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Oroonoko: Birth of a Paradigm

Moira Ferguson

Introduction

THOUGH CHRONOLOGICALLY not the first text by an Englishwoman to address colonial slavery, *Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave* (1688) by Aphra Behn made the splashiest and most influential contemporary public statement and generated a paradigm for British colonialist discourse.¹ Elements of the paradigm inevitably shifted as historical events unfolded, but the basic construction of antislavery discourse remained in place well beyond the passage of the Emancipation Act in 1834. The diverse, seemingly contradictory hermeneutics of *Oroonoko* directly bear on the paradigm that emerged.

For three centuries critics have tried to batten down the thematics of *Oroonoko*. It is interpreted variously as the “first literary abolitionist [text] . . . on record in the history of fiction”; a political allegory about “James, Mary, and the unborn . . . prince” that argues the “absolute power of legitimate kings”; a model of “colonial realism”; “pure romanticism” by “an incurable romantic”; the “source of the English novel”; and a debate about the concept of honor.² Sympathetic to all of these readings, this essay further suggests that the text’s protean nature relates to Aphra Behn’s politically ambivalent views about royalty and colonial supremacy, and about the multiple relationships among author-narrator, *Oroonoko*, and the colonists. First, the difference in age between Behn and the narrator, a Behn projection, that determines their different perspectives on events is worth noting. Entranced by romantic love, the youthful narrator (who discusses prominent contemporaries and whom Behn in the preface claims to be herself) admires *Oroonoko*’s heroic stand against slavery and deplores his punishment when captured. At this level the text functions as a eulogy. As the forty-eight-year-old author, Behn fuses this perspective with an assault on usurpation of royal authority. Narrator Behn, that is, undermines or sabotages her own youthful views with her later ones in a form of self-conflict. Meanwhile, as a consistent advocate of slavery (evident elsewhere in her

writings), she twice has her narrator abandon her hero-friend at critical junctures. Additionally, she constructs West African reality Eurocentrically in a discourse that I shall call Anglo-African. By Anglo-Africanism I mean a colonialist discourse about slavery that unwittingly intensified negative attitudes toward Africans in general and slaves in particular. In Winthrop Jordan's words, "to be Christian was to be civilized rather than barbarous, English rather than African, white rather than black."³

Second, although the romantic tale of *Oroonoko* and Imoinda absorbs the fifteen-year-old Behn, the more worldly Behn of 1688 in three subtle textual epiphanies chafes at misogynous sway and its wounding effect on tenacious females denied lawful authority.

Third, in exposing barbarous colonial administrators wantonly exceeding the limits of their power, Behn obliquely indicts the "upstarts" who overthrew Charles I and now threaten James II. More to a personal point, these same usurpers disempowered Behn herself in Surinam. Thus as a multilayered, semiautobiographical tale, *Oroonoko* affirms Behn's consistent royalist politics at the same time that it reveals her evolving perspective on women. Certainly her readership decoded the tale as an act of revenge against specific contemporaries in Caribbean government whom Behn exposes as calculating sadists. Throughout the eighteenth century this condemnation continued in Thomas Southerne's version of *Oroonoko* and, even today, in the current recuperation of Behn's literary reputation.⁴

I. The Debate About Slavery

Baldly stated, the plot of *Oroonoko* centers on a royal prince in West Africa, Oroonoko, who is in love with and soon betrothed to Imoinda, the daughter of a slain general. No dates are given, but documented historical events occur in the 1660s as Britain secures its foothold in the slave trade.⁵ Angered by Imoinda's love for Oroonoko and not himself, Oroonoko's grandfather sells her into slavery, an act solidly condemned by the narrator. A slaver captain and former friend then treacherously kidnaps Oroonoko in West Africa and sells him in Surinam to a Mr. Trefry, overseer of a vast plantation there. Once in the Caribbean, Oroonoko and Imoinda serendipitously meet, marry, and conceive a child. Fearing lifelong enslavement, Imoinda goads Oroonoko into orchestrating a slave rebellion that then fails disastrously. As part of a suicide pact, Oroonoko kills Imoinda, after which he is caught and tortured to death by command of colonial officials.

