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Review of "Of Love and War" by Judy Hayden

Karen Gevirtz, *Seton Hall University*



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Of Love and War: The Political Voice in the Early Plays of Aphra Behn by Judy A. Hayden (review)

Karen Gevirtz

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Arguing that Behn's early plays should be read as responses to the political turmoil of the early part of Charles II's reign, Ms. Hayden contends that she "does not board the political bandwagon during the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis. Although her plays may have become more vocal and certainly more outwardly royalist after the Exclusion Crisis, they consistently express political content." Each of the five chapters has a common focus: the relationship between each play and the political issues of the early years of the Restoration. A Conclusion and Appendices provide the relevant period political documents.

Chapter One addresses *The Young King*, which Ms. Hayden dates to the period between 1664 and 1670. Relying on Frederick Link's 1968 Behn biography, Ms. Hayden uses the dedication, a document usually used to help date the play's origins, to reject the notion that the play was begun or that an early draft was written while she was in Surinam, as well as the theory that it was revised during the 1670s. "That she was able to revive this play in 1679 owes much to the similarity of the political issues of Restoration and Exclusion." Chapter One also discusses the romance plot taken from *La Calprenède*, the inclusion of a Druid among the characters, gender, the play's use of the restoration plot that is characteristic of Carolean drama—a term used interchangeably with "Caroline literature," "Restoration-type drama," and "Restoration drama"—the play's effort to historicize the Stuart monarchy, and the "parallel in Polish/Swedish historical events during the reign of Sigismund III with those in mid-seventeenth-century England," which Ms. Hayden calls "remarkable."

The other chapters on the plays also follow this form: they open with a description of a historical situation, identify issues in the dramas, and provide descriptions or lists of contemporary male-authored plays that share with Behn's a technique (a character like a Druid or a Moor) or an issue (such as incest). Chapter Two argues that "The Forc'd Marriage is a restoration-type play that re-historicizes the events surrounding the collapse of the Interregnum government and the return of the Stuart monarchy." In Chapter Three, Ms. Hayden explains that in *The Amorous Prince*, Behn criticizes not Charles II's sexual exploits nor his preference for sex over governing, but the courtiers who supply women to tempt him. Yet Behn's drama, like those of her male contemporaries, "demonstrate[s] public anxiety about the King's lack of sexual restraint." With *The Dutch Lover*, the subject of Chapter Four, "Behn reaches her stride as a shrewd and competitive playwright." The play was a miserable failure, however, and Ms. Hayden accepts Behn's claim that it was the actors that killed it: "Hippolyta's questioning of gender privilege must have been both intimidating and shocking to the male hierarchy. That the actors intentionally sabotaged the play, then, is perhaps not surprising, and, under the circumstances, the lack of approval from her audience is unfortunate, but understandable." Chapter Five on *Abdelazer* maintains that his "point is that contemporary contention about Catholicism is merely a means to distract and to divide the polity over the chief issue at stake—the succession"—thus positing religious issues as separate and a diversion from the real problems of royal succession. Much of this chapter draws parallels between the character of the Queen and the actual Duchess of Portsmouth; for example, "While the Queen rifles the treasury for her lover in this play, the expensive Duchess of Portsmouth spent money in lavish receptions and refurbished on numerous occasions her sumptuous apartments. The estimate is that with her pensions and her presents, she cost the country nearly £40,000 annually."

The conclusion, focusing on a justification for viewing Behn's early plays within the context of her male contemporaries, reviews women's opportunities to enter the public sphere during the Civil

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War, Commonwealth, and Restoration, and also speculates about what Behn thought and felt. Primarily, however, it seems designed to inveigh against critics who label her a “feminist,” although what either they—whoever they are—or Ms. Hayden mean by that term remains undisclosed...

at roughly the same time in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. For example, the section on Wales begins with the well-known transplant, Katharine Philips, who in her poem “On the Welch Language” “engages with Wales” in “almost ethnographic tones,” while noting that the local language “hath her beauty Lost.” Ms. Chedzoy places in dramatic parallel with Philips one Magdalen Lloyd, a transplant from Wales in domestic service in London, whose memories provide comfort and “human connections despite geographical separation.”

The chapter on “Women’s Writings and the Memory of War” examines Bradstreet’s mediation of past history and current civil war in the 1640s. Attention is also turned to the step-daughters of Margaret Cavendish—Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish—and their turn to memories that sustained them through the trials of the Civil War, while their father was first in battle and later in exile, and their ancestral homes were besieged and sometimes occupied by Roundheads. Not enough is done with these two fascinating women. Their manuscript collection, Bod. MS. Rawl. 16, an admixture of verse; a play about marriage choices, *Concealed Fancies*; and a strange *Pastorall* involving witches, is discussed without much logic, and, oddly, there is no reference to the publication of *Concealed Fancies* (ed. Nathan Comfort Starr, *PMLA*, 1931). But the chapter turns quickly to Lady Hester Pulter, whose manuscript in the Brotherton Collection (Lt q 32) contains over one hundred poems and an unfinished prose romance, this latter not discussed. Pulter’s poems are highly political, and use public spaces and landscapes as sites of memory for the lost world of the Royalists in the 1640s. Although the poems discussed are not given dates and are quickly reviewed, they show that Pulter is a writer who needs

more attention. Lucy Hutchinson is also surveyed too quickly, and it seems as a counterbalance to the royalism of the other women discussed in the chapter.

The final section, “Atlantic Removes, Memory’s Travels,” is given over to Behn and Mary Rowlandson, returning the focus to the Americas. Both authors purport to write histories, and both present memories of the “Other.” While one can enjoy imagining Behn as a Bible-reciting memorialist as Rowlandson is, it is Rowlandson who demonizes the “Other” in presenting the horrors of her captivity while Behn celebrates the memory of the African Oroonoko and of the Caribs, a people approaching a praeternatural state in a prelapsarian Eden before corruption by the English and the Dutch. As good as the discussion of the role of memory is in this section, one longs for a discussion of what Behn and Rowlandson have left out, especially Rowlandson, whose account lacks the coherence that Behn appears to muster.

This handbook is a useful survey of the use of memory and memorial techniques in seventeenth-century writings by women. In-depth analyses will wait for others who build on Ms. Chedzoy’s recovery.
Mary Ann O’Donnell Manhattan College

JUDY A. HAYDEN. *Of Love and War: The Political Voice in the Early Plays of Aphra Behn*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010. Pp. 303. €63; \$85.

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