PRINCES, POWER, AND POLITICS
IN THE EARLY PLAYS OF APHRA BEHN

by

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Abstract

My thesis explores Aphra Behn's early plays and their portrayal of monarchical power within the political contexts of Charles II's reign. The plays are studied chronologically, beginning with *The Young King* – which Behn claimed she wrote in c.1664 – and continuing through the first four of her works performed on the Restoration stage: *The Forc'd Marriage*, *The Amorous Prince*, *The Dutch Lover*, and *Abdelazer*. These works have been largely neglected by previous Behn studies, dismissed as experimental forerunners of her better-known works, like *The Rover*. By contrast, this thesis argues that these plays contain complex analogies of the political concerns and events troubling Charles II's reign. Behn is popularly remembered as an ardent monarchist and staunch supporter of the Stuart crown. However, these plays chart Behn's increasingly questioning, troubled perception of Restoration politics. In them, she explores with progressively irreverent criticism the problematic nature of the divine right and absolute rule. She dramatizes the court's rapacious reputation, queries popular sentiments regarding the Third Anglo-Dutch War, and confronts the looming Succession Crisis while constantly asking what it is that makes a king a rightful ruler. Ultimately, Behn's early plays reveal her royalism was once far more conditional than how it is remembered.

Dedicated to my mother and father.

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I also owe a great debt to my family and friends; in particular my parents (for everything they have done for me) and my sister Lorna Hawes, who kindly proof-read this thesis for me in its final drafts. Finally, I wish to thank James, Cloé and Xavier Minogue for always making space for me to work in their home, and for all the love, support and cups of tea they brought me whilst I did.

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Note on Textual Conventions

Unless otherwise stated, references to Aphra Behn's plays and poetry are taken from Janet Todd's *The Works of Aphra Behn*. In citing other Early Modern dramatic works, I have consulted the most modern and reliable scholarly editions, where ones are available. Otherwise, quotations from Early Modern works come from their first editions and have been sourced from Early English Books Online [EEBO]. These quotations retain original spellings and capitalisation. In my footnotes, I abbreviate the five plays by Aphra Behn which I refer to most frequently as the following:

The Young King – YK

The Forc'd Marriage – FM

The Amorous Prince – AP

The Dutch Lover – DL

Abdelazer – Abd

INTRODUCTION

'Your Majesty'

The Hague. 4 February 1649. Miles from his family, home and crown, Charles Stuart learned he was now King of England, Scotland and Ireland. His beloved father, Charles I, had been publicly executed the week before.[1] There are two accounts of how Charles's exiled court of loyal followers broke the news to him. In the first, Charles was in a crowded room; in the second, Stephen Goffe – royalist agent and Catholic chaplain – stood before him and pronounced him king with a chillingly expedient, 'Your Majesty'.[2] In both versions, Charles's response was to burst into tears. As Ronald Hutton writes, 'The whole weight of ideals, loyalties, responsibilities, and dilemmas which had confounded and killed his father had just crashed on to his eighteen-year-old shoulders'.[3]

Charles II's preparation for the throne had been an adolescence of battles and banishment. At this grief-stricken moment of succession, his once close family was scattered across Europe. Whilst Charles wept for his father in The Hague, his widowed mother and fifteen-year-old brother James were exiled in St Germain. His sister and youngest brother were still in London, prisoners of the very men who had murdered their father. Stephen Goffe's own brother, William, was one of those regicides.[4]

As this moment in history epitomises, the Civil War and execution of Charles I had divided families and politics. England stood on the brink of an uncharted and blood-stained political landscape. When Charles I's decapitated head struck the deck of the execution platform, kingship as

[1] Historical information for this thesis largely taken from Antonia Fraser, *King Charles the Second* (London: W&N, 2002); Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his Kingdoms, 1660–1685* (London: Penguin, 2006); Ronald Hutton, *Charles II: King of England, Scotland and Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1991); and John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: 'This Masquerading Age'* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000).
[2] Hutton, *Charles II*, p.33.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Charles Spencer, *Killers of the King: The Men Who Dared to Execute Charles I* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) p.50.

a concept was also severed from the political body. No British monarch had ever been, or has since been, deposed in such a way. Kings had been murdered by their rivals in private or slaughtered on the battlefield. Queens had been executed at the orders of other queens. In the last two hundred years, Richard III, Lady Jane Grey and Mary Queen of Scots had all met bloody ends to facilitate or protect another monarch's reign. However, no British king or queen had ever been publicly executed by their subjects as a step towards abolishing the monarchy. No matter how contested its occupancy, the throne itself had always stood.

The nature of kingly power had been dramatically, violently and irreversibly changed. As Charles II faced what would be a decade-long fight for his throne, the future poet, novelist and playwright Aphra Behn was growing up in obscurity, probably somewhere in the Kentish countryside. Little is known about her childhood, but Janet Todd imagines at the Restoration in May 1660 she might have been 'one of the maidens who strewed herbs along the leisurely royal route through Kent and wondered at the height and swarthiness of the new King'.[5] Behn's early plays, the focus of this thesis, demonstrate a fascination with the concept of monarchy. On 4 February 1649, Charles was thrust to the threshold of a new world, a world in which he was both king and not a king. Aphra Behn's early plays are all about such moments, the moment where a prince becomes a king, or a boy becomes a man.

[5] Janet Todd, *Aphra Behn: A Secret Life* (London: Fentum Press, 2017) p.3. Behn's birth and family evaded church and tax records and therefore we do not know a lot for certain about her life prior to her playwriting career. In 1696, a posthumous publication of her play *The Younger Brother* included 'An Account of the Life of the Incomparable Mrs Behn'. Later the same year a collection of works called *The Histories and Novels of the Late Ingenious Mrs Behn* was also published, beginning with an account of 'The Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn. Written by One of the Fair Sex'. After her death, her self-proclaimed foster brother Colonel Thomas Colepepper included some details of her life in his manuscript 'Adversaria'. The poet Anne Finch made a jibe about Behn's lowly background as the daughter of a barber from a decaying little Kentish town in the marginalia of her manuscript poems 'The Circuit of Apollo'. See Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'Aphra Behn: the documentary record', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.1–11 and Jane Jones, 'New light on the background and early life of Aphra Behn', in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.310–20.

By the time Behn entered public, literary life with *The Forc'd Marriage* in September 1670, the monarchy had been restored for ten years. Charles II's court has become infamous for its decadence. Ronald Hutton writes that in the early 1670s:

> The followers over whom [Charles] presided retained their reputation for debauchery. John Evelyn found them at Newmarket in October 1671, 'racing, dancing, feasting, and revelling, more resembling a luxurious and abandoned rout than a Christian court'. In Buckinghamshire the year before, the gentry were gossiping about how a courtier walked five miles 'stark naked and barefoot' to win a wager while the King and nobles watched […] In the winter of 1670–1 Charles led the court in a fashion of going masked to balls and feasts. He had to ban the practice after a party which included Monmouth and Richmond, thus disguised, clashed with watchmen and accidentally killed one of them.[6]

Against this backdrop of revelry and violence, Jessica Munns claims that the glory of the Restoration had become a distant memory for playwrights like Behn:

> By the mid-1660s, a new generation of writers emerged – Thomas Otway, Nathaniel Lee, Aphra Behn, Elkanah Settle, and Henry Nevil Payne – for whom, as for the audience, the recycling of the previous generation's past of exile and restoration was increasingly irrelevant. Explaining the past was less important than dramatizing a present marked by disillusionment over the character of Charles II, disappointment over a series of naval and military fiascos, and anxiety over the succession with the king's wife (if not his mistresses) barren, and his brother and heir, the Duke of York, a declared Roman Catholic following the Test Act of 1673.[7]

This helpfully summarises some of the most prevalent criticisms and concerns plaguing Charles II's reign when Behn first took up her pen for the stage. However, it is inaccurate in its assumption of a mutual exclusivity between earlier dramatisations of the Restoration cycle and criticisms of Charles II's reign. As Nancy Klein Maguire explains, the spectre of Charles I and the Civil War haunted the

[6] Hutton, *Charles II*, pp.277– 8.
[7] By contrast to the rhymed, heroic dramas of Dryden and the Early of Orrery. Jessica Munns, 'Theatrical culture I: politics and theatre' in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1650–1740*, ed. by Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp.82–103 (p.94).

stage well into Charles II's reign; the plays of the 1660s betray a pervasive 'anxiety about the regicide and fear of unforeseen complications about the restoration'.[8] Although Maguire's *Regicide and Restoration* focuses on the first decade of Charles's reign, Aphra Behn's commentaries and criticism on kingship and governance in her plays from the early-to-mid 1670s are also overshadowed by the lingering sense of fear that what had happened in the past could happen again. This is somewhat surprising for drama of the 1670s. Drama of the 1660s was understandably concerned with exploring the events of the Civil War and Interregnum in the context of the recent Royalist victory and the monarchy's future. In the 1680s, drama, like Behn's own *The Roundheads* (1682), would once again more obviously turn to England's past, during the new political upheaval of the Exclusion Crisis.[9] By contrast, the drama of the early-to-mid 1670s, written over a decade after the Restoration and before the Exclusion Crisis, had turned in the direction of depoliticised sex comedies. However, Behn's early plays of the 1670s are still dominated by themes of exile and restoration. The contents of the plays also express an increasing, rather than decreasing, sense of alarm concerning the power-struggles between kings and subjects. In *The Young King*, the prophets predict a baby Prince Orsames will mature into a tyrant, so his mother disinherits and imprisons him. *The Forc'd Marriage*'s Prince Phillander is sexually dispossessed by a romantic rival. In *The Amorous Prince*, Frederick faces an assassination attempt. In *Abdelazer*, the royal fathers of the eponymous Moor and Prince Philip are both killed, and both their sons subsequently usurped. Although *The Dutch Lover* does not deal in royal characters, it shares a similar interest in themes of dispossession, as its denouement reveals its hero was kidnapped from a noble family and raised in illegitimate obscurity. Therefore, in each play the heroes are faced with a form of dispossession which they (in most cases) eventually overcome.

[8] Nancy Klein Maguire, *Regicide and Restoration: English tragicomedy 1660–1671* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.5.
[9] Aphra Behn, *The Roundheads*, ed. by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 6 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1996) pp.357–424.

Behn's early plays continue to work with themes of dispossession and restoration which were clearly inspired by the events of the Civil War and Charles II's return to the throne. Furthermore, as this thesis explores, she repositions these allusions to England's past within a new context of criticism and anxiety over Charles's reign. However, she also raises questions about the very nature of monarchy and legitimacy, which contravene generally accepted ideas about Behn's political beliefs.

Approaching the Early Plays

This thesis therefore addresses two major components of existing Behn scholarship. First, except for Judy Hayden's monograph *Of Love and War*, it offers the only substantial body of interpretation and analysis which focuses exclusively on the 'early' plays: *The Young King*, *The Forc'd Marriage*, *The Amorous Prince* and *Abdelazer.*[10] Second, this interpretation and analysis re-evaluates the belief that Behn was the consistently staunch supporter of the monarchy that analyses of her later plays conclude.

What demarcates a play as an early, mid or late work beyond a sense of a playwright's age and thus, maybe, maturity? Where can we draw the lines between what is early or mid, and mid or late, especially when the writer produced plays with such frequency as Behn? We might distinguish early, mid or late work based on genre and afterlife. In terms of genre, *The Rover* (1677) marks a turning point in Behn's opus as a sex comedy comparable to famous Restoration romps like William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) and George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), combining the wit and intrigue of that vein of drama with her own, unique, proto-feminist twist. The plays she wrote before *The Rover* are an assortment of genres, three tragicomedies (*The Young King,* c.1664; *The Forc'd Marriage,* 1670*; The Amorous Prince*, 1671), a comedy, (*The Dutch Lover*, 1673), a tragedy

[10] Judy Hayden, *On Love and War: The political voice in the early plays of Aphra Behn* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010).

(*Abdelazer*, 1676) and another comedy (*The Town Fopp*, 1676).[11] From *The Town Fopp* onwards, Behn would write predominantly comedic plays. There is, therefore, a sense that Behn's early plays are those written whilst she was exploring a range of genres, and, as we will see, different political attitudes.

Furthermore, to refer to Behn's first five plays as 'early' is synonymous with the lack of attention they have received in their afterlives and within Behn scholarship. Although during the Restoration Behn was second only to Dryden in her dramatic output, the plays she wrote before *The Rover* have been neglected. Derek Hughes, for example, has a surprisingly dismissive attitude to the plays' potential performability. He rejects the idea that the early plays have the potential for any modern production, stating that 'they are beyond revival today'.[12] He states they are 'unperformable today' even though they are 'exceptional in their period for their closely imagined unity and their assurance in using the scenic space'.[13] His firm opinion that the plays are unperformable despite their sense of unity and imagination is unexplained and therefore questionable. Admittedly, there have been very few twentieth- or twenty-first-century performances of *any* of Behn's plays. Given his status as a seminal Behn scholar, Hughes's lack of rationale runs the risk of unduly discouraging performers and readers from the early plays.[14] However, in his other work Hughes points that when Behn first began her playwriting career in the early 1670s, 'at this early stage of her career, she does not see herself as a face in the crowd, but as competing for top place in a threesome' comprised of herself, John Dryden and Thomas Shadwell'.[15] If Behn took her writing of the 1670s seriously, it is

[11] *The Amorous Prince*'s title page claims the play is a 'Comedy'. However, it has many tragic elements that suggest it would be more fitting to describe it as a 'tragicomedy'. Janet Todd and Derek Hughes therefore include a discussion of the play in their chapter 'Tragedy and tragicomedy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.83–97.

[12] Derek Hughes, 'The masked woman revealed; or, the Prostitute and the Playwright in Aphra Behn Criticism', in *Women's Writing*, 7:2 (2000) pp.149–64 (p.157).

[13] Derek Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) p.48.

[14] 'The first major restaging of a play by Behn in the twentieth century was a production of *The Lucky Chance* by the Woman's Playhouse Trust in 1984 […] followed up by the RSC staging of *The Rover* in 1986' in W. R. Owens and Lizbeth Goodman (eds.) *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon* (London: Routledge, 1996). The RSC also produced *The Rover* August 2016–February 2017.

[15] Derek Hughes, 'Aphra Behn and the Restoration Theatre', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.29–45 (p.30).

only appropriate that we as readers do likewise. However, potential readers and performers are hampered by the lack of modern editions of the early plays. Only *The Dutch Lover* and *Abdelazer* have appeared in twentieth-century print beyond Montague Summers's *The Works of Aphra Behn* (1915) and Janet Todd's *The Works of Aphra Behn* (1996).[16] The early plays will all appear again in the forthcoming *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn*, but sadly no other modern publication of these plays, either in anthologies or as individual editions, is projected.[17] By contrast, *The Rover* and the plays Behn wrote after it have been published more recently and by mainstream publishers such as Penguin and Oxford World Classics.[18] This is indicative of the scarcity of modern editions of Restoration drama more widely; those that do exist are the ones most usually taught on Restoration modules; sex comedies like *The Man of Mode* and *The Country* Wife, or Dryden's tragedy *All for Love*, which can be read alongside *Antony and Cleopatra*. As Susan Owen mentions, when modern readers think of Restoration drama, it is the libertine sex comedies that most frequently come to mind.[19]

The lack of modern editions of Behn's early plays is also perhaps because the political issues they dramatise have been downplayed in scholarship which addresses Behn's collective works. In Janet Todd's edited *Aphra Behn Studies*, the early plays and their politics are alluded to, but with a brevity belying the complexities of their nature.[20] Owen discusses *The Young King* exclusively in

[16] *The Dutch Lover* was included in *American Aphrodite: A Quarterly for the Fancy-Free*. Ed. Samuel Roth. 2, no.5 (1952): pp.1–55. Maureen Duffy edited a collection of Behn's works, *Five Plays*, which included *Abdelazer* (London: Methuen, 1990), which is now out of print. See Mary Ann O'Donnell, *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Surrey, Burlington: Ashgate, 1986 rpt. 2004).
Montague Summers (Ed.) *The Works of Aphra Behn*. 6 vols. (London: Heinemann; Stratford; A. Bullen, 1915; rpt. New York: Phaeton, 1967 and New York: Bloom, 1967, 2: 1–98).
Janet Todd (Ed.), *The Works of Aphra Behn* (London: Pickering & Chatto; Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992–1996). All citations from the plays are taken from Todd's edition.

[17] General editors: Claire Bowditch, Mel Evans, Elaine Hobby and Gillian Wright. Publication by Cambridge University Press is anticipated from 2020 onwards.

[18] *The Rover* and *The Widow Ranter* appeared in Janet Todd's edition of *Oroonoko, The Rover and Other Works* (London: Penguin, 1992); *The Rover, The Feign'd Curtizans*, *The Lucky Chance* and *The Emperor of the Moon* were published together as *The Rover and Other Plays* ed. Michael Cordner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[19] Susan J. Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) p.16.

[20] Janet Todd (ed.) *Aphra Behn Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

terms of the Exclusion Crisis; that is, when the play was first performed rather than when (according to Behn) it was apparently written, in the early 1660s. Owen surmises that the play's dramatisation of 'the disastrous results of political exclusion on the royal personality reflects fears expressed by Parliamentary opponents of the Exclusion Bills that excluding James from the succession might make him desperate and lead to civil war'.[21] Jacqueline Pearson compares *The Dutch Lover* and *Abdelazer* to *Oroonoko* whilst exploring 'how persistently Behn uses images of racial and cultural difference throughout her work', and she studies the link between these and Behn's portrayal of transgressive female sexuality.[22] Discussion of *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince* is even more fleeting. Dawn Lewcock makes only brief references to their political messages whilst discussing the use of discovery scenes in *The Forc'd Marriage*, and disguise in *The Amorous Prince*. She mentions that the ending of *The Forc'd Marriage* relies on the audience's

> knowledge that the Duke of York had married a commoner, Anne Hyde; that her father had been recently exiled […] Behn's manipulations of the audience response in this way continued in her late plays and implicitly comments on contemporary attitudes, opinions or behaviours.[23]

She then briefly concludes that the political overtones of *The Amorous Prince* are a dramatisation of the idea that 'the duty due to a prince by his subjects must be reciprocated by scrupulous conduct towards them'.[24] Although the chapters pertaining to the early plays in *Aphra Behn Studies* hint at their potential contribution to understanding Behn's perception of politics, they do not thoroughly investigate what these political messages are, and how complex and perplexing they are when trying to provide a coherent sense of Behn's political voice.

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[21] Susan J. Owen, 'Sexual politics and party politics in Behn's drama, 1678-83', in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.15–29 (p.19). She makes a similar argument regarding the play in her monograph *Restoration Theatre and Crisis*.

[22] Jacqueline Pearson, 'Slave princes and lady monsters: gender and ethnic difference in the works of Aphra Behn', in *Aphra Behn* Studies *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.219–34 (p.219).

[23] Dawn Lewcock, 'More for seeing than hearing: Behn and the use of theatre', in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) (pp.66–83) p.75.

[24] Ibid., pp.67–68.

In *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, the politics embedded in the early plays are also only sparingly touched upon. The editors Janet Todd and Derek Hughes combine *The Young King*, *The Amorous Prince* and *Abdelazer* into a chapter dedicated to Behn's 'Tragedy and tragicomedy'. This links Behn's plays to early Restoration royalist drama's 'obsession […] with representing the recent reverses and triumphs of the British monarchy'.[25] The princes, in these plays, are described as 'disturbing', especially in regard to their treatment of female characters. Todd and Hughes continue, 'If, then, [Behn] persists with the theme of restoration whilst many others were dramatising change, she could scarcely endorse it with less idealization'.[26] Over the course of *The Cambridge Companion* as a whole there is absolutely no discussion of *The Dutch Lover*.[27]

Of course, this lack of in-depth analysis is due to the nature of the publications in which they appear; studies and companions of necessity provide a comprehensive, but concise, overview of the primary texts at hand. However, the brevity with which *Aphra Behn Studies* and the *Cambridge Companion* touch upon the early plays is indicative of the general scarcity of research dedicated specifically to Behn's early output. There is a corresponding dearth of journal articles relating to the plays. The ones that have appeared, few and far between, offer a wonderful assessment and depth of analysis to individual plays, for example: Christopher Gabbard and Rebecca Wolsk's articles on Anglo-Dutch relationships in *The Dutch Lover*, and Adam Beach and Susie Thomas's research on *Abdelazer*'s issues of race.[28] Alvin Snider has recently published a very informative piece on the

[25] Janet Todd and Derek Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.83–97 (p.84).
[26] Ibid., p.91.
[27] *The Cambridge Companion* does mention *The Dutch Lover* in references to the complaints Behn made about the theatre, actors and critics in the prologue she penned for its publication: in Mary Ann O'Donnell's chapter 'The documentary record' pp.1–11 (p.7) and Derek Hughes's chapter 'The Restoration Theatre' pp.29–45 (pp.30–1). However, other than that, there is no discussion of the play itself.
[28] Christopher D. Gabbard, 'Clashing Masculinities in Aphra Behn's *The Dutch Lover*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*. 47 (2007) 557–72; Rebecca S. Wolsk, 'Muddy Allegiance and Shiny Booty: Aphra Behn's Anglo-Dutch Politics', *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 17 (2004) 1–33; Adam R. Beach, 'Global Slavery, Old World Bondage and Aphra Behn's "Abdelazer"', *The Eighteenth Century*, 53 (2012) 413–31; Susie Thomas, '"This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine": Aphra Behn's *Abdelazer, or, The Moor's Revenge*', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture 1600–1700*, 22 (1998) 18–39.

significance of *The Forc'd Marriage*'s original staging and audience at Lincoln's Inn Fields.[29] However, apart from Anita Pacheco's comparison of *The Young King* and *The Forc'd Marriage*'s portrayals of kingship, these articles, necessarily, study these individual plays in isolation.[30] Despite this, they have all been instrumental in furthering my understanding of each play in and of itself, and demonstrate that there is a significant critical interest in Behn's early works, upon which this thesis hopes to build.

Beyond these shorter pieces focused on individual plays, when dealing with a writer as prolific as Behn in a longer piece of work, there is the added difficulty of handling her overwhelmingly expansive oeuvre. Deciding which specific texts to focus on when trying to cover 'everything' is therefore a difficult and daunting task, and often decided by having a cohesive focus. For example, in *Aphra Behn Studies*, issues of gender underpin the basis of the volume's contributions. Todd's introduction explains how Behn was relegated to relative obscurity in the eighteenth and nineteenth century by moralists scandalised by the smuttiness of her later plays and their fervent reaction to a *woman* writing such things. As Todd writes, Behn was:

> condemned as hopelessly sexy. The emphasis on the gendered pen made certain kinds of expression not only improper but almost impossible for a woman – the woman who *had* so expressed herself had forfeited her claim to membership of the 'Fair Sex' while she could not associate herself with the other.[31]

Aphra Behn Studies therefore addresses Behn's works in terms of 'the discursive crisis of construction of state, sex and nature', in which the issue of sex seems to dominate.[32] One might speculate that this issue of sex, deplored in the Victorian period, is exactly what might appeal to contemporary readers, especially students. However, Behn's early plays do not automatically lend themselves half so easily to a reader or critic interested in redressing her obscurity based on ideas of

[29] Alvin Snider, 'Aphra Behn's *The Forc'd Marriage* at Lincoln Inn's Field', *Studies in Philology*, 115 (2018) 193–217.
[30] Anita Pacheco, '"Where Lies This Power Divine?" The Representation of Kingship in Aphra Behn's Early Tragicomedies', *Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38 (2015) 317–34.
[31] Todd, 'Introduction', in *Aphra Behn* Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.1–14 (p.3).
[32] Ibid., p.4.

gender-based propriety, because they are simply not 'hopelessly sexy' in the way *The Rover* or *The Feign'd Curtizans* are (and these later plays are both granted their own chapters in *Studies*).[33]. Although Behn established her career with these early plays, they are not sexually scandalous; they were written before sex comedies came into their own on the Restoration stage. Therefore, there are fewer wayward women for the feminist to champion, or rapacious rakes to chuckle at, criticise and cajole. The prototypes of such characters are there: in *The Amorous Prince*'s aggressive Prince Fredrick and *The Dutch Lover*'s wandering lothario Alonzo, we have early models for *The Rover*'s hate-to-love hero Willmore. Euphemia's escape from her father's house to extricate herself from an unwanted betrothal in *The Dutch Lover* has the rough beginnings of *The Rover's* Hellena, and *The Feign'd Curtizans'* Laura Lucretia, who rail against female stereotypes in their sexual forwardness and self-determination. However, beyond that, the early plays are dominated by the actions of men: *The Young King* and *The Forc'd Marriage* going so far as to 'trace male supremacism to its origins in warrior communities whose values are dictated by strength and soldierly prowess'.[34] In Behn's early plays, women have a raw deal. As my comparisons show, there is a temptation to look *back* at these early plays with hindsight, contrasting how they fare in comparison to the heroines of Behn's later plays.

The issue of hindsight certainly seems to be present in Derek Hughes's monograph, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*. It is the only critical work to provide a detailed study of Behn's entire dramatic output, and its approach to studying the plays in chronological order inspires the structure of my own thesis. Hughes's linear approach charts Behn's developing interest in issues of gender, power and politics:

> What changes throughout her work is the relationship of the milieu she is portraying to its origins in archetypal militaristic cultures. Her first two plays go back to the

[33] *The Rover* also has its own chapter in Helen M. Burke's 'The Cavalier myth in *The Rover*' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.118–34.
[34] Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', p.83.

> origins of male supremacism, depicting feudal societies whose hierarchies and imperatives are those of the battlefield. Memories of the warrior society are generally an important background to her later work, but increasingly she examines the transition from military to economic power, and the interaction between the two.[35]

His analyses of the early plays address their relationship to Restoration politics in a way that previous Behn scholarship had not done. Hughes also explores how the sexual politics of Behn's later plays have their roots in her early works. However, he draws a distinct line between the early plays and the plays from *The Rover* (1677) onwards, a line which is never really explained or justified. After a brief note on *The Debauchee* Hughes covers *The Rover*, *Sir Patient Fancy* and *The Feign'd Curtizans* in a chapter titled 'Maturity'. This is revealing. Maturity connotes skill and experience and therefore leads to the suggestion that such qualities are lacking in the plays that went before. *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, therefore, might encourage an unwary reader to approach the early plays tentatively, regarding their worth in relation to their being the 'first' of her works, that exist only as forerunners to her later, perhaps better, plays.

Currently, the only monograph which focuses exclusively on Behn's early plays is Judy Hayden's *Of Love and War: The Political Voice in the Early Plays of Aphra Behn.* It has been an instrumental source for my re-evaluation of the early plays' place in Behn's output as it is the first work to strongly argue for recognising that there is a 'politicality' to Behn's dramatic output, well before the excitement of the Exclusion Crisis:

> The fundamental change in the direction of the state, the subsequent disruption surrounding the demise of the Interregnum, and the re-establishment of the Stuart monarchy gave rise to radical extremes of behaviour and opinion, both socially and politically. Public clamour for the punishment of the regicides, the contest initiated by the old cavaliers to reclaim sequestered property, the debates on religious issues, and particularly on religious toleration (including Charles II's attempts to institute religious indulgence), and the Dutch Wars, bespeak a state enmeshed in both

[35] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, pp.10–11.

> internal and external political turmoil […] The political voice in dramatic texts is not absent in the first decade of the Restoration; it is simply more focused after 1678. It is louder and certainly more extreme – but it is not new.[36]

Hayden's work provides the first sustained and substantial interpretation and analysis of the early plays, reading them not only in the context of historical events, but also in comparison and contrast to the works of Behn's male colleagues. However, like *Studies*, Hayden's work returns forcefully to the issue of Behn as a *female* writer, and the point that the fact Behn was even writing for the stage in this period is a political statement in and of itself. Her work proves that 'much can be gained by exploring her work in the context of her male colleagues rather than limiting our study to her feminist voice'.[37] In the book's approach to the plays however, gender forms the bedrock of her analysis, aligning the political nature of the plays with the nature of their sexual politics.

I first thought to write about Behn's early plays with a final chapter on *The Rover*. When I tentatively mentioned to a respected Behn scholar that I was thinking of dropping that last chapter, the response was, 'How can you *not* write about *The Rover*?' This incredulity caused me a certain amount of alarm and uncertainty, but the question indicates just how much *The Rover* dominates scholarship on Behn's plays and, as Hughes's work shows, that that potentially leads to her earlier plays being overshadowed by a sense of *The Rover*'s supposed superiority. *The Rover* is certainly a wonderful play: a Restoration romp of black humour and slapstick comedy in which the sexual politics are not only laugh-out-loud funny, but at moments horrifically sinister and starkly revealing of gender dynamics in the Restoration that have, arguably, endured to the modern day. In 2016–2017 it had a critically-acclaimed revival at the Royal Shakespeare Company under the directorship of Loveday Ingram. However, with the exceptions of some aspects noted earlier of *The Amorous Prince* and *The Dutch Lover*, the early plays are very different from *The Rover* and the material Behn wrote later in her career.

[36] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, pp.2–4.
[37] Ibid., p.201.

This thesis follows Hayden in addressing Behn's early plays both as individual pieces and as a coherent body of work in its own right, unencumbered by constant comparison to her later works. However, it differs from Hayden in moving away from establishing Behn's political voice as a specifically gendered one. It identifies Behn's first five plays, from *The Young King* to *Abdelazer*, as her 'early' work based on their common political themes that Behn would move further away from in *The Town Fopp* and *The Rover*. This thesis explores how Behn's first five plays take up the themes of dispossession, usurpation and restoration that were popular in the first decade of Charles II's reign, and repositions that cycle in new dramatic worlds where the dispossessed princes are not always sympathetic heroes, the usurpers are not always villainous, and a successful restoration is dependent upon a prince's moral, as well as political, restoration. I argue that the politics of these plays rest less on ideas about gender, than on a reimagining of events of the earlier seventeenth century and corresponding anxieties in Behn's modern day. Alvin Snider writes:

> Restoration London was not, contrary to the official line, miraculously transformed by rebuilding overnight. It remained overcrowded and disintegrative, rebuilt on the ruins of the past, just as the rubble from the Great Fire supplied material for London's rise from the ashes. For all the boasting claims of actors and playwrights, a generation saw themselves as camped out in the remains of a vanished culture.[38]

Just as London was not magically rebuilt after the Great Fire, the monarchy did not magically return from exile, unbent or unbruised, after the Restoration. Behn was not writing about concepts of kingship in a political vacuum. Her engagement with themes of dispossession and usurpation is shaped by an England that now *knew* that kings could be disposed of: that monarchical privilege is vulnerable to challenging questions at best, and, at worst, the ambitions and ruthlessness of those emboldened to usurp its authority. Behn also knew, in a way playwrights of the early Restoration did not, that Charles II had not lived up to expectations. The courts of Behn's early plays face imminent transitions of power, new princes stand poised to take their crowns. In light of Charles II's failings,

[38] Snider, 'Aphra Behn's *Forc'd Marriage*', p.201.

Behn asks, what if these princes are not ready to do so? What if their behaviour is unkinglike? What gives them the right to the throne at all?

The Problem of *The Young King*

Of all the plays addressed in this thesis, *The Young King* is the most problematic in terms of dating. This thesis treats it as an early play, and therefore analyses it in the context of the early 1660s' political landscape and the time of its supposed composition, rather than the time of its first performance in 1679. To do so, however, involves venturing into the uncertainty of Behn's biography and chronology. Behn's statement that *The Young King* was written in the early 1660s is based on one of the most intriguing, and controversial, claims she herself made about her own life: that, as a young woman, she had travelled to the English colony of Surinam in South America. In her dedicatory letter to the play's 1683 publication, Behn claims of the work:

> Three thousand Leagues of spacious Ocean she has measured, visited many and distant Shores, and found a welcome everywhere; but in all that vast tract of Sea & Land cou'd never meet with one whose Person and Merits cou'd oblige her to yield her unguarded Self into his protection [...] She feared the reproach of being an American, whose Country rarely produces Beauties of this kind.[39]

She describes it as the 'first Essay of my Infant-Poetry', written as a 'youthful' 'sally'. The idea that 'America' here refers to Surinam comes from her story *Oroonoko* (1688). Suriname (as it is now called) being approximately 2,600 leagues from London as the crow flies, it is possible Behn's reference to 'Three thousand leagues' refers to a there-and-back voyage to South America. It is interesting that in the dedication to *The Young King* Behn obviously did not feel the need to explain the particulars of *The Young King*'s 'American' origins in the way she painstakingly foregrounds *Oroonoko* in autobiographical fact. It could, of course, have been a deliberately vague ruse to incite interest in – and suggest there is a mystery about – herself to an unfamiliar reader. Maybe it was a

[39] Aphra Behn, *The Young King*, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 7, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1996) pp.79–152 (p.83).

means of enticing the curiosity and therefore the patronage of the dedicatee.[40] Maybe it was a 'fact' she had established a long time ago in conversation rather than print, so was well known to the more closely associated reader; we could take this as a signal that the London theatrical circle was familiar with the story that Mrs Behn had spent time in Surinam. In 1688, though, she was more specific and direct about the claim she had travelled to 'America'. The dedicatory letter to her story *Oroonoko* states the ensuing fiction 'is a true story' about 'the royal slave I had the honour to know in my travels to the other world […] I was myself an eyewitness to a great part of what you will find here set down'.[41] Author and narrator thus conflated, Behn's story about a royal slave contains elaborate descriptions of the flora, fauna, indigenous population and slaves 'in a colony in America called Surinam in the West Indies'.[42] She claims to have brought back not only *Oroonoko*'s tragic tale, but also a set of feathers: 'I gave 'em to the King's theatre, and it was the dress of the Indian Queen, infinitely admired by persons of quality, and were unimitable'.[43] If Behn did go to Surinam, at least the reference to *The Indian Queen* pinpoints her return as sometime in or before 1664 and therefore gives us a rough idea of when *The Young King* would have been written.[44] Whether the set of feathers used in John Dryden and Robert Howard's 1664 play *The Indian Queen* were genuinely from South America or not, and whether she was the one who provided them if they were, we have only Behn's word. Rob Baum points out that, if they were authentic feathers, 'Behn could hardly afford to give something away of great value when she was in debt and literally writing for her life', even if she was, as Baum concedes, trying to ingratiate herself with the likes of Dryden.[45] As Baum's

[40] Janet Todd speculates the 'Phillaster' the dedication is addressed to might refer to Philip, Lord L'Isle, made Earl of Leicester in 1677 (*Secret Life*, p.509 n.22).
[41] *Oroonoko*, p.5–6.
[42] Ibid., p.6.
[43] Ibid., p.7. See also Margaret W. Ferguson, 'Feathers and flies: Aphra Behn and the seventeenth century trade in exotica' in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Peter Stallybrass, Margreta de Grazia and Maureen Quilligan, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) pp.235–59. The reference to the 'Indian Queen' is to Robert Howard and John Dryden's 1664 play *The Indian Queen*.
[44] She might, of course, have provided the feathers for a revival of the play, but seeing as more reliable documentation places Behn in Antwerp 1666–67, it is more likely she would have gifted the feathers to Dryden before her spying mission and, therefore, more immediately after this supposed trip to Surinam.
[45] Rob Baum, 'Aphra Behn's Black Body: Sex, Lies and Narrativity in *Oroonoko*', *Brno Studies in English* 37 (2) (2011) pp.7–29 (p.10).

research suggests, there is some scepticism surrounding Behn's Surinamese adventure. Most biographies are inclined to accept Behn's claims she was at least *there*, royal slave adventures or not. As Matthew Parker writes in his history of the English colony in Suriname:

> Aphra Behn claims to be an 'eye-witness' to the colony. And certainly much of the content of the story supports this claim, as the book contains precise and accurate details of everything from topography to slave prices to indigenous people, as well as local words, uncommon or even unheard in England: 'cat-o'-nine-tails', 'backerary', 'osenbrigs', 'hamaca', 'savan', 'pickaninnies', 'paddle', 'punch'. This is very different from her other works set abroad, in France or Spain for example, where she never provides even the most rudimentary local colour. Furthermore, all the Europeans named in *Oroonoko* – including John Trefry, George Marten and William Byam – were, as we have seen, real people who were there.[46]

Further research into Behn's supposed sojourn in South America is already underway. Helen Wilcox, who is editing *Oroonoko* for the new collected works of Aphra Behn, identified fascinating parallels between the former colony's slave history and its legends which bear parallels to *Oroonoko*, whilst on her own travels in Suriname.[47]

If Behn *was* telling the truth, it would place her composition of the play before her return from Surinam in c.1664.[48] It is believed it might have been shelved until later in Behn's career due to the 1670 failure of Edward Howard's similar play *The Women's Conquest*.[49] It was first performed in 1679, and therefore scholars have habitually interpreted the play as one of Behn's dramatic responses to the 'deepening polarisation and of vigorous royalist response to the Opposition's successful exploitation of the Popish Plot'.[50] Critics like Anita Pacheco are hesitant to date the play,

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[46] Matthew Parker, *Willoughbyland: England's Lost Colony* (London: Hutchinson, 2015) p.150.
[47] Helen Wilcox, 'Aphra Behn's Suriname: Shedding Light on *Oroonoko*', unpublished paper delivered at the conference 'Early-Modern Women Writers: New Methodologies, Resources, and Theoretical Approaches. (University College Dublin, 27–29 June 2018).
[48] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.63.
[49] Edward Howard, *The Womens Conquest*, (London: 1671).
[49] Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', p.84.
[50] Susan J. Owen, 'Sexual politics and party politics in Behn's drama, 1678–83', in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.15–29 (p.25).

on the grounds that we have no hard evidence how much revision the play underwent from the time of its first draft to its first performance at least fifteen years later.[51] New research has questioned Behn's claims this was an early text. Using a stylometric approach to analyse Behn's dramatic output, Mel Evans's research has pointed out that *The Young King* bears fewer linguistic similarities to Behn's first 'known' play, *The Forc'd Marriage*, than it does to the later *Abdelazer*, suggesting that, '*The Young King* was written, or at least revised, contemporaneously with this play […] which points to a date of composition, or at least revision, of the mid-to-late 1670s'.[52] Although Evans's research is evidence that the play was probably heavily revised prior to publication, certain factors remain that support the argument that the play should be counted as one of Behn's 'early' works. First, why would Behn lie about the play's early origins? She was an established playwright by the end of the 1670s and it therefore seems an odd claim to make unless it was grounded in the truth. Second, in *The Young King*'s tragicomic themes of dispossession and restoration, the play has more in common with the early plays of the 1660s than the social comedies popular in the late 1670s or *Abdelazer*, which Evans in stylometric analysis identified as the most similar.

It seems unlikely that Behn would conceive of and write a tragicomedy like *The Young King* in the mid-to-late 1670s, when it is rooted generically and thematically in the heroic style popular in the early 1660s. Tragicomedies such as these had given way to social comedies and pure tragedies. If we believe Behn wrote the play from scratch in the mid-to-late 1670s, we are faced with an oddity in terms of time and setting. It is set in the classical Kingdom of Dacia. Its pagan, feudalistic military society bears more parallels to the setting of *The Forc'd Marriage*. *The Forc'd Marriage* is set in the French court, but beyond the title page stating that it is so, there is no reference to time or place within the play. Watching *The Forc'd Marriage* in a performance, its characters would therefore seem suspended in a timeless and placeless, but nevertheless intensely feudal and militaristic, world

[51] Anita Pacheco, 'Where Lies this Power Divine?': The Representation of Kingship in Aphra Behn's Early Tragicomedies', *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 38 (2015) pp.317–34.
[52] Mel Evans, 'Style and chronology: A stylometric investigation of Aphra Behn's dramatic style and the dating of *The Young King*', *Language and Literature*, 27 (2018) pp.1–30 (pp.21–22).

where gods are equally unidentifiable, as in *The Young King*. In both *The Young King* and *The Forc'd Marriage*, the courts are at war with a foreign (but in the case of *The Forc'd Marriage*, an unspecified) adversary. *Abdelazer* has similar parallels in the sense there is military presence in the play: Prince Philip has returned from conquering Portugal and Abdelazer is a general in the Spanish army. However, *Abdelazer* is obviously *Spanish* in its setting and subject matter. Its conflict between the Moors and Spanish roots it firmly in Spanish politics perceptibly contemporary to Behn's own time, rather than the airy classical kingdoms and Amazonian warrior princesses of *The Young King*, or the ambiguous, feudal court of *The Forc'd Marriage*. If we place *The Young King* at the start of Behn's dramatic output and *Abdelazer* at the 'end', we see how Behn's plays move from an ambiguous to a more easily identifiable sense of setting and place: from classical Dacia; to a France in name alone; to references to Italian names and manners in *The Amorous Prince*'s Florence; to Madrid and seventeenth-century international wars and relationships in *The Dutch Lover*; to *Abdelazer*'s Spanish court and wars against the Moors. In this order we see how the plays continue to develop a keener sense of time and place in increasingly recognisable European, and urban, settings. If *The Young King* was conceived of and written at the time of *Abdelazer*, it would be an odd step backwards in style. For this and the reasons outlined below that form the summary of this thesis's arguments, I am considering *The Young King* as an early play, perhaps revised in preparation for its first staged performance, but first devised much earlier in Behn's life.

The Political Voice of Aphra Behn's Early Plays

Crucially, placing *The Young King* and *Abdelazer* at two ends of a chronological spectrum explains the wildly different characterisations of monarchy in the plays. Behn's early plays portray a monarchy which gradually declines in reverence over the course of the 1670s. It directly challenges the notion that Behn was always the staunch royalist, as has been previously assumed. As Mary Ann O'Donnell writes, Behn's 'dedication to the Stuart kings and the Tory cause has never been questioned, and her published writing never falters in her support of Charles II or his brother James

II'.[53] Owen declares, 'Behn was a staunch Tory at the time when Toryism first developed'.[54] However, in Owen's discussion of Behn's political voice, she only goes as far back in Behn's output to *The Rover*, with no mention of the development of Behn's political voice up to this point. Behn might have always supported Charles II and, even more importantly in light of the succession crisis, his brother James. After all, she served Charles and James in many ways, as a spy for the Crown from August 1666 to April 1667 and turned her pen to dramatic and poetic support for James during the Exclusion Crisis. One might assume the works she produced in between these two periods of her life were, similarly, unwaveringly supportive of the Stuart kings. However, in her early plays this political support does not correspond to an intrinsic faith in the concept of monarchy in and of itself. Nor does it limit her tendency to criticise behaviour she deemed unkinglike. In the early plays, her royalism and attitude towards the divine right of kings, birth-right and legitimacy – cornerstones of the English monarchy – are surprisingly questioning and faltering in tone. As Todd writes, 'Her tentative doubts over arbitrary authority, expressed in her earliest plays' disappeared in her later works 'under the increasing fear of democracy, mob-rule, or anarchy'.[55] Before the Exclusion Crisis polarised political opinion, it would be much more accurate to say that Behn is a conditional royalist. The ideas that emerge from my chosen plays can be best summarised as an interrogation of the nature of kingship by prompting such questions as, 'What is a king?', 'What is a man?', 'What is national identity?' and 'What is racial identity?'. Ultimately, these plays question the very nature of legitimate rule.

As we progress from *The Young King*, through *The Forc'd Marriage, The Amorous Prince* and *The Dutch Lover*, to *Abdelazer*, she becomes increasingly anxious over questions of kingship, and the problems her kingly characters face are less easily resolved. Orsames emerges from captivity in an

[53] Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'Private jottings, public utterances: Aphra Behn's published writings and her commonplace book' in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) pp.285–309 (p.285).
[54] Susan J. Owen, 'Behn's dramatic response to Restoration politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.68–82 (p.68).
[55] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.229.

exalted celebration of political autonomy and reason over prophetic authority and religious education. *The Forc'd Marriage* champions Prince Phillaster's superiority through a problematic reaffirmation of the divine right of kings. The bad behaviour of *The Amorous Prince*'s eponymous hero brings him perilously close to an assassination attempt by a subject with whose grievances the audience greatly sympathises. *The Dutch Lover* might seem like an anomaly in Behn's other early plays, in that it does not feature any royal characters; however, its questioning exploration of what a national identity *is* merges with issues of identity more generally, birth-right and legitimacy, akin to the issues that are then raised in *Abdelazer*. Behn's portrayal of monarchy in *Abdelazer* is vastly different from that in *The Young King*. The latter is about a prince dispossessed from birth by the insidious influence of prophetic authority, who triumphs over his baser instincts to emerge an undisputed and popular monarch in a peaceful, bloodless coronation. In *Abdelazer*, Behn pits two princes against each other in a rivalry that leaves a trail of political devastation and heavy casualties in its wake. Janet Todd wrote that *Abdelazer* 'does not investigate the possible questions of usurpation, right to rule, political morality and law', and that whereas Behn's contemporaries Dryden, Lee, Ravenscroft and Otway were 'interrogating state and church', Behn was not.[56] However, as my chapter on *Abdelazer* shows, Abdelazer's and Prince Philip's claims to the throne are mirror images of each other, and in their reflections Behn raises uncomfortable questions about the nature of legitimate rule and succession. These questions were neatly answered in *The Young King* where Orsames is crowned undisputed and lauded above all others upon a bloodless battlefield; whereas Philip eventually triumphs in a prison cell littered with dead bodies and haunted by a pervading fear of the monarchy's fragility and anxiety about the future. These two vastly different portrayals of kingship represent too abrupt a *volte-face* to suggest they were written so closely together. However, if we insert *The Forc'd Marriage*, *The Amorous Prince* and *The Dutch Lover* between them, we can chart how this decline in the power and prestige from one end of a spectrum to the other came about in the evolution of Behn's thought and characterisation: from the

[56] Ibid., pp.189–90.

celebratory restoration analogies popularly dramatised at the start of the 1660s, to the creeping fear and uncertainty of what the future would hold for the country after Charles II's officially childless reign ended in the growing political tensions of the mid-to-late 1670s. Therefore, it is likely that *The Young King* and *Abdelazer* were written some time apart from one another, rather than one after the other.

The escalating questions, uncertainty and fear about the monarchy's legitimacy, authority and future linger in Behn's early plays, casting an ominous pall over their happy endings in restored princes and promising marriages. As a writer living in London, the epicentre of English politics, and working for the royally-patronised Duke's Company, her engagement in these political conundrums draws on the politics of the age in which they were written just as her later plays do, both broadly and more specifically. The question of how a subject should deal with a tyrannical ruler is a recurring theme. Charles II's penchant for extra-marital affairs with politically-controversial mistresses is also a frequent feature. It is alluded to with comic exaggeration in Orsames's rampage through the women of *The Young King*'s court, but in *The Amorous Prince* the predatory nature of Frederick's sexuality almost costs the prince his life. In *Abdelazer*, King Ferdinand's pursuit of his enemy's wife does cost him his life. The issue of the English succession is also increasingly prevalent over the course of the plays, from the hints that Charles might dissolve his marriage to Catherine of Braganza in *The Forc'd Marriage*, to the civil war fought in *Abdelazer* over the Spanish throne. In *The Dutch Lover*, Behn presents a fascinatingly complex understanding of national alliances and identities that directly relate to the Third Anglo-Dutch War during which the play was written. Behn's plays therefore marry fears about the fragility of the monarchy with the criticisms and concerns of Charles II's reign. This controversial reign began when he was a young man living in exile, dispossessed of his crown and family. It is therefore fitting that Behn's first play, *The Young King*, also begins with a prince living in banishment, but finally ready, like Charles, to take back his crown.

CHAPTER 1: OF GODS AND KINGS

THE INFLUENCE OF LUCRETIUS'S *DE RERUM NATURA* ON THE PORTRAYAL OF KINGSHIP IN *THE YOUNG* KING

A prophecy, a captive prince in a gloomy castle and an Amazonian princess in love with her greatest enemy against the backdrop of classical warfare make *The Young King* one of Behn's most fantastical plays.[57] Based on Pedro Calderón de la Barca's baroque drama, *La vida es sueño* (1635), it is a story of unjust dispossession, moral reformation and political restoration.[58] In many ways, it is reminiscent of the heroic dramas of the early 1660s, feting the king's return with plots of triumph over usurpation. However, there is a rather unusual problem facing *The Young King's* Dacian court: when we first meet the Prince Orsames, he is simply not fit to rule. He is a tyrant, a deluded, deviant despot.

Exploring how Behn chose to revise Orsames's story reveals a fascination with the interplay of religion and politics and the nature of gods and kings. In Behn's version, Orsames's nobility and virtue have been warped by the undue influence of prophetic authority, religious instruction and the belief in the divine right of kings. This attitude is specific to Behn's version of the story, rather than the Spanish original and, I argue, was inspired and informed by the seventeenth-century Lucretian revival.[59] This chapter, therefore, traces the impact of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* on Behn's portrayal of kingship in *The Young King*. It charts her exposure to the Lucretian revival and explains the appeal of Lucretius's depiction of the interdependent nature of family, monarchy and civilisation to royalist dramatists. It then compares *De Rerum Natura* and *The Young King*'s condemnations of

[57] Aphra Behn, *The Young King; or, The Mistake*, ed. by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 7 (London: William Pickering, 1996) pp.79–152.
[58] Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *Life Is a Dream: La vida es sueño*, trans. by Gregary J. Racz (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2007).
[59] Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. by Ronald Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Unless otherwise stated, quotations from *De Rerum Natura* are taken from this translation. See also, Lucretius, *The Nature of Things*, trans. by A.E. Stallings (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2007).

religious authority's corrosive impact on political agency and personal reason. Finally, it examines how Behn dramatises Lucretius's perception of love as a civilising force and its power to conquer a tyranny that has been born out of the loss of a king.

The Play and Its Source

In *The Young King*, the widowed Queen of Dacia was told by an oracle that her infant son would grow up to be 'fierce and bloudy, a Ravisher, a Tyrant o're his People; his Reign but short, and so unfit for Reign'.[60] She, therefore, imprisoned Orsames in a gloomy, lakeside castle. He has since been raised in isolation, utterly ignorant of his true identity and the workings of the world beyond his prison's walls. The jailer, Geron, is his only source of company, and education. To control his prisoner's increasingly frustrated questions, Geron spins stories about the will, power and vengeance of the gods. When Orsames has a chance to become king, he confuses monarchical power with divine omnipotence and terrorises the court with unrestrained violence. A second dispossession swiftly follows and Orsames looks doomed to rot in prison. His sister, backed by a military uprising, secures a second release and restoration, by which time his temper has been mollified by a developed ability to reason, and his love for the woman he will go on to marry.

Behn's plot of one man's triumph over his passions is largely based on *La vida es sueño*. In Calderón's play, the Russian Rosaura travels to Poland to confront a faithless lover. On her journey, she stumbles across a mountain prison in which Prince Segismundo has been incarcerated since birth by his father, King Basilio. The Queen died in childbirth, after prophesising that her son would be a monster. The King's own astrological divinations confirmed that Segismundo would be a cruel tyrant who would trample on his father's head with 'conquering feet' to seize the crown.[61] He, therefore, pretended that the baby had been stillborn and locked him up in a secret prison, watched over by Clotaldo. Years later, the King has grown anxious over his decision and wants to put his son

[60] Behn, *The Young King*, I. 1. 47–8. [Hereafter: *YK*].
[61] Calderón, *Life is a Dream*, I. 6. 723.

to the test. He concocts a plan to tell Segismundo the truth and see how he will react. If the results suggest the prophecies are true, Segismundo will be drugged, told the episode was simply a dream, and the Polish throne will pass to Astolf, the Duke of Moscow, Rosaura's fickle lover. Furious at the deception, Segismundo behaves exactly as the prophecy predicted, and is swiftly re-imprisoned. However, angry at the King's deception and anxious at the prospect of bowing to a foreign king, the people rebel in support of Segismundo. When King Basilio's head lies beneath Segismundo's hovering boot, the prince behaves with grace and mercy. Since life is but a dream and when we wake from it the reality we face will be dictated by the actions of our dream selves, Segismundo decides to sacrifice self-interest for political stability and forgives his father.

Behn greatly elaborates on Calderón's story, spinning the original three-act drama into five acts, padded out by a variety of characters and subplots, and relocates it from Poland to the classical Kingdom of Dacia. Whilst Orsames unknowingly awaits his test of kingship, his Amazonian sister Cleomena unwittingly falls in love with her sworn enemy, the Scythian Prince Thersander.[62] Thersander then juggles his love for Cleomena with his loyalty to his country. After many disguises and mistaken identities, the couple, and thus their countries, are united in time to greet Orsames for his coronation at the head of a loyal, if rather confused, army.

How Behn knew Calderón's story of an ill-fated prince is very difficult to discover. In the 1650s a French prose version of the story, *La Vie n'est qu'un Songe*, appeared in an anthology by François le Métel de Boisrobert which may be the likely source material.[63] It follows the plot of *La vida es sueño* very closely, and Patricia M. Seward believes Behn knew both texts.[64] Alternatively, when Behn was staying in Antwerp on her hapless spying mission between 1666 and 1667, she

[62] This aspect of the plot is taken from another Spanish source: La Calprenède's heroic romance *Cléopâtre*. Patricia M. Seward credits Montague Summers (*The Works of Aphra Behn*, 2, pp.102–3) as the first to identify this borrowing in her article 'Calderón and Aphra Behn: Spanish Borrowings in *The Young King*', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 49:2 (1972) 149–64 (p.149).
[63] Seward, 'Calderón and Aphra Behn', p.150. Her article covers the standard plot points of similarities between the Spanish and English version of the play.
[64] Ibid., p.150.

might have seen the play at the Almoners' Theatre.[65] This theatre had opened in 1661 and, given both the relative dearth of theatrical output from Antwerp prior to this and the Spanish influence on the region at the time, it is very possible that the plays performed there were drawn from Calderón's oeuvre. Frustratingly, however, no records remain of *what* plays were put on during that period.[66] We know with more certainty that Calderón's works had broadly influenced Behn's contemporaries, whether in their original format or in French retellings; for example, John Dryden's *An Evening's Love* (1668) is drawn from Calderón's *El Astrologo Fingido* and William Wycherley's *Love in a Wood* (1672) and *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1673) took inspiration from *Mañanas de abril y mayo* and *El maestro de Danzar*.[67] However, Behn claims *The Young King* was written in c.1664, before these other plays and her trip to Antwerp, so it is probable that she came across the story independently, or even seen an undocumented version of it. Janet Todd cites the popularity of Spanish dramas in the early 1660s as another piece of evidence in support of Behn's claim that it was written early in that decade rather than at the end of the 1670s.[68] Seward writes that:

> there do not appear to be any close verbal links between [*La vida es sueño* and *The Young King*] and it is possible that Mrs Behn did not have the Spanish text beside her when she wrote but worked perhaps from a summary or even adapted straight from memory.[69]

Through whatever means she had come across Calderón's plot, the similarities between that and *The Young* suggest Behn was very familiar with the play.

Assuming Behn had a decent knowledge of the play, the most fascinating revisions she makes to the Spanish original lie in her retelling of Orsames's incarceration. The details she changes

[65] Interestingly, Behn's spying reports were written under the pseudonym Astrea. Astrea is also the name that Rosaura takes in *La vida es sueño* when she is undercover in the Polish court as a lady-in-waiting to Stella.
[66] See Chapter 3 of this thesis on *The Dutch Lover* for more information on Antwerp's theatrical scene during Behn's visit.
[67] Nora Rodríguez Loro, 'Calderón's and Wycherley's Dancing-masters', in *English and American Studies in Spain: New Developments and Trends*, ed. by Luis Alberto Lázaro Lafuente and M. Dolores Porto Requejo (Seville: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alcalá, 2015) pp.136-143 (p.137).
[68] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.59.
[69] Seward, 'Calderón and Aphra Behn', p.162.

in relation to how he came to be imprisoned, what he believes about himself and his place in the world, and the thought process behind his moral reformation are subtly, but captivatingly, different from Calderón's version. King Basilio imprisoned Segismundo based on his own, private, deductions about the ill-fated star his son was apparently born under. Behn's Queen also imprisoned her infant son, but on the advice of an oracle. Whilst Segismundo wretchedly ruminates on how his unnatural captivity contrasts with the liberty the rest of nature enjoys, Orsames fantasises that if he *were* Nature, he would make one man greater than all others. Segismundo behaves poorly during his test reign because he is enraged by his father's deception. Orsames behaves poorly because he believes, from his education, that kings are like the tyrannical gods he was taught to blame for his imprisonment, and fear. Segismundo reforms because he no longer trusts reality and is frightened of waking up again in a prison. Orsames reforms because his reason grows too powerful to accept his jailer's explanations, and because his angry disposition is tempered by his infatuation with his newfound love, Olympia. Although the premises of the princes' plights are therefore similar, Behn revises the history and mentality of her captive prince in ways that best promote the themes that would become hallmarks of her early plays: legitimacy, birth-right, divine right and how subjects respond to an alien or dangerous ruler. In the exploration of these themes, this chapter demonstrates how the philosophy of *The Young King* contrasts strongly with that of *La vida es sueño*, in ways that suggest the influence of another text, another writer's philosophy. That text, I contend, is Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*.

'Former Kings Now Murthered': Aphra Behn, Lucretius and Royalism

Placing *The Young King* in the context of the seventeenth-century Lucretian revival is another complicated endeavour in chronology. In 1682, the classical scholar Thomas Creech published the first full, English translation of *De Rerum Natura* and Behn penned a dedicatory poem to its second edition in 1683:

> Till now I curst my Sex and Education,

And more the scanted Customs of the Nation,

Permitting not the Female Sex to tread

The Mighty Paths of Learned Heroes Dead:

The Godlike Virgil and great Homer's Muse

Like Divine Mysteries are conceal'd from us.[70]

This is the first, hard evidence we have that Behn had read a translation of *De Rerum Natura*. Creech's first edition was printed the year before *The Young King* was published. However, we cannot be certain she read Creech's translation in its entirety, although she could have done so, and her dedicatory verse suggests she certainly wants the reader to believe she has. Although she lauds Creech's translation, 'So thou by this Translation dost advance / Our Knowledge from the State of Ignorance; / And Equal'st us to Man!' at no point does she claim that this is the first time she has read the text.[71] She writes that men have been able to whet their appetites on their knowledge of Greek and Latin, whereas she has been able to feast on Creech's excellent translation. However, this only *implies* this is the first of any translation she has read and does not directly state that it is so.[72] It is possible she was not thinking so much about herself when referring to 'Our Knowledge' and how the translation 'Equal'st us' as about women in general, who would now have access to the text. Also, as the poem was written to extol the virtues of Creech's translation, Behn may have deliberately downplayed her prior knowledge to further exalt his work.

