This volume of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn* is comprised of plays from the final years of Behn’s writing life: *The City-Heiress*, probably first performed and published in 1682; *The Luckey Chance*, performed and almost certainly published in 1686; *The Emperor of the Moon*, performed and first published in 1687 (republished in 1688); *The Widdow Ranter*, performed in 1689 and published either later that year or in early 1690; and *The Younger Brother*, probably first performed and certainly published in 1696. In the case of *The Widdow Ranter*, this volume provides both the prologue and epilogue written for the play’s first performance, and the different prologue and epilogue included in the first printed edition (here given in an appendix, pp. 700–03). The volume does not include Behn’s theatrical paratexts for other writers’ work during this period – her prologues and epilogues for *Romulus and Hersilia* (1682) and prologue for *Valentinian* (1684) – or the prologue and epilogue for her own *Like Father, Like Son*, a lost play of 1682. All of these paratextual verses, published as broadsides in Behn’s lifetime, are included with her poetry in Volume v.

Editorially, Volume iv follows the general principles for *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn* in the respects applicable to drama, as set out in full in Volume i. It is organised by date of first performance rather than by first publication or composition. (For this reason, *The Young King* – probably first performed in 1679 though not published until 1682 – is included in Volume iii.) As with the rest of the edition, the central aims are here to reconstruct Behn’s own intentions for her works, insofar as these can be determined, and to place her texts within the linguistic, cultural, and political contexts that were available to her first audiences and readers. Given the dramatic focus of the volume, the edition-wide objective of locating Behn’s works in relation to the institutions of the book trade is complemented by the parallel objective of orienting her texts within the conventions and conditions of the London theatres. Details of our editorial practice are outlined in the Editorial Conventions section that follows, while play-specific information can be found in the editorial section and its Textual Headnote prefacing each work.

The five plays printed in Volume iv include three that were performed and published during the last years of Behn’s life, as well as two that first reached
public audiences only after her death in 1689. Politically, these years (1682–96) stretch from the immediate aftermath of the Exclusion Crisis (c. 1679–81), through the three years of James II and VII’s reign (1685–88), to the 1688 Revolution and the accession of William and Mary; the last play to be attributed to Behn, *The Younger Brother*, was first performed two years after the death of Mary II. In the theatre, these fourteen years witnessed many changes in dramatic tastes, from Exclusion-era political tragedies such as *Venice Preserv’d* and *The Sicilian Usurper* in the early 1680s, to the comedies of a new generation of playwrights such as William Congreve, Mary Pix, and John Vanbrugh in the mid 1690s. Institutionally, the period also witnessed two major upheavals within the London theatre: the 1682 merger of the King’s and the Duke’s companies to form the United Company, followed twelve years later by that organisation’s break-up and the subsequent formation of the Lincoln’s Inn Fields Company. Behn was unusual among dramatists of the later 1680s in continuing to write for the commercial theatre – albeit less frequently than in the 1670s – even after the creation of the United Company had greatly reduced opportunities for new plays; and, as the staging and publication of *The Widdow Ranter* and *The Younger Brother* demonstrate, she was to remain a marketable dramatist even after her death.

For Behn, the years from 1682 to 1689 were the busiest and most diverse of her writing life. As Volumes v–viii of this edition indicate, this was the period when she was most active across a range of non-dramatic literary genres. Such generic diversification can be attributed to both financial imperatives – her need to find new sources of income amid the dearth of theatrical opportunities in the 1680s – and an interest in literary experimentation evident in her writing since the early 1670s. Already active as a poet in the 1670s and early 1680s, when her published verse included a commendatory poem for Edward Howard’s *The Six Days Adventure*, as well as several songs reproduced in miscellanies and songbooks, and the literary imitation ‘A Paraphrase on Oenone to Paris’, she was to move in the mid and late 1680s into such new poetic genres as panegyrics on royal events and Aesopian satire, as well as publishing her own single-authored *Poems upon Several Occasions* (1684). Over the same period she established a reputation in the modish fields of prose fiction and translation, and edited two literary miscellanies. Her ability to produce non-dramatic texts of such range, innovation, and sheer quantity alongside maintaining a successful career in the theatre is rare and remarkable.