The traditional argument that *Oroonoko* marks the first antislavery fiction in the English language turns on Oroonoko's fiery exhortation to the slaves, since all other textual commentary points in a proslavery direction. The passage begins when "Imoinda began to show she was with child, and did nothing but sigh and weep for the captivity of her lord, herself, and the infant yet unborn, and believed, if it were so hard to gain the liberty of two [note: not all the slaves] it would be more difficult to get that for three" (55). Oroonoko (by this time renamed Caesar) reacts to Imoinda's promptings with a stirring speech to the slaves:

And why, my dear friends and fellow-sufferers, should we be slaves to an unknown people? Have they vanquished us nobly in fight? Have they won us in honourable battle? And are we by the chance of war become their slaves? . . . No, but we are bought and sold like apes or monkeys, to be the sport of women, fools and cowards: and the support of rogues and runagades, that have abandoned their country for rapine, murders, thefts and villainies. . . . And shall we render obedience to such a degenerate race, who have not one human virtue left to distinguish them from the vilest creatures? Will you, I say, suffer the lash from such hands? (56)

In inveighing so categorically against slavery, this passage connects to and intertextualizes an earlier assault on slaves' treatment in Surinam, launched in the London press in 1667 by one George Warren: slaves there, he hisses, "are sold like dogs, and no better esteem'd but for their Work sake, which they perform all the Week with the severest usages for the slightest fault."⁶ Small wonder that the Deputy Governor of Surinam, William Byam, testified in 1665 to their fierce reactions: the "insolencies of our Negroes, killing our stock, breaking open houses . . . and some flying into the woods in rebellion," approximately one year after Aphra Behn's probable arrival in Surinam.⁷

Oroonoko's speech also raises a current abiding concern of the Royal African Company which at that time held the slave trade monopoly: that independent traders desist from kidnapping princes and "other important personages."⁸ Walter Rodney comments that the counterproductive turmoil generated in slave communities by the captivity of nobles taught Europeans to leave African nobility alone "so long as that noble had not been voluntarily given up by his fellows."⁹ Behn's text graphically illustrates the source of the Royal Africa Company's complaints. Moreover, since the royal monopoly on trading was persistently challenged during these years, her text also quietly emphasizes the economic value of the monopoly

and castigates the instability caused by such “interlopers” as the captain who kidnapped Oroonoko.¹⁰

But despite the obvious reasons for revolt, the construction of Oroonoko’s speech raises questions both about his motives and the narrator’s. In her own words, the “told-to” narrator reports more than half the speech and excoriates dehumanization. She upholds Christian values and invalidates African beliefs about joining ancestors as free beings after death when she has Oroonoko claim that slavery will last “for eternity”: “He told them, it was not for days, months or years, but for eternity” (56). Voicing (and voiced) in the first person—a rare occurrence in Anglo-Saxon texts—West African Prince Oroonoko addresses “underlings” in the tones of a superior, deplores his own enslavement, and (in ominous prophecy) his role as the “sport of women, fools, and cowards.” His conscious self-exclusion from the majority of slaves in his use of the second person when he mentions the lash, and his temporary identification with slaves whom he may have originally sold into slavery lend lavish irony to his exhortations. After all, he profited from and perpetuated slavery in his own country, and has just tried to bribe overseer Trefry “with gold or a vast quantity of slaves” into freeing himself and Imoinda (42). Nor is it likely that Oroonoko could be talking English to African men, even if we suppose (which is unlikely) that they were all from Coromantien. Behn assumes authorial license here in collectivizing the slaves’ ethnicity, or conjures up the scene in its entirety because the scenario she presents is a fantasy. Specifically, Behn exemplifies what President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana termed much later “the Balkanization of Africa.” The division of kingdoms made it “easy for the slavers to set one group against another.”¹¹

The people from that region in question (today’s Ghana) would have spoken Ashanti, Fanti, and possibly some less widely spoken languages such as Twi and Ga.¹² Additionally, there might well have been captives present from other regions, some of whom Oroonoko is apparently attempting to resell. Or he could have been negotiating an exchange with Trefry that depends on Oroonoko’s returning to West Africa and shipping gold and slaves to Trefry. The unrealities build on one another. So the narrator’s reconstruction (allowing for the existence of an original rousing speech) alerts us to a certain unreality in Oroonoko’s expostulations and the slaves’ dramatized univocal response. Yet, again, a skeptical onlooker might wonder at the ready acquiescence of slaves to a noble prince who enjoys an unencumbered existence in Surinam where the rest of the slaves

endure, according to Oroonoko's own account, a ravaged quotidian reality.