There were earlier English translations that Behn might have had access to. In the 1670s and 1980s, the London literary and theatrical circle in which Behn moved was deeply immersed in Lucretian ideology, and Behn's awareness of this is evidenced by her later elegies to the most

[70] Aphra Behn, 'To the Unknown Daphnis on His Excellent Translation of Lucretius' in *Titus Lucretius Carus. His Six Books on Epicurean Philosophy, Done into English Verse, with Notes*, trans. by Thomas Creech, 2nd edn (Oxford: Printed by L. Lichfield, Printer to the University for Anthony Stephens, 1683) sigs d3r–e2r (sig d3v); See also, Aphra Behn, 'To the Unknown Daphnis on His Excellent Translation of Lucretius', ed. by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 1 (London: William Pickering, 1992). pp.25–29 (ll.25–30).
[71] Ibid., ll. 41–3.
[72] Ibid., ll. 21–4.

influential men in her life. She described her sometime lover John Hoyle as 'A great admirer of Lucretius' and eulogised Rochester, 'Large was his Fame, but short his Glorious Race, / Like young Lucretius and dy'd apace'.[73] Todd speculatively suggests Behn's introduction to the text could date as far back as her childhood, through her self-proclaimed foster brother who apparently 'studied Lucretian atomism' although 'only to pronounce it frivolous'.[74] However, any access Behn might have had to the original Latin text herself is negated by the fact that she claimed she could not read Latin or Greek. Within Behn's immediate circle, Rochester produced fragmentary translations in the early 1670s, and Dryden published fragmented translations of Books 1–5 in 1685.[75] Critics have convincingly argued for the Epicurean philosophy's impact on later works, such as her poetry and social comedies of the late 1670s and 80s.[76] However, although Rochester, Dryden and Creech's translations obviously postdate the date claimed for *The Young King*'s first composition, my analysis of the play's treatment of religion, reason, love and kingship concludes those themes seem drawn from tenets of *De Rerum Natura*'s philosophy.

When locating the source of Behn's exposure to the text prior to her association with Rochester, we face more uncertainty, but a variety of possibilities. The parliamentarian Lucy Hutchinson translated the poem in full in the 1650s, although this remained in manuscript copy until Hugh de Quehen's edited version in 1996.[77] More likely candidates were available translations by Michel de Marolles and John Evelyn. Marolles, Abbé de Villeloin, translated *De Rerum Natura* as *Le Poëte Lucrèce, Latin et François* in 1650, the first translation of the poem into any vernacular

[73] Aphra Behn, 'A Letter to Mr. Creech at Oxford, Written in the last great Frost', ed. by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 1 (London: William Pickering, 1992) pp.166–168, ll.47–8.
Aphra Behn, 'On the Death of the late Earl of Rochester', ed. by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 1 (London: William Pickering, 1992), pp.161–163 (ll.68–9).
See also Jane Spencer, *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.28–9.
[74] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.299. Unfortunately, Todd does not provide a primary source reference for this statement. Further research will be necessary to establish the validity of this claim.
[75] John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, 'Translations from Lucretius', in *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. by Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) pp.108–9; John Dryden, *Sylvae* (Menston: Scholar Press, 1973).
[76] See for example: Ros Ballaster, 'Taking Liberties: Revisiting Behn's Libertinism', *Women's Writing,* 9 (2012), 165–76; Michael L. Stapleton, *Admired and Understood* (Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2004) p.87.
[77] *Lucy Hutchinson's Translation of Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, ed. by Hugh de Quehen (London: Duckworth, 1996).

language. The translation apparently sold well; a second, heavily revised, edition appeared in 1659 (and a third in 1677).[78] Possibly inspired by Marolles's success, John Evelyn translated the first book of the poem into English in 1656.[79] However, worried at the attention his version of what was still regarded as a controversial and unorthodox text received, he suppressed the circulation of the rest of the translation.[80] For many seventeenth-century readers, Lucretius's views on religion were ambiguous at best, and atheistic at worst. Behn might not have known Latin or Greek, but she did know French, so well that she turned to translation works in the 1680s.[81] She could have read Marolles's translation, or she might have read Evelyn's translation of Book I. Sophie Tomlinson explains that Behn's 'To the Unknown Daphnis' 'contains echoes of Creech's, Rochester's and possibly Evelyn's text'.[82] Because it is difficult to ascertain how proficient Behn's French was prior to her translations of the 1680s (Cottegnies believes Behn 'perfected' her French on a visit to France in 1683), references to Lucretius's text in this chapter are therefore taken from Evelyn's translation unless otherwise stated.[83] Although Evelyn only published Book I of his translation, this alone contains much of the philosophy that is also present in *The Young King*.

From parliamentarian Lucy Hutchinson to royalist John Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura* attracted translations from across the political spectrum and gender divide in the seventeenth century. Reid Barbour explains that the revival of interest in Lucretius was part of an 'intellectual attempt to reckon with religious warfare between and within dynasties', *De Rerum Natura* providing 'models of how to deal with contemporary religious, moral, political and epistemological problems and

[78] See Line Cottegnies, 'Michel de Marolles's 1650 French Translation of Lucretius and its Reception in England' in *Lucretius and the Early Modern*, ed. by David Norbrook, Stephen Harrison and Philip Hardie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.161–90 (p.163).
[79] John Evelyn, *An Essay on the First Book of T. Lucretius Carus: De Rerum Natura* (London: Printed for Gabriel Bedle and Thomas Collins, 1656).
[80] Cottegnies, 'Michel de Marolle', p.179.
[81] Line Cottegnies, 'Aphra Behn's French Translations' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) pp.221–34.
[82] Sophie Tomlinson, '"A Woman's Reason": Aphra Behn Reads Lucretius' in *Intellectual History Review*, 22 (2012) pp. 355–72 (p.366).
[83] Cottegnies, 'Aphra Behn's French Translations', p.221.

choices'.[84] For example, according to David Norbrook's analysis, Book V had a particular relevance to seventeenth-century English writers dealing with the political upheaval of Charles I's execution and subsequent Interregnum. In *De Rerum Natura*, 'three early phases of sociability can be traced, starting with the closer familial bonds, then the emergence of monarchy, and finally the formation of new constitutions after a period of anarchy'.[85] The family unit in Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* is the bedrock of civilisation and the founding of harmonious communities:

> When One to One confin'd in chaste embrace
>
> Enjoy'd sweet love, and saw a numerous race;
>
> Then Man grew soft, the temper of his Mind
>
> Was chang'd from rough to mild, from fierce to kind. /
>
> […] Beside, the Child,
>
> Softned by Parents love, grew tame and mild.[86]

As this familial feeling evolves, a wider community expands and develops in which kings emerge at the forefront of an elite of 'the wiser and the wittier'.[87] Kings are presented as fatherly figures, constructing cities and citadels for their populace's protection, in which they duly allot livestock and property to their subjects according to their 'beauty, strength, or wit'.[88] They stand, in Alessandro Schiesaro's words, 'at the helm of what is effectively a natural meritocracy' as society's 'most gifted members'.[89] The role of kings as the head of the familial and political structure is portrayed as a

[84] Reid Barbour, 'Moral and political philosophy: readings of Lucretius from Virgil to Voltaire' in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. by Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp.149–66 (p.153).
[85] David Norbrook, 'Atheists and Republicans: Interpreting Lucretius in Revolutionary England' in *Lucretius and the Early Modern*, ed. by David Norbrook, Stephen Harrison and Philip Hardie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) pp.223–58 (p.229).
[86] Creech, *Titus Lucretius Carus*, p.171.
[87] Ibid., p.174.
[88] Ibid., p.174.
[89] Alessandro Schiesaro, 'Lucretius and Roman politics and history', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. by Stephen Gillespie and Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp.48–58 (p.52).

crucial aspect for harmonious community and good governance. However, Lucretius explains mankind then learned greed and ambition, and descended into anarchy and violence:

> Those former Kings now murthered, they overthrown,
> The glory of the Scepter, and the Crown
> Decreased; The Diadem, that sign of State,
> Now wept in drops of blood, the Wearer's fate,
> Spurn'd by the common feet, who fear'd no more:
> Tis sweet to spurn the things we fear'd before.
> Thus the Monarchy was lost.
> That Sun once set, a thousand little Stars
> Gave a dim light to Jealousies and Wars,
> Whilst each among the many sought the Throne,
> And thought no Head like his deserv'd the Crown.[90]

Because of the references to abstract insignias of power – 'throne', 'sceptre' and 'crown' – it is unclear whether this passage refers to the literal death of kings or a metaphorical downfall of a monarchy. For both Roman and Stuart readers, ready, relevant contextualisations for this extract are apparent. For example, Schiesaro argues that Roman readers, at the time of Lucretius's composition, could have drawn comparisons to the legendary fall of King Tarquin and the end of the Roman monarchy.[91] D. P. Fowler suggests that the allusion to the shedding of civilian blood would have also had connotations of the Roman civil wars from the late 50s to 48 BC.[92] In the seventeenth century's revival of interest in Lucretius, the execution of Charles I in 1649 similarly lent this passage a particular significance that transcended both literal and metaphorical interpretations. As Norbrook discusses, the fall of the

[90] Creech, *Titus Lucretius Carus*, p.174–5.
[91] Schiesaro, 'Lucretius and Roman politics', p.53.
[92] D. P. Fowler, 'Lucretius and Politics' in *Philosophia Togata: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*, ed. by Miriam Griffin and Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) pp.120–*50* (p.144).

monarchy expressed with bloody, violent imagery resonated with mid-seventeenth-century royalist translators shocked by the regicide, like John Evelyn.[93] As *De Rerum Natura* goes on to depict the rise of a republic, albeit one tainted by greed and personal ambition, this passage also has a versatility which appealed to both royalist sympathisers and republican supporters, like Lucy Hutchinson. Whether royalist or parliamentarian, the poem inescapably presents the destabilisation of the monarchy as bloody and anarchic; English translators could draw obvious parallels between the 'chaos' referred to in Lucretius's text and the English Civil Wars.

As Nancy Klein Maguire argues, the spectre of Charles I's execution haunted early Restoration drama.[94] Politician playwrights scrambling for favour produced a host of plays with plots framed by recent historical events, 'beginning at the Death of Charles I and Ending with the Happy Restauration of Charles II'.[95] Satirical attacks on the Interregnum, like John Tatham's *The Rump* (1660) and Robert Howard's *The Committee* (1665) and allegorical, tragicomic heroic dramas like Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery's *Henry V* (1664) and *The Generall* (1664), are dominated by themes of usurpation and restoration, and, Maguire believes, intentionally invited allegorical approaches.[96] In them, the trauma of Charles I's execution is allayed by the re-establishment of the dynastic line. As Maguire argues throughout her work, Charles II was frequently reimagined in literature as the literal re-embodiment of his father and the importance of this *homoousian* bond was the crux on which royalists rested their faith in the restored monarch. These themes persisted throughout the dramatic output of Charles II's reign and are evident, albeit in a complicated fashion, in *The Young King.* Behn's play opens with the

[93] Norbrook, 'Atheists and Republicans', p.242.
[94] Nancy Klein Maguire, *Regicide and Restoration*: *English Tragicomedy 1660–1671* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[95] A Person of Quality [Anonymous], *Cromwell's Conspiracy*. *A Tragy-Comedy, Relating to our Latter Times. Beginning at the Death of King Charles the First And ending with the happy Restauration of King Charles The Second* (London: Printed for the Author, 1660).
[96] John Tathum, *The Rump; or, The Mirrour of The late Times. A New Comedy* (London: Printed by W. Godbid, 1661); Robert Howard, *The Committee*, ed. by Carryl Nelson Thurber (Urabana: The University of Illinois, 1921); Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, *The History of Henry V* (London: Cornmarket Press, 1969); Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, *The Generall* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994) [Available from English Verse Drama Full-Text Database]; Nancy Klein Maguire, 'Regicide and Reparation: The Autobiographical Drama of Roger Boyle, Early of Orrery, in *English Literary Renaissance* (1991) 21:2 (257–82) p.260.

destabilisation of power that the death of a king precipitates and is followed by the heir's struggle to claim his father's throne. In it, Lucretius's inextricable links between familial and political bodies, and the disorder that ensues when the head of both are removed, are starkly apparent themes.

However, by the mid-1660s, dramatic portrayals of restoration were tainted by growing political discontents. As early as November 1662, the Venetian Resident in England reports:

> Indeed the discontent is general and everyone complains of the King and that he allows himself to be governed by ministers while he cares for nothing, attending only his hunting, his lusts and other amusements, which are not well interpreted.[97]

Criticisms of the King's adultery with politically-controversial mistresses and his lavish lifestyle were fuelled as the decade progressed with public suffering during the plague, Great Fire and high taxation during the unsuccessful Second Anglo-Dutch war. Despite the political/theatrical entente, Jason McElligott warns that beneath the strain of political discontent royalism as a cohesive term began to fracture and fragment.[98] Rachel Willie agrees that 'far from being a royalist monolith, the Restoration stage was a site where the body politic could be and was represented and debated'.[99] Plays written from the mid-1660s onwards betray uneasy notions of power and monarchy.[100] As Owen says, the royalist heroic play became 'an attempt to paper over ideological cracks'.[101] The difficulty most playwrights had to confront was how to assimilate their propagandised, idealised vision of kingship embodied in a martyred Charles I with the practical, often disappointing, figure of Charles II.

The desire to reimagine events of the Interregnum and Restoration could have led to one of the most obvious revisions Behn made to Calderón's play: in *La vida es sueño* it is the widowed King

[97] *Calendar of State Papers Venice, 1661-1664*, p.205 [Available at British History online].
[98] Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007) pp.65–89
[99] Rachel Willie, *Staging the Revolution: Drama, Reinvention and History, 1647–72* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p.14.
[100] See, for example, the analysis of Davenant and Dryden's *The Tempest* in George R. Guffey, 'Politics, Weather and Contemporary Reception of the Dryden-Davenant *Tempest*', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700*, 8 (1984) (1–8).
[101] Susan J. Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) p.19.

Basilio who imprisons his son, whereas in *The Young King* it is a widowed, unnamed, Queen. Why Behn changed the gender of the royal parent is intriguing. On the one hand, it could have been a way of balancing an otherwise male-dominated cast of characters: *La vida es sueño* only has two female characters, Rosaura and Stella. In addition to the Queen, Behn also added another three female characters, two small ones in the shepherdess Lyces and the lady-in-waiting Semiris, and the major part of a princess, Cleomena.[102] However, a deceased king and fatherless court is also more in keeping with Restoration tropes of departed kings and their struggling sons. Behn demonstrates how the loss of a patriarch creates an unstable power vacuum, which is then filled with the corrupting force of superstition, an insidious authority Lucretius emphatically deplores in *De Rerum Natura.* Raised in this turmoil, her future king has become a stranger to the community he hopes to govern, tainted by a tyrannous disposition and sexual profligacy. The effect is directly to confront audiences with their past and current, contemporary fears about the state of the English monarchy. *The Young King* reflects and works through the difficulty royalist dramatists had in reconciling their general support for the monarchy with their criticisms of it. The celebratory trope of a restored prince in *The Young King* is therefore complicated by Behn's portrayal of a future king who, as this chapter will explore, exhibits some of the problematic characteristics of both Charles I and Charles II.

'Gross Superstitious Sway': Dispossession and Isolation in *The Young King*

In *The Young King*, the loss of a father and king acts as a catalyst to Behn's characterisation of the prince's tyranny and rapacity. In the power vacuum created by the death of a king, superstition erodes the already destabilised familial and political structures and the prince's place within them. Orsames is imprisoned because of his mother's superstitious belief he will grow up to be a tyrannical king. This question of what agency the Queen played in this event is one of the key

[102] Behn might have revised the play with specific actresses in mind for her newly-created cast of female characters. However, if she was working on *The Young King* while out of England then this might have been less of a consideration.

differences between Behn's version and her Spanish source. In *La vida es sueño*, the prophecy was divined by the King himself:

> Recurring to the sciences
> For guidance, we divined dire plans
> For Segismundo. We learned our heir
> Would be the most rebellious man
> The world could ever know, the cruellest prince
> And even most ungodly king
> Whose reckless rule would leave the realm
> Divided and in open rift,
> A fractious School for Treachery
> And roiled Academy of Vice.[103]

Racz's translation uses the royal 'we' in Basilio's speech. In the Spanish text, the King refers to himself throughout this speech using the first-person singular.[104] Basilio acted alone in deciding Segismundo's fortune. His is a hubris of excessive pride in his ability to divine the fates of others, and an arrogant belief in his prerogative to subvert them. Basilio oversteps his kingly right, but Behn's Queen is the opposite. The prophecy stating Orsames would grow up to become a tyrant came from an unnamed oracle. In listening to that oracle, she allowed it to exercise a disproportionate influence over her own and her son's lives. Imprisoning Orsames on their advice, she surrendered, rather than exerted, her royal privilege.

Looking more closely at the dialogue surrounding the relationship between the Queen and the oracle, we can draw more parallels between Behn's depiction of Orsames's incarceration and Lucretius's extended reference to Iphigeneia's sacrifice at Aulis in Book I of *De Rerum Natura* than

[103] Calderón, I.6.700–717.
[104] Here, and elsewhere, I am greatly indebted to Dr Jules Whicker for his advice and guidance on translation and meaning in *La vida es sueño*.

we can to King Basilio. Both the Queen and Agamemnon serve as a searing criticism of an external, oracular authority's influence on politics. Both writers portray a royal parent who sacrifices his or her child's wellbeing on the dictates of artificial prophetic authority, illustrating how wrongfully sovereign agency is crushed by the burden of religion: 'sometimes human life dejected lay / On earth, under gross superstitious sway'.[105] Lucretius uses an extended emotive reference to Iphigenia's sacrifice to demonstrate 'Religion itself, oft times / Hath perpetuated foul and bloody crimes'.[106] We can compare Lucretius's parable to the dispossession of Orsames in *The Young King*. Both royal children have been betrayed by their parents, their lives forfeited because, 'To so much ill could foolish Zeal persuade'.[107] Echoing Lucretius's condemnation of Agamemnon, Behn's Pimante and Vallentio bemoan the 'superstitious Queen' and those 'Who did conspire 'gainst [Orsames] in their Oracles'.[108] In *The Young King* doomsayer-prophets, like Agamemnon's priests, have succeeded in infiltrating and influencing the country's politics, altering the line of succession. Orsames's mother argues at the end of the play 'You know 'twas not the Tyrant in *my* nature / That from his infancie has kept him ignorant / Of what he was – but the Decrees of Heaven' and she 'now repents her superstitious errour'.[109] The Queen's evasion of personal culpability is reminiscent of Lucidor's from Orrery's *The Generall*, who excuses his seeming disloyalty with, 'Yet, I confesse, I cannot butt designe / To show my failings are fates sins, nott mine'.[110] In Behn we are told this kind of 'fate' has been articulated by an actual person, the oracle. The audience never meets this oracle, although its presence is certainly felt. Similarly, the priests only attend Agamemnon at the actual execution,

[105] Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.17.
It is important to note here that Evelyn is cautiously stylistic in his translation, or rather, his interpretation, of these lines. What Evelyn translates as 'superstitious' is '*Religione*' in the original Latin. Melville's modern translation is, 'When human life lay foul for all to see / Upon the earth, crushed by the burden of religion' (I.62–3). As Cottegnies says, 'Evelyn obviously did not misunderstand the Latin text, but in many instances he tried to mitigate the explicitness of some of the most heterodox arguments by toning down the text' (in 'Michel de Marolles's 1650 French Translation of Lucretius', p.186).
[106] Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.19.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Behn, *YK*, I. 1. 70 and 44.
[109] Behn, *YK*, II. 4. 24–6 and V. 4. 224. [Emphasis added].
[110] Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, *The Generall* in William Smith Clark (ed) *The Dramatic Works of Roger Boyle Early of Orrery* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1937) [Available online: Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1994).

standing by him at the altar with concealed knives.[111] There is therefore a suggestion in both Behn and Lucretius that the ultimate culpability lies in the parents' inability to reason above their superstition and gullibility and their reliance on the political advice of others. Their sovereignty has been compromised by their susceptibility to prophetic authority. The Queen's gullibility is contrasted with Cleomena's sense of control and independence; she dismisses the oracle and their co-conspirators, and supplants their interpretation of the prophecy with her own:

> I will expound that Oracle
> Which Priests unriddling make more intricate:
> They said that he should reign, and so he did,
> Which lasted not above a pair of hours;
> But I my self will be his Oracle now,
> And speak his kinder fate,
> And I will have no other Priest but thee,
> Who shall unfold the mystery in plain terms.[112]

Thus, Cleomena expunges the previous oracular authority, claiming it has already been fulfilled by Orsames's brief and unsuccessful reign in Act III. She then substitutes it with another kind of prophecy based on her own authority, that she and Vallentio will reinstate her brother for a second reign. Her conscious decision to reinterpret the prophecy strips the priests of their political agency and re-establishes the royal family's control of the political hierarchy, at the head of which she plans to place Orsames.

In *De Rerum Natura* and *The Young King*, Agamemnon's and the Queen's betrayals of their children are motivated by the thought of public good. By contrast, in *La vida es sueño*, when King Basilio confesses to the court, he claims he has hidden his son until now because Segismundo 'would be the most rebellious man / The world could ever know, the cruellest prince / And even most ungodly king'.[113] This bears obvious parallels to the Queen's decision to imprison Orsames on the

[111] Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.19.
[112] Behn, *YK*, IV. 5. 95–102.
[113] Calderón, I. 6. 711–3.

advice he would be 'fierce and bloudy, a Ravisher, a Tyrant o're his People; his Reign but short, and so unfit for Reign'.[114] Basilio claims he acted to 'To free [Poland] from the heinous plight / Of serving tyrant kings'.[115] However, Calderón goes on to suggest the King also has more self-interested motivations: 'We even saw [Segismundo] set his heels / Upon us as we lay beneath […] / The silver hairs that grace this crown / Were but a carpet for his steps'.[116] Amongst the many predictions regarding Segismundo's brutality, this last point, subtly, holds an important sway for Basilio. When Segismundo is first released from prison and told the truth of his existence, he is (understandably) furious with his father. The last threat he makes in this trial run of his tyranny is aimed at Basilio:

> Nothing you could say
> Would force me to respect that hoary gray
> And all its vile deceit.
> I'll see it someday, too, beneath my feet,
> Which may at last avenge
> My stolen life and bring me sweet revenge.[117]

This, rather than Segismundo tossing servants into the sea and his general violence, is what finally prompts Basilio to bring his experiment to a close, 'Before you see these things, / You'll sleep again'.[118] When the soldiers free Segismundo from prison, they also interpret Basilio's actions as purely self-motivated:

> Your father Basilio, our great king,
> Has lived in terror of the skies
> Fulfilling their dread prophecy
> That presaged you would see him lie

[114] Behn, *YK*, I. 1. 47–8.
[115] Calderón, I. 6. 764–5.
[116] Calderón, I. 6. 720–5.
[117] Ibid., II. 10. 1714–9.
[118] Ibid., II. 10. 1720–1.

Subdued beneath your feet.[119]

Despite Basilio's grand declarations about saving Poland from a tyrant, Calderón's emphasis on the personal threat Segismundo poses to the King's own life and autocratic reign takes a certain precedence in understanding Basilio's motivations. Basilio acts to save his own neck, quite literally, not just Poland. Thus, father and son are only reconciled with Basilio's ultimate surrender: 'Come, tread upon our neck and trounce / Our crown'.[120] Segismundo nobly declines the invitation.

By contrast, Behn excises a sense of personal, political motivations in the Queen's decision to imprison Orsames. There is nothing in *The Young King* to suggest the Queen imprisoned Orsames for any reason other than a gullible belief her son would be a dangerous monarch. By reimagining the transgressive parent as a queen, rather than a king, Behn also mitigates the sense of Oedipal parent-child rivalry for the throne and therefore the selfish motivations that underlie Basilio's actions. The Queen's naivety is more akin to that of Lucretius's Agamemnon; he is also portrayed as powerless against the demands of the priests. Despite the fact he was a 'King, first [Iphigenia] a father made […] / By her sad Sire's consent, [she] impurely dies'.[121] Lucretius lays the blame for the slaughter upon Agamemnon's powerlessness in the face of religious imperatives: 'To so much ill could foolish Zeal persuade'.[122] In these three separate texts, the monarchs' role in their private, familial lives is brought into conflict with their public, political responsibilities; however, Behn seems more inspired by the figure of Agamemnon's sorrowful helplessness in the face of the dictates of priests, than by King Basilio's absolutism and self-interest. Like Lucretius, Behn places accountability squarely with the oracle.

In the myth of Agamemnon, and Calderón and Behn's plays, the parents' actions lead to a breakdown of the family unit. Basilio's actions are tainted by self-interest and the irony that in his proclaimed attempt to prohibit tyranny he was exercising his own autocracy. In Lucretius and Behn,

[119] Ibid., II. 2. 2280–4.
[120] Calderón, II. 14. 3150–1.
[121] Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.19.
[122] Ibid., p.19.

the question of 'public good' is a trickier notion to quantify as the motivations of Agamemnon and the Queen are less self-interested, to the point they act almost without agency. In Lucretius and Behn, the solution to what is in the public good hinges more transparently on a belief that familial and public good are interdependent entities. For those who lived through, and in the aftermath of, the English Civil Wars, this notion had a great political relevance. As Susan Staves explains, 'Because of the radical challenges during the Civil Wars to hierarchies both political and domestic, the Restoration Church of England often stressed that proper observances of hierarchy in the family and in the state were interdependent'.[123] Lucretius's idealised society fostered by the symbiotic unity of private relationships and public responsibility therefore appealed to royalist writers. His atomism leads to a belief in a universal kinship in which, with the 'strongest tye' all of creation 'closely joyn the Earth, the Air, and Sky'.[124] Interestingly, Lucretius frequently uses the metaphor of parenthood in the text to illustrate this point. As Stalling explains, *De Rerum Natura* is filled with images of parenthood, from nature's Father Sky and Mother Earth, to Mars and Venus's union, to the formation of society through marriage whereby 'numerous Cities flourish'.[125] If we follow this through, the principle of universal kinship suggests that nothing good that occurs in the private, family unit can have a negative impact on the wider, public community; if one acts correctly, they should not be at odds with each other but in unison. Although this philosophy is not explicit in Behn's play, she disdains abusing and forcing private relationships for political gain. When General Honorius seeks to marry his daughter, Olympia, to the legendary soldier Clemanthis, the Queen (hypocritically) questions his designs:

> Is't possible, my Brother, you can have
> So great a passion for the publick good?
> As willing to sacrifice your Child to its repose,

[123] Susan Staves, 'Behn, women, and society' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) pp.12–28 (p.13).
[124] Creech, *Titus Lucretius Carus*, p.157.
[125] Stalling (ed.) *The Nature of Things*, p.xiv; and Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.29.

And make her Arms the soft and easie Chains
To link this gallant stranger to our interest?[126]

These lines are filled with ironic condemnation; the imagery of imprisonment echoes the Queen's own literal incarceration of Orsames and the reference to sacrificing a child suggests that the dislocation of what would constitute private happiness from the public good. Thus, both Lucretius and Behn portray how a superstitious religion precipitates a breakdown in familial relationships and dismiss the idea that fracturing private bonds is ever beneficial to the public good.

The pivotal role of oracles, priests and predictions in *The Young King* is unique within Behn's dramatic output; none of her other plays hinge on ideas of prophecy. However, it is evidence of what was to become a long-standing interest in criticising prophetic authority's interference in politcs. In 1688 she apparently translated Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's *The History of Oracles on Cheats of the Pagan Priests*.[127] In the second discourse of this work, Fontenelle confuted the orthodox claims that oracular authority ceased altogether with the advent of Christianity and that priestcraft continued to pervade the faith. Champion explains that Fontenelle's work 'had distinctly subversive implications for the nature of the Christian religion'.[128] For example, his argument that the founding Church's authority was tainted by priestly artifice in order to control the population is preceded by the insidious suggestion, 'if the Priests could so dextrously put the cheat upon people during the space of four hundred years, why could they not continue to do it longer?'[129] The discourse ends with a damning condemnation of false prophecies and those that make them, 'Thus the Wickedness of the Priests, their Insolence and several Chances that had discovered their Cheats,

[126] Behn, *YK*, II. 4. 1–5.
[127] Aphra Behn, *The History of Oracles, and the Cheats of Pagan Priests written in Latin by Dr. Van-Dale; made English by Mrs Behn* (London: Printed by W.O. for Sam. Briscoe, at the Blackamoors-head, in Bow-street, Covent Garden, 1699). Behn's authorship is questionable, but it is included in Mary Ann O'Donnell's *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Surrey and Vermont: Ashgate, 1986 repr. 2004) pp.213–215.
[128] J. A. I. Champion *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: the Church of England and its Enemies, 1660–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) p.159.
[129] Behn, *The History of Oracles*, p.155.

and the Obscurity, Uncertainty and Falseness of their Answers'.[130] Hughes cites Behn's apparent translation as an example of the 'suggestive link between the theatre and culture of free thought' that 'mock[s] paganism in ways which implicitly reflected upon Christianity'.[131] It is interesting that *The Young King* is set in a pagan society and it is possible Behn is mitigating her scorn of institutionalised religion by relocating the action to the classical past. By contrast, *La vida es sueño* is set in a relatively contemporary-sounding Poland; Astolf is the Duke of Moscow (the duchy of Moscow was established in the fourteenth century), and the men wield pistols rather than swords. Behn's decision to set *The Young King* in the classical Kingdom of Dacia might also have been another way to link the action of the play to the writer Lucretius.

It is possible Behn's hostile attitude towards false prophecy in *The Young King* and its effect on politics could have been derived from the events of the Interregnum and the early years of Charles II's reign. Prophetic writing pervaded political discourse throughout the Early Modern period. In the seventeenth century, belief in the predictive authority of divine prophecy and astrology was prevalent. As Tim Thornton has shown, this divine prophecy in Protestant theology had an apocalyptic and millennial nature.[132] The Interregnum saw the rise of several religious sects, like the Fifth Monarchists, for whom Bernard Capp explains 'millenarianism… was the *raison d'être*'.[133] Taking their name from a prophecy in the Book of Daniel, they believed the four ancient monarchies (Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian and Roman) had been and gone, and the fifth monarchy, the Kingdom of Christ, was imminent. To pave the way for this Parousia, the old order had to be overthrown. The execution of Charles I was viewed as a vital step in the implementation of this plan, and Fifth Monarchists were dominant amongst the signatories of the King's death warrant.

[130] Ibid., pp.226–267.
[131] Derek Hughes, *English Drama, 1660–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) p.8.
[132] Tim Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006).
[133] Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber, 1972), p.14.

Because of this, prophetic thought became associated in the Restoration with radical, political overthrow. In October 1660, Fifth Monarchists Major-General Thomas Harrison, John Jones Maesygarnedd and John Carew were amongst the first regicides to be executed. The continued threat the Fifth Monarchists posed to the newly-established government was realised in Venner's Rising on 6th January 1661, when fifty members of the organisation attempted to seize London to make way for Jesus's second coming. The movement itself was relatively small, its actual numbers still debated.[134] However, the impact Venner's Rebellion had on public consciousness is evident in its reporting at the time. One writer recounted the events in an anonymous pamphlet entitled, *A true discovery of a bloody plot contrived by the phanaticks, against the proceedings of the city of London.*[135] The pamphlet explains that a 'dangerous group… apparently released letters of a strange prophecy of the fall of Europe and Christianity across England'.[136] Another tract reflected similar fear *The Traytors Unvailed, or A Brief and true account of that horrid and bloody designe intended by those Rebellious People, known by the names of Anabaptists and Fifth Monarchy*.[137] Despite the paucity of numbers, the Fifth Monarchist involvement in Charles I's execution and Venner's Rebellion, followed by repressive legislation passed by the Cavalier Parliament to suppress non-conformist groups, highlights a schism between the Crown's political agency and prophetic sects.

It should be noted, that for all Behn's condemnation of prophetic authority's influence on politics, she was not above engaging in visionary bombast herself when the need suited her. As Kimbery Latta writes, 'Behn clearly and consciously drew upon a long-standing tradition in English

[134] Barry H. Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions: The Questions of Orthodoxy Regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys (c.1599–1691)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001) p.244.
[135] Anonymous, *A true discovery of a bloody plot contrived by phanaticks, against the proceedings of the city of London, in order to the coronation of the high and mighty King, Charles the Second, with the manner how it should have been acted on Sunday last, the number taken who should have been actors, and a true account of the late insurrections of the phanaticks in Newgate* (London: Printed for John Jones, 1661).
[136] Ibid., p.2
[137] Anonymous, *The traytors unvailed, or a brief account of that horrid and bloody designe intended by those rebellious people, known by the names of Anabaptists and Fifth Monarchy being upon Sunday the 14th. of April 1661. in Newgate on purpose to oppose his Majesties person and laws* (Printed in the Year 1661).

letters of associating poets with prophets'.[138] In Behn's *Pindarick on the Death of Our Late Sovereign, With an Ancient Prophecy on His Present Majesty*, the speaker grieves the loss of the late Charles II,

> when loe a Voice arriv'd,
> Welcom as that which did the Crowd surprise,
> When the Dead Lazarus from the Tomb reviv'd,
> And saw a Pitying God attend his rise!
> *Our Sovereign lives!* it cry'd! *rise and Adore!*
> *Our Sovereign lives! Heaven adds one Wonder more,*
> *To the Miraculous History of his Num'rous store*.[139]

In a poem filled with references to resurrection, the monarchy is resuscitated after Charles II's death in the form of James Stuart. James, 'full of Wisdom and the Pow'r of God' is compared to Joshua, who 'by Heaven and Nature' succeeded Moses.[140] James therefore comes to his ailing brother's deathbed: 'The Royal Prophet now before [Charles] stood: / On whom His Hands the Dying Monarch laid'.[141] Behn draws on biblical allusions to portray a smooth succession from Charles to his brother. Thus, whilst decrying its use, Behn appreciated the potent sway of portentous words for political expediency and was not above using them herself later in life, and in an atmosphere of crisis, to suit and propagate her own allegiances.

However, written twenty years before Charles II's demise in the more immediate aftermath of zealous-driven regicide and overthrow, *The Young King* features a prophecy that, like the beliefs of Fifth Monarchists, demands the overthrow of a king. Its threat is realised because prophetic influence has insidiously infiltrated the royal family itself. In any revisions Behn might have made to

[138] Kimberly Latta, 'Aphra Behn and the Roundheads', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 4 (2004) pp.1–36 (p.1).
[139] Aphra Behn, 'A Pindarick on the Death of Our Late Sovereign, With an Ancient Prophecy on His Present Majesty', ed. by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra* Behn, 1, (London: William Pickering, 1992) pp.190–195 (ll.35–41)
[140] Ibid, ll. 78–9.
[141] Ibid., ll.80–1.

the play after returning from Surinam, she may have been influenced by Dryden's 1665 *The Indian Emperor*, the play for which she she reportedly provided South American feathers as a prop.[142] In Dryden's play, the hero brands priests who use their priestcraft to influence politics 'Enemies of Crowns… [who] sawcily, teach Monarchs to obey, / And the wide World in narrow Cloysters sway; / Set up by Kings as humble aids of power, / You that which bred you, Viper-like devour'.[143] Similarly, Behn also criticises prophetic authority. She does so in ways that seem inspired by Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* and reflect contemporary fears of the threat it posed to the royal succession. She shows how it is used to isolate Orsames from familial and societal structure, with adverse consequences, both for Orsames and the country.

'So Great the Power Religion Had for Evil': Orsames's Religious Education

So far, I have examined how prophetic authority is used in *The Young King* to remove Orsames from both the interdependent familial and political structures. Her superstitious susceptibility strips the Queen of her own, her son's and, therefore, the Crown's political authority. Behn was certainly not unusual or radical in her condemnation of prophetic authority's influence on politics, as the pamphlets reporting the Fifth Monarchists' activity shows. However, her conservative condemnation of prophecy and meddling priests acts as a springboard for a far more subversive attack on religious teachings themselves. In *The Young King*, the political voice is not only supplanted by the voice of religion, it is also manipulated and moulded by it into tyranny. In Orsames's isolation, he is raised with a religious education which does not appear to have been drawn from Calderón. In both *La vida es sueño* and *The Young King*, the captive princes are watched over by a minder (named Clotaldo and Geron, respectively). Superficially, they serve a similar role in the princes' upbringings. Clotaldo 'tutored him in sciences / And catechized him in beliefs / Of Christian faith', and Geron 'teaches him a deal of Awe and Reverence to the Gods; and tells him that his natural Reason's a

[142] Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. by Paul Salzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p.4.
[143] John Dryden, *The Indian Emperor*; *or, The Conquest of Mexico. A tragedy* (Menston, Scholar Press, 1971) (IX. l. 102).

sin'.[144] However, whereas Calderón does not explore this fleeting mention of a Christian element to Segismundo's education, Behn seems fascinated by it, and makes much more explicit use of its influence on Orsames. Vengeful, trickster gods are a staple recourse in Geron's attempts to control Orsames. After Orsames meets Urania, Geron pretends the encounter never happened: 'What Airy Vision has possess'd your fancy? / For such the Gods sometimes afflict men with'.[145] When the prince wakes from his test of kingship and demands an explanation, Geron attempts to explain it away with a warning 'not […] to prie into the hidden secrets of the Gods'.[146] Clotaldo does not resort to such tactics, there is no attempt to lie to Segismundo about Rosaura's sudden appearance in the prison, or explain away Segismundo's 'dream' of kingship – the prince is happy simply to accept it was a dream. By contrast, Geron uses false, religious explanations to chastise and control Orsames, and has taught the prince to fear the wrath of rancorous deities. As Orsames explains, Geron 'hast hitherto so frighted me / With thoughts of Death, by stories which thou tell'st / Of future punishments i'th' other world'.[147] In *De Rerum Natura* Lucretius stresses the psychological harm institutional religion has on the individual, and Behn's characterisation of Orsames's isolation seems drawn from his philosophy, rather than Calderón's. Lucretius believed institutional religion is used as a form of psychological as well as political control:

> Thy self (so long) with Poets frightful lies
> O'rcome, wilt our opinions soon despise.
> How many dreams yet could I to thee fain
> Sufficient to confound the very Brain,
> And all the enjoyments with vain fear offend;
> And well; for did men think their woes had end,
> After a thought perhaps resist they might

[144] Calderón, I. 6. 756–758; Behn, *YK*, I. 1. 56–58.
[145] Behn, *YK*, II. 1. 199–200.
[146] Ibid., IV. 3. 87.
[147] Ibid., IV. 3. 4–6.

Poetique Threats, and Superstitious fright.

But now in vain alas! No help remains

Since after death they dread eternal pains […][148]

Lucretius acts as a gloss on Behn's lines about visions and frightening thoughts of death, the above passage acutely summarising how Orsames suffers at the hands of his minder, Geron.

Lucretius decries religion's being used to terrify mankind and control society through fear of divine reprisal and the promise of either a good or bad afterlife. For Lucretius, who did not believe in the afterlife, this is a cruel manipulation, causing unnecessary suffering akin to nightmares. Orsames can be said to lead a nightmarish existence; the majority of his scenes are set in a claustrophobic prison, a 'gloomy place [which] possesses all that enter it'.[149] Geron tells him that his meeting with Urania and his brief reign as king are 'visions' sent from the gods to punish him for his lack of obedience. Geron uses religion to confuse Orsames by distorting reality and manipulating what the prince believes to be real and what is fake. By contrast, Calderón does not portray the distortion of reality as such a negative thing. In fact, dreams and the inability to distinguish reality from fantasy are an essential part of Segismundo's reformation:

Then let's suppress

The fury of our savage state,

The vile ambition and the hate,

So when we dream we won't transgress.[150]

However, Behn portrays Geron's manipulation and education as abusive and isolating. Anita Pacheco argues that Orsames's psychological suffering is an attack on 'Christianity, particularly those branches of it that stress human sinfulness and disparage as pride any claims for the power of

[148] Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.19. Once again, here Evelyn underplays the role of religion suggested by the original Latin. Melville translates the lines as 'You, yourself, overcome at times by words / Of terror from the priests' might one day 'defy the priests and their dark religion' (ll.102–109)
[149] Behn, *YK*, II. 1. 95.
[150] Calderón, 2. 19. 2148–51.

human reason. Orsames, then, is the victim of an exclusively Christian education'.[151] Jonathan Williams writes that for the majority of seventeenth-century writers *De Rerum Natura* 'left no place for God or organised religion'.[152] On the other hand, Sarah Ellenzweig posits that Restoration freethinkers did find a place for God within society, and that they 'hold up deference to traditional religious laws as an expedient fundamental to the stability of customary social and political forms' [153] If Behn did believe in religion's political usefulness, as Ellenzweig describes, she does not dramatise it as such in *The Young King*, perhaps because, for religion to be politically expedient, it needs to be wielded by political, rather than religious power, and *The Young King* is all about what happens when those in political power are as vulnerable to religion's control as any civilian might be. Instead, Behn seems more preoccupied in *The Young King* by the rejection of religion as transcendental truth and, particularly, in the role and nature of the Gods in human life and morality. It is revealing that one of Rochester's two fragmentary translations of *De Rerum Natura* is about the indifferent relationship between divinity and morality:

> The Gods, by right of Nature, must possess
>
> An Everlasting Age, of perfect Peace;
>
> Far off remov'd from us, and our Affairs;
>
> Neither approach'd by Dangers, or by Cares:
>
> Rich in themselves, to whom we cannot add:
>
> Not pleas'd by Good Deeds; nor provok'd by Bad.[154]

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[151] Anita Pacheco, '"Where Lies this Power Divine?"', p.318.

[152] Jonathan C. Williams, 'Happy Violence: Bentley, Lucretius and the Philosophy of Freethinking', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700*, 38:1 (2014), 61–80 (p.62).

[153] Sarah Ellenzweig, *Fringes of Belief: English Literature, Ancient Heresy, and the Politics of Freethinking 1660–1760* (Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 2008) p.2.

[154] Rochester, 'Translation of Lucretius*, De Rerum Natura*, ii. 646-52', ed. by Harold Love, *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of* Rochester, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p.109; In Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.17: 'Gods in their nature of themselves subsist / 'Tis certain, nor may ought their peace molest / For ever, unconcern'd with our affairs / And far remote, void of grief or cares, / Need not our service, swim in full content, / Nor our good works accept, nor bad resent'. In Creech, *Titus Lucretius Carus*, p.141: 'The Gods must live at ease, not look below, / Free from all medling cares, from hate, and love'.

This passage holds an obvious appeal to the Restoration bad boy, arguing that if gods do exist, they have no regard for morality.

Despite Geron's best efforts to terrify Orsames into submission, the prince's innate superiority and power of reason eventually triumphs over fear. In *De Rerum Natura* the king rises above the rest of social organisation 'at the helm of what is effectively a natural meritocracy: they are the most gifted members of the community, and distribute cattle and lands according to strength and beauty and genius'.[155] Even in his captivity, Behn's young prince exudes a natural and superior nobility. Urania comments when she first meets Orsames that he even '*looks* above the common rate of men'.[156] Orsames is also subconsciously aware of his own intrinsic superiority, and, whilst he struggles with this self-awareness, he cannot reconcile himself to Geron's belief that he is a lowly creature. He spurns his jailer's teachings that all men are low and insignificant to a set of gods above, calling it a 'damn'd resistless thought' which when pushed to its natural conclusion does not adequately explain his own existence.[157] When Geron tells him to appease himself with thoughts of heavenly reward, Orsames scoffs, 'Future bliss! The Dreams of lazy Fools'.[158] This echoes Lucretius's dismissal of the idea of mankind's centrality in the universe as the misunderstanding of 'silly men'.[159] This belief is part of the foundation of Lucretius's opinion, which Rochester was particularly taken by, that mankind is so unimportant that cosmic deities, if they existed, would not concern themselves with their actions.

Orsames's dismissal of divine designs and judgements is indicative of Lucretius's belief in a non-providential universe. Schiesaro explains that Lucretius believed: 'evolution and progress are non-teleological and non-providential [and] historical causation and events are mechanical and unpredictable: they reflect at the human and social level the unpredictable patterns of atomic

[155] Schiesaro, 'Lucretius and Roman politics', p.44.
[156] Behn, *YK*, II. 1. 97.
[157] Ibid., II. 1. 54.
[158] Ibid., II. 1. 58.
[159] Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.77.

aggregation made possible by *clinamen*.'[160] *Clinamen*, derived from the Latin *clīnāre*, to incline, is Lucretius's own term for the erratic movement of atoms. The unpredictability of atomic motions breaks the bonds of fate and, Lucretius argues, allows for freewill.[161] In a universe devoid of fate, the use of prophecy is nullified and thus easily usurped by Cleomena's re-establishment of monarchical prerogative when she liberates her brother from prison. This contrasts with the role of fate and free will in *La vida es sueño*. Fate and stars in *La vida es sueño* are refigured as gods and oracles in *The Young King*. Although both plays explore the concept of self-fulfilling prophecies (in that, by raising Segismundo and Orsames in ignorance and isolation, King Basilio and the Queen ensure their sons become exactly what their parents feared they would), the philosophical and political conclusions drawn are very different. King Basilio comes to regret his attempt to manipulate fate and surrenders himself to the inevitability of a 'grand design', against which 'man's initiatives / All come to naught when they presume / To counteract the powers on high'.[162] Segismundo declares that the 'Events you've witnessed have evinced, / What heaven has decreed shall come / To pass is writ in God's own script'. Henceforth, he will curb his impulses and desires because:

> I've learned
> That pleasure is a lovely flame
> The merest breath of air blows out
> So only wafting ash remains –
> Let's look toward the eternal then,
> And seek renown that never dies
> Where joy will not succumb to sleep
> Or splendour ever napping lie![163]

[160] Schiesaro, 'Lucretius and Roman politics', p.43.
[161] Creech, *Titus Lucretius Carus*, pp.42–3
[162] Calderón, III. 13. 3105–3107.
[163] Ibid., III. 10. 2978–2985.

Segismundo's references to the 'eternal' could be, and maybe should be considering the otherwise absence of gods in the play, interpreted as an allusion to a sense of everlasting fame – how he will be remembered as a king. However, strong religious connotations still linger in Segismundo's references to the transience of life versus the future of an eternity, an eternity shaped by the behaviour of our fleeting, dreamlike realities:

> For on this earth, I've come to see
> That all of human happiness
> Must reach an end, just like a dream.
> So in what little time is left,
> I'll seize this opportunity
> To ask forgiveness for our flaws,
> As noble souls like yours are wont
> To pardon others for their faults.[164]

In *La vida es sueño* the potency of prophecy still holds sway; the characters are reconciled to its mysterious workings. Segismundo's reformation, in part, hinges on his appreciation for the blurred distinction between reality and dreams. By contrast, dreams and visions in *The Young King* are part of the manipulative mechanism of institutionalised religion's adverse influence on political, and personal, agency. Cleomena comes to her brother's aid with the dismissal of a prophetic, higher power, turning instead to General Vallentio who will free Orsames from prison: 'I myself will be his Oracle now, / And speak his kinder fate, / And I will have no other Priest but thee'.[165] *La vida es sueño* ends with the submission and reassertion of faith in a sense of self and predetermination, whereas Behn's ending is the complete abandonment of faith in the dictates of the gods and their self-appointed mouthpieces. Fate, stars and God hold a lasting, powerful sway on Calderón's court

[164] Ibid., III. 14. 3305–3319.
[165] Behn, *YK*, IV. 5. 99–101.

of characters, but gods and prophecies do not in *The Young King*. Behn's royal family shed what she portrays as the insidious influence of prophetic authority and religion's false promises to reassume a sense of self-determination and political autonomy. Behn's searing condemnation of the intimidating power wielded by institutionalised religion seems more drawn from Lucretian philosophy than it does from its Spanish source.

In Geron's evocation of vengeful deities, Behn appears to be flirting with the idea prompted by *De Rerum Natura* that maybe there is no such thing as an afterlife. It is too difficult to discern with any certainty exactly what Behn's fundamental beliefs about the nature of the gods or existence of an afterlife were, because any allusions to it in the play are strictly bound up in what she portrays as Geron's manipulative, cruel use of its existence to subjugate Orsames. Relocating the action of the play from a contemporary Poland to the classical Kingdom of Dacia might also have been a cautious move to couch this ambiguous at best, and at worst subversive, attitude within a pagan society, with a plurality of unnamed 'Gods'. In the world of her play, it is far easier to evaluate what she does *not* believe in, than what she does. What we can say, from reading *The Young King*, is that whatever Behn's private beliefs might have been about the natures of God, heaven and hell, *The Young King* is a showcase of the elements of religion she does not believe in: its superstitious aspects and its manipulative potential in subjugating reason. In Behn's re-dramatisation of a captive prince, religion is presented as a form of tyranny which is used first to dispossess and then control the royal prince.

'Is There Any Other Gods but I?': The Portrayal of Tyranny in *The Young King*

Over the course of the plot, Behn reveals that religion is not only a form of tyranny in and of itself, but that its influence breeds tyranny in others. Orsames's powers of intellect are evident, his ability for stubborn, independent thought suggest an underlying fitness to rule. However, this potential is badly damaged by his isolation and crude education. Religion not only supplants political autonomy but can also mould it into a monstrous aspect. Understanding the impact of Orsames's

religious education is a crucial facet to understanding Behn's portrayal of the prince's tyrannous disposition; Behn blames Geron's interpretation of religion and divine power for instilling in Orsames dangerous ideas about the nature of kingly power. This restrictive religious education is filled with nightmarish images of vengeful deities akin to an Old Testament god, rather than the remote, peaceful divinities of Lucretius's imagination. These deities demand unquestioning obedience, force him to suffer an existence of their making and, when he angers them, punish him with further suffering. However, Geron, in his tutelage, fails clearly to distinguish the difference between gods and monarchs, instead telling Orsames that kings are 'as great' as gods and bestowed with the power to create or destroy at will.[166] Therefore, when Orsames is told he is a king, a powerful being, he imitates how Geron has told him gods behave:

> *Orsames*
> ---Gods! what am I?
> ---Or, is there any other Gods but I?
> *Geron*
> Yes, my great Lord---
> But you're a King, a mighty Monarch, Sir.
> *Orsames*
> I understand thee, 'tis some God thou mean'st.[167]

By contrast, when Segismundo awakes in new-found pomp Clotaldo tells him the truth, that he is the heir to Poland's throne and has been kept from it because of fears of the 'cards intemperate fate had dealt'.[168] Segismundo is furious:

> How could you bring this treasonous act
> Against your land, to jail your prince
> And strip him of all honors, since
> No right or reason could retract

[166] Behn, *YK*, III. 1. 6.
[167] Ibid., III. 1. 1–5.
[168] Calderón, II. 3. 1279.

A crown, blood pledged?[169]

Calderón uses Segismundo's speech to raise the question of what right a subject, or even a king, has to subvert the line of succession? In Behn's equivalent scene, her depiction of Orsames's childlike grandiosity allows her to reframe this question within another interrogation about the intertwined nature of gods and kings. *The Young King* asks, what right does a subject, or even a queen, have to subvert the line of succession *if* the heir has such delusions of grandeur? As Pacheco explains, Orsames's vision of the world is divided between omnipotent beings and 'submissive Souls', 'he is supposed to see himself as one of these submissive souls, but of course identifies with the former, which Geron's tutelage has apparently stripped of moral conduct'.[170] That is not to say that Segismundo is not also tyrannical in his violence; he throws a servant from the balcony and attempts to rape Rosaura. However, his aggression towards Clotaldo and Basilio arises from righteous indignation and a desire for calculated vengeance rather than sheer impetuosity. He advances on Clotaldo, pointing out his jailer has 'long betrayed our country's laws […] / For this, the king, the law, and I, / In light of crimes we three condemn, / Now sentence you to die for them / At my own hands'.[171] Orsames's violence, as this chapter goes on to explore, is, by contrast, portrayed as the product of childlike frustration when his carnal desires are denied. In this, Behn portrays Orsames as far less reasonable than his counterpart, and the demands he makes as far more tyrannical by their impulsiveness: an impulsiveness inspired by the education he received that kings are like gods, and gods are capricious, cruel creatures: 'Am I a God, and can be disobey'd? / Remove that Contradictor from my sight, / And let him live no longer'.[172] Fully trusting in his god-like absolutism, Orsames revels in his newfound power, threatening sexual violence to the female characters and death to men who try to stop him. His nurture therefore fulfils the prophecy about his nature, that he shall be 'fierce and bloudy, a Ravisher, a Tyrant o're his People; his Reign but short, and so unfit for Reign'.[173]

[169] Ibid., II. 2. 1300–1304.
[170] Behn, II. 1. 34; Pacheco, '"Where Lies This Power"', p.318.
[171] Calderón, II. 3. 1305–1311.
[172] Behn, *YK*, III. 1. 52–54.
[173] Ibid., I. 1. 47–8.

However, his religious education and belief in the blurred lines between monarchy and godhood are the root cause of Orsames's tyranny.

Behn's portrayal of Orsames's tyrannical disposition strongly deviates from the early Restoration formula for tragicomic drama, as well from as Calderón's original depiction. Clotaldo reports that when he described 'a mighty eagle' to Segismundo, the prince wondered, 'That even from the raucous realm / Of birds a leader must emerge / To claim the fealty he compels! […] I would never willingly / Submit to a mortal's law.'[174] In *The Young King*, Orsames also reflects on what he has been told of Nature:

> This order and this harmony of things,
> Was worthy admiration,
> --- And yet thou sayst all men are like to us,
> Poor, insignificant Philosophers.
> I, to my self could an Idea frame,
> Of man, in much more excellence.
> Had I been Nature, I had varied still,
> And made such different characters of men,
> They should have bow'd and made a God of me.[175]

Although Segismundo's desire for dominion has references to deification, his understanding of hierarchy is formed by comparisons to the natural world, in which one bird is superior to all others. Segismundo frequently compares his lot in life to the natural world he glimpses from his prison walls, lamenting the freedom of birds, beasts, fish and streams and asks, 'Should I enjoy less liberty?'[176] Whereas Segismundo only compares himself to nature, Orsames fantasises about *being* nature: the creator, the worshipped architect of mankind. Behn's prince is emphatically more tyrannical than his Spanish counterpart. In this, he makes for an unlikely hero of early Restoration

[174] Calderón, II. 1. 1036–1063.
[175] Behn, *YK*, II. 1. 16–24.
[176] Calderón, I. 2. 123–162.

tragicomedy. Typically, dispossessed princes in early Restoration dramas are noble, deserving characters, prevented from ruling by unjust, usurping forces, such as Melizer of Orrery's *The Generall*, 'Whose virtues are soe great, his right soe good, / Hee should bee King by choice as well as bloud'.[177] Todd cites Behn's unusual depiction of kingship as evidence that *The Young King* was written before she returned from Surinam, because 'there is […] more criticism of aristocracy and privilege than she would allow herself later'.[178] Far from the scrutiny of literary London Behn might have felt at liberty to explore a controversial portrayal of kingship than those of her contemporaries. Of course, she could also have explained Orsames's problematic tyrannies by pointing out she was working from a source text. Questions remain though: what was it about Calderón's vengeful, violent prince that might have appealed to Behn? Why did she choose then to exacerbate this proto-monarch's flaws? How can we reconcile this portrayal of tyranny with Behn's renowned royalist sympathies?

The answer might, in part, lie in the plot's depiction of a short-lived, unsuccessful and tyrannous reign contrasted with the second, successful restoration of a king fit to rule at the end of the play. The Orsames in Act III and the one in Act V exhibit two very different styles of kingship. In this, he could be said to embody the memory of Charles I's thwarted rule, current concerns over Charles II's current reign, but also the hopes for its future. The failed reign of Charles I cast an ominous pall over early Restoration drama, and royalist writers had to navigate between the recent memory of the abject failure of monarchical power despite its illusions of martyrdom, and Charles II's moral failings. As Tim Harris explains, Charles II 'could not live up to his image of 1660 – majestic and semi-divine monarch; in reality he proved to be a rather debauched, worldly man, preoccupied with venereal delights'.[179] Orsames's absolutism in Act III might have recalled the accusations of

[177] Orrery, *The Generall*, III. 2. 188–189.
[178] Todd, *Secret Life*, pp.59–60.
[179] Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*: *Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), p.94.

autocracy associated with Charles I. His uncontrollable lust might have drawn parallels with Charles II. In this, Orsames embodies a hyperbolised version of both kings' failings.

That is not to say Behn blames Charles I as the architect of his own misfortune, since with Orsames's behaviour in Act III Behn's criticism is levelled at Geron's faulty religious teachings rather than the prince. As demonstrated, the King Orsames of Act III is a product of his education. His innocent susceptibility is emphasised throughout the play; he has been entirely dependent on Geron's teachings, 'but now you said / I was a King, a mighty God on Earth, / And by that Power I may do anything'.[180] In these lines, Behn stresses that Orsames's conflation of monarchy and divinity is derived from Geron's tutelage, not simply impulsive self-aggrandisement. Geron's instruction reflects the theory of the divine right of kings, and Behn's criticism seems to target that royalist ideology rather than the king himself. Pacheco writes that Behn 'seeks to expose the dangers inherent in a conception of kingship that draws facile equivalences between monarchs and a Christian god invested with omnipotence and infallibility'. [181] Behn's portrayal of tyranny is less demonstrative of any *current* anxieties about the nature of monarchy, and more demonstrative of her hostility to a religious education which creates poorly-behaved monarchs. *The Young King* serves as a warning that without good governance, as recent history had proved, even a rightful king can be toppled. Rachel Bushnell writes that 'it is a commonplace of the literary criticism of the Renaissance that by offering a prince the mirror of tyranny, tragedy persuades him to rule well'.[182] Orsames's poor behaviour emphasises the inherent dangers in believing in religious-political ideology with the zeal of the past. Those that do, like Orsames, are portrayed as unable to reason and therefore unfit to rule. Orsames's tyranny and fanatical belief in his own divinity is a product of a religious radicalism. His short-lived reign of brutality is another demonstration of Behn's argument that

[180] Behn, *YK*, III. 1. 46–48.
[181] Pacheco, '"Where Lies this Power"', p.320.
[182] Rachel W. Bushnell, *Tragedy of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990) p.1.

religious radicalism should not be tolerated: it has no place in deciding political succession, shaping education or governance.

'Conquered by Love': The Stabilising Effect of Marriage in *The Young King* and *De Rerum Natura*

Because of Orsames's belief in his god-like authority, and his uncontrollable sexual impulses, he is judged unfit to rule and dispossessed for a second time. Before he can be restored properly, he must overcome both. He receives a second chance, as the English monarchy had in 1660. His sister Cleomena and Colonel Vallentio plot to free him, Cleomena declaring,

> I'll have this Nation happy in a Prince;
> A Prince they long in silence have bemoan'd,
> Which every slight occasion breaks out loud,
> And soon will raise them up to a Rebellion.[183]

This portrayal of a country pining for a prince can be interpreted as a romanticised version of the 1660 Restoration. The silence of Dacia's oppressed people in these lines contains echoes of Dryden's 'Astraea Redux', which lamented the absence of Charles II, 'Ours, a World divided from the rest, / A dreadful Quiet felt'.[184] Vallentio, like General Monck, leads an army to free Orsames from prison. The king he restores is now devoid of the tyrannical arrogance which blighted his rule in Act III. As one curious citizen observes upon seeing a king close up for the first time, 'Good lack a day, 'tis as a man may say – 'tis just such another body as one of us, only he looks a little more terrably'.[185] Orsames has indeed accepted that his body is just 'as one of us', he swears he is now 'enlightened' and will 'follow all the Dictates of my Reason'.[186] The restored Orsames now fulfils the Lucretian ideal of kingship. In *De Rerum Natura*, kings are not kings because of godly design, but because they are the

[183] Behn, *YK*, IV. 5. 85–88.
[184] John Dryden, *Astraea Redux: A Poem on the Happy Return and Restoration of His Sacred Majesty Charles the Second* (London: Printed by J. M. for Henry Herringman, 1660), p.5 (ll.2–3).
[185] Behn, *YK*, V. 3. 36–37.
[186] Ibid., IV. 3. 71.

best in a meritocratic society. The play ends with Orsames fulfilling the Lucretian kingly duty of rewarding subjects based on 'beauty, strength, or wit', ceremoniously rewarding Vallentio with a wife in reward for his service: [187]

> Come, my *Vallentio,* it shall ne'er be said
> I recompenc'd thy services
> With any thing less grateful than a Woman:
> ---Here, I will chuse for thee---
> And when I know what 'tis I more can do,
> If there be ought beyond this gift, 'tis thine.[188]

Thus, Orsames who once embodied the worst aspects of Charles I and Charles II's reign emerges as an idealised, much-improved version of himself. Behn's presentation of Orsames's restoration is a Lucretian triumph of reason over a tyrannical reign of religious superstition. Without the debilitating weights of self-deification and promiscuity, the monarchy is secured, 'happy in a Prince'.