Behn’s plays of this period also exhibit impressive diversity in terms of both genre and subject matter. *The City-Heiress* and *The Luckey Chance* continue in the tradition of London-based comedies previously evident in *The Town-Fopp* (1676, pub. 1677) and *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678) but with a different political focus,
following on from her topically inflected historical drama, *The Roundheads* (1681, pub. 1682). *The Emperor of the Moon*, a farce, brought Italian *commedia dell’arte* up to date with an admixture of scientific satire, in a dazzlingly successful comedy that continued to attract audiences well into the eighteenth century. *The Widdow Ranter*, another politically inflected historical drama, can be linked with her near contemporary prose fiction *Oroonoko* due to the two works’ innovative American settings; it also represents a reversion to tragicomedy, a genre she had not utilised since *The Forc’d Marriage* (1670, pub. 1671). *The Younger Brother*, a comedy of familial inheritance and sexual intrigue, is more difficult to situate within Behn’s career as its late emergence, seven years after her death, leaves so much unclear – most importantly, when it was written and how much of the published text can be attributed to Behn.

By the early 1680s Behn had been writing for the London theatre for over a decade, and had formed many professional, cultural, and political connections. The plays included in the present volume saw her collaborating with a wide range of theatrical and book trade professionals, as well as seeking the patronage of a number of public figures. The text of *The City-Heiress*, for instance, attests to her professional relationship with the booksellers Thomas Brown and Thomas Benskin, who were responsible for its publication. It also evinces links with the playwright Thomas Otway, who provided the prologue; leading actors such as Elizabeth Barry, Thomas Betterton, Charlotte Butler, Thomas Jevon, Anthony Leigh, and James Nokes; and the nameless ‘Person of Quality’ who supplied the epilogue. Dedicated to the Earl of Arundel, a member of the powerful Howard family, the play aligned Behn firmly with the anti-Popish Plot and anti-Exclusionist cause, with which the earl himself was publicly associated. Arundel’s courage in speaking out against the Plot, despite the risk to his own safety, is lauded by Behn in her dedicatory epistle.

Comparable evidence of professional and political connectedness can also be found in her other plays of the period. Behn seems to have been skilled in writing for the talents of individual performers, many of whom worked with her repeatedly. Barry, Betterton, and Nokes, already seasoned Behn performers, were all to act in *The Luckey Chance*, while Leigh and Jevon took part both in that play and in *The Emperor of the Moon*. The young Anne Bracegirdle, later one of the most successful actors of her generation, was to enjoy an early leading role as the Indian Queen in *The Widdow Ranter*. While Behn, unlike some writers of her generation – notably Dryden – did not publish habitually with a particular bookseller, she did place multiple works with the same firm(s). Just as Brown and Benskin, who issued *The City-Heiress*, had previously published *The Roundheads*, Joseph Knights and Francis Saunders, booksellers for
The Emperor of the Moon, later issued Lycidus (1688). William Canning, who published The Luckey Chance, was to be Behn’s most frequent bookseller in her final years, responsible for texts including The Fair Jilt, Oroonoko, A Discovery of New Worlds (all 1688), and A Congratulatory Poem to Queen Mary (1689). Her dedications of The Luckey Chance to Laurence Hyde, Earl of Rochester, and The Emperor of the Moon to Charles Somerset, Marquess of Worcester, also signal her continuing engagement with contemporary politics and politicians, even in works with less central or obvious political concerns.

Behn’s connections with other writers, like her popularity with both audiences and readers, were to continue even after her death. The Widdow Ranter was performed posthumously in 1689 with a prologue and epilogue provided by John Dryden – his first known work alongside Behn since Ovid’s Epistles in 1680. Like Behn, Dryden had opposed William III’s accession to the throne; his puns on rebellion, plots, and William’s Irish wars in his Widdow Ranter paratexts suggest that he recognised these shared loyalties, which may in part explain his willingness to write on her behalf. The early 1690s were to see Behn maintain a frequent presence within the London book trade: a second edition of Abdelazer appeared in 1693, poems attributed to her were published for the first time in 1691 and 1692, and a collected edition of her prose fiction, The Histories and Novels of the Late Ingenious Mrs Behn, appeared in 1696. A dramatised version of Oroonoko, by Thomas Southerne, first staged in late 1695, was closely followed by The Younger Brother, published in 1696 under the aegis of Charles Gildon. Both her work and her name had retained popularity.

Like many of the texts posthumously attributed to Behn, including both poems and prose fiction, The Younger Brother raises complex questions of authorship and attribution. These issues have been explored through traditional literary and modern computational methods in preparation for this edition. Both the methods and their findings are discussed in the editorial note to The Younger Brother in the present volume.