In the wake of the failed rebellion, Oroonoko compounds his barely veiled sense of class supremacy by scorning slaves who followed their wives' advice to choose pardon and self-preservation over recapture and possible death. African marriage within the slave community, frequently forbidden as a formal institution by Europeans, is unrealistically taken for granted. Oroonoko seems insensitive to the plight and conflicts of his fellow slaves, so drastically different in many ways from his own. Once the rebels are overcome, the prince tells Byam, the lieutenant governor of Surinam from 1662 to 1667, "he had rather die than live upon the same earth with such dogs" (61). Thus the slaves are divided among themselves, with the "racial difference" of the majority highlighted and disparaged: a Europeanized Oroonoko contrasts with the "fetishization" of native cowardice and vacillation, with everyone conveniently lumped into the collective "they" of the colonial other.¹³ Oroonoko's contentions about the slaves, since he is more lifelike than the silenced majority, press home an old Eurocentric stereotype of the "savagery" of Africans. Certainly the slaves reneged on a verbal contract to fight to the death. But their reasons were as good as Oroonoko's when, in a later episode, he breaks his pact with Imoinda to kill her and then himself after he avenges them both. By positioning slaves and not the "degenerate [European] race" as the "other," as individuals apart from an articulate individual like himself, one with the power to speak, Oroonoko reasserts royal power and his class identification with British colonial rule. He affirms the propriety of a ruler's outlook that coincides with Behn's uncompromising royalist perspective.

None of these reservations denies the emotional impact of Oroonoko's speech, "perhaps the first important abolitionist statement in the history of English literature," nor his hyperbolically magnificent personal heroism.¹⁴ A critical presence in the text, the actualization of a resistance the reader has long awaited, that speech unfurls the flag on the atrocities of slavery. We could and do welcome it as an "antislavery" tribute, but another keenly developed dimension of the text, as Professor K. A. Sey has pointed out, fundamentally undermines the impact: "the slave trade is not evil in itself, provided the dealers are 'gentlemen' or true Christians."¹⁵ As long as humane traffickers (not seen as a contradiction) and philanthropic plantation owners (ditto) run the institution and felicitously convert pagan Africans to Christianity and hence to "civilized" values, then slavery

and the slave trade can blend harmoniously with the aristocratic ethic. As someone who tries to instruct Imoinda “to the knowledge of the true God” and dispel Oroonoko’s disdain for the holy trinity, the narrator attempts just that (42).

Class relationships determine Aphra Behn’s outlook, for many aristocrats undoubtedly benefitted from slavery. The King himself held the Royal African Company’s monopoly. But slave traders on the whole were ostensibly arrogant and avaricious entrepreneurs who did not represent social and moral values cherished by aristocrats.¹⁶ Buy low, sell high was a practice far removed from the aristocratic ethic supposedly based on honor, chivalry, and heredity.

Aphra Behn’s proslavery and probenevolent plantation-owner views dovetail with ideas expressed elsewhere in her writings. Behn’s poem *To the Most Illustrious Prince Christopher, Duke of Albemarle, on His Voyage to His Government of Jamaica: A Pindarick* (1687) provides an especially telling example. The occasion of the poem is the Duke of Albemarle’s departure from London to assume his appointment as Governor of Jamaica. The sadness that his departure causes is paralleled, according to the narrator (surely an undisguised Behn, certainly a staunch royalist), by the good fortune of the island’s inhabitants, men and women of African descent, over whom he comes to rule. By stressing the Jamaicans’ good fortune, the narrator accentuates the Duke’s distance from barbarous (nonaristocratic) rulers, managers, slaveowners. His class defeated in the civil war, the Duke of Albemarle as governor (or feudal overlord) revives a culture in deep and reluctant decline from feudal structures. Behn appropriately draws on the language of Roman imperialism to set forth the advent of the usurping colonist:

Prepare, ye Sun-scorch’d Natives of the Shore,
Prepare another Rising Sun t’adore,
Such as has never blest your Horizon before.
And you the Brave Inhabitants of the Place,
Who have by Conquest made it all your own,
Whose Generous and Industrious Race
Has paid such Useful Tribute to the Crown;
See what your Grateful King for you has done!¹⁷

Despite assumptions about the unilateral happy response the Duke can anticipate, Behn also signals her awareness of potential peril when she describes doting parents as allowing their “Darling” to be exposed to “Dangers.” “With trembling Doubts and Fears at last they part, / With Vows and Pray’rs commit Him to Heav’ns Care” (8).