His ability to reason past his religious education, and control his promiscuity are important elements in Orsames's reformation and restoration. Orsames's restrictive religious education allows no room for reason but Behn presents it as so potent a force it creeps into his consciousness despite Geron's best attempts to discourage it. At one point Geron is forced to withdraw, saying Orsames 'grows too wise to be impos'd upon, / And I unable to withstand his reason'.[189] Geron's efforts to instil a sense of blind obedience to religious authority in his young charge are thwarted by Orsames's rationality. The importance of reason was a hallmark in freethinking, as Behn wrote in her commendatory poem to Creech's translation of *De Rerum Natura*:

> And Reason over all unfetter'd Plays,
> Wanton and undisturb'd as Summers Breeze
> That gliding Murmurs o're the Trees,

[187] Creech, *Titus Lucretius Carus*, p.174.
[188] Behn, *YK*, V. 4. 260–265.
[189] Ibid., II. 1. 78–79.

And no hard Notion meets, or stops its way;

It Peirces, Conquers, and Compells

As strong as Faiths resistless Oracles,

Faith the Religious Souls content,

Faith the secure Retreat of Routed Augment.[190]

Tomlinson provides an excellent analysis of this passage, discussing how the personification of reason as a 'sovereign human faculty' with an almost sexual potency triumphs over feeble religious faith.[191] Similarly, Orsames's reason also pierces, conquers and compels Geron's attempts to control him. His insistence on reason and logic over Geron's arguments of airy visions and vengeful gods are instrumental in his moral reformation and, therefore, the ultimate resistance against the oracle who would have Orsames barred from the throne for life.

Orsames must also overcome his unbridled sexual impetuousness. His relationship with the women involved in this moral transformation is very different from that of Segismundo in the Spanish text. In *La vida es sueño,* part of Segismundo's reformation rests on his selfless denial of love, or, at least, lust. Throughout the play he expresses a violent desire for Rosaura, who comes to him on the eve of battle to join his cause and avenge herself upon Astolf. At this point, Segismundo is faced with an opportunity:

I hold Rosaura in my power,

Her beauty captivates my soul.

So let me profit from this chance

To let love set aside codes

Of valor, trust and chivalry

[190] Behn, 'To the Unknown Daphnis', sigs d4r.
[191] Tomlinson, '"A Woman's Reason"', p.363.

That she's invoked in her request.[192]

However, he decides not to try to force himself upon her again, considering that although 'pleasure is a lovely flame', it is easily extinguished.[193] At the end of the play, when in his triumph he might have demanded Rosaura for his wife, he denies himself the woman he wants and insists Astolf marry her instead, as the Duke had once promised to do. Segismundo then marries his cousin Stella. There is something dictatorial in these arranged marriages, but it allows Calderón to emphasise Segismundo's complete transformation of character in his willingness to exercise both self-restraint and self-denial. By contrast, Orsames's marriage to a woman he loves marks a vital advance in his suitability for the Crown.

In Behn, as in Lucretius, love is portrayed as a forceful, civilising power. Orsames's feelings for Olympia mark a crucial turning point in his character's development. Unlike that of the other women Orsames encounters, Olympia's mere presence tames the King's temper, in ways that bear striking similarities to Lucretius's glorification of wedded union. Before he meets her, Orsames's tyrannous nature is matched by a forceful sexual aggression. He assaults Urania by '[*Touch[ing] her breasts*]', and '[Snatches]' his own mother, declaring, 'By my great self is another woman, / Which I have burnt with a desire of seeing:/ – Begone, and leave us here alone together'.[194] The incest is more exaggerated than Segismundo's transgressive sexuality in the original Spanish text, but he is similarly sexually-aggressive towards Rosaura, 'But since my suit occasions such alarm, / See what you think of me without the charm! / Leave us, the lot of you, and bolt the door. / See no one enters here'.[195] However, Behn juxtaposes the crudity of her prince's behaviour with the awed reverence with which Orsames meets Olympia, 'may you be approacht with Knees and Prayers?'[196] Love conquers his lust and makes him a supplicant rather than a predator. It forces him to question his

[192] Calderón, III. 10. 2957–62.
[193] Ibid., III. 10. 2978.
[194] Calderón, II. 1. 130 and Behn, *YK*, III. 1. 25–27.
[195] Calderón., II. 7. 1662–1665.
[196] Behn, *YK*, III. 1. 62.

omnipotence, 'Till now I did believe I was some God, / And had my Power and Divinity / Within my will, but by this awful fear / I find thou art the greater Deity'.[197] The effect Olympia has checks his previously unbounded ego. Behn shows how, soothed by thoughts of Olympia, his ability to reason improves, and, inspired by thoughts of Olympia, he later demands Geron tell him the truth about his existence.

> Come, tell not me of Secrets, nor of Gods---
> What is't thou studiest for, more new devices?
> Out with 'em---this sullenness betrays thee;
> And I have been too long impos'd upon.
> I find my self enlightened on the sudden,
> And every thing I see instructs my Reason;
> It has been enslav'd by thee---come, out with it.[198]

Women's stabilising effect on men's fiery dispositions is a recurring theme in *De Rerum Natura*. Love conquering lust is also a cliché of heroic drama; however, given Orsames's unusually rampant behaviour which is so uncharacteristic of the dispossessed princes in other early Restoration tragicomedies, we might still draw parallels to *De Rerum* Natura's philosophy. Lucretius writes at length about the difference between love and lust and the former's necessity for harmony and societal progress. In the poem's opening invocation to Venus, Lucretius claims only the goddess of love can pacify the warring Mars, who:

> On thy fair Bosom resting oft his head
> With lasting wounds of Love is vanquished,
> And bending his round neck which on thee lyes
> With greedy passion feeds his amorous eyes.[199]

[197] Ibid., III. 1. 64–68.
[198] Ibid., IV. 3. 88–94.
[199] Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.15.

Man's capacity for violence is overcome by the tenderness of a woman's love. The soothing effect Venus has on Mars is reflected in Behn's portrayal of Olympia's impact on Orsames, who explains how:

> her wondrous Eyes,
>
> Did all my Power and Thunder too despise:
>
> Her Smiles could calm me, and her Looks were Law;
>
> And when she frown'd, she kept my Soul in awe.[200]

Olympia inspires Orsames's underlying capacity for gentility and gentleness. Because of this, Geron counsels the Queen, 'since [Orsames] can be tam'd by Love and Beauty / You should not doubt but he'll be fit to reign'.[201] The play ends with a tamed Orsames reunited with Olympia, ready to rule. A further marriage between Cleomena and Thersander also ends the war between Dacia and Scythia, demonstrating Lucretius's belief that in the union of male and female may 'Wars [be] clos'd in an everlasting peace'.[202]

Behn's portrayal of the stabilising effect of marriage could reflect the hope that Charles's 1662 marriage to Catherine of Braganza would similarly tame the lustful monarch. From early in his reign, Charles's decadence and the lasciviousness of his court scandalised moralists.[203] His behaviour continued to be scrutinised in literature throughout the period: from Orrery's quiet, but pointed admonishment of the King in *The Generall*, warning him, 'O! wrong not thus the Glory of your name, / Nor to you pleasure sacrifice your fame', to Rochester's notoriously lewd, '[Charles's] sceptre and prick are of a length; / And she may sway the one who plays with th'other' as a condemnation of Charles's relationship with the unpopular Barbara Villiers.[204] Marvell's 1667 'Last Instructions to a

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[200] Behn, *YK*, IV. 3. 56–59.
[201] Ibid., III. 1. 158–59.
[202] Evelyn, *De Rerum Natura*, p.15.
[203] Jeremy W. Webster, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court: Politics, Drama, Sexuality* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) p.173.
[204] Orrery, *The Generall*, IV. 1. 13–4; John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, 'A Satyr on Charles II', ed. by Harold Love, *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp.85–90

Painter', in Owen's words, 'shows Charles awakened in bed by a symbolic female form representing his grieving kingdom. His response is not sympathy or shame but a fumbling amorousness'.[205] However, *The Young King*, written soon after Charles's marriage, in its advocacy of the edifying effect of wedded union, could have been Behn's expression of hope Charles would settle down once he was married. As Samuel Hinde wrote to Catherine upon her marriage, 'May you be like a fruitful Vine by all sides of his house; and may his house be an unvanquishable Fort against all Assailants'.[206] This passage expresses the hope for Catherine's fertility and Britain's prosperity in warfare, both ultimately unfulfilled during Charles's reign. However, in it Catherine is also presented as a stabilising force, who encompasses a domestic dwelling that is impenetrable to 'Assailants', which we might easily interpret as other women. It is hoped that Catherine might bar other women from Charles's 'house' and therefore bed. As we know, and as the first audience and readers of the play in 1679/1683 would be so keenly aware, the marriage did very little to sate Charles's appetite for women.

Conclusion

Working from *La vida es sueño* allowed Behn graphically to portray and condemn tyrannous absolutism. However, whilst *The Young King* is heavily indebted to Calderón, if we look closely at Behn's revisions to the original plot we can see the influence of a religious and political philosophy that does not come from the Spanish source. In her inclusion of oracles, her emphasis on Orsames's religion education and the romanticised ending in which Orsames marries for love, Behn appears to have been far more inspired by Lucretius's censure of religion's influence on politics. Behn uses Lucretian ideals to reframe *La vida es sueño* as an early Restoration drama, in which the typical cycle

[205] Andrew Marvell 'Last Instructions to a Painter' in *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Elizabeth Story Donno (London: Penguin Group, 1996) pp.157–183; Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis*, p.9; See also Barbara Riebling, 'England Deflowered and Unmanned: The Sexual Image of Politics in Marvell's 'Last Instructions'' in *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 35 (1995), 137–157.

[206] Samuel Hinde, *Iter Lvsitanicvm*, or, *The Portuguese Voyage: with what memorable passages interveen'd at the shipping, and in the transporation of her Most Sacred Majesty Katharine, Queen of Britain, from Lisbon to England: exactly observed by him that was eye-witness of the same* (London: 1662, repr. Edinburgh, 1662), p.6.

of dispossession and restoration is blighted by the problem of dealing with a tyrannous ruler. Her exaggerated portrayal of Orsames's despotism corrupts and undermines the celebratory figure of dispossessed-prince-turned-restored-monarch. Behn uses this portrayal of problematic kingship to address the enemies and criticisms of the monarchy that had so affected, and ended, Charles I's rule, and also to highlight the political concerns about Charles II's early reign. In her play, the King's failings are remedied by his natural ability to reason over his religious education and the cliched love of a good woman. In reality, Charles II's extra-marital relationships continued to taint his sovereignty well into the 1670s, when the play was first staged.

The Young King demonstrates that Behn's royalism, although dominant, was not unconditional at her career's outset. She presents the monarchy as vulnerable to the insidious influence of prophetic authority. On the other hand, in Orsames's exercise of a god-like, tyrannous power that threatens to bar him from the throne forever, she also serves a warning to royals and royalists to acknowledge the limitations of kingly power. In this play, Behn portrays the ideology of divine right as a tyrannous and self-sabotaging dogma; *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince* share a similar preoccupation with the struggles divine right creates when it is wielded by unfit rulers or confronted by its detractors.

CHAPTER 2: OF KINGS AND MEN

MEN'S BODIES AND THE BODY POLITIC IN *THE FORC'D MARRIAGE* AND *THE AMOROUS PRINCE*

'I never saw a King all days of my life', exclaims an excited citizen upon glimpsing *The Young King*'s Orsames for the first time, 'Good lack a day, 'tis as a man may say --- 'tis just such another body as one of us, onely he looks a little more terrably'.[207] His reaction could be read as one of surprise, intrigue or merely disappointment. No matter the inflection in its delivery, the sentiment expressed remains the same: kings are simply bodies like any others, and only their deportment and behaviour, rather than some superhuman aspect, distinguishes them above the others. Kings and princes are only men, like the men who serve under them, and in Behn's next plays *The Forc'd Marriage* (1670) and *The Amorous Prince* (1671), she turns to examining how these male bodies interact with one another and how they form and inform the body politic.[208] Where her discussion of kingship in *The Young King* was chiefly concerned with Prince Orsames's personal development of benevolence and reason, in these plays she focuses more keenly on the relationships between royalty and their subjects. She interrogates not only what it means to be a good king, but also a good subject, and how the two relate to each other. Unlike Orsames, the King and his son Phillander in *The Forc'd Marriage*, and Prince Frederick in *The Amorous Prince*, have grown up immersed in the rules and concerns of society. Because of this, homosocial bonds that predate the plays' actions have formed between royalty and their male subjects. Orsames's homosocial interaction is limited to the

[207] Behn, *YK*, V. 3. 35–7.
[208] Both plays are included in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 5, ed. by Janet Todd (London: William Pickering, 1996) pp.1–156.

mentorship of Geron and the feudalistic loyalty of Vallentio, whereas Phillander and Frederick are presented within court circles comprised of their friends and family, where the cast lists are dominantly male. In these circles they have formed friendships with other male characters, predicated on shared experiences of war and familial relationships.

In *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous* Prince, Behn shifts the action from the backdrop of the battlefield to the domesticity of court and city life respectively. In the feudalistic, military world of *The Young King*, there existed a simplified system where armies followed generals and generals follow princes. The role of kings in such times, as Vallentio stated, is as military leaders.[209] However these plays move away from the hierarchy provided by war, beginning in *The Forc'd Marriage* with the additional difficulty of a king who is too old to lead his troops into battle in person. Transported into relative peacetime, the homosocial bond between royalty and male subject is complicated because it now exists within a cross-framework of other relationships. Subjects and princes are now also lovers and brothers, with domestic motivations and duties defined by honour codes. These plays illustrate how royals struggle to assimilate themselves and their authority into this framework, managing their own relationships whilst guiding and not impinging on others'. This struggle originates in the very social nature of men. Behn shows how the hallmarks of manly strength, prized on the battlefield, are transmuted into a potentially destructive force in domestic settings. They no longer have a common enemy to unite against, only the domestic, personal triumphs found in political reward, women and marriage, and the rivalries with each other they discover therein. In dramatising the potential conflict this competitive nature invokes, Behn abandons the portrayal of the idealised, Lucretian kingship embodied by Orsames to explore more challenging ideas of how king and subjects relate to each other as men. At their hearts these plays are less about a prince's self-discovery than the conflict felt by subjects about how they interact with these royal authority figures and vice versa. In these works, she continues to interrogate the nature of kingship, by

[209] Behn, *YK*, I. 1. 39–40.

interrogating the nature of a man in and of himself. This chapter therefore investigates the socio-political conflicts that arise in a dramatic world where men's relationships to one another are the focal point of the drama. It looks at how the understanding of men's physical bodies informs the competitive nature of the male community, and how Behn exposes predicators of manly merit prized within the homosocial community as the cause of great political strife. In worlds in which men jockey for precedence based on their marital or sexual prowess, Behn's plays explore the harm masculine virtue inflicts on politics through her portrayal of authority at odds with the will of its subjects.

Male Bodies

Previous scholarship of these plays has tended to focus on the interplay of gender and power dynamics between the male and female characters; when we consider an overview of their main plot points, we can see why. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, the French King welcomes his returning army home from a decisive victory. One soldier, Alcippus, apparently distinguished himself above all others on the battlefield, and the King is desperate to reward him. Upon Prince Phillander's advice, he promotes Alcippus to the rank of general. However, Alcippus has another request, the hand of Erminia. The King grants Alcippus his wish, and immediately announces the wedding will shortly follow, just as Orsames 'gives' the lady-in-waiting Semiris to Colonel Vallentio to thank him for his service at the end of *The Young King*.[210] Because of this, *The Forc'd Marriage* is in a sense a continuation of *The Young King*, as it begins where Behn's first play ends, with a woman bestowed as a military prize on a favoured male subject. However, in *The Forc'd Marriage* there is a twist to this simple act of reward: Erminia is already in love, with Prince Phillander. The couple have so far managed successfully to hide their relationship from the King and are both heartbroken when Erminia is compelled to marry another. However, Alcippus grows increasingly jealous about Erminia and Phillander's past. Driven to the brink of madness by his envy and frustration, Alcippus tries to

[210] Behn, *YK*, V. 4. 265.

murder Erminia, and for a while it seems he has succeeded. However, helped by the other ladies of the court, Erminia reappears and, in a ghostly disguise, manages to convince Alcippus of the error of his ways. The King finally learns the whole business and the play ends with Phillander and Erminia reunited, and a repentant Alcippus married to his long-time admirer, Princess Galatea.

The Amorous Prince begins with the eponymous Frederick swaggering away from a night's work with Cloris. He boasts to his friend Curtius about how he tricked the country maiden into bed with promises of marriage, which of course he has no intention of fulfilling. However, unbeknownst to the smug young prince, Curtius is actually Cloris's brother. Curtius is dismayed by the prince's attitude but initially hopes to change his mind. However, Frederick is already on the lookout for his next conquest, and lights on Curtius's beloved, Laura. When Curtius bursts in on Frederick attempting to rape Laura, swords are drawn, threats are made, and Curtius banished. Meanwhile, Cloris gives out that Frederick's deception has driven her to suicide and comes to Florence in a man's disguise. A grieving and disenchanted Curtius plots to assassinate Frederick, but his plans are hijacked by the rest of the cast. Frederick repents, Cloris reveals herself and the two are married.

Both plays are therefore greatly concerned with the use and abuse of female bodies. In the first work, a woman is coerced into marrying a man she does not love, who very nearly murders her. In the second play, one woman is tricked into bed and another is almost raped. Considering this, it is unsurprising that the bulk of past analyses of these two plays have therefore tended to focus on the role and treatment of women and Behn's emerging proto-feminism.[211] However, this chapter argues these plays are not only the experimental start of Behn's proto-feminism, but an evolution of her fascination with the monarchy and the interplay between monarchical prerogative and power and the subject's rights and will.

[211] See Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', pp.84–90; Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, pp.39–50; Hayden, *Of Love and War*, pp.55–122.

In *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince* the principal casts of characters are composed of 'brave youths', whose unmarried but marriageable status suggests they are between 18 and 25 years old.[212] The plays' familial and political authority figures, the King and the Duke, respectively, are chiefly absent throughout the drama, the latter never even appearing on stage. Their absence allows Behn to dramatise the political conflicts that occur when young men are thrown together without parental or kingly authority to guide them. Her characterisation of male youth, and the anxieties it raises, seems partly drawn from the Early Modern understanding of the individual male as a composition of his biology. Elizabeth Foyster explains:

> The human body was thought to be made up from four humours – blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile – and it was their relative heat or moistness which determined maleness or femaleness. Men had a propensity to be hot and dry; women cold and moist.[213]

Men's propensity to be hot and dry led to their perceived physical and mental superiority over women. It was believed this humoral constitution granted men a predisposition for self-control and reason, which women's humours tended to lack. As Alexandra Shepard explains, 'this, crucially, was the bodily basis of the link between masculinity and reason which in turn provided the justification for men's claim to social and political precedence in manhood'.[214] This perceived biological advantage coupled with theological theories gave the Early Modern man the right to use his rule over his family as a model for his authority in the state. For example, Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*, written in support of absolutism during the reign of Charles I, strongly advocates a causal link between familial and state patriarchy:

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[212] Behn, *The Forc'd Marriage*, V.5.247. [Hereafter, *FM*]. In the seventeenth-century, a man was expected to marry in his mid-to-late twenties, although maybe younger if he was a member of the social elite. See Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, sex and marriage* (London: Longman, 1999) pp.41–2.

[213] Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, p.28. It is worth noting that Lucretius, whose influence over Behn's *The Young King* formed the focus of the previous chapter, vehemently rejected humoural theory. The suggestion that Behn is working with Galenic theory in these plays therefore might appear contradictory. However, Behn rarely committed to any single philosophical position and, more importantly, *De Rerum Natura* does not offer any useful insight into why young men behave as they do.

[214] Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), p.48.

> For as Adam was lord of his children, so his children under him had a command and power over their own children, but still with subordination to the first parent, who is lord paramount over his children's children to all generations, as being the grandfather of his people […] I see not then how the children of Adam, or of any man else, can be free from subjection to their parents. And this subjection of children is the only fountain of all regal authority, by the ordination of God himself.[215]

However, this manhood of familial and state supremacy could only be achieved through what Anthony Fletcher describes as a 'process through which the adult rational male was constructed from the beginnings of the male child'.[216] A man's justification for being the ruling authority of home and country was dependent upon his mastering the impulses of his humours. Shepard's *Meanings of Manhood* comprehensively illustrates this process of attainment, configuring the Early Modern male's journey from adolescence to maturity as distinctive phases of biology. Particularly relevant for this study is her attention to understandings of male youth, and the pains contemporary writers took to distinguish youth from maturity:

> Male youth was widely characterized as an age of extremes, marked both by an unrivalled capacity for spirited and courageous action and a seemingly unlimited potential for vice… readers of *The Office of Christian Parents* (1616) were warned that between the ages of 14 and 28 a young man's entire future was at stake. Although it was the time when he was 'most sensible, full of strength, courage and activenes', without sufficient direction and constant vigilance he would be 'easily drawne to libertie, pleasure, and licentiousnes'.[217]

As Shepard's research explains, a young man's masculine humours sometimes veered to the dangerously excessive. The bellicose nature, commendable on the battlefield, exercised in a domestic setting has almost tragic consequences in Behn's plays, in which the young General

[215] Sir Robert Filmer, 'Patriarcha' in *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, ed. by Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp.1–68 (pp.6–7).
[216] Anthony Fletcher, 'Manhood, the Male Body, Courtship and Household in Early Modern England' in *History*, 84, (1999) 419–36 (p.436).
[217] Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, p.24.

Alcippus and Prince Frederick stand upon this cusp of maturity. Both have proven their strength, courage and activeness in past battles, but the conflicts of the plays rest in part on their unwillingness to control their inclination to 'libertie, pleasure, and licentiousness'.

Orsames in *The Young King* also struggled to control his sexual desires. However, Behn portrayed his rapaciousness as symptomatic of a more general naïveté. At the start of the play we are told the prince 'ne'er saw a Woman, nor knows how to make use of one if he had her', and that in a similar fashion he also does not how to dress himself, let alone sing, dance or make music.[218] By contrast, the badly-behaved young men of *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince* are fully aware that their actions are transgressive. They simply do not care. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, Alcippus demands a woman he knows is secretly engaged to his prince and future king, Phillander. Although what Alcippus did or did not know of the pre-existing relationship is at first the subject of much debate in the court, he admits to his bride on their wedding night that Phillander, 'said, Erminia, that you were his wife'.[219] In spite of this, Alcippus preyed on the King's ignorance of his son's engagement and insisted on Erminia's hand in marriage. Mad with jealousy, Alcippus then attempts to rape and murder Erminia. Meanwhile, in *The Amorous Prince*, the eponymous Frederick is also fully aware that his sexuality is fraught with immoral behaviour. He seduces the innocent Cloris with false promises of marriage, which he boasts he made 'in abundance, / that's your only bait, / And though they cannot hope we will perform it, / Yet it secures their Honour and my Pleasure'.[220] Not content with ruining one woman, he then attempts to rape Laura, his best friend's beloved. Both Alcippus and Frederick are obviously aware that their sexual behaviour is socially reprehensible. What is interesting, and problematic, about this is how much Behn's emphases her male characters' youth during her condemnatory portrayal of their actions. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, of the fourteen times the word 'youth' is used, half of those instances are in direct relation to Alcippus. In *The*

[218] Behn, *YK*, I. 1. 54.
[219] Behn, *FM*, II. 3. 44.
[220] Behn, *The Amorous Prince*, I. 2. 39–41 [Hereafter *AP*].

Amorous Prince six out of the ten times 'youth' is used it is in relation to Frederick. In both plays, the rest of the occurrences of this word are used to describe a range of other characters. Therefore, the disproportionate number of times the word is applied to these characters, the antagonists, as we might call them, suggests a particular significance. I argue that youth is central to the characterisations of Alcippus and Frederick as the crux of their reputable qualities but, also, as the cause of their transgressive behaviour.

In *The Forc'd Marriage* Alcippus is frequently referred to as a 'youth' in conjunction with positive adjectives to express admiration: he is 'brave'; 'vigorous'; 'generous'; 'Noble'.[221] These promote Alcippus as the epitome of Shepard's description of the Early Modern man's youthful capacity for 'spirited and courageous action'. His 'brave' and 'vigorous' efforts on the battlefield have distinguished him in the eyes of a court which, embroiled in a foreign war, prizes these masculine virtues above all others. Audiences at the time might have been initially reminded of James, Duke of York and the Earl of Rochester's commended valour in the battles of the Second Anglo-Dutch War. As Derek Hughes explains:

> the cult of virile strength is encoded even in the Greek meanings or associations of the characters' names, over which Behn took some trouble […] Alcander (man-strength), Alcippus (horse-strength), Phillander (loving masculinity), Orgulius (from *orgê*, anger), Cleontius (from *kleos*, glory).[222]

Interestingly, Judy Hayden provides another classical origin for Alcippus's name which similarly highlights his hot-blooded nature:

> Mars, who fathered a daughter named Alcippe, was heroic in warfare. Honoured and revered by soldiers, he was also often irrational, racing to battle with neither the wisdom of Pallas nor for the just causes that Pallas supported. Thus, Behn draws a parallel between Mars, the fierce but irrational warrior, and Alcippus.[223]

[221] Behn, FM, I. 1. 8, 65, 88 and III. 1. 32.
[222] Derek Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) p.32.
[223] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.73. Although Hayden refers to Mars, the Roman God of War, specifically, Alcippe also appears in Greek mythology as the daughter of the Greek God of War, Ares.

However, the repetitive emphasis on Alcippus's youth also serves to remind the audience of his lack of years. It is interesting that whereas Phillander and Alcander are also referred to as a 'youth', Alcippus is the only male character in the play whom Behn also describes as 'young'.[224] It is also interesting that in the *dramatis personae* Mr Cademan is listed as playing 'Pisaro, friend to the young General Alcippus'.[225] Apart from Orgulius, the 'late General' (which chiefly denotes status), Alcippus is the only character with an adjective attached to his name. Of course, Behn might not have been the one to write the descriptions in the *dramatis personae*. If she did not, whoever did write them might simply have wished to distinguish between the two generals and happened to use 'young' instead of 'new'. However, the play as a whole seems to be trying to draw a special attention to Alcippus's youth. The significance of Alcippus's age and the origins of his name invite us to view his character as that of a virile, but immature, young man.

Similarly, in *The Amorous Prince* Behn frequently emphasises Frederick's youth. Revealingly, references to it are also often bound up in criticisms of his behaviour. Curtius insists Frederick 'is just and good, only too much misled / By youth and flattery'. Similarly, a servant muses 'even Frederick, I see, is but a man, / But his youth and quality will excuse him'.[226] In both instances, youth is the primary mitigating factor for Frederick's behaviour, more potent than his susceptibility to flattery or the quality of his status. At the end of the play Frederick also excuses his past behaviour on similar grounds,

> all the sallies of my flattering youth,
> Shall be no more remembr'd, but as past;
> Since 'tis a race that must by Man be run,
> I'me happy in my youth it was begun;
> It serves my future Manhood to improve,

[224] Behn, *FM*, I. 2. 7 and II. 4. 14.
[225] Behn, *FM*, p.6.
[226] Behn, *AP*, I. 1. 126–7 and II. 1. 180–1.

> Which shall be sacrific'd to War and Love.[227]

In this, Frederick goes so far as to describe his past indiscretions as a rite of passage after which his new-found maturity serves to make him a better man; a man predisposed to more honourable, or at least selfless, pursuits of warfare and love. The metaphor of 'a race that must by Man be run' is an allusion to Corinthians:

> Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the Prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.[228]

Ending the play in this way somewhat tempers Behn's searing criticism of royal behaviour by suggesting that Frederick's sexual impropriety was simply a hallmark of his understandable immaturity, a rite of passage out of which he emerges fit for rule. The biblical allusion fittingly contrasts Frederick's past competitiveness with his new-found maturity, and his now 'temperate' self-restraint.

In both plays, therefore, the subject of the antagonists' youth is keenly emphasised, and its bellicosity and impetuosity are punished. Not only are the two young men brought low by their actions, in danger of execution and assassination, Behn also strips them of their masculinity. Over the course of *The Forc'd Marriage*, Behn begins subtly to erode the machismo of Alcippus's fiery temper. This begins with the fact Alcippus's name is derived from Alcippe – the name of a *daughter* of the mythological God of War. In Roman mythology, Mars fathered many children, including twin sons Timor and Formido who were known for accompanying Mars into battle.[229] In Greek Mythology, the God of War also has a son called Anteros, the avenger of unrequited love. Behn could have named her war veteran after any of these offspring. So, there might be a deeper meaning

[227] Behn, *AP,* V. 3. 369–374.
[228] I Corinthians 9:24–25 (King James Version).
[229] Timor is also known as Timorus and Pavor. His Greek mythological counterpart is called Phobos. Formido was also known as Metus, and as Deimos in the Greek.

to Behn's choice of Alcippus's name. In Greek mythology, Alcippe was raped by Poseidon's son. Her father Ares stood trial for avenging the rape, the first criminal trial in Greek mythology, and was acquitted.[230] Therefore, Alcippus's namesake is linked more to a myth about female vulnerability, violation and justice than warfare, making the connection to the mythological God of War rather ironic. Behn emasculates her male character and foreshadows Alcippus's attempt to rape Erminia, and the restoration of law and order at the play's conclusion.

This emasculation perpetuates in the dialogue. The references to Alcippus being 'young' is intriguing, as in this play and *The Amorous Prince*, 'young' is otherwise only applied to female characters, implying beauty, but also a physical vulnerability.[231] Behn shows how the instability of this young man's humours threatens to destabilise the very conception of his manliness. As the play progresses Alcippus' actions become more manic. As Orgulius warns, even amidst his praise for Alcippus, the young man is prone to 'melancholy'.[232] The audience witnesses this for themselves when Alcippus believes he has killed Erminia. His deepening depression rocks our perception of his manly mental and physical strength. When wrestling with his feelings of unrequited love he urges Pisaro, 'prithee be near me still, / And tell me of the faults that look unmanly'.[233] His judgement is beginning to fail him, he is no longer confident of how a man should conduct himself and is acutely sensitive to the fact he is beginning to behave in an unmanly fashion. He wonders at himself, 'perhaps 'twill make me mad, or end my life, / Either of which will ease me', to which Pisaro replies in horror, 'Neither of these Alcippus, / It will unman you, make you too dispis'd; / And those that now admire will pity you'.[234] Pisaro's warning reminds us that a man's reputation depends on the demonstration of his physical and mental capacity and, if he is unable to fulfil these expectations, he

[230] Fritz Graf, 'Alcippe', in *Brill's New Pauly* ed. by Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Ohio: Columbus, 2006) [Available at BrillOnline].
[231] I established this point by running a search on the word 'young' using Chadwyck-Healey's online versions of *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince*.
[232] Behn, *FM*, I. 1. 91.
[233] Behn, *FM*, III. 2. 119–120.
[234] Behn, *FM,* IV. 2. 18–22.

is no longer considered manly. Despite Pisaro's caution, at the height of Alcippus's depression madness overcomes him:

> his almost frantick head he'd tear
>
> Whole handfuls of his well-becoming hair:
>
> […]
>
> The Marble Statue *Venus* , he mistook
> For fair *Erminia* , and such things he spoke;
> Such unheard passionate things as e'ne would move,
> The Marble Statue's self to fall in love;
> He'd kiss its breast, and say she kind was grown,
> And never mind, alass, 'twas senseless stone;
> He took its hand, and to his mouth had laid it,
> But that it came not, and its stay betray'd it;
> Then would he blush, and all asham'd become,
> His head declining, for a while be dumb:
> His Armes upon his breast across would lay […] [235]

Alcippus succumbs to a 'frantick' state of insanity on beholding a supposed image of his murdered wife. In the report that he lay his 'Armes' down upon the statue, Behn suggests that Alcippus's mania has unmanned him; 'Armes' have a militaristic homonym implying Alcippus has lost the manly, martial spirit that is so highly-prized in his society. His hysteria and blushing are behaviours typically associated with the 'moistness' of 'femaleness'.[236] Behn contrasts Alcippus's reaction to the statue to Phillander's meeting with the 'ghost' of Erminia. The prince remains 'undaunted', certain of himself and his ability to reason, reassuring a sceptical Alcander, 'I'me my self, / I was not in a dream, nor in a passion'.[237] He remains determined to hold onto this power of rationality even as Alcander questions it, 'Pray do not urge my sense to lose its nature'.[238] Phillander's rationality is

[235] Behn, *FM*, V. 1. 13–4 and 19–29.
[236] Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, p.28.
[237] Behn, *FM,* IV. 9. 56 and 51–52.
[238] Ibid.*,* IV. 9. 62.

contrasted with Alcippus's irrational response to suggest Phillander, the prince and lover of Erminia, is the better man.

Alcippus's emasculation reflects contemporary anxieties about the realisation of masculine qualities in individuals. Although Galenic theory only suggests a predisposition towards the desirable, manly traits of strength, self-control and rationality, it does not posit a biological certainty. Within these humoral parameters, as Thomas Laqueur famously opines, 'having a penis does not make the man'.[239] Early Modernists believed men could be inclined to 'female' traits of weakness and over-emotion irrespective of biological sex. As Fletcher demonstrates, Early Modern anxiety over potential, rather than inherent, manliness started from a male child's birth. Using seventeenth century diaries and letters he demonstrates how parents anxiously 'watched over their boys for signs of their budding manliness'.[240] Their anxiety betrays the notion that the favoured masculine traits were attainable but, by implication, might *not* be attained. Behn's decision to portray Alcippus's loss of reason demonstrates the potential instability of young men's mentality. She subtly erodes the presentation of Alcippus's perceived masculinity over the course of the play to deride him as the antagonist of Phillander and Erminia's love story.

In *The Forc'd Marriage* Alcippus's youthful fire is drowned by his womanish tears of regret. In *The Amorous Prince*, the portrayal of Frederick's sexual rapacity offers an interesting example of a critical divergence on the subject of uncontrollable male sexuality and effeminacy. Whereas Alcippus is fixated on one woman, Frederick casually flits from one to another. Thus, the conflict of *The Amorous Prince* is sparked by Frederick's 'humours of inconstancy', a fickleness not only displayed towards women, but also to his best friend Curtius whom he betrays first unwittingly, by seducing his sister, and then consciously by pursuing his beloved Laura.[241] Across the play, of the seven times inconstancy is mentioned, six of those are in relation to Frederick's temper and treatment of

[239] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (London: Harvard University Press, 1990) p.25.
[240] Fletcher, 'Manhood', p.421.
[241] Behn, *AP*, I. 2. 12.

others.[242] Frederick speaks of this inconstancy as 'youthful fire', and comforts a disguised Cloris that a new woman 'kindles new fires, and quite expel[s] the old'.[243] Fire as a metaphor for sexual desire is a common literary trope; however Behn here firmly ties it to her emphasis on Frederick's hot-blooded youth. Even 'old' fires are simply extinguished by younger ones. Whereas Frederick enjoys the excitement of fiery lust, Alcippus says, 'A fire that's kindled cannot long survive, / If one add naught to keep the flame alive', begging Erminia to reciprocate his feeling, but without Frederick's flippant complacency that new delights can easily replace unrequited love.[244] Instead, Alcippus's 'raging fire […] never ceases / Till it has quite destroyed the goodly Edifice / Where it first took beginning'.[245]

Traditionally, a man's inability to control his sexual appetite was regarded as an effeminate failing, as John Donne's epigram 'The Jughler', or 'Manliness', tells us, 'Thou call'st me effeminat, for I love women's joyes; / I call not thee manly, though thou follow boyes'. Andrew William Barnes describes the accusation Donne is responding to as 'a common male anxiety in the early modern period', which Donne wittily turns on its head and deflects back to his accuser.[246] Alan Bray argues 'in this culture sexuality itself whatever the object makes a man effeminate'.[247] He uses the 1650s diary of Michael Wigglesworth to illustrate this case, whose entries document a man's fight to overcome his sexual urges for his male students. Bray points out that Wigglesworth's anxiety lies less in the immorality of homosexuality and more in his inability to control his own carnal impulses. Hayden seems to agree that Frederick's sexual conduct can be interpreted as a failure of masculinity rather than a hallmark of it, referring to 'the effeminacy of the Prince's uncontrolled sexual urges'.[248] We might therefore conclude that on one level Behn not only associates rampant male desire with

[242] Ibid., I. 2. 12; II. 1. 83; II. 2. 142; III. 1. 45; III. 3. 45; V. 3. 209.
[243] Ibid., III. 1. 86 and IV. 3. 54.
[244] Behn, *FM*, II. 3. 106–107.
[245] Ibid., IV. 2. 12–14.
[246] Andrew William Barnes, *Post-Closet Masculinities in Early Modern England* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009) p.31.
[247] Alan Bray, 'To be a Man in Early Modern Society. The Curious Case of Michael Wigglesworth', in *History Workshop Journal*, 41 (1996) 155–65 (p.159).
[248] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.111.

immaturity, as she did in *The Young King*, but that in these plays she also associates it with effeminacy, denoting a lack or failure of masculinity.

We can therefore begin to see how Alcippus and Frederick epitomise the Early Modern understanding of early manhood and the anxieties caused by its perilous and counter-masculine impetuosity. In both plays Behn emphasises the causal link between male youth and violent behaviour. However, her emphasis on the youth of the male characters raises an intriguing problem for those who might wish to see Behn's condemnation of such behaviour as evidence of her potential proto-feminism. By so frequently stressing Alcippus and Frederick's youth as a mitigating factor, she almost appears to be subscribing to a view that boys will be boys; it is what to be feared, but expected, of their age. Their transgressive sexuality, especially in the case of Frederick, is almost a rite of passage on the road to maturity. However, the fact their youth is used to persuade an audience they are capable of redemption might be a necessary evil for the sake of a happy conclusion. Both men are eventually forgiven by playwright and courts and escape the possible fatal punishments planned by the outraged Phillander and Curtius. Behn even has them married in the plays' conclusions, Frederick happily to Cloris, and Alcippus to the Princess Galatea, not as happily but without protest. Furthermore, Behn's clemency is important for the political analogies contained within the dramas: ultimately, the leniency with which Alcippus and Frederick escape punishment is because their individual bodies do not operate in the plays in isolation. These plays explore perceptions of the individual male body and nature, but also the political body in which they exist, in direct competition with other young men.

Men's Competing Bodies in *the Forc'd Marriage*

The worlds Behn constructs in these plays are dominated by the youthful imperatives of their young, male characters. In a social hierarchy where manliness is predicated on physical strength and sexual virility, how these male characters interact with each other reveals how their biological drives conflict with their social and political obligations. The focus of the plays is the male

characters' homosocial relationships with one another rather than the love stories. The plays are less about Phillander and Erminia's, and Curtius and Laura's, romantic relationships than they are about the intricacies of the male bonds surrounding them. The complexity of these male friendships begins and ends with an emphatic sense of competitiveness. Behn explores how behind the rivalry of who is the most martial and the most virile lurks a destructive force that threatens the peacetime of the plays' domestic settings.

In *The Forc'd Marriage* male characters stake their virility on the battlefield in a competition for political reward. Alcippus returns to court to be pronounced the winner of this contest and is therefore granted both a political promotion and the hand of the woman he chooses. Hughes notes a debt in this to John Dryden and Sir Robert Howard's *The Indian Queen* (1664):

> At the beginning of *The Indian Queen*, the Ynca of Peru offers his victorious general, Montezuma, any reward he cares to name, but banishes him when he requests the hand of his daughter. Here, it is the daughter who is willing, and the king is opposed. Behn's reversal of this situation – with the king now willing the marriage and the woman resisting – creates an entirely new perspective upon military heroism […] the king is unjust because he obeys the rules and rewards the hero. Her simple switch – with the hero's marriage opposed not by the king but by the heroine – turns civilization into a male conspiracy.[249]

Hughes also writes, with Todd, that the play 'trace[s] male supremacism to its origins in warrior communities whose values are dictated by strength and soldierly prowess: a simple feudal world of aristocracy, male bonding, oaths, and romance'.[250] However, I am inclined to disagree that it is such a 'simple feudal world' or a 'male conspiracy', because Behn goes on to illustrate how a seemingly simple, directly-proportional system of demonstrable manliness and reward is actually arbitrary, causing unnecessary and dangerous tension between its competitors. Erminia might be said to suffer the most within this system, as an objectified trophy, but the male characters are also greatly

[249] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, pp.30–31.
[250] Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', p.83.

aggrieved by it. When the reward ceremony ends, and the court exits the stage, the first discussion takes place amongst the young men Alcander, Pisaro and Falatio. This discussion, interestingly, does not focus on the scandal created by Alcippus snatching Erminia from the prince, but on Alcander's resentment over Alcippus having been favoured above the rest:

> What is't that thou call'st merit;
> He [Alcippus] fought, 'tis true, and so did you, and I,
> And gain'd as much as he o'th' victory.
> But he in the Triumphal Chariot rod,
> Whilst we ador'd him like a Demi-god. [251]

An audience might easily dismiss Alcander's venomous tone as simple jealousy; however, through this Behn also convincingly exposes the seemingly meritocratic court system as an arbitrary lottery for the king's favour, undermining the legitimacy of Alcippus's martial 'merit' as an unquantifiable construct. Thus, Alcander does not only compare himself to Alcippus, but invites Pisaro to do the same - 'so did you'. He goes on,

> Has he more youth, more strength, or arms then I?
> Can he preserve himself i'th' heat of battail?
> Or can he singly fight a whole Brigade?
> Can he receive a thousand wounds and live? [252]

Even Pisaro, Alcippus's chief ally in the play, relents, agreeing he 'merits it as well as you or I'.[253] In the onslaught of Alcander's hypothetical questions, Behn highlights the subjectivity of the king's decision to favour Alcippus. By extension, it also questions society's ability to distinguish one's man's manliness above his peers. In this scene Behn suggests the praise heaped on Alcippus cannot in all fairness empirically distinguish him above his peers. Without dramatising the battlefield scenes which the characters are alluding to, the audience cannot judge for themselves the worthiness of Alcippus's advancement over his comrades. Instead, the audience finds itself in the same position as

[251] Behn, *FM*, I. 1. 141–5.
[252] Ibid., I. 1. 154–7.
[253] Ibid., I. 1. 163.

the King; they are only able to judge based on the reports of others. Orgulius's report distinguished Alcippus above all others and Alcander's testimony refutes that. It is does not matter who is right and who is wrong. In fact, the inability to judge a man's worth seems to be Behn's point. What appears to matter more to Behn, as her portrayal shows, are the consequences of predicating political advancement on such subjective terms.

These consequences are the erosion of public confidence in the monarchical hierarchy. Todd writes, 'Behn was already aware of the dangers of men promoted too far or favoured too hugely at the expense of legitimate privilege and power'.[254] Behn portrays the insidious nature of this corrosion by contrasting public ceremony with private discourse. The play opens with the court's public celebration of the recent military triumph, where Phillander selflessly commends Alcippus's actions, telling the king 'he merits all your Bounty'.[255] Since he and the audience do not know of Alcippus's plan to demand Erminia's hand, Phillander's self-deprecation suggests that a fellowship exists between male soldiers; Phillander wants his compatriot to receive recognition, even if it will diminish his own reward. However, Behn goes on to expose the court's lack of conviction in its military, and therefore royal, leadership. In the private discourse between Alcander and Pisaro the latter comments that General Orgulius 'was grown old' and 'was unfit' for his position.[256] Even Orgulius agrees with this view, telling the King and Phillander he has become 'uncapable / Of what that can with more success perform'.[257] Although Behn is careful that none of her characters voice a direct lack of confidence in the King, Orgulius's unpopularity, and the manner in which he is replaced, invites the audience to reflect on the King's inability to effectively organise his own military. Despite the obvious need for a change of command, it takes Phillander's intervention to replace the old general. When the King struggles to think of a suitable reward for Alcippus, Phillander steps forward, 'Permit me, Sir, to recompense his valour, / I saw the wonders on't and

[254] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.140.
[255] Behn, *FM*, I. 1. 4.
[256] Ibid., I. 1. 164 and 166.
[257] Ibid., I. 1. 64 and 66.

thence may guess / In some degree, what may be worthy of it'.[258] Phillander's deferential words mask the contrast between his own proactivity and the King's inaction, and stress how oblivious the King is towards his soldiers' attitudes and needs. Phillander's comment that he 'saw the wonders' of Alcippus's actions first-hand emphasises the fact the King has not. Like the audience, the King appears as a spectator in his own court, relying on the report of others to inform his judgement, and watching passively as Phillander transfers the staff of the general from Orgulius to Alcippus.

However, in an ironic twist, this change of command actually escalates the lack of faith in the military leadership. Alcander's proud competitiveness will not allow him to accept Alcippus's promotion:

> *Alcander*
> What's [Alcippus]; I should not speak my sense of him?
> *Pisaro*
> He is our General.
> *Alcander*
> What then?
> What is't that he can do, which I'le decline?[259]

Pisaro attempts to evoke the respect accorded by soldiers to their military superiors. However, since Alcander does not believe Alcippus merited the promotion, his lack of respect for Alcippus now also extends to the position Alcippus holds. 'What then?' he asks dismissively, undermining the authority of the very rank of general. Todd and Hughes have argued 'it is in the bedroom rather than the battlefield that the heroes rage and fight'; however against the backdrop of this war, Alcander's words are dangerously subversive, even mutinous.[260] The competitive nature of the male characters undermines the stability of the court's military feudalism and Behn shows how a male force which

[258] Ibid., I. 1. 49–51.
[259] Ibid., I. 1. 150–153.
[260] Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', p.86.

should be united splinters into opposing factions in the aftermath of Alcippus's controversial promotion and marriage.

The rivalry between Phillander and Alcippus is set up in the very first lines of the play when the King asks, 'How shall I now divide my Gratitude; / Between a Son, and one that has obliged me, / Beyond the common duty of a subject?'[261] Political favour is the reward for the demonstrable manly trait of martial prowess, emphasised by the fact the King addresses the question in the public eye of the court. Hughes describes this opening scene as 'the male domination of public space; a ritual of masculinity – of soldiers after a victory – in which all the important male characters are on stage. There is not a woman in sight'.[262] However, the victory cannot be shared; one man must take precedence over the other. It is this reward system which pushes men to compete against one another. Phillander is unwilling to play such a game, instead championing Alcippus's superiority. The competition between the two characters only really starts when Alcippus asks for the hand of Erminia as well. The conflict of the battlefield then becomes a domestic, civil war to possess Erminia. Thus, the romantic rivalry which springs from this first scene is expressed in militaristic terms by Alcander, 'He [Phillander] put the Sword into his Rivalls hand, / Who will return it to his gratefull bosom'.[263] The analogy becomes literal, as Phillander and Alcippus's rivalry erupts into violence with swords repeatedly drawn against one another. All this is bad enough, but whilst this civil conflict stirs, the war beyond the court still lurks. As Phillander protests, 'Alcippus, is't a time to think of Weddings; / When the disorder'd Troops require your presence: / You must to th' Camp tomorrow'.[264] His feeble objection serves to remind the audience of the war still ongoing and foreshadows the disorder which follows amongst the courtiers as they split into factions: on the one side Phillander, supported chiefly by Alcander, on the other Alcippus with the support of Orgulius and Pisaro, the rivalry unfolds in a mesh of the other courtiers' romantic agendas.

[261] Behn, *FM*, I. 1. 1–3.
[262] Derek Hughes, 'Aphra Behn and the Restoration Theatre' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Janet Todd and Derek Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) pp.29–45 (p.38).
[263] Behn, *FM*, I. 1. 175–176.
[264] Ibid., I. 1. 120–122.

Games of Seduction in *The Amorous Prince*

Whereas the courtiers in *The Forc'd Marriage* stake their manhood on the battlefield in the endless gamble for royal favour, the men in *The Amorous Prince* compete for women armed with charms and wealth. Martial prowess is still a hallmark of man's virility, but war is a far less dominant feature and only fleetingly mentioned. For example, Curtius refers to the 'great name [Frederick] has acquir'd in War' and Alberto and Antonio consider giving up their amorous endeavours and retiring to the military camp to make war their 'Mistress' and their 'Penance'.[265] Using this urban, peacetime setting, Behn scrutinises male characters' powers of seduction and wealth; moving from the claustrophobic, war-orientated French court of *The Forc'd Marriage*, to the open streets, houses and groves of Florence, and trading the feudalistic court of kings, princes, princesses, generals and soldiers for an urbanite crowd of wealthy friends. Here though, the competitive nature of man still thrives, perpetuated by Prince Frederick, who 'no longer possessing a visible military purpose […] has come to regard the "Conquest" of women as its prime *raison d'être*'.[266] Seduction is the name of the game, a game which Behn exposes as built on deception, tenuous economic terms and, as this chapter will illustrate, the abuse of princely power. In *The Forc'd Marriage* Behn targeted a political system predicated on unquantifiable expectations of masculine virtue. In *The Amorous Prince* she targets the system of courtly precedence and reward that is driven by the Prince's inconstancy and competitive sexuality in ways which would have drawn obvious parallels with the court of Charles II.

As in *The Forc'd Marriage*, the sense of male competition is perpetuated by a royal personage; as the King in *The Forc'd Marriage* insists on pitting Phillander and Alcippus against each other, so Prince Frederick is the instigator of a competition of sexual conquest. Unlike *The Forc'd Marriage*'s King, however, Frederick is also an active player in the game he has created. He taunts Curtius in light of his successful seduction of Cloris, 'But I love pleasures which thou can'st not prize,

[265] Behn, *AP*, IV. 2. 154; V. 2. 55 and 69.
[266] Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', p.87.

/ Beyond dull gazing on thy Mistress eyes'.[267] He contrasts his successful conquest of Cloris with Curtius's apparent failure with Laura, believing the two friends are simply competing for women's sexual favour. The prince's sexual rapacity and ribaldry invites parallels with our understanding of Charles II's relationship with his courtiers. As Anna Bryson explains,

> The personal influence of Charles II was certainly of great importance in encouraging libertine elements in gallant manners. His easy-going participation in many of the uproarious activities of his younger courtiers, and his not unnatural cynicism about the love and loyalty of his subjects, were more immediately significant social models for fashionable young men than any philosopher was […] [He] did not prevent the intermingling of court and riotous London life. He protected his favourites from the legal consequences of some of their escapades, and participated in their sexual competition.[268]

The Amorous Prince is the first of Behn's plays to dramatise these 'libertine elements' of Restoration society. In the mid-seventeenth century, young men wilfully, 'embraced precisely the kinds of behaviour – violent disruption, excessive drinking, *illicit sex* – condemned by moralists as unmanly, effeminate and beast-like'.[269] Their behaviour redefined normative meanings of manhood to create a dichotomy between moralist and society's expectations of manly behaviour. Shepard cites university students' exploits, where 'youthful misrule was tolerated and even implicitly condoned by those in authority […] many adult men recognized and even endorsed the potent meanings of manhood to which it was linked'.[270] These 'potent meanings' refer to the physical strength and virility demonstrated by youths, and such behaviour was also endorsed by Charles II in his court. Especially relevant for *The Amorous Prince* is Bryson's description of the stereotypical Restoration 'libertine' or 'rake', and what chiefly separated him from the 'gallants of yesteryear was the central stress upon rapacity, he is seen as 'predator rather than "gull" and as a character bent on humiliating

[267] Behn, *AP,* I. 2. 84–85.
[268] Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) pp.259–261.
[269] Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, p.94 [Emphasis added].
[270] Ibid.

and ridiculing the innocent or sober'.[271] Frederick certainly embodies aspects of the Restoration rake as a man hell-bent on pleasure-seeking at the expense of innocent women and his loyal friends. With this casual view on monogamy and marriage, he bears some parallels to the infamous Willmore of Behn's later play, *The Rover*.

However, it would be reductive to view Frederick as simply a prototype for Behn's later, and perhaps more loveable, rogue. Libertines in literature are typically portrayed as groups of young gentlemen friends, revelling and brawling across a city's taverns and brothels on a series of misadventures, as in *The Rover*.[272] Although the callousness of their perceived predatory sexual nature again bears parallels with Frederick, it is interesting that Frederick is a prince and that he operates as something of a lone agent in his exploits. Although Frederick moves easily from one woman to another and believes that Curtius shares his sexual rapacity, Curtius, interestingly, does not want to play the game. Curtius does not view his relationship with Laura as a sexual conquest in a competitive game against Frederick. When Frederick accuses him, 'you on Laura have the same design', Curtius replies, 'Yes, Sir, when justify'd by Laws Divine'.[273] The rhyming couplet perfectly contrasts the two men's different approaches to sex. Frederick's 'design' has undertones of intrigue and deception; he promises to wed Cloris to get her into bed, believing such flimsy promises 'would go as far with any other man'.[274] However Curtius does not make such promises. Nor does any other man in the play. Curtius's is a purer love, in which for him the 'prize' of sex should only be attained after marriage. Curtius's unwillingness to engage with Frederick in a competition can be compared to Phillander's collegial behaviour towards Alcippus at the beginning of *The Forc'd Marriage*, and, as with Phillander, the real rivalry between the two principal male characters begins when Frederick sets his sights on his friend's lover. Behn first hints at this rivalry and the conflict it will cause when Frederick turns his attention to discussing Curtius's lover Laura, 'Prethee when is't that I shall see

[271] Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, p.247.
[272] Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, p.250. See, for example, Wycherley's *A Morning's Ramble* (1673).
[273] Behn, *AP*, I. 2. 87–88.
[274] Ibid., I. 2. 54.

that Beauty?' and Curtius ruefully responds in an aside, 'Never I hope'.[275] By contrasting the prince's rapacity with his courtier's disaffection, Behn appears to be making an unflattering commentary on Charles II's encouragement of his courters' sexual exploits, and his own engagement in sexually inappropriate behaviour. As Bryson explains,

> The pressure to 'distinguish oneself' in a social context where reputations could be made by an extravagant 'frolic', audacious sexual conquest, or talent for repartee was very great. A courtier's failure to compete in the race meant loss of prestige; failure to succeed in a stratagem meant a barrage of ridicule; a refusal to play the gallant game, as when Lord Chesterfield took his wife to the country to prevent her from having an affair with the Duke of York, brought down the full weight of satire on the victim's head. The most dramatic moves in this game were the most radical instances of libertinism; for example, in the notching up of sexual conquests with a view to the discomfiture of the rival rather than the actual pleasure of the affair.[276]

Furthermore, Todd notes that Charles might have been using these games to pit his courtiers against one another, distracting them from opposing him instead. She writes that the politician Algernon Sidney 'went so far as to link royal debauchery with absolutism when he suggested that Charles II was depraving his people with his fetid example and so preventing their resistance to his policies'.[277] Behn's decision to have Curtius decline to compete in this race is therefore significant. She does not mock or ridicule him for his fastidious faithfulness, as the prince does. In her respectful portrayal of Curtius's honourable intentions contrasted with Frederick's dishonourable ones, she seems to be casting her lot in with the loving courtier. However, Curtius is not above other means of deception.

Thus, 'Arts and cunning' underpin Frederick's amorous endeavours in *The Amorous Prince*.[278] Whereas martial prowess is undermined in *The Forc'd Marriage* by the ambiguity of judging one man's demonstrable success above his peers, here male competitiveness is mired in deception as well as distrust. Women cannot be won as prizes on the battlefield, but are bought, and sold, in an

[275] Ibid., I. 2. 92–93.
[276] Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, p.267.
[277] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.227.
[278] Behn, *AP*, I. 2. 35.

industry of sexual economics and deceit. And, although Curtius might have more honourable intentions towards Laura, Behn reveals that he himself is capable of stooping to deceit. Curtius hides the fact that Cloris is actually his sister, preferring to utter his horror at her seduction in asides to the audience, 'Oh Hell! […] My Soul learn now the Art of being disguis'd'.[279] The reason, it is soon revealed, is that Curtius needs Frederick to assist him in his courtship of Laura:

> Her Father still is Cruel, and denys me,
> What she and I have long made sute in vain for;
> But, Sir, your Interest might prevail with him
> When he shall know I'me one whom you esteem,
> He will allow my flame and my address,
> He whom you favour cannot doubt success.[280]

Curtius's behaviour is certainly morally dubious, as here Behn implies he defers confronting Frederick or Cloris over their illicit relationship in case it will cause him to lose his 'favour' with the prince, and thus the woman he loves. Over the course of the play, Curtius's capacity for dishonesty becomes even more apparent. He writes to Cloris:

> *Cloris beware of men; for though I my self be one,*
> *Yet I have the frailties of my Sex, and can dissemble too;*
> *Trust none of us, for if thou dost, thou art undone;*
> *We make vows to all alike we see.*[281]

Curtius's warning is interesting. He admits he cannot honestly distinguish his behaviour from those around him. For although he might not lie to Laura to seduce her, he has shown the audience he is capable of dissembling to others to attain the woman he wants. Earlier in the play Curtius excused Cloris's part in her seduction, 'Since thou art bred in so much innocence, / Thou couldst not dream of

[279] Ibid., I. 2. 28 and 31.
[280] Ibid., I. 1. 95–100.
[281] Ibid., III. 3. 1–4.

falsity in men'.[282] Behn appears to be a reacting against traditionally-held beliefs that women are the morally inferior gender by blaming their sexual-susceptible on men's capacity for lies and manipulation.

