

## I

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## Aphra Behn: the documentary record

When Aphra Behn first attracted public literary notice, it was in September 1670 with her first play, *The Forc'd Marriage*, which she published in 1671 with the epigraph, '*Va mon enfant! Prend ta fortune.*' Since the Duke's Company presented this as the opening play of their new season and Thomas Otway acted in it, we can assume that Behn's literary connections were formed before the staging of her first play. But tracing the convoluted path of Aphra Behn to this theatrical première is not simple.

Behn is a particularly hard person to pin down. Germaine Greer calls her 'a palimpsest; she has scratched herself out',<sup>1</sup> somehow avoiding notice in church or tax records, perhaps deliberately. Janet Todd underpins this when she notes that Behn 'has a lethal combination of obscurity, secrecy and staginess, which makes her an uneasy fit for any narrative, speculative or factual. She is not so much a woman to be unmasked as an unending combination of masks.'<sup>2</sup>

The closest we come to establishing a time and place for Behn's birth is in Harbledown, Kent, 14 December 1640, as Eaffrey Johnson, daughter of Elizabeth Denham and Bartholomew Johnson.<sup>3</sup> The name Johnson and the Kentish birthplace were noted in 1696 in the brief biographies published first in *The Younger Brother* and shortly thereafter in *Histories and Novels*. In these two documents, we have the skeleton of the biography: the voyage to Surinam, the marriage to Mr Behn, and the 'several Negotiations in Flanders' for Charles II. The name Johnson and the birthplace of Canterbury or Sturry have independent support in Col. Thomas Colepepper's manuscript 'Adversaria', where, after her death, he alludes to Behn's mother as having been his wetnurse.<sup>4</sup> Anne Finch, later Countess of Winchelsea, adds to the biography in marginalia in one of her manuscript poems, 'The Circuit of Apollo', where she sneered that Behn was 'Daughter to a Barber, who liv'd formerly at Wye a little market town (now much decay'd) in Kent.'<sup>5</sup>

The world into which Behn was born was rife with religious tension and political friction as the Civil War and the Stuart exile racked England. By

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1642, the puritans had closed the theatres, and in January 1649 the King's head was severed in plain view of thousands who came to cheer or to weep. The kingdom fell to the protection of Oliver Cromwell and his roundheads, as the cavaliers and supporters of Charles II joined their new king in his exile on the continent. While Behn used cavaliers and Oliverians in her plays, most notably *The Roundheads* and the two parts of *The Rover*, and, while the theme of restoration runs through many of her other plays, she has left us no understanding of the impact of these angst-filled years on her youth.

The earliest biography, published with Behn's posthumously performed comedy *The Younger Brother* (February 1696), grew rapidly into the influential pieces published in the first and then the greatly augmented third editions of the *Histories and Novels*, and then into the standardized introduction to the fifth edition in 1705, the biography that was reprinted in later editions. Probably by Charles Gildon, since he signed the dedication, the sketch in *The Younger Brother* indicates that Behn went to Surinam with her father, mother, brother, and sisters (all information that could have been derived from *Oroonoko*), and that she suffered the 'loss of her Relations and Friends there', which 'oblig'd her to return to *England*'. Although the alleged death of the narrator's father could easily be derived from *Oroonoko*, it is absent in this account. The second 1696 version of her biography, in *Histories and Novels*, adds her father's relationship (not necessarily kinship) to Lord Willoughby, which afforded him the substantial post of 'Lieutenant-General of many Isles, besides the Continent of Surinam'.

While this voyage has less substantive evidence to support it than does her later spying mission, there is independent documentation of the Surinam stay. In sharp contrast to the floridly exaggerated early biographies, Behn leavens the highly romanticized details in *Oroonoko* with brutally graphic descriptions of the Surinam colony, including those of petty governmental officials from the early 1660s whose names would be unknown to Londoners of the late 1680s. In addition, her known political sympathies are somewhat distorted in her harsh portrayal of the royalist William Byam and her praise of Colonel George Martin, 'brother to *Henry Martin*, the great *Oliverian*', and a 'Man of great Gallantry, Wit, and Goodness, and whom I have celebrated in a Character of my New *Comedy*, by his own Name, in Memory of so Brave a Man'.<sup>6</sup> Several extant letters appear to refer to Behn and William Scot, son of Thomas Scot, Cromwell's Secretary of State for Intelligence, who was executed as a regicide in October 1660.<sup>7</sup> One letter from Byam to Sir Robert Harley in March 1664 alludes to 'Celadon' and 'Astrea', the code names used respectively by Scot and Behn in their later spying mission, leading to conjectures that Behn and Scot were in Surinam together, Behn as Scot's mistress.

