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Abstract
Over the past twenty-five years, revisionist studies of Aphra Behn have illuminated the political subtexts and endeavours in her work. Several scholars have reconciled her Toryism with her feminism, on behalf of modern readers, who may find that type of political juxtaposition harder to comprehend than Behn's contemporaries might have. In the 1990s, Ros Ballaster and Toni Bowers drew on the work of Susan Staves to illuminate how Behn's amatory fictions register contemporary anxiety about the credibility and endurance of oaths of allegiance. More recently, surveys by Janet Todd and Derek Hughes have further contextualized Behn within key Restoration moments (the Popish Plot, the emergence of Whig and Tory partisanship during the Exclusion crisis, and the Glorious Revolution). As efforts to understand Behn's beliefs and constraints move forward, Behn scholarship must better acknowledge the significance of the Low Countries in her work and the importance of that region to the murky political waters that she and her contemporaries navigated.

Keywords
Aphra Behn, Anglo-Dutch politics, Toryism, feminism, oath of allegiance, Restoration

Cover page footnote
Contributor's note: Rebecca S. Wolsk is an independent scholar from Washington, D.C.; her work has appeared in several scholarly databases, and in *Brain, Child* magazine.

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Rebecca S. Wolsk

Over the past twenty-five years, revisionist studies of Aphra Behn have illuminated the political subtexts and endeavours in her work. Several scholars have reconciled her Toryism with her feminism, on behalf of modern readers, who may find that type of political juxtaposition harder to comprehend than Behn's contemporaries might have. In the 1990s, Ros Ballaster and Toni Bowers drew on the work of Susan Staves to illuminate how Behn's amatory fictions register contemporary anxiety about the credibility and endurance of oaths of allegiance. More recently, surveys by Janet Todd and Derek Hughes have further contextualized Behn within key Restoration moments (the Popish Plot, the emergence of Whig and Tory partisanship during the Exclusion crisis, and the Glorious Revolution). As efforts to understand Behn's beliefs and constraints move forward, Behn scholarship must better acknowledge the significance of the Low Countries in her work and the importance of that region to the murky political waters that she and her contemporaries navigated.[1]

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1 See Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), esp. 78–79; Susan Staves, *Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); Toni O'Shaughnessy Bowers, "Sex, Lies, and Invisibility: Amatory Fiction from the Restoration to Mid-Century," *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. John Richetti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 63–67; Derek Hughes, *The Theatre of Aphra Behn* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Janet Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (London: Pandora, 2000). Todd recommended the study of Behn's relationship to France and the Low Countries during the 1999 International Conference on Behn. See "The Roundtable Discussion," *Aphra Behn (1640–1689): Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity*, ed. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Bernard Dhuicq, and Guyonne Leduc (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000). Jacqueline Pearson has recently highlighted Behn's striking interest in Europe, aligning it with her Toryism in "Dutch Lovers and Other Europeans in Aphra Behn's Comedies" (paper presented at the Colloque International at the Sorbonne, Paris, France, July 2003), 1. I must thank Jacqueline Pearson for

Before the Protestant Dutch stadholder William III replaced his Catholic uncle and father-in-law James II as king of England during the winter of 1688–89, England and the Dutch United Provinces fought against each other in three wars (1652–54, 1665–67, and 1672–74). Revisionist critics, who otherwise contextualize the "political Behn" so astutely, have overlooked the contemporary importance of the Dutch settings and the Dutch protagonist, Octavio, in Behn's three-part novel *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister. Love-Letters* criticism marginalizes Octavio because he is seen as a relatively apolitical, amatory saint in contrast to the historically based, transgressive characters of Silvia, Philander, and Caesario. In repoliticizing Octavio, his hodgepodge of contradictory characteristics (that is, aristocratic republican, "papist" Dutchman) simultaneously activates and disproves Restoration-era "Hollandophobia." This complex deployment of anti-Dutch tropes supported Behn's overarching effort to titillate and Tory-fy her readers.[2]

Octavio's aspect as rivalrous suitor bears provocative similarities to suitor pairings in her more overtly Hollandophobic texts: *The Dutch Lover*, and the untitled epistolary tale of Vander Albert and Van Bruin from her posthumously published memoirs.[3] In *Oroonoko*, allusions to the Dutch threat to James II parallel the abrasion of aristocratic power structures by mercantile power structures. In *The Fair Jilt* and *The History of the Nun*, anti-Dutch valence accompanies the Netherlandic

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sharing this conference paper with me prior to publication. For a fictionalized portrait of Behn that emphasizes her Anglo-Dutch context, see Jane Stevenson, *The Shadow King* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003).

2 Simon Schama uses the term "Hollandophobia" in *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987). For foundational discussions of this dual purpose, see Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 29, 69–84, 113, and William B. Warner, "Licensed by the Market: Behn's *Love Letters* as Serial Entertainment," *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684–1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 45–87.

3 The Vander Albert/Van Bruin narrative appears within the Antwerp section of *The History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn. Written by One of the Fair Sex*, in *All the Histories and Novels Written by the Late Ingenious Mrs. Behn, Entire in One Volume*, 4th ed. (London: R. Wellington, 1699), http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/printedbooksNew/index.cfm?TextID=behn_works&PagePosition=3 (accessed 24 August 2004), xv–xxx. References are to this edition. Critics have cautiously attributed the Antwerp section of the memoirs to Behn: see William J. Cameron, *New Light on Aphra Behn* (Auckland: University of Auckland Press, 1961; reprint, Darby, PA: Arden Library, 1978), 87–100; Todd, *Secret Life*, 110; Robert Adams Day, "Aphra Behn's First Biography," *Studies in Bibliography* 22 (1969), 229–31, 239–40. Day speculates that Behn composed unpublished short fictions like this Antwerp tale between 1682 and her death.

convent setting and functions as a diversionary tactic. This diversion enables Behn to hedge her bets with regard to James II's extremism, while proffering lucrative "desiring nun" stories.[4]

At the outset, Behn's geographic definition of Dutch identity was broader than our own, encompassing both the Dutch Republic (officially known as the United Provinces) in the Protestant northern Netherlands, and the Spanish Netherlands in the Catholic south.[5] So, for example, the boorish title character in her play *The Dutch Lover*, Haunce van Ezel, is actually from the southern province of Flanders.[6]

Historical Background: Behn's Anglo-Dutch Context

England and the United Provinces—despite their shared Protestantism, concern about Louis XIV's Catholic expansionism, and republicanism during the Interregnum—sparred over maritime disputes during the seventeenth century, especially after the Dutch surpassed English sea trade in the 1640s. England had superior military might, but the United Provinces were an economic miracle: their financial success surpassed mercantilist expectations.[7] Several English economic and political observers, including economic theorist Roger Coke, Sir Josiah Child of the East India Company, and

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4 Todd, introduction, Behn, *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, ed. Todd (London: Penguin, 1996), xv. References are to this edition. On the financial rewards of such tales, see Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 100; Todd, *Secret Life*, 369.

5 The "United Provinces" was the official name of the republic, 1579–1795. Holland was its most significant province. Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), v, 9. During this period, Louis XIV's forces occupied parts of the Spanish Netherlands, including the 1678 annexation of Ypres (the setting of *The History of the Nun*). For a map and dates of these French conquests, see Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 782.

6 See II.ii.83–87 of *The Dutch Lover* in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Todd, 7 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992–96), 5:180. References are to this edition. When A.T. van Deursen discusses the term "Dutch" in his overview of seventeenth-century Dutch culture, he avers that it must refer "only to the Republic, not to Antwerp or Brussels." At the same time, he recognizes the integral contribution of the southern provinces to what he labels Dutch: "it was a culture with a debt to the inhabitants of the old Seventeen Provinces, and not just from the new seven." "The Dutch Republic, 1588–1780," *History of the Low Countries*, ed. J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts, trans. James C. Kennedy (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 170.

7 Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 714; Todd, *Secret Life*, 76–78. Jack S. Levy, "The Rise and Decline of the Anglo-Dutch Rivalry, 1609–1689," *Great Power Rivalries*, ed. William R. Thompson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 173; Dwight Christopher Gabbard, "The World in Reverse: Sex Roles and Holland in the Seventeenth-Century Imagination" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1999), 253.

ambassador Sir William Temple, studied and disseminated information about Dutch methods in hopes of improving the industrial and commercial prospects of their own country.[8] Of course, Dutch wealth also attracted intense envy and criticism. Mercantilist Thomas Mun railed against the Dutch for fortifying themselves at English expense in his tract *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade*, while mariner Tobias Gentleman condemned the Dutch "usurpation on our Fishery" in *England's Way to Win Wealth*. The concomitant Dutch modernization of gender roles worried English "domestic-patriarchalists."[9]

In the 1660s, English hostility towards the Dutch soared, and pamphlets such as *Dutch Boare Dissected; or, a Description of Hogg-Land* (1664) reflect this animus.[10] Lampooners portrayed the Dutch as boorish, drunken, uncivil, phlegmatic, and unscrupulously avaricious. Simon Schama has suggested that the Dutch Republic's jealous monarchist neighbours expressed their own materialist longings through condemnations of Dutch rapacity.[11] Hollandophobic slurs also reveal England's anxiety about its own political changeability, as when the quintessential anti-Dutch pamphleteer, Owen Felltham, declared:

> 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 commer without the least remembrance that you ere were there.[12]

According to Felltham, even the geographic terrain of the Low Countries ("the great Bog of *Europe*"; "an universal Quagmire")

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8 K.H.D. Haley, *The British and the Dutch: Political and Cultural Relations through the Ages* (London: George Philip, 1988), 103, 123; and Gabbard, 252–74.

9 Schama, 256; Levy, 176–77, 182. For information on Gentleman's pamphlet see John Keymer, *Original Papers Regarding Trade in England and Abroad*, ed. M.F. Lloyd Prichard (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1967), 7–9. See also Gabbard, 73–82, whose discussion of "domestic patriarchalism" draws on Michael McKeon, "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660–1760," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28:3 (1995), 295–322.

10 Todd notes that Behn included a similar document in her *Miscellany* (1685) (*Secret Life*, 452n25).

11 See Schama, 221–88, 662–64n; he compares Hollandophobia to anti-Semitism; and Haley, *British and the Dutch*, 107–23. Haley generally downplays Anglo-Dutch tension in this book.

