

Aphra Behn was England's first professional woman writer, but her status as a major author has only recently become clear. Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries Behn was denigrated for her 'unwom-anly' subject matter and intellectual immodesty. In the twentieth century she has been increasingly viewed as an important dramatist and poet of the Restoration and a founder of the English novel.

This book sets Behn firmly in an historical context of political factions, theatre developments and colonial encounters. Her work is remarkably diverse. There are chapters on each of the genres in which she wrote: drama, fiction, poetry and translation, and on other aspects of her life, from her publishing struggles to her involvement in American slavery.

The authors adopt different approaches to Behn's work and biography. Most provide an historical appreciation of Behn as a writer in a specific moment of English culture; others examine her in the light of current interests in gender, race and class, and in the manipulation of linguistic signs and codes.

Nowadays Aphra Behn is widely read. This book is an important resource for those studying seventeenth-century English literature and drama, and for those interested in the development of women's writing.

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∞ Aphra Behn studies

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