kerouaille. Louise was called "the Catholic whore" and Nell apparently referred to herself as "the Protestant whore" in contrast. Charles had at least twelve illegitimate children, most of whom were recognized and given titles.

**Third-day profits** (p. 15): Similar to French practice, the playwright only started earning money after the third performance of a new play.

"Hymn the **joys of cookery**." This may be a reference to the poetry of Margaret Cavendish, with a sly nod to *The Joy of Cooking*. Here's an article about references to food in Cavendish's poetry: <https://margaretcavendish.net/2016/01/07/15-margaret-cavendish-and-hannah-woolley-kitchen-work-fancy-food-and-social-class/> (There's a shout-out to kickshaws at the end!)

"The blunt monster with uncounted heads" is a quote from *Henry IV, part 2*

p. 16: Aphra and Charles conflate his birth, his restoration, and his coronation. Charles's restoration was on May 29, 1660. His coronation was on April 23, 1661. His birth on May 29, 1630 was possibly marked by the appearance of a supernova at noon. The Eve of Coronation ceremony included this poetic dialogue spoken by a performer representing Plenty:

Great Sir, the Star which at your happy Birth  
Joy'd with his Beams (at Noon) the wandering earth  
Did with his joyous lustre then presage  
**The glittering plenty of this Golden Age** [Aphra refers to a Golden Age in conversation with Nell]  
The clouds blown o're, which long our joys o'recast;  
And the sad winter of your absence past:  
See the three smiling seasons of the year  
Agree at once to bid you welcome here.

[Cited in Fraser, *Royal Charles* from John Ogilby, *The King's Coronation* (1685)]

The return to rhyme at the end of Scene 1 suggests similarity to the couplets at the end of each act in a Restoration comedy.

**Florimel** (p. 18) is a character in John Dryden's play *Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen*. Nell Gwynn's performance in this role is singled out for praise by obsessive Restoration diarist Samuel Pepys.

**"Orange girl made good"**: Oranges were sold in theatres. Nell was raised in a brothel and got a job as an orange-seller at Drury Lane in 1664. By 1665, she was "discovered" and began acting.

**Lady Davenant of the Duke's Company**: In 1660 Charles allowed patents for two theatres: The Duke's, managed by Davenant, and The King's, managed by Killigrew.

"A room of my own" (p. 18) refers to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, in which she praises Aphra Behn.

The **rivals** (p. 18) may refer to Sheridan's play *The Rivals* (1775).

Aphra is working on her play *The Young King, or, The Mistake* which was actually not performed until 1679.

**"Shall I read you a bit from the play?"** (p. 19): Nell was illiterate. She could sign her initials (E.G. for Elinor Gwynn).

**"Who kisses better, me or your keeper"** and Charles's later line about boys and girls kissing the same may refer to John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester's poem "The Disabled Debauchee," which includes the lines:

Nor shall our love-fits, Chloris, be forgot,  
When each the well-looking linkboy strove t' enjoy,  
And the best kiss was the deciding lot  
Whether the boy fucked you, or I the boy.

"A nobody like me is the **It girl** everyone loves." (p. 22): "It girl" is a term from the 1920s that referred to film actress Clara Bow, but Performance Studies Scholar Joseph Roach has written a book title *It* that

examines celebrity in the English Restoration period, with particular reference to Charles II and Nell Gwynn.

**William Scot** and Aphra Behn crossed paths in Suriname, and she was sent to Antwerp to negotiate with him and see what kind of information he might have. William's father Thomas Scot was executed in 1660 for his role in the death of Charles I in 1649.

Bastard Catholic **terrorists** (p. 25): Adams uses the vocabulary of the early twenty-first century to encourage us to understand the scapegoating of religious groups as "terrorists."

William's demands (p. 26) are taken almost directly from p. 84 of Janet Todd's biography of Aphra Behn.

**Lady Davenant** did indeed run the Duke's Company after her husband's death, in collaboration with leading actor Thomas Betterton. John Downes was the prompter. William Davenant claimed to be descended from Shakespeare.

Thomas Shadwell was a playwright who wrote lots of Moliere adaptations. Holborn is a London neighbor, known for prostitution during the seventeenth century. "Drab" is an archaic term for a sex worker.

Elizabeth Barry was another leading actress in the period; she was famously coached by Rochester (depicted in Stephen Jeffreys's play and film *The Libertine*).

Shakespeare's "Or" titles include *Twelfth Night, or, What You Will* and, less frequently, *Othello, or, The Moor of Venice*.

Charles's **spaniels** (p. 31): he was known for his love of dogs

The **Tower** is the Tower of London, still used as a prison in this period.

**Costumes cost the earth** (p. 35): actors usually provided their own costumes in this period, sometimes with more of an emphasis on fashion than on the given circumstances of a character.

"You'll be my Charles the Third" is anecdotally a real quip from Nell Gwynn.

"He's been promised the best room in heaven..." (p. 37): another reference to rhetoric about Muslims and terrorism in the 2000s.

**Cromwellians**: Oliver Cromwell was a Puritan who served as Lord Protector (1653-1658) during the Interregnum.

**Bedlam** was a mad-house, basically a prison for the mentally ill. (p. 39)

"the way of the world" (p. 41) refers to William Congreve's play *The Way of the World* (1700)

Terschelling was the site of "Holmes's bonfire" in August 1666.

Aphra's "Remember Suriname?" speech refers to events described in her novel *Oroonoko* (1688).