12 [Owen Felltham], *A Brief Character of the Low-Countries Under the States* (London: H.S., 1659), 18–19. Citations from *Poor Robins Character of a Dutch-man* (and from Behn's memoirs) also substitute "s" for the obsolete "*ſ*."

exudes instability.[13] The tendency to denigrate the Dutch Republic and its citizenry by attacking Dutch "amphibious geography" was a Hollandophobic hallmark.[14]

Anglo-Dutch enmity directly affected Behn's life. During the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1666, she travelled to Antwerp at the request of Charles II's intelligence officials, who had asked her to question dissident and spy William Scot about the community of exiled conspirators who had found refuge in the United Provinces.[15] Thomas Killigrew and Lord Arlington, the Secretary of State, chose Behn after learning of her dalliance with Scot a few years earlier. As a royalist spy, Behn would have been rankled by the United Provinces serving as a refuge for enemies of the English monarchy, and during the Third Anglo-Dutch War she penned an arguably Hollandophobic play entitled *The Dutch Lover*, which was performed in February 1673.[16]

By the end of 1673, Hollandophobia was beginning to subside. While an "unusual conjunction between the City of London and influential courtiers," including the king's brother James, had clamoured for the Second Anglo-Dutch War, the Third Anglo-Dutch War was

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13 [Felltham], 1.

14 As Schama puts it, "Watery land or land-from-water was in their [foreign critics'] view as much of an anomaly as the political artifice which had been constructed on its infirm structure ... . That sovereignty could not be built on silt was a refrain echoed by all those who meant to discount Dutch nationality" (262–63).

15 Cameron recounts Behn's time in Antwerp and provides a transcription of the letters she sent back to Whitehall (18–86). The tenor of Behn's repeated requests for financial compensation from her employers at Whitehall makes reading these letters painful. For detailed, engaging chronicles of Behn's spy mission, see Angeline Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn* (New York: Dial Press, 1980), 88–112; and Todd, *Secret Life*, 78–115.

16 See Gabbard, 31–36, and Todd, *Secret Life*, 77, 84. Todd asserts Behn "had no love for the Dutch who, apart from any unkindness on her Antwerp mission, stood for what she most deplored in society: mercenariness, acquisitiveness and vulgarity" and suggests that anti-Dutch feeling informed Behn's creation of the idiotic Haunce in *The Dutch Lover* (*Secret Life*, 165). I take a more agnostic stance on the question of whether or not Behn was personally Hollandophobic, especially in light of Pearson's contention that even Behn's most negative representations of Dutchness have subversive potential. See Pearson, "Slave Princes and Lady Monsters: Gender and Ethnic Difference in the Work of Aphra Behn," *Aphra Behn Studies*, ed. Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 219–34. In *The History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn*, the cryptically named biographer "One of the Fair Sex" refers to Behn's marriage to a man of "*Dutch* Extraction" (iv), but this biographical detail lends negligible insight into Behn's private attitude towards the Dutch, since Mr Behn may have been German. The term "Dutch" connoted "many nationalities from German to Flemish. 'Behn' is a north German rather than a Dutch name" (Todd, *Secret Life*, 67).

initiated in 1672 by Charles II, in partnership with Louis XIV.[17] Parliament and most English subjects now feared French expansionism more than Dutch republican Protestantism, resenting what they viewed as French exploitation of the English fleet.[18] At this time, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, who would later head the Whigs, and his fellow Country Party member Andrew Marvell distanced themselves from the anti-Dutch sentiments that both had previously so prominently expressed.[19]

For the rest of the 1670s, and through the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, Tories expressed more Hollandophobia than their countrymen.[20] William Speck's survey of the British reaction to the United Provinces focuses on this Whig-Tory division:

> The tories, who drew their strength primarily from the gentry and Anglican clergy, advocated divine right monarchy and religious uniformity. They were consequently held to be impressed by the example of France. The whigs, who appealed more to the commercial classes, upheld resistance theories based either on the notion of an ancient constitution of mixed monarchy, or on some form of contract theory, and supported religious toleration. Whigs were regarded as admirers of the Dutch Republic.[21]

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17 Haley, *British and the Dutch*, 95, 102.

18 See Steven C.A. Pincus, "From Butterboxes to Wooden Shoes: The Shift in English Popular Sentiment from Anti-Dutch to Anti-French in the 1670s," *Historical Journal* 38:2 (1995), 333–61; Keith Feiling, *A History of the Tory Party: 1640–1714* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 148. On the significance of the pro-Dutch pamphlet *England's Appeal*, see Haley, *William of Orange and the English Opposition, 1672–74* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 88–111; and Gabbard, 17, 210. Israel concedes that anti-Dutch rivalry ebbed at the close of the Third Anglo-Dutch War but points out that tension persisted through the 1680s, so that "by 1688 Anglo-Dutch economic rivalry was thus a deeply entrenched, universally familiar feature of English and Dutch political life and attitudes." "England, the Dutch, and the Struggle for Mastery of World Trade in the Age of the Glorious Revolution, 1682–1702," *The World of William and Mary: Anglo-Dutch Perspectives on the Revolution of 1688–89*, ed. Dale Hoak and Mordechai Feingold (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 75.

19 On Shaftesbury's shift from his anti-Dutch *Delenda est Carthago* speech in February 1673 to backtracking in the autumn of 1673, see Feiling, 151n4, and Haley, *William of Orange and the English Opposition*, 88–90. On Marvell's shift from the 1653 poem "The Character of Holland" to the 1677 tract *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government*, see Gabbard, 135–39 and Haley, *William of Orange*, 59.

20 Gabbard, 18. T.N. Corns, W.A. Speck, and J.A. Downie, "Archetypal Mystification: Polemic and Reality in English Political Literature, 1640–1750," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 7:3 (1982), 17.

21 William Speck, "Britain and the Dutch Republic," *A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective*, ed. Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 193. Speck outlines seventeenth-century English vacillation between Dutch and French ideological models, calling 1688 the "triumph of whig over tory ideology"

Similarly, Douglas Coombs asserts that although Tories and Whigs alike admired and wished to emulate Dutch commercial practices, "as an explanation of Dutch prosperity the Whig might point to the 'frugality' and 'parsimony' of the inhabitants, where the Tory would speak of their 'avarice' and 'greed.'"[22] In addition to the Tories' distaste for Dutch republicanism, they could not stand what they derogatorily referred to as "Dutch divinity": "By this term they sought to convey their abhorrence both of the Calvinistic religion of the Dutch and also, curiously enough, of the materialistic irreligion which was for them so notorious a feature of Dutch life."[23] Another source of anti-Dutch sentiment involved the charge that Dutch society was an unpleasantly egalitarian hodgepodge.[24] Behn's Vander Albert/Van Bruin tale sarcastically alludes to this reputation in its description of two Dutchmen "of very different Ages (I was going to say Degrees too, but I remember there are no Degrees in *Holland*)" (xv).

In the 1680s, Behn and her Tory compatriots continued to resent the Dutch for harbouring and assisting anti-Stuart exiles, most notably the first earl of Shaftesbury and the Rye House plotters.[25] As Susan Staves has pointed out, however, "it cannot be stressed too often how frequently practical Whigs and practical Tories agreed on important issues, how ideology shifted with the new illuminations of new circumstances, and how fluid political alliances were throughout the Restoration."[26] In the context of thawed Anglo-Dutch relations after

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(173–74, 194).

22 Douglas Coombs, *The Conduct of the Dutch: British Opinion and the Dutch Alliance during the War of the Spanish Succession* (The Hague and Achimota: Martinus Nijhoff for the University College of Ghana Publications Board, 1958), 14.

23 Coombs, 11.

24 Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 2.

25 Speck, 176. Peter Earle recounts how the rebels received funding and shelter from Dutch sources, especially in Amsterdam, where "the city was traditionally republican and Calvinist and thus had a natural antipathy to King James both as a king and as a papist." *Monmouth's Rebels: The Road to Sedgemoor, 1685* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1977), 68. See also Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom: British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688–1689* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 254. For Behn's references to Dutch complicity with Whig rebels in *Love-Letters*, see 131, 262, 403, 409.

26 Staves, 77. Thomas Osborne, the first Earl of Danby, is but one example of this fluidity: Whigs could not stand him, and he galvanized their opposition from 1674 to 1678, but he was also anti-French, close friends with Sir William Temple, and helped arrange the 1677 marriage of William and Mary, which Charles II hoped would ease Protestant concerns

the Third Anglo-Dutch War, Behn seems to have attended to the fact that blatant Hollandophobia was out of fashion. Anti-Dutch allusions in *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, *The Fair Jilt*, and *The History of the Nun* operate more subtly than in the earlier *Dutch Lover*.

Critical Neglect of *Love-Letters*'s Hollandophobic Aspect

With *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, Behn fictionalized an adulterous affair between prominent Whig conspirator Ford Lord Grey and Henrietta Berkeley, his sister-in-law (referred to in seventeenth-century parlance as his sister). The scandal was politically charged because Grey and his colleagues actively opposed the Stuart monarchy, most notably through their 1683 Rye House Plot and the Monmouth Rebellion two years later. The serial publication (1684–87) of Behn's three-volume narrative enabled her to update readers on the contemporaneous scandal as it transpired, though she self-protectively altered historical particulars and published it anonymously.[27] In addition to disguising England as France, she expanded the amount of time that the exiled lovers spent in the Low Countries. She also added a Dutch rival, Octavio, to the fact-based affair between Silvia (Berkeley) and Philander (Grey).

For more than a decade, nearly all critics of this novel have offered nuanced readings of the rakish Silvia and Philander, while summarily describing Octavio as Silvia's virtuous victim. Behn's decision to make Octavio Dutch at a time when England felt threatened by the Dutch Republic compels the correction of the usual two-dimensional, trusting appraisals of his character. Character flaws drawn from Hollandophobic logic and lore significantly influence Behn's characterization of the dazzlingly affluent, subtly threatening Octavio. Although my reinterpretation of him highlights his flaws, it would be inaccurately simplistic to argue that we should replace the current reading of Octavio (simple, good man who resists corruption) with an opposing view (devious man whose sneakiness validates anti-Dutch stereotypes). Instead, Behn Hollandophobically compromises "our young Dutch *Hero*" (168) not for bigotry's sake but because the conflation of Octavio's courtly vulnerability with republicanism and mercantile wealth promotes her championship of monarchism and aristocracy.

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about Stuart familial ties to Catholicism (Feiling, 164; Todd, *Secret Life*, 222).

27 Todd, *Love-Letters*, xi–xv, 3. Warner asserts the importance of *Love-Letters*'s serial publication in his analysis of the novel's "repetitive but variant" plots and changeful characters (45–87).