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Nothing supports the narrator's contention in *Oroonoko* that her father died during passage to Surinam. Equally, no evidence suggests that Behn and Scot knew one another before meeting in Surinam or were lovers in Surinam. If Behn's father moved his family to Surinam, it could have been in response to Lord Willoughby of Parham's Prospectus, which promised fifty acres per settler, with additional acreage for dependants.<sup>8</sup> Or 'Mr Johnson' could himself have been an agent of the King sent to check on the colony and its republican inhabitants shortly after the Restoration. Whatever the reason, Behn's stay in Surinam lasted somewhere between eighteen months and two and a half years. When her first play, *The Young King*, was eventually published in 1683, four years after the probable date of its belated première, Behn in her Preface refers to its 'Virgin-Muse' as 'an *American*', noting that it measured 'Three thousand Leagues of spacious Ocean . . . [and] visited many and distant Shores'. This suggests, somewhat mysteriously, that she spent more than just a few months in the Americas.

Somewhere between Behn's return from Surinam and her mission to the Low Countries comes her alleged marriage to Mr Behn, supposedly a London merchant of Dutch extraction, although the name is more frequently connected to Hamburg, Germany. Several candidates have been advanced, most notably Johan or John Behn, captain of the *King David*, a ship that plied the southern Atlantic trade route, but no documents so far confirm any marriage.<sup>9</sup> The closest evidence to a 'Mr Behn' appears in a May 1669 draft letter concerning the British seizure off the Irish coast of the *Abraham's Sacrifice*, a ship under the control of a Genoese captain. The letter refers to 'the factour, or the person that looks after the business of the Widow Behn,' suggesting Behn's marital status by this time and an involvement in the shipping business, and perhaps tying her to a Dutch or Hamburg merchant or the ship captain John Behn.<sup>10</sup> With plague so prevalent in England through the mid-1660s, 'Mr Behn' could well have expired by late 1665.

The records pick up again shortly after the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1665 with the well documented spying mission that Behn undertook as an agent of the English government. She was sent by Joseph Williamson, aide to Secretary of State Henry Bennett, Lord Arlington, a connection perhaps made through Thomas Killigrew, groom of the bedchamber to Charles II and patentee of the King's Company, one of the two London theatrical companies. Her sailing companions to Flanders included William Howard, Viscount Stafford, and his son John, whose names reappear in her spying letters, and later in her writings.<sup>11</sup>

Behn arrived in Bruges with her brother and probably two others in late July 1666 with a fourteen-point list, 'Memorialls for Mrs Affora,' prepared by the Secretary of State's office, containing specific charges to lure William

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Scot back to the English side with promises of a pardon and a considerable reward, and to gather information on the Dutch fleets and merchant ships and on possible operatives within the exiles living in Holland.<sup>12</sup> Her final extant letter is dated 26 December 1666, probably just before she returned to a London devastated by plague and fire.

The documents from her spying mission and several other surviving petitions afford the opportunity to hear the voice of Behn unfiltered by the literary modes and *personae* she later adopted.<sup>13</sup> From the beginning, we hear the voice of a young woman caught in an intrigue in which the spy-handlers at Whitehall could not keep their operatives in line or supply them with the means to perform their duties. Behn was shocked by the cost of living in Antwerp, the failure of Williamson's office to respond to her requests for assistance or for the speedy pardon of William Scot, one of the first promises she was given. Her problems were exacerbated by another English operative, Thomas Corney, who had been betrayed by William Scot the year before as Scot sought to ingratiate himself with Col. William Bampfield, a notorious turncoat in the service of the Dutch.<sup>14</sup> Behn and Scot met once, no more than twice, each fearful of crossing the border between Spanish Flanders, where Behn remained, and Holland, where Scot was by December in prison for debt. One month into her mission, Behn had already pawned some jewellery, but received no response to her increasingly urgent importunities first to Halsall, then to Killigrew, and finally to Arlington himself. By mid September, letters from her mother and 'S<sup>r</sup> thomas'<sup>15</sup> made Behn realize how deeply in trouble she was, and she implored Killigrew to 'beleeue w<sup>t</sup> you please: you shall find still this that how great a Child soeuer I am in other matters: I shall mind dilligently w<sup>t</sup> I am now about', and begging 'for christ his sake S<sup>r</sup> let me receaue no Ill opinion from his Maj:<sup>ty</sup> who would giue my poore life to serue him in neuer so little a degree'.<sup>16</sup>