Curtius's use of Frederick in his courtship of Laura is also an example of how Behn explores a causal link between male relationships, sex and economics in *The Amorous Prince*. Curtius defines Frederick's standing with Laura's father Salvator with the economic term 'interest', a word Behn also uses to describe the prince's relationship to his own father, the Duke, 'I have a Father, […] / I would not lose my int'rest with'.[283] Whereas in *The Forc'd Marriage* the King's favour is arbitrary, in this play securing favour from the Duke and the other senior male character, Salvator, is presented in coldly economic terms. Favour here can be easily purchased, rather than earned. Frederick's quality affords him a certain amount of credit with the older male generation with which he can pursue his own ends. In the case of Salvator, Curtius hopes to capitalise on his friend's credit to increase his own interest. The audience are therefore invited to view Lorenzo's compliment about Curtius that he is 'an honest fellow, / And one of us too' with a degree of scepticism.[284] Not only does Curtius lie to women, a fact Lorenzo might have thought insignificant given his androcentric comment 'one of us', but the audience are aware he has also lied to his friends for sexually economic reasons. Behn shows that male friendship is therefore as vulnerable to, and manipulated by, the powers of money and quality as comradeship in *The Forc'd Marriage* is undermined by delineating masculine virtue. Just as quantifying these masculine virtues proved an impossible task in *The Forc'd Marriage*, in *The Amorous Prince* Behn proves that the economics of such preferment can be equally deceptive and unreliable. Salvator initially refuses Frederick an audience with Laura, reportedly saying 'he cares not for / A thousand Princes'.[285] The value and certainty of Frederick's credit is rocked. Later, however, Frederick's 'moving tale so won upon him, / Or rather by his quality', that he does succeed in

[282] Behn, *AP*, I. 2. 119–120.
[283] Ibid., I. 1. 44 and 46.
[284] Ibid., II. 1. 29.
[285] Ibid., II. 1. 3–4.

meeting Laura.[286] Once there, he abuses the faith Curtius has invested in him by attempting to seduce her himself. As Curtius therefore learns, 'even the best of men, the Prince, / Is not to be credited in an affair of love'. Thus, as Behn exposed the competition for masculine superiority in *The Forc'd Marriage* as an arbitrary lottery, in *The Amorous Prince* she sets up to destroy the male characters' belief the prize can be so easily bought by the highest bidder. The male characters' amorous advances are filled with economic terms and exchanges. Frederick departs from Cloris leaving behind a 'Box of Jewells' and Antonio gives Alberto a 'set of Jewels' to woo Clarina.[287] The male characters consider wealth an indispensable weapon in the pursuit of women, as Lorenzo ponders:

> [Frederick] has had some repulse from a
> Lady; and that's a wonder; for he has a Tongue and a
> Purse that seldom fails; if youth and vigour would
> Stretch as far, he were the wonder of the Age.[288]

Lorenzo believes charm and wealth go further with women than youth and virility. The enjambment in his speech that places 'Purse' at the beginning of the line emphasises that the prince's wallet plays an essential role in Frederick's pursuit of women. Lorenzo therefore finds it strange that any woman could reject a man like Frederick, a 'Merchant of Love' in possession of such a 'Tongue and a / Purse'.[289] Frederick is believed to wield a greater advantage over his male counterparts in the game of seduction. Whereas masculinity is portrayed as an unquantifiable attribute in *The Forc'd Marriage*, in the eyes of the male characters the extent of Frederick's wealth and status clearly distinguish him above his rival, Curtius. Because of this, he could gain admittance to Laura where Curtius failed.

[286] Ibid., II. 2. 170–171.
[287] Ibid., I. 1. 115; I. 4. 31.
[288] Ibid., III. 2. 13–16.
[289] Ibid., IV. 4. 90.

Yet, as Lorenzo marvels, Frederick's 'Purse' fails him in his conquest of Laura. Antonio insists that 'there's far more women won by Gold then industry'; however, Behn exposes such financial enticements as completely unnecessary.[290] Cloris's constant devotion to Frederick signals she slept with him because she was in love with him, not as trade for the jewels he offered her. She refers to his gifts as 'unvalued Presents', which implies both how expensive, or invaluable, they might be and but also how little they mean to Cloris.[291] Similarly, Ismena, and the plotting women behind the play's subplot of equal dishonesty and deception, do not make any references to gifts Alberto might give to Ismena to prove his love to her, although the audience knows he has some. Alberto simply refuses to give Ismena the jewels Antonio means for Clarina. His refusal to do so reveals a more sensitive kind of love. Ismena asks if Alberto does not 'look for some returns' on her promises of love, but Alberto replies:

> ---Madam, if I have err'd in that belief,
> To know I do so, is sufficient punishment.
> ---Lovers, Madam, though they have no returns.
> Like sinking men, still catch at all they meet with;
> And whilst they live, though in the mid'st of storms,
> Because they wish, they also hope for calms.[292]

Alberto responds to Ismena's coldly-financial expression of courtship with an emotive, romantic simile of stormy, destructive love based on often groundless 'hope' rather than economic confidence. He is one of the more likeable of Behn's male creations, proving uniquely, utterly disinterested in socio-economic gain. However, she uses this to contrast him with the host of male characters around him whose words and actions are dominated by economics.

The female characters' indifference to jewels, both the ones they receive and the lack of the ones they do not, suggests that the need to bribe women with presents is a male fantasy. However,

[290] Ibid., I. 4. 46.
[291] Ibid., V. 1. 39.
[292] Ibid., IV. 1. 25 and 28–33.

the unwitting male characters willingly throw their wealth away under the false impression their 'Women naturally are more inclin'd / To Avarice, then Men'.[293] Behn's mockery of men's mercantile attitude to love is most searing in Lorenzo's attempt to woo Clarina. Lorenzo literally employs Clarina's servant Isabella to broker a love affair between himself and her mistress, and they meet to balance the books:

> *Lorenzo:*
> *Item*, 2000 Crowns in a Bracelet for *Clarina* ;
> What say you to that now *Isabella*?
> *Isabella:*
> *Item*, The day after they were presented,
> She saluted you with a smile at the Chappel.
> *Lorenzo:*
> And dost thou think it was not dearly bought?
> *Isabella:*
> No man in *Florence* should have had it
> A Souce cheaper.
> *Lorenzo:*
> Say you so *Isabella*; out with it then.
> *[Crosses it out.]*
> *Item*, 100 more to thee for presenting them.
> *Isabella:*
> Which I did with six lyes in your commendation,
> Worth ten Pistols a piece for the exactness of a Lie;
> Write there indebted to me---
> *Lorenzo:*
> Nay then thou dost deserve it:
> Rest due to *Isabella*.[294]

[293] Ibid., I. 4. 33.
[294] Ibid., I. 3. 39–52.

The subject is love, but the tone and details are thoroughly business-like. Like Frederick and Antonio, Lorenzo believes expensive gifts, like a bracelet, will further his interest with Clarina. Comically his investment only returns a supposed smile. Isabella gleefully exploits Lorenzo's willingness to spend vast amounts of money in return for such paltry dividends. The audience, however, knows that Clarina is oblivious to Lorenzo's suit and Behn uses this dramatic irony to mock men's mercantile approach to sex and relationships. This mockery culminates in the final act, when Antonio and Pietro replace the prostitutes Curtius believes he has hired to lure the prince to his death, with the female characters. Frederick, Lorenzo and Curtius believe they are watching a host of prostitutes who are ready for purchase when, ironically, none of the women can actually be bought. Behn's orchestration of this final act artfully unites the various characters onstage in preparation for the play's happy resolution, but it also makes fools of not only the prince and pimp, but even Curtius, who was unaware his assassination attempt had been hijacked. Thus, Behn uses her cohort of female characters to mock and disrupt men's economic understanding of sexual relationships. This mockery would harden into a far severer condemnation in *The Rover*.

In a play where men figure sex as a form of currency, it is unsurprising that Behn creates a character like Lorenzo, happy to capitalise on the economic opportunities such an attitude towards sexual rapacity affords. As previously shown, the audience is introduced to Lorenzo bartering with Isabella for access to Clarina. We are told afterwards that he is:

> The most notorious Pimp, and Rascal in Italy;
> 'Tis a vile shame that such as he should live,
> Who have the form and sense of man about them,
> And in their action Beast,
> And that he thrives by too. [295]

[295] Ibid., I. 3. 120–124.

Behn probably linked Lorenzo's beastly actions to a reminder of the play's Italian setting because 'Italy had come to signify sexual deviance'.[296] Setting a play in a foreign country also has had the time-honoured benefit of allowing playwrights to comment safely on contemporary concerns without overtly criticising the powers that be in their own country. Lorenzo pimps for Prince Frederick, hoping to 'render my self more acceptable / To [him] by that Franchise'.[297] Later, he 'provide[s]' for Frederick by enticing him to the brothel, where he has been told the prince will have a good time.[298] Thus Lorenzo is 'the comical but overstated personification of a serious problem – vice at court'.[299] Pimps and prostitution were popular subjects of much Restoration satire. One such example is 'The Poor-Whore's Petition', and the sardonic replies to it, a satirical petition which circulated in the aftermath of the 1668 Bawdy House Riots.[300] Ritualised attacks on brothels, customarily occurring on Shrove Tuesdays, had occurred throughout the early Stuart reign. However, Tim Harris believes the revival of the tradition in the Easter week of that year was 'a political and religious protest against the policies of the Court'.[301] The Duke of York patronised some of the brothels targeted by the rioters, who also threatened to 'pull down the great bawdy-house at White Hall'.[302] 'The Poor-Whore's Petition', addressed to Charles's mistress Lady Barbara Castlemaine, suggested the rioters were motivated by the immorality of the court and Charles's complicity in prostitution. It seems highly likely, therefore, that Behn is dramatising the contemporary grievances about the court, sexual impropriety and prostitution in *The Amorous Prince*.

However, the link between courtiers, pimps and prostitutes had plagued English courts in the past. It is possible, therefore, that Behn was not only thinking of the court's literal role in the prostitution industry, but the very nature of courtiership. As Seth Lerer writes of the Tudor courts,

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[296] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.109.
[297] Behn, *AP*, II. 1. 73–74.
[298] Ibid., IV. 4. 95.
[299] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.107.
[300] Anonymous, *The Gracious Answer of the Most Illustrious Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlem---- To the Poor-Whores Petition* (1662).
[301] Tim Harris, 'The Bawdy House Riots of 1668' in *The Historical Journal*, 29:3 (1986) 537–556 (p.538); Samuel Pepys, March 24, 25, 1668.
[302] Harris, 'The Bawdy House Riots', quoting Samuel Pepys, March 24, 25, 1668 (p.548).

'The courtier is both a pimp and prostitute: a panderer to the desires of the prince, a procurer of women, information and advantage: but also a servant, whose needs have all the wilful manipulations of a whore'.[303] Lerer's observations are partly drawn from Erasmus's advice to courtiers, 'just as skilful courtesans by various pretexts and devices always get something from their lovers, similarly let it be your endeavour always to get something from your prince'.[304] The association of courtiership with prostitution destabilises the masculinity of the courtier. Behn's portrayal of courtiership suggests little changed between the reigns of Henry VIII and Charles II; the character of Lorenzo serves as the most exaggerated portrayal of the morally bankrupt courtier. As Hayden observes, 'Behn draws a subtle parallel to those courtiers engaged in political skirmishes at court, who prostituted themselves to win preferment for lucrative offices'.[305] Even the clown Guillam, recently arrived in town and introduced to the court's circle by Lorenzo, quickly learns the economic value of information. He makes sure that Curtius pays him before he will inform him that his sister has apparently committed suicide: 'Here's Gold for thee,' Curtius is forced to offer, 'I will be secret too'.[306]

Although Lorenzo's character is the simplest example of the double-dealing courtier, Curtius's behaviour has escaped scrutiny in previous studies of *The Amorous Prince*, such as they are. As mentioned before, he is prepared to defer his outrage at the prince's deception of his sister in order to use Frederick's favour in his pursuit of Laura. Curtius's treatment of Cloris prior to the action onstage is a subtle reflection of Lorenzo's treatment of his own sister. Curtius explains he has deliberately kept Cloris from the court to preserve her virtue, 'Without permitting thee to know what Courts meant, / Lest their too powerful temptation / Might have betray'd thy Soul'.[307] However, this brotherly concern jars with the hint in the dialogue that Curtius was actually

[303] Seth Lerer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII: Literary Culture and the Arts of Deceit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p.1.
[304] Ibid., p.5.
[305] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.57.
[306] Behn, *AP*, IV. 2. 134.
[307] Ibid., I. 2. 110–112.

instrumental in Cloris and Frederick's relationship. Cloris tells us, 'It chanc'd Prince Frederick came unto our Village, / On some reports were made him of my beauty, / Attended only by the noble Curtius'.[308] It seems highly suspect Frederick came to the very humble village Cloris happens to live in by such 'chance', considering her brother was in tow. When the play opens, Curtius has knowingly allowed Frederick to visit Cloris at night, without telling his friend the woman he is pursuing is his sister. Despite his later protestations he has gone to great lengths to protect her from the vices of the court, it seems to have been Curtius who led the court to his sister's door. As he waits for Frederick's return from Cloris's cottage, he comforts himself that he although does not like 'these night-works', he is 'confident of Cloris's virtue'.[309] It seems likely Curtius deliberately allowed Frederick access to his sister in the hopes he would marry her, making Curtius brother-in-law to the future duke. Curtius in the *dramatis personae* is only described as a 'friend' of Frederick's, whereas the other male characters are all denoted by titles, lord, nobleman, man etc. If Curtius is not a titled member of the aristocracy, it could explain his motivation for encouraging a relationship between the prince and his sister. His artifice in keeping Cloris from court, and therefore her virginity safe, only then to orchestrate a meeting with the prince certainly points to this. He first seems to encourage the prince's courtship, saying he is 'welcome from Cloris Arms'.[310] However, when he learns Cloris has slept with Frederick he demands to know, 'Is that the way? Had you no other aids? / Made you no promise to her, Sir, of Marriage?' His complicity in Frederick's suit and the bombardment of his questions strongly suggests Curtius tried to use the courtship to further his own political aspirations. Being previously 'confident' in Cloris's virtue, she turns out to have been an uncertain investment. He then changes tactics, deciding he will reveal his family ties to Cloris and thus try 'gentle' means to persuade Frederick to marry her.[311] Curtius is, thus, also prepared to use his sister to further his advancement with the prince; although his political goals are set higher than

[308] Ibid., V. 1. 3–5.
[309] Ibid, I. 2. 2–3.
[310] Ibid, I. 2. 8.
[311] Ibid., I. 2. 133.

Lorenzo's, it no less exposes Curtius's character as a similarly dissembling, morally degenerate courtier.

However, as we have seen before, favour that can be bought and sold is subject to uncertainty. In the *dramatis personae* Lorenzo is described as 'a kind of Favourite to Frederick'. This tentative description foreshadows Lorenzo's uncertain standing with the prince. When Frederick leaves Salvator's house angered that Curtius has just interrupted his attack on Laura, the Prince lashes out at Lorenzo, '*Strikes him and goes out*'.[312] Frederick's violent and dismissive behaviour shows the extreme and capricious nature of royal favour. Lorenzo, a career courtier, is unfazed by this treatment, 'So very well; How Mortal is the favour of / Princes: these be turns of State now: what the / Devil ails he trow; sure he could not be / Offended with the news I have brought him'.[313] Lorenzo's acceptance of Frederick's abuse reveals the cyclical nature of the rise and fall of royal preferment, which can be granted and then, inexplicably, taken away. Without knowing the cause of Frederick's ill-temper, Lorenzo can only speculate as to why he has been so mistreated.

In a play which thus exposes the capricious whim and moral cost of royal preferment, it is significant that Behn addresses the subject of favour in the play's 'Prologue'. She begins by outlining the typical sycophancy and self-deprecation of prologues:

> *Well! you expect a Prologue to the Play,*
> *And you expect it too Petition-way;*
> *With Chapeau bas, beseeching you t'excuse,*
> *A damn'd Intrigue of an unpractic'd Muse;*
> *Tell you it's fortune waits upon your smiles,*
> *And when you frown, Lord how you kill the whiles!* [314]

She follows by referring to the prologue's usual role as a device to heighten the audience's anticipation for the following drama by promising 'more vices […] / Then either Court or City knew

[312] Ibid, III. 2. 6.
[313] Ibid., III. 2. 7-10.
[314] Ibid., 'Prologue', 1-5.

before'.[315] A play relied on the favour of the audience to deem it a success. However, Behn appears to spurn such curried favour, 'my Commission's not to please you now'.[316] She insists her play looks for favour from no one and in turn will not grant favour either, warning it will not please the 'grave Dons' who favour Jonson's style, or those who simply love 'a smutty jest'.[317] Her address to both types of theatre-goer is an allusion to the dual nature of her tragicomic play, 'not serious, nor yet Comick, what is't then?'[318] The ambiguity of genre is fitting to a play of disguise and cross-dressing, in which each character has a hidden motivation. Her aggressive refusal to ask for favour could be a reaction to the fickle goodwill of audiences, which we can liken to the arbitrary, unpredictable royal favour dramatised in the following performance. Behn does not want to be viewed as a sycophant, currying favour with flattery. In truth, however, despite her provocative tone, the commercial playwright Behn did depend financially on the audience's reception and appreciation for her plays.

In *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince*, Behn dramatises how youthful virility and impetuosity without the common enemy of international conflict turns inwards. Comrades and friends become political and romantic rivals on the domestic plane in an ambiguous, deceitful scramble for royal and social reward. In both plays, Behn exposes this natural competitiveness as corrupted by dissatisfaction and uncertainty. Royal prerogative drives the competition in both plots: the King in *The Forc'd Marriage* insists on distinguishing one man above others, and Frederick forces Curtius into a competition for Laura. In both, competition is portrayed as a divisive energy disrupting the unity of the male collective body. If the ceremonial scene at the end of *The Young King* reflects the beginning of *The Forc'd Marriage*, we might see in *The Forc'd Marriage* Behn exploring how the idealised vision of a meritocratic system presided over by royal prerogative might play out once the public ceremony is over. She exposes it as an ambiguous system of reward tainted by jealousy, inviting the audience to view the meritocratic system of kingly reward as a deeply flawed one which

[315] Ibid., 9-10.
[316] Ibid., 12.
[317] Ibid., 13–22.
[318] Ibid., 29.

creates disagreement and political discontent. In *The Amorous Prince*, Behn attacks another system of preferment in men's commodification of women for political advancement. She similarly exposes this scheme of preferment as rife with uncertainty, as fraught with deception and deceit as *The Forc'd Marriage* was troubled by disagreement and subjectivity.

However, within this royally-driven rivalry Behn portrays Phillander and Curtius as rather unwilling participants. Phillander's acquiescence to Alcippus's martial superiority and Curtius's refusal to treat Laura as a sexual conquest suggest an authorial sympathy towards men who do not wish to engage in such contests. More belligerent forces drag them into it, but they emerge the victor. Phillander and Curtius defying the expectations of their peers is one example of how Behn undermines male expectations of their own masculinity in the plays. The war hero Alcippus is reduced to an emotional, effeminate wreck and the Florentine men realise that sexual conquest cannot be bought with their wealth. Behn therefore dramatises Early Modern anxieties surrounding issues of masculinity, in both its fragility in *The Forc'd Marriage*, and its rapacity in *The Amorous Prince*. Frederick embodies the worst aspects of Restoration rakish behaviour, and the male courtiers capitalise on his rapacity as a means of furthering their own socio-political advancements. Behn therefore exposes masculinity as both a capricious concept, and one that is perilous for women, friendship and, as this chapter will go on to explore, political stability.

Royalty's Public and Private Bodies

Absent Kings

In *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince*, a King and a Duke preside over the casts of young men and women. However, whereas Prince-turned-King Orsames was a focal point of Behn's first dramatic attempt, in these plays her king-like figures take a backseat to the trials and tribulations of their sons and subjects. Prior to Pacheco's 2015 article highlighting the complexity of the King's portrayal in *The Forc'd Marriage*, discussion of his character had been limited in most

criticism to his role as a catalyst, as he unknowingly precipitates Alcippus, Phillander and Erminia into the embittered love triangle which forms the drama of the play.[319] Perhaps this, and an even further lack of comment about the *Amorous Prince*'s Duke, is because both characters are either chiefly or entirely absent from the bulk of the onstage drama. The Duke of Florence never actually appears on stage; the audience is only made aware of his existence and his qualities through the fleeting references of other characters: Frederick mentions he would not look favourably upon his marriage to Cloris; Antonio pretends to visit the Duke as an excuse to leave Alberto and Ismena alone together; to Lorenzo he is a 'chapman' even more lucrative than Frederick.[320] When Curtius wants to shame Frederick's actions he invokes the 'great' and 'pure and noble' nature of the Duke.[321] Frederick claims at the start of the play his father's disapprobation is the reason he cannot marry Cloris; however when Frederick visits him at the end of the play to get his blessing to marry Cloris, it is swiftly and easily granted, and in a very short meeting given the amount of time Frederick is offstage.[322] Thus, the Duke is only ever used to further the other characters' own desires; to duck a marriage, to excuse an absence, to shame a wayward son. The prominent role he could have had in blessing Frederick's marriage is reduced to a simple report after Frederick returns from visiting him offstage, 'Cloris shall be welcom to [the Duke's] bosom; / Who'le make him happy in my reformation'.[323] Frederick's performance of this cursory filial duty is a marker of his new-found moral obligation, rather than the reassertion and exertion of any fatherly authority. The Duke's own feelings on the play's events are solely dictated by Frederick, who assures the audience 'To Marry me, is what he long has wish't for, / And will, I know, receive this news with joy'.[324] Throughout the turbulence of Frederick and Curtius's dispute the Duke is holed up at court, entirely absent.

[319] Anita Pacheco, '"Where Lies this Power Divine?": The Representation of Kingship in Aphra Behn's Early Tragicomedies' in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38 (2015) 317–334.
[320] Behn, *AP*, IV. 2. 93
[321] Ibid., V. 3. 148–149.
[322] Ibid., I. 1. 44 and V. 3. 295.
[323] Ibid., V. 3. 296–297.
[324] Ibid., V. 3. 206–207.

Meanwhile, his son rages out of control and is very nearly assassinated by his own courtier and all, it seems, without the Duke's knowledge.

The King in *The Forc'd Marriage* plays a instrumental role in the drama. As discussed above, his insistence on favouring one man above another sets in motion a chain of events that leads to Phillander and Alcippus's conflict. However, for large passages of the play he is noticeably absent. Despite this physical absence, both Todd and Pacheco have interpreted the King's role as a perpetuation of Behn's interest in autocratic rule. Todd suggests his 'arbitrary decree and the exaggerated advancement of favourites' suggests 'the play might have been used to assault autocratic rule of the sort the Stuarts approved'.[325] Pacheco agrees the play is a 'sustained if subtle critique of royal absolutism', and provides a penetrating analysis arguing that the conflict of the drama springs from 'an intimidating atmosphere of royal exclusivity […] buoyed by divine right and a pervasive fear of arousing the king's ire'.[326] However, how far can we describe a king as absolute when he is so oblivious to events at court and absent during most of the action? At the height of the drama, Alcander advises Galatea to retire to her apartment because 'This is no place to make a longer stay in, / The King has many spies about the Prince'.[327] His warning is evidence of the culture of fear surrounding the perceived absolutism of the king. However, these spies never materialise. Despite the belief the prince is surrounded by informers, the King remains the last to know of Phillander and Erminia's relationship. He complains that 'had I known the passion of my son / And how essentiall 'twas to his content, / I willingly had granted my consent' to Phillander and Erminia's marriage.[328] Royal absolutism appears to be a mirage, its power lying in its perception, rather than its actuality. Because of his ignorance, violence and disruption pervade his court, of which he is as unaware as he was the military discontent discussed earlier in the chapter. It seems there is a lot in this play the king does not know concerning the subjects he apparently governs.

[325] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.140
[326] Pacheco, '"Where Lies this Power"', pp.323 and 326.
[327] Behn, *FM*, IV. 9. 147.
[328] Ibid., IV. 7. 80–82.

Pacheco argues that it is the King's overbearing and angry nature that terrifies his subjects into silence. However, Behn shows this ire is not unassailable. She shows the King is susceptible to flattery and manipulation. Phillander tells Galatea,

> Whilst *I* perswade *Erminia* to this flight;
> Make it your business to perswade the King,
> Hang on his neck, and kiss his willing cheek:
> Tell him how much you love him, and then smile,
> And mingle words with kisses; 'twill or'ecome him:
> Thou hast a thousand pretty flatteries.
> Which have appeas'd his highest fits of passion:
> A Song from thee has won him to that rest,
> Which neither toil nor silence could dispose him to.
> Thou know'st thy power, and now or never use it.[329]

Phillander proposes simple, almost guileless manipulation. The kisses and smiles and flatteries 'have appeas'd his highest fits of passion', draw attention to the fact that Galatea's influence has been successful in the past at calming the King's rage. There is also the suggestion that Phillander has manipulated the King's temper. When Alcander wonders whether Alcippus knew of Phillander and Erminia's not-so-secret betrothal, Phillander retorts:

> Know it: yes as well as thou and I:
> The World was full on't, and could he be ignorant:
> Why was her father call'd from banishment,
> And plac'd about the King, but for her sake:
> What made him General, but my passion for her.
> What gave him twenty thousand Crowns a year,
> But that which made me Captive to *Erminia*.[330]

[329] Ibid., IV. 1. 19–28.
[330] Ibid., I. 4. 28–34.

Since the King seems to be the only person in the play who did *not* know his son was desperately in love with Erminia, it seems that Phillander must have found another way to persuade his father to allow Orgulius to return to court. He might have been motivated to do so by his love for Erminia, but this, logically, could not have been how he presented the case to his father. It seems then that when Phillander wrested the staff of generalship from Orgulius and passed it onto Alcippus, it was not the first time he had manipulated his father's decisions regarding the political and military positioning of his own courtiers. Can a King be considered absolute when his son has such power over him?

The King only reappears at the end of Act IV, hounded by an enraged Orgulius seeking justice for his murdered daughter and Galatea pleading mercy for Alcippus. The dialogue is dominated by the two subjects arguing their cases; the King somewhat melts into the background of the scene. He arrives onstage agreeing with Orgulius that Alcippus must die for Erminia's murder; however, under the barrage of Galatea's pleas his resolve weakens. He eventually decides that he will only act once he knows what has become of his son, 'I'le know Phillanders fate ere I proceed, / And if he dye, Alcippus too shall bleed'.[331] The King delays executing justice, and ambiguously suggests justice might only be served if his son has also been a victim of Alcippus's violence. The King appears motivated by a personal and paternal nature, rather than acting as Orgulius begs he do, as the 'the Lover and Protector of [his] people'.[332] He will be moved by personal grievance rather than kingly duty. Easy to manipulate, the King's resolve is therefore at worst mutable, and at best, unpredictable.

The King continues to act in surprising ways. The characters have hidden Phillander and Erminia's engagement from him because they believed the King 'would ne're consent' to a match between a prince and a commoner.[333] Erminia also believes that, similarly, the Princess Galatea would be forbidden from marrying Alcippus since

Your greatness would his just return forbid;

[331] Ibid., IV. 7. 98–99.
[332] Ibid., IV. 7. 34.
[333] Ibid., I. 3. 54.

His humbler thoughts durst ne're to you aspire,
At most he would presume but to admire;
Or if it chanc'd he durst more daring prove,
You still must languish in concealed love.[334]

Surprising everyone, however, the King rebukes this expectation by insisting that had he known about Phillander and Erminia's desire to wed he 'willingly had granted [his] consent' since the royal family has a history of marrying commoners.[335] Critics have found the controversy surrounding royal-commoner weddings historically relevant. Hughes suggests it is possible Behn's 'favourable portrayal of royal marriage to a commoner, defends the York-Hyde marriage, though it is not clear why she should wish to do so'.[336] However, the analogy is not straight-forward, because the Duke of York and Anne Hyde had been married for ten years by the time *The Forc'd Marriage* was performed and there is no obvious reason why Behn should have wished to revisit the origins of their union. Erminia and Phillander's insistence they are married despite the lack of public ceremony could possibly allude to the early days of the York-Hyde relationship, since in 1659 they made a marriage contract which was only formalised the following year. Todd and Hughes point out that in *The Forc'd Marriage* 'such unions are desirable if the commoners are worthy or beautiful; so Behn might have been trying for a compliment to the Duke of York and his wife'. [337] Hayden believes it would have been an outdated endeavour, arguing that the rising opposition to James in 1670, which might support Hughes's interpretation, 'owed less to the social status of his wife than to a general suspicion and fear that he had converted to Catholicism'.[338] Instead, Hayden suggests Behn might have been thinking of Charles II's marriage. In the same year that *The Forc'd Marriage* was

[334] Ibid., I. 2. 102–106.
[335] Ibid., IV. 7. 85–88.
[336] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.15.
[337] Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', p.86. See also Maureen Duffy, *The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn 1640–1689* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977) p.103.
[338] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.77.

produced, Charles personally oversaw a debate in the House of Lords regarding Lord Roos's request for a divorce. The bill was passed, and Hayden posits that the ruling

> raised new hopes for many who were concerned about the number of miscarriages Catherine of Braganza had suffered and had begun to doubt, like Charles himself, that the Queen had ever been pregnant. It had been argued in the Roos debate that divorce should be granted not only for adultery, but also for 'immundicity of the womb'. A royal divorce would put aside the barren Catholic Catherine and allow the King to choose a fruitful Protestant bride.[339]

Hayden draws a link between *The Forc'd Marriage*'s dramatisation of the dissolution of one marriage, replaced by a royal-commoner match, and Charles's love and court support for the commoner Frances Theresa Stuart. Again, however, the link is tenuous, as Frances had married in 1667. Drawing comparisons between the dissolution of Alcippus and Erminia's marriage and the possibility that Charles II could divorce Catherine of Braganza is also a dubious theory, since the play is about a pre-existing contract which supersedes Alcippus's marriage. Hopes of grafting historical occurrences to the events of the play therefore seem futile in this particular instance. A more likely explanation for Behn's focus on commoner-marriages is Pacheco's argument that the King's apparent *volte-face* and reference to previous royal marriage could be his way of shirking responsibility for the tragedy.[340] Todd suggests the King is simply a dramatic device, that he 'needs to be a tyrant to prevent anyone from speaking out at the start of the play', so that the conflict might arise before order is restored by 'a kindly father figure'.[341] Alternatively, the inconsistency of character could be simply a dramatic failure on Behn's part. Logically, after all, the court must have known of the history of royal marriages, and nothing in the King's own dialogue over the course of the play gives any suggestion that he would have refused Phillander's wish to marry Erminia. However, the most likely interpretation is that the play presents an example of the capricious and

[339] Ibid., p.78.
[340] Pacheco, '"Where Lies this Power"', p.327.
[341] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.140.

changeable nature of royal prerogative, subtler but similar to that portrayed through Frederick's inconstant temper in *The Amorous Prince*.

The King's ignorance, susceptibility and unpredictability are all symptomatic of an ailing absolutism. His physical prowess has weakened; he admits to Phillander that he is 'old and feeble / And cannot long survive'.[342] Too aged to lead his army, his royal power now rests solely on his ability to bestow or deny reward and when he is confounded in the performance of this ritual his reaction is indicative of his consciously-failing power. Alcippus insists that he does not need to be rewarded with a literal gift for his military service, since, 'the Duty which we pay your Majesty / Ought to be such, as what we pay the Gods; / Which alwayes bears its recompense about it'.[343] The King, however, refuses to accept this, and persists in offering some reward, warning, 'It is not well to think my kindness limited'.[344] Pacheco explains:

> For the king, the capacity and willingness to bestow his royal bounty on loyal servants are a key signifier of his power, and he is quick to take offence at the slightest suggestion that either his generosity or the resources at his disposal might in fact have limits.[345]

The King's reaction exposes Alcippus's invocation of the divine right of kings as a hollow sentiment. The King refuses to rely on it, understanding that rewarding a soldier's action will 'incourage Bravery' in others.[346] However, Alcippus's reticence causes him to flounder and he quickly grows testy. He does not simply offer reward, he wants Alcippus to tell him what reward he wants. His uncertainty is characteristic of the weakening of his authority, which is physically symbolised when Phillander steps in, taking the general's staff from Orgulius and passing it to Alcippus. As discussed earlier, Phillander's action compensates the King's inaction in this scene. However, it is also a phallic symbol of the transfer of power from the old to the young. As the role of general is passed from the old

[342] Behn, *FM*, V. 3. 8–9.
[343] Ibid., I. 1. 27–29.
[344] Ibid., I. 1. 109.
[345] Pacheco, '"Where Lies This Power"', p.324.
[346] Behn, *FM*, I. 1. 31.

Orgulius to the young Alcippus, so the King's role of gift-giver is subtly usurped by the young prince. Such is the cyclical nature of time: the young grow old and are replaced by the young in turn.

Considering this in another light, Phillander's encroachment on kingly prerogative could be viewed more innocently, as a necessary preparation for the throne which his father willingly concedes because he is conscious his own reign is drawing to a close. When Phillander asks permission to reward Alcippus, the King grants it, 'I like it well, and till thou hast perform'd it, / I will divest my self of all my power, / And give it thee, till thou hast made him great'.[347] Similarly, at the end of the play he instructs Phillander, 'Go, carry on your innocent design, / And when you've done, the last act shall be mine'.[348] This 'last act' is to pardon Alcippus, marry the wayward general to Galatea and finally bless the union of Phillander and Erminia. In both these instances, the King allows Phillander a little power under the proviso the King will then take it back again. However, in context of the King's general lack of knowledge and control over his court's affairs, these small relinquishments of power seem inconsequential. The King seems to welcome Phillander's interventions because it allows him to mask his uncertainty. His indecision is contrasted by his son's proactivity. The King's 'last act' therefore seems a very weak attempt at *deus ex machina*.

The absences of the Duke and the King are dramatically necessary for the conflict of the plays to unfold, allowing the princes and their rivals' enmities to build to an almost fatal climax. Behn's young men can only behave as badly as they do without the watchful eye of parental authority. However, this portrayal of regal absenteeism goes beyond the negligent, to the ineffective; their courts splinter into factions and a political unrest so extreme that it threatens the lives of their sons, their heirs. It was a common belief that that young men needed a paternal figure to guide them on their path to maturity.[349] However, in her exploration of not only paternal but

[347] Ibid., I. 1. 52–54.
[348] Ibid., V. 3. 20–21.
[349] Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, pp.45–7.

kingly authority we might see Behn making a comment upon Charles II's own lack of moral guidance at his court. Todd writes

> Prince Frederick embodies the Stuart doctrine of the divinity of kings, in which the king is responsible to God alone […] But since Frederick is a rake who must be reformed, reverence was coupled with criticism of royal gallantry, which might have arisen from Behn's irritation with a king who had abandoned her penniless, whilst wasting the nation's substance on expensive mistresses.[350]

As we have seen, however, Behn does not actually appear to credit divine right with the 'reverence' Todd suggests here. However, the possibility that Behn's critique of the court was also fuelled by a more personal grievance against Charles is interesting. As Chapter 3 of this thesis explains in more detail, before the start of her playwriting career Behn had served the Crown as a spy in Antwerp from 1666–7. The mission was a tedious, long-drawn-out failure, made far worse by the fact that Behn found herself desperately short of funds with which the Crown was unforthcoming. The Crown's distribution of money had also been the embittered subject of poem attributed to Behn called 'The Complaint of the Poor Cavaliers'. The poem deals with Charles's controversial decision following his Restoration to allow past Parliamentarians to retain the land and wealth they had accumulated during the Civil Wars and Interregnum, at the expense of his royalist supporters who believed such land and wealth should be returned, or rewarded, to themselves. Thus the cavalier feels like a 'Blockhead' for trusting the Crown, and 'has all his Fortune lost'.[351] Whilst absentee kings might on the one hand relate to the idea of the chaos that ensues without a monarchical head of the state, it might also be a commentary about the absence of care in a king's treatment of his subjects whilst he is more concerned with entertaining himself and his closest courtiers with games of sexual conquest.

[350] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.150.
[351] Aphra Behn, 'The Complaint of the poor Cavaliers', ed. by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 1, (London: William Pickering, 1992) p.359, ll.26–7. It is uncertain when Behn wrote the poem (if she did at all) as it was first published in 1701 (see Todd's note to the poem, p.457).

Rebel Princes and Loyal Subjects

Kingly absenteeism is as dramatically necessary for the events of Behn's plots as it is part of her wider political commentary. In their absence, the misuse of and opposition to royal prerogative can be represented by the young princes and their adversaries. This allows Behn to temper the inflammatory portrayals of royal authority and rebellion that exist in both plays by exploring it within the confines of the younger generation. In both plays she presents princely privilege as highly problematic. Both plays contain a romantic rivalry between a prince and a subject, which flares up into violence and accusations of treason. Whilst Curtius deals with Frederick's abuse of power in *The Amorous Prince*, in *The Forc'd Marriage* Phillander occupies an increasingly ambiguous political position in which he is not only a wronged lover, but also a rebellious prince. In the princes' morally and politically questionable actions, Behn continues to explore the fallibility of the divine right of kings.

The Forc'd Marriage can be interpreted as a Restoration analogy in which Alcippus, the 'high, bold Rebel' seizes the subject Erminia from her rightful husband, the royal prince.[352] As Hayden writes, Erminia's unwillingness and resistance against the Cromwellian figure of General Alcippus re-historicises the role of the nation during the civil wars and Interregnum, 'absolving once again the guilt of their participation'.[353] It is a convincing interpretation in many respects. Erminia, hand on heart, protests that Galatea would be wrong to think 'Ought but Phillander can inhabit here'.[354] Refiguring her own body as a kind of territory, we could read this as a metaphor for the nation. Against her protests, Alcippus makes increasingly violent attempts to consummate his marriage, entering this territory by force, filled with political overtones: 'She takes the party of her Prince'.[355] More worryingly, his words convey images of usurpation, 'By slow degrees, I might approach that

[352] Ibid., V. 2. 67.
[353] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.68.
[354] Behn, *FM*, I. 2. 123–124.
[355] Ibid., II. 3. 27.

Throne, / Where now the blest Phillander reigns alone'.[356] Erminia's physical body is the site of contention which prince and subject jockey to own and, therefore, can easily be read as a metaphor for throne and state.

However, reading *The Forc'd Marriage* as a simple reinterpretation of Cromwell's seizure of power does not accommodate the fact that Alcippus's political ambitions stop short after obtaining the woman beloved of his prince. Alcippus's similarities to Cromwell pale in comparison with those of Behn's later villain Abdelazer, whose aspirations are presented as far more astutely Cromwellian. By contrast, Alcippus is single-mindedly focused on Erminia. He does not ask for his military promotion, looking on it 'amazedly' and he shuns the love of Princess Galatea which would raise him to royalty and, in the end, he is forgiven by the court.[357] His violent treatment of Erminia is motivated purely by unreciprocated passion, rather than political machinations. Although Alcander believes that Alcippus 'with the Prince an equal welcome found, / Was with like Garlands, tho' less merit, crown'd', Alcippus cannot be accused of seeking these garlands for the sake of political advancement, only romantic fulfilment.[358]

Instead, I argue that viewing Alcippus as simply a rebel subject sidelines the complex socio-political and moral ambiguity of Phillander's own actions in the play. Phillander frequently accuses Alcippus of rape, promising to 'Force the bold Ravisher to resign my right. / Alcander, is she not my wife, and I his Prince?'[359] Rape, as Jocelyn Catty explains, derives from the Latin *rapere*, to seize, and had Early Modern connotations of property theft.[360] In seizing what belongs to the prince, Alcippus has not only ravished a woman, but one considered the prince's property, which of course has connotations in this period of political overthrow harking back to the Interregnum. However, interestingly, Alcippus also accuses Phillander of rape. He describes finding Phillander in his

[356] Ibid., II. 3. 27 and 100–101.
[357] Ibid., I. 2. 55.
[358] Ibid., I. 1. 146–147.
[359] Ibid., II. 7. 78–79.
[360] Jocelyn Catty, *Writing Rape: Writing Women in the Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) p.6.

bedchamber with Erminia 'all disorder'd like ravisher'.[361] Both Phillander and Alcippus regard Erminia as their wife and therefore their property, any attempt on her by the other making their rival the ravisher. Although Behn champions Phillander's prior claim to Erminia, her portrayal of the prince's tribulations offers an alternative view of Phillander's actions and his character. In effect, Phillander is pursuing a married woman, a woman who has been married by the King and a 'holy Priest'.[362] His justification for doing so is his belief that he is *already* married to Erminia, as Alcippus confesses 'he said, Erminia, that you were his wife'.[363] This means that the validity of both marriages is socially and legally ambiguous. When Erminia pleads with her father, she begs him to 'permit your daughter to *become* [Phillander's] wife'.[364] The couple seem to be both married and not married at the same time. Phillander and Erminia's struggle lies in convincing the other characters of the validity of their private marriage vows, which were unsanctioned by king or priest.

An audience might, then, regard Alcippus's position with a degree of understanding, if not sympathy. By legal definition, Erminia is his wife. As he asks:

> Erminia, is this brave or just in you,
> To pay his score of love with what's my due:
> What's your design to treat me in this sort,
> Are sacred Vows of Marriage made your sport?[365]

In Erminia's dilemma Behn dramatises the contemporary ambiguity of what constituted a valid marriage. As Sheryl Nadler explains, there existed:

> two conflicting bodies of law regarding marriage, the canonical law of the early Middle ages, which permitted oral private marriage vows, and the Church law of the Renaissance, which insisted that public, ritualized weddings had to take place if a

[361] Behn, *FM*, IV. 6. 119.
[362] Two references to the 'holy priest' and his role in sanctifying the marriage are made, the first by Phillander (II. 1. 48) and the second by Alcippus (III. 3. 105). In a third instance, Pisauro asks Alcippus if he did see how unhappy Galatea was, 'whilst the Priest / Was giving thee to fair Erminia' (III. 1. 70–71).
[363] Behn, *FM*, II. 3. 34.
[364] Ibid., I. 3. 70. [Emphasis added].
[365] Ibid., II. 3. 46–49.

> marriage were to be recognized as legal. Since the latter often clashed with the former, people sometimes innocently found themselves guilty of bigamy.[366]

Erminia's refusal to reciprocate Alcippus's declaration of love or to consummate *their* marriage goes some way towards safeguarding the validity of her 'oral private marriage vows', as Nadler describes them, which she made with Phillander. As Erminia protests, 'My heart before you ask't it, was his prize, / And cannot twice become a sacrifice'.[367] Behn addresses this conflict again in *The Amorous Prince*, when Curtius tries to persuade Frederick not to pursue Laura as the Prince should consider himself 'already marryed' by his promises to Cloris.[368] Behn presents promises of marriage as binding oaths, superseding any subsequent vows like the ones Erminia is compelled to make in *The Forc'd Marriage*.

Behn's sympathies clearly lie with Phillander and Erminia's plight, as would have, according to both Nadler and Todd, the bulk of her audience's. Nadler explains that in the 1670s 'the majority of middle and upper classes probably already supported the idea of affective marriage, but many people still could not put it into practice'.[369] Todd writes, 'the theme of forced marriage outwitted, both a conventional concern and idiosyncratic obsession […] provided alternatives to the single legal marriage supported by parental power, which so many of her audience had complacently experienced'.[370] However, what is most interesting in Behn's dramatisation of the conflict between the two states of marriage is how it acts as a catalyst, putting Prince Phillander in a politically dubious and ostracised position. Unlike the 'marriage' of Phillander and Erminia, the audience witnesses Alcippus's marriage for themselves, and the way Behn stages it has surprising implications for Phillander's character:

The REPRESENTATION of the WEDDING

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[366] Sheryl Nadler, 'Aphra Behn's Conflicted View of Marriage in *The Town Fop*', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre Research*, 9:1 (1994) 34–50 (p.38).
[367] Behn, *FM*, II. 3. 44–45.
[368] Ibid., III. 3. 116.
[369] Nadler, 'Aphra Behn's Conflicted View', p.39.
[370] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.139.

> *The Curtain must be let down; and soft Musick must play: the Curtain being drawn up, discovers a Scene of a Temple: The King sitting on a Throne, bowing down to join the hands of* Alcippus *and* Erminia, *who kneel on the steps of the Throne; the Officers of the Court and Clergy standing in order by, with* Orgulius. *This within the Scene. Without on the Stage,* Phillander *with his sword half-drawn, held by* Galatea.[371]

The wedding scene has all the trappings of magisterial authority. In a temple Alcippus and Erminia are physically united by the King, with clergymen standing by and Phillander and Galatea visually ostracised to the outskirts of the tableau. Hughes describes this as a:

> ceremonial exercise of authority which manifestly overrides the lives and aspirations of those who are forced to participate in its choreography, and by using the proscenium arch to separate the desirers from the objects of desire Behn creates a great fissure within the ceremony itself.[372]

Thus, Phillander stands on the periphery of the marriage scene, but also now metaphorically on the edge of political approbation; his pose is of extreme resistance rather than subjugation. He stands with a sword half-drawn, held back by Galatea. The stage direction implies that without physical restraint Phillander would interrupt this religious ceremony with violence. Therefore, it is Phillander, and not Alcippus, who first threatens the domestic setting of the court with violence. This threat, and his refusal to recognise a marriage which has been ordained by the very king himself, is seditious. In attempting to draw his sword and interrupt a ceremony presided over by the king, he is offering a direct political challenge. Furthermore, as he grows more frustrated, his words become full of rebellious intent:

> And must she now be ravish't from my Arms;
> Will you *Erminia* suffer such a Rape.
> What tho' the King have said it shall be so,
> 'Tis not his pleasure can become thy Law,
> No, nor it shall not.
> And though he were my God as well as King,

[371] Behn, *FM*, II. 1.
[372] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.33.

I would instruct thee how to disobey him;
Thou shalt, *Erminia*, bravely say, I will not;
He cannot force thee to't against thy will:
---Oh Gods, shall duty to a King and Father,
Make thee commit a Murther on thy self?[373]

Phillander's challenging remarks about his father's authority are a direct affront to the divine right of kings. To Phillander, even the word of his father cannot validate Alcippus's marriage and he plots to contravene the King's decree. Here, Behn allows Phillander to stray into politically dangerous territory.

Alcippus is then one rebel in a court rife with rebellious resentment. Alcander challenges his new general's authority, 'What is't that he can do, which I'le decline[?]'; Alcippus threatens Phillander, 'That y'are my Prince shall not defend you here, / Draw Sir, for I have laid respect aside'; Phillander plots to disobey the King, 'though he were my God as well as King, / I would instruct thee how to disobey him'.[374] The hierarchy of the court is being undermined on every level: soldiers no longer respect generals, generals no longer respect their princes, and princes no longer respect their kings. The King's attempt to restore peace by invoking divine right is therefore almost laughable:

Behold him well, *Alcippus*, 'tis your Prince.
---Who dares gaze on him with irreverend eyes?
The good he does you ought t'adore him for,
But all his evills 'tis the Gods must punish,
Who made no Laws for Princes.[375]

It is ironic that Phillander's defeat of his rival might rest on the very divine right he himself had questioned. However, given how far sedition has overrun the court, the King harking back to divine right is, for want of a better phrase, fighting to close the stable door against a horse that really wants to bolt. The real *dea ex machina* is Erminia, whose ghostly wanderings about the court after Alcippus

[373] Behn, *FM*, I. 4. 9–19.
[374] Ibid., I. 1. 153; II. 7. 61–62; I. 4. 14–15.
[375] Ibid., V. 5. 84–88.

believes he has murdered her finally drive the rebel general to such a state of psychological strain that he loses all his passion and regains a sense of humility. However, Alcippus is not to blame for the court's dissent into anarchy. Behn places this blame firmly on the King, in two respects. First, because he devises a system where one man must take precedence over another, an apparently meritocratic system that in reality breeds disagreement and resentment and is open to abuse, as when Alcippus uses it to steal Erminia from the prince. Second, because the King is so oblivious to the goings-on at his court that he unwittingly assists Alcippus in stealing Erminia. Behn presents the King as so ignorant, so open to manipulation, that it is he who is the very real danger to the court's stability. In *The Young King* she presented divine right as a dangerous ideology, breeding tyranny. Here, she presents it as simply an ineffectual crux upon which the King rests his authority, inclined to break at any moment beneath the weight of personal and political discontent.

Behn also pits a disenchanted subject against royal prerogative in *The Amorous Prince*, continuing her interest in probing the nature of divine right. However, in this play she also raises the stakes. Curtius is not dealing with an uninformed but well-meaning monarch as in *The Forc'd Marriage*, or a tyrannous but naïve prince like Orsames, but with the wilful, deliberate abuse of royal power. From beguiling innocent country maids, Frederick's rapacity takes an even darker turn as he next attempts to seduce and then rape Curtius's fiancée, Laura. At this point, his immoral sexual behaviour metastasises from a single site of political tyranny into a body-wide cancer as he uses his princely status to justify his actions. Laura protests that she 'told [Frederick] of the vows I'de made to Curtius, / But he reply'd that Curtius was a subject'.[376] Frederick's dismissal of the 'vows' of Curtius's prior claim is tyrannous. His pursuit of an unwilling woman coupled with his disregard for the 'vows' is a much more simplified version of the complex conflict between betrothals and marriages in *The Forc'd Marriage*. In this play, Behn simplifies the issue. Frederick has absolutely no claim, emotional or otherwise, over Laura. He simply believes his sexual desire outranks the sacred

[376] Ibid., II. 2. 164–165.

vows of others. In believing so, he forces his subjects, Curtius and Laura, into a complicated situation, torn between their respect for Frederick's status and the need to defend their own lives.

Behn also emphasises how defenceless wronged subjects are in the face of the royal misuse of power. As Curtius contemplates the loss of his sister's honour he asks, 'And shall not I revenge the loss of it? It is but common Justice'.[377] However, in the absence of the Duke, Frederick is the highest political and legal authority. As a punishment for preventing the rape, Curtius is 'proclaim'd Traytor' by the Prince.[378] Hughes explains:

> Frederick controls the terminology, able to proclaim the innocent Curtius a traitor for opposing his will. Judicial redress fails and, with the masquerade of apparent whores and thugs, Curtius can only turn the tables on Frederick, trapping him in a descent into violence and whoredom that mirrors his own mismanagement of the kingdom. Only here, amidst this symbolism of anarchy, can the ruler be authoritatively accused of 'crime'.[379]

With no legal recourse and in a state of emotional despair, Curtius therefore hatches a plot to assassinate Frederick with a group of, what he believes to be, hired bravados. Hughes continues,

> The criticism of misused power is new in its complexity, and raises a question which was increasingly to dominate drama until the deposition of James II: how can subjects cope with, or even intelligibly talk about, a ruler who remains the arbiter of justice but whose conduct is, in any normal understanding of the term, criminal? [380]

As in *The Young King* and *The Forc'd Marriage*, Behn confronts once again the complicated quandary of how subjects can reconcile their political reverence and sense of obligation to their royals when those royals behave with less than admirable conduct. However, Orsames's tyranny was born out of naïveté and a damaging religious education. Although he behaved tyrannously during his trial reign, he was not actually invested with any real authority at the time and was therefore easily drugged and deposed. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, the King is similarly ignorant, and is neither violent nor

[377] Ibid., I. 2. 131–132.
[378] Ibid., IV. 2. 6.
[379] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.45.
[380] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn,* p.45.

malicious in his conduct. By contrast, Behn escalates the predicament of princely abuse of power in *The Amorous Prince* with a prince who wields his power against Curtius and Laura knowingly and violently. In Curtius, the subject is no longer a grumbling soldier, or a general whose reason has been mangled by jealousy and madness, but a loyal friend pushed to his limits by the purely abhorrent behaviour of his prince to the brink of murder: 'were it permitted me to kill this Prince, / This false perfidious Prince'.[381].

So, how does Behn resolve the issue of dealing with a prince whose deportment is less than princely? Curtius grapples with this issue throughout the play:

> ---And he who injures me, has power to do so;
> ---But why, where lies this power about this man?
> Is it his charms of Beauty, or of Wit?
> Or that great name he has acquir'd in War?
> Is it the Majesty, that Holy something,
> That guards the person of this Demi-god?
> This awes not me, there must be something more,
> For ever when I call upon my wrongs;
> Something within me pleads so kindly for him,
> As would perswade me that he could not erre.
> ---Ah, what is this? where lies this power divine,
> That can so easily make a slave of mine?[382]

How can he be both 'but a man' and a 'Demi-god'? One clever way Behn attempts to resolve this issue is to draw a clear distinction between the prince's symbolic royal body and his physical body with its literal actions. When Laura fights off Frederick's rape she draws a dagger and begs him to hold off, 'Or I'l forget you are my Prince'.[383] By contrast, Alcippus abandons all deference for princely power when he draws his sword on Phillander, 'That y'are my Prince shall not defend you here /

[381] Behn, *AP*, I. 2. 121–122.
[382] Ibid., IV. 2. 151–162.
[383] Ibid., III. 1. 70.

Draw Sir, for I have laid respect aside', Laura expresses a conditional respect for royalty. In the face of royal abuse, she warns Frederick that the status and respect she accords his position are entirely dependent upon his conduct. When Curtius bursts in, his confrontation with the prince continues to explore this attitude:

Curtius:
How! the Prince! arm'd against *Laura* too!
[Draws.]

Frederick:
Traytor, dost draw upon thy Prince?

Curtius
Your Pardon Sir, I meant it on a Ravisher.
[Bows.]
A foul misguided Villain.
One that scarce merits the brave name of Man.
One that betrays his friend, forsakes his Wife;
And would commit a Rape upon my Mistress.

Frederick:
Her presence is thy safety, be gone and leave me.

Curtius:
By no means Sir; the Villain may return;
To which fair *Laura* should not be expos'd.

Frederick:
Slave darst thou disobey?
[Offers to fight.]
Curtius:
Hold Sir, and do not make me guilty of a sin,

Greater then that of yours.[384]

As Laura warns that Frederick's persistence will force her to 'forget' he is her prince, so Curtius warns that that by Frederick's actions he uncrowns and unmans himself. When Frederick reminds him that drawing a sword against a prince is treasonous, Curtius points out that he does not draw against Frederick as a prince, but Frederick as a would-be rapist. And a rapist, he points out, 'scarce merits the brave name of Man'. Therefore, he offers Frederick the chance to realise his actions are at odds with his station by referring to him in the third person: 'the Villain may return'. Princes should not be 'villains', but by distancing the symbolic body of the prince from his literal, physical actions, Curtius can morally justify his use of armed resistance. *The Amorous Prince* serves a warning to royalty that the abuse of power jeopardises the perceived integrity of their royal person and the protection and loyalty it affords them.

Thus, Curtius is disillusioned about the ideology of divine right. However, 'something' within him 'pleads so kindly' for the prince that he cannot entirely shake his political and fraternal loyalty. I contend that here Behn is not referring to a sense of persistent monarchical mystique, but more to the power of male amity. Curtius frequently refers to Frederick as a friend, not just a prince, one 'to whom my Soul is ty'd by friendship'.[385] Furthermore, Curtius is not only a subject and friend, but also a brother: 'Yet what's a Friend, a name above a Sister? / Is not her Honour mine?'[386] Behn demonstrates, however, that friendships are like kingly prerogative; they do not in reality exist within a social vacuum. Subjects' loyalties cannot be entirely consumed by their duties to their royals because they exist within a complicated framework of other allegiances and duties, to their sisters or their lovers. In *The Amorous Prince* Behn dramatises how a member of a royal family cannot exert autocratic rule by imposing on these familial and romantic bonds, as Frederick tries to do, without

[384] Ibid., III. 1. 73–85.
[385] Ibid., I. 2. 128.
[386] Ibid., I. 2. 129–130.

alienating even the most loyal of their subjects. Like the King in *The Forc'd Marriage*, rulers need to be mindful and respectful of their subjects' lives.

Conclusion

In her plays Behn presents the audience with a politically-charged portrayal of young men's capacity for immorality. Just as she examines an idealised vision of kingship, contrary to that found in the court of Charles II in *The Young King*, so in her next two plays she explores the nature not only of kingship but of men themselves, their homosocial bonds and political structures to explore the possible reasons for the failures of male governance. In her portrayal of Alcippus's and Frederick's lack of self-control she dramatises anxieties about the seventeenth-century male's individual body: one suited to bellicosity, albeit prone to impetuosity, but also fallible and immoral. Whereas previous research like Pacheco's explores how Behn exposes the concept of the divine right of kings as a dangerous illusion, this chapter has explored how Behn exposes the predication of masculine virtue on martial and sexual prowess as an equally fallible system of socio-political prestige. In *The Forc'd Marriage* she problematizes the simple act of kingly gift-giving by revealing how the idealised vision of a community founded on a natural meritocracy is, in reality, complicated by subjectivity and ambiguity, and thus leads to political discontent. In *The Amorous Prince* she presents a different system of preferment, based on economics, and in turn exposes that as a morally bankrupt and often fruitless endeavour open to abuse and corruption. Presiding over these political systems are ailing and absent figures of detached and uninvolved royal authority. In these fathers and their wayward sons Behn continues with an exploration of the divine right of kings. In *The Young King*, she portrayed it as the breeding ground for tyranny. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, she subtly derides it as an ageing King's last, and ineffectual, resort as he tries to hold onto his power. In *The Amorous Prince*, she portrays it as a shattered illusion, documenting the subjects' struggle to align hypothetical doctrine with the reality of the worst of human behaviour.

Therefore, in *The Young* King, *Forc'd Marriage* and *Amorous Prince* Behn does not appear to hold the symbolic royal body in and of itself in high esteem. The only royal body that counts is the literal one, and it can only be esteemed to the extent that it is moral. As Hayden writes, 'the monarchical mystique is clearly threatened by the Prince's immoral behaviour: deprived of his mystique, Frederick has little that seems divine about him, so that he appears common'.[387] I would suggest that Behn herself believes very little in any such 'mystique' to begin with. None of her kings or princes in these plays meet the required standards; they might reform and end the play better men than they started, but their need to do so is simply further proof of their fallibility to start with. In this respect, her continual emphasis on Frederick's youth not only serves as a commentary on the Early Modern anxieties about the behaviour of young men, or the criticisms of Charles II's court, but also highlights Behn's seeming belief that a prince or king is 'but a man' like any other.[388]

[387] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.102.
[388] Behn, *AP*, II. 1. 80.

CHAPTER 3: THE BOOR AND THE WHORE

FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY IN *THE DUTCH LOVER*

The Forc'd Marriage and *The Amorous Prince* end with their sights set on future warfare. The King invites his court to celebrate, 'And when w' are weary of the lazy play, / We'll search abroad to find new Conquests out', and Frederick promises his new-found maturity 'shall be sacrific'd to War and Love'.[389] It is difficult not to view these heroic sentiments with a degree of cynicism, especially as the political crisis in *The Forc'd Marriage* evolves from the difficulty of proportioning the 'victories and spoil' of warfare amongst its soldiers.[390] Alvin Snider suggests such sentiments might well have been viewed 'with suspicion or outright derision' by the Restoration London audience.[391] However, in reality and hindsight, the endings of these plays were actually prophetic; by April 1672 England was at war with the Dutch.

Written during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, *The Dutch Lover* has been often interpreted as wartime propaganda and frequently linked to Dryden's jingoistic tragedy *Amboyna* in discussion of its anti-Dutch sentiments.[392] Hayden writes that Behn's 'concern is to provide propaganda for the war', and Christopher D. Gabbard states the 'play served as wartime propaganda'.[393] It is an understandable conclusion to draw, given the play's wartime context and Behn's creation of the

[389] Behn, *FM*, V. 5. 253–54 and *AP*, V. 3. 374.
[390] Behn, *FM*, V. 5. 259.
[391] Alvin Snider, 'Aphra Behn's *The Forc'd Marriage* at Lincoln Inn's Field' in *Studies in Philology*, 115:1 (2018) 193–217 (p.196).
[392] Aphra Behn, *The Dutch Lover*, ed. by Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 5, (London: William Pickering, 1996) pp.158–238. The exact date of the play's premiere is uncertain, although Todd claims in her edition of the play that it was performed 6 February 1673 at Dorset Garden (p.158).
John Dryden, *Amboyna*, (London: Printed for Henry Herringman, 1673)
[393] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.127; Christopher D. Gabbard, 'Clashing Masculinities in Aphra Behn's *The Dutch Lover*' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 47:3 (2007) pp.557–72 (p.557).

eponymous, bumbling Dutchman Haunce van Ezel. Echoing the pejorative portrayals of the Dutch in other plays and pamphlets from the period, aspects of Restoration Hollandophobia are woven into the fabric of Haunce's ridiculous apparel and attitude. Todd declares, 'Behn had no love for the Dutch who […] stood for what she most deplored in society: mercenariness, acquisitiveness and vulgarity'.[394] However, very few characters in *The Dutch Lover* are who they first appear to be, and Haunce is no different. A reappraisal of his actions reveals a far more likeable, even honourable, character than the reports of his fellow characters would first lead an audience to believe, undermining the supposition Behn was writing in support of the war and with as much disdain for the Dutch as we might originally conclude. Instead, her comedy of assumed and interchangeable identities explores national stereotypes as a paradigm predicated on unreliable foundations of assumptions and artificiality. Just as Haunce's identity is a confused construction of deceit and disguise, so is Hippolyta's: a woman who has been forced to adopt the disguise of a Venetian courtesan by her vengeful lover Antonio. Both the perceived boor and whore's senses of self are commandeered for the personal motivations of others, and they struggle to reassert their identities in a milieu of mistaken who's-who. In this play, Behn seems less interested in analogies of foreign wars and alliances, than she is in the personal, the familial and the domestic. Hippolyta's flight from her ferocious brother and lover, and Silvio's violent pursuit of the woman he believes to be his sister, suggests Behn was far more interested in England's internal politics than she was in its foreign adversary.