From *Love-Letters*'s Tory perspective, Behn's "French" (that is, English) protagonists, and her English readers, are behind enemy lines during the stay in the Low Countries. The narrator attributes Silvia's increasing materialism to Dutch infection:

> in that Climate, the Air Naturally breeds Spirits avaritious, and much inclines 'em to the Love of Mony, which they will gain at any price or hazard, and all this discourse to *Silvia* was but to incline the revengeful listening Beauty to admit of the Addresses of *Octavio*, because she knew he wou'd make her fortune. (220–21)

Silvia similarly defames the Dutch climate when she mockingly attributes Octavio's awkward courtship style to his nationality:

> Your thick foggy air breeds *Loves* too dull and heavy for noble flights ... . The Flemish Boy wants arrows keen enough for hearts like mine, and is a Bungler in his Art, too lasie and remiss, rather a heavy *Bachus* than a *Cupid*, a Bottle sends him to his Bed of Moss, where he sleeps hard, and never dreams of *Venus*. (142–43)

Todd's footnote to this passage suggests that Behn refers to Cupid as a "Flemish boy" because contemporary producers of emblem books from the Low Countries prominently featured him.[28] This passage echoes the slurs of anti-Dutch pamphleteers. For example, in the vitriolic *Poor Robins Character of a Dutch-Man*, preoccupation with alcohol is linked to the pamphlet's explicit subject, a Dutchman's ingratitude: "to perswade a *Dutch man* to thankfulness, is almost as hard a task as to disswade him from his dearest delight *Brandy*, that Liquor which he accounts of more then the Poets do of *Helicon*." Behn may, in fact, have borrowed from this very pamphlet. "Poor Robin" claims that Dutchmen let murderers go free: "though he [the "*Dutch man*"] kill you, they will be so far from stopping him, that with one voice they will cry, *Lope Scellum, Lope*, which is in *English, Run thief, run*, a very fit appellation for them."[29] This idea appears almost verbatim in *Love-Letters*, after a scuffle between Octavio and his uncle,

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28 Todd, *Love-Letters*, 142.

29 [Poor Robin], *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 commited on the English at Amboyna, Polaroon, and other Islands in the East Indies* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1672), 3. References to a Dutch love of drink were not always Hollandophobic. From the Dutch perspective, "under certain circumstances ... smoking and drinking, so far from being signposts on the way to self-destruction, had actually become familiar characteristics of the national culture—mutually shared manners by which the Dutch recognized their common identity" (Schama, 200). Schama finds that seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters frequently depicted "drunken sleep" (208).

Sebastian, ends with the old man's accidental death:

> And it being natural in *Holland* to cry, *Lope Schellum,* that is, Run Rogue, to him that is alive, and who has kill'd another; and for every Man to set a helping Hand to bear him out of Danger, thinking it too much that one's already dead: I say, this being the Nature of the People, they never pursu'd the Murderers or fled Persons. (305)

The narrator's remarks in this passage convey more than the Hollandophobic notion that Dutch society is immoral. The anecdote also challenges the Restoration Whig's view of the United Provinces as a refuge by suggesting that no one is safe in a place where criminals are allowed to run free.

Behn debunks the Whiggish "United Provinces as Refuge" paradigm in *Love-Letters*. She has the States of Holland issue a decree ordering Philander to leave just after he and Silvia have arrived (129).[30] Philander appeals to Octavio, a member of the States, casting Octavio as the sole source of protection in a hostile environment: "a Life whose only refuge is *Octavio*'s goodness" (131). Philander's plea foreshadows the frequency with which the protagonists will face imprisonment in Holland. Agents of the States arrest and lock up Octavio and Silvia, for example, after Philander's servant Brilljard accuses Octavio of treason (262–64). Later, in another plot twist, the States imprison Silvia (282). Right after her release, she proceeds towards de facto imprisonment by Octavio's boorish Uncle Sebastian, who casts the confinement as a refuge from his barbarous countrymen: "*least that Innocence should not be sufficient to guard you from the Outrage of a People approaching to Savages. I begg, for your own Security, not mine, that you will make this House your Sanctuary*" (287–88).[31]

Todd observes a darkening mood after part 1 of *Love-Letters*, attributing it to a shift from romance to intrigue and from "assumed

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30 The States of Holland dominated the Dutch Republic's States General, a congress comprised of representatives from the seven voting provinces. For information about governmental structure, see Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 276–306.

31 The Dutch authorities never imprison Philander, despite his role as a conspirator, and this irony reflects historic reality. Richard Greaves recounts that in July 1683, the English demanded that Dutch authorities banish the Duke of Monmouth and Lord Grey. Although the States of Holland and Utrecht called for the conspirators' arrest, the order was "apparently only pro forma" and "perhaps more representative of popular Dutch feeling was the Utrecht bailiff who left his town rather than arrest [conspirator Robert] Ferguson" (255–56). Conceivably, Behn included this historical fact in *Love-Letters* as a subtle, Hollandophobically rooted criticism of a justice system in which traitors get away with their offences.

sincerity" to "insincerity and artifice."[32] William Warner registers part 2 as "a space of relative equality and horizontal affiliation in which love problems develop out of the rivalry of equals for the thing each desires."[33] The shifts that Warner and Todd sense might relate to the novel's concurrent geographic shift: part 1 of *Love-Letters* is set in France (that is, England); parts 2 and 3 are almost entirely set in the Low Countries. The ominousness and competitiveness after part 1 can also be attributed to the Hollandophobia that pervades parts 2 and 3.

Critics of this novel only briefly mention its Dutch setting. Perhaps they infer that Behn's choice of setting was merely dictated by the story's historic background: Grey and Berkeley, like other Whig exiles, sought refuge in the United Provinces. When we consider the Restoration-era significance of Dutchness, however, we recognize why Behn's Netherlandic settings were politically and financially advantageous. Susan Staves has observed that playwrights in the mid-1680s favoured settings

> where there were no kings and queens at all, only senates, assemblies, councils, and executive officers of various kinds ... . If there were no monarch, there could be no loyalty to pure divine right theory ... . [D]ivine right theory is not very congenial to drama. Too extreme a reverence for kings is likely to make dramatists represent them as faultless and to offer no plots except static harmony or rebellion from motiveless malignity.[34]

The United Provinces' reputation as "a Country of much Freedom" (126) made it a particularly felicitous backdrop for a scandalous plot, because it afforded its wilful characters more room to really get into trouble. *Love-Letters* argues that without the governing influence of monarchy, love has free rein to wreak havoc.[35] As I explore further in

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32 Todd, *Secret Life*, 343; Todd, *Love-Letters*, xvi. Todd also observes that "instead of the pastoral world of part 1, where letters were hidden in baskets of strawberries and read on flowery banks, in part 2 the writers watch balefully as each comes and goes."'Fatal Fluency: Behn's Fiction and the Restoration Letter," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 12:2–3 (2000), 429.

33 Warner, 67.

34 Staves, 85.

35 In Hughes's analysis of *The Dutch Lover*, he refers to Behn's general interest in exploring "the chaotic operations of sexual desire in situations where social and familial relationships are suspended and erased" (50). Donald R. Wehrs writes that in *Love-Letters*, Behn depicts "love as a god who acts as a usurping tyrant ... suggesting that her characters allow the kind of usurpation and abrogation of hierarchy in psychic and ethical life that Monmouth and the Whigs are seeking to achieve in political life." Wehrs, "*Eros*, Ethics, Identity: Royalist Feminism and the Politics of Desire in Aphra Behn's *Love Letters*," *Studies*

my discussion of part 3 of *Love-Letters*, *The Fair Jilt*, and *The History of the Nun*, Behn's southern Netherlandic settings were similarly fruitful.

In her annotated edition of *Love-Letters*, Todd mentions that Behn's characters spend more time in Holland than Lord Grey and Henrietta Berkeley did. She suggests Behn did this to "elaborate on the relationships of both Silvia and Philander with Octavio within a context of absences and arrivals." This statement implies that the Dutch setting matters only in relation to Octavio, whom Todd dismisses as a virtuous foil. She describes him as "hapless" and "sentimental," and casts him as a victim. Todd asserts that Octavio, his sister Calista, and her husband the Count of Clarinau appear in the text "primarily to construct more traditional romantic plots which parallel the story of Philander and Silvia."[36] Like Todd, other critics of *Love-Letters* richly map Silvia and Philander's erotic machinations and political dimensions, while perfunctorily praising Octavio and comparing him to the pre-seduction Silvia.[37]

Critics praise Octavio because, in many passages, the narrator

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in English Literature 1500–1900 32 (1992), 469.

36 Todd, *Love-Letters*, 364, xxiii, xxviii. Todd, *Secret Life*, 388. "In Part I of *Love-Letters*, the ingenue heroine had faced the sophisticate Philander; now in Part II, the worldly Silvia and Philander face other ingenuous characters, a brother and sister Octavio and Calista who have not been steeped in Restoration court culture. Octavio is a sincere man, believing love to be absolute, true and uncontingent; he takes the passions of the heart as his authority and is self-deluded" (*Secret Life*, 338). In accordance with her assumption of Octavio's benign nature, Todd finds his historical origin in men who helped Lord Grey during his time in Cleve: Ambassador Fuchs, and a merchant named Hermanus de Bressaw (*Love-Letters*, 122). Elsewhere, Todd cites only Fuchs (*Secret Life*, 504n4). Maureen Duffy speculates that Octavio was based on de Bressaw (see her introduction to *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* by Aphra Behn, ed. Maureen Duffy [Harmondsworth: Penguin/Virago, 1987], vi). Grey biographer Cecil Price mentions Grey's time in Cleve, and his relationship with Fuchs, but finds no historic correlate for Octavio, asserting that the last two parts of *Love-Letters* have "very little basis in fact." *Cold Caleb: The Scandalous Life of Ford Grey First Earl of Tankerville 1655–1701* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1956), 145–46. Price does mention that Fuchs wrote Grey a letter regretfully informing him that the English dissident could no longer count on Cleve for political asylum. In *Love Letters*, Octavio sends Philander a similar message from the States of Holland, so in this respect, Octavio certainly resembles Fuchs (162).

37 Examples of comparisons with Silvia include Goreau, 276; Jorge Figueroa Dorrego, "Viragos and 'Soft' Men: Androgyny in Aphra Behn's Fiction," *Aphra Behn (1640–1689): Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity*, 29; G.A. Starr, "Aphra Behn and the Genealogy of the Man of Feeling," *Modern Philology* 87 (May 1990), 369. Warner, Richetti, and Starr give affirmative readings of Octavio that grant him more attention and significance. See Warner, 65–85; Richetti, "*Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*: Aphra Behn and Amatory Fiction," *Augustan Subjects: Essays in Honor of Martin C. Battestin*, ed. Albert J. Rivero (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 25–26; and Starr, 362–72.

showers him with compliments: "He was very hansom, well made, well drest, and very well attended" (122), and "*Octavio* had all those additions that render a man truly great and brave, and this is the character of him that was next undone by our unfortunate and fatal Beauty" (126–27). In addition, Octavio ultimately behaves better than the other characters. The last time the narrator mentions him, he is following through on his promise to provide for Silvia financially, though his monastic vows preclude a quid pro quo romantic reunion (414).[38] This generosity comes even after Silvia has broken his heart and repeatedly gotten him into trouble.