Behn's last document from the Flanders mission preserved in the Public Record Office, dated 26 December 1666, pleads for permission and money to return to London. She had warned the Home Office of the Dutch intention to attack the fleet in the Thames, a warning that was dismissed, and her mission was a failure.<sup>17</sup> Several other documents in the Public Record Office indicate Behn's return to London on £150 borrowed from a Mr Botteler or Butler, probably one of the Duke of Ormond's retinue, and even more insistent petitions demand redress. One indicates that she was to be taken to debtors' prison the following day, yet there is no evidence that this warrant was executed or that Behn ever spent any time incarcerated.

Between 1667 and 1670, the paper trail diminishes, but does not disappear. London was slowly rebuilding after war, plague, and fire, and the theatres regained the popularity they had enjoyed between the return of Charles II in

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1660 and the devastation. Thomas Killigrew held one of the two patents for theatrical productions and directed the King's Company while Sir William Davenant held the patent for the Duke's Men. They vied through the early part of the decade to hire the most popular actors and attractive actresses, women having been allowed full participation in theatrical productions by order of the King, and then to have the newest theatres and the best stage machinery.

In the two years before the production of her first play in 1670, Behn seems to have been associated with Dryden and the Howards in Killigrew's King's Company, as scribe and perhaps as adapter of old plays, since the appetite for these revisions was voracious. There are few scribal copies of plays and prompt-books extant, but one of these, the prompt-book for Edward Howard's unsuccessful *A Change of Crownes*, may be in Behn's hand.<sup>18</sup> Her petitions and letters from Flanders show a clear hand and spelling sufficient to the scribal task, as does her later commonplace book.<sup>19</sup> Howard soon shifted to Davenant's company; Behn probably changed companies at the same time, since in the same year that she published her first play, she also wrote a dedicatory poem to Edward Howard for the publication of *The Six Day's Adventure*.

Her first staged work, *The Forc'd Marriage*, was quickly followed by *The Amorous Prince* (February 1671), the first definitely and the second probably serving her well with the third-night receipts that provided the playwright's remuneration. In 1672, she probably edited *The Covent Garden Drolery*, a compendium of popular songs, prologues, and epilogues from the theatre, additional evidence of her closeness to literary London.

Following the failure of her third play, *The Dutch Lover* (February 1673), Behn disappeared from the records for three years. We can speculate that she was travelling, perhaps again as an agent for the Crown, or that she had found protection with a lover. A recently recovered contemporary reference in Roger Morrice's 'Entering Book' suggests that Behn began a relationship with John Hoyle at about this time.<sup>20</sup> The bisexual Hoyle figures throughout Behn's writings. In an early piece, 'Our Cabal,' he appears aloof, accompanied by 'Mr Ed. Bed.,' whose description ('His Beauty Maid; but Man, his Mien') echoes the depiction of the androgynous 'fair Clarinda' in one of her most famous poems. Significantly her first dedication does not appear until her eighth play, *The Feign'd Curtizans*, with its fulsome praise of the real courtesan Nell Gwyn, suggesting that prior to this Behn had no need to court favour with patrons.

Behn returned to the stage by July 1676 with her only tragedy, *Abdellazer*, a brilliant revision of the early seventeenth-century play *Lust's Dominion*, perhaps by Dekker and others. Shortly thereafter came *The Town-Fopp*

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(September 1676) and, by March of the following year, her great success *The Rover*. With *The Rover*, Behn drew charges of plagiarism, since she drew heavily from *Thomaso*, an unproduced drama by her old spy-master and employer Thomas Killigrew, and she defended herself in a feisty postscript.