The Play, the Third Dutch War and Restoration Hollandophobia

The Dutch Lover begins with Colonel Alonzo arriving in Madrid to seek out his former comrade Marcel, whom he met whilst serving in the Spanish army in Flanders. Alonzo, his impressive military career compensating for the ignominy of his birth, has been invited to marry Marcel's sister, Hippolyta. Shortly after arriving however, Alonzo is lured into a web of scheming women, resentful

[394] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.165.

brothers, hot-headed duels and farcical night-time assignations. The woman he intended to marry, Hippolyta, has been seduced by the villainous Antonio and is hiding from her brother's fury in a bordello, disguised as a courtesan. Meanwhile, Euphemia is set to marry the foppish Dutchman Haunce van Ezel. She recruits Alonzo to dress up as and imitate Haunce in all his ridiculous glory to convince her father to dissolve the engagement. The plot is chiefly inspired by the 'The History of Eufemie and Teodore', a chapter from a Spanish romance, *The History of Don Fenise*, by Francisco de Quintana (writing under the pseudonym Francisco de las Coveras), which was translated into English 'by a person of honour' in 1651.[395] In 'Eufemie and Teodore', Leonard, a Valencian gentleman, plans to wed his sister Eufemie to his friend Don Alonso. However, he runs afoul of Don Pedro, who seduces Eufemie into running away with him to Madrid where he installs her as a courtesan. Leonard pursues them to the city, where he meets Teodore. Teodore is being forced to marry a country bumpkin called Don Martin Elizalde. She persuades Leonard to dress up in Don Martin's rustic clothes and convince her father he is her betrothed. In her dramatisation of the romance, Behn deconstructs the narratives of *Don Fenise* by reassigning aspects of the plot to a variety of new characters. Amongst the many changes Behn makes, she promotes her unpopular fiancé, Haunce, to a far more significant role. His character raises the most interesting questions critics face when studying the play, as a dramatic representation of a Dutchman at a time when England was at war with the Dutch.

Attempting to understand Behn's portrayal of Haunce involves considering public, parliamentarian and Behn's own personal perceptions of the Third Anglo-Dutch War. In January 1668 England and the United Provinces had formed an alliance to support Spain against French expansionism. However, in 1670 Charles II had decided to form a new alliance with Catholic France. In what is known as the Secret Treaty of Dover, and in return for French subsidies, Charles agreed to become an ally of France against the United Provinces and promised to announce his conversion to

[395] *The History of Don Fenise. A New Romance, Written in Spanish by Francisco de las Coveras. Now Englished by a Person of Honour* (London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley, 1651) pp.60–87.

Catholicism.[396] At the beginning of the war, therefore, there was parliamentary and mercantile concern over French imperialism, Catholic resurgence and the existing Anglo-Dutch trade agreements. On 11 November 1671, five months before war was officially declared, the MP Joseph Williamson gloomily prophesised,

> We go into a Dutch war now with more disadvantage than the last Quare. Now it is taken we go in for the sake of Frances etc. the merchants do not allow they are aggrieved by the Dutch, but think it is a French trick. Even the [Cavaliers] dread a war and ominate ill.[397]

C.R. Boxer writes:

> Louis XIV's increasingly obvious designs on the Spanish Netherlands, and Colbert's protectionist tariff policies, were hurting both English and Dutch interests. The Triple Alliance, fragile as it proved in practice, had been warmly welcomed by the great majority of Dutchmen and Englishmen, as is perfectly clear from many contemporary sources besides Pepys's Diary.[398]

Rebecca S. Wolsk explains that at the start of the war parliament 'resent[ed] what they viewed as French exploitation of the English fleet'.[399] It is harder to quantify what public opinion was. John Spurr believes it was initially eager: 'enthusiasm for the war seemed remarkably high among the people; several observers commented on the willingness of seamen to volunteer for the King's service'.[400] By contrast, Boxer's analysis of primary sources from the time points out

> The *London Gazette* naturally published optimistic reports about the large numbers of men who were cheerfully volunteering their services; but these assertions were implicitly contradicted in the columns of the same paper by the publication of two

[396] Hutton, *Charles II*, p.71.
[397] *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1671* [Available at British History Online]. 'Ominate' is a, now, obsolete verb meaning 'to serve as an omen' (Oxford English Dictionary online).
[398] C. R. Boxer, 'Some Second Thoughts on the Third Anglo-Dutch War, 1672–1674', *Transactions of the Royal Historical* Society, 19 (1969) 67–94 (p.70).
[399] Rebecca S. Wolsk, 'Muddy Allegiance and Shiny Booty: Aphra Behn's Anglo-Dutch Politics', *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 17 (2004) 1–33 (p.6).
[400] John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: 'This Masquerading Age'* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000) p.29.

> royal proclamations, complaining of the high rate of desertion and enacting severe penalties for deserters and all those who harboured them.[401]

However, there is a more confident consensus that, by the summer of 1673, enthusiasm or doubt about the war had hardened into 'virtually unanimous condemnation'.[402] Historians have posited various theories to explain the change of opinion. Carl Ekberg blamed military failure.[403] K. H. D. Haley proposed that the distribution of Dutch propagandist Pierre Du Moulin's pamphlet *England's appeal from the private cabal at Whitehall to the great council of the nation* in the summer of 1673 'did more than anything else to identify the French alliance in foreign affairs with the danger of Popery at home, and consequently to lead public opinion and the Country Party in Parliament to turn against the war'.[404] Both theories have since been contested by revisionist historians like Steven C. A. Pincus and Ronald Hutton, Hutton convincingly arguing that, above all else, the Duke of York's Catholic conversion was the most important factor in the change of public opinion: 'As soon as they became aware that the heir presumptive was a Catholic by conversion, the attack on the Dutch acquired quite a different meaning for many'.[405] James's conversion exacerbated the belief England was only waging war for the sake of Catholic interests and expansionism.

Whatever the reasons for the hardening of public opinion, the plays of 1672–1673 are full of references to the war and anti-Dutch sentiments, offering their dramatic voices of support for the King's cause. Behn's *Dutch Lover* appeared c. February 1673, before the watershed of public opinion but at the start of a contentious parliamentary session that saw Charles wrangling with parliament for money to continue the war. Scholarship on *The Dutch Lover* frequently compares it to John Dryden's *Amboyna* — the most famous, or infamous, example of Hollandophobia and jingoism in

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[401] Boxer, 'Some Second Thoughts', p.75.
[402] Steven C. A. Pincus, 'From Butterboxes to Wooden Shoes: The Shift in English Popular Sentiment from Anti-Dutch to Anti-French in the 1670s', *The Historical Journal*, 38.2 (1995) 333–61 (p.333).
[403] Carl J. Ekberg, *The Failure of Louis IX's Dutch War* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1979) p.153–54.
[404] K. H. D. Haley, *William of Orange and the English Opposition*, *1672–1674* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953) p.90 in reference to *England's appeal from the private cabal at White-Hall to the great council of the nation, the Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled. By a True lover of his Country* (1673).
[405] Hutton, *Charles II*, p.308.

drama during the war.[406] Dryden's tragedy is undeniably propagandist: dedicated to, and perhaps also commissioned by, Lord Thomas Clifford, who had been one of the chief negotiators of the Secret Treaty of Dover. Exactly when it was performed is a matter of some dispute. Paulina Kewes, Robert D. Hume, Derek Hughes and Joseph F. Stephenson date it to c. May 1672.[407] James Anderson Winn argues it was written and performed, like Behn's *Dutch Lover*, in February 1673 during the debates in parliament, because Dryden's published preface states the play had been rushed, 'contriv'd and written in a moneth, the Subject barren, the Persons low, and the Writing not heightened with many laboured Scenes', suggesting it had been written at the behest of his benefactor for immediate political usage.[408] However, Stephenson makes a compelling argument that a November 1672 puppet show by Antonio di Voto called 'The Dutch Cruelties at Amboyna' seems to have been censored for taking 'material from an existing play, and Dryden's *Amboyna* is the only likely candidate', therefore it seems likely *Amboyna* predates the *The Dutch Lover*.[409] Although the rush job might imply Dryden was writing for immediate political purposes, paraliamentary disaffection had been in the air long before the contentious debates of 1673.

Although the date might be unclear, Dryden's feelings towards the Dutch are not. The play is a graphic indictment of the 'barbarous' rape, torture and unsanctioned execution that native women, Japanese soldiers and English merchants suffered at the hands of the Dutch in Amboyna (present-day, Indonesian province, Maluku) in 1623.[410] The violence is unparalleled in Restoration

[406] 'Hollandophobia/Hollandophobic' – a term coined by Simon Sharma in *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana, 1988). For examples of comparisons between *Amboyna* and *The Dutch Lover* see Gabbard, 'Clashing Masculinities', p.557; Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.130; Todd, *Secret Life*, pp.165–6;

[407] Paulina Kewes, 'Dryden's theatre and the passions of politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. by. Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.131–55 (p.140); Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) p.223; Derek Hughes, *English Drama 1660–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p.91; and Joseph F. Stephenson, 'Redefining the Dutch: Dryden's Appropriation of National Images from Renaissance Drama in *Amboyna*', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700*, 38.2 (2014) 63–81 (p.77).

[408] James Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and his World* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1987) p.239; Dryden, *Amboyna*, sigs A4r.

[409] Stephenson, 'Redefining the Dutch', p.77.

[410] Dryden, *Amboyna*, p.33.

drama: the native woman Ysabinda is found onstage still bound to the tree she was raped under in the 'first scene of accomplished rape in Restoration drama'.[411] Elsewhere, doors are opened to discover 'the English tortur'd, and the Dutch tormenting them'.[412] The Dutch governor presides over the horror with sadistic glee: 'I'le take the pains my self to see these Tortur'd'.[413] The treacherous Dutch delight in their 'most unheard of Cruelties', their villanious portrayal seemingly drawn from Cromwellian propaganda used to incite public resentment during the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652–1654).[414] Dryden appears to utilise 'A Memento for Holland', a reprint of the East India Company's report of the massacre, reissued in 1652.[415] He dramatises the pamphlet's chilling account of Englishmen burnt 'till their fat by dropping extinguished the candles' by having the evil Governor Harman call for the candle near Beaumont's burning body: 'I am exalted, and wou'd light my Pipe just where the Wyck is fed with English Fat'.[416]

The events at Amboyna were a frequent theme in the propaganda printed in 1670s. *Poor Robins Character of a Dutch-man* insisted that the 'bloody and inhumane butcheries committed by them [the Dutch] against us [The English] at Amboyna, Polaroon, and other places in the east Indies, such insolences at Sea, and ingratitude by land, must needs cry aloud for vengeance'.[417] In Dryden's retelling of Dutch depravity, his portrayal of the wrongfully imprisoned Englishmen is a similarly undisguised rallying cry in support of the Third Anglo-Dutch War, inviting the audience to 'view then

[411] Derek Hughes, 'Rape on the Restoration Stage', *The Eighteenth Century*, 46:3 (2005) 225–36 (p.227).
[412] Dryden, *Amboyna*, p.44 and p.61.
[413] Ibid., p.58.
[414] Ibid., p.53.
[415] Anonymous, 'A Memento for Holland; Or, A true and exact history of the most villainous and barbarous cruelties used on the English merchants residing at Amboyna in the East-Indies, by the Netherland governor and conncel [sic] there (London: Printed by James Moxon, 1652).
[416] 'A Memento for Holland', p.1; Dryden, *Amboyna*, p.62.
[417] Anonymous, 'Poor Robins Character of a Dutch-man, As also his Predictions on the Affairs of the United Provinces of Holland. Together With a brief Epitomy of the Ingratitude of the Dutch, and their barbarous cruelties t on the English at Amboyna, Polaroon, and other Islands in the East Indies' (London: Printed for Benjamin Harris, 1672) p.4.

[Dutch] Falsehoods, rapine, Cruelty; / And think what once they were, they still would be'.[418] His brave English boys withstand the agonies of fire and water-torture, one boldly proclaiming:

> I have a little Brother in England, that I intend to appear to, when you have kill'd me; and if he do's not promise me the Death of ten Dutchmen in the next War, I'le haunt him instead of you.[419]

Similarly, Captain Towerson, framed for robbery, murder and treason by Dutch dishonesty and extorted confessions, exits to his execution prophesying:

> An Age is coming, when an English Monarch with Blood, shall pay that blood which you have shed: to save your Cities from victorious Arms, you shall invite the Waves to hide your Earth, and trembling to the tops of Houses fly, while Deluges invade your lower rooms: Then, as with Waters you have swell'd our Bodies, with damps of Waters shall your Heads be swollen;
>
> Till at last your sap'd foundations fall,
>
> And Universial Ruine swallow all.[420]

Dryden's emphasis on impassioned patriotism and the prophecy of vengence seems directly related to the play's origins in the midst of a war against the Dutch and therefore propagandist intentions. However, as Boxer says, Dryden's 'avowed object of inflaming popular opinion… almost certainly failed to achieve its aim'.[421] Despite Dryden's prefatory claims of commercial success, his play flopped as 'a dramatically worthless piece of political propaganda, of which he himself was ashamed' and 'nothing more than timely atrocity-mongering'.[422] Most likely, the jingoistic portrayal of Dutch devilry was too strong for a politically ambivalent if not resistant audience.

Also believing *Amboyna* predates *The Dutch Lover*, Hughes speculates Dryden's failure informed Behn's own strategy for tackling the war in a play of her own; that, having witnessed

[418] Dryden, *Amboyna*, sigs A1v.
[419] Ibid., p.57.
[420] Dryden, *Amboyna*, p.64.
[421] Boxer, 'Some Second Thoughts', p.92.
[422] Derek Hughes, 'The masked woman revealed; or, the Prostitute and the Playwright in Aphra Behn criticism', *Women's Writing*, 7:2 (2000), 149–64 (p.157); Hume, *Development of English Drama*, p.223

Amboyna's flop, she opted for a 'more low-key contribution to attacking the Dutch'.[423] Other plays of this time similarly offered such low-key contributions. The drama of 1672–73 contains pejorative comments about the Dutch and references to the war. In William Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1672) the foppish Monsieur de Paris, agitated by Gerard's ridicule of his beloved French nation, launches into a diatribe against the Dutch:

> If you are for de raillery, abuse the Dutch, why not abuse the Dutch? Les grosse Villaines, Pandars, Insolents; but here in your England may foy, you have more honeur, respecte, and estimation for the Dutch Swabber, who come to cheat your Nation, den for de Franch-Foot-man, who come to oblige your Nation.[424]

He continues:

> It is de Brutale Country, which abuse de France, an' reverence de Dutch: I vill maintain, sustain, and justifie dat one little Franch-Foot-man have more honeur, courage, and generosity, more good blood in his vainee, an mush more good manners an' civility den all de State General togeder, Jarnie – dey are only wise and valiant wen dey are drunkee […] But dey are never honeste wen dey are drunkee: dey are de only Rogue in de Varlde, who are not honeste wen dey are drunk – ma foy.[425]

In Shadwell's *Epsom Wells* (1672) Clodpate makes an ironic jibe at the Gazette's 'puther about the honest Dutch'.[426] The lads-about-town in Henry Neville Payne's *The Morning Ramble* (1672) burst into a jingoistic song in honour of the Duke of York's command of the navy during this time:

> Charge every man his Glass of Wine,
>
> 'Tis our Royal high Admirals Health,
>
> Whilst we drink all Night,
>
> He does Hero-like Fight,

[423] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.4.
[424] William Wycherley, *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, ed. by Peter Dixon, in *The Country Wife and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) pp.97–190 (I.2.67–71).
[425] Ibid, I.1.80–87.
[426] Thomas Shadwell, *Epsom Wells*, (British Library: British Library Historical Print Editions, 2011) IV.1.p.57.

To rescue the Kingdoms Honour and Wealth,

Let Trumpets sounds, and all at once give Fire,

If the Enemy comes, we'l soon make em Retire.[427]

The Morning Ramble's Epilogue returns to this rousingly patriotic sentiment: 'Our present War, the greatest Scene of Fame. / The best contriv'd, best lead, and bravest fought / Of all, in which England has Glory sought'. Meanwhile, in Edward Ravenscroft's *The Careless Lovers* (1673) a jilted Toby complains about women, 'I would first see the Souls of a hundred thousand of 'em ramm'd into a Morter-piece, and shot into a Dutch Fire-ship'.[428] Thus, the drama in the run-up to *The Dutch Lover* seems openly supportive of the war effort, both in their diatribes or sneers against the Dutch, and their militaristic bombast.

In this light, the question why *Amboyna* is frequently referred to in analyses of *The Dutch Lover* is difficult to answer. Likely explanations are Behn's general association with Dryden, and his status as a canonical writer with whom readers of Restoration literature are more likely to be familiar than lesser-known works by Ravenscroft. Furthermore, *Amboyna* and *The Dutch Lover* are the only plays of the time to feature, rather than just reference, a Dutch character. However, their portrayals of Dutchmen are so extremely different from one another that, beyond the fact they are given voices in both plays, the conclusion that they are simply both propaganda, as if they are of the same nature, is reductive. It is more interesting to examine how and why Behn offers a more multi-faceted portrayal of the Dutch.

Behn's Own Experience of the Dutch

Todd believes that Behn bore a feeling of ill-will towards the Dutch. In her analysis of *The Dutch Lover*, she claims that the Dutch 'stood for what [Behn] most deplored in society'.[429] However,

[427] Henry Neville Payne, *The Morning Ramble*, (London: Printed for Thomas Dring, 1673) p.27.
[428] Edward Ravenscroft, *The Careless Lovers* (London: Printed for William Cademan, 1673) p.74. The Dutch had notoriously used fireships in the Raid on the Medway in the Second Anglo-Dutch War, and both the English and the Dutch had employed them at the Battle of Solebay in May 1672.
[429] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.165.

this seems to rely more on speculation than solid fact. Interestingly, and by contrast to her contemporaries, Behn had very personal experiences of Dutchmen, which might have influenced how she decided to portray them onstage. Behn's origins and personal life are so tantalisingly obscure, despite her prolific publications, that trying to extract meaning in her texts from details of her life is a daunting, if not downright unwise, undertaking. However, some of the conjectures made about the elusive writer's life regarding the Dutch are too enticingly salient for this argument not to comment upon. One of the more tenuous connections is the idea that Behn might have married a Dutchman. Her self-proclaimed foster brother Colepeper records the marriages of Aphra and a 'Mr Beene', and between her sister Frances and a captain whose name under Colepeper's penmanship is almost impossible to decipher; Todd postulates it could be Wrils, Write or Wrede.[430] The anonymous 'Memoirs' adds a further, fascinating note, that Behn married 'Mr Behn […] a Merchant of this City, tho' of Dutch Extraction'.[431] From these details and her own research into shipping records, Todd has developed a theory about who this Dutchman might have been:

> Johan Behn […] was one of the forty odd crew serving on an Atlantic vessel called *The King David* in May 1655 when the ship was seized by the English settlers in Barbados. The Captain, who owned the ship, was a Captain Wrede – close enough to Colepeper's illegible word for Frances Johnson's husband. Johan Behn was a merchant sailing with him. The two men might have been together again sailing home to London from Surinam. If so, they may have coincided with Aphra and Frances Johnson.[432]

As Todd explains, this theory is frustrated by the fact aht 'no wedding of a Behn is recorded in London', so we only have the suggestion from posthumous biographical accounts that somewhere between leaving Surinam and embarking on her spying mission to the Netherlands, Aphra Behn had

[430] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.63.
[431] 'The Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn. Written by One of the Fair Sex' in *The Histories and Novels of the Late Ingenious Mrs Behn* (London: Printed for S. Briscoe in Covent-Garden; and Sold by Richard Wellington at the Lute in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1696) sigs b1v.
[432] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.63.

married.[433] There the trail runs cold. Mr Behn and Aphra either separated, or he died. Of course, it is very possible that this man never existed at all. Instead, Behn might have fabricated the name she has come to be known by and adopted the identity of a widow for the purposes of respectability. If this Mr Behn did exist and Aphra was widowed, his spectre provides an interesting theory to explain her portrayal of the Dutch in *The Dutch Lover*. It is her first piece of work that mentions the Dutch, and, perhaps, in memory of a fledging marriage cut short by bereavement, Behn could not bring herself wholly to denigrate her departed husband's countrymen.[434] Maybe the time spent with the elusive Mr Behn gave Aphra a far kinder opinion about the Dutch than those of her contemporaries. Of course, this theory is as sentimental as it is speculative. However, aside from such an emotional motivation, the possible marriage raises a more practical, intellectual explanation for Behn's attitude to national identity in *The Dutch Lover*. Todd has noticed that in the dedication to *The Young King* Behn describes 'her Muse if not herself as "An American". Possibly Mr Behn was an "American", that is, a frequent trader with the New World colonies'.[435] If such a man had been married, it would have given Behn a very unusual understanding of her own national identity: she was English, but American by marriage to a Dutchman who lived (or at least worked) in London, who in turn was deemed an American by his trade. Admittedly, Behn's claim to be 'an American' could have been a purely commercial attempt to make herself sound more exotic and intriguing. If not, however, it offers an interesting explanation for why national identity in *The Dutch Lover* is such a fluid construct, created by a blend of histories and circumstances rather than an inalienable characteristic.

As this chapter explores, the belief that *The Dutch Lover* is an expression of anti-Dutch prejudice could well be mistaken. It is possible that writers like Todd believes that Behn detested the Dutch for their 'mercenariness' and 'acquisitiveness' because of their portrayal in *Oroonoko*

[433] Ibid., p.64.
[434] Todd wonders whether Mr Behn might have been victim to the 1666 Plague of London (*Secret Life*, p.71).
[435] Behn, *YK,* p.83; Todd, *Secret Life*, p.63.

(1688).[436] This later prose work is set in Surinam, the South American colony Charles II ceded to the Dutch in the Treaty of Breda. Although the action of the plot takes place when Suriname was still in English hands, Behn makes frequent, gloomy references to the coming rule of the Dutch. She claims that the Dutch did not treat the indigenous 'Indians' 'so civilly as the English' had.[437] Elsewhere, she claims Oroonoko's tale would have already been much better known, 'if the Dutch […] had not killed, banished and dispersed all those that were capable of giving the World this great Man's Life, much better than I have done'.[438] However, it is important to note that Behn's condemnatory comments on the Dutch are inextricably linked to the obvious dismay with which she recalls how England lost such a colony, so rich in resources, to another state. After a tantalising mention of the country's gold reserves she bitterly points out, 'tis to be bemoaned what His Majesty lost by losing that part of America'.[439] It is therefore possible that Behn's pejorative comments about the Dutch are more indicative of her regret at the loss of Suriname than they are of a deep-rooted prejudice. Reading *The Dutch Lover* in light of *Oroonoko* therefore might unduly incline a reader to view her portrayal of Haunce as more straight-forwardly Hollandophobic than it strictly is.

Furthermore, we do know for certain that, unlike Dryden, Wycherley, Neville Payne and Shadwell, Behn spent time in Flanders. By 1673, Wycherley was the only one of Behn's fellow playwrights who had come close to that part of the world. He probably fought in a sea battle against the Dutch during the Second Anglo-Dutch War, which might go some way to explain Monsieur de Paris's Hollandophobic vitriol in *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*.[440] By contrast, during the Second Anglo Dutch War Behn was actually sent to Spanish Flanders as an agent of the crown in August 1666 (Flanders being where her Dutchman Haunce also hails from). Her mission was to engage William Scot, a double-dealing parliamentarian and son of executed regicide Thomas Scot. If Behn

[436] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.165.
[437] Behn, *Oroonoko*, p.52.
[438] Ibid., p.40.
[439] Ibid., p.57.
[440] Kate Bennett, 'Wycherley, William', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) [Online].

had been to Suriname, it is possible she met Scot whilst he was in hiding there, before he fled from his debts there to the United Provinces in May/June 1665. Todd suggests there might even have been a romantic dimension to that relationship.[441] Now, William Scot was offering information on the Dutch war efforts, in exchange for a royal pardon and safe return to England. Behn was supposed to evaluate and report what this information was for further negotiation. The fact she was trusted to do this suggests she might have had prior experience of espionage. Todd suggests that in her Interregnum youth Behn might have been a messenger and courier for the Sealed Knot. Her foster brother Colepeper, and his half-brother Lord Strangford, were both members of this royalist society. As an untitled young woman she 'could easily have liaised with Lord Strangford in France, where Colepeper's journeys would be noted, as well as with other royalist men. There is, however, no proof, for it is the nature of a secret service to remain secret'.[442] If she had acted as such, she might have run into Thomas Killigrew in the Low Countries, establishing the basis for his further offer of espionage employment in 1666. If she was an old friend of Scot's from Surinam, she would have made an even more attractive agent to reel in the former Parliamentarian. Aside from this speculation, and for whatever reason, the documentary records state that from August 1666 to April 1667 Behn was based, or rather marooned, at an inn called the Rosa Noble in the large international city of Antwerp. Marooned, because the mediation with Scot led nowhere, and he was arrested by the Dutch in January 1667. By the end of the first month of her assignment Behn was already struggling for money, but she was left stranded in Antwerp after Scot's arrest until the spring. Over the course of this mission she wrote repeatedly to the Crown for funds that were unforthcoming.

It is likely that during the eight months Behn spent in Antwerp she would have been socialising with, and maybe dependent upon the good will of, Dutch men and women. Todd claims she befriended a married merchant from Amsterdam at the Rosa Noble, and that he might have

[441] Todd, *Secret Life*, pp.80–1.
[442] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.34.

helped her relieve the mounting debts she accrued there.[443] Todd even goes on to suggest Behn might have prostituted herself to elicit such aid.[444] Interactions with the Dutch, social and commercial, are fictionalised in the *Memoirs*. These tell a very different, albeit of course entirely unreliable, story of Behn's mission. They claim that in Antwerp Behn had made 'use' of a Dutch merchant called Vander Albert, from Utrecht.[445] He was apparently so in love with her he 'pressed her extremely to let him by some signal Means give undeniable Proofs of the Vehemence and Sincerity of his Passion', suggesting Behn strung him along for financial security during her mission.[446] Of course, from the writer's point of view, Behn was acting purely 'in Service of her Country' and therefore 'the Pleasures of Love had not the Predominance'.[447] The account is full of farcical bed-switching and amorous tricks akin to those found in Behn's later plays. In the *Memoirs*' third edition this account is expanded and becomes an even more florid description of the affair, which included love letters between Vander Albert and 'Astrea' and featuring a second, besotted, Dutchman, Van Bruin.[448]

The *Memoirs* are of course exceedingly untrustworthy, driven by, in Claudine van Hensbergen's words, 'pervasive attempts to establish Behn as a romantic heroine who had much in common with the female characters depicted in her writing'.[449] However, Todd thinks there may be some underlying truths to the *Memoirs*' claims based on what we know with more certainty about Behn's life. She draws comparisons between Vander Albert and William Scot as a man who might have been in love with Behn '"before the War, in her Husband's time"' and that Albert's financial support of Astrea is 'a neat reversal of the real case, but a more usual one when sex rather than

[443] Ibid., p.102.
[444] Ibid, p.107.
[445] *Memoirs*, (1696), sigs b3r.
[446] Ibid., sigs b3v.
[447] Ibid., sigs b3v and b2v.
[448] 'The History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs Behn. Never before Printed', in *All the Histories and Novels Written by the Late Ingenious Mrs Behn* (London: Printed for Samuel Briscoe in Russel-Street; at the Corner of Charles-Street, Covent Garden, 1698).
[449] Claudine van Hensbergen, '"Why I Write Them, I Can Give No Account": Aphra Behn and "Love-Letters to a Gentleman" (1696)', *Eighteenth Century Life*, 35 (2011) 65–82 (p.69).

information is the commodity'.[450] She suggests that Van Bruin, Albert's fat friend enamoured of Astrea, might have been based on an Amsterdam merchant at Rosa Noble. Disregarding the luridness of the *Memoirs*, it is very likely that Behn made Dutch friends and acquaintances during her long, inactive stint in Antwerp. Her survival in the city despite a distinct lack of money might have been due to at the goodwill of these companions.[451] The *Memoirs* say that Behn spent a night 'out at a Merchants of Antwerp, passing the Evening in Play, and Mirth, as her Age, and Gaiety requir'd'.[452] Of course, it is not altogether unlikely that this social life might have led her to the theatre.

Theatre life in Antwerp in the 1660s was like that of London, in the sense that both cities had recently re-established their stages after a period of cultural dearth (although the reopened London theatres fared far better). By the mid-1500s, Antwerp was the second largest city north of the Alps: a thriving, prosperous hub with flourishing commercial and cultural communities. However, the chambers of rhetoric, which were chiefly responsible for Antwerp's theatre life, partially or wholly disappeared during the 1640s because of the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648). At the time Behn was in the city, theatre life had been recently re-established in the form of two companies: the Almoners' Theatre and *De Olijtak*, or, the Olive Branch.[453] Relatively little is known about the Almoners' Theatre, except that it emerged in 1661 as Antwerp's first permanent commercial theatre which used its profits to support the city's elderly, poor and infirm. It was built in rented rooms on the ground floor of the *Spanjepand*, or, the House of Spain (which still exists today), and hosted performances by both local actors and travelling companies. Timothy de Paepe describes it as 'extremely small […] It had a proscenium stage with appropriate machinery and wing

[450] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.107 (quoting from *Memoirs* sigs b3v).
[451] Ibid., p.104.
[452] *Memoirs*, (1696), sigs b5r.
[453] For more information on the history of Antwerp, these companies and the design of their theatre spaces see Timothy de Paepe's work: 'How new technologies can contribute to our understanding of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century drama: an Antwerp Case Study', *Journal of Dutch Literature*, 1:1 (2010) 28–54; 'Painting, Drama and Discomfort: the Great Painters' Hall of Antwerp Saint Luke's Guild (1664–1810), *Artibus et Historiae,* 33:66 (2012) pp.247–68; '"*Les operas étaient en vogue*": Opera in a city in crisis: Antwerp between 1682 and 1794', in *Music and the City: Musical Cultures and Urban Societies in the Southern Netherlands and Beyond c.1650–1800*, ed. by Stefanie Beghein, Bruno Blondé, Eugeen Schreurs (Leuven: Leuven UP, 2013) pp.19–37.

changes, a simple U-shaped auditorium including, eventually, boxes. In short, all the elements of the traditional box, pit and gallery theatre and a miniature version of a baroque theatre'.[454] Perhaps enthused by the Almoners' success, in 1662, the Chamber of the Gillyflowers, the only chamber of rhetoric to survive the Eighty Years' War, revived itself. Under the new name of the Olive Branch, together with their parent organisation Saint-Luke's Guild and the recently-founded Academy of Fine Arts, moved to a wing above the Antwerp Stock Exchange in 1664 and opened the Rhetoricians' Theatre in the Great Painters Hall. Whereas the Almoners' Theatre was centred on a charitably-commercial ideal, the Olive Branch 'attempted to retake some of their former glory and regain part of their old social position, whilst attempting to confirm Antwerp's cultural pre-eminence' by 'positioning themselves as the guardians of the cultural past'.[455] Unfortunately, between 1665 and 1676 no performances by the rhetoricians are known to have taken place, so it is unlikely Behn would have seen a play there during her stay. More frustratingly, although we know performances were organised at the Almoners' from 1666 to 1667, no records remain of *what* was played. De Paepe believes it was probably Dutch-spoken, serious drama – tragedies based on sacred or classical stories, in the vein of Anthonius Franciscus Wouthers's *De Heylige Genoveva* (Genevieve of Brabant), performed in 1664.[456] Behn, a natural linguist, *might* have learned enough Dutch to have been able to understand a play performed at the Almoners. Either way, it seems unlikely that a resourceful, quick-witted and fun-loving woman like Behn would have spent all her time in Antwerp closeted at the inn, counting her lack of pennies.

Her destitution in Antwerp and the friendships she may have struck up as a result, might go some way to explain why her portrayal of the Dutch is so multi-faceted. Abandoned by her handlers, Behn had learned the hard way that there is nothing glamorous or particularly romantic about patriotic service in warfare, as Neville Payne romanticises in *The Morning Ramble*. She, therefore,

[454] Paepe, 'How new technologies', p.37.
[455] Ibid., p.13.
[456] I would like to express my thanks to Timothy de Paepe and to Hubert Meeus for answering my questions on this topic.

might not have been interested in directly addressing Anglo-Dutch relations or making bold allusions to the Third War in her play. She may well, in fact, have had much warmer feelings towards the Dutch than her contemporaries did because of her first-hand encounters; she had been associated with them during a time when England had forsaken her. All of this may explain why, although her play was written during the Third Anglo Dutch War and features a Dutch character, Haunce is comprised of a greater number of contrasting qualities than a two-dimensional Hollandophobic, propagandist attitude would allow.

Foreign Invasion and the Friendly Fool

Within propagandist parameters, *The Dutch Lover* initally appears to sits somewhere in between *Amboyna* and the other plays referencing the war. Behn's portrayal of Haunce and his ridiculous apparel are woven with a few undeniably Hollandophobic threads. By the time Haunce van Ezel drunkenly lurches onto the stage, the third act of Behn's *The Dutch Lover* is well underway; Euphemia has enlisted Alonzo to pose as her boorish betrothed to her unwitting father Carlo, and three subplots of love and revenge are already afoot. Late to the party, drunk and seasick, Haunce has spent the opening of the play incapacitated at an inn 'in as lamentable a pickle, as if he were still in the storm; recruiting his emptied stomach with Brandy, and railing against all women-kind for your sister's sake, who has made him undertake this voyage'.[457] Haunce's uncomfortable journey to Madrid is an ironic jibe at Dutch naval superiority. In his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden recalls the Battle of Lowestoft during the Second Anglo-Dutch War as one fought by 'the two most mighty and best appointed Fleets which any age had ever seen'. Dutch 'financial success surpassed mercantilist expectations', aided by a naval superiority that had established colonies across the southern hemisphere.[458] Behn undermines this reputation for naval superiority with taunting references to Haunce's shaky sea-legs, and his nausea draws from traditional slurs against Holland. Despite having been on dry land for a full day, Haunce is still ill: 'do not name a storm to me, unless thou wilt have

[457] Behn, *The Dutch Lover*, I.1.17–21 [Hereafter *DL*].
[458] Wolsk, 'Muddy Allegiance', p.4.

the effects on't in thy face'.[459] When his servant Gload encourages him to 'bear up', Haunce berates him for using 'a sea phrase... I tell you I can indure nothing that puts me in mind of that element'.[460] Haunce's nauseous entrance might remind one of Andrew Marvell's searing attack on 'The Character of Holland' as the 'indigested vomit of the sea'.[461] Other lambasts linked the Dutch in caricature-fashion with their underlying treacherous natures: 'all the world knows him [the Dutchman] for a slippery Fellow. A Hollander […] loves to be down in the Dirt, and Boar-like, to wallow therein'.[462] Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's study of the grotesque body, Gabbard explains: 'Haunce's seasick vomiting marks his body as open and leaky, as "porous and permeable," all of which implies that he lacks "bodily refinement" and "physical and emotional self-control"'.[463] Exploring the humoral implications of Haunce's portrayal, Gabbard interprets Haunce as having a phlegmatic disposition, which Mary Floyd Wilson describes as 'typically denigrated for effeminacy and cowardice'.[464] Gabbard writes, 'At the core of the satiric attack on Haunce was the belief that Netherlandic males were cold – lacking in sexual and romantic ardour'.[465] Therefore, when the audience first meets Haunce, it appears Behn is drawing on typical Hollandophobic stereotypes.

The Dutch Haunce's arrival in Madrid and the Spanish Euphemia's unwillingness to marry him has overtures of a foreign invasion. In Behn's source material, the unpopular fiancée, Don Martin Elizalde, hails from the Spanish province of Gipuzkoa. Teodore explains her father comes from there and therefore wishes his daughter to marry one of his kinsmen. However, Teodore baulks at the idea of marrying such a 'rustically educated' country bumpkin.[466] Given *The Dutch Lover*'s wartime context, Behn's decision to change the undesirable kinsman into an undesirable foreigner

[459] Behn, *DL*, III.2.11–12.
[460] Ibid., III.2.14–15.
[461] Andrew Marvell, 'The Character of Holland' [1653] ed. by Elizabeth Story Dono, in *The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1972) pp.112–116 (l.7).
[462] Anonymous, *The Dutch Boare Dissected, or A Description of Hogg-Land* (London, 1665).
[463] Gabbard, 'Clashing Masculinities', p.561.
[464] Mary Floyd Wilson, 'English Mettle' in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. by Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) pp.130–46 (p.133).
[465] Gabbard, 'Clashing Masculinities', p.560.
[466] *The History of Don Fenise*, p.74.

invites comparison between the unwanted engagement and a foreign invasion. Furthermore, Hayden believes the use and revisions of *Don Fenise* are nods to the Anglo-Dutch conflict:

> Her extensive use of a Spanish text, which she employs to mock the Dutch, reflects the manifest political motive behind the construction of the play, particularly given the then current Spanish-Dutch alliance. In her Alonzo/Euphemia/Haunce plot, the patriarchs (one Dutch, the other Spanish) attempt to unite the families, which may serve to reflect this alliance. The public stage ostensibly becomes the field on which international affairs are played out through the concord and discord of fast-paced and multi-plotted events.[467]

Following Hayden's logic, the failure of the patriarchs' plans in the engagement's comedic demise could be interpreted as a hoped-for, symbolic demise of England's enemy's political alliances.

The temptation to view Haunce as a foreign invader is exacerbated by the aggressive way he speaks about his unwilling bride. Drunk and grumpy after his turbulent voyage to Spain, he declares:

> I'l manage her that be my wife as I please, or I'l beat her into fashion […] , if I am provok'd, anger will have its effects on whomsoe'er it light; so said Van Trump, when he took his Mistress a cuff o'th' ear for finding fault with an ill-fashion'd leg he made her; I lik'd his humour well, therefore come thy ways.[468]

Todd explains Van Trump refers to 'Cornelius Tromp […] the great Dutch admiral in the first Dutch War with Cromwellian England in the 1650s. He also took part in the Third Dutch War shortly after *The Dutch Lover* was staged'.[469] He was a celebrated Dutch hero, but there are reports he was an aggressive, heavy drinker.[470] Haunce's admiration for Van Tromp's belligerence aligns his character with the commander of the enemy fleet. Later, he also makes sexually-aggressive menaces to Euphemia herself: 'I care not whether you are [satisfied] or no, for I shall have you whether you will

[467] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.128.
[468] Behn, *DL*, III. 2. 93-99.
[469] Todd, *Works*, p.539, n.97.
[470] A. J. van der Aa, 'Cornelis Maartensz Tromp', *Biographical Dictionary of the Netherlands, Part 18 (Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden.* Deel 18, (1874) [Online]; P. J. Blok and P. C. Molhuysen, 'Cornelis Tomp', *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*. Deel 5 (1921) [Online].

or no'.[471] However, when Euphemia continues to refuse to marry him, Haunce's bold threats fail him and he is simply 'Ready to cry'.[472] If we take these circumstances in and of themselves, and Euphemia's resistance to Haunce's belligerence (which is made all the more ridiculous by its superficiality), we might conclude that Behn is using the engagement as an analogy for the Anglo-Dutch conflict.

However, basing an understanding of Haunce on this alone overlooks other vital aspects of Behn's portrayal, which do not comfortably fit with an interpretation of the foolish Haunce as a foreign invader formed by a playwright's Hollandophobic bias. In fact, Behn's use of source material, the setting and the characterisation of Haunce riddle that interpretation with contradictory complexities. Her use of a Spanish source text is not necessarily evidence of a political significance, given her previous use of a Spanish text for *The Young King*. Hayden's belief that it does so also overestimates the role of the Spanish in the Dutch Wars. Hutton's biography of Charles II, which Hayden herself references, does not explain Spanish-Dutch relations as comprising so strong a wartime alliance. Rather, Hutton writes that the Queen Regent of Spain 'responded with a stony lack of interest' to the war during 1672.[473] At one point it did look as though Spain might enter the conflict; the Spanish governor of Brussels helped the Dutch attack a French fortress in the winter of 1673, well after Behn's *Dutch Lover*. However, the Queen Regent 'disowned her viceroy's actions'.[474] Therefore, whilst Behn was writing *The Dutch Lover* Spain was far more of an observer in the war than ally to either side.

The play also contains historical references that suggest it is set in the Interregnum. The implications of these references suggest that Behn was less interested in demonstrating support she might have had for the war, and more interested in the capricious nature of wartime alliances. Whereas Behn's earlier plays give no hint to specific time settings, *The Dutch Lover* is bookended by

[471] Behn, *DL*, IV. 1. 226.
[472] Ibid., IV. 1. 205.
[473] Hutton, *Charles II*, p.292.
[474] Ibid., p.302.

two interesting historical allusions that suggest the play is set in a more specific period. In the first scene Alonzo explains he has travelled from Brabant to Madrid on 'the sudden orders of my Prince Don John', and at the end of the play, we discover that Silvio is actually a nobleman:

> Your Father was the mighty favourite, the *Conte De Olivaris* […] The story of his disgrace you know with all the world; 'twas then he being banisht from the Court, he left you to my care then very young.[475]

Hughes believes that Count Olivaris is a reference to the historical figure of the same name:

> A favourite of Philip IV and virtual ruler of Spain from 1621 until his fall in 1643, caused by the series of revolts within Spain's dominions and its military reverses abroad […] He did have an illegitimate son, of worthless character, and increased his unpopularity by legitimising him […] None of these facts, however, improve our understanding of the play.[476]

As Hughes explains, the reference to Count Olivaris sets the play in Philip IV's reign (1621-1665).[477] Silvio has no memory of his fugitive father and is still so young he has not joined his older half-brother (as he believes him to be) in the Spanish army. Alonzo's mention of Don John and Spanish Flanders further narrows down a potential date; Don John, Philip IV's illegitimate son, was summarily recalled from his governorship of the Spanish Netherlands and temporarily returned to Spain in March 1659. Hughes also draws a link between Haunce's complaint about the beer tax in the Spanish Netherlands, and a British excise of 1661.[478] These facts combined suggest it is likely the play is set in or shortly after 1659.

Hughes might have been too hasty in asserting Behn's reference to Count Olivaris does not further an understanding of the play, although, in fairness, his analysis of the play focuses on *The Dutch Lover*'s exploration of turbulent sexual relationships rather than its political contexts. Setting

[475] Behn, *DL*, I. 1. 5 and V. 1. 356–61.
[476] Hughes, *Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.54.
[477] Although Todd comments that it is 'strange' that Haunce makes a reference to 'the young King of Spain' (*DL,* III.2.82) when Philip IV was in his forties in the 1650s (p.538–39 n.82 in her notes on her edition of *The Dutch Lover*).
[478] Hughes, *Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.53.

the play at the end of the 1650s, after England's relative success in the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652–1654) but before its defeat in the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665–1667), *could* have a propaganda motive. Behn might have been referring to England's previous success against the Dutch, although it had been one of Cromwell's victories. However, if this had been Behn's intent, it would mean she expected her audience to have an instant recall of the finer points of the last thirty years of Anglo-Dutch and Spanish history. This could have been an unlikely expectation. Having said that, an audience might not be able to immediately recall Olivaris and Don John's significant dates, but it might recognise the names and associate them with the First Anglo-Dutch War and England's success. However, the indirect nature of Behn's references raises the question, why make such references at all? *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince* did not contain any historical references in this manner. Instead, if we do take the references to Don John and Count Olivaris into account and the rough date produced by them, we see Behn might be making an interesting, subtly allusive, commentary on international relationships.

From 1656 to 1660 Spain had been closely allied to the exiled Stuart court. James, Duke of York, had fought for the Spanish army so closely that he was about to accept the post of Spanish high admiral when the Restoration occurred. The reference to respected martial hero Don John might therefore be an acknowledgement of the bravery and military capability of the Duke: the two men had fought alongside each other against French and Cromwellian armies at the Battle of the Dunes in June 1658. However, when James was fighting with the Spanish at Dunkirk, he was facing his old mentor the general Vicomte de Turenne, whom he had also served under during his time in the French army 1652–1657.[479] During the Interregnum Charles and his exiled court chopped and changed their allegiances when it suited them. As the controversial origins of the Third Anglo-Dutch War proved, Charles continued to have a capricious approach to international relationships well into his reign. Behn might be implying that international alliances, who we consider allies or adversaries,

[479] W. A. Speck, 'James II and VII', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) [Online].

break and are repaired frequently. Setting the play in the Interregnum with its allusions to the fickleness and failures of these relationships suggests Behn had a cynical view of the war and Hollandophobia.

Consequently, just as alliances are never as certain as they seem, so too are the characters that comprise them. Haunce is the perfect embodiment of this kind of uncertainty. As demonstrated, some aspects of his character are drawn straight from Hollandophobic portrayals of the Dutch. However, unlike her contemporaries, Behn balances Haunce's undesirable qualities by a foolish, but surprising, likeability that belies the belief he is simply a vehicle for anti-Dutch sentiment, as he initially appears to be. Most importantly, he becomes the unlikely saviour in a scene of attempted rape.[480] He stumbles across the traitorous Antonio attacking Hippolyta and rescues her from the assault. The scene has escaped critical scrutiny, but it is actually very intriguing.[481] It is drawn from *Don Fenise*, in which a woman called Eufemie has been spirited away by her brother's vengeful friend, Don Pedro, and set up in Madrid as a courtesan, as Hippolyta is in *The Dutch Lover*. When the couple are ousted from the city, the villainous Don Pedro attempts to murder Eufemie, but she is saved by her own foresight in having enlisted another man to follow her and intercede should her lover turn violent. Don Pedro is killed and Eufemie and her honourable saviour later marry. Behn changes this story, turning the attempted murder into an attempted rape. The arrival of a Dutchman on the scene of an attempted rape in a forest might bear parallels in an audience's mind to the villainous Young Harman's rape of Ysabinda in *Amboyna*. However, here, the Dutchman Haunce acts as the saviour of female virtue. Admittedly, unlike his gallant predecessor in Quintana's version, Haunce is at first reluctant to get involved, but when Gload insists on interceding, Haunce refuses to be 'outdone by my man', and orders Gload to remove Hippolyta

[480] Behn, *DL*, III. 3. 158.

[481] As will be discussed in more detail, Jacqueline Pearson briefly remarks, 'Haunce as the Other is the least threatening to the women of the play's male characters. On one occasion, indeed, he actually saves Hippolyta from rape, and his "great Dutch Knife" is hilariously and suggestively contrasted with the small dagger of the would-be rapist: this episode at least presents Haunce in a surprisingly comic light' ('Slave princes and lady monsters: gender and ethnic difference in the work of Aphra Behn', in *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp.219–34 (p.225).).

whilst he deals with Antonio.[482] Haunce's heroism is tempered by the comedy of his speech, and bolstered by his insobriety.[483] The correlation between his inebriation and courage is reminiscent of Monsieur de Paris's damning account of the Dutch in Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*: 'dey are only wise and valiant wen dey are drunkee', but Behn's portrayal of Haunce is not only comedic, but also rather endearing.[484] He directs Gload to 'march off with the baggage' (meaning Hippolyta), and the ensuing duel is punctuated by humorous asides to the audience.[485] Behn presents a comic, but nonetheless sincere, chivalrous side to her Dutchman. His previous ineptitude is replaced by a surprising courage and capability, because of and in spite of his drunkenness. He challenges Antonio, 'there lyes my sword; and since you dare me at my own weapon, I tell you I am as good at snick a snee as the best Don of you all', before dexterously drawing first blood with his 'great Dutch knife' and disarming his opponent.[486] All this he performs whilst still roaringly drunk. In victory, despite Antonio's rudeness, he displays a quixotic graciousness: 'now like a generous enemy, I will conduct thee to my Tent, and have thy wounds drest'.[487] There is a comic pomposity to his chivalry — the 'Tent' is actually his lodgings in town — but he explains his actions in frequent asides to the audience: 'That I learnt out of Pharamond… That too I had out of Pharamond… Pharamond again'.[488] Todd explains Pharamond was 'the legendary ancestor of the Merovingian kings of the Franks [and] was the subject of a late romance by La Caprenède, *Pharamond* (1661-70)'.[489] Therefore, with references to Pharamond and Van Trump, Behn demonstrates Haunce is a man who relates himself to and is inspired by heroes, albeit ones who were enemies of the English. His asides have an engaging quality, reminiscent of a schoolboy eager to show off what he has learnt. He has

[482] Behn, *DL*, III. 3. 158.
[483] Haunce is later asked to duel Alonzo. Haunce is terrified to do so and hushes Gload: 'not a word of my prowess aloud. Salerimente, I shall be put to fight when I am sober, shall I, for your damn'd prating, ye rascal?' (IV. 1. 215–17).
[484] Wycherley, *Gentleman Dancing-Master*, I.1.82.
[485] Behn, *DL*, III.3.158.
[486] Ibid., III.3.166–68.
[487] Ibid., III.3.185–86.
[488] Ibid., III.3.1.178-79 and 187.
[489] Todd, *Works*, p.539 note l.179.

learnt bravery and chivalry. Wolsk writes that Behn's 'Dutch characters are rivalrous suitors in situations where she contrasts boorishness with courtliness'; however, this mutually exclusive contrast does not hold true for Haunce in this scene.[490] With his asides, Behn seems to be asking for the audience's approval of Haunce or, at least, offering them a chance to like him more than his previous appearance onstage warranted. Further, although Haunce first engaged with Antonio so as not to be outdone by his manservant, Gload and Hippolyta exited the stage before the duel commenced. Haunce therefore has no 'audience' to show off in front of, no servant to outdo or woman to impress, apart from the literal audience in the theatre. Behn is therefore directly inviting this audience to warm to Haunce as a comically-chivalrous character.

Behn continues to present Haunce as a fool, but a friendly one, even when he is tricked into marrying Euphemia's maid Olinda. This happy conclusion is foreshadowed in their first meeting, when Haunce prefers the servant over the mistress, saying she is 'the better bargain of the two'.[491] Of course, this might be a sly dig at the low standards of the Dutch; however, the fact Haunce is so amenable, even relieved, to learn of the deceit is interesting. Having been promised a Spanish noblewoman, Haunce accepts the duplicity with surprising good grace: 'Now do they all expect I should be dissatisfied; but, Gentlemen, in sign and token that I am not, I'll have one more merry frisk before we part, 'tis a witty wench; faith and troth after a month 'tis all one whose who'.[492] Like his asides during the duel, Haunce again addresses his words directly to the audience, addressing his philosophy to the 'Gentlemen' in the theatre. His good nature earns him Alonzo's praise, calling him a 'man of Gallantry' and Behn, interestingly, rewards him with a marriage that appears to be happy.[493]

Therefore, Haunce is made up of composite parts: when he is sulking or uncomfortable, he talks of violence; when he is called upon for chivalry, he is brave and honourable; when he is drunk,

[490] Wolsk, 'Muddy Allegiance', p.23.
[491] Behn, *DL*, IV.1.127.
[492] Ibid., V. 2. 191–94.
[493] Ibid., V. 2. 195.

he is a skilful swordsman; when he is sober, as when he tries to challenge Alonzo for Euphemia's hand, he is cowardly. Don Carlo, interestingly, explains Haunce is 'half a Spaniard' and Lovis similarly dismisses Haunce as 'this half man, half fool'.[494] The idea of being a half of something, rather than a whole, further depreciates the construction of Haunce as a whole, consistent character. Rather, he is made up of incomplete bits. His extreme mood swings suggest an interchangeability in his personality that belies the ease with which we can cast him singularly as a villainous outsider and the threat, especially towards women, which that identity implies. Jacqueline Pearson goes so far as to write, 'in this dark comedy with its emphasis on violence and deception, Haunce […] is the least threatening to the women of the play's male characters'.[495] By contrast to Marcel and Antonio's menacing attitudes towards Hippolyta, Haunce's aggression proves utterly harmless. Although Behn ridicules him frequently, she appears to have an underlying affection for Haunce that prevents her from vilifying or degrading him as far as she might do. Ultimately, despite his arrival from abroad to marry an unwilling woman, with the implicit overtures of foreign invasion, and the threats he makes, Haunce is not as dangerous as his Dutchness could have afforded him to be.

Although Behn's portrayal of Haunce draws on other Hollandophobic slurs like those found in Wycherley's tirade on Dutch drunkenness and cowardice, her representation of Dutchmen and references to the war are made as part of a far broader and more complex discussion about the nature of identity and alliance. The play lacks both the profusion of English patriotism, and a Dutch villain. Haunce is neither villainous nor entirely inept. Therefore, Behn does not seem interested in completely vilifying or ridiculing the Dutch as we might expect a propagandist playwright to do. Haunce's actions subvert the expectations we might have formed of him given the play's wartime context.

[494] Ibid., III. 1. 102; II. 7. 71.
[495] Pearson, 'Slave princes and lady monsters', p.225.

‘To make good the character I always gave of him’: Expectations and Perceptions in the Construction of Haunce.

Behn is more interested in expectations and perceptions of the Dutch than she is in the Dutch man in and of himself. As Euphemia complains, ‘I am contracted to a man I never saw, nor I am sure shall not like when I do see’.[496] Haunce is not only at the mercy of an audience’s potentially hostile expectations, but those of his fellow characters. The audience’s expectations are influenced by Lovis and Euphemia’s unfavourable reports in the early acts of the play; the audience therefore learns a lot about what these characters *think* about Haunce long before they actually meet him for themselves. Euphemia tells Alonzo her fiancé has ‘more vice and folly than his fortune will excuse’ and instructs him therefore to ‘put your self into an equipage very ridiculous, and pretend you are my foolish lover’.[497] When Alonzo complains to Lovis, ‘why need I act the fool thus, since Haunce was never seen here?’ Lovis replies, ‘To make good the character I always gave of him to my Father; but here he comes, pray be very rude, and very impertinent’.[498] Therefore Alonzo attacks Carlo with a barrage of questions and interrupts his courtesies with abrupt demands to see Euphemia. When Euphemia is ushered in by her perplexed father, Alonzo takes advantage of his disguise to ‘rudely […] kiss her’.[499] None of this greatly surprises Don Carlo, who recalls, ‘I remember amongst [Haunce’s] other faults, my son writ me word he had courage’.[500] However, Alonzo’s boorishness is a two-fold trick, not only to fulfil the expectation of being ‘very rude and very impertinent’, but also to avoid discovery. He interrupts Carlo because he is being ‘plagu’d with nothing but wise questions, to which I am able to make no answer’.[501] He therefore successfully imitates all the boorish qualities that Lovis, Euphemia and Carlo expect of the Dutchman.

[496] Behn, *DL*, I. 3. 57–58.
[497] Ibid., I. 3. 58–59; II. 2. 86–87.
[498] Ibid., III. 1. 3-6.
[499] Ibid., III. 1. 83.
[500] Ibid., III. 1. 36–37.
[501] Ibid., III. 1. 26–27.

All this takes place before Don Carlo, Euphemia, Alonzo and the audience have even had the chance to meet the real Haunce for themselves. When Don Carlo does encounter the genuine Dutchman, he does not realise he is dealing with a different man, partly because Haunce behaves with the same abruptness that Alonzo had adopted. However, Alonzo's deception is chiefly to blame for Haunce's own rudeness. When Haunce arrives at Don Carlo's house, he is utterly (and understandably) baffled by the familiar welcome he receives. Don Carlo cheerfully interrupts his ceremonious greeting to say Euphemia is 'in much better humour than when you saw her last', which leads a discombobulated Haunce, who of course has never seen Euphemia, to splutter, 'Why look here again-- I ask'd after her health, not her humour'.[502] This perceived rudeness, therefore, is not the direct result of a national disposition to boorishness, but because Haunce has been completely wrongfooted by, what seems to him to be, the madness of the Spanish household: 'Look there again---the old man's mad too'.[503] Rather than dominating the household with brashness, as Alonzo did, Haunce's lines are mostly reduced to nervous laughter. As he says, 'it has put me quite beside my part'.[504] Even more interestingly, when Haunce meets Euphemia, he does not behave with the same uncouth forwardness as Alonzo did when playing his part. When invited to approach her Haunce instead respectfully declines, 'Your pardon, Sir, let her come to me, if she will'.[505] The real Haunce therefore finds his reception in Spain at the mercy of the words and actions of others. Haunce becomes a passive observer in the creation and reception of his own identity onstage, overshadowed, and therefore overlooked, by Alonzo's impersonation of him. Behn's decision to wait until the third act to introduce Haunce allows her to explore the misconceptions that arise when a person's identity is established on the reports, illusions and misrepresentations of others.

[502] Ibid., IV. 1. 57–58.
[503] Ibid., IV. 1. 43–44.
[504] Ibid., IV. 1. 94.
[505] Ibid., IV. 1. 75.

The Deceit of Dress and National Denigration

The artificiality and, therefore, unreliability of identity relies heavily on the use of costume. In Behn's preface to the play, she explains that Haunce's costume and Alonzo's imitation of it were supposed to have been identical in all their lavish ridiculousness.

> I intended [Haunce] a habit much more notably ridiculous, which if it can ever be important was so here, for many of the Scenes in the last three Acts depended upon the mistakes of the Colonel for Haunce, which the ill-favour'd likeness of their Habits is suppos'd to cause.[506]

Apparently, this 'likeness' was not well-executed, undermining the plausibility of Alonzo's successful deceit. Behn makes far more use of the need for a costume in her lovers' conspiracy than the original source material does. In *Don Fenise*, the only mention of using a costume is when Leonard 'clothed [him]selfe like a traveller' to convince Teodore's father he is her Basque fiancé.[507] Of course, in a play, visual appearances are far more important. Haunce's clothes are an opportunity for visual comedy, but they also serve a greater significance in Behn's exploration of the complexities involved in the construction of identity. Alonzo 'drest ridiculously' to play his role, and when the real Haunce arrives he is 'drest as Alonzo was'.[508] The man and the imitation mirror each other in these stage directions and, therefore, visually when they come face-to-face in Act V. At this point, Haunce is so perturbed by the resemblance he loses grip on his own sense of identity:

> I know no more than the great Turk, not I, which of us is me; my hat, my feather; my sute, and my Garniture all over faith now; and I believe this me, for I'l trust my eyes before any other sense about me. What sayst thou now Gload? Guess which of us is thy own natural Master now if thou canst.[509]

[506] Ibid., Preface, l.154–157.
[507] *Don Fenise*, p.75.
[508] Behn, *DL*, III. 1. 1; IV. 1. 1.
[509] Ibid., V. 2. 81–85.