Behn's conspicuous omission of any explicit reference to slavery in this apostrophe to the Duke of Albemarle spotlights contemporary colonialist attitudes. Aside from predictable assumptions about Britain's right to economic "benefit" and "expansionism," Behn glosses over conditions she personally witnessed. More decisively, Behn intertextually reinscribes contemporary loathing for the ongoing spectacle of North African pirates kidnapping and enslaving Europeans in what was called Barbary Coast slavery. In the press, pamphlets, and published volumes, Restoration society deplored slavery when the enslaved were Europeans.¹⁸ No argument there.

In its cavalier dismissal (or evasion) of the reality of island life, *To the Most Illustrious Prince Christopher Duke of Albemarle* comments ironically on *Oroonoko*, published the following year. *Oroonoko* affirms the improbability of "Natives'" gratitude and the appropriateness of Albemarle family anxieties. *Oroonoko*, in other words, does not sustain an emancipationist reading. Power is problematized because Behn intends to protest and highlight her sympathy for illegitimate disempowerment of royalty. Oroonoko's commitment to emancipation lasts as long as his personal freedom depends on revolt. Take, for example, how the narrator explains why the British do not enslave South American Indians: "So that they [the Indians] being on all occasions very useful to us, we find it absolutely necessary to caress 'em as friends, and not treat 'em as slaves, nor dare we do other, their numbers so far surpassing ours in that continent" (5). Her nonchalance toward the indigenous peoples (though some argue she speaks ironically) bears a strong resemblance to the comfort she acquires from the fact that African military customs aid British merchants in acquiring slaves more easily.¹⁹ Opposition to slavery is not the point. Rulers' rights—British and African—are at stake. Oroonoko, his grandfather, and the Coromantien ruling class are implicated in the system of colonial slavery, although we could reasonably assume that Oroonoko would have no specific or only severely limited knowledge of the particular configuration slavery took outside of Africa: his only model of slavery is a traditional African one that he himself practiced.²⁰ We also learn that the impecunious and destitute palpably deserve slavery:

Those who want slaves, make a bargain with a master, or a captain of a ship, and contract to pay him so much a-piece, a matter of twenty pounds a head, for as many as he agrees for, and to pay for 'em when they shall be deliver'd on such a plantation. . . . Coramantien, a country of blacks so called, was one of those places in which they found the most advantageous trading for these slaves . . . *at least those common men who could not ransom*

themselves. Of these slaves so taken, the General only has all the profit; and of these Generals our captains and masters of ships buy all their freights. (5–6; my italics)

Nonetheless, despite certain assumptions about “great traders in that merchandize” usurping the “right” to decide for Africans, the narrator draws the line at the enslavement of Oroonoko and Imoinda.

Her disgust plain, she describes the captain’s treachery in selling Oroonoko and “an hundred of the noblest youths in the court” into slavery: “All in one instant [they] . . . were lashed fast in irons. . . . Some have commended this act as brave in the captain; but I will spare my sense of it” (31). The narrator (Behn) objects to this royal *class* of people being enslaved, not to the act of enslavement itself.²¹ Anyone who meddles with “legitimate” royal authority stands indicted. Earlier, for example, Oroonoko’s grandfather discovers that Imoinda still dotes on Oroonoko, and sells her out of jealousy as if she were a “common slave,” but in retrospect he regrets inflicting this “greatest revenge and the most disgraceful of any” fate on Imoinda and conceals the “affront” from Oroonoko.

The constant misrepresentation and romanticizing of African reality similarly undercuts an emancipationist reading. The picture drawn of the journey on the middle passage from West Africa to the Caribbean—to take an egregious example, since that voyage accounted for the deaths of approximately one-third of all slaves—is the material of fantasy.²² The captain placates Oroonoko with promises of freedom in order to secure cooperation from all other slaves who “bear their chains with . . . bravery.” Behn here is underlining the need for loyal, obedient “subjects.” Oroonoko is presumed to act in the slaves’ best interests; simple-minded and easily pleased, slaves assent, even relish a vile captivity, and revere this captain who is (the reader is asked to assume) unlike almost any other captain who transported Africans across a notorious source of terror—the middle passage—to which Olaudah Equiano in a later narrative bears testimony.²³ Oroonoko’s appearance, moreover (unlike that of “common slaves,” more like a hero of Restoration tragedy) conforms to Western standards of beauty and wholesale racist attitudes:²⁴ “His nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat. . . . The whole proportion and air of his face was so nobly and exactly formed, that, bating his colour, there could be nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome” (8). Likewise, the “natives of the place . . . have all that is called beauty, except the colour” (1, 3). African customs are decried as uncouth. Moreover,