With the popularity of *The Rover*, Behn secured her theatrical reputation, but the times were not conducive to a prosperous theatre. In 1673, James, Duke of York and heir presumptive to the crown, made public his Catholicism and married the Catholic princess Mary of Modena. This second marriage raised fears that a male heir would displace his Protestant daughters, Mary and Anne, from the succession, and create a perpetual Catholic dynasty. Fears of this led, between 1678 and 1681, to parliamentary moves to exclude James from the succession and replace him by Charles II's eldest illegitimate son, James, Duke of Monmouth. With this political turmoil, Behn's dramas become increasingly political, satirizing the emerging anti-royalist Whigs as greedy, sexist 'cits', especially in her great London plays, *Sir Patient Fancy*, *The Roundheads*, and *The City-Heiress*. In these, Behn explores the recurrent themes of forced marriage between a handsome woman and the classic *senex amans*, revealing the hypocrisy of the puritanical, impotent old bourgeois merchant who would seek to block the rightful heir, always a loyalist cavalier, from his rightful possessions. In these plays, Behn explored issues of women's right of self-determination, the tyranny of patriarchy, and the use of masquerade and carnival to re-normalize the world. Behn's darker side also emerges in this period, most notably in 1681 with *The Second Part of The Rover*, which she dedicated to James, Duke of York, whom she had supported throughout the Exclusion Crisis.

In August 1682, Behn's attack on the Whigs and Monmouth in the Epilogue to *Romulus and Hersilia* led to a warrant for the arrest of Behn and Lady Slingsby (formerly Mary Lee), the actress who delivered the Epilogue. There is, however, no evidence of the warrant's execution, and the offending epilogue was published virtually unchanged early the following year with the play.

From August 1682 to early 1684, Behn disappeared from the scene, emerging to publish a prologue to the late Earl of Rochester's *Valentinian* in February 1685 and shortly thereafter her first published foray into fiction, the first part of the *Love-Letters between a Noble-Man and his Sister*. In the last four years of her life, Behn occupied herself predominantly with fiction, translation, and poetry, writing only four more plays, two of which were staged posthumously.<sup>21</sup>

In 1684, she published *Poems upon Several Occasions*, a major compendium of her pieces dating back as early as the 1670s. Two later collections, *Miscellany* in 1685 and a miscellany added to *Lycidus* in 1688, mix her poems

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with works by many others, including the Earl of Rochester, Thomas Otway, Sir George Etherege, the Earl of Dorset, Mrs Taylor, and Anne Wharton. The highly charged political events of the time gave opportunity for publishing poems on the death of Charles II, the mourning of Queen Catherine, the coronation of James II, Queen Mary of Modena's pregnancy and delivery, and at the very end of her life poems to Sir Roger L'Estrange, Gilbert Burnet, and the new Queen Mary II, daughter of James II, who, with her husband William of Orange, ascended the throne on her father's exile.

Behn's fiction has the same political and satirical edginess as her plays. *Love-Letters between a Noble-Man and his Sister* is a remarkable *roman à clef* focusing simultaneously on Monmouth's rebellion and the incestuous relationship between Ford, Lord Grey of Werke, and his wife's sister, and written in three parts as the real-life story was unfolding. In 1688, with *The Fair Jilt* and *Oroonoko*, and a translation of *Agnes de Castro*, Behn's development of the narrator's voice, one of her major contributions to the evolution of the novel, gained full maturity. In some of the narrator's self-reflexive assertions, we may be hearing Behn's voice telling us that she was once intended for a convent, that she visited Venice, that she was sent by Charles II into Flanders as a spy, that she witnessed the slave rebellion in Surinam, that she donated some South American flies to 'His Majesty's *Antiquaries*' and brought back to London Indian feathers used in a production of *The Indian Queen*.<sup>22</sup>

While in most of her poetry and fiction, her voice must be seen as filtered through a *persona*, we can hear some of her voice in her prefaces and dedications and in her political poems. With the failure of her third play, *The Dutch Lover*, Behn retaliated with a detailed preface to the 'Good, Sweet, Honey Sugar-Candied Reader'. Here, between complaints about the staging of her play, she humorously limns the playhouse fop who condemned her play, 'God damn him, for it was a womans'. In this same piece, Behn gives some insight into her literary theory, preferring Shakespeare to Jonson, and noting that plays are meant to entertain rather than educate. Another brief insight into Behn's literary models comes in the dedication 'To Lysander' of *Seneca Unmasqued*, where she praises 'that unstudied, and undesigned way of writing (tho not so approved of by the Learned) which is used by a Courtier who has Wit, as that of the late Lord Rochester and present Lord Mulgrave'. After praising 'those little chance things of Sir Carr. Scroope', Behn delivers her highest praise for the 'Charming and Incomparable Mr Dryden'. Such moments of personal intervention in her writing are rare.