In Donald Wehrs's analysis of the Aristotelian, Platonic, and Augustinian provenances behind the exploration of submission to the Earthly Venus ("the erotic passion that pulls the mind downward") in *Love-Letters*, he argues that Behn deploys this classic amatory trope in the service of her royalist argument that "surrendering one's will to 'the god of love' leads to a loss of self-possession that culminates in violence against all familial-hierarchical ties."[39] Wehrs shows how all *Love-Letters* protagonists, including Octavio, suffer diminishment, though he does not delineate Octavio's case specifically.[40] Other critics, perhaps because they cannot imagine the saintly Octavio suffering the same fate as those other recreants, interpret Octavio's monastic ordination as his last-minute reprieve from the diminishing desire and conquest that, at the end of the narrative, leave Caesario dead and Silvia "daily mak[ing] considerable Conquests where e'er she shows the Charmer" (439).[41] Warner asserts that "for the narrator, this elevation of Octavio into 'heaven' confirms his special grace and his spiritual movement beyond the compromises of amorous intrigue," and even that "Behn makes him the vehicle for affirming

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38 Duffy commends Octavio for fulfilling his financial promises to Silvia and points out that "in doing so he rejects the seventeenth-century institutional bartering of sex for money, seen particularly in the legalized prostitution of arranged marriages which Aphra Behn despised" (xiv).

39 Wehrs, 469, 473.

40 Behn explicitly alludes to what Wehrs calls the "ethical plotting of Renaissance romance" when Silvia, in anticipation of a visit from Octavio, "adorns her self for absolute conquest and disposing herself in the most charming, careless, and tempting manner she cou'd devise" beneath a picture of the Tassian temptress Armida (*Love-Letters*, 202) and when Sebastian derogatorily compares Silvia to an "*inchanting* Circe" just a few pages before he also falls under her spell (283).

41 See Bowers's discussion of Silvia's audacious amorality in comparison to Behn's moralistic eighteenth-century predecessors (52–53).

the possibility of loyal love."[42]

A triumphalist reading of Octavio's ordination scene overlooks its equivocation. During this ceremony, when the handsome nobleman's hair is shorn, a crowd of enflamed women clamour to purchase pieces of it "at any price" (382–83). Rather than saving his soul and "the possibility of loyal love," Octavio becomes a commodity, as clumps of him are literally put up for sale.[43] Octavio's ultimate fate as marketed body directly parallels Silvia's descent into prostitution.[44] As the next section delineates, to build up to this ignoble (albeit ambiguous) end, Behn embues Octavio with flaws throughout the narrative that parallel Silvia's and Philander's flaws. In Octavio's case, however, unlike in the case of the non-Dutch protagonists, Behn conflates his shortcomings with his nationality.

Hollandophobic Challenges to the Noble Dutchman's Heroic Facade

Octavio is aristocratic, a most marvellous trait in Behn's eyes.[45] But Behn problematizes Octavio's aristocratic heritage by making him an illegitimate nobleman whose surrogate father, Uncle Sebastian, is a wholly mercantile misogynist-turned-letch.[46] The narrator explicitly emphasizes Octavio's Dutch identity, which her contemporaries

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42 Warner, 83. Similarly, Richetti suggests that "Aphra Behn herself appears in Brussels as the enraptured witness," and casts Octavio's ordination as a refuge from an otherwise torrid narrative. He suggests the ceremony "marks a longing for a meaningful, valid public life where ritual and communal expression correct the corrosive private hedonism the novel has relentlessly chronicled and indeed continues to trace after Octavio's investiture" (25–26).

43 Although Warner acknowledges this hair-selling moment as a "pathetic climax," he disassociates Octavio from it by asserting that it "fixes blame squarely on Silvia" (84).

44 Wehrs writes: "A measure of Sylvia's 'ruin' is indicated by her relationship with Brilljard [Philander's servant]. He begins as 'her creature,' then aspires to her favors, becomes a lover, and ends up as her pimp" (471–72). For alternative interpretations of Silvia's trajectory see Todd, "Who is Silvia: what is she?," *Aphra Behn Studies*, 199–218, and Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 109–13.

45 Gabbard contends that Octavio's "noble heritage sets him apart from his countrymen," and by extension, from Hollandophobic implication (224).

46 See *Love-Letters*, 192, for Silvia's reference to Octavio's illegitimacy. On literary representations of bastards from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, especially with regard to their liminal, subversive aspect, see Alison Findlay, *Illegitimate Power: Bastards in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994) and Wolfram Schmidgen, "Illegitimacy and Social Observation: The Bastard in the Eighteenth-Century Novel," *English Literary History* 69:1 (2002), 133–66.

would have associated with arriviste merchants. At the beginning of the second volume of *Love-Letters*, entry into the Dutch setting coincides with the introduction to Octavio. The narrator makes his nationality a defining aspect of his character, introducing him as "a young *Hollander* of a more than Ordinary Gallantry, for that Country so degenerate from good manners and almost common Civility, and so far short of all the good qualities that made themselves appear in this young Noble Man ... . [He] had a vivacity and quickness of Wit unusual with the Natives of that part of the World" (121–22). Not only is Octavio Dutch, but he is also a descendant of the "Princes of *Orange*" and member of the States of Holland (122, 126). With these affiliations, he personifies "Dutchness." The gist of the narrator's apparently positive introduction contradicts this, however: she notes that Octavio's virtues make him an *atypical* Dutchman. The narrator initiates a feeling of distrust in the readers by providing them with paradoxical guidance. Her bigotry directs the reader to view all Dutch people as inherently unpleasant, while offering assurances of this one Dutch person's merit.[47]

Octavio's dual allegiance to both monarchists and republicans should also inspire distrust. Philander, a Whig conspirator, assumes the Dutchman is a fellow republican in the first letter he writes to him: "I know, my Lord, that the Exercise of Vertue and Justice is so innate to your soul, and so fixt to the very Principle of a generous Commonwealths man" (130).[48] Philander points out that the men share political beliefs by rhetorically asking, "Does my Religion, Principle, or Opinion differ from yours?" (131). Octavio's dual affiliation with the House of Orange and the States of Holland makes his true political allegiance more difficult to determine, since the House of Orange resembled a royal family, while the States of Holland was a republican institution.[49] Behn complicates matters further by suggesting via Octavio's Uncle Sebastian that self-important

47 As Pearson points out, Behn's narrator tends "to undercut the moral apparently offered by her narrative." "Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn," *Review of English Studies* n.s. 42 (February 1991), 49.

48 Todd explains that "commonwealthmen" refers to Whigs after the restoration of Charles II (130n).

49 See *Love-Letters*, 126. The complexities of relations among the Stuarts, the Oranges, and the republican United Provinces surface in *The History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn*: the narrator mentions that the Dutch Republican De Witt family "had an implacable Hatred to the [E]nglish Nation, and the House of *Orange*, that was so nearly related to it" (vi).

members of the States of Holland sometimes betray the republican values of their citizenry by thinking of themselves as kings. Sebastian, a member of the States, heatedly refers to his own eminence as "a very Monarch of the Commonwealth!" (290).

Octavio's murky allegiances make him comparable to both of James II's rivals (and nephews): William III and James Scott, Duke of Monmouth. As stadholder, William III was the "monarch" of a republican nation. Although William had close familial and political ties to the Stuarts, his inaction during the planning of the Monmouth Rebellion disappointed James II.[50] Also, like William III, Octavio is a descendant of the "Princes of *Orange*" (126) whose father is absent (William III never knew his father, who died shortly before he was born).[51] Octavio even more closely resembles James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, who is most directly represented in *Love-Letters* by Caesario. Both Octavio and Monmouth challenge the status quo: Monmouth attempts to usurp James's throne, while Octavio attempts to win his friend Philander's lover Silvia. Both men love strong-willed women (Behn fictionalizes Monmouth's devotion to Henrietta Wentworth by emphasizing Caesario's obsession with Hermione in part 3). In addition, both Caesario and Octavio are illegitimate nobles (Monmouth was an illegitimate son of Charles II). Octavio's double agenda with regard to Silvia and Philander reflects his fissured background. The newly arrived couple are delighted when their influential and affluent new friend offers them hospitality and assistance, but Behn gives readers a specific reason to question Octavio's helpful exterior: his secret attraction to Silvia (123).

Just a few pages later, Octavio delivers a decree from his States of Holland colleagues ordering Philander to leave the United Provinces. Octavio advises Philander to comply, an action that necessitates the exiled lovers' separation, since Silvia's mobility has been compromised by a fever. The narrator informs us that Octavio feels "a secret joy at the thoughts of his [Philander's] departure" (128), though outwardly he expresses regret that "I have so small and single a portion of their [the States'] power, that I am asham'd of my incapacity of serving you in this great affair" (134). This discrepancy alerts readers to Octavio's ability to make smooth statements that

50 Earle, 69.

51 Herbert H. Rowen calls attention to William's fatherless youth in *The Princes of Orange: The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 109–19.

contradict his true feelings, rendering him comparable to the manipulative Silvia and Philander. As Jacqueline Pearson has recognized in the case of that infamous pair, so too with Octavio, "the increasing interventions of the narrator allow us to look behind the heroic facade, at the desperate and shabby appetites for money, sex, and power that motivate the protagonists."[52] In addition to its Hollandophobic resonance, of course, Octavio's duplicity can also be attributed to his struggle with the "torments of love," a signature Behnian trope that she refers to in the dedication to *Love-Letters* (7).

Critical and narratorial assertions of Octavio's intrinsic goodness obscure his materialistic, exchange-based pursuit of Silvia. In one of his first notes to Silvia, he includes bracelets, and modestly (or pretentiously) refers to them as "*Trifles*" (160). She responds with the observation, "there is great eloquence in a pair of Bracelets of five thousand Crowns ... nor can a Lover write or speak in any Language so significant, and very well to be understood, as in that silent one of presenting" (161). One could argue that Octavio has to provide shiny gifts to attract Silvia, since she's so materialistic, but at this point in the trajectory of Silvia's degradation, her materialism has yet to blossom; she's most focused on using Octavio to renew Philander's interest (141–47, 164–66). In Behn's 1684 poem "The Golden Age," she celebrates the Tassian, Ovidian pastoral idyll as the ideal site of aristocratic love.[53] The nobly born Philander alludes to this aristocratic idyll when he seductively refers to rural swains, their cottages, and their groves of flowers, in one of his love notes to Silvia (35). In contrast to this ideal, Octavio actually builds Silvia a lucre-encrusted love nest with "Flowers in-laid with Silver, and Ivory, guilded Roofs, carved Wainscot, Tables of Plate ... and all was perfumed like an Altar, or the Marriage-Bed of some young King" (271). The reference to royalty here is ironic, because Silvia has actually severed her monarchal affiliation by following Philander into a Whiggish Dutch exile, and because Octavio's elitism is mercantile, not monarchal.[54] Later in Silvia and Octavio's affair, the narrator, who is usually unsparing in her criticism of the flighty Philander, almost sounds wistful when she suggests that Octavio's wealth alone has enabled him to usurp

52 Pearson, "Gender and Narrative," 54.

53 Todd, *Secret Life*, 204–5.

54 Todd observes how Silvia "moves from a trangressing [sic] royalist to the shameless mirror image of Whig capitalist, going to market with herself" ("Who is Silvia," 202).