when Oroonoko and “several English gentlemen” later prevail on the slaves to stop bemoaning the captivity of Oroonoko—who is “infinitely glad to find his grandeur confirmed by the adoration of all the slaves”—the slaves then prepare “all their barbarous music” (38). Whether Behn Europeanizes Oroonoko to accommodate her text to her audience, while perhaps not ascribing to racist physiognomical standards, remains an open question.

Scenes at the West African court also distort reality. Behn conjures up a picture of a Middle Eastern seraglio that more appropriately belongs in extravaganza tragedies such as John Dryden’s *Aureng-Zebe*, published in 1676.²⁵ Oroonoko’s superhuman encounter with a tiger (tigers in Africa?) is more grist for the mill of Euro-African fantasy and idealism. Once again, a glance at contemporary histories of warring West African tribes gives the lie to this romanticized, highly reductive charade. The damaging view of Africa as “uncivilized” reaches a high point of wild invention in the scene where Oroonoko kills Imoinda. Behn and those from whom her inventions derive seem oblivious to the fact that most African cultures tend to condemn killing for any purpose except war or sacrifice.²⁶ As Winthrop Jordan pointedly argues (in a different and later context), such romanticism signifies “a retreat from rational engagement with the ethical problem posed by Negro slavery.”²⁷ In Behn’s case, the clashing admixture of “real-life” tragedy and sentimental love emphasizes ideological conflict. Perhaps most striking of all is the narrator’s behavior when Oroonoko’s life hangs in the balance. First, just prior to his death, she states of her family that “You may believe we were in no little affliction for Caesar and his wife.” But when the reconnaissance group returns with Caesar, the narrator continues in a different vein: “and a great fire made before him, he should die like a dog, as he was” (71).

Both times—when Oroonoko is caught after the rebellion and when he is found after Imoinda’s death—the narrator leaves the scene of the torturous action and administrators act with impunity. Her absence enables them, “for I suppose I had authority and interest enough there, had I suspected any such thing, to have prevented it.” The first time “all the females [flew] down the river,” claiming to be scared of Oroonoko (63) whose army had no weapons to speak of; the second time the narrator was “fall[ing] into fits of dangerous illness upon [her] extraordinary melancholy” (71). In the narrator’s absence, he is savaged the first time and killed the second.

The question is why. Clearly the narrator’s adolescent flight underlies the moral corruption of a mercantilist usurping authority. On the other hand, too fearful or too melancholic to remain, does

she flee her own contradictions when he threatens the status quo? Or perhaps she acts consistently.²⁸ As long as Oroonoko behaves as her exotic playfellow, embracing European control as it were, she enjoys her adventurous life. She seems fascinated by racial difference. But once he rebels against the king (symbolically), her mask drops and off she goes. And does the older Behn, recapitulating old memories, condone the narrator's (her own) youthful departure? Does she signal with no remorse the instant "othering" of the prince-turned-rebel and the temporality of her friendship? "Behind the narrator's story [do] we read a second story, the author's story?"²⁹ This is the person, after all, who is designated (by said barbarous administrators) to "distract" Oroonoko from thinking about escape by shunting him on thrilling trips. At its core, the text exalts Oroonoko's heroism and rebellion as long as they do not threaten British colonialism and royal authority.

II. Feminist Polemic

The complex perspective on slavery becomes more discernible on the question of female subjugation, a condition many contemporary women were aware of and loudly protested. Behn's play concretely addresses the fact that "the marriage market was weighted against women," that "there were thirteen women to every ten men in London."³⁰ She had lamented women's marital powerlessness from the time of *The Forced Marriage* (1670), her first play, until *The Lucky Chance*, published two years before *Oroonoko*.³¹ Behn's political engagement with the lives of Anglo-Saxon women and colonial slaves sprang from her own, albeit imperfectly known, circumstances. Although her parentage, the details of her upbringing, and the reasons for her stay in Surinam remain controversial, certain facts are known: she was a spy for the king and, a royalist to the last, loyally refused to celebrate in print the accession of William and Mary. She condemned male domination and was persecuted in print (at least) for staking out a claim as a woman writer. According to poems and other biographical data, she related sexually to both men and women.