Addressing Henry Howard, later Duke of Norfolk, in the dedication of *The City-Heiress* in 1682, Behn praises him for voting 'Not guilty' in the trial



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of his uncle, William Howard, Viscount Stafford, a Catholic lord executed during the height of the Popish Plot, the same William Howard who with his son John had accompanied her to Flanders at the start of her spying mission. In her dialogue 'Pastoral to Mr. Stafford', printed in 1685, Behn praises Stafford's son John for a translation from Virgil, but devotes close to a quarter of the poem to the execution of Stafford (I, 64). Again, in Spring 1688, the year before her death, in her *Poem to Sir Roger L'Estrange on His Third Part of His History of the Times: Relating to the Death of Sir Edmund Bury-Godfrey*, she deplores the frenzy that led to the Popish Plot and openly mourns the death of the Catholic Stafford, who 'like a God, dy'd to redeem *Our Faith*' (I, 82). Shortly thereafter, the dedication to *Oroonoko* to Lord Maitland contained a passage that almost certainly linked Behn to Catholicism, a passage that was deleted while the work was still in press, surviving in one known copy (III, p. 55 and note). To Henry Howard, Duke of Norfolk, she devotes a section of the *Pindarick Poem on the Happy Coronation of His most Sacred Majesty James II*, calling him 'Mæcena of my Muse, my Patron Lord' (I, p. 217).

According to the documentary record, the last four years of her life were marked by poverty and illness. In August 1685, she pledged the proceeds of her next play as collateral for a debt of £6 she owed Zachary Baggs,<sup>23</sup> and she also begged Jacob Tonson for an additional £5 for her *Poems upon Several Occasions*. When she sent her elegy on the poet Waller to Abigail Waller, his daughter-in-law, she appended a letter with a postscript noting her 'Lame hand scarce able to hold a pen.'<sup>24</sup> Impelled by poverty and defying her increasing debilitation, Behn saw her greatest literary output in the period between 1684 and her death.

The difficulties Behn encountered as a woman writer also impinge, especially toward the end of her life. In *The Luckey Chance*, she tells the dedicatee, Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester, that this play is '*the Product of a Heart and Pen, that always faithfully serv'd that Royal Cause*', while in the Preface, she answers charges of bawdry, comparing her scenes to other plays by contemporaries, and concluding that 'such Masculine Strokes in me, must not be allow'd'. In this same Preface, she notes that she will be 'kinder to my Brothers of the Pen, than they have been to a defenceless Woman' (VII, pp. 215–17). Although she had been charged with plagiarism and bawdry, Behn, in fact, was less vilified than most of her contemporaries, especially Dryden. As she grew more famous, the hacks of the period attacked. In the widely circulated poem 'The Session of Poets', Behn is mocked for appealing to Apollo for the laurels, with allusion to her 'Black Ace' (pudenda) and her advanced age.<sup>25</sup> Alexander Radcliffe alleged that a '*Greys Inn Lawyer*', her 'Friend in Bosom', either John Hoyle or Edward Ravenscroft, was the author



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of her plays.<sup>26</sup> Thomas Shadwell denounced Otway as her Pimp, while ‘An Epistle to Julian’ called her a harlot plagued by ‘Poverty, Poetry, Pox’.<sup>27</sup> The hack Robert Gould, nettled by her success, is probably the author of the oft-quoted lines denouncing ‘*Sappho*, Famous for her Gout and Guilt’: ‘For *Punk* and *Poesie* agree so pat, / You cannot well be *this*, and not be *that*’.<sup>28</sup> In ‘The Journey to Parnassus’, another classic ‘sessions-of-poets’ poem, Apollo rejects her for her lasciviousness and her plagiarism, adding that ‘since her Works had neither Witt enough for a Man, nor Modesty enough for a Woman, she was to be look’d upon as an Hermaphrodite, & consequently not fit to enjoy the benefits & Priviledges of either Sex, much less of this Society.’<sup>29</sup>