The use of mirror images recalls pamphleteer Owen Fellltham's 1652 attack on the Dutch in *A Brief Character of the Low Countries*, reprinted throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century:

> When you are entered the [Dutch] house, the first thing you encounter is a Looking glasse. No question but a true Embleme of politick hospitality, for though it reflect your self in your own figure, tis yet no longer than while you are there before it. When you are gone once, it flatters the next comer without the least remembrance that you ere were there.[510]

Fellltham's mirror is a metaphor for Dutch vanity and interchangeability. However, Behn might have been thinking about the use of mirror images and the crisis of identity provoked by them because of Leonard's brief remark in *Don Fenise*, 'I so admired at this success that I knew not myself, I looked in the glasse fearing that I was some other'.[511] Whether inspired by Fellltham or by *Don Fenise*, in Behn's play the mirror images of Haunce and Alonzo offer a commentary on the fundamental interchangeability of identity itself. One might argue that the ease with which Alonzo adopts another name, nationality and personality is based on the idea Alonzo is 'so unhappy as not to know [his] Birth or Parents'.[512] He grew up with the Spanish army in Flanders believing himself to be the son of a soldier but, since his guardian's deathbed confession, has been left to 'shift' for himself. His lack of paternity makes him the perfect candidate for a conspiracy predicated on identity. Arguably, he can easily inhabit the clothes and name of another because he has none of his own.

Haunce's 'equipage very ridiculous' provides a recurring visual joke throughout the play and is a foundational cause for the derision aimed at him. However, as Behn's plays continually prove, dress is often a form of deceit. Costumes by their very nature are multi-layered metatheatrical devices, easily put on and taken off, facilitating the adoption of different identities to the great confusion of other characters. The deceit of dress in *The Dutch Lover* is so complete that, Gabbard's

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[510] Owen Fellltham, *A Brief Character of the Low-Countries Under the States. Being three weeks' observation of the vices and virtues of the inhabitants*. [London: Printed for H.S. 1652] (pp.18–19). See K. van Strien, 'Owen Fellltham's *A Brief Character of the Low-Countries*: a survey in texts', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700*, 6 (1997), pp.132–74.
[511] *Don Fenise*, pp.75–76.
[512] Behn, *DL*, I. 1. 39–40.

words, 'in the eyes of Don Carlo, the real Dutch man is indistinguishable from the fraud'.[513] Visual markers as a demarcation of identity are so unreliable even Haunce cannot trust his own eyesight. Alonzo's imitation, Behn's greatest denigration of the Dutch, is therefore inextricably bound up with ideas of deceit. Even Haunce is not immune from attempting a similar kind of transformation. Gload points out that the ridiculous aspect his master has donned to meet his future bride is very different from how he is attired at home:

> when instead of a Periwig, you wore a slink, greasie hair of your own, through which a pair of large thin souses appear'd, to support a formal hat […] A Coller instead of a Cravat twelve inches high; with a blew, stiff starcht, lawn Band, set in print like your Whiskers; a Dublet with small Skirts hookt to a pair of wide-kneed Briches, which dangled half way over a leg, all to be dash'd and durty'd as high as the gartering […] A cloak, half a yard shorter than the Breeches, not through lin'd, but fac'd as far as 'twas turn'd back, with a pair of frugal butter-hams, which was always manag'd---thus---[514]

By contrast to this portrait of himself at home, Haunce is very proud of the aesthetic effort he has made for his visit, believing himself to be a 'Merchant revers'd […] so transform'd from the Merchant to the Gallant in all points, that his own Parents, nay, the Divel himself cannot know him'.[515] Again, there is a mirror imagery in Haunce, Alonzo and the use of costumes. Haunce is a merchant who has adopted the clothes of a gallant, and Alonzo is a gallant who has adopted the clothes of a merchant. Of course, Haunce's attempt at imitating the costume of a gallant fails miserably in that he only looks absurd, whereas Alonzo looks so absurd he succeeds in convincing Don Carlo he *is* a merchant. Hughes notes that 'the interchangeability of the cavalier and the merchant does contribute to the portrayal of a world in which old categories have become fluid and uncertain. Alonzo and Haunce's backgrounds clearly correspond to those of royalist gentry and dissident citizenry'.[516] Thus, with dramatic irony, Haunce is correct that he is transformed beyond

[513] Gabbard, 'Clashing Masculinities', p.560.
[514] Behn, *DL*, III. 2. 48–64.
[515] Ibid., III. 2. 65–78.
[516] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.53.

recognition, in that Euphemia's father has already failed to recognise Alonzo as a fraudulent representation of the real Haunce.

The ridiculousness of Haunce's aspect and its relationship to the construction of national identity is reminiscent of Monsieur de Paris in Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, which in turn was inspired by another Spanish text, Calderón's *El maestro de danzar*.[517] In both plays, an engaged woman tricks her father into allowing her lover's visits by convincing him he is her dancing tutor. One of the key revisions Wycherley made to the Spanish original is in his characterisation of this overbearing father, and the undesirable, foppish fiancé. In Wycherley, both father and fop are actually English, but both affect the language and fashions of rival countries, thus creating a comedic rivalry between the two antagonists. Don Diego (or Mr James Formal, as he was born) is 'newly returned home, as much affected with the Habit and Costums of Spain' as Monsieur de Paris is 'newly returned from France, and mightily affected with the French Language and Fashions'.[518] Both characters adamantly believe that adopting the manners and costume of their chosen nationality *makes* them that nationality, to the point where Don Diego believes he can curb his future son-in-law's Frenchness by forcing him to dress in Spanish clothes and giving him a Moorish servant to teach him how to walk in a Spanish way. [519] Of course, in Behn's play it is the hero Alonzo who pretends to be another nationality rather than the antagonists, and he certainly does not do so because he *wants* to be Dutch, but rather to denigrate the Dutchman. However, the ideas about the construction of national identity raised in Wycherley's comedy bear parallels to Behn's. The changeability of nationality is a common theme in both Wycherley and Behn, and both are rooted in the idea of costumes and affectation. Identity — our perception of ourselves and of others — is predicated on unreliable factors, whether those be the testimony of others, or the costumes we

[517] See Nora Rodriguez-Loro, 'Calderón and Wycherley's Dancing-Masters', in *English and American Studies in Spain: New Developments and Trends*, ed. by Luis Alberto Lázaro Lafuente and M. Dolores Porto Requejo (Alcalá de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universeridad de Alcalá, 2015) pp.136–143.
[518] William Wycherley, *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, in *The Country Wife and Other Plays*, ed. by Peter Dixon, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) pp.97–190 (p.98).
[519] Wycherley, *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (Act IV).

wear. Behn seems to be suggesting that the use of national stereotypes to ridicule the Dutch is similarly unreliable. Rather than simply mocking the Dutch, she is mocking the process by which they come to be ridiculed.

The deceit of dress is also an integral motif to the subplot involving Hippolyta, her dishonourable lover Antonio and her vengeful brother, Marcel. Antonio installs Hippolyta at a bordello 'drest like a Venice courtesan'.[520] We see her briefly in this costume in the bordello, before she is hustled to safety by Lovis. Later, Antonio tells her his design was always:

> to spread your fame abroad.
> But being not satisifi'd till in Madrid,
> Here in your native Town I had proclaim'd you.
> The house from whence your Brother's fury chac'd us,
> Was a Bordello, where 'twas given out
> Thou wert a Venice Curtizan to hire
> Whilst you believ'd it was your Nuptial Palace.[521]

Antonio and Hippolyta's relationship is inspired by 'The History of Eufemie and Teodore' in *Don Fenise*, but Behn adds the detail that the costume is Venetian to her adaptation. The adoption of a Venetian identity and dress is a further reference to Hippolyta's dislocation from society and fall from grace. As Pearson writes,

> Behn's female characters, traditionally viewed as low-status on the grounds of gender, do tend to identify themselves, either overtly or by implication, with ethnic outsiders, those cast as low-status by virtue of their race or nationality. Hippolyta in *The Dutch Lover*, a seduced and abused woman, figures her sense of alieness within Spanish society by adopting the role not only of a courtesan but of a Venetian courtesan.[522]

[520] Behn, *DL*, I. 2. 139.
[521] Ibid., III. 3. 100–06.
[522] Pearson, 'Slave princes', p.220.

Disguising Hippolyta as a foreign courtesan is an important part of Antonio's plot to avenge himself on Marcel by denigrating his sister. In *The Amorous Prince* a host of female characters disguise themselves as courtesans to fool Prince Frederick, and my previous chapter analysed this artifice as a condemnation of Frederick's mercantile attitude towards women. Here, however, the artifice has a far crueller objective, which reobjectifies the use of the courtesan costume: 'to show, and offer you to sale, was equally as shameful'.[523] Antonio uses the costume to humiliate and dishonour Hippolyta's female body, rather than shame the male consumer. Conflating her real identity with that of a foreign prostitute emphasises the fact Hippolyta has been debauched and is therefore no longer a marriageable virgin, and casts her further away from the respectable place she once held in Spanish society. The Venetian courtesan disguise was Antonio's idea and he assumes Hippolyta was unaware of its significance. However, Hippolyta reveals she understood what he was doing, 'Dost think I did not understand the plot?', but explains that she continued to wear the costume since Antonio advertised her at a 'price too high' and deterred would-be costumers.[524] Her reluctant acquiescence to her costume is even more indicative of how low she has fallen that she consented to hide her shame in the guise of a foreign woman for hire.[525]

Therefore, it is a fitting plot development that Hippolyta seeks revenge on Antonio by adopting another mask, this time of her own choosing. In Act IV she enters 'drest like a man', the guise of Alonzo, to challenge Antonio to a duel. She says, 'Methinks I am not what I was, / My soul too is all man: / Where dwells no tenderness, no womanish passions'.[526] Female revenge and empowerment is only achievable through the abandonment of 'womanish' sentimentality and the absorption of masculine virtues. Hippolyta cannot challenge Antonio as herself, only in the form of the man who had a prior claim to her. She must forsake her name, her dress and the very core of her identity, her soul, in order to avenge the wrongs done to her. 'Be strong my soul', she counsels

[523] Behn, *DL*, III. 3. 116.
[524] Ibid., III. 3. 109.
[525] Ibid., III. 3. 107.
[526] Ibid., IV. 2. 2–4.

herself, 'And let no feeble woman dwell about thee'. To this end, her violent sentiments even begin to echo those of her angry brother, Marcel. Earlier in the play Marcel warned Hippolyta that she had had 'more mercy on thy slaughter'd honour, / Than I will have thee'.[527] He promised to restore his family's reputation with bloodshed: 'Tyrannick Honour / Presents the credit of my house before me, / And bids me first redeem its fading glory, / By sacrificing that false woman's heart'.[528] Here, Hippolyta also speaks of 'redeem[ing] / All the lost credit of our Family' through the 'showres' of blood she wishes to see spilled from Antonio.[529] The adoption of masculine virtues is matched by a surprising confidence in her martial abilities. When Alonzo offers his services in the duel Hippolyta declines, believing 'my own [sword] will be sufficient in so good a cause' and proving it to be the case in the confused four-way fight that ensues, duelling against both Antonio and Marcel.[530] When Marcel joins the fray, Behn presents the opportunity for a persecuted woman to exact revenge, like-for-like, for the violence Antonio and Marcel have both shown towards her person. However, because she is a woman, she cannot win. When Antonio discovers Hippolyta's disguise, it is he who steps between her and Marcel: 'Hold, Sir, and touch her not without my leave, / She is my wife; by sacred vows my wife'.[531] Ultimately, Hippolyta can only be protected from one man's rage by placing herself under the ownership of another man.

Dress is a fundamental demarcation of identity, but, as the hijacking of costumes in Haunce and Hippolyta's respective plotlines show, it is also easy to imitate and manipulate. Alonzo and Antonio understand this and capitalise upon it to denigrate Haunce and Hippolyta. Dress not only signifies their otherness, as, respectively, a foreigner and as a woman, but is also used to alienate them further from Madrid's society. Haunce and Hippolyta therefore have a lot in common; they are both victims of stolen or appropriated identities. The difference is that Hippolyta recognises this and

[527] Ibid, I.2. 114–15.
[528] Ibid., II . 1. 8–10.
[529] Ibid., IV. 2. 150 and 157–58.
[530] Ibid., IV. 3. 133–34. Behn often included fight scenes in which women disguised as men were more than a match for their combatants e.g. Cleomena in *The Young King* and Celinda in *The Town-Fopp*.
[531] Ibid, IV. 3. 250–51.

uses the same method of changing dress/changing identity in an attempt to assert a new sense of autonomy and self-determination. However, she fails.

Tyrannous Brothers

As Hippolyta's plotline shows, Behn is not interested in portraying Haunce as a foreign force whose presence poses a threat to the female characters. Rather, she aligns his plight with that of the fugitive, persecuted woman. Haunce's recusing of Hippolyta highlights the fact that foreign adversaries do not present the greatest threat to the women of the play. In fact, the most dangerous figures live much closer to home; they are Hippolyta's, and Cleonte's, own brothers. Marcel's murderous wrath ousts Hippolyta from the city, driving her to the woodland grove where she is vulnerable to Antonio's assault. Elsewhere, Silvio plots to rape Cleonte, the woman he believes is his half-sister. The violence in the play therefore lurks in familial and domestic relationships, rather than the metaphorical invasion of Haunce. This poses yet another conflict to the general understanding of *The Dutch Lover* as wartime propaganda, as Haunce's aggression pales into comparison beside the murderously-vengeful Marcel and the would-be incestuous rapist Silvio. This is all the more pertinent, because in Behn's earlier plays brothers and sisters enjoy amiable, supportive relationships with one another: Cleomena champions her brother's succession over her own claim to the throne; Phillander and Galatea console one another through their respective heartaches; Curtius, although prepared to use Cloris to further his own political ambitions, loves her so much he is prepared to kill his prince to avenge her honour and heartbreak. By contrast, the sibling relationships in *The Dutch Lover* are embroiled in violence: Marcel spends the play hunting for his wayward sister with a blood-thirsty obsession to restore his sense of 'Tyrannick Honour, / […] By sacrificing that false woman's heart'.[532] Sword in hand, he pursues Antonio and Hippolyta through the bordello and streets of Madrid, planning to 'take them in their foul imbraces / And send their souls to hell'.[533] Hippolyta's predicament bears parallels to Cloris's in *The Amorous Prince* in that

[532] Ibid., II. 1. 7–10.
[533] Ibid., I. 2. 124–25.

both women have been seduced by a man's promises of love and marriage. However, whereas Curtius immediately excuses his sister's role in her seduction as indicative of her gullible naïveté, Marcel resents Hippolyta for what he believes to be the merciless, self-inflicted 'slaughter' of her own honour.[534] In the meantime, Marcel is hypocritically planning to seduce Clarinda, a woman he has no intention of marrying.

In this, Hippolyta and Clarinda are not simply the ultimate victims of male violence and concepts of honour, they are also used as disposable pawns in Marcel and Antonio's games of sexual one-upmanship. Antonio confesses to Hippolyta that he did not pursue her because he loved her, but because he wanted to punish Marcel for flirting for Clarinda, telling her:

> 'Twas no love to thee,
>
> But hatred to thy Brother Don Marcel,
>
> Who made addresses to the said Clarinda
>
> And by his quality destroy'd my hopes.[535]

Antonio felt that seducing Hippolyta, especially since she was engaged to Alonzo at the time, would be the most effective way to hurt Marcel. Antonio was right; even though Marcel is enraged by Antonio's treatment of Hippolyta, he cares about how the seduction has affected his own pride more than he cares about his sister's wellbeing. His anger causes him to reflect, briefly, on his pursuit of Clarinda:

> Only Hippolyta a brother has,
>
> Clarinda none to punish her disgrace:
>
> And 'tis more glory the defenc'd to win,
>
> Than 'tis to take unguarded virtue in.
>
> I either must my shameful love resign,
>
> Or my more brave and just revenge decline.[536]

[534] Ibid., I. 2. 114.
[535] Ibid., III. 3. 81–84.
[536] Ibid., II. 1. 18–23.

Both men's sense of honour comes at the price of a woman's disgrace. Behn therefore pits masculine honour against feminine virtue as violently at odds with one another in a society where a man's sense of manliness is derived from sexual competition and conquest. Marcel frets that Antonio could be considered the more masculine since he has succeeded in seducing a guarded woman, as opposed to a defenceless one. By figuring this conundrum in militaristic terms – 'glory', 'defence' – Behn emphasises the fact that Marcel's attitude towards sex is that it is a kind of sport. Despite his sanctimony, his intentions to resolve the hypocrisy of his actions do not last long, and he continues to take part in both pursuits of love and vengeance when, having lost sight of Antonio and Hippolyta in the streets of Madrid, he decides to soothe his ego in Clarinda's embraces, and slips through her unlocked front door.[537] 'Unguarded virtue' indeed, as it is only Alonzo's accidental presence in the hallway (the result of another case of mistaken identity) that puts paid to his plans. Marcel and Antonio's perceptions of honour, as an insincere contest of masculine sexual prowess, trivialises the very real danger in which it places the women. Whereas they have only their sense of pride to lose, the stakes are perilously high for Hippolyta as she faces her brother's wrath on one side, and her former lover's sexual assault on the other.

Just as Haunce's character has typically been interpreted in the light of Behn's putative anti-Dutch bias, Marcel's character has also been frequently explored in light of his Spanish nationality. Gabbard writes that Marcel 'epitomizes Spanish intransigence, and through him, the text deploys the national stereotype of the "hypermasculine Spanish male"'.[538] The peril Hippolyta faces, coupled with Euphemia's forced marriage at the insistence of her Spanish father, could be viewed as a further example of what Brian C. Lockey argues: that Behn uses gender to reconfigure imperial and colonial politics. Therefore, like Hellena and Florinda in *The Rover*, Euphemia and Hippolyta represent the 'oppressed subjects of Spanish imperial rule'.[539] Marcel, therefore, has been viewed as

[537] Ibid., II. 3. 60–70.
[538] Gabbard, 'Clashing Masculinities', p.563.
[539] Brian C. Lockey, '"A Language All Nations Understand": Portraiture and Politics of Anglo-Spanish Identity in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 39:1 (2009) 161–81 (p.164).

a representation of and commentary on Early Modern perceptions of Spanish tyranny, in which 'English writers viewed Spain with a complex combination of admiration, fear, and contempt for what they perceived as the cruel and oppressive policies initiated by the Spanish crown in the Americas and Continental Europe'.[540]

However, understanding Marcel's character as a condemnatory portrayal of Spanish patriarchal values is inherently problematic when considering the wider cast of characters. Lovis is also Spanish, and yet he gleefully indulges in and assists his sister's wilfulness. Further, if we are to understand that Marcel acts in a violent and vengeful manner simply because he is Spanish, it should follow that Antonio is equally violent and vengeful because he is German. However, there are actually very few references to Marcel or Antonio's nationality in the play itself. Any comments upon the Spanish men come from Haunce, who complains 'I hate the sober Spanish way of making love, that's unattended with Wine and Musick'.[541] To emphasise this point he later calls for music, 'To show [Euphemia] the difference between the damnable dull gravity of the Spanish, and the brisk gaiety of the Dutch'.[542] However, Haunce also seems to be working under a misconception of the Spanish in this interesting and comic reversal of stereotyping. There is, actually, nothing leaden or gloomy about the Spanish men's approach to lovemaking in the play. Instead, as we have seen, they are vicious and violent in their conquests. Haunce's comments can be interpreted as another example of misjudged perceptions of national stereotypes.

The play, therefore, is neither anti-Dutch nor anti-Spanish. Rather, Behn's cast of a variety of international characters is a continuation of her interest in the destructive masculinity of society. Spanish or German, men pursue women violently and selfishly in a game of sexual one-upmanship. This one-upmanship is more extreme in *The Dutch Lover* than in her previous plays. Here, this sexual competitiveness turns brothers against sisters, thereby not only threatening a more general sense of

[540] Ibid., p.162.
[541] Behn, *DL*, III. 2. 88–89.
[542] Ibid., IV. 1. 175–76.

political stability, as in *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince*, but also encroaching upon the domestic harmony of familial bonds. In setting the play in the domestic, rather than political, realm, Behn draws attention away from foreign, outside forces, to interrogate the dangers that lurk within the local community or the family home.

Dangerous Families, Favourites and Desire

As the exploration of Haunce and Hippolyta's unstable conceptions of the self, and Marcel and Antonio's violence demonstrate, *The Dutch Lover* is far less a dramatisation of external, European politics than it is about the world of the internal and the domestic. Haunce unwittingly stumbles into a Madrid whose homes and family structures were full of internal strife and uncertainty long before his unwanted arrival. Behn's first three plays revolved around the interlocked and contentious bonds between royalty and subjects, interrogating different facets of power — autocratic, meritocratic and economic — in the problematic absence of an authoritative father/king figure. In her earlier plays, she explored the impact this absence had on the political realm. In *The Dutch Lover*, she continues her theme of absent father figures and their impact on different characters' understandings of self and familial bonds, and the resultant breakdown of those bonds. It is possible that Behn is asking her English audiences to turn their eyes inwards, away from the outside war, to focus instead on England's internal politics. Of course, foreign settings are typically used to distance a play's politically-controversial commentaries from England. The argument that *The Dutch Lover* contains coded references to English politics would not be extraordinary, if not for the fact that this familiar trope seems to have been largely unexplored in relation to *The Dutch Lover*. The play's wartime context offers a deceptively simple approach to its politics, inviting us to read in it the anti-Dutch sentiments this chapter has redressed. However, there is potentially a subtle and hitherto unexplored commentary at work in *The Dutch Lover* embedded in its portrayal of favourites and influence.

Alonzo and Silvio spend the majority of the play believing they are illegitimate sons. Alonzo was brought up by a Spanish soldier who 'dying, confest I was not his son, (which till then I believed) and at the age of twenty left me to shift for my self'.[543] At the end of the play, it is revealed that the Spanish soldier who raised him was the jealous lover of Clarinda's mother, and Alonzo's father was the nobleman Don Manual. Alonzo bears similarities to Don Fernand in *Don Fenise*, who was stolen from his parents, brought up ignorant of his birth and distinguished himself in Flanders on the battlefield.[544] Alonzo's lack of a familial identity facilitates the ease with which he fully embodies the role of Haunce, with all the comedy and swagger of a roving Restoration rake set on having a good time. The revelation that he is related to Clarinda only emerges as an amusing near-miss in accidental incest. Thus, their flirtation is the comic misadventure of mistaken familial identity. However, Behn pairs this with a far darker story of perceived-illegitimacy and incestuous infatuation, exploring the far more sinister consequences of confused identity. Silvio labours under the misapprehension he is the bastard son of Don Ambrosio, the unwanted and disgraced half-brother of Marcel and Cleonte. He spends the play tormented by his desire for the woman he believes to be his sister, at an almost tragic cost. His struggle illustrates the chaos that ensues when familial identities become confused, and points to a potential political commentary about the domestic politics of Charles II's court.

As Silvio wrestles with his passion, egged on by the treacherous servant Franscisca, he resolves to rape Cleonte. The subplot involving Silvio seems to be taken from an episode in *Don Fenise* called 'The History of Jame', in which a bastard called Lucian conspires to rape his sister Olinde, but is prevented by her caring brother Jame and a serving girl.[545] The fact Cleonte is not actually Silvio's sister in *The Dutch Lover* is a moot point at this juncture; Silvio's character, and the audience (albeit probably to a lesser extent) fully believe they are related. Despite this, Silvio

[543] Ibid., I. 1. 43–45.
[544] 'The History of Don Antonio' in *Don Fenise*, pp.250–94.
[545] 'The History of Jame' in *Don Fenise*, pp. 206–49

prepares himself 'for all the resistance she can make, and am resolv'd to satisfie my insupportable flame, since there's no other hope for me'.[546] When the moment of his planned attack arrives, he is checked by his conscience and begs Cleonte to flee from him: 'A strange wild Monster is broke in upon thee; / A thing that was a man, but now as mad, / As raging Love can make him'.[547] Silvio's desire threatens to overwhelm the censure of sexual-familial relationships. The two are, morally, utterly incompatible and Silvio is so tortured by his transgression he no longer considers himself to be human. The horror he feels towards his feelings is so devastating his very sense of identity is consumed by it, reducing him to a 'Monster' and 'thing that was a man'. His belief that he is in love with his sister has, in his eyes, deformed his body and crippled his mind beyond recognition. Just as Haunce no longer feels certain it is his own face he sees in the mirror, so here Behn presents an uglier example of the psychological torment precipitated by issues of identity.

Behn's revisions to Silvio's plotline, and the way in which she resolves its crisis, suggests that this chaotic domestic setting is a coded reference to England's domestic politics and the looming succession crisis. Don Ambrosio reveals at the end of the play that Silvio is not actually his son, but the legitimised bastard heir of 'the mighty favourite' Counte De Olivaris.[548] Behn's reference to the Count of Olivares is intriguing. It not only goes some way towards dating the play in terms of its setting, but the connotations of Olivares's name in the seventeenth century belie Hughes's remark that 'it seems likeliest that Behn simply needed a famous Spaniard' to step in as Silvio's errant father.[549] Why a famous Spaniard in the first place? Alonzo's parentage was explained using a fictitious father, without a historical and political bearing. Why should Silvio be elevated to the legitimised son of an infamous Spanish nobleman?

One possible answer is that the reference to Olivares contains potential allusions to the matter of the English succession. Charles and Catherine of Braganza did not have a legitimate,

[546] Behn, *DL*, III. 4. 7–9.
[547] Ibid., III. 4. 65–67.
[548] Ibid., V. 1. 356.
[549] Hughes, *Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.54.

Protestant child of their own and by 1673 it was obvious there would be none. At the time Behn wrote *The Dutch Lover*, the Duke of York looked set to inherit the throne, and there were worrying rumours that he had converted to Catholicism during his time in France. Exacerbating these fears, in 1672 Charles II had issued a Royal Declaration of Indulgence, a gesture of religious toleration towards non-conformists and Catholics. Although the Succession Crisis was not to come to a head for another six or so years, the issues surrounding James's succession were already causing concern. In this context, Hayden points out that Olivares:

> was much concerned about direct succession to the duchy of San Lucar. His only legitimate heir, a daughter, died while giving birth to her first child. When it appeared certain that he would have no further children by his wife, Olivares suddenly acknowledged and declared as his heir an illegitimate son, Don Julian de Guzman, the child of a liaison with a lady at court.[550]

She argues that Behn's reference to Olivares, and Silvio's subsequent legitimisation and inheritance, could allude to the possibility that the Crown might legitimise James Scott, Duke of Monmouth. As the son of Charles II's affair with Lucy Walter, the king could declare him heir to the throne, circumventing his uncle James. As bastard sons of famous, ruling fathers, there is a potential parallel that could be drawn between Silvio and Monmouth that subsequently suggests Behn is expressing political support for Monmouth's succession. Behn is remembered for her support of the Duke of York and her dramatic works of the early 1680s in which she attacked the Whigs who opposed his succession. As Hayden comments, Behn's 'shift' from nephew to uncle might have been prompted by Monmouth's unpopular decision to align himself with Shaftesbury and the Whigs.[551] However, she did not really throw the weight of her theatrical support behind James until the events of the Exclusion Crisis polarised political opinion. As Todd comments, 'the polarising included Aphra

[550] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, pp.150–51.
[551] Ibid., p.152. Behn expressed her support for James's succession in dedicating *The Second Part of the Rover* to him (1681) and in criticising Monmouth and Shaftesbury's plot in the 'Epilogue' she wrote for *Romulus and Hersilia* (1682).

Behn'.[552] It is possible, that in the early 1670s Behn was toying with the idea that Monmouth could inherit the throne.

If Behn was playing with the possibility that Monmouth could inherit the throne, then she obviously had concerns about the possibility. Silvio's despair as he battles his desire makes him far more sympathetic than the character he was based on from *Don Fenise*: Lucian is villainous and unscrupulous in his machinations, Silvio is not. Silvio, like Haunce and Hippolyta, is also the victim of an identity conspiracy, and, as seen, Behn takes pains to dramatise the enormous emotional toll this takes on Silvio's sense of self. However, during this struggle, Silvio displays a sexual promiscuity, aggression and susceptibility to flattery which does not make him very likeable. In his attempts to distract himself from Cleonte, he mentions he has pursued a variety of other women, high and lowborn, making his 'addresses / To all the fairest Virgins in Madrid' whilst also 'frequenting every common house'.[553] He has even pursued the woman he knows his half-brother, Marcel, is in love with: 'Even the fair Clarinda I have courted too'.[554] Since Silvio's pursuits are the desperate actions of a lovesick man, rather than pleasure-seeking, we might excuse this promiscuity, especially since Restoration drama is typically quite tolerant of male profligacy. However, he continues to pursue Cleonte with an often calculating and violent undercurrent to his desire. He resents Marcel, and asks Francisca to help him devise a plot to distract him from his close watch of Cleonte, believing if Marcel were elsewhere, 'At least she should permit me to adore her, / […] Hast thou no stratagem to get him absent?'[555] When all else fails, he seriously considers luring Cleonte to the garden to rape her, 'prepar'd for all the resistance she can make, and am resolv'd to satisfie my insupportable flame'.[556] However, he cannot go through with the act and begs her flee, lest, 'In some such fit as does possess me now / I should commit a rape, a rape upon thee'.[557] Although he does not commit a

[552] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.229.
[553] Behn, *DL*, I. 2. 19–22.
[554] Ibid., I. 2. 51.
[555] Ibid., I. 2. 15.
[556] Ibid., III. 4. 7–9.
[557] Ibid., III. 4. 92–93.

rape, he is still tempted by the thought. Therefore, although he is ultimately able to overcome his lust, Silvio struggles to restrain himself and exhibits a violent disposition which makes it unclear Behn intended him to represent the man she believed *should* inherit the throne over James, already a legitimate prince. Behn's decision to legitimise Silvio, whose behaviour has been highly problematic, suggests she might not have been as strongly averse to Monmouth's claim to the throne as her later works would lead us to believe. At the time of *The Dutch Lover*, she might have been prepared to entertain the idea that Monmouth might inherit. However, in pairing Silvio's legitimisation with his highly problematic behaviour, she also clearly had concerns about the idea.

The reference to Olivares as a 'mighty favourite' also contains much clearer allusions to the problems of the English court in the early 1670s. Unpopular political favourites dogged the reputation of Charles II's court, as they had done his father and grandfather's. Because of his unpopular political influence, Olivares was frequently compared to Charles I's favourites, Strafford and the Duke of Buckingham. Hughes also acknowledges there might be some comparisons to be drawn between Olivares's fall and that of the Earl of Clarendon.[558] At the turn of the 1670s, there had been grumblings about Charles II's long-time friend George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham, who was constantly present in Charles's inner circle despite the fact he did not hold any serious governmental office. Hutton explains that 'the wayward Duke's actual impotence coupled with his prominence at court […] led some observers to mistake him for a major influence upon the King at this period'.[559] It is interesting that in *The Dutch Lover*, the reference to Olivares raises thoughts about the controversial influence of favourites within a court. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that this detrimental influence rests on the shoulders of not a male, but a female, character. Francisca, a maid serving in Don Ambrosio's house, encourages Silvio to pursue Cleonte. Her role is very different to her counterpart in *Don Fenise*, in which Lucian also confides in a serving woman, but she is appalled by his confession and betrays his confidence to save her

[558] Hughes, *Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.54.
[559] Hutton, *Charles II*, p.259.

mistress's virtue. In Behn's version, the maid Francisca actively encourages Silvio's desperate plans, with a spiteful view to damning Cleonte's reputation and having Silvio for herself. She lures Cleonte to the garden where Silvio plans to rape her, and leaves the innocent maid to her fate believing that 'when he possesses the fair Cleonte, he for ever ruines his interest in her heart, and must find nothing but her mortal hate and scorn'.[560] She later tries to convince Silvio that Cleonte has invited him to her bedchamber that night, and he will be met with only a token resistance: 'even whilst she so denys [she] will yield'.[561] Behn had portrayed bad advisors before in the figures of the manipulative Geron and licentious Lorenzo; however there is a vicious wickedness to Francisca's self-serving machinations that is unparalleled in the plays before *The Dutch Lover*. Geron filled Orsames's head with visions of vengeful gods, but he did so to try and control his frustrated prisoner. Lorenzo facilitated in Frederick's pursuit of women, but he did so for economic gains and always at the behest of his prince. By contrast, Francisca actively and maliciously encourages Silvio's disastrous feelings for Cleonte. Francisca, a female servant, prepared to manipulate sexual situations to achieve her desired ends, could indicate that Behn's thoughts about favouritism lay at least as much in the influence that the *women* of Charles's court wielded. In this, Francisca bears certain parallels to the influence Charles II's mistresses were thought to have on him, especially Louise-Renée de Penancoët de Kéroualle.

Hutton views Louise de Kéroualle, later Duchess of Portsmouth, with a degree of sympathy, as an impoverished young noblewoman solely reliant on her position as lady-in-waiting to, first, Charles II's sister Minette and, second, Catherine of Braganza. By the end of 1670, she had been 'coaxed and cajoled' by Charles II, the Secretary of State Arlington, and the French ambassador, into the King's bed.[562] Charles was taken by her virginal beauty; Arlington by the idea of a fresh new face given that previous royal mistresses had disliked him; de Croissy, the French ambassador, by the

[560] Behn, *DL*, III. 4. 12–13.
[561] Ibid., V. 1. 261.
[562] Hutton, *Charles II*, pp.279–80.

obvious opportunities a French mistress to the English king would provide to further French interests in the year the Secret Treaty of Dover was signed. However innocent, or helpless, Kéroualle was in her sudden ascendency at the English court, as Hutton comments, she was

> immensely unpopular, being both a Catholic and a French subject and also extremely expensive. It has been estimated that between her pension and her presents she cost the nation about £40,000 per year. The Earl of Pembroke told her to her face that she was the realm's greatest grievance.[563]

Kéroualle's unpopularity was so great that in 1681 an Oxfordshire mob attacked Nell Gwyn's carriage, believing it belonged to the Duchess of Portsmouth, leading to Gwyn's famous retort, 'Pray good people be civil, I am the *Protestant* whore'.[564] Behn might have had her own reasons for disliking Kéroualle, whose had replaced the aforementioned Nell Gwyn in Charles's affections.[565] Gwyn had been working for the King's Company until Charles had persuaded her to retire by the beginning of 1671. Although she therefore never acted in one of Behn's plays, she had frequently starred in Dryden's, and continued to visit the theatre long after she stopped treading the boards herself.[566] It is possible that Behn might have considered the ex-actress and theatre-lover Gwyn to be 'one of us'. In *The Feign'd Curtizans* dedication to Gwyn she showers Charles's mistress with praises, claiming that she possesses, 'a greatness so unaffected, an affability so easy, an humour so soft, so far from pride or vanity'.[567] Therefore, it is possible Behn was sorry to see Gwyn replaced in Charles's bed by a French, Catholic noblewoman.

We can draw parallels between Kéroualle's unpopularity, and the unusual role Francisca plays in *The Dutch Lover*. Both serve the mistress of the house: Francisca serving Cleonte and Kéroualle, Catherine of Braganza. Kéroualle was despised for being French, and Francisca's name

[563] Ibid., pp.335–36.
[564] Alison Conway, 'Defoe's Protestant Whore', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 35 (2002) 215–33 (p.215).
[565] Hutton, *Charles II*, pp.279–80.
[566] Behn wrote exclusively for the Duke's Company. Todd states that Gwyn saw Behn's next play, *Abdelazer* (*A Secret Life*, 2017, p.191). Behn would go on to dedicate her play *The Feign'd Curtizans* to Nell Gwyn in 1679.
[567] Aphra Behn, 'The Epistle Dedicatory to Mrs Ellen Gwyn', in *Aphra Behn: The Rover and Other Plays*, ed. by Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) pp.91–92 (ll.52–54).

bears an aural similarity to 'France'. They both have a worrying influence over a man who is sexually promiscuous yet becomes obsessively fixated on the most inappropriate woman he can possibly pursue. Of course, Charles II was never accused of having, let alone forcing, a sexual relationship with one of his sisters. Charles II also never believed himself to be a bastard. However, Silvio's sexual promiscuity matched with Francisca's influence suggests the two characters could serve as a stand-in for a comment on Charles II's unpopular relationship with his French mistress. With parallels to Kéroualle, Francisca has insinuated herself into the heart of her superiors' home, and ultimately plans to put herself into Silvio's bed.

Conclusion

When we first consider *The Dutch Lover*'s historical context, we might automatically assume that Behn was writing in support of an increasingly unpopular war with the Dutch. However, wartime propaganda offers a clear, reductive portrayal of characters as the good and bad, a 'them' and 'us', who are clearly distinguishable and recognisable in order to promote one combatant's moral and military superiority over the other. These distinctions are bluntly apparent in Dryden's 'timely atrocity-mongering' *Amboyna* and, although less overtly, touched upon in the soldierly songs of Neville Payne and vitriolic tirades of Wycherley.[568] However, through a closer inspection of the portrayal of Haunce van Ezel we see Behn is, in fact, making a far more sophisticated commentary on national stereotypes, fitting for a play in which very few characters are who they first appear to be. Haunce might possess some Hollandophobic aspects, but he is also endowed with far more amenable, even honourable, characteristics which distance him from the role of villainous or futile foreigner we expect to see (and which has been found in previous analyses). Rather, the perception of character is chiefly (mal)formed by the hearsay, illusions and the deceits of others which blur any sense of an easily-distinguishable 'them' and 'us'. Instead, the characters and an unwary audience see, not Haunce, but Alonzo's satiric embodiment of him, inviting the question of which of the two

[568] Hume, *The Development of English Drama*, p.223.

men should really be considered the eponymous 'Dutch' lover. In this, identity, national or otherwise, becomes an unreliable construct, open to the abuse of others. We see this mirrored in Hippolyta's plotline, in which her sense of identity is made 'whore', first, by Antonio's failure to marry her and, then, by his forcing her into the disguise of a courtesan. Haunce and Hippolyta's identities are both hijacked by others for their own ends, which leads to the play's real underlying political commentary: first, that Behn is resisting anti-Dutch sentiments of the day; second, that the real threat facing England in the early 1670s comes from much closer to home than a foreign adversary. Setting the play in homes containing fractured familial relationships acts as a locational metaphor for the tensions of the English Court. Behn uses Silvio to highlight the increasingly worrisome question of the English succession, and to express concern over the potential influence of the king's mistress.

Charles's military and Behn's dramatic attempts during the Third Anglo Dutch War both ended in failure. In 1673, at the end of a contentious parliamentary session, Charles was granted a limited supply of £70,000 a month for eighteen months to continue the war, a war that he would ultimately lose. Significantly, this grant was given in exchange for Charles II withdrawing the Declaration of Indulgence and agreeing to a Test Act that would disbar Catholics from holding public office. With the Duke of York's Catholic conversion soon to be exposed, Behn's next play would return to a court setting, and the bloody tragedy of royal in-fighting and succession.

CHAPTER 4: THE MANY FACES OF *ABDELAZER*

RACE, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN *THE MOOR'S REVENGE*

No other character in Behn's early dramatic output has a more complex development, historical context and afterlife than the eponymous Abdelazer.[569] Based on *Lust's Dominion*, an anonymous play with a history of collaboration and revision stretching as far back as the end of the sixteenth century, *Abdelazer* is Behn's retelling of a Moorish man's endeavour to topple the Spanish monarchy.[570] Since his father, King Abdela of Fez, was overthrown by old King Philip of Spain, Abdelazer has risen through the military ranks, married a Spanish noblewoman, Florella, and conducted an illicit affair with the infatuated Queen. Despite his success, the former Prince of Barbary languishes amongst the material comforts of his courtly confinement, consumed by resentment and revenge. As the curtain rises on a moody Abdelazer, the Queen is poisoning her husband at his behest. Abdelazer then murders the new king, Ferdinand, and declares his brother and heir, Prince Philip, a bastard. Spain fractures into civil war from which Abdelazer emerges triumphant. His revenge seems complete, until he is betrayed by one of his lowly guardsmen and eventually killed by Prince Philip.

Abdelazer is a play of 'firsts' and 'onlys' in Behn's dramatic output. It is her first and only 'tragedy', the first and only play to have a black character as a lead role, and the first and only play which she would directly name after its main character.[571] *Abdelazer*, therefore, automatically

[569] Aphra Behn, 'Abdelazer', ed. by Janet Todd, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 5, (London: William Pickering, 1996) pp.239–316.
[570] Anon. *Lust's Dominion; or, The Lascivious Queen. A Tragedie* (London: Printed for F. K., 1657).
[571] Her previous titles are mostly periphrases relating to their heroes, such as *The Young King* after Orsames, or *The Amorous Prince* after Frederick. However, in this play, 'Abdelazer' stands alone, without an accompanying adjective, as both the main title and the name of the main character.

invites scrutiny of its eponymous anti-hero over and above that of the rest of the cast. Understandably, interpretations of his character have begun with the issue of his race. By contrast to the representation of race in *Lust's Dominion*, there seems to be a consensus that Behn's portrayal is simply not as damningly racist as her source text, with all the difficulties of applying that twentieth-century term to criticise Early Modern playwrights. Derek Hughes writes that Behn 'excises the moral symbolism of black and white', and Jacqueline Pearson explains, 'the moral distinction between Black and white is […] much less absolute' than in *Lust's Dominion*.[572] However, there the discussion of race in *Abdelazer* seems to stop, turning instead to how it operates in relation to gender, or to highlight the potential political analogies encoded in her drama — anti-Catholic sentiment and the looming succession crisis. In these analogies, Abdelazer is another reincarnation of the usurper from the popular dispossession and restoration narratives of early Restoration drama, inviting the possibility that Behn is downplaying Abdelazer's race to strengthen the comparisons between him and Cromwell. His generalship, regicides, dictatorship and the dispossession of Philip recall the events of the English Civil War and Interregnum and resonate with the impending resistance to the Duke of York's succession. Few studies of the play have explored why Behn, working so closely with her source material, chose to make these alterations to references to race or what their impact is on our perception of Abdelazer beyond the basic discussion of racism. Therefore, jumping from *Lust's Dominion* straight to Restoration crown politics leaves the issue of race behind prematurely. As this chapter will explore, Abdelazer is not only a black man, he is also a royal slave and a Morisco.

Therefore, although Behn alters some details of the plot that do create distinct parallels between Abdelazer and Cromwell, the nuances of these other embellishments directly contradict straight-forward analogies. She emphasises Abdelazer's own royal heredity and stresses his suffering and slavery in ways *Lust's Dominion* does not, inspiring sympathy, if not support, for his claim to the

[572] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.60; Pearson, 'Slave princes' (p.228).

Spanish throne. By doing so, *Abdelazer* questions the very predictors of what legitimate power is, and those questions feel unanswered even at the play's end. As this chapter will demonstrate, focusing on *Abdelazer*'s historical contexts and making a sustained comparison to *Lust's Dominion* reveals a nuanced understanding of the complexities of Behn's portrayal of the Moorish prince.

Background and *Lust's Dominion*

Abdelazer, unlike Behn's earlier plays, is lifted directly from an English source, *Lust's Dominion*. In terms of the plot, *Lust's Dominion* is very similar to *Abdelazer*. In *Lust's Dominion*, the Moorish General Eleazar is married to Spanish noblewoman, Maria, whilst conducting an illicit love affair with Queen. He murders the recently-crowned Fernando and, with the help of two friars, sets about discrediting Prince Philip, his younger brother. Philip flees to Portugal to rally outside support but is betrayed by the Cardinal Mendoza on the battlefield and captured. Thanks to his sister's quick-wittedness and a blundering guardsman, Philip frees himself and defeats Eleazar by leading him into a torture trap of his own design. It is a gleefully-violent play, with dubious authorship and origins. It was likely to have been performed by the Admiral's Men in 1599/1600 as *The Spaneshe Mores Tragedie*, for which Henslowe gave Thomas Dekker, William Haughton and John Day £3 as a part payment on 13 February 1600.[573] It is also possible that the play was revised over the first decade of its life to include allusions to the Gunpowder Plot (1605) and the Expulsion of the Moors from Spain (1609).[574] It was first published as *Lust's Dominion* by Francis Kirkham at the behest of Royalist sponsors in 1657, which would come to be the last year of Cromwell's dictatorship. As Dale Randall's research shows, plays that had been written before 1642 were frequently reprinted during the Interregnum as a covert means to critique the Civil War and Cromwell's subsequent protectorship.[575]

[573] See P. J. Ayres, 'The Revision of *Lust's Dominion*', *Notes and Queries*, 17 (1970) 212–13 (p.212); Charles Cathcart, '*Lust's Dominion; or, The Lascivious Queen*: Authorship, Date and Revision', *The Revision of English Studies*, 52 (2001) 360–75 (who identifies John Marston as fourth likely collaborator on the project) and Claire Jowitt, 'Political Allegory in Late Elizabethan and Early Jacobean "Turk" Plays: *Lust's Dominion* and *The Turke*', *Comparative Drama*, 36 (2002–3) 411–43.
[574] See Ayres, 'Revision of *Lust's Dominion*', p.213 and Cathcart, 'Authorship, Date and Revision', p.372.
[575] Dale Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642–1660* (Lexington, Kentucky: Kentucky UP, 1995) pp.229–47.

Charles Cathcart draws a link between this and the likely sponsors of *Lust's Dominion*'s production, who might have 'wanted to take advantage of the likenesses between the play's action and contemporary political affairs in order to insinuate that Cromwell's behaviour matched Eleazar's'.[576] The original manuscript of *The Spaneshe Mores Tragedie* has not survived, so it is impossible to assess what changes Kirkham might have made to the 1657 publication to suit a Royalist objective. However, as Susie Thomas notes, the play's collaborative conception and frequent revisions result in duplicated passages and confused plotting.[577] In short, it was a perfect text for another adaptation.

This adaptation, in the form of *Abdelazer*, marked Behn's return to the stage after a three-year hiatus. Although we do not know the date it premiered, Todd and Hughes believe it cannot have been long before its first recorded performance on 3 July 1676.[578] We also do not know exactly what Behn was doing in the three years before this performance. Maybe she had taken *The Dutch Lover*'s failure to heart. In 1674 she published *The Dutch Lover* with an epistle to the 'Good, Sweet, Honey, Sugar-candied Reader' that rebuffed the commercial failure of her play, blaming the actors and mocking her critics.[579] This epistle's rumbustious tone somewhat belies the idea she might have left the theatre in a fit of pique. Instead, she might have been working on uncredited collaborative projects, like *The Debauchee*.[580] Or, maybe, she had spent these years as a kept mistress. Behn had a fraught and sexually-frustrated friendship with the bisexual lawyer John Hoyle. Todd cites from the registers of a Presbyterian cleric, Roger Morrice, a reference to John Hoyle from 1687 which claimed that it was 'too publickly known that Mr Hoyle 10. or 12. yeares since kept Mrs. Beane'.[581] However, it is impossible confirm how long this arrangement lasted, if indeed it existed at all. If Hoyle,

[576] Charles Cathcart, '"You will crown him King, that slew your King": *Lust's Dominion* and Oliver Cromwell', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 11 (1999) 264–74 (p.267).
[577] Susie Thomas, '"This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine": Aphra Behn's *Abdelazer, or, The Moor's Revenge*', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700*, 22 (1998) 18–39 (p.19).
[578] Todd, *Works*, V, p.241 and Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.56.
[579] Behn, *DL*, pp.160–3.
[580] Mary Ann O'Donnell, *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources*, 2nd edn. (Surrey and Vermont: Ashgate, 2004) pp.258–60. Todd suggests *The Debauchee* might have been a collaboration with Thomas Betterton in her notes to *The Debauchee* in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 5 (London: William Pickering, 1996) pp.387–444 (p.389).
[581] Todd, *Secret Life*, p.184.

portrayed as disdainful and neglectful in Behn's poetry, *had* deigned to keep Behn, it would explain her absence from the theatre. It might also lead to the suggestion that Behn might have been drawn to revising *Lust's Dominion* because she saw something of a parallel between Hoyle and Eleazar's cruel rebuff of the Queen's obsessional love. The play opens with an original song, 'Love Arm'd', a poem of heartbroken vitriol in which the sadistic figure of Love presides in 'Fantastique Triumph' over a dominion of 'Bleeding Hearts', a tyrant of selfishness, cruelty and fickleness: 'From me he took his sighs and tears, / From thee his Pride and Crueltie'.[582] Behn would later publish this song in her 1684 collection of poetry, revealingly placed next to 'Our Cabal'.[583] The parallels between the poems' portrayals of love are noteworthy. In 'Our Cabal' Hoyle is refigured as Lysidas, and like 'Love Arm'd' is deemed a selfish conqueror of 'Fantastique Passion'.[584] He overpowers his conquests with piercing eyes that 'kill with Fierceness, not with Love', much like the 'Killing Dart's in 'Love Arm'd'.[585] There is an interesting shift in perception though between the earlier and later poem. In 'Our Cabal' the speaker is a sympathetic, albeit obviously intrigued, observer of Lysidas's lethal charms, naming 'Poor Doris, and Lucinda too' amongst his victims.[586] In 'Love Arm'd', the speaker's own pain dominates: 'my poor Heart alone is harm'd'.[587] *Abdelazer*, a play featuring one woman's obsessional love for a cruel conqueror, therefore opens with a seemingly personal account about the sorrow of unrequited feelings. If the ultimate failure of Behn and Hoyle's relationship necessitated a return to the theatre, it also seems to have inspired her.

Heartbreak aside, attempts to understand why Behn decided to revise *Lust's Dominion* when she did have produced very different answers. Jacqueline Pearson wonders if we could, although not necessarily should, regard *Abdelazer* as a 'potboiler', hastily produced to tide Behn over

[582] Behn, *Abdelazer*, I. 1. 2 and 9–10. [Hereafter *Abd.*].
[583] Aphra Behn, 'Love Arm'd', ed. by Janet Todd, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 1, (London: William Pickering, 1992) p.53.
[584] Aphra Behn, 'Our Cabal', ed. by Janet Todd, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 1, (London: William Pickering, 1992) pp.47–52 (l.154).
[585] Ibid., l.162.
[586] Ibid., l.155.
[587] Behn, 'Love Arm'd', l.15.

financially.[588] However, the extreme care Behn took to revise the play, both structurally and more subtly, suggests otherwise. Hayden credits Behn with a more intellectual bent:

> Whether Behn was asked to revise *Lust's Dominion* […], or whether she discovered it herself among the manuscripts in the Duke's Company holdings and chose to revise it, she certainly recognized […] the seemingly ageless applicability of religion and succession issues in seventeenth-century culture.[589]

The play obviously was more to Behn than a self-indulgent outlet for hurt feelings, or a quick source of income. *Lust's Dominion* had an ever-evolving political existence that could once again be tweaked to comment on the issues of kingship, usurpation and good governance which defined Behn's previous plays. However, the most interesting part of Behn's reproduction is not *why* she chose to revise the play, but *how*.

Behn changes the title from *Lust's Dominion*: *or, The Lascivious Queen* to *Abdelazer*: *or, The Moor's Revenge*. This provides some early clues as to Behn's intentions for the renewed drama. First, the new title abruptly disowns its predecessor's combined images of lust, politics and female lasciviousness. Instead, Behn roots her play in ideas of tragedy and revenge. Dryden and Orrery frequently named their tragedies about foreign princes after their eponymous characters, for example Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe* (1675); therefore Behn might have had a modish motivation for renaming the play. By doing so though, she also creates a greater sense of ambiguity surrounding Abdelazer as this title character; and this sense of ambiguity, the exoticism of its intrigue, creates a renewed sense of interest in who this Moor is and what he wishes to avenge. Behn also changes most of the characters' names, and completely cuts out others: the friars Eleazar commandeers to besmirch Prince Philip's legitimacy, his father-in-law, Alvero, and Philip's ally the King of Portugal. She creates two new minor characters, the Queen's woman Elvira, and Roderigo, 'Creature' to the

[588] Pearson, 'Slave princes', p.227.
[589] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, p.161.

Moor.[590] With cuts to extraneous material, Behn tightens and polishes the once rambling play, making it a much more streamlined production. Most importantly, the significant changes she makes regarding Abdelazer himself suggests her interest lies in refashioning the main character. She downplays or omits references connecting Abdelazer's race to his villainy and promotes a new idea — that Abdelazer is a slave of the Spanish court. The latter, paired with embellishments to Abdelazer's family background and history, emphasises Abdelazer as a royal figure in his own right. These changes go beyond a hasty reorganisation of its longwinded source material and suggest Behn was specifically interested in portraying a more nuanced villain.

'For then began my Slavery': Britain, Barbary and Old World Slavery

Behn's portrayal of race is one of the starkest differences between *Abdelazer* and *Lust's Dominion*. In the Early Modern period, portrayals of blackness often use confusingly indiscriminate terminology: 'Negro', 'Moor' and 'Blackamoor' are frequently used interchangeably, making '"race"… a highly unstable term'.[591] Thus, in *Lust's Dominion*, Eleazar is referred to several times over the course of a play as a 'Negro' and 'Moor' with careless derision.[592] However, Behn never uses the word 'Negro', or 'Blackamoor', in *Abdelazer*. Rather, Abdelazer's racial heritage is rooted in his Moorish identity as a Prince of Barbary, demonstrating, therefore, a seemingly more specific understanding of Early Modern geopolitics. When the Spanish court expresses hatred or contempt for Abdelazer, Behn often excises *Lust's Dominion*'s references to race in their insults. Despite drawing heavily from her source material for script as well as plot, Behn frequently omits or alters the lines which equate the Moor's black skin with his evil intentions. For example, in *Lust's Dominion*, Cardinal Mendoza observes Eleazar looks like 'pale death / Had made his eyes the dreadful messenger / To carry *black* destruction to the world', whereas Behn's Philip comments that

[590] For more on the differences between *Lust's Dominion* and *Abdelazer* see Thomas, '"This Thing of Darkness"'.
[591] Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (eds.) *Women, "Race", and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) pp.1–2.
[592] *Lust's Dominion*, III. 2: sigs D5r; III. 5: sigs D12v; IV. 2: sigs E6v and IV. 4: sigs E11v.

Abdelazer intends 'From his infectious eyes to scatter Plagues, / And poison all the world'.[593] Susie Thomas calculates that 'in *Abdelazer* there are fewer than twenty speeches that refer to the Moor's colour compared with over forty in *Lust's Dominion*'.[594] Taking into account that Behn's is the longer play, the excision seems quite deliberate. Thomas continues by pointing out that

> for the most part, also, Abdelazer is referred to by his name and only occasionally as 'the Moor'. *In Lust's Dominion* every character, with the exception of the Queen, invariably refers to Eleazar as 'the Moor', often with the epithet 'devil', until the two terms become virtually synonymous.[595]

However, there is less discussion in existing scholarship about *why* Behn made these revisions to race. To account for it by suggesting she is simply not as damningly racist seems a little too vague, and the possibility she deliberately downplays Abdelazer's race for the sake of comparing him to Cromwell does not, as I will later explore in further detail, stand up to scrutiny. Alternatively, whereas *Lust's Dominion* is likely to have only been read rather than performed, *Abdelazer* was definitely acted out on stage, and the actor, Thomas Betterton, might have used black make up to transform himself into the Moorish general. Therefore, there is the possibility that Behn felt that so many frequent references to Abdelazer's race would be unnecessary

Alternatively, Behn might have been partially reconfiguring race in the new norms of the 1670s. Anthony Gerard Barthelemy warns 'what may seem to be a decrease in overt racism in the Restoration is complicated by historical and economic factors' and that Behn's apparent change in attitude to race 'points to a reality of life in the 1670s. Blacks were to be found everywhere, and English interests in the slave trade were well-established'.[596] With this in mind, *Abdelazer* must also be considered as the child of a nearly century-year-old lineage of dramatisations of the Moor which reflected Britain's changing relationship with the Barbary States. As Nabil Matar explains, 'Barbary'

[593] Ibid., II. 1: sigs C1 [Emphasis added] and Behn, *Abd*, II. 1. 2–3.
[594] Thomas, '"This Thing of Darkness"', p.25.
[595] Ibid., p.26.
[596] Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (USA: Louisiana State University Press, 1987) pp.115–16.

was an English term referring to the Ottoman regencies of Libya (Tripolitania), Tunisia and Algeria — and the independent kingdom of Morocco, where both Eleazar and Abdelazer are said to hail from.[597] Behn's Queen explains that her late husband, old King Philip, 'made a War in Barbary, / Won Tunis, Conquer'd Fez, and hand to hand / Slew great Abdela, King of Fez, and Father / To this Barbarian Prince'.[598] Moorish characters first appeared on the English stage in George Peele's 1594 *The Battle of Alcazar*.[599] The play was written soon after the arrival of the first official Moorish delegation to London. Excluded from predominantly Catholic Europe, and exposed to Spanish invasion, Elizabeth I was seeking new diplomatic relationships with the Ottoman Empire and the Barbary States.[600] Morocco, independent of the Ottoman Empire and threatened, like Britain, by Spanish expansionism, created 'a long legacy of commercial trade and diplomatic exchange' with Elizabethan England.[601] Peele's portrayal of the first Moor on the English stage was far less gracious than these diplomatic relationships might have suggested; in a dramatic retelling of the 1578 Battle of Alcácer Quibir, the usurper Muly Mahamet smothers two child princes and strangles his elderly uncle to seize power. Abdelmelec, the rightful sultan, rallies his armies and allies with the Portuguese King Sebastian and Turkish King Bashaw to defeat the wicked Muly Mahamet. In Elizabethan drama Moors are triumphant and threatening and their characterisation usually predicated upon a synonymy of black skin with dark immorality. Shakespeare's Aaron the Moor (co-authored by George Peele), has a 'cloudy melancholy' and 'fleece of woolly hair' to signify his role in the play's unrelenting drama of evil, vengeance and death.[602] In *The Battle of Alcazar* the prologue describes Muly Mahamet as 'Black in his look and bloody in his deeds'. Interestingly, this line is taken

[597] Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589–1689* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), p.3.
[598] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 85–88. Fez was one of the four States of the Kingdom of Morocco. In *Lust's Dominion*'s *dramatis personae* Eleazar is described as 'Prince of Fesse and Barbary' (sigs A4r).
[599] Matar, *Britain and Barbary*, p.8; George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*, ed. by Charles Edelman, *The Stukeley* Plays (Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2005).
[600] See the 'Introduction' of Bernadette Andrea's *Women and Islam in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[601] Matar, *Britain and Barbary*, pp.3–4.
[602] William Shakespeare, *The Most Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus,* ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp.125–52. (II. 2. 33–39).

up in a dedicatory letter to *Lust's Dominion*, to describe Eleazar: 'Black as his Face his Deeds appear'd at last'.[603] English attitudes to their Moorish allies were characterised by fear, and the insistence on what Kim F. Hall describes as 'the absolute difference between black and white'.[604]

Adapted from an Elizabethan or Jacobean script, *Lust's Dominion*'s portrayal of race bears all these hallmarks of the turn of the seventeenth century's study of the demonic Moor, whereas Behn's revisions frequently excise the link between colour and morality. Part of the reason for this might lie in Britain's dominance over the Barbary States at the time *Abdelazer* was written, which has been largely unexplored in relation to the play. In the Jacobean and Caroline Ages, relationships with Barbary deteriorated into piracy and slavery on both sides. During the Interregnum, Cromwell initiated a vast ship-building project of small, inexpensive gunboats to protect English merchant ships from Barbary corsairs and provide a strategic, organised presence of the British Navy along the trade routes.[605] Charles II continued the expansion and modernisation of the navy until Britain 'assumed a dominant role in the Mediterranean [...] Britain asserted its naval and military presence and changed the course of North African history'.[606] Through his marriage to Catherine of Braganza, Charles also acquired the Portuguese garrison at Tangiers, which he used as a bastion for English expansionist hopes. In the autumn of 1669, Sir Thomas Allin won a decisive victory against neighbouring Algiers, which meant 'North Africa was now on the London map, and readers were eager to learn about that part of the world that was coming under their expanding material gaze'.[607] Maybe, because of this renewed sense of British superiority, black characters like Abdelazer no longer held the same fearful fascination for theatrical audiences that they once had.