Philander's rightful place in Silvia's very materialistic heart (by now):

> She was married to his [Philander's] Love, to his Heart, and *Octavio* appeared the intruding Gallant, that would, and ought to be content with the Gleanings of the Harvest, *Philander*, should give him the opportunity to take up: And tho', if she had at this very time been put to her sober Choice, which she would have abandoned, it would have been *Philander*, as not in so good Circumstances at that time to gratify all her Extravagancies of Expence. (344–45)

Octavio even enlists the support of Silvia's servant by becoming "*a great benefactor to* Antonett, *and had already by his gifts and presents made her a Fortune for a Burgomaster*" (206). With the term "burgomaster," Behn connects Octavio's role as benefactor, or rather briber, with his Dutch identity.[55]

In spite of Silvia's own materialism, she ultimately breaks her generous Dutch suitor's heart, and he responds (after some vacillation) by becoming a monk. Behn alludes to anti-Dutch tropes of Dutch wealth and materialism through the ironically opulent way Octavio renounces the world. The narrator marvels at the decor, observing that behind the High Altar "a most magnificent Scene of Glory was opened, with Clouds most rarely and Artificially set off ... their lustre was hardly able to be look'd on" (380). Octavio's outfit seems an oddly elaborate choice for an aspiring monk:

> I never saw any thing more rich in Dress, but that of *Octavio* exceeded all Imagination, for the gayety and fineness of the Work: It was white Cloth of Silver embroidered with Gold, and Buttons of Diamonds; lin'd with rich Cloth of Gold and Silver Flowers, his Breeches of the same, trim'd with a pale Pinck Garniture; rich Linen, and a white Plume in his white Hat. (381–82)[56]

When the narrator informs us that Octavio is entering an elite brotherhood, she blurs values of nobility and materialism—the traits that epitomize Octavio's mixed identity generally:

> The Order of St. *Bernard* is one of the neatest of any of 'em, and there is a Monastery of that Order, which are oblig'd to be all Noble Mens Sons ... all handsome, and most of 'em Young; their Habit adds a Grace to their Person, for of all the Religious, that is the most becoming ... . [I]n my opinion 'tis here a Man may hope to become a Saint, sooner than in any other, more perplext with Want, Cold, and all the necessaries of Life, which takes the thought too much

55 The *OED* defines "burgomaster" as "the chief magistrate of a Dutch or Flemish town."

56 Duffy writes wittily of the spectacle: "Octavio's reception into the Benedictines ... is so full of exotic detail that it resembles Firbankian ecclesiastical high camp" (xiv).

> from Heaven, and afflicts it with the Cares of this World, with Pain and too much Abstinence. (380)

This contention that affluent monks are better suited for piety is a sardonic reversal of the biblical notion that the rich have a hard time getting into Heaven.

Another Hollandophobic facet of the investiture recalls Octavio's role as Philander's moneyed, gaudy rival. Octavio's grandeur inspires considerable sexual tension as he parades before Silvia and the other adoring women. Behn's depictions of monasticism are always eroticized—the convent in *The Fair Jilt*, for example, is a veritable seraglio.[57] Along those lines, Octavio's supposedly chaste retreat heavenward finds him out-seducing the master seducer, Philander.[58] Even G.A. Starr, who casts Octavio as a vulnerable milquetoast, notices the "women's concupiscence ... fervid toward the unwitting Octavio, the object of Sylvia's and the narrator's passionate gazings."[59] Octavio's sister, Calista, who grew up in a convent and joins the Brussels Order of St Augustine after Philander seduces her, is similarly sexualized by her convent affiliation. Philander raves about how "she had from her infancy been bred in a Monastery, kept from the sight of men, and knew no one art or subtilty of her Sex ... so innocently she confest her passion that every word added new flames to mine" (236).[60]

Octavio's erotic power also costs him dearly, but in his case the diminishment is Hollandophobically charged. When his hair is cut during the ceremony, we see a Tory critique of "Dutch divinity"—the claim that materialism permeates and corrupts Dutch religious life. The women who swoop in to purchase locks of Octavio's hair (instead

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57 An observation of Todd's is instructive here: "In *Oroonoko*, the narrator provides reading matter for her hero Oroonoko and her heroine Imoinda. While he is given *The Lives of the Romans*, a politically subversive text in the circumstances of Surinam, she is given an apparently passive work about nuns. It is only when the reader considers *The History of the Nun* and *The Fair Jilt*, the heroine of which is in a kind of convent when she begins her seduction of a monk, as well as the posthumous 'The Nun, or the Perjur'd Beauty', where the heroine bolts from the nunnery on two occasions and loves three men in quick succession, that the possibly subversive nature of Imoinda's chosen text appears." Todd, introduction, *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave: A True History*, in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 3:xiii.

58 Octavio's embroidered outfit has a seductive connotation within the universe of this text, since one of Philander's metaphors for seduction is an "embroider'd Coat" (*Love-Letters*, 181).

59 Starr, 371.

60 See Bowers's discussion of amatory fiction's ostensible effort towards "warning the innocent" (52).

of treating him reverentially) are as materialistic as he is.[61]

Although my reading of Octavio's ordination scene emphasizes its Hollandophobic resonances, I cannot overlook how the awestruck narrator seems to approve of the proceedings. The celebratory aspect of the scene may nod to James II and his Catholicism. In contrast to Octavio's dazzle on his way out of the narrative, the Whiggish usurper Caesario loses his life at the end of *Love-Letters*, as James's challenger Monmouth did. Octavio's Dutch alterity enables Behn to celebrate Catholicism here in a manner that mollifies English Protestant readers who feared James II's "papist" commitment but were still amused by rivalrous depictions of their Protestant counterparts across the North Sea. These readers might join Behn's Tory readership in snickering that the gaudiness of Catholicism suits a Dutchman; they might say they expected a Dutchman to betray his frugal, Protestant countrymen by running off to Brussels to turn Catholic.[62]

Behn's Tory Elision of Errant Aristocrats with Dutch Arrivistes

The narrator's approval of Octavio's lavish ordination may also represent Behn's ambivalence about the increasing influence of mercantile-based wealth on the English aristocracy.[63] On the one hand, Behn felt contempt for the social types she associated with the spoils of trade; on the other hand, she was no dour Puritan and needed to please her audiences with luscious scenes.[64]

Octavio's ordination, like all of *Love-Letters*, is morally ambivalent.[65]

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61 The crowd's reaction may also allude to the death of the Duke of Monmouth, who, as Paula Backscheider has recounted, "was executed before a huge crowd that dropped their handkerchiefs in his blood for souvenirs." *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 109. See Todd's brief suggestion that Octavio's monastic withdrawal foreshadows Caesario/Monmouth's demise. "Spectacular Deaths: History and Story in Aphra Behn's *Love Letters*, *Oroonoko* and *The Widow Ranter*," *Gender Art and Death* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 39, 42.

62 The United Provinces' Dutch Reformed Church was Protestant. Octavio is in the Catholic, Spanish Netherlandic city of Brussels when he finds out that Silvia and Philander have resumed their affair and when he is ordained.

63 Speck identifies this shift as a key aspect of seventeenth-century Anglo-Dutch rivalry, especially in and after the 1650s (190).

64 See Todd, *Secret Life*, 33–34, where Todd discusses Behn's fascination with the visual, erotic, theatrical aspects of convents and Catholic ritual: "the scandal of what Puritanism had tried to eradicate in her home country."

65 See Todd, *Love-Letters*, xxxii; Bowers, 52–53.

Behn never fully celebrates or attacks him, just as she never unequivocally maligns her Whiggish, exiled protagonists. She admires Silvia and Philander's truly aristocratic provenance, though she abhors their betrayal of class, family, and King; thus, Octavio operates complexly as their foil but without the lilywhite innocence most critics have assumed. Instead, Octavio—with his Hollandophobic hodgepodge of clashing influences: aristocratic, republican, Catholic, Calvinist—reflects Philander and Silvia's liminality as errant aristocrats.[66] Philander becomes comparably oxymoronic when he stoops to conspire as a "French Whigg"(5) in the Low Countries, forsaking his sturdy background ("born Noble, from Parents of untainted Loyalty" [39]).[67] Recall Warner's assertion that Octavio affirms "the possibility of loyal love" in *Love-Letters*: if that is the case, what a breathtaking critique of corrupt English aristocracy Behn mounts in this novel by suggesting a republican, mercantile Dutchman better represents loyal love![68]

Behn uses Philander's and Silvia's friendship with Octavio to degrade the pair, in order to more generally censure Whiggish conspirators and the republican Dutchmen who abet them. Octavio's rivalry with Philander over Silvia represents Behn wielding Hollandophobically charged poetic justice. The traitorous Philander puts his country's monarchy at risk by associating with the exile community in the United Provinces, thereby risking the loss of Silvia to a Dutch

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66 See Gabbard's discussion of *discordia concors* and oxymoronic identity in the context of anti-Dutch stereotyping of Dutch women and in Andrew Marvell's "The Character of Holland" (131–46).

67 Todd observes how Silvia similarly "loses class when she steps out of her father's house. She moves from being noble daughter to becoming beloved mistress and then betrayed whore" ("Who is Silvia," 211). Todd sees Silvia's acceptance of Brilljard's amorous overtures as her diminishment: "the servant gains all that the noble Octavio has tried to buy with his youth, beauty, status and wealth" (212). I would argue that Octavio and Brilljard are of more comparable status in this text. They are frequently brought together in the plot as Silvia's rivalrous suitors.

68 Richetti discusses the amatory fiction genre's interest in depictions of corrupt aristocracy: "the seducers of these heroines are often enough idle and dissolute aristocrats for whom amorous conquest and betrayal is the sole degraded remnant of the heroic ethos of their literary ancestors ... their behavior is specific to their social status and is often derived from their bored patriarchal privilege and corrupt custom" (15). Wehrs registers Behn's concern that "vice in high places" will have a trickle-down effect (475n15). See also Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600–1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) for a brief interpretation of how Behn "raised the problem of mutability within love narratives that are concretely specified to problems of status inconsistency" within what he views as her "critique of aristocratic ideology" (258–59).

usurper. In addition, Octavio's role as Silvia's benefactor shames Philander (even if the unrepentant Philander never feels guilt). While Philander abandons Silvia to fend for herself in the Low Countries, Octavio fulfils the expectations he had cultivated. At the beginning of the narrative, when Silvia is a Tory in her father's home, her financial support is aristocratic. Thanks to the Whiggish Philander's betrayal of her, however, her "economy" becomes Dutch and trade-based. Octavio's role as benefactor contributes to Behn's larger attack on Whiggish challenges to the Stuarts in the 1680s: she implies that even a Dutchman has more honour than a faithless Englishman, and she links Whiggish faithlessness to Dutch encroachment.