Yet the commonplace book she kept with others between 1685 and her death shows that these attacks are gentle compared to the routine vilifications of courtiers and actors of the time.<sup>30</sup> And many of her contemporary writers, among them Thomas Otway, Nahum Tate, Jacob Tonson, and Thomas Creech, wrote in her support, and Nathaniel Lee mourned her death in a broadside. John Dryden, who published, and praised, her paraphrase ‘Oenone to Paris’ in his *Ovid’s Epistles* in 1680, wrote a prologue and epilogue to *The Widdow Ranter*, recalling Behn’s ability to portray love and asking the audience to accept this ‘orphan’ play of a dead writer.<sup>31</sup>

In one of her earliest statements in her own voice, in 1678 in her preface ‘To the Reader’ to *Sir Patient Fancy*, Behn described herself as one ‘forced to write for Bread and not ashamed to owne it’ (vi, p. 5). The same pride and unflinching self-understanding come through in all her direct statements. As she was dying, she completed a translation of the last book of Abraham Cowley’s *Six Books of Plants*. At the point that Cowley is considering the laurel tree, the leaves of which adorn the brows of conquerors and poets, Behn allows her voice to break through, acknowledging the break with the marginal notation ‘The Translatress in her own Person speaks’ (1, p. 325). Noting the fame of Katherine Philips, ‘Orinda’, as a poet, Behn seeks to be honoured with her, when she interpolates:

Among that number, do not me disdain,  
Me, the most humble of that glorious Train.  
I by a double right thy Bounties claim,  
Both from my Sex, and in *Apollo’s* Name:  
Let me with *Sappho* and *Orinda* be  
Oh ever Sacred Nymph, adorn’d by thee;  
And give my Verses Immortality.

Despite attempts in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to damage her reputation and denigrate her literary importance, the works of Aphra

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Behn are read more widely and presented in theatres more often today than at any time except during her life. She wrote about what concerned her – politics, sexual freedom, imbalances in the power structure. She spoke to her late seventeenth-century audiences with power and vigour in a voice no less powerful and vigorous than she addresses us with today. That is her major accomplishment.

NOTES

- 1 'Roundtable', in *Aphra Behn (1640–1689): Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity*, ed. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Bernard Dhuicq, and Guyonne Leduc (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), p. 282.
- 2 Todd, p. 9.
- 3 Duffy, *The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn 1640–1689* (London: Cape, 1977), p. 20; Jane Jones, 'New Light on the Background and Early Life of Aphra Behn', in *Aphra Behn Studies*, pp. 310–20; Todd, p. 14.
- 4 British Library MS Harl. 7588.
- 5 Quoted in Todd, p. 13. The manuscript is in the Folger Library.
- 6 *Oroonoko* in *Works*, III, pp. 97, 111. The play to which Behn refers, *The Younger Brother*, was produced and published posthumously.
- 7 Harrison Platt, 'Astrea and Celadon: An Untouched Portrait of Aphra Behn', *PMLA*, 49 (1934), 544–59.
- 8 Reprinted in Joanna Lipking's Norton Critical edition of *Oroonoko* (New York, 1997), pp. 101–3.
- 9 Henry A. Hargreaves, 'A Case for Mr. Behn', *Notes and Queries*, 207 (1962), 203–5.
- 10 James Fitzmaurice, 'Aphra Behn and the Abraham's Sacrifice Case', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 56 (Spring 1993), 319–26.
- 11 It is not clear how Behn came to make these court connections. The extant manuscripts of her spying mission, preserved in the Public Record Office, have been published by W. J. Cameron in *New Light on Aphra Behn* (Auckland: University of Auckland Press, 1961).
- 12 PRO SP 29/172, no. 81.1
- 13 In addition to the documents reproduced by Cameron, Peter Beal calendars the remaining PRO petitions and other Behn manuscripts in the second volume of his *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (London, 1987), pp. 1–6.
- 14 This is the same Bampffield involved with Anne Murray, later Lady Halkett, in her attempts to assist James, Duke of York, to escape from England in 1648.
- 15 Sir Thomas has not yet been identified. Behn implies a closeness to him, adding that he 'is selldom in towne'. There is the possibility that Behn refers to Thomas Colepepper.
- 16 PRO SP 29/172, no. 14. Quoted in Cameron, pp. 61–4.
- 17 The Dutch did, in fact, sail up the Thames and destroy much of the British fleet in June 1667.
- 18 This manuscript is currently under study by Mary Ann O'Donnell.
- 19 For an examination of Bod. MS Firth c.16, see, Mary Ann O'Donnell, 'A Verse Miscellany of Aphra Behn: Bodleian Library MS Firth c.16', in *English*