Another important clue to Behn's abandonment of the black versus white moral dichotomy is her emphasis on the ambiguous, but liminal, position Abdelazer holds at court, a position between

[603] George Peele, 'The Battle of Alcazar' p.6; and *Lust's Dominion*, sigs A4v.
[604] Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economics of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1994) p.118.
[605] Matar, *Britain and Barbary*, p.73.
[606] Ibid., p.133.
[607] Ibid., p.145.

that of captivity and freedom. After the Moor's father died, the prince was captured and raised by a nobleman to serve in the Spanish army. At some point he married this nobleman's daughter. These details were taken from *Lust's Dominion*. When Behn's play opens, Abdelazer oversees the palace guardsmen, and is the favourite of the soon-to-be-murdered old King Philip. Because of this, Hughes refers to Abdelazer's military slavery as a past event, 'though *originally* a captive and slave in Spain, he has gained royal favour', attributing Abdelazer's bitterness to 'resentment [of] his *past* slavery'.[608] However, Adam Beach believes, 'modern critics have not generally recognised that Abdelazer is, in fact, a slave'.[609] Some critics had recognised Abdelazer's status, like Susie Thomas in her study of *Abdelazer* and race in which she writes that Behn transforms the archetypal black villainy of *Lust's Dominion* into 'the defiant, self-assertive anger of the royal slave who refuses to bow down to his captors'. However, her article absorbs Abdelazer's unique slave status into its discussion on the contrast between the portrayal of Eleazar and Abdelazer's race, and therefore wickedness, without much further investigation. Beach's research focuses far more on the historical context and cultures of slavery and their significance to Behn's decision to emphasise Abdelazer's slave status. Beach uses theories of slavery that explore the status of the slave as one of dishonour, 'humiliation and psychological damage', and argues that Abdelazer's rebellion can be viewed as a form of ipsimission, meaning the process 'by which an elite slave can become more powerful than his master and effectively free himself'.[610] Doing so, he refutes the beliefs that Abdelazer was either never, truly, enslaved, or that he was freed before the action of the play commences. Beach argues that these misconceptions derive from associating slavery exclusively with forms of manual labour and degradation.[611] Rather, he claims Abdelazer represents the English 'fascination' with military slave institutions of the medieval and Early Modern Islamic world, where captives were trained in the

[608] Hughes, *Theatre of Aphra Behn*, pp.57 and 67 [Emphasis added].
[609] Adam R. Beach, 'Global Slavery, Old World Bondage, and Aphra Behn's "Abdelazer"', *The Eighteenth - Century*, 53 (2012) 413–31 (p.414).
[610] Beach, 'Global Slavery', p.414.
[611] Ibid.

military to serve as bodyguards, soldiers and generals.[612] Comparing and contrasting *Abdelazer*'s references and portrayal of slavery to *Lust's Dominion*, therefore, provides further, more substantial, evidence that Behn is refashioning the Moor as a captive of the Spanish court. In Behn's changes to the play's name, the way the eponymous lead talks about himself, and the emotive embellishments to his backstory, we see evidence that Behn was refashioning *Abdelazer* as a slave narrative.

This evidence begins with the name of the play and its titular character. The name 'Abdelazer' appears to have been entirely Behn's own invention, but no one has ever posited a theory about how and why Behn devised this particular name. '*Abd*' is a common prefix in Arabic names, meaning 'servant of'. It is usually used to refer to the person in question being a 'servant of God'.[613] However, Matar explains that '*Abd* in Arabic can also mean 'slave'. As he translates, ''Abeed (pl. of '*abd*) were captives who were to spend the rest of their lives in slavery'.[614] If Behn was aware of this and therefore incorporated the word ''*abd*' as an intentional prefix to Abdelazer's name, it might have been to highlight his slave status. The Moor's name, we could say, equates to 'Slave Eleazar'. Although the general theatre-going public of the Restoration might have been unaware of this significance, it might not have not been accidental on Behn's part. In 1648, Christian Ravis (née Raue) published *A Discourse of the Orientall Tongues*, including *A Generall Grammar for the Ebrew, Samaritan, Calde, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic Tongue*, which went into several editions for the next two years.[615] In it, he defines the Arabic 'abdo' as 'a servant'.[616] However, whether Behn had ever seen a copy of this lexicon, let alone read it so thoroughly that she found this entry halfway through it, is very questionable.

Unlike *Lust's Dominion*, Behn gave Abdelazer's father a name: Abdela. She might have come across this name from histories of Barbary published in the 1670s and, from it, invented 'Abdelazer'.

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[612] Ibid.
[613] I am very grateful for Dr Issa Islam for his help in explaining the formation and translation of Arabic names.
[614] Translation and definition from Matar, *Britain and Barbary*, p.114.
[615] Christian Ravis, *A Discourse of the Orientall Tongues: Ebrew, Samaritan, Calde, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic: Together with A Generall Grammar for the Said Tongues* (London: Printed for W. Wilson for T. Jackon, 1649).
[616] Ibid, p.140.

In 1670, the royalist publisher and geographer John Ogilby published *Africa*, which contained a history of Barbary. In it, he briefly writes about Hamet Ben Abdela, 'a Religious, but hypocritical Heremite', who opposed the rule of Muly Sidan.[617] In 1671, Lancelot Addison, chaplain-in-ordinary to the king, published *West Barbary, or, A Short Narrative of the Revolution of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco*. Its opening pages narrate the same history as Ogilby's work, with the rise of an ambitious Moorish priest, Zeriffe, and his three sons. Driven by 'a desire of Rule', they poison the King of Morocco, betray the King of Fez, and seize power.[618] The family then falls into generations of civil war as brothers, uncles, nephews and cousins battle against one another for supremacy. Abdela's opposition to Muly Sidan is mentioned early on in the narrative.[619] It is possible that Behn might have seen one, or the other, or both of these texts. If she had, then she might have then also come across this name 'Abdela'. It is possible that these histories of poisoned kings, ruthless families and warring dynasties might have inspired Behn's choice of names in her play about a prince from Barbary.[620] Maybe it had even inspired her revision to the play's beginning; in *Lust's Dominion* old King Philip dies peacefully of old age, but in *Abdelazer* he has been poisoned. What Behn certainly does do though, in the names Abdela and Abdelazer, is create a semantic, familial link between her Moorish father and son. Whether or not Behn knew the meaning behind the prefix ''*abd*', their story is one of defeat, capture and chains, because, as Abdelazer explains, it was on the death of this father that his slavery first began.

Behn's changes to the Moor's backstory appear to highlight his state of continued captivity. His background, as a prisoner of his father's failed war against the Spaniards, is set out in the opening acts of both *Lust's Dominion* and *Abdelazer*. In the former, Eleazar wonders that his father-in-law should suspect the Queen Mother should be with him, 'The Queen with me, with me, a

[617] John Ogilby, *Africa* (London: Printed for Thomas Johnson, 1670) p.184.
[618] Lancelot Addison, *West Barbary, or, A Short Narrative of the Revolutions of the Kingdoms of Fez and Morocco* (Printed at the Theatre in Oxford, and are to be sold by John Wilmot, 1671) p.6.
[619] Ibid, p.8.
[620] The name 'Abdela' does not appear in any others works in Early English Books Online between 1600–1685.

Moore, a Devill, / A slave of Barbary', and recalls how his father's death 'left me Captive to a Spanish Tyrant'.[621] Abdelazer makes almost identical statements.[622] However, Behn embellishes the account of the Moor's childhood; Abdelazer mourns how he had been captured when 'old enough to grieve, / Though not revenge, or to defie my Fetters; / For then *began* my Slavery'.[623] Behn's reference to how this life of slavery 'began' implies it has not yet ended. Eleazar calls himself 'a slave of Barbary' in the same lines as he also refers to himself as a 'Devill', to mock Alvero's suggestion that the Queen would ever stoop to be with him. In this version, 'slave' seems to function purely as an insult, whereas, in Behn's rephrasing, she instead refers to 'slavery', a state of being, rather than 'slave'. Accompanied by references to fetters, here and elsewhere Abdelazer makes references to slavery that strongly suggests he still considers himself a captive of the court.

Eleazar only refers to himself and slavery at that *one* moment in the text whilst protesting his innocence. In *Abdelazer*, however, the Moor makes many more references to his captivity using the words 'slave/slavery'. Sometimes his use of the word can be explained away as simply a romantic or political form of self-depreciation: as when he appeals to the angry Queen, 'Look up, --- by Heav'n 'twas Jealousie, --- / Pardon your Slave, --- pardon your poor Adorer'; or when Ferdinand demands to know why Philip and Mendozo have fled the castle and Abdelazer explains, 'Both animated by a sense of wrongs, / (And envying, Sir, the fortune of your Slave) / [They] Had laid a Plot, this Night, to Murder you'.[624] However, at other points in the plot, Abdelazer makes unmistakeable references to his slavery with a heated, angry, sincerity that cannot be discounted as mere sycophancy. For example, when he has murdered Ferdinand and establishes himself as a new Protector of the Crown, he demands to know:

> And who shall lead you forth to Conquest now,

[621] *Lust's Dominion*, II. 1: sigs B5r.
[622] Behn, *Abd*, I. 1. 162–63.
[623] Ibid., I. 1. 174–76 [Emphasis added].
[624] Behn, *Abd*, I. 1. 112–13 and III. 1. 62–64.

> But Abdelazer, whose Sword reapt Victory,
> As oft as 'twas unsheath'd;—and all for Spain!
> How many Lawrels has this Head adorn'd?
> Witness the many Battels I have won;
> In which I've emptied all my Youthfull Veins,
> And all for Spain!—ungrateful of my favours!
> I do not boast my Birth,
> Nor will not urge to you my Kingdoms ruine;
> But loss of bloud, and numerous wounds receiv'd,
> And still for Spain!
> And can you think, that after all my Toyls
> I wou'd be still a Slave![625]

Once again, this speech is a greatly extended and embellished version of a similar scene in *Lust's Dominion*, in which Eleazar appeals to the court:

> Look well on Eleazar; value me not by my sun-burnt
> Cheek, but by my birth; nor by
> My birth, but by my losse of blood,
> Which I have sacrificed in Spains defence.[626]

Behn retains the reference to the Moor's birth, but Abdelazer's petition omits any reference to his skin colour. Instead, he recalls his impressive military record to garner support. Beach comments,

> the repetition of the phrase, 'all for Spain' signals Abdelazer's shame for having served as an effective military slave for the very country that has conquered his own

[625] Ibid., III. 3. 216–28.
[626] *Lust's Dominion*, III. 4: sigs D10r.

> and as a personal slave to the very man whose actions led to the death of his father.[627]

However, in my view, the real dramatic punch to his speech lies in Abdelazer's vitriolic, 'And can you think, that after all my Toyls, / I wou'd be *still* a Slave!' The rhetorical question is laced with venom. It is a declaration: that, after all of this, he will be a slave *no more*, which reinforces the idea that right up until this point in the plot, Abdelazer has been a slave.

Similarly, when Abdelazer has defeated Philip's forces and refuses the crown for himself, he remarks, 'nor have those Fetters / (Which e're I grew towards man, Spain taught me how to wear) / Made me forget what's due to that Illustrious Birth: / --- Yet thus --- I cast aside the Rays of Majesty'.[628] In *Lust's Dominion* Eleazar unhesitatingly seizes the crown for himself, so these sentiments are entirely Behn's own invention. Abdelazer's refusal is a very pretentious one and, on one level, part bluff. As the audience will soon find out, Abdelazer does indeed intend to secure the throne for himself, but through far more insidious means: by marrying the Spanish Infanta Leonora. These lines therefore might again be interpreted as insincere self-deprecation, a ploy to distract the court from suspecting his true motivations. However, why would Behn allow Abdelazer to hyperbolise his slave status in this way if he is planning to marry the Spanish princess and thus elevate himself to the throne? It would be politically counter-intuitive to portray himself as lowly, and such a mistake would not fit with Behn's portrayal of Abdelazer as a master of cunning and manipulation. Therefore, it is more likely not to be hyperbole, but another reference to his having led a very literal life in slavery. Here, we might also find the use of the subordinate clause, 'Which e're I grew towards man, Spain taught me how to wear', interesting. It is another instance where Behn seems to be emphasising Abdelazer's slavery has not yet ended. Instead, he has been 'taught' to acclimatise to his status; he has adapted to the point where literal fetters, like those he mentioned in Act One to Alonzo, are no longer needed, although his state of subservience continues.

[627] Beach, 'Global Slavery', p.422.
[628] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 11–14.

Beach's research into *Abdelazer* and Old World slavery has provided a fascinating insight into what kind of continued slavery Behn is dramatising here. He regards Abdelazer as an example of a military slave, trained to serve as bodyguards, soldiers and generals.[629] This insight is especially pertinent when considering how Behn embellishes further details about Abdelazer's background. In *Lust's Dominion*, beyond the Queen's brief mention of Eleazar's military triumphs serving in the Spanish forces, there is no explanation as to how Eleazar rose from being a captive orphan to the position he currently holds at the court.[630] By contrast, Behn includes a far more detailed discussion of Abdelazer's rise to favour — in ways which reveal her interest in emphasising his slavery. Alonzo explains, 'My father brought him up to Martial toyls, / And taught him to be Brave; I hope, and Good; / Beside, he was your Royal Father's Favourite'.[631] Superficially, Alonzo's exposition paints an almost familial picture of Abdelazer's career at the Spanish court, under paternal guidance and royal approbation. Beach's research reveals, however, that, given the physical power masters invested in their slave soldiers, a master needed to inspire a sense of loyalty in his men. He writes that Alonzo's words here present the figure of the young Abdelazer as an ideal candidate in this situation, 'he clearly was malleable and susceptible, at least to some extent, to the desires of his master, who engaged in a close, personal relationship with his slave'.[632] This would lead us to interpret Alonzo's father's paternal approach to Abdelazer as a far more calculating gesture. If we were still in any doubt as to Abdelazer's relationship to Alonzo's family, King Ferdinand's response is far more transparent:

> No, Alonzo, 'twas not his love to Virtue,
>
> But nice obedience to his King, and Master,
>
> Who seeing my increase of Passion [for Florella],

[629] Beach, 'Global Slavery', p.418.
[630] The Queen tells the friars to extoll Eleazar's military accomplishments whilst slandering Philip's legitimacy: 'Tickle the ears of the Rude multitude, / With Eleazar's praises; guild his virtues, / Naples recovery and victories / Achieved against the Turkish Ottoman' (II. 2: sigs C7r).
[631] Behn, *Abd*, II. 2. 14–18.
[632] Beach, 'Global Slavery', p.420.

> To kill my hopes, he gave her to this Moor.[633]

Ferdinand dismisses the idea that Abdelazer was further embraced into the noble family in his marriage to Florella because of love. Instead, Ferdinand claims Florella was forced to marry the Moor out of spite, to thwart his hopes to marry Florella himself. More importantly, he states that Abdelazer's commendable military action was born out of 'obedience', not honourable virtue as Alonzo believes. He tellingly refers to Alonzo's father as Abdelazer's 'Master', rather than his 'General'. Ferdinand's rebuff reaffirms Abdelazer's status as a slave, who is invested with some power but, ultimately, one whose military achievements will always be tainted — not because he is black, but because he is a slave. Beach continues,

> Behn effectively transforms Abdelazer into a similar type of elite military slave, a liminal figure who is given some power, but who is also subject to the authority of his masters and is regularly an object of contempt and ridicule.[634]

Abdelazer embodies this kind of liminal power, as 'the Captain of [a] Guard of Moors', a regiment charged with the protection of the palace and King.[635] It is noteworthy that in this position however Abdelazer is not in charge of *Spanish* soldiers, again highlighting the idea of power tainted by ostracisation. He has been exalted above his Moorish countrymen; however, the ways in which these guardsmen are spoken of and to also strongly suggests they are similarly captives of the Spanish court and reflect Abdelazer's own beginnings. When Osmin reports that Alonzo has resisted his would-be assassins, he tells Abdelazer, 'Some of your Slaves h'as kill'd, and some h'as wounded'.[636] Rather than refer to the men as 'your soldiers', the speech recalls Abdelazer's military and social superiority over his men. Similarly, Mendozo insists Philip and he disguise themselves before fleeing the castle, 'For so the Guards are set in every place, / (And those all Moors, the Slaves of Abdelazer)'.[637] Abdelazer might hold a military command, but his power is limited to the control

[633] Behn, *Abd*, II. 2. 19–22.
[634] Beach, 'Global Slavery', p.414.
[635] Behn, *Abd*, II. 1. 281.
[636] Ibid., V. 1. 576.
[637] Ibid., II. 2. 159–60.

over a distrusted and denigrated cohort of Moorish 'slaves', reflecting his own beginnings at the Spanish court as one in 'Fetters'.

Reflecting Abdelazer's limited status of power, Behn also revises the play to emphasise his liminal occupation of space, curtailing the sense of power and autonomy that, by contrast, Eleazar enjoys at the Spanish court. In *Lust's Dominion*, after King Fernando's coronation, the celebratory banquet takes place at Eleazar's own castle. This change of scenery was probably chosen to heighten the sense of foreboding as the King naively asks, 'Your Castle, for a while shall bid us welcome, / Eleazar shall it not?'[638] It moves the action to Eleazar's evil lair, where he hatches the next stage of his devilish plot. Abdelazer, however, has no such castle of his own and, thus, Behn denies him the importance, agency and independence that having one affords Eleazar. Abdelazer instead resides at the Spanish court, and by doing so, the court setting becomes one of impending claustrophobic catastrophe akin to that of *The Forc'd Marriage*. This contrasting lack of a castle implies Abdelazer's restriction of movement. This is further emphasised by the contrast between Eleazar and Abdelazer's responses when they are threatened with banishment. Behn uses the opportunity to downplay her protagonist's sense of freedom. Eleazar lists the places he could go if he were outlawed, 'There's Portugal a good air, and France a fine Country; / Or Barbary rich, and has Moors'. He goes on 'I can live there, and there, and there, / Troth 'tis, a villain can live anywhere'.[639] Eleazar's focus on the 'good', 'fine' and 'rich' offerings of other countries demonstrates an interest in refinement and material comforts which he could only have expected if he had the personal means and wealth to purchase them. By contrast, for Abdelazer the question of banishment is plagued with more uncertainty:

> What if I be [banished]? — Fools! not to know — All the parts o'th' world
>
> Allow enough for Villainie, — and I'le be brave no more.

[638] *Lust's Dominion*, II. 1: sigs C3v.
[639] *Lust's Dominion*, I. 4: sigs B11r.

It is a crime, — and then I can live any where.[640]

In *Lust's Dominion*, Eleazar is discussing his banishment with his wife. In *Abdelazer*, the Moor speaks in an aside, and his lines are fragmented. Eleazar had gone so far as to list the specific places where he could make a new home for himself, concluding, 'I can live there, and there, and there'. By contrast to Eleazar's languid and measured repetition, Abdelazer's lack of specificity and his exaggerated claims that he could 'live anywhere' in 'all the parts o'th' world' convey a lack of conviction and certainty in their vagueness. Eleazar approaches the idea of banishment with calm, almost optimistic, thoughts. By contrast, the prospect of exile for Abdelazer is portrayed more ambiguously. Even in these smaller details of her plot and script, Behn appears to take the opportunity to demote Abdelazer's sense of autonomy and promote the view that he is a semi-captive of the court.

'Yet as I am, I've been in vain Ador'd': *Abdelazer* and Sexual Slavery

Abdelazer's restriction of movement also means he is unable to escape the Queen's tiresome sexual demands. Unlike Eleazar, he has no castle of his own he can withdraw to. His court chambers, as we see at the beginning of the play, offer him no privacy or protection from his paramour. When the Queen bursts into his room uninvited and unwanted, Abdelazer hisses to his guards 'Ye Dogs, how came she in?'[641] In *Lust's Dominion*, Eleazar responds to a similar interruption by demanding, 'Did I not bind you on your lives, to watch that none disturb'd us?'[642] In Behn's version, Abdelazer's question conveys his perplexity and therefore powerlessness against the Queen's insidious physical movements, rather than explaining it by the guards' incompetency as Eleazar does.

This one, fleeting moment exemplifies how Behn substantially alters the dynamic of power between the Moor and the Queen. In *Lust's Dominion*, the Queen plays a far more submissive role in

[640] Behn, *Abd*, I. 2. 166–68.
[641] Ibid., I. 1. 21.
[642] *Lust's Dominion,* I. 1: sigs B1v.

Eleazar's plots. She is destructive but doting and doe-eyed. By contrast, in *Abdelazer* the Queen is far more ferocious and vicious in her pursuit of the Moor's affections, to the point where Joyce Green Macdonald views Abdelazer as 'a victim of female sexuality which knows no bounds… Abdelazer is the queen's prey'.[643] Beach agrees, writing that the Queen, 'in effect, uses him as a sex slave'.[644] Behn shifts the balance of power from the disinterested Moor of *Lust's Dominion*, to her own domineering Queen. For example, when Eleazar rebuffs the Queen's advances in the opening of the play, she threatens suicide:

> I'le kill myself unless thou hear'st me speak.
>
> My husband King upon his death bed lies,
>
> Yet have I stolen from him to look on thee,
>
> A Queen hath made herself thy Concubine;
>
> Yet do'st thou now abhor me, hear me speak!
>
> Else shall my sons plague thy adulterous wrongs,
>
> And tread upon thy heart for murd'ring me.[645]

In *Abdelazer*, the Queen instead responds to her lover's rejection with fiery rage:

> Ingrate!
> Have I for this abus'd the best of men?
> My noble Husband!
> Depriving him of all the joys of Love,
> To bring them all intirely to thy bed;
> Neglected all my vows, and sworn 'em here a-new,
> Here, on thy lips;---
> Exhausted Treasures that wou'd purchase Crowns,
> To buy thy smiles,---to buy a gentle look;---
> And when thou didst repay me,---blest the Giver!---

[643] Joyce Green Macdonald, *Women and Race in Early Modern Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) pp.144–46.
[644] Beach, 'Global Slavery', p.421.
[645] *Lust's Dominion* II. 1: sigs B3v.

Oh *Abdelazer* , more then this I've done.---
This very hour, the last the King can live,
Urg'd by thy witchcraft I his life betray'd:
And is it thus---my bounties are repaid? [646]

Lust's Dominion's Queen is furtive in her actions and masochistic in her rebukes. She has 'stolen' from her husband's deathbed and threatens suicide if Eleazar will not look kindly on her. She speaks of herself as Eleazar's 'Concubine'. In stark contrast, in Behn the Queen reframes the Moor himself as the sexual possession. She has procured Abdelazer for herself, with the 'Exhausted Treasures that wou'd purchase Crowns, / To buy thy smiles', and she now expects repayment for the 'bounties' she has invested. This dynamic inverts Behn's previous portrayals of sexual relationships as mercantile exchanges. In *The Amorous Prince* men did the purchasing of prized women, offering jewels and money in exchange for sexual liaisons. In *Abdelazer*, it is the woman, the queen, who commodifies the man.

Abdelazer's sexual submissiveness comes into play once again when he tries to seduce the Spanish princess. There is a similar scene in *Lust's Dominion*, and in both versions the black princes blame the colour of their skin when the princesses rebuff of their sexual advances. Eleazar cries,

[…] why did this colour,
Dart in my flesh so far? Oh! Would my face
Were of Hortenzo's fashion, else would yours
Were as black as mine is.[647]

The scene continues with Eleazar continuing to besiege the Princess Isabella, 'I'le touch you, yes, I'le taint you', although he soon relents, claiming 'I jest with you: I wrong Hortenzo? / Settle your thoughts, 'twas but a trick to try, / That which few women have, true constancy'.[648] In Behn's

[646] Behn, *Abd*, I. 1. 86–99.
[647] *Lust's Dominion*, V. 3: sigs G1v.
[648] Ibid., V. 3: sigs G1v–G2r.

equivalent scene between Abdelazer and Princess Leonora, she retains the reference to colour, but expands upon its role in her protagonist's sexual relationships:

> […] Curst be my Birth,
>
> And curst be Nature, that has dy'd my skin
>
> With this ungrateful colour! Cou'd not the Gods
>
> Have given me equal Beauty with Alonzo!
>
> -Yet as I am, I've been in vain Ador'd,
>
> And Beauties great as thine have languish'd for me.
>
> The Lights put out! Thou in my naked arms
>
> Wilt find me soft and smooth as polisht Ebony;
>
> And all my kisses on thy balmy lips as sweet,
>
> As are the Breezes, breath'd admist the Groves.[649]

Both Moors blame the rejection on the colour of their skin, articulating a general notion that virtuous white women do not sleep with black men; Isabella/Leonora instead save their love for the superior 'fashion' and 'Beauty' of white men like Hortenzo/Alonzo. In *Lust's Dominion*, this prohibition is supported by King Fernando's threat from earlier in the play, 'It shall be death for any Negroes hand, / To touch the beauty of a Spanish dame'.[650] In Behn's version, she not only excises this decree, but in Abdelazer's attempted seduction of Leonora quoted above, inserts very interesting comments about the power dynamics of the Moor's interracial relationships as seen through his eyes: 'Yet as I am, I've been in vain Ador'd, / And Beauties great as thine have languish'd for me'.[651] Of course, the reference to past romances could be interpreted as boastful posturing, an attempt to allay and rebuke the doubts he believes Leonora has about his attractiveness before he makes his next assault. However, we know he has been having an affair with Queen, who we have

[649] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 509–18.
[650] Ibid., III. 2. 48–49.
[651] Ibid., V. 1. 513–14.

witnessed certainly adores Abdelazer 'in vain', and who Hughes believes is the 'beauty as great as thine' whom Abdelazer is referring to.[652] However, it might not be the case that Abdelazer is referring exclusively to the Queen — the line is 'And *Beauties* great as thine', rather than 'And a *Beauty* great as thine'. Behn therefore seems to be hinting at multiple past interracial relationships, especially if we take 'yet as I am' to mean 'despite what colour I am', as seems logical by Abdelazer's earlier equation of beauty with whiteness and his claim that these past relationships had been with 'Beauties great as' the white Florella. Given that the Queen has viewed Abdelazer as a purchase, Behn might be suggesting that Abdelazer was similarly used by other 'great' court ladies as a concubine, showered with gifts by infatuated women who could buy his body, although not his love. His speech also emphasises an effeminate indifference to his role in sexual relationships. Here, Abdelazer is presented as the passive recipient of passion, rather than the perpetrator of it; he has been adored and languished for. Even when he directly addresses the princess, despite the physical sexual threat he poses in his words and actions, he still figures her as the active participant and he the passive, 'Thou […] wilt find me'. He sexually objectifies himself with effeminizing claims about his 'soft and smooth' body, and the comparison of his body to 'polisht Ebony' continues to emphasise the sense that he views his body as a commodity, perhaps having internalised his past lovers' treatment of it.

Therefore, Behn's revisions to Abdelazer's relationship with the Queen and his allusions to other sexual liaisons go some way to exonerate him from the stereotype of a black, sexual predator by focusing instead on the passivity and commodification of his body by the agency of female sexual desire. Instead, Behn frequently emphasises the Queen's lascivious behaviour. For example, in *Lust's Dominion*, the Queen ruminates on the lecherous and murderous potential nightfall brings, with references to the Moor and his blackness:

> Fair eldest child of love, thou spotlesse night,

[652] Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn*, p.59.

Empresse of silence, and the Queen of sleep,
Who with thy black cheeks pure complexion,
Mak'st lovers eyes enamour'd of thy beauty:
Thou art like my Moor, therefore will I adore thee,
For lending me this opportunity,
Oh with the soft skin'd Negro! Heavens keep back
The saucy staring day from the worlds eye,
Until my Eleazar make return.[653]

Behn omits this from her version:

Thou grateful Night, to whom all happy Lovers
Make their devout and humble Invocations;
Thou Court of Silence, where the God of Love,
Lays by the awfull terrour of a Deity,
And every harmfull Dart, and deals around
His kind desires; whilst thou, blest Friend to joys,
Draw'st all thy Curtains made of gloomy shades,
To veil the blushes of soft yielding Maids;
Beneath thy covert grant the Love-sick King,
May find admittance to Florella's arms;
And being there, keep back the busie day;
Maintain thy Empire till my Moor returns.[654]

In *Lust's Dominion* the Queen makes a comparison between night's lustful properties and Abdelazer's sexual attractiveness, both having 'black cheeks' which she 'adore[s]'. By contrast, in Behn's version, instead of the 'soft skin'd Negro', nightfall interacts with the blushing faces of 'soft yielding Maids'. Behn therefore shifts the focus from Abdelazer to female sexuality.

[653] *Lust's Dominion*, III. 1: sigs D2v.
[654] Behn, *Abd*, III. 2. 1–12.

The Queen's speech in *Lust's Dominion* is centred upon Eleazar, her evil intentions of the night clearly associated with the Moor and her devotion to him: 'Thou art like my Moor, therefore will I adore thee'. The Queen's innuendos in Behn's version have a political undertone; the night creates a whole 'Court', rather than just one 'Empresse', of silence. In *Abdelazer*, Behn changes the Queen's obsessional sexual objectification of Abdelazer's body into a more general commentary on the latent desires of the court, removing the colour black from the figure of the black man and instead associating it more with literal darkness and the sexual transgression it leads to, in this case the current King's desire for the married woman Florella. As I will discuss later, it is this, the King's desires, that precipitate the court's downfall. Within a court of kings and queens driven by their pursuit of sexual gratification, Abdelazer seems to inhabit an ambiguous territory, somewhere between captivity and freedom. He is the perpetrator of a great amount of violence, but also the victim of a childhood of slavery and indentured sexual objectification. Maybe Behn found 'race' to be an unsatisfactory answer to why the Moor thinks and acts the way he does. In her elaborate backstory she not only inspires a greater degree of sympathy for Abdelazer, but also creates a more nuanced villain whose villainy, if not justifiable, is at the least more human, more real.

Behn's Attitude to Slavery: *Abdelazer* and *Oroonoko*

Understanding Abdelazer as a captive of the Spanish court has wider implications for the much-discussed issue of Behn's attitude towards slavery. She was obviously inspired by Eleazar's brief reference to himself as 'Captive to a Spanish Tyrant' and decided to develop this detail further. However, despite the textual evidence supporting Abdelazer's slave status, until recently, discussions of Behn and seventeenth-century slavery have been largely reserved for her prose fiction narrative *Oroonoko*. Although it is occasionally paired with *Oroonoko* in discussions of race, *Abdelazer* is strangely neglected when the topic turns to slavery, despite the fact it contains 'a sustained exploration of slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean, which demonstrates Behn's

interest in depicting Old World forms of human bondage'.[655] The texts are, after all, two different mediums, play and prose, operating within the different generic frameworks of dramatic tragedy and heroic narrative. However, both characters experience a form of slavery. Abdelazer is a slave from Barbary (North Africa), Oroonoko a slave from Coromantien (Ghana, West Africa). Beach suggests that *Abdelazer* has been overlooked as a slave narrative precisely because it is a depiction of Old World bondage:

> *Abdelazer* has suffered from the critical assumption that New World plantation slavery was the norm for the early modern world, and that slaves were, by definition, subjected to extreme forms of physical labour and material degradation. This assumption has hindered Behn scholars from considering other important forms of slavery in the early modern world, especially those in the Islamic Mediterranean, in which some bondsmen were invested with substantial power and responsibility.[656]

He points out that, especially for American and British scholars, our thoughts about slavery are dominated by the North Atlantic trade and the American slave experience, at the expense of recognising the widespread use of slaves in the Old World. The two types of bondage were very different industries, as demonstrated by Abdelazer and Oroonoko. Abdelazer was enslaved as a trophy of European warfare, Oroonoko for purely mercantile purposes. Today therefore, *Oroonoko* might seem to more recognisably fit the bill of what twenty-first century readers expect of a slave narrative: based in the American colonies and exposing the barbarity of white colonists.

Oroonoko's depiction of slavery also inspires a special interest because of Behn's claims it is a true story about real events: 'I was myself an eye-witness to a great part of what you will find here set down, and what I could not be witness of I received from the mouth of the chief actor in this

[655] Beach, 'Global Slavery', p.413. For example, Pearson discusses the two texts in racial terms in 'Slaves princes', but does not mention *Abdelazer* when it comes to slavery. Joanna Lipking makes absolutely no reference to *Abdelazer* in '"Others", slaves, and colonists in *Oroonoko*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn*, ed. by Derek Hughes and Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) pp.166–87.
[656] Beach, 'Global Slavery', p.414.

history'.[657] Behn wants her reader to conflate writer and narrator in this story about a woman meeting the slave prince Oroonoko in the jungles of Surinam. Her story is partly comprised of a retelling of how he came to be captured and transported to South America, and partly her own account of the barbarity he and his fellow slaves suffered as the hands of the slave-owners. Although in *Abdelazer* she does not make any such autobiographical claims, if we are to take Behn at her word that she did witness the slave trade at work in Surinam, then it might follow that her experiences there in the 1660s may have somewhat impacted her views on slavery when writing *Abdelazer*. If we consider *Abdelazer* in context of Behn's portrayal of slavery in *Oroonoko*, we see there are many parallels between the two eponymous characters, which gives us an even fuller picture of Behn's views on slavery. What does reading *Abdelazer* as a slave narrative do to our understanding of the play, and Behn's own thoughts about this dimension of Early Modern morality?

Without the commentaries and evaluations of a narrator to guide, or sometimes mislead, us, Behn's attitude towards Abdelazer's history of enslavement are difficult to pinpoint. Once again, the most compelling evidence we have comes from the revisions she makes to the source text. In *Lust's Dominion*, Eleazar briefly recalls his 'father, who with his Empire, lost his life, / And left me Captive to a Spanish Tyrant, Oh! / Go tell him! Spanish Tyrant! tell him, do!'[658] His words are addressed to his father-in-law, Alvero, challenging him to tell old King Philip of his suspicions the Queen has been with the Moor. Behn takes this narrative and develops it further. The speech in her version is addressed to Abdelazer's brother-in-law, Alonzo:

> My Father, Great Abdela, with his Life
> Lost too his Crown: both most unjustly ravisht
> By tyrant Philip; your old King I mean.
> […]

[657] Behn, 'Oroonoko', (p.6).
[658] *Lust's Dominion*, I. 2: sigs B5r.

I was but young, yet old enough to grieve,

Though not revenge, or to defie my Fetters;

For then began my Slavery: and e're since

Have seen that Diadem by this Tyrant worn,

Which Crown'd the Sacred Temples of my Father,

And shou'd adorn mine now; -shou'd! nay and must;-

Go tell him what I say, -'twill be but death-

Go Sir, - the Queen's not here.[659]

Of course, these lines could be performed onstage as a stalling tactic — Abdelazer berating and thus delaying Alonzo with his tale of woe to allow enough time for the Queen to hightail it through the secret passageway and back to the King's deathbed. However, if acted with sincerity, Behn's revisions invoke a far greater sympathy for her character's history. She adds far more emotion to her retelling of a vanquished Moorish king, his death and his son's consequential slavery. First, Eleazar's defeated father is unnamed in *Lust's Dominion*, whereas Behn gives him the name, Abdela. Beyond the potential significance of the prefix '*abd*' pointed out above, it also makes Abdelazer's account of his father far more personal. It gives a name to the man whose death, it has been argued, has had a fundamental impact on Abdelazer's motivations. As Thomas writes, 'Behn portrays a prince whose position has been usurped, a slave humiliated by his fetters and, above all, a son still haunted by his father's violent death'.[660] Abdelazer's recollection of his father is one of revered deification, his father becomes a 'Great' man, whose crown graced his 'Sacred Temples'. Moreover, Behn paints an emotionally-charged portrait of an orphaned boy forced into 'Fetters' whilst too young for revenge, 'yet old enough to grieve'. His challenge to Alonzo to relay his words to the 'Tyrant' usurper of his father's crown includes the parenthesis '-'twill be but death-'. It could be intended as a manipulative bluff. Abdelazer is Alonzo's brother-in-law, and Alonzo might therefore be reluctant to see the Moor

[659] Behn, *Abd*, I. 1. 167–81.
[660] Thomas, '"This Thing of Darkness"', p.27.

die, thus leaving Florella, Alonzo's sister, a grieving widow. However, after the fury and pain Behn has just emphasised, it might better be interpreted as the extent of Abdelazer's misery at the Spanish court — he no longer cares whether he will live or die in this state of semi-captivity. Thomas believes Abdelazer's subsequent deception and murders are 'the only course of action he can pursue because he *is* a slave'.[661] Behn's portrayal of Abdelazer's history — his past slavery and current state of semi-captivity — inspires a far greater compassion for his character, and an emotive explanation for his plans for revenge that an audience might sympathise with, if not support.

Despite the sympathetic figure Behn offers the audience as Abdelazer relates his backstory in the first act, this pity dissolves very quickly. Abdelazer, like Oroonoko, ultimately fails in his attempt to overthrow his oppressors. However, whereas *Oroonoko*'s narrator relays the rebel slave prince's grisly execution with heartbroken sorrow ('Thus died this great man; worthy of a better fate'), Abdelazer has probably exhausted an audience's sympathy by the time he meets his end at the point of Philip's sword.[662] Philip thus commands him to 'Dye with thy sins unpardon'd, and forgotten'.[663] Unlike Oroonoko, Abdelazer has indeed sinned: dealing in deception, lies and manipulation, plotting behind closed doors to commit two regicides and a host of other murders to clear his path not just to freedom, but to power. By contrast, in *Oroonoko* Behn emphasises the nobility of the hero's spirit and mind, with 'all the civility of a well-bred great man. He had nothing of barbarity in his nature, but in all points addressed himself as if his education had been in some European court'.[664] She demonstrates this civility in his actions: on the slave ship Oroonoko convinces the captain to unchain him by promising he will not use the opportunity to mount an attack on his captors, and he keeps this promise. We are told his 'honour was such as he never had

[661] Ibid., p.26 [Emphasis added].
[662] Behn, *Oroonoko*, p.71.
[663] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 799.
[664] Behn, *Oroonoko*, p.11.

violated a word in his life himself', and we certainly cannot say the same for Abdelazer, which might explain why the two slaves receive such different levels of sympathy from their creator.[665]

Behn's depiction of Abdelazer's enslaved guards further conveys her attitudes towards slavery and Abdelazer's failed revolt. In *Lust's Dominion* and *Abdelazer*, the Moorish guards appear to play only minor roles for much of the action; they act as henchmen, ferrying messages and enacting their commander's devilish demands. At the end of both plays, they are instrumental in bringing about their general's demise, but in very different ways. In *Lust's Dominion*, Princess Isabella pretends to be in love with the guard Zarack, and begs him to kill his comrade, Baltazar, and Eleazar so they can marry. She instructs him to free Philip and Hortenzo so they can help him in this endeavour.[666] Baltazar discovers them, kills Zarack and is in turn killed by Philip. The freed prisoners bury the bodies, and Philip and Hortenzo don their uniforms and blacken their faces. In their disguise, they trick Eleazar into one of his own torture contraptions and thus secure their victory. It is through the Spaniards' clever manipulation and disguise that Philip triumphs. Zarack's betrayal of Eleazar was impulsive, power-hungry and inspired by Isabella, who dismisses the helpful role he unintentionally played with a grim 'what will not devils do?'[667] By contrast, Behn radically changes the end of the play and the portrayal of the treacherous guardsman. In her version, Philip's victory is only achieved by the work of the lowly guard Osmin. She reveals that Osmin has been secretly undermining his general's plots all along; he was the one who warned Philip and Mendozo that Abdelazer was planning to assassinate them after the coronation, giving them a chance to flee and organise their military resistance. [668] In the final act it is Osmin who orders the palace guard to turn on Abdelazer, prevents the rape of Leonora and frees Philip, Alonzo and Mendozo. Osmin is killed by Abdelazer in the final fight. This denouement is so brief and followed so quickly by a bloodbath that

[665] Ibid., p.35.
[666] *Lust's Dominion*, V. 5: sigs G6v.
[667] Ibid., V. 5: sigs G7r.
[668] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 589–91. In *Lust's Dominion* it is the friars, Cole and Crab, who warn Philip and Mendoza of the plot against their lives (II. 4: sigs C8v.).

it distracts from the pivotal role Osmin plays, and his motivations. Unlike *Lust's Dominion*'s deluded Zarack, Osmin does not betray Abdelazer because of a princess's encouragement and promise of reward. Rather, he does so because, 'I am weary now of being a Tyrants Slave, / And bearing blows too; the rest I could have suffer'd'.[669] In this, a perceptive audience should realise Osmin is not just referring to Abdelazer's general tyrannical disposition, but to the personal suffering Osmin has endured under him. Over the course of the play Abdelazer abuses Osmin verbally and physically, as when he 'Stabs him in the arm' for interrupting his attempt to rape Leonora.[670] Abdelazer is defeated not by Spanish virtue or ingenuity, but because he has abused the slaves who serve under him. In focusing so much on his own grievances, he himself has become the cruel and violent slave-master. Behn exalts the lowly slave soldier Osmin for his resistance and courage. Leonora thanks her rescuer, 'Sure Osmin from the Gods thou cam'st', and Philip marvels, 'Thou art some Angel sure, in that dark Cloud'.[671] At this point we might remember that when Osmin told Abdelazer Philip had fled, he claimed Philip was warned, 'By some intelligence from his good Angel', and at the end of the play the audience now realises he was talking about himself.[672] Behn's sympathy and respect essentially lies with Osmin, a lowly slave soldier.

Although Behn ultimately condemns Abdelazer's actions, she displays an obvious sympathy for his origins as captive prince. Slavery is portrayed as unjust and cruel, and, ironically, Behn uses Abdelazer as the ultimate epitome of her critique of this violence and injustice. The slave prince's attempt to revolt fails because of this, and Osmin's own resistance succeeds in bringing down his master, although, like Oroonoko, he pays with his life. The abuse and fragility of power, here explored in Abdelazer and Osmin's dynamic is, as this chapter will continue to explore, an overarching theme in the play. Whereas Oroonoko inspires the love and respect of his compatriots, Abdelazer does not, and it proves to be his downfall.

[669] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 593–94.
[670] Ibid., V. 1. 573.
[671] Ibid., V. 1. 579 and V. 1. 692.
[672] Ibid., III. 1. 22.

'Let his faith be try'd': Abdelazer's Conversion and Faith in Catholic Spain

Just as Behn repurposed *Lust's Dominion*'s hints of Eleazar's enslaved past for a much more complex portrayal of the Moorish prince's status, so she also revises how the plot deals with issues of religion. The Islamic worlds of dynasties, imperialist victors, military forces and economic powerhouses fascinated the Early Modern English. Between 1579 and 1624 over sixty dramatic works featuring Islamic themes, characters or settings were produced in England.[673] Bernadette Andrea attributes the 'awe of the Ottomans' in the mid-seventeenth century to 'two synchronous and related trends', the propagation of radical sects during the English Revolution and the first translation of the Qur'an into English in 1649; this translation, *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, is described as 'slipping through the censor's hands to circulate within a milieu charged with religious controversy and open to radical trends'.[674] Matar argues that, despite the inaccuracies of the translation, it was widely read:

> Attention to Islam was proportionate to the religious anxiety in society; the more there was tension and discussion — and the Interregnum and Restoration periods were riddled with controversy — the more Englishmen were willing to explore the Muslim alternative, an alternative that was associated in their minds with a powerful empire, Turkish rugs, coffee beans, 'Turk's Head' and Barbary pirates. For a Londoner in the second half of the seventeenth century, there were many reminders of Islam; for an English trader in the Mediterranean, the Turks and the Moors were inescapable.[675]

Although Matar does not believe the Muslim empires posed a direct threat to England, the propagation of mighty Islamic armies captured the imagination.[676] In *The Alcoran of Mahomet*'s

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[673] Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579–1624* (Newark: Delaware UP, 2005) p.11. See also Matthew Birchwood, *Staging Islam in England: Drama and Culture, 1640–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007).

[674] Andrea, 2007, p.57. The Qur'an was translated from the Arabic into English by Alexander Ross as *The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated out of the Arabique into French; By the Sieur Du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and Resident for the King of France, at Alexandria. And newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities* (London: Printed *Anno Dom.* 1649).

[675] Nabil I. Matar, 'Islam in Interregnum and Restoration England', *The Seventeenth Century*, 6 (1991) 57–71 (p.58).

[676] Ibid., p.58

foreword Alexander Ross suggests that his 'Christian Reader' might use his translation 'so viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou mayst the better prepare to encounter, and I hope overcome them'.[677] Beach writes that there was a

> nearly insatiable appetite for stories about the interplay between Christian and Muslim powers in the Mediterranean region […] These interests translated into a desire for stage dramas that engaged with the fascinating history of the region as well as its unique institutions of human bondage.[678]

Behn's decision to stage *Abdelazer* is, therefore, an attempt to capitalise on English readers' and playgoers' fascination with the Islamic world; although, interestingly, she generally excises references to Muslim-Christian relationships. In *Lust's Dominion*, Philip tells us:

> My father whilst he liv'd try'd his strong armes
> In bearing Christian armour, gainst the Turk's
> And spent his brains in warlike strategems
> To bring Confusion on damn'd Infidels.[679]

In *Abdelazer*:

> My Father whilst he liv'd, tir'd his strong Arm
> With numerous Battels 'gainst the Enemy,
> Wasting his brains in Warlike stratagems,
> To bring confusion on the faithless Moors [680]

Behn removes most of the references to the wars that figure them as *religious* conflicts; references to Christians and Turks are replaced with, simply, 'numerous Battels' against a secularised 'Enemy'. She also de-escalates the vitriol of 'damn'd Infidels' to 'faithless Moors'. She appears to excise the common conflation of Turks and Moors that *Lust's Dominion* appears guilty of in this instance -

[677] *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, sigs A2r.
[678] Beach, 'Global Slavery', pp.414–15. Behn would address this interplay again in her later play, *The False Count*.
[679] *Lust's Dominion*, I. 3: sigs B9v.
[680] Behn, *Abd*, I. 2. 83–86.

conflating the story of Old Philip's wars against the Turks, with that of a war with the Moors which resulted in Eleazar's capture. More interestingly, however, Behn never once refers to Abdelazer as an infidel. Furthermore, over the course of the play, she generally avoids all references to God as either a Christian or Muslim entity.[681] The 'faithless'[ness] of the Moors in Philip's above exposition is only a vague allusion to the different religions of the Spanish and Moorish armies. More pertinently, faithless also has a non-secularised meaning. Whilst Behn expunges references to hostile Christian-Muslim relations more generally, she makes much more of the idea of faithlessness, meaning both lack of religion and disloyalty, when it comes to Abdelazer specifically. Religion is a crucial stepping stone between our understanding of how race and politics are operating in this specific play as she uses exaggerated questions about Abdelazer's faith to highlight criticisms, not of Islam, but of Catholicism.

Abdelazer is a proclaimed Christian convert, a Morisco. Whereas in *Lust's Dominion* the characters do not interrogate the Moor's personal, religious beliefs, Behn makes several references to the fact Abdelazer has converted to Christianity. At the beginning of the play, Abdelazer bitterly alludes to his conversion, 'The Queen with me! with me! a Moor! a Devill! / A slave of Barbary! For so / Your gay young Courtiers *christen* me'.[682] Moreover, in her revisions, the issue of Abdelazer's religion is not only raised, but also hotly debated by the court when the cardinal attempts to banish Abdelazer. In *Lust's Dominion*, Cardinal Mendoza declares that as

> Protector to Fernando King of Spain:
>
> By that authority and by consent
>
> Of all these peers, I utterly deprive [Eleazar]
>
> Of all those Royalties thou hold'st in Spain.[683]

[681] She does make one reference to God when Philip on the battlefield accuses Mendozo of being a traitor like Judas who would sell 'thy God' again (*Abd*, IV. 1. 384).
[682] Behn, *Abd*, I. 1. 162–64 [Emphasis added].
[683] *Lust's Dominion*, I. 3. sigs B10r.

The Queen then demands to know the cardinal's justification: 'For what cause? Let [Eleazar's] faith be try'd', to which Mendoza simply answers, 'His treasons need no trial, they're too plain'.[684] Here the Queen seems to refer to 'faith' in a political sense, and the scene ends shortly afterwards. The issue of Eleazar's faith is raised as a challenge to the cardinal and court to provide a legitimate reason for Eleazar's banishment but is swiftly dismissed and the question of Eleazar's religious faith remains unexplored. Behn, however, appears to have read this scene and imagined a different context for the argument about 'faith', refiguring it as a religious dispute over the Moor's Christian faith. She then uses its controversial uncertainty to provide a further commentary which reflects England's religious tensions in the 1670s. In Behn's version, Cardinal Mendozo doubts the sincerity of Abdelazer's conversion, and immediately uses it to justify his desire to exile the Moor:

> Abdelazer, -
>
> By the Authority of my Government,
>
> Which yet I hold over the King of Spain,
>
> By warrant from a Councel of the Peers,
>
> And (as an Unbeliever) from the Church,
>
> I utterly deprive thee of that Greatness,
>
> Those Offices and Trusts you hold in Spain.[685]

The cardinal's decree is similar to the source text, but with the significant additional accusation that Abdelazer is an 'Unbeliever'. The ensuing argument about the legitimacy of Abdelazer's banishment is then centred on this question of his religious faith. Alonzo defends his brother-in-law, 'let his Faith be try'd […] Why should you question his Religion, Sir? / He does profess Christianity'.[686] Mendozo retorts that Abdelazer's 'Religion was his veil for Treason' and calls the court to 'witness' Abdelazer's

[684] Ibid.
[685] Behn, *Abd*, I. 2. 125–31.
[686] Ibid., I. 2. 135 and 138–39.

'habit, which he still retains / In scorn to ours, -- / His Principles too are as unalterable'.[687] In *Abdelazer*, the question of the Moor's uncertain religious faith is far more pertinent than Eleazar's.

On the one hand, by emphasising Abdelazer's conversion Behn provides a more believable explanation for how a Muslim slave prince rose within the Spanish military ranks and married a Christian wife. Throughout history, people have publicly converted not only to avoid persecution, but to assimilate themselves and progress within their adopted culture and society. In England, religious converts had a history of being received with great anxiety and mistrust, their conversion seen to be symptomatic of unstable moral or political conviction.[688] Abdelazer never clarifies his religious beliefs, and so there continues to be a question over the issue of the Moor's faith. The uncertainty it produces, on one level, reflects the Moor's untrustworthy and secretive nature.

On the other hand, the uncertainty surrounding Abdelazer's conversion also has a specific political relevance for the 1670s. In 1676, the Pope publicly recognised the Duke of York's controversial conversion to Catholicism. Behn never makes an overt reference to Catholicism; however, her play is set at the Spanish court, despite, as we saw in her reworking of *The Young King*, her willingness to relocate her revised dramas to a different setting. In this case, the action remains at the Spanish court, where the obviously Catholic 'cardinal', Mendozo, holds a significant degree of military and political power. The concern is about whether the Moor has truly converted to Catholicism, not just to Christianity more generally. The issue of a Catholic conversion creates an uncomfortable parallel between the evil Moor and the Duke of York. Hayden deals with this by citing how Behn curtails the discussion of Abdelazer's faith in the banishment scene; Prince Philip impatiently dismisses Mendozo's complaints, 'Damn [Abdelazer's] Religion, --- he has a thousand crimes / That will yet better justifie your sentence'.[689] His lines alert the audience to the insincerity of Mendozo's concern for Abdelazer's religion. Mendozo and Philip are allies, both eager to see the

[687] Ibid., I. 2. 137–42.
[688] See Daniel J. Viktus, 'Turning Turk in *Othello*: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48 (1997) 145–76.
[689] Behn, *Abd*, 1. 2. 147–48.

back of Abdelazer, yet even Philip does not believe the issue of Abdelazer's faith can fully 'justifie' his exile. The prince's conspiratorial words suggest Mendozo has simply targeted Abdelazer's religion to validate his decree expediently, because he is, to use Abdelazer's insult, a 'politik Cheat'.[690] Hayden therefore believes that:

> Although religion is an issue in this play, as it was at this historical moment in England, through the discourse of the rightful heir, Behn argues that religion is merely a blind for the real issue […] her point is that contemporary contention about Catholicism is merely a means to distract and to divide the polity over the chief issue at stake — the succession.[691]

However, Behn not only dramatises a dubious conversion but uses it as a catalyst to express anti-Catholic sentiments. This is problematic, because England's worries over the succession *were* inextricably bound to James's Catholicism, and therefore it is difficult to isolate the anti-Catholic sentiments expressed in *Abdelazer* without their impacting upon our understanding of Behn's support, or criticism, of James.

Abdelazer's anti-Catholic sentiments are chiefly levelled at Mendozo — a cardinal and therefore pillar of the Catholic Church. When Mendozo attacks Abdelazer's traditional Moorish dress, calling the court to 'witness' that Abdelazer has not put off his Muslim 'Principles' any more than he has his Moorish habit, Abdelazer throws the accusation back at him:

> Is that the only Argument you bring?
> I tell thee, Cardinal, not thy Holy Gown
> Covers a soul more sanctify'd
> Than this Moorish Robe.[692]

[690]Ibid., I. 2. 124.
[691] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, pp.174–75.
[692] Behn, *Abd*, 1. 2. 143–46.

Of course, many of Behn's audience would have been very sceptical of the value of a Catholic cardinal's 'Holy Gown'. She invites a comparison between Catholic and Islamic garments to insinuate that, despite the two different religions they signify, both are simply costumes under which neither body can be considered more 'sanctify'd' than the other; rather, both are as unsanctified as each other. The comparison plants the thought in the audience's mind that maybe they should not trust the cardinal any more than Abdelazer. They would be right not to: the scene foreshadows Mendozo's own powers of treachery and deception. In Act IV, Philip looks certain to defeat Abdelazer on the battlefield, until the Queen convinces Mendozo to change sides. The cardinal at first resists her suggestion to betray Philip, claiming his 'Honour and Religion bids me serve him'.[693] However, when the Queen tells him Philip is a bastard, Mendozo is quick to believe her, accepting her airy promise that, 'The Circumstances I shall at leisure tell you'.[694] With little more explanation and persuasion than that, his thoughts immediately turn to the fact that without Philip he himself is heir to the Spanish throne: 'My soul retains too, so much of Ambition, / As puts me still in mind of what I am, / A Prince! And Heir to Spain!'[695] He therefore does a deal with Abdelazer and the Queen to turn against Philip. He agrees to use his standing as a cardinal to persuade the people to do likewise, since, as Abdelazer observes, 'The giddy Rout are guided by Religion, / More than by Justice, Reason or Allegiance'.[696] Mendozo will then abandon his vows of celibacy by marrying the Queen, and therefore ascend the throne. When the Queen double-crosses him, accusing him of raping her and thus fathering the apparently illegitimate prince, Mendozo protests, 'Madam, I cannot own so false a thing, / My Conscience and Religion will not suffer me'.[697] However, in light of his recent betrayal and desire to take the throne, the audience might agree when the Queen summarily dismisses his protest as 'canting' nonsense.[698] Mendozo's professed faith is not so sincere

[693] Ibid, IV. 1. 288.
[694] Ibid., IV. 1. 321.
[695] Ibid, IV. 1. 328–30.
[696] Ibid., IV. 1. 342–43.
[697] Ibid., V. 1. 65–66.
[698] Ibid., V. 1. 67.

that he cannot be enticed to abandon his conscience and religion to betray Philip, marry, and take the throne for himself. Behn therefore raises the question of Abdelazer's sincerity of faith as a mirror of the cardinal's own faithlessness.

In *Abdelazer*, Behn generally excises references to Muslim-Christian animosity, couching the references to old King Philip and King Abdela's wars in secular, rather than religious, terms. None of the supposedly Christian characters, beyond Mendozo's charade, appear to be particularly pious. Mendozo claims that Abdelazer has not converted in all sincerity, but Behn reveals the complaint to be insincere; even Philip does not regard the question of the Moor's faith, or faithlessness, with any sense of urgency or apprehension. However, Behn's re-dramatisation of the scene in which the characters dispute Abdelazer's religious conversion is not a call for religious tolerance. Rather, her revisions emphasise the anxiety, genuine or otherwise, that surrounds a convert. It demonstrates how religious persecution can be used as a 'politik Cheat' for political motivations. Mendozo does not want to exile Abdelazer over concerns that the Moor retains his Islamic faith, but because of the influence he holds over the Queen — a woman we later learn the cardinal covets for himself. In this respect, we might interpret this scene, in which the question of a man's religion is used against him for political expediency, as a show of support for the Duke of York's conversion, suggesting that those who would use it to banish him from the throne have other, less religiously-motivated reasons for doing so. However, if Behn had wanted to show support for the Duke, aligning him with the villainous Abdelazer would have been a strange way to show it. Rather, she uses the scene to expose the Catholic cardinal's hypocrisy and deceit. Whether or not Behn might personally have been able to separate her thoughts on the Catholic faith from her political support of James's succession, the issues of James's religion and his succession were inextricably bound together. In a play which dramatises both the anxiety, genuine or otherwise, surrounding a converso, and exposes the self-serving fickleness of a Catholic cardinal, Behn is clearly willing to play up to the news of James's conversion for dramatic impact. Ultimately, Abdelazer's villainy is not predicated on his religious faith, but rather on his political faithlessness.