In line with feminist contemporaries and heirs, in a narrative with a geographical span from Britain to the African continent and the South America mainland, in a unique formulation Behn pronounces women's lives a form of slavery, and introduces a virtuous West African female as coprotagonist. This choice enables Behn to assault at one stroke forced marriage, rape, slavery, the repudiation

of women as other, and their reduction to biological beings. According to popular seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglo-Saxon prescriptions of the ideal woman, Imoinda's physical beauty and moral purity merge in a well-nigh perfect combination (she is "the beautiful black Venus . . . and of delicate virtues" [9]), her sexual objectification virtually inevitable in a society that legally buys and sells men and women.³²

Oroonoko is so consumed with her "lovely modesty," with "that softness in her look and sighs," that he brings her a gift of "an hundred and fifty slaves in fetters . . . trophies of her father's victories" (9–10). A tribute to Oroonoko's ardor, this gift is standard enough to warrant no comment. After West African battles, such enslavement traditionally followed, but—a critical difference—no stigma attached to these prisoners, nor was brutality a matter of course. Customarily regarded as apprentices in captivity, slaves could rise to positions of power like other citizens. In Calabar, for example, slaves were known to have become princes.³³

After agreeing to marry Oroonoko, Imoinda is summoned by Oroonoko's father, the "old monarch [who] saw, and burned . . . and would not delay his Happiness" (11). On penalty of death, Imoinda has to comply when he sends her the royal veil; her "sweetness and innocence of youth and modesty" are compromised and degraded when he forces her "to expose her lovely person to his withered arms" (15). Given the king's extensive regal and patriarchal authority, Imoinda has virtually no choice but to submit.

This perverse January-May alliance contrasts with Oroonoko's subtle ravishment of a sexually timid Imoinda, or perhaps an Imoinda more alive than Oroonoko to the consequences of the king's wrath toward both of them. Like the wives in the rebellion, she may be more realistic or prescient about punishment, especially since she is already his "victim." What's more, although Oroonoko gains a sexual victory with a hint of a Restoration rake about him, the double-voiced narrator compares Oroonoko's "ravishment" with the interminable assaults by the "hundred and odd years old" king while insisting straight-facedly on the joy of mutual "romantic" love. Through such widespread innuendo about Oroonoko's sexual conduct, perhaps the narrator unconsciously "defends" her own withdrawal from the site of torture after the rebellion. Female hesitation about rakish advances haunts Behn's low-profiled reenactment of a familiar form of subjection.³⁴

The Prince softly wakened Imoinda, who was not a little surprised with joy to find him there, and yet she trembled with a thousand fears. I believe

he omitted saying nothing to this young maid that might persuade her to suffer him to seize his own, and take the rights of love. And I believe she was not long resisting those arms where she so longed to be; and having opportunity, night, and silence, youth, love and desire, he soon prevailed, and ravished in a moment when his old grandfather had been endeavouring for so many months. (22)

Circumstances allowing Imoinda no time to resolve her apprehension, she justifies her conduct as if she were male property, noting “that what she did with his grandfather had robbed him [Oroonoko] of her virgin honour . . . having reserved that for him, to whom of right it belonged” (11). A magnanimous Oroonoko turns a blind eye on the fact “that she was wife to another” (11). Behn is reacting against the age’s sexual politics: “Men who cleverly planned seduction and women who wittily railed against men were exalted, and the losers were not so much the morally bad as the stupid, the naive and the emotionally self-indulgent.”³⁵ But Imoinda ends up in a no-win situation on both continents. When the king discovers her “treachery,” he orders her to be “sold off” (24). Later he regrets not having put her “nobly . . . to death” rather than selling her “like a common slave . . . [selling being] the greatest revenge, and the most disgraceful of any” punishment (25). When she arrives in Surinam, physical beauty, implicitly European-style, defines Imoinda once again: “the most charming black that ever was beheld on their plantation, about fifteen or sixteen years old. . . . I have [the narrator states earlier] seen a hundred white men sighing after her” (9). After overseer Trefry’s confession, the narrator reveals his infatuation with Imoinda and her “noble disdain” (39).

Once again Behn’s narrative soars to grotesquely fanciful Euro-African