



Quantitative Literary Analysis of the Works of Aphra Behn

Words of Passion

By *Laura L. Runge*

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Explores the works of Aphra Behn (1640–1689) synchronically through word counts and statistical measures.

Aphra Behn (1640–1689), a prolific and popular playwright, poet, novelist, and translator, has an extensive corpus of literature that plays a key role in literary history as the work of a female author. Based upon word counts, *Quantitative Literary Analysis of the Works of Aphra Behn* chronicles Behn's obsession with the mystery and power of love and early modern passions through her entire oeuvre. Love, for Behn, is an external power, sometimes figured as the boy god Cupid or an abstraction, that enters the body with pain and pleasure and leaves the victim searching for understanding. The book follows two threads of argument: one using quantitative measures to indicate passages for significant close reading of preferred language and the other focused upon her use of small words like *thou*, *sir*, or *said*. Situating her writings in the conflicts of Early Modern discourses on the passions, the book demonstrates that Behn's language reveals generic patterns for representing love that include a warning about its potential to destroy the body and condemn the soul. Taken as a whole, Behn's literary production is an extraordinary examination of the early modern concept of love at a moment of change in the language and meaning of the passions.

Key selling points

- Situates Behn in the context of Early Modern passions and offers a new interpretation of Behn's unique representation of love and the passions.
- The first monograph dedicated to comprehensive coverage of Aphra Behn's works, including all poems, plays, and prose.
- A new blend of methodologies using computational quantitative techniques for literary criticism; broadens the scope of conventional methods of close reading.

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About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Laura L. Runge is a professor of English at the University of South Florida. She specializes in women's writing of the long eighteenth century, digital humanities, and book history.

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