A Black Cromwell? Legitimacy and Usurpation in *Abdelazer*

Abdelazer's attack on the Spanish throne is entangled in matters of political, more than religious, legitimacy. In the play's Elizabethan conception, Eleazar's racial and religious deviancy renders the question of his claim to the throne practically redundant: a matter of personal greed and villainous impetus rather than restitution. Because *Lust's Dominion* had been revised during the Interregnum, there are obvious parallels between Cromwell and Eleazar — his military prowess and regicidal tendencies. These undermine an audience's attempt to sympathise with, let alone justify, the Moor's actions. In some ways, Behn's play *is* a continuation of the popular format of usurpation, dispossession and restoration seen in her first three plays. Her plot alterations intensify the parallels between the action of the play and the events of the English Civil War and Interregnum even more overtly than the 1657 version had done. In *Lust's Dominion*, the old king dies of natural causes and King Fernando hands Eleazar the 'Staffe of our Protectorship' to spite Cardinal Mendoza.[699] After murdering Fernando, Eleazar seizes the crown demanding a 'general applause' of, 'Live Eleazar, Castiles Royall King', whereupon he divides the kingdom up amongst his Moorish followers.[700] However, in *Abdelazer*, the Moorish general murders not one, but two kings, and ostentatiously refuses the crown himself, proclaiming instead 'to be Protector of the Crown of Spain / Till we agree about a lawful Successor'.[701] Aside from the double regicide, Behn emphasises a far more recognisably-Cromwellian idea in this 'Protectorship'. Abdelazer is the only, self-styled, Protector, whereas in *Lust's Dominion* the Cardinal Mendoza was granted the title by the dying king, for a brief while. Furthermore, in *Abdelazer*, the idea of a protector is only raised after the regicides have happened and Abdelazer has seized control of the court. Behn also erases the part in *Lust's Dominion* where Eleazar divides the Spanish kingdom amongst his guardsmen.[702] Doing so emphasises that Abdelazer's short-lived rule is a dictatorship and eliminates a factor that had no

[699] *Lust's Dominion*, II. 1: sigs C2r.
[700] Ibid., III. 4: sigs D11r.
[701] Behn, *Abd*, III. 3. 232–3.
[702] *Lust's Dominion*, III. 4: sigs D11r–D11v.

parallel with Interregnum history. Hence, Abdelazer's regicides and self-proclaimed protectorship bear clear parallels to Oliver Cromwell's governance: Cromwell was offered and refused the crown twice, in March and April 1657.[703] Furthermore, Prince Philip bears obvious parallels to a young Charles II in exile, hounded from his court by his father's murderer. Cathcart points out Philip is referred to as 'the best of Men, and Princes' — a phrase Behn commonly applied elsewhere in her works to Charles II.[704]

The parallels between Abdelazer and Cromwell are certainly *there*, but I contend that critical reception of them erroneously allows those comparisons to influence our interpretation of Abdelazer's bid for power as an unquestionably illegitimate one. Hayden, despite believing Abdelazer 'has no corollary to a specific person', refers to him as an 'ambitious usurper', and Leonora in the wake of Philip's arrest as 'the only remaining legitimate member of the royal family'.[705] Todd and Hughes similarly declare Philip is 'the rightful heir to the throne'.[706] Their championship of Spanish legitimacy probably derives from a belief that Behn also approaches this play with a clear stance on the (il)legitimacy of her characters' claims to the throne. However, I do not think Behn does approach and portray her characters with such a clear sense of the rights and wrongs of their bids for the throne. In her revisions to the text, there is a subtle, but discernible, pervasive anxiety surrounding the question of legitimacy. She might have exaggerated the Cromwellian aspects of the Moor in the play's *events*, but when it comes to language of the legitimacy of rule, Abdelazer is certainly not just a black Cromwell.

In Behn's earlier plays legitimacy depended, if often problematically, on the conception of the divine right of kings. Challengers questioned and contested the existence of such a divine right. However, Abdelazer, unlike Alcippus, Curtius or even Eleazar, *does* display a great reverence for the sanctity of kingship. He does not seek to overthrow conceptual authority of the monarchy, but

[703] Cathcart, '"You will crown him King"', p.264.
[704] Ibid., p.267.
[705] Hayden, *Of Love and War*, pp.165 and 161.
[706] Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', p.91.

rather to reinstate his own power after it has been 'unjustly ravisht' from him.[707] When considering his right to rule, Behn's language is couched in religious imagery. When Abdelazer tells the audience that he is set on 'noble Vengeance' he exclaims:

> Oh glorious word [Vengence]! Fit only for the Gods,
> For which they form'd their Thunder,
> Till man usurpt their Power, and by Revenge
> Swayed Destiny as well as they,
> And took their trade of killing.[708]

In the original, Eleazar calls for 'purple villainy' to,

> Sit like a Robe imperial on my back,
> That under thee I closer may contrive
> My vengeance; foul deeds hid so sweetly thrive:
> Mischief erect thy throne and sit in state
> Here, here upon this head let fools fear fate.
> Thus I defie my stars, I care not I
> How low I tumble down, so I mount high.
> […]
> Sweet opportunity I'le bind my self
> To thee in base apprenticehood […][709]

Whilst Eleazar delights in the 'opportunity' for 'mischief', Abdelazer's language is expressed in terms of divine right and retribution. In Abdelazer's eyes, his murderous schemes are an implementation of divine vengeance against the common 'man' who has 'usurpt' power fit only for the gods, of which

[707] Behn, *Abd*, I. 1. 168.
[708] Behn, *Abd*, I. 1. 189–93.
[709] *Lust's Dominion*, I. 2: sigs B5v–B6r.

he considers himself one, or as close to being one as it is possible to be. Throughout the play he continually aligns his person and his intentions with the gods', declaring Leonora, 'must be Queen, I, and the Gods decree it'.[710] Similarly, in his final duel with Philip he scoffs that the prince's 'treacherous Swords' could 'Take but a single life!--- but such a life, / As amongst all their store the envying Gods / Has not another such to breath[e] in man'.[711] In Abdelazer's eyes, his person and thus his intentions have a deified status and purpose. This furious, megalomaniac faith is reminiscent of Orsames's tyranny in *The Young King*. Therefore, Abdelazer does not challenge the notion of the divine right of kings, as Alcippus and Curtius do, or as Cromwell's dictatorship implied. His challenge to the Spanish monarchy is not based on the theoretical conundrums of the nature of kingship; he simply does not believe that Ferdinand and Prince Philip are legitimate kings. He is not confused, like Curtius, about *what* a king is. He unequivocally thinks he should be one, and that Ferdinand and Philip should not. So, Behn does not portray Abdelazer as an anti-monarchist, and to view him as such and strictly align his character and the play with Cromwell's protectorship, does not neatly encompass all aspects of Behn's Moor. In Abdelazer's assured belief in his own legitimacy, and the play's excision of racial and religious impediments, Behn seems to be deliberately interested in how legitimacy can be determined if two rivals for the throne both believe they have a 'right' to it. The crown is passed backwards and forward in a series of lies and bloodshed, in which Behn explores two key principles of legitimacy: military might and the legitimacy of birth-right.

Abdelazer fondly recollects his father's 'Life and Empire', recalling Spain's geopolitical history of war, conquest and changing dominion. With his sword, old King Philip seized the throne from an emperor, a fellow conqueror. As explored earlier, when Behn revises the passages that pertain to Old King Philip's conquest, she strips the war with the Moors of its religious imperative. The conquest of kingdoms becomes an imperialistic free-for-all, rather than a consecrated crusade. Interestingly, Behn is also keen to perpetuate a portrayal of the specific imperialistic expansion of

[710] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 195.
[711] Ibid., V. 1. 726–29.

the Spanish Crown. When Philip rushes to his father's deathbed, he has just come from the conquest of Portugal: 'with Conquest on my Sword'.[712] Later, Portugal becomes Philip's stronghold, 'If all fail, Portugal shall be my Refuge, / Those whom so late I Conquer'd, shall Protect me.'[713] By contrast, in *Lust's Dominion*, Portugal is an independent country, whose king, Emmanuel, takes pity on Prince Philip and the cardinal and magnanimously agrees to help them overthrow Eleazar. 'Poor Spain,' he commiserates, 'how is the body of thy peace / Mangled and torn by an ambitious Moor! / How is thy Prince and Counsellors abus'd, / And trodden under the base foot of scorn'.[714] At the end of the sixteenth century, when it is believed *Lust's Dominion* was first performed as *The Spaneshe Mores Tragedie*, Portugal had been under Spanish control for the past twenty years and England had been at war with Spain since 1585. The original play's reconfiguration of Portugal as not only an independent country, but one vital to the Spanish monarchy's survival, suggests Emmanuel's emphatic pity for Spain's wretched and decrepit state could hardly have been written and performed with a straight face. As Claire Jowitt writes, 'it is entirely possible to read the confusion and usurpation in the Spanish court as something that might be celebrated by the Elizabethan regime'.[715] Although Portugal had regained independence in 1640, in *Abdelazer* Philip returns to court having just conquered Portugal. Backdating the play to a time of Spanish dominance seems to be Behn's way of emphasising again how dynasties can be overthrown, and new royal lines established on the battlefield. Just as in *The Forc'd Marriage*, Behn explored the dangers of predicating masculine value and political status on the demonstration of military prowess, so in *Abdelazer* she appears to question whether military success is an effective barometer for monarchical legitimacy. Abdelazer clearly does not accept it is so, and nor can the audience because Prince Philip loses to Abdelazer on the battlefield. A battle is fought and won, and it is Abdelazer, not the 'rightful heir' Prince Philip, who succeeds.[716] Arguably, the battle is won by devious means, when

[712] Ibid., I. 2. 60.
[713] Ibid., II. 2. 140–41.
[714] *Lust's Dominion*, IV. 1: sigs E4r.
[715] Jowitt, 'Political Allegory', p.417.
[716] Todd and Hughes, 'Tragedy and tragicomedy', p.91.

the cardinal betrays Philip's cause. However, Abdelazer and Philip's final stand-off is also won in the aftermath of deception by Osmin's betrayal of his general. Ultimately, though, Philip's victory is not a military one.

Military victory, it seems, also establishes the second vital component of legitimacy: birth-right. Both Abdelazer and Philip believe they should be king because their fathers were kings before them. Thus, Philip is finally restored 'to all the Glories of [his] Birth and merits', and Leonora tells him 'to that glorious business / Our Birth and Fortunes call us'.[717] In both instances, birth precedes merit or fortune. However, this play demonstrates that beyond the competing birth rights, parentage can also be an exceptionally unreliable indication of legitimacy. Abdelazer is easily able to undermine Philip's claim to the throne when he convinces the Queen to declare her youngest son is a bastard. He rallies the court to his side declaring with reverent conviction, 'By Heaven but Philip shall not be my King! / Philip's a Bastard, and a Traytor to his Country. / […] Can you think, that after all my Toyls / I wou'd be still a Slave! --- to Bastard Philip too?'[718] Abdelazer is cunningly manipulative: not even he, an enslaved and despised Moor, will bow to a bastard, and thus the respectable Spanish court follows suit. Behn thus portrays legitimacy, appropriately for this time of England's successional uncertainty, as a highly unstable and precarious concept, based on the dubious outcomes of battles and easily manipulated by treachery and lies.

Interestingly, Abdelazer proposes an arguably very credible solution to the problem of competing monarchies. When he seizes control of the court, he reveals his plan to marry the Spanish princess Leonora:

> Yes,---why not?
> You're but the Daughter of the King of *Spain* ,
> And I am Heir to Great *Abdela* , Madam.
> I can command this Kingdom you possess,

[717] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 810 and 818–19.
[718] Ibid., III. 3. 212–28.

(Of which my Passion only made you Queen)
And re-assume that which your Father took
From mine,---a Crown as bright as that of *Spain*.[719]

In *Lust's Dominion* Eleazar crowns the Princess Isabella queen, but his idea to marry her afterwards to secure his own position is only briefly-mentioned and never really materialises.[720] This could have been an oversight in previous versions of the play that Behn noticed and decided to expand upon. Abdelazer thinks to solve the competition between Moorish and Spanish rule by combining the two opposing sides. To an Early Modern audience, this might have strengthened their perception of Abdelazer as a ravaging Moor. However, brokering a marriage between two opposing dynasties is also reminiscent of the Henry VII's marriage to Elizabeth of York which ended the Wars of the Roses, as dramatised by Shakespeare in *Richard III*.[721] If Abdelazer had managed to execute his plan, it might have been a very smart political move.

In *Abdelazer* the popular Restoration narrative of usurpation, dispossession and restoration is therefore disrupted by a body count comprising members of *two* opposing royal dynasties, whose rise and falls from power mirror one another. We have not one, but two dead patriarchs at the beginning of the play and, after the subsequent murder of King Ferdinand, we are left with not one, but two dispossessed princes. It is therefore unlikely that Behn intended a more perceptive audience to view Abdelazer solely as a Cromwellian figure, a usurper and an interloper. Rather, she uses him to challenge our perceptions of what does and does not constitute legitimate power.

'The King Will Sleep Away His Anger, and Tamely See Us Murder'd by this Moor': The Desires and Deaths of *Abdelazer*'s Kings

Whilst exposing the fragile foundations of legitimate rule, Behn also returns to her fascination with bad and incompetent rule. One reason why an audience might find it difficult to

[719] Ibid., V. 1. 483–89.
[720] *Lust's Dominion*, V. 3: sigs F10v–G2v.
[721] William Shakespeare, 'Richard III', ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp.183–222.

assess who should be the legitimate ruler in Behn's version of the play is how she changes the portrayal of the Spanish kings, the old King Philip and the young King Ferdinand. In *Abdelazer*, she portrays both kings as inept rulers, whose ignorance and blind lust are the primary reasons for why Abdelazer so successfully ends their reigns. In *Lust's Dominion*, Eleazar's sway over the Queen is the only catalyst for the, albeit temporary, downfall of the Spanish dynasty. The monarchy is presented as almost blameless in the face of Eleazar's racially-based villainy and the Queen's insipid obsession, culpability resting almost exclusively on the wickedness of a black man and the moral frailty of a woman's sexuality. Although, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Behn's queen is more domineering in her illicit relationship than her original counterpart, her actions and motivations remain largely unchanged in *Abdelazer* until Behn's revised ending. The two key differences are the Queen's murder of her husband, and that in *Lust's Dominion* she repents, denounces and survives her lover, whereas in Behn's version she is murdered by his hand. In these two changes Behn grants the Queen a more autonomous villainy, and accentuates an even more murderous, twisted darkness to her dynamic with Abdelazer. However, Behn's revisions also serve a wider purpose. Behn exposes in them the inherent weaknesses of a monarchy, which long predate Abdelazer's open, political move against it. Behn balances her Queen's lasciviousness by an extensive revision to the portrayal of Ferdinand's uncontrollable sexuality. She might have done this because, of course, she revised the play during the reign of the very lascivious Charles II. Ferdinand therefore acts as a male counterpoint to the Queen's own salacious behaviour — preventing the play from becoming a demonization of solely *female* sexuality. Consequently, Behn presents the plot's themes of sex and politics in relation to both female and male transgressive behaviour. By doing so, Behn detracts from *Lust's Dominion*'s attention on and condemnation of its lascivious queen and its inherent demonization of female sexuality, to make a broader commentary on the danger of gender-neutral lust at court.

Both plays begin with the old King Philip on his deathbed. In both versions, he is a conqueror who defeated the Moor's father in battle, thereby establishing himself at the head of a new royal

line. In *Lust's Dominion*, the audience witness the old king's passing; in *Abdelazer* it is only reported. Thomas explains Behn's excision of 'supernumerary kings' as 'merely those of a professional playwright licking into shape a much-revised text'.[722] However, Behn's excision has far wider implications than 'licking into shape'. The very different ways Behn portrays her king's passing makes his death a crucial starting point for understanding how her extensive revisions to the presentation of royal authority in *Abdelazer* are a continuation of her early plays' interest in problematic succession and kingly power. In *Lust's Dominion*, the dying king lies in state as the picture of deathbed dignity, the grieving court gathered around him, including his heir Fernando and daughter Isabella. He accepts his death, comforts those crying, and outlines his wishes for his funeral. He then turns to his son:

> You all acknowledge him your Sovereign […]
>
> Govern this kingdom well: to be King
>
> Is given to many: but to govern well
>
> Granted to few: have care to Isabel
>
> Her virtue was King Philip's looking-glasse.
>
> Reverence the Queen your mother. Love your father,
>
> And the young Prince your brother; even that day
>
> When Spain shall solemnize my Obsequies
>
> And lay me in the earth; let them crown you.[723]

The old king also has a warning for his son about Eleazar:

> I do commend him to thee for a man
>
> Both wise and warlike, yet beware of him,
>
> Ambition wings his spirit, keep him down;

[722] Thomas, '"This Thing of Darkness"', p.20.
[723] *Lust's Dominion*, I. 3. sigs B8r.

What will not men attempt to win a crown.[724]

The scene is a visualisation of a verbal and literal transfer of power from king to heir. Although there is a mournful air to the proceedings, the king's own words and actions are controlled and decorous. In it, the playwright paints a picture of a stately succession, with a future king bidden by his father to care for both his country and family. The instructions to govern well, followed by the warning about Eleazar, casts Eleazar firmly as a figure of suspicion and treachery in court. Paired with King Philip's beliefs in good governance, it thrusts the blame for what is to come in the plot squarely onto Eleazar's shoulders.

In Behn's revisions, her new king's more problematic succession and his accentuated character flaws play as much of a role in his downfall as Abdelazer's deceit does. She cuts the deathbed scene, removing the stately transference of power from father to son. In fact, we never see the old king onstage at all. An absentee monarch is a recurring device Behn uses in her early plays to allow her to explore issues of problematic succession and reign, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety surrounding the future kings. In *Abdelazer*, she also adds a further, important, twist — the old king has been murdered. The Queen, his wife, has disposed of him: 'Oh Abdelazer, more than this I've done. - / This very hour, the last the King can live, / Urg'd by thy witchraft I his life betray'd'.[725] Osmin then 'hastily' confirms the King's death when he comes to warn Abdelazer that Alonzo is hot on his heels in search of the Queen.[726] It is an ignominious death, without the sense of occasion and solemnity *Lust's Dominion* afforded the king's passing. The king in *Lust's Dominion* welcomed his death with thoughts of embalming, a 'rich Roial Robe', and a 'brazen shrine'.[727] In Behn his death is one of hurried whispers and adulterous wives slipping into hidden passageways to escape angry accusations.[728] The murdered king also dies still deluded by

[724] Ibid.
[725] Behn, *Ab*d, I. 1. 96–98.
[726] Ibid., I. 1. 121.
[727] *Lust's Dominion*, I. 3: sigs B7v.
[728] Ibid., I. 3: sigs B8r and Behn, *Abd*, I. 1. 133–40.

Abdelazer's lies of loyalty. As Prince Philip tells Abdelazer, the old king 'unjustly cherisht' the Moor whilst he was alive:

> And set thee up beyond the reach of Fate;
> Blind with thy brutal valour, deaf with thy flatteries,
> Discover'd not the Treasons thou didst act,
> Nor none durst let him know 'em;---but did he live,
> I wou'd aloud proclaim them in his ears.[729]

In *Lust's Dominion*, after accusing Eleazar and the Queen of having an affair Philip only says,

> Did the King live I'de tell him how you two,
> Rip't up the entrails of his treasury:
> With Masques and Revellings.[730]

Behn's is a far more detailed explanation of the extent to which the king was unaware of the Moor and his wife's adultery. In *Lust's Dominion*, his ignorance about this matter remains ambiguous. But Behn paints a portrait of a deluded king, blind and deaf to the treason at the heart of his court: single-minded and susceptible to sycophancy. The sensory deprivation is a metaphor for the king's poor judgement of character, which Behn is emphasising here far beyond the scope of the original material. It also emphasises the king's physical vulnerability. As Abdelazer's manipulations took the king's sight and hearing, so he has gone on to take the king's actual life. Interestingly, Behn explains through Philip that 'none durst' tell the king what, it appears, all at the court were aware of apart from him. Her portrayal of old King Philip is reminiscent of the king in *The Forc'd Marriage*, both monarchs are oblivious to the personal relationships and machinations of the closest members of their courts and families. Both prize military competence at the expense of all else and are inclined to favour those who flatter their own vanity, and are, therefore, vulnerable to manipulation.

[729] Behn, *Abd*, I. 2. 107–12.
[730] *Lust's Dominion,* I. 3: sigs B9v.

Because of this, the kings in both Behn plays raise courtiers above their station to a point where they can challenge royalty's hierarchy. *Abdelazer* is, therefore, a continuation of themes raised in *The Forc'd Marriage*, and an exaggeration of them. In this, old King Philip has been so manipulated and ignorant of the goings-on at his court that it leaves his physical body, as well as the body of the monarchy, open to assault and murder.

Into this unstable realm steps a new king, but there is no ceremonial ascension for Behn's Ferdinand. He does not know it, but his father's insidious murder taints his succession. His ignorance of this and the fact that, unlike Fernando, he has not yet received a warning about the Moor, makes him even more vulnerable to the same dangers that befell his father. Furthermore, the beginning of his reign is not only stripped of public ceremony but is also marred by over-emotion and indecorum on his part. He enters the stage 'weeping' with the courtier Ordonio 'bearing the Crown' behind him.[731] The crown carried behind the new king is an interesting visual.[732] As a prop, it could have been simply left offstage until after the coronation or have already been placed on Ferdinand's head. However, Behn wants it there, but disembodied. The fact it is not on top of anybody's head, along with the lack of a deathbed succession ceremony as in *Lust's Dominion*, gives the sense of a succession that is fragmented and uncertain. Rather than being settled on the next king's head, it is carried about the court as if unclaimed. Interestingly, the frontispiece of the 1657 copy of *Lust's Dominion* features the illustration of a crown, which was most likely a deliberate statement of the Royalist intention behind the publication. Here, Behn seems to repurpose the image of the hollow crown, to borrow Shakespeare's term, for a very different effect. Its first appearance, trailing behind Ferdinand, foreshadows the scene after Ferdinand's murder, when the crown is on offer, but Abdelazer rejects it.

[731] Behn, *Abd*, I. 2. 1.
[732] And one Behn would use again in her later play *The Roundheads*.

Whilst the crown is almost forgotten in the wake of old King Philip's death, Ferdinand can only weep. In *Lust's Dominion*, it is Isabella who weeps for the King's death, not Fernando. Fernando actually chides her for grieving, 'For sweet Isabella, shrieks are in vain'.[733] She retorts that he only says so because he has profited from their father's death, 'But I have lost a Father and a King'.[734] In Behn, Ferdinand not only cries openly, he also speaks the line given to the princess in the original, 'A Kings great loss, the publique grief declares / But 'tis a Fathers death that claims my tears'.[735] My discussion of *The Forc'd Marriage* explored how extreme displays of emotion were considered in the Early Modern period to be a womanish trait, based on an excess of the melancholic humour typically found in the female body. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, Alcippus's tears are therefore a sign of his escalating effeminacy, and Behn's way of deriding her antagonist, undermining all his previous masculine honour. It is significant therefore that King Ferdinand also weeps, whilst expressing a sentiment that was originally voiced by a female character. The overall effect, again, promotes the idea of the effeminacy of uncontrolled emotion, but here the character doing so is a *king*.

Prince Philip re-enters also 'weeping' after he views his father's body, but through the tears he declares:

> His soul is flew to all Eternity:
> And yet methought it did inform his body
> That I, his darling Philip was arriv'd
> With Conquest on my Sword; and even in death
> Sent me his Joy in smiles.[736]

Philip weeps once, but the fact he does seems mitigated by the fact his grief is expressed through ideas of masculine honour, accomplishment, pride and filial duty. His tears are accompanied by a

[733] *Lust's Dominion,* I. 3: sigs B8v.
[734] Ibid.
[735] Behn, *Abd*, I. 2. 15–16.
[736] Ibid., I. 2. 57–61.

self-assurance that he attended his father's deathbed as a returning conqueror, cheering his father's departed soul. By contrast, Ferdinand has no such manly accomplishments to think of, and we soon learn that his tears are not only filial grief, but lovesickness.

Ferdinand cries not only for his father, but for the Moor's wife Florella, with whom he is desperately in love. He is so in love with her, that he tells Leonora that he does not even want the crown:

> My Leonora, cannot think my grief
> Can from those empty Glories find relief;
> Nature within my soul has equal share,
> And that and Love surmount my glory there.
> Had Heav'n continued Royal Philip's life,
> And giv'n me bright Florella for a wife,
> To Crowns and Scepters I had made no claim,
> But ow'd my blessing only to my flame.
> But Heav'n well knew in giving thee away,
> I had no bus'ness for another joy.

Thereafter, he 'weeps' again.[737] If entering the stage crying and the crown carried behind him are red flags questioning Ferdinand's fitness to rule, this speech seems to confirm those warning signs. Ferdinand shows very little interest in taking the crown, with the 'empty Glories' that accompany it. If he could have married Florella 'To Crowns and Scepters I had made no claim'. He would happily have relinquished his birth-right and its accompanying entitlements, but in saying so he is also rejecting the responsibilities it entails. His words could be simply romantic exaggeration, but juxtaposed with the death of his father, it emphasises his reluctance to assume the position of

[737] Ibid., I. 2. 22–31.

leadership which has been thrust upon him and thus reveals his lack of responsibility. *Lust's Dominion*'s Fernando had no such qualms.

This brings us to Ferdinand's ultimate undoing: his pursuit of Abdelazer's wife, Florella. In both plays, the new king's passion for the Moor's wife plays a crucial part in the Moor's plot to take back the Spanish throne. In both plays, the king is murdered when he tries to seduce Florella/Maria in the dead of night. However, the way Behn portrays Ferdinand's ardour is an exaggerated account of royal lust and the vulnerability to which it exposes the Crown. Ferdinand's declarations of love are public and effusive, whereas Fernando's are private and circumspect. Ferdinand's speech above, accompanied by its flood of unmanly tears, is a public declaration. With 'double cause to mourn', Ferdinand continues to brood over his feelings throughout the coronation.[738] Behn inserts a coronation banquet scene not found in the original, and has Ferdinand spend this celebratory occasion in paroxysms of misery, publicly bewailing the fact that he did not declare his love for Florella sooner:

> Oh God! had I then told my tale
>
> So feebly, it could not gain belief!
>
> Oh my Florella! this little faith of thine
>
> Hath quite undone thy King![739]

He is public, effusive, emotional and hyperbolic in his love. It makes an uncomfortable spectacle, especially when we remember Florella is a married woman. By stark contrast, in *Lust's Dominion*, we are simply *told* Fernando is in love with Maria by Eleazar, 'here comes the King, and my Maria; / The Spaniard loves my wife'.[740] Fernando's own declaration of love is brief and direct. When he revokes Eleazar's banishment he tells Maria, 'Swear but to love me, and to thee I'le swear / To crown thy

[738] Ibid., II. 2. 2.
[739] Ibid., II. 2. 32–35.
[740] *Lust's Dominion*, I. IV: sigs B12r.

husband with a diadem'.[741] By contrast, when Florella begs the King to commute the banishment in *Abdelazer*, the King's offer is far more florid:

> Mistaken charming creature, if my power
> By such, who kneel and bow to thee,
> What must thine be,
> Who hast the Soveraign command o're me and it!
> Woud'st thou give life? turn but thy lovely eyes
> Upon the wretched thing that wants it,
> And he will surely live, and live for ever.
> Canst thou do this, and com'st to be of me?[742]

In both versions, the king is openly prepared to make an important political decision based on his love life. However, Behn substantially alters the rhetoric to portray her king as far more submissive than his source character. Whereas King Fernando bluntly bribes Maria with his wealth (and wealth for her husband, rather than herself at that), Ferdinand is a supplicant. Ferdinand is once again willing to sacrifice *all* his kingly authority for Florella, rather than just offering her a share in its rewards as Fernando does. She has a 'Soveraign command' over him, who is only a 'wretched thing' under her gaze. His is an emotional weakness, whereas Fernando's seems a more primitive greed.

Behn goes further in demonstrating the political dangers of obsessional love. In her original banquet scene, she emphasises how the King's embellished fixation on Florella has made him oblivious to its impending, political dangers. As he moons over Florella, Philip is watching Abdelazer conspiring with Roderigo. Whilst the King believes Abdelazer has been preoccupied in some 'Publique good', Philip retorts, 'There's no *good* toward when you are whisp'ring', and 'Mark how he snarles upon the King! / The Cur will bite anon'.[743] Like his father, Ferdinand is blind to the political

[741] Ibid.
[742] Behn, *Abd.*, I. 2. 213–20.
[743] Ibid., II. 2. 71, 79 and 111–12 [Emphasis added].

danger Abdelazer obviously poses. When Philip tries to warn Ferdinand, he is airily brushed away, 'we will find a way to check him; / Till when we must dissemble; - take my counsel, - Good night'.[744] With this lackadaisical complacency he drunkenly traipses off to bed, leaving the court to conspire without him. As Philip says,

> Well Friends, I see the King will sleep away his anger,
>
> And tamely see us murder'd by this Moor,
>
> But I'le be Active, Boys. […]
>
> We will awake this King, out of his Lethargy of Love,
>
> And make him absolute.[745]

Behn stresses Philip's loyalty to his feckless older brother, but his loyalty is matched with an astute awareness that the danger Abdelazer poses goes beyond the threat to the King's life; it extends to the lives of those around him: all are likely to be 'murder'd by this Moor'. Ferdinand is so preoccupied with Florella it not only leaves his own person and the Crown vulnerable, but also the lives of his courtiers.

Behn continues to alter the text to present Ferdinand as far more of a supplicant to Florella's charms and, thus, negligent of his kingly responsibilities. In *Lust's Dominion*, when the King believes he has sent the Moor in pursuit of the runaway Philip and Mendoza, he seizes on the opportunity, 'Why, this sorts right, he gon[e]; his beautiful wife / Shall fall in the naked arm of love'.[746] Whereas in Behn: 'Mean time I will to my Florella's Lodging, / Silence and Night, are the best Advocates / To plead a Lover's cause'.[747] Fernando is confident that Maria will fall for his powers of seduction. Ferdinand is far more subservient. He is a pleading submissive, relying on the insidious advocation of 'Silence and Night', rather than being certain he will be the recipient of swooning women. Behn's

[744] Ibid., II. 2. 128–29.
[745] Ibid., II. 2. 131–33 and 137–38.
[746] *Lust's Dominion*, II. 5: sigs C12r.
[747] Behn, *Abd*, III. 1. 90–92.

decision to portray Ferdinand as a submissive supplicant continues in the scene where he tries to seduce Florella. In *Lust's Dominion*, the king is forceful and intimidating. He pulls Maria onstage with 'his Rapier drawn in one hand'.[748] The sword, he claims, is a prop to make an ostentatious threat of suicide should Maria refuse him, but the drawn rapier poses an implicit, phallic threat to Maria. He has also come armed with music and a banquet to charm her, 'My hand holds death, but love sits in mine eye, / Exclaim not dear Maria, do but hear me'. In *Abdelazer*, Ferdinand's attempt at seduction is far less intimidating and overwhelming. His questions are grovelling,

> Where learnt you, Fairest, so much cruelty,
> To charge me with the Pow'r of injuring thee?
> Not from my Eyes, where Love and languishment
> Too sensibly inform thee of my heart.[749]

Both kings promise to marry the woman, but in *Lust's Dominion* Fernando's offers, or threats, continue. Maria tells him she cannot marry him whilst her husband lives. The King says he will send Eleazar away to die in the wars. Maria declares she cannot love him if he murders her husband, so he says he will instead have parliament banish all Moors from the country. When Maria persists in saying that she would join her husband in exile, Fernando expostulates 'It shall be death for any Negroes hand, / To touch the beauty of a Spanish dame'.[750] His measures, and countermeasures, planned and calculated, demonstrate the reach of his kingly power, an easy authority that can sweep whole demographics from his lands and change the course of future relationships forever. He locks the doors to proceed, but Maria drugs him before he can go any further. In Behn, Ferdinand promises to make Florella queen, but very little else. Instead, he seems distracted and overwhelmed by his passion. Florella tells us he is 'All pale; [his eyes] thus fix't' and his hands are 'trembling'.[751]

[748] *Lust's Dominion*, III. 2: sigs D4r.
[749] Behn, *Abd*, III. 3. 6–9.
[750] *Lust's Dominion*, III. 2: sigs D5r. As mentioned earlier, Behn never uses the word 'Negro' or any variation of it herself.
[751] Behn, *Abd*, III. 3. 31.

Arguably, Behn's alterations make for a more likeable king than Fernando, in the sense that he is far less aggressive and threatening in his pursuit of Florella than his counterpart. Whereas Fernando uses his royal power to bribe and intimidate Maria, Ferdinand offers to give it all up to have Florella; whilst Fernando abuses his power, Ferdinand neglects his. Behn has created a more redeemable man, but a weaker, more vulnerable king. Fernando's seduction is a demonstration of his power, whereas Ferdinand's is an abandonment of it entirely.

Both kings misuse their kingly power, allowing lust to govern their politics, and both are undone by their pursuit of the Moor's wife. Both allow their passion for the Moor's wife to sway their political decisions, and in both they suffer the consequences. The Moor uses the night-time assignation to murder the King and provide himself with good justification for doing so, on the pretence he is avenging the rape and murder of his wife. The regicide derails the Spanish monarchy and throws the country into civil war. However, Behn's revisions to the text portray Ferdinand as far more emotional, obsessional and negligent than his counterpart. She not only emphasises how vulnerable this makes the King but shows that his weaknesses threaten the lives of others as well. He disowns his power and the responsibility it entails in a way his counterpart never does. With this change, Behn places some of the blame for the disastrous consequences on Ferdinand himself, rather than on Abdelazer alone. A royal figure governed by lustful imperatives, who jeopardises his authority and power, has been a consistent theme in Behn's previous plays: both Orsames and Frederick were examples of this. However, Ferdinand is far more problematic. Orsames and Frederick are princes, who mature and reconcile their lustful feelings before they have to take up their official responsibilities. Ferdinand, however, *is already* king, not a wayward prince in need of reform and with the luxury of time to do so. A king who has not yet reconciled his lustful excesses is unusual in Behn's oeuvre, but even more dangerous for it. Ferdinand is a decision-maker, with neither a watchful court to censor him, as in *The Young King*, nor a father who is still in political charge, as in *The Amorous Prince*. The decisions he makes have disastrous personal and political consequences. As a very new king, Ferdinand's role in *Abdelazer* demonstrates why it was so

imperative for Behn's earlier princes to reform in the ways they eventually did long before they actually take up the reins of power for themselves. All that was threatened by the princes' actions in *The Young King* and *The Amorous Prince* — civil war and murdered monarchs — actually comes to pass in *Abdelazer*.

In *The Young King* and *The Amorous Prince*, a king's 'right' to rule hinges on his ability to demonstrate rationality and restraint as much as it does on his lineage. In *Abdelazer*, the Spanish kings' failings in this respect further erodes an audience's confidence in Spanish supremacy. In the confusion created over what legitimate succession means, and the shortcomings of the usurper-Spanish kings, *Abdelazer* becomes far more a play in which an audience might wonder which side it would *like* to emerge victorious, rather than which *should*. It is a radical position to take. One might argue that Behn's portrayal of Prince Philip mitigates this uncertainty. He is, in many respects, the hero of the plot. Whilst Ferdinand uncontrollably weeps at their father's deathbed, Philip returns to court as a conqueror; whilst Ferdinand drowns his sorrows and moons over Florella at his coronation banquet, Philip focuses on the deadly threat Abdelazer poses and rallies his men to defend the court. Philip's manly aggressiveness and shrewd perceptiveness obviously make him a far better candidate for kingship than Ferdinand is. Therefore, to a certain extent, *Abdelazer* contains a reassuring, hopeful suggestion that even though some members of a royal family turn out to be bad rulers, their heirs could be better. However, Philip's eventual triumph over Abdelazer and his restoration to the throne is fraught with complexities and anxieties that belie such a straight-forward interpretation and suggest that, for Behn, the question of succession in the play cannot end quite so neatly and comfortably with Philip.

'Fearing to Trust the Faithless Seas Again': Philip's Problematic Restoration

The play ends with Philip's restoration, in a prison cell standing over the bodies of Abdelazer and Osmin. Alonzo reports the people have filled the streets with joy. Philip grudgingly forgives the

snivelling Mendozo '(though with much a-do)' and rewards Alonzo's loyalty with the dukedom of Salamanca and, it is implied, the hand of Leonora.[752] This done, the play ends with Philip's reflection:

> So after Storms, the joyful Mariner
>
> Beholds the distant wish'd-for shore afar,
>
> And longs to bring the rich-fraight Vessel in,
>
> Fearing to trust the faithless Seas again.[753]

Enemy slain, mercy granted, and rewards dispensed, Philip now imagines himself steering the storm-battered Spanish monarchy out of danger, back to dry land. However, it invites us to reflect on what condition this ship of state bearing the returning monarchy is in. In Behn's earlier plays, the monarchy always emerges from the drama in an indisputably better shape than it began. Orsames's tyrannous disposition is quelled and, with a new queen at his side, he dispenses kingly rewards to a court now reconciled with its foreign adversary through Cleomena and Thersander's marriage. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, Alcippus apologises, Phillander marries the woman he wants and is prepared to replace his father, with a previously factious court now united behind him. Frederick in *The Amorous Prince* forswears his womanizing and, reconciled with Curtius, turns his attention to dutiful pursuits as a military commander and respectable husband. Even in *The Dutch Lover*, the various marriages signify a happy conclusion to the play's extended metaphors of international conflict. These plays have conflicts which are resolved peacefully through forms of repentance, revelation and reconciliation, and thus end with their characters optimistically poised to embark on their future married lives and/or further military pursuits. *Lust's Dominion* ends on a similar note with Philip's words:

> And now Hortenzo to close up your wound,

[752] Behn, *Abd*, V. 1. 800–20.
[753] Ibid., V. 1. 821–24.

I here contract my sister unto thee,

With Comick joy to end a tragedie.

And for this Barbarous Moor, and his black train,

Let all Moors be banished from Spain.[754]

In the original, the tragic nature of the play is mitigated by the 'Comick joy' of the loyal courtier's marriage to the princess. The banishment of the Moors from Spain is a demonstration of kingly authority and an unquestionable, final revenge and victory over the court's perceived enemies. However, Behn radically changes this ending. The atmosphere of *Abdelazer's* conclusion remains one of heightened anxiety, rather than of triumph. Abdelazer is dead, Osmin has insured the remaining palace guards are now loyal to Philip and the people have risen in his support… but despite this, Leonora urges her brother to hasten along 'For here methinks we are in danger still'.[755] Philip's closing line, in which he fears 'to trust the faithless Seas again' echoes this unease.[756] Whereas the final lines of the previous plays are of anticipation for the future, *Abdelazer*'s concern withdrawal, retreat from the adventures, perils and treachery of the open seas. The play therefore ends with a restored monarchy's lingering feelings of dread and inconstancy rather than optimism and strength.

The monarchy's overall victory is therefore tainted by a prevailing tone of fear. The reasons for this lie in the details of this victory and a haunting uncertainty about the monarchy's future. Happy conclusions in Behn's previous plays are brought about through forms of repentance and reconciliation. Even in *Lust's Dominion*, the Queen denounces Eleazar, Philip offers her and the cardinal his forgiveness, and the penultimate speech is the Queen's declaration of penitence:

I'le now repose my self in peacefull rest,

And flye unto some solitary residence;

[754] *Lust's Dominion*, V. 6: sigs G11v.
[755] *Abd*, V. 1. 820.
[756] Ibid, V. 1. 824.

Where I'le spin out the remnant of my life,

In true contrition for my past offences.[757]

Her stately, willing withdrawal from court provides the audience with a magnanimous reconciliation of mother and son, and the absence of a previous political opponent. However, in *Abdelazer* there are few such repentances or reconciliations. The cardinal does beg for, and receive, clemency, but his track record of vacillation renders him such a minor adversary the moment lacks any gravitas as he asks Philip whether he will:

Leave only me unhappy? when, Sir, my crime

Was only too much Faith:---thus low I fall,

And from that store of mercy Heaven has given you,

Implore you wou'd dispense a little here.[758]

Behn's queen was murdered at Abdelazer's instruction at the beginning of the final act. She dies without a word of remorse, still revelling in her misled, sinful passion for Abdelazer.[759] Behn denies her, and by extension Philip and the court, the reconciliation and remorse of her *Lust's Dominion* counterpart. Without it, the monarchy and court survive with far fewer characters than before. Two kings and a queen have been murdered, leaving only two surviving members of a royal family whose past familial-political disputes can now never be resolved.

Because Behn cut the character of the Moor's father-in-law Alvero, and dramatizes the murders of both Roderigo and the Queen, Philip now inherits the throne with a court much depleted by contrast to that of his *Lust's Dominion*'s counterpart.[760] 'All' are scripted to say, 'Long live Philip King of Spain', but when we consider how few living characters are actually on the stage at this point, their shout is unlikely be a gloriously loud one. More realistically, it is the paltry cry of the

[757] Ibid.
[758] Ibid., V. 1. 813–16.
[759] Ibid., V. 1. 314–32.
[760] In *Lust's Dominion* Alvero is Eleazar's father-in-law (deceased in *Abdelazer*). Roderigo, a nobleman in *Lust's Dominion*, is actually Abdelazer's creature, murdered by his master after murdering the queen.

bedraggled remnants of the court, still standing in a dismal prison cell. And although Philip now has the support of both the palace guard and the common people, such loyalty has already proven over the course of the play to be fickle. At the end of *Lust's Dominion*, Philip banishes the Moors in revenge for their part in the uprising, which concludes the play with a powerful reaffirmation of white, Christian strength and superiority. In *Abdelazer*, the palace guard remains, even though their resolve has proven capricious in the past: maybe as an act of tolerance in keeping with Behn's handling of religion in the play. However, they have already betrayed two leaders. Perhaps, against this backdrop of 'faithless Seas' that Philip swears not to trust again, and the way the play ends with Philip and his small entourage cowering in the prison cell that would have been their deathbed, it is not surprising Leonora and Philip still sense danger all around them.

Further undermining a sense of victory, in *Abdelazer* the Spanish prince only triumphs because of the machinations of Osmin. The lowly palace guard is revealed to have been the 'good Angel' who enabled Philip to escape Abdelazer's assassination attempt, and subsequently prevented the rape of Leonora, ordered the palace guard to turn on Abdelazer, and unlocked Philip's chains.[761] In *Lust's Dominion*, victory was secured by the wit and ingenuity of the Spanish prisoners. By elevating Osmin's role to that of the architect of Abdelazer's downfall, Behn diminishes Philip's role in the final defeat of Abdelazer. Furthermore, the details of Osmin's betrayal reveal he has problematic motivations. He tells Leonora, 'I am weary now of being a Tyrants Slave, / And bearing blows too; the rest I could have suffer'd'.[762] His reason for turning on Abdelazer is entirely self-motivated, his loyalty to Philip only seems inspired by the personal grievance he bears for Abdelazer's treatment of himself. He does not aid Philip because he loves him or believes in the legitimacy of his rule. The same might be said of the remaining palace guards. Osmin reassures Philip, 'There are no Guards, Great Sir, but what are yours', but also says 'I command the Guard of

[761] Behn, *Abd*., III. 1. 22.
[762] Ibid., V. 1. 593–94.

Moors, / Who will all dye, when e're I give the word'.[763] Philip's guards are only his because Osmin has made it so. Therefore, at the play's conclusion, the future of this restored monarchy remains unstable, and rife with uncertainty. Philip's restoration is not a celebratory triumph of rationality and reconciliation, but simply the end to a story which warns the audience about the uncertain, cyclical nature of power and rule. Philip might be steering the ship back into safe harbour, but the future remains uncertain, and the corpses of the weak, treacherous and murdered royalty lie in its wake. Few are lucky to have survived at all.

Conclusion

Abdelazer has many faces: black, prince, general, usurper, Morisco, slave. By drawing all these faces into one Behn gives her audience one of the most surprising and complicated portrayals of race, religion and politics of her early repertoire. In *Abdelazer*, the conventional literary trope of a black and white moral binary is eased, and her Moorish villain is given much more colour and depth than his black face granted him in the hands of Behn's predecessors. She creates a backstory for his character which has been filled with grief and suffering, with a sympathetic portrayal of a young boy mourning both a kingdom and a father, enslaved by his captors. By emphasising his continued state of slavery to a country and a queen, to people who abuse and use him, our sympathy surprisingly leans towards his claims of legitimacy. In the declarations of his right to rule, Behn raises uncomfortable questions about the nature of legitimacy and succession. Although we could interpret Philip's victory as a political analogy of support for the Duke of York's claim to the throne, the path to that conclusion is complicated by a problematic portrayal of the Catholic faith and political succession which does not easily lend itself to that interpretation. Behn uses the question of Abdelazer's faith to dramatise contemporary concerns over the Duke's own conversion, and, furthermore, portray the Catholic religion, in its cardinal-representative, as one of greedy, self-serving opportunism. In presenting the case for Abdelazer's own claim to the throne, she pits the

[763] Ibid., V. 1. 711 & V. 1. 587–88.

Moor against Philip as equal. Both are dispossessed princes and sons of murdered kings. Philip does not triumph because of an intrinsic moral/white superiority, or by his own military prowess or ingenuity. Instead, the fate of the kingdom is decided by a lowly guardsman who escapes notice for most of the play but who has had his own agenda in mind — and it is not one based on a sense of loyalty or honour, but rather revenge and quest for freedom. Thus, a Spanish king is reinstated, on top of a pile of dead bodies, with a depleted court, a palace guard who clearly does not answer to him, and a pervading sense of fear and anxiety for what the future holds in store.

CONCLUSION

The princes of Behn's first five plays are about to receive the power and responsibility that come with their inheritance. In the moral and political conflicts they face, Behn draws on the cycle of dispossession, usurpation and restoration that had been frequently represented in the drama of the early 1660s. Her male protagonists all face a form of dispossession. Orsames and Alonzo have been raised as illegitimate outcasts far from their identities, families, homes and birth rights. Phillander powerlessly watches his beloved bestowed upon a man who has been promoted to a position that dangerously conflicts with his own standing within the court and military hierarchy. Frederick is almost assassinated by his best friend. Following the murder of his father and brother, Philip is forced to flee the court and is branded a bastard by his mother and her usurping lover. Each play ends happily, in the sense that the princes have survived, alive and well, ready to face their futures with, in most cases, the women they love by their sides. However, Behn's use of the celebratory trope of a restored royal repositions this cycle in the growing anxieties of the 1670s over Charles II's behaviour, policy and succession. Behn's princes might all emerge victorious, but their paths to restoration are blighted by an increasingly pervasive anxiety over their monarchical prerogative and power.

Problematic male sexuality is a prevalent theme in all five works and Behn's depiction of it grows progressively more fraught over the course of the plays. In *The Young King*, Orsames initially exhibits an indiscriminate and uncouth passion for the ladies of his new-found court. However, Behn contextualises his undiscerning desire as just one aspect of a broader naïveté, which has been the result of an adolescence in exile. At the beginning of the play, Pimante explains that Orsames, 'knows nothing of a world, cannot dress himself, not sing, nor dance, or plays on any Musick; ne'er

saw a Woman, nor knows how to make use of one if he had her'.[764] This foreshadows Orsames's later rapacity, but also immediately provides mitigating circumstances for what would otherwise be a purely condemnatory portrayal of royal sexuality. Orsames, Behn suggests, is simply young and extraordinarily naïve, and it does not take much for him to curb his unkinglike behaviour – just a beautiful woman and a weariness of his minder's lies. However, this is only the start for Behn of what becomes in her ensuing plays an increasingly intense scrutiny of how royal sexuality affects the body politic. In *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince*, she places male sexuality within the complex framework of homosocial bonds and problematic systems of political preferment and personal vanity, where princes and their subjects are in direct competition with one another. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, Phillander and Alcippus's sexual rivalry for Erminia is symptomatic of the underlying fragility of monarchical power and prestige. The ageing King insists on exercising his waning power the only way he still can, by granting political and sexual rewards, based on the recommendations of others rather than his own observations and thus judgements. His insistence on measuring manly merit with this subjective and ambiguous method leads to his disenfranchised army questioning the military hierarchy. Meanwhile, he is entirely oblivious to a not-so-secret relationship between Phillander and Erminia. Alcippus is therefore able to take advantage of the King's over-indulgence and ignorance to steal Erminia for himself. Behn implies that the court had been a discontented and volatile place before the events onstage occur, and Alcippus and Erminia's marriage exposes these other underlying political tensions. The fact that Alcippus steals Erminia is not significant in and of itself, rather, Behn uses it to demonstrate how Alcippus was emboldened and enabled by an ignorant King who insists on perpetuating a sense of competition amongst his subjects that only actually reveals his own weaknesses and leaves his only heir vulnerable to attack.

In *The Amorous Prince*, Behn's exploration of male sexuality's dangerous impact on politics becomes even more sinister, and deadly. Whereas Orsames and *The Forc'd Marriage*'s King are both

[764] Behn, *YK*, I.1.52–4.

blighted by ignorance when it comes to (respectively) their own sexuality or the sexual relationships of others, Prince Frederick acts consciously, with deliberate cruelty and calculated violence. He uses his royal privilege to instigate a culture of coital competitiveness into which he drags reluctant subjects and unwilling women. In order to win at a game of his own design, he is prepared to lie, buy and rape his way to victory. His readiness to buy creates the opportunity for the unscrupulous courtier Lorenzo to sell access to women in exchange for political favour. Frederick's sexuality is not only the point of contention between himself and Curtius, it is also what makes him most vulnerable. Curtius uses Frederick's rapacious and mercantile nature against him by luring him into an assassination attempt using the promise of beautiful courtesans as bait. Male sexuality's adverse effect on politics then becomes even more fraught and perverse in *The Dutch Lover*, in which Alonzo and Silvio lust after their sisters, biological or otherwise, and knowingly or unknowingly. Alonzo and Silvio might not be princes; however, given the theme of incest Behn might have felt it safer to distance what would otherwise have been an uncomfortably searing political commentary on the workings of Charles II's court and his politically-controversial mistresses, by placing the action within a domestic setting. In addition, the domestic setting becomes a reflection of the domestic workings of Charles's court. As Lorenzo and Curtius are able to capitalise on Frederick's rapacity to seek their own ends, so Francisca is able to manipulate Silvio's lust to attain her own desires. Both *The Amorous Prince* and *The Dutch Lover* therefore continue to explore the political consequences of problematic male sexuality by highlighting the issues of undue influence and presenting how their sexuality makes the male characters vulnerable to the manipulation of others. In *Abdelazer*, pre-marital and unconsummated flirtations devolve a step further, portraying a court which is rife with extra-marital affairs as the new King Ferdinand pursues the married woman Florella. Just as Curtius uses Frederick's sexuality against him and lures him into a trap, so Abdelazer leads Ferdinand to his death using the king's unrestrained desire for Florella as bait.

In *The Young* King, *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince*, Behn takes pains to emphasise the youthfulness of her male characters; their age is portrayed as the primary mitigating

factor to explain and excuse their problematic sexuality. Each of these plays, to differing extents, promotes the view that the male characters will outgrow the tempestuous effects of their testosterone and settle down into having faithful and fruitful marriages. However, as the plays progress, Behn appears to become increasingly disillusioned with this hopeful idea. In *The Young King*, Orsames simply does not know any better. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, Phillander and Alcippus are clearly both in love with Erminia rather than simply seeking quick sexual gratification. However, Frederick rampages through the Florentine countryside and city, intent on raising hell. Behn's references to how his youth should pardon him ring hollowly considering his selfish callousness. Maybe this jaded disillusionment explains why in *The Dutch Lover* and *Abdelazer* she abandons indulgent references to youth altogether and focuses more critically on demonstrating how male sexuality jeopardises both the domestic and political. In *Abdelazer*, male sexuality is not only dangerous for women, but also the weak point in a monarchy's garrison against usurpation. Across the plays, the political adversaries find it increasingly easy to capitalise on a member of the royal family's lust to secure his own, ever-more-murderous, ends.

By pairing the threat of usurpation with the figure of a prince or king who cannot control his sexuality Behn blends memories of the execution of Charles I with present anxieties over the current state of the monarchy and its immediate future. Sex plays a more manipulative, insidious role in controlling politics as the plays progress. If we start with *The Young King*, Orsames's dispossession is the result of prophetic authority. His uncontrollable sexuality might have precipitated his second dispossession; however, Behn had demonstrated the culpable role his religious education had played in shaping his unrestrained and tyrannical disposition. In *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince*, she highlights youthful wilfulness. However, in *The Dutch Lover* Francisca all but succeeds in convincing Silvio to rape his supposed sister and the tortured Silvio very nearly follows through with the dastardly plan. In *Abdelazer*, there are no holds barred as Ferdinand, crowned king, blindly follows his desire into a death-trap. As potential excuses for problematic male sexuality begin to drop off, Behn also presents a changing attitude towards the princes' political adversaries, an

attitude that becomes increasingly, and more obviously, sympathetic. In *The Young King*, Orsames's adversaries are unseen and discarded prophets, and an easily-manipulated, albeit well-meaning, Queen mother who Behn ridicules for her superstitious gullibility. She punishes Alcippus's insurrection in *The Forc'd Marriage* by driving him to the brink of insanity and emasculation. However, whilst she does so she also raises questions about Phillander's own conduct which might produce a certain amount of sympathy for Alcippus. In *The Amorous Prince*, Curtius's attempt on Frederick's life is portrayed as a desperate act by a man who has been betrayed by one he considers a friend as well as his prince. In *The Dutch Lover*, the dispossession of Alonzo and Silvio took place many years earlier, involving a cast of characters now deceased and unable to answer for their crimes. However, the way Silvio handles his feelings towards the woman he considers his sister does not really inspire much sympathy. Furthermore, Behn creates a Dutchman who, despite the play's wartime context, is multi-faceted – ridiculous but likeable, bumbling but chivalric. Then, in *Abdelazer*, she portrays not a simple act of usurpation, but a dynastic war between two princes who are the mirror images of one another. Her emotive portrayal of Abdelazer's own dispossession, coupled with the unfavourable portrayal of Ferdinand's kingship, blurs the distinction between notions of good and evil, hero and villain. In her increasingly complex portrayals of usurpation she is asking the question, how does one deal with a king who does not display king-like behaviour? How can subjects hold the members of the royal family in the esteem of divine right if these figures of princes and kings are so human, so base in their instincts, so ungodlike, without taking matters into their own hands as Curtius and Abdelazer are driven to do?

Thus, Behn's restored princes might emerge victorious, but their paths to restoration are blighted by an increasingly pervasive anxiety in which she not only appears to question the court's sexual conduct, but also raise other issues about the use and abuse of monarchical prerogative and power in which she interrogates how the sense of royal authority is constructed. In *The Young King*, Orsames's entitlement to the throne is never seriously questioned: he has the support of his sister, the military and the people, despite his bad behaviour. In *The Forc'd Marriage*, Behn begins to

address the fallibilities of the divine right to rule by subtly exposing the weaknesses of the King's purported absolutism. This tentative suggestion explodes into outright subversion in *The Amorous Prince* when Curtius can no longer justify his obligations to his prince in light of the prince's actions. The deportment of royal characters in the first three plays, therefore, plays an increasingly important role in the audience's perception of their adversaries. Kings and princes are men like any others, but they cannot maintain their authority if they undermine it by immoral behaviour. Like others, they too must be held to account in this respect. This then raises further questions about the nature of legitimacy and succession, as the decade progresses. As the country became increasingly concerned with the question of the future of the dynastic line, so Behn began to dramatise these anxieties, at first tentatively in the comedic confusion of mistaken identities in *The Dutch Lover*, and then with far more seriousness in *Abdelazer*. *Abdelazer* is the culmination of all Behn's anxieties surrounding royal rapacity and questions about the 'right' to rule.

Therefore, Behn's sense of political loyalty is entirely conditional. In the early plays, the issue of the 'right to rule' is far less important to her than the idea of 'fit to rule'. In Orsames, the King, Frederick and Ferdinand she demonstrates what happens when a prince or king is not only unfit to rule, but even uses his sense of entitlement to exonerate his own bad behaviour. By the time she wrote *Abdelazer* and its dramatisation of two competing dynasties, we can see a pattern emerging in Behn's plays which suggests she was beginning to wonder whether succession, and thus legitimacy, could even be predicated on the notion of birth-right, let alone divine ordination.

The conditional – bordering on subversive – royalism of Behn's early plays is maybe not the only surprise for readers more familiar with her later works. These early plays also challenge our perception of Behn's proto-feminism. Many of the plays' happy resolutions are only made possible by the intervention of the female characters: Cleomena's rebellion against her mother, Erminia's disguise as a ghost, the Florentine women's staged brothel and Euphemia's conspiracy to end her engagement. However, Behn's portrayal of women who hold tangible, political power is an

inglorious one. Queens, let alone mothers, are more absent than kings in most of the plays. Phillander and Frederick's mothers are not mentioned once in *The Forc'd Marriage* and *The Amorous Prince*. Mothers are also entirely missing from the fractured families of *The Dutch Lover*. Only *The Young King* and *Abdelazer* feature queens, and neither portrayal promotes a favourable view of women in power. *The Young King*'s Queen is gullible, easily persuaded by prophetic authority to sacrifice both her own and her son's political autonomy. Interestingly, in *La vida es sueño*, it is a king, a father, who makes this mistake. Behn decided to turn widowed, male Basilio into the widowed, but unnamed, Queen. Of course, Behn might have had dramatic reasons for altering the gender of this parental role; despotic, loveless fathers do not fit the mould of the early Restoration dramatic cycles of usurpation and restoration. However, by turning Basilio's character into a woman, and one so frail, Behn creates a despondent view of women in power. Vallentio declares, 'I abhor the feeble Reign of Women […] / Give me a man to lead me on to Dangers'.[765] Later, a rabble of citizens also insists on Orsames' being restored because, 'we will have King: for look ye, Colonel, we have thought of a King, and therefore we will have'.[766] In this instance, Behn appears to be poking fun at mob mentality, but the level-headed Vallentio agrees with them, 'I like your Resolution, but not your Reason'.[767] One might argue that in Cleomena Behn provides a counterpoint to the portrayal of female rule. Cleomena is more than capable of commanding her army, having been raised, 'more like a General than a Woman: Ah how she loves fine Arms! A Bow, a Quiver; and though she be no natural Amazon, she's capable of all their Martial Fopperies'.[768] Of course, in order to be considered seriously for leadership, Cleomena must exhibit all the masculine, martial qualities of the male sex. Furthermore, she is the one who declines the possibility of power and willingly cedes her crown to her brother.

[765] Behn, *YK*, I.1.37–39.
[766] Ibid., IV.4.135–36.
[767] Ibid., IV.4.139.
[768] Ibid., 1.1.73–75.

Women in positions of political power are frail or controversial in *The Young King*; however, in *Abdelazer* they are simply disastrous. Although the Queen's character is based on that of *Lust's Dominion*, Behn's decision to refashion Abdelazer as a sympathetic victim of courtly confinement necessarily refashions the Queen in a more villainous light. In both versions of the play, the Queen is instrumental to Abdelazer's plots – they both readily agree to broadcast the lie that Philip is a bastard and manipulate their respective Cardinals into betraying the prince. Not only do they conspire in and assist their lovers' plans, they also add their own murderous twists to them by killing the Moor's wife out of pure jealousy. However, Behn adds an extra layer to her Queen's wickedness. Whereas *Lust's Dominion*'s Queen enters simpering over her lover as the King lies on his ceremonious deathbed, *Abdelazer*'s Queen storms her lover's rooms, aroused by the *murder* of her husband. Behn therefore adds regicide/mariticide to the Queen's list of crimes. Behn's intention was probably to heighten the horror of the drama, by elaborating on the Queen's own wickedness and therefore counterbalancing *Lust's Dominion*'s portrayal of the Moor as the only true villain of the play. However, here Behn again portrays a Queen who uses her position of power to create political chaos. Thus, in the power vacuum that the death of a king creates, a queen's superstition in *The Young King* and her lust in *Abdelazer* further erode the already destabilised familial and political structures, and the princes' place with them.

The early plays therefore are crucial to study, both as individual pieces and as a body of work within its own right. Without taking them into account in context of Behn's entire dramatic output, we cannot form a complete understanding of Behn's attitudes towards Restoration politics. In these plays, we hear a very different political voice from a playwright who has come to be associated with ardent royalism and proto-feminism, and that is not because the early plays are juvenile, tentative forays into Behn's new writing career. Rather, she was writing them before the political mood of Charles II's day turned ugly with the Exclusion Crisis and the polarisation of public opinion to which it led. In her early plays, Behn felt more at liberty to explore and question the nature of princes, power

and politics, in a wonderfully diverse set of works which were responsible for establishing her as one of the leading dramatists of her day.

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