Although Octavio's heroic facade is compromised by anti-Dutch tropes, he is not fully inscribed by them, making him alluring and formidable. Lest Octavio's mercantile-based affluence please readers too much, destabilizing the Tory agenda he is there to help bolster, Behn uses Sebastian to temper the temptations of Octavio by reminding readers of what brutes those merchants are. Silvia's materialistic affair with Octavio therefore represents only the middle of her progress towards fully prostituting herself to the boorish Sebastian (and being prostituted by Philander's servant Brilljard). Sebastian is so industrious and obsessed with material output that, before Silvia catches his eye, he excoriates love and says "if he were to make Laws, he would confine all young Women to Monasteries, where they should never see Man till Forty, and then come out and marry for Generation sake, no more" (285).[69] When Silvia eventually lets that filthy rich old man rub "his grizly Beard on her divine Face," the narrator signals her debasement by describing Sebastian's grope as "a Blessing he had never before arriv'd to with any body above the Quality of his own Servant-Maid" (299). The implication is beware the Dutch and Dutch influence, while registering how impossible it was to do that, politically and economically, in the 1680s.

Anglo-Dutch Politics in Behn's Other Works: Romantic and Colonial Rivalries

69 The fact that Silvia is able to fell both Uncle Sebastian, who is obsessed with the bottom line, and the apparently self-abnegating Octavio, who is hesitant to betray his friend Philander, functions as but one of many sites in Behn's fictions where she proclaims the irresistibility of love. See Staves, 247, and Bowers, 60. On Behn's attempt to inscribe Charles II's royal "libertinage" with a "politically correct and personally satisfying synthesis of desire and loyalty, pleasure and royalism," see Warner, 50–51.

Behn exploited the commercially comedic potential of Hollandophobia throughout her career[70] but softened her bite over time, perhaps in accordance with the historical decline in anti-Dutch sentiment. During the early 1670s, therefore, the ridiculous Haunce Van Ezel is the eponymous protagonist of *The Dutch Lover*,[71] whereas in the 1680s, the clownish Sebastian gets a smaller role in *Love-Letters*. A survey of Behn's oeuvre reveals that the majority of her Dutch characters are rivalrous suitors in situations where she contrasts boorishness with courtliness.

To date, three Behn scholars—Hughes, Pearson, and Margarete Rubik—who have published analyses of Behn's representations of Dutchness have focused their attention on *The Dutch Lover* and downplayed the work's Hollandophobic aspect.[72] All three scholars point to Behn's blurring of the difference that she initially poses between Haunce, the rich merchant whom Euphemia's father is forcing on her, and her other suitor Alonzo, a formidable, attractive cavalier whom Euphemia desires and draws in. In an effort to escape marriage to Haunce, Euphemia asks Alonzo to impersonate him; this impersonation is the most obvious way Behn elides the rival lovers. Additionally, Alonzo's background, as a "*Flaunders* Colonel" who turns out to be Spanish, resembles Haunce's own mixed identity as Flemish

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70 See the farcical doctors' consultation scene in her comedy *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678): two of the doctors are named Amsterdam and Leyden, and another, named Fat Doctor, gets lambasted as "a *Dutch* Butter-ferkin, a Kilderkin, a Double Jugg," whereupon the Fat Doctor calls his accuser, the idiotic Sir Credulous, an "ignorant Blockhead" (V.i.451–53).

71 Gabbard suggests that Haunce is "the antithesis of the Stuart masculine hero ... . [T]he *Dutch lover* is not so much a man as an unseemly contradiction, the very term for him being nothing but an oxymoron." He also concedes that while Haunce "is a stock comic figure drawn from anti-Dutch tradition as well as being a conventional fool, she [Behn] enlivens the portrait with more detail than commonly is found in the type" (235, 225, respectively). For his analysis of the play in the context of contemporary anti-Dutch discourse, see 218–35.

72 Hughes calls *The Dutch Lover* "a more low-key contribution to attacking the Dutch" than Dryden's 1672 play *Amboyna* (46). Pearson argues that Behn subverts Hollandophobia, and she emphasizes Haunce's positive traits, finding that "despite her Tory patriotism," Behn's representations of outsiders challenge bigotry, particularly by collapsing the binary oppositions which perpetuate bias ("Slave Princes and Lady Monsters," 225, 221, 231, respectively). In "Dutch Lovers and Other Europeans," Pearson contends that Behn looks past rigid, nationality-based categorizations and identifies with "a pan-European gentry class and its values" (3). Margarete Rubik similarly finds "the hostility in *The Dutch Lover* ... social rather than national." "Spaniards, Dutchmen, Moors, Jews and Turks: Race and Nationality in the Plays of Aphra Behn," *Revisiting and Reinterpreting Aphra Behn: Proceedings of the Aphra Behn Europe Seminar ESSE Conference, Strasbourg 2002* (Entrevaux: Bilingua GA Editions, 2003), 10.

and as "half a Spaniard, his mother was one."[73] Pearson and Hughes highlight the fluidity of identity engendered by the plot's cascade of mistaken identities, particularly with regard to obscured kinship and nationality.[74] Hughes argues that *The Dutch Lover* blurs the lines between cavalier and merchant to register "a world in which old categories have become fluid and uncertain" and to express Behn's feminist contention that, in Hughes's words, "old and new systems have a depressing isomorphism in their treatment of women."[75] Although *The Dutch Lover* has subversive potential as a "verbal text,"[76] I believe audiences digested it as straightforwardly Hollandophobic humour when it appeared raucously and ephemerally before them in 1673.[77] At one point, Haunce and Gload, his "Cash-keeper,"[78] guffaw drunkenly for a whole scene.[79] As Todd has discovered, Behn based *The Dutch Lover* on an earlier narrative, *The History of Don Fenise*, to which she had to add the anti-Dutch minstrel figure of Haunce.[80]

The Vander Albert/Van Bruin tale from the posthumously published *The History of the Life and Memoirs of Mrs. Behn* more closely resembles references to the Dutch in *Love-Letters*, though it is peppered with more Hollandophobic slurs than *Love-Letters*. "Astrea"[81] recalls her flirtations with "two *Dutch*-men in Love with me," the attractive Vander Albert and his clownish relative Van Bruin (xv). Van Bruin's belaboured usage of naval metaphor reflects his inept courtship style. For example, he proclaims Astrea "beautiful in every part, as a goodly

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73 See *The Dutch Lover*'s Dramatis Personae, V.i, III.i.102. See also Rubik, 10.

74 Hughes, 50–52; Pearson, "Slave Princes and Lady Monsters," 229–30.

75 Hughes, 53, 55.

76 Here I am using Hughes's distinction between plays as "verbal texts" and plays performed in theatres (2–3).

77 *The Dutch Lover*'s stage presence was especially ephemeral, because it was a flop (Todd, *Secret Life*, 169).

78 See the Dramatis Personae.

79 See III.ii.

80 Todd, introduction, *The Dutch Lover*, in *Works*, 5:158, and see Gabbard, 223. This is not to suggest Behn was bubbling over with Hollandophobic vitriol. *The Revenge*, a 1680 adaptation of John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605) that has been attributed to Behn, indicates a lack of personal animosity towards the Dutch. In that adaptation, she transforms Marston's Hollandophobic stereotype Franceschina into the sympathetic Corina (see Pearson, "Slave Princes and Lady Monsters," 223–24; Hughes, 116–22).

81 Behn's pen name (Goreau, 54).

Ship under sail from the *Indies*." He compares her eyes to "Guns, thy Nose like her Rudder, that steers my Desires, thy Mouth the well-wrought Mortar, whence the Granado's of thy Tongue are shot into the Gun-room of my Heart" (xvii). Van Bruin's naval metaphors have two larger functions beyond making him look awkward. They bring to mind contemporary Anglo-Dutch naval battles, and rivalries related to colonial exploration and conquest.[82] They also may reflect Behn's frustration with Whitehall's neglect of her covert information about Dutch ships (vi–viii). She defiantly subverts her "pleasant Adventures" by imbuing them with naval allusions.[83]

Astrea's "other *Dutch* Lover," the courtly Vander Albert, suffers guilt by national association on two levels: not only is he saddled with a relative who epitomizes anti-Dutch stereotypes, but he embodies the threat that the Dutch (and their mercantile-based might) pose to the English. He and Octavio of *Love-Letters* are similar enough to be versions of the same character. In fact, their introductory descriptions are almost identical. "One of the Fair Sex," writes that

> *Albert*, as soon as he knew of her [Astrea's] Arrival at *Antwerp*, and the publick Posts he was in wou'd give him Leave, made a short Voyage to meet her, with all the Love his Nature was capable of, (and which by Chance was much, and more refin'd than most of his Countrymen, at least according to our common Notions of 'em). (xxvii, v–vi)[84]

Like Octavio, Vander Albert has a duplicitous, subtly threatening facet. He has abandoned a wife, and by sharing state secrets with the Tory spy Astrea, he has betrayed his republican compatriots, even though he is an "irreconcilable Enemy to Monarchy." In addition to manifesting duplicity, of course, Vander Albert's choice of love over republican honour here shows his susceptibility to erotic desire. As is the case in the love plot of Silvia and Octavio, Tory beauty trumps Dutch might in this amatory narrative, but only to some extent—just as Octavio becomes Silvia's benefactor, Vander Albert provides Astrea

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82 Astrea will disdainfully inform Van Bruin that she "never doubted the Zeal of your Country-men, in making new Discoveries; in fixing new Trades; in supplanting their Neighbours; and in engrossing the Wealth and Traffick of both the *Indies*; but I confess, I never expected so wise a Nation shou'd at last set out for the *Island of Love*" (xix).

83 Bowers incisively points out that "Behn's conflation of politics and sexual relations gives the lie to traditional distinctions between public and private concerns, male and female experience, amatory and realistic fiction" (67).

84 See *Love-Letters*, 121–22 for Octavio's introductory description.

with funding,[85] as well as state secrets (xxviii, xv, xvi). This pecuniary arrangement is highly dubious, since an English royalist spy should be solely supported by Whitehall. Several Behn scholars have identified Behn's fellow spy William Scot as the inspiration for Vander Albert, and Scot had a reputation for both dissidence and double-dealing.[86] Since I view Octavio and Vander Albert as variants of the same character, I submit that memories of Scot's mixed allegiances influenced both characterizations. In identifying William Scot as Vander Albert's historical source, William Cameron and Todd puzzle over the fact that Vander Albert, unlike Scot, financially assists Astrea.[87] My answer is that Vander Albert, and by extension Octavio, differ from Scot in that respect because Behn made formidable affluence such a significant aspect of her Dutch characterizations. Behn uses these two Dutch benefactors to warn powerful Englishmen that if they do not fulfil their obligations, the Dutch will sweep in to fill the vacuum. In addition to helping her lodge political warnings, Behn's variegated Dutch suitors promote her effort to please readers. A clutch of caricatures would make boring protagonists: better to intersperse fools to laugh at with heroes to fawn over.

Revisionist *Oroonoko* criticism has focused on Behn's attitudes towards race, slavery, colonialism, and gender,[88] but the novella also addresses the threat that the United Provinces posed to England and to English aristocracy in the context of Anglo-Dutch colonial rivalry and the approaching replacement of James II with William III.[89] The latter half

85 For more comparisons between Behn and Silvia see Todd, *Secret Life*, 109, 341; Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 111–13.

86 On the Vander Albert/William Scot connection, see Ballaster, *Seductive Forms*, 80; Cameron, 94; Goreau, 92, 110; Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 122; and Todd, *Secret Life*, 81–84, 110.

87 Cameron, 93; Todd, *Secret Life*, 110.

88 Elliott Visconsi, "A Degenerate Race: English Barbarism in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and *The Widow Ranter*," *English Literary History* 69:3 (2002), 682, 699n28.

89 With regard to Behn's registry of James II's increasing unpopularity, Visconsi observes that through *Oroonoko*, she sought to defend absolute monarchy generally, as opposed to James II and his family specifically: "Prince Oroonoko is the perfect vehicle for such an abstraction because he is both transparently foreign and unrelated to James II, and transparently virtuous as an ideal monarch." Visconsi's reading of *Oroonoko* and *The Widow Ranter* as "poised on either side of the 1688 revolution" finds Behn using American

of *Oroonoko* takes place in the English colony of Surinam, just before the Dutch seize it and then take it over under the Treaty of Breda in 1667.[90] Behn, as the narrator, explicitly positions herself and the hero she commemorates against the Dutch within the narrative:

> his [Oroonoko's] Mis-fortune was, to fall in an obscure World, that afforded only a Female Pen to celebrate his Fame; though I doubt not but it had liv'd from others Endeavours, if the *Dutch*, who, immediately after his Time, took that Country, had not kill'd, banish'd and dispers'd all those that were capable of giving the World this great Man's Life, much better than I have done.[91]

Throughout the second half of *Oroonoko*, Behn contrasts her tragic protagonist with ignoble European colonial usurpers (both English and Dutch), but as a "European aristocrat in blackface," Oroonoko is simultaneously comparable to the Hollandophobically scathed, but courtly, Octavio. Several Behn critics have noted this parallel with regard to the two characters' effeminacy and tragic heroism.[92] We might also compare these courtly Others with regard to Behn's oeuvre-wide concern about mercantile affluence. Like Octavio at his dazzlingly erotic and materialistic ordination, Oroonoko is rendered in a scoptophilic way and "commodified as an exotic, luxurious, and appealing example of colonial bounty."[93] The two gorgeous but vul

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colonial space to express Tory concern that "the nebulous Whig confluence of republicanism and Williamite kingship" will usher back in a primitive tradition of English barbarity (682, 673, 677, respectively).

90 Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 774.

91 See Todd, introduction, *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave: A True History*, in *Works*, 3:52. Behn, *Oroonoko*, in *Works*, 3:88. George Guffey points out that a "number of times in the novel, the narrator bemoans the loss of Surinam to the Dutch." He opines that Behn does this because in 1688, the English "were in danger of losing England itself to the Dutch, or more precisely, to a Dutchman—William, Prince of Orange." Further, Guffey links the negative depictions of Surinam's Deputy Governor William Byam, and his associate James Banister (who makes a cameo appearance at the end of the novella), to Behn's anger over their inability to protect Surinam from Dutch usurpation. "Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: Occasion and Accomplishment," *Two English Novelists: Aphra Behn and Anthony Trollope* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1975), 33–35, 40n38. See Todd, *Secret Life*, 417.

92 Laura Brown, "The Romance of Empire: *Oroonoko* and the Trade in Slaves," *New Casebooks: Aphra Behn*, ed. Janet Todd (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 187. For examples, see Starr; Todd, "Spectacular Deaths"; and Dorrego, 28–29.

93 Visconsi, 683. He analyses the way *Oroonoko's* "royalist invective" against "encroaching commercial ideology" is complicated by the "narrator's desires for and fascination with the sundry exotic objects of Surinam and its colonial economy ... . For all of her apparent interest in genteel honor, the narrator here becomes a debased merchant herself, breaking an

nerable characters enable Behn to address compellingly the tempting dangers of mercantile and colonial expansion.

Behn's Complex Deployment of Hollandophobia on the Eve of the Glorious Revolution: Sex and Subterfuge in the Netherlandic Convent

In *Oroonoko*, Behn projects English political concerns onto the South American colonial setting. In *The Fair Jilt* (1688) and *The History of the Nun* (1689), set in the Spanish-occupied and French-occupied southern Netherlands respectively,[94] Behn employs those geopolitical "buffer zones" to displace and buffer her critique of the damage that James II's stubbornness inflicts on English monarchism.[95] In *Love-Letters*'s third volume, Behn had located Octavio's and Calista's religious orders in Brussels, and in these later works, she returns to that Netherlandic space to lodge increasingly pessimistic and subversive portrayals of ardent Catholicism.[96] In that third volume, Octavio's commodifi-

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honorific gift economy by trading the headdress for cultural capital back in London" (687–89). Visconsi's gloss on *Oroonoko*'s ambivalence towards mercantile bounty reminds me of the narrator of *Love-Letters*'s wry approval of Octavio's lavish ordination. Anita Pacheco reflects that "England in 1688 was a world in which divine-right Toryism was dying, eroded by Whig principles and by the steady expansion of commerce and the bourgeoisie. This gradual shift in power relations spelled not the eclipse of aristocratic might, but a growing collaboration among elite groups—landed, mercantile, professional—which brought with it an intermingling of cultural systems of value." "Royalism and Honor in Aphra Behn's 'Oroonoko,'" *Studies in English Literature* 34:3 (1994), 503.

94 Although *The History of the Nun* was not published until 1689, Behn wrote both works just before William's accession. See Day, 232. Hughes links Behn's "frequent interest in the occupied or colonized territory" to the "usurpation of power in England" and the subjugation of women under male domination (84–85).

95 On the southern Netherlands' historic role as buffer, see C. Bruneel, "The Spanish and Austrian Netherlands, 1585–1780," *History of the Low Countries*, 221–30, 239–46. Behn's familiarity with this aspect of the southern Netherlands' reputation is evident in a slight against Flanders that she paraphrases from Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan*. In *The Revenge*, Behn's adaptation of Marston, Wellman defends brothels as societal safeguards: "A married man ought to love a Bawdy-house, as English-men love *Flanders*; with war shou'd be maintain'd there, lest it shou'd be brought home to their own doors" (I.i.80–82). After citing Marston's version of that sentiment, Jean E. Howard reflects that from the speaker Freevill's "Anglocentric point of view, the Dutch are not fellow allies in a Protestant cause so much as inhabitants of a convenient buffer zone keeping Spanish troops from attacking England." "Mastering Difference in *The Dutch Courtesan*," *Shakespeare Studies* 24 (1996), 108.

96 Bernard Dhuicq observes Behn's increasingly negative portrayals of Catholic ceremony in "France and Roman Catholicism: Intertextuality in Aphra Behn's Works," *Aphra Behn (1640–1689): Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity*, 6–7.

cation, and the sexualized depictions of him and of Calista, problematize the alleged impermeability of the cloister. Octavio and Calista keep their monastic vows, however, and only Octavio gets commodified. Calista's post-seduction move to a convent even empowers her somewhat. When Silvia shows up there to confront the former milquetoast, Calista addresses her with "an unalterable Air and Courage," and briskly asks "*Madam, if my Charms were so powerful, as you are pleased to tell me they are, they sure have attracted too many Lovers for me to understand which of 'em it is I have been so unhappy to rob you of*" (314). A few pages later, Calista's aunt, the abbess, protects her niece by foiling Philander's effort to pay a visit to Calista (318).

By the end of James's reign, convents in *The Fair Jilt* and *The History of the Nun* afford no protection from the usurping force of erotic love, which Behn describes as a "*Fury from Hell*" for "unguarded and ungovern'd Hearts."[97] Behn condemns extremism as the weakening agent of destructive love in *The History of the Nun*.[98] When the heroine, Isabella, first becomes attracted to her aristocratic Dutch suitor, Bernardo Henault,[99] she responds with excessive asceticism, foreshadowing her downfall: "'twas generally believ'd, she was too Devout, for now she redoubled her Austerity ... she receiv'd Orders from the Lady *Abbess*, not to harass herself so very much, but to have a care of her Health, as well as her Soul; but she regarded not these Admonitions" (3:221).[100]

Like Octavio, the inhabitants of Behn's Netherlandic convents in *The Fair Jilt* and *The History of the Nun* are vulnerable not because they are simple, virtuous victims but because they embody the instability of their Dutch environment. Their nunneries represent both fortitude and lack of restraint. On the one hand, the convents offer shelter to English Catholic recusant exiles whose families can afford

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97 Behn, *The Fair Jilt: Or, the History of Prince Tarquin and Miranda* in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 3:9. References are to this edition.

98 On James II's zealotry see Melinda Zook, "Contextualizing Aphra Behn: Plays, Politics, and Party, 1679–1689," *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 89–90; Todd, *Secret Life*, 400.

99 He is the son of a Dutch "grave," who has the status of an earl. Behn, *The History of the Nun: Or, the Fair Vow-Breaker* in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, 3:220, 458n7. References are to this edition.

100 Catherine A. Craft situates Isabella's exemplary piety within an older satirical tradition: "such a paragon is destined to fall." "Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn's *Fair Vow-Breaker*, Eliza Heywood's *Fantomina*, and Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*," *Modern Language Review* 86:4 (1991), 823.

the dowry. This renders them worthy of Tory admiration as aristocratic enclaves of pure loyalty to Catholicism and to the Stuart monarchy.[101] On the other hand, the Englishwomen in the Continental convents have forsaken their Protestant country to keep the religious vows that bond them to James II.[102] They have also forsaken the patriarchal familial order of their fathers' homes.[103] Their convents are erotically transgressive spaces, where young men visit, and where nuns tell one another enflaming stories. After Henault's sister, Katteriena, divulges an amorous tale from her past, Isabella protests "*thou blow'st my Flame by thy soft Words, and mak'st me know my Weakness*" (3:223). The heroine of *The Fair Jilt*, Miranda, is similarly encouraged to abandon herself to her raging passion after her friend Cornelia tells her about Prince Henrick/Father Francisco's aristocratic, lovesick past (3:18–19). These oxymoronic convents parallel the awkward position James II had imposed upon his English supporters in the late 1680s, where "in the country at large, to be a Catholic was even now not especially advantageous but, around the King, it was increasingly so."[104]

Behn, as a Tory, cannot complain about James directly, but she

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101 On the recusant exiles' active royalism and support of the Stuarts, see Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 122–29. In turn, James II financially supported several houses (125–26). Charles was a more hesitant donor. Abbess Mary Knatchbull of Ghent had to go to great lengths to collect the £3,000 he had promised her for helping him before he was restored to the throne (122), reminiscent of the trouble Behn endured when Whitehall left her financially stranded in Antwerp.

102 Ballaster, drawing on the work of Staves, points out that in the wake of Popish Plot hysteria, "perjurers, Catholics forced to disavow their church in order to escape persecution, became the recipients of public sympathy in this period" because they could not be loyal to both Church and State. She analyses Behn's conciliatory theme of vow-breaking as "an inevitability rather than a choice. There can be little doubt that Behn's dramatization of the destructive confrontation between a concept of absolute moral justice (the inherent truth-telling capacities of the word) and the contingencies of political and social survival (in the form of a feminocentric tale of love) was one of the major causes of her popularity as a fiction-writer in the late seventeenth century" (*Seductive Forms*, 83–84).

103 Walker points out that pamphlets salaciously portraying these Continental convents as "dens of iniquity" were not only anti-Catholic but were also expressive of English Protestant anxiety over women's autonomy and leadership (53–54). Several scholars have explored Behn's proto-feminist subversion of misogynist tropes, such as lascivious renderings of feminine desire. See Craft, 821–38; and Ballaster, "Fiction Feigning Femininity: False Counts and Pageant Kings in Aphra Behn's Popish Plot Writings," *Aphra Behn Studies*, 50–65. For Bowers's analysis of feminine desire in the amatory fiction genre, see 55–60.

104 Todd, *Secret Life*, 368.

wants to proffer stories of desiring nuns because, in addition to expressing Tory angst, such stories were highly profitable. So the narrator of *The History of the Nun* self-consciously tempers her tale's resemblance to then-popular anti-Catholic pornography by asserting her own Catholic ties: "I once was design'd an humble Votary in the House of Devotion" (3:212). To further divert audiences from the anti-Catholic valence of these salacious tales, Behn locates the convents in the Netherlands, so their licentious character will carry a Hollandophobic, instead of anti-Catholic, frisson.[105] A look back to the lampoonery of two brazen Dutch women in *Love-Letters* reveals Behn's precedent. In that narrative, a Dutch countess aggressively prostitutes herself to one of Silvia's many suitors, Alonzo,[106] and Silvia's maid Antonett pursues Philander's servant, Brilljard,

> with that passion those of that Country do almost all handsom Strangers, and one convenient principle of the Religion of that Country is to think it no sin to be kind while they are single Women, tho otherwise (when Wives) they are just enough, nor does a Woman that manages her affairs thus discreetly meet with any reproach, of this humour was our *Antonett* who persu'd her Lover out half jealous there might be some amorous intrigue between her Lady and him, which she sought in vain by all the feable Arts of her Countries Sex to get from him. (149–50)

Behn deploys the Hollandophobic allegation that Dutch women are too sexually free to keep the sexual content in *The Fair Jilt* and *The History of the Nun* aligned with contemporary English mores. In *The Fair Jilt*, Miranda's aristocratic Beguinage in Antwerp does not require vows of perpetual chastity, and suitors are especially eager to court the *Fille-Devotes* because their pretence of chastity is more resolute than that of their uncloistered counterparts. They

> live with the Reputation of being retir'd from the World a little more than ordinary, and because there is a sort of difficulty to approach 'em, they are the People the most courted, and liable to the greatest Temptations; for as difficult as it seems to be, they receive Visits from all the Men of the best Quality, especially Strangers. (3:10)

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105 In his analysis of seventeenth-century English anxiety about Dutch society, Gabbard notes the contemporary belief that "excessive desire often was thought to 'masculinize' a woman," and discusses Felltham's accusations about Dutch gender inversion, whereby women pursue men (120).

106 The countess informs Alonzo that she has "set a price upon her Beauty." Alonzo "fansied it was the assurance of my Heart she meant; but she very frankly replyed, Sir, you may spare your Pains, and five hundred Pistols will ease you of a great deal of trouble, and be the best Argument of your Love" (389).

Miranda inverts traditional gender roles by virtually raping the handsome and well-born Father Francisco (formerly Prince Henrick), and before that abuse, she treats him like a prostitute (just as the women in the crowd treat Octavio at his ordination). Miranda, who has broken many hearts prior to the poetic justice of getting her heart broken by Father Francisco, registers her own erotic diminishment by attempting to bribe him with the "Trifles, as he [Francisco/Henrick] call'd em" of previous suitors (3:21), and Behn casts the offering Miranda gives him during a church ceremony as an erotic pay-off:

> She gaz'd upon him, while he bow'd before her, and waited for her Charity, till she perceiv'd the lovely *Friar* to blush and cast his Eyes to the Ground ... . [She] easily betray'd the Satisfaction she took in looking on him; while the good Man, having receiv'd her Bounty, after a very low Obeisance, proceeded to the rest. (3:12)

Behn gives *The Fair Jilt*'s gender inversion a Hollandophobic provenance by presenting it alongside allusions to Dutch materialism and class instability. For example, Behn wryly equates Miranda's sister Alcidiana with a social-climbing streetwalker when she describes Alcidiana's pseudo-regal church-going equipage:

> she had her Gentleman bare before her, carrying a great Velvet Cushion, with great golden Tassels, for her to kneel on ... followed by innumerable Footmen, Pages and Women. And in this State she wou'd walk in the Streets, as in those Countries 'tis the Fashion for the great Ladies to do, who are well. (3:30)

With similar criticism of Dutch pretence, Behn equivocally punishes Miranda's debasement of the aristocratic Henrick/Francisco by marrying her off to a fake Dutch royal, who "own'd himself Prince *Tarquin,* of the Race of the last Kings of *Rome*" (3:27). Miranda, who is deeply status-conscious, is delighted by the match (3:28), but the joke is on her, because Tarquin turns out to be "but a Merchant's Son of *Holland*" (3:42).[107] Like Octavio and Vander Albert, Tarquin becomes

107 The narrator elsewhere celebrates the fact that Miranda's sister Alcidiana's "young Count, who before shou'd have marry'd her, now went off for want of Fortune; and a young Merchant (perhaps the best of the two) was the Man to whom she was destin'd" (3:47). McKeon has suggested that *The Fair Jilt* attacks corrupt aristocrats and that Behn thus proves "Tarquin's true nobility by cleansing him of genealogical nobility" (*Origins of the English Novel,* 259). I disagree with this reading and believe the narrator's apparent open-mindedness towards merchants is intended to distance Behn and the narrator from Miranda and Alcidiana's materialism and status-consciousness. On Behn's effort to distance herself from Miranda, see Jane Spencer, "Not Being a Historian: Women Telling Tales in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century England," *Contexts of Pre-Novel Narrative: The*

a heroine's attractive but subtly duplicitous benefactor. As with Octavio and Sebastian's kinship, Behn uses Tarquin's faux elitism to highlight the downside of otherwise tempting Dutch affluence.

Behn similarly employs Hollandophobic nuance in *The History of the Nun*, set in the French-occupied town of Ypres. The heroine Isabella's uncontrollable sexual desire eventually leads her to murder two husbands. Behn moderates the tale's salaciousness via tropes about Dutch oxymoronic identity, materialism, and amorality. Like Octavio and Tarquin, Isabella has a mixed nature: she is a virtuous murderess.[108] The moral landscape in this Netherlandic convent narrative is as chaotic as the "*lope scellum lope*" mentality Behn refers to in the Holland of *Love-Letters*.[109] At the beginning of the narrative, Isabella's father, who had entrusted her to the Ypres nunnery when she was just two, has given her the chance to decide if she will leave or stay when she turns thirteen. He depends on the "discretion of the Lady *Abbess*, who was a Lady of known Piety, and admirable strictness of Life, and so nearly related to *Isabella*, that there was no doubt made of her Integrity and Justice" (3:213). This abbess leaves much to be desired as Isabella's moral compass, for she turns out to be as mercenary as she is pious. As Isabella mulls her decision, the narrator relates that because the abbess is "very loth to part with her [Isabella's] considerable Fortune, which she must resign, if she returned into the World, she us'd all her Arts and Stratagems to make her become a *Nun*, to which all the fair Sisterhood contributed their Cunning" (3:214).

The mercenary vapour that suffuses the Dutch setting in *Love-Letters* similarly clings to Isabella. After she decides to give in to her illicit love of Henault (whose name Behn may have drawn from the southern Netherlandic province of Hainault), and he expresses concern about his ability to financially support her, she angrily urges him not to sully their love with materialistic concerns. At that point, she believes they can aspire to the pastoral aristocratic idyll where love is "*unmix'd with any other Sentiment*." She suggests they may be able to "*laugh at Fortune, and the Proud, despise the duller World, who place their*

European Tradition, ed. Roy Eriksen (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 329–34.

108 Pearson discusses Behn's refusal to bridge or ameliorate Isabella's contradictory nature in "The History of *The History of the Nun*," *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, ed. Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 234–52.

109 See Pearson, "Gender and Narrative," 50–53, on the moral ambiguity which characterizes all three texts, especially with regard to guilt versus innocence, and 181–84 on Behn's reversal of gender roles in *Love-Letters* and *The Fair Jilt*.

Joys in mighty Shew and Equipage" (3:237–38). A moment later, though, as the couple yield to the eros of Earthly Venus, we find them pilfering the convent's treasury in the name of love (3:238). Even in their "honeymoon" stage, Behn casts the vow-breaking Isabella as, at best, a thrifty Dutch wife, "perpetually progging and saving all that she could, to enrich and advance her" (3:241).

The alluvial trope of foundational unsoundness, expounded upon by Restoration-era anti-Dutch pamphleteers, surfaces in Behn's work through her politically amphibious Dutch characterizations and settings. Just as Octavio's mixed identity serves Behn's larger goals with regard to Tory propaganda and personal profit, the Hollandophobic valences that accompany her oxymoronic Netherlandic convents allow her to court both Tories and the ascendant Whigs. Her Tory and Catholic audiences can read *The Fair Jilt* and *The History of the Nun* cathartically: even in recusant communities, disloyalty is inevitable. Whig readers who prefer the Dutch to Continental Catholics, but are still cognizant of the Dutch as rivals, can enjoy the semi-pornographic merger of anti-Catholic and anti-Dutch tropes. In *The Dutch Lover*, the Vander Albert/Van Bruin tale, *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, *The Fair Jilt*, and *The History of the Nun*, tropes of Dutch alterity helped Behn express international and domestic political tension through politically correct, because politically ambiguous, amatory fiction.[110]

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110 See Todd's description of Behn's talent for encoding, as spy and then as author in *Secret Life* (5–6). I would like to thank Amy Augenblick, Toni Bowers, Doris Merino, Jacqueline Pearson, John Richetti, Sara Schotland, Roy Schotland, Rhoda Trooboff, Jeremiah Wolsk, Nancy Coleman Wolsk, and two anonymous readers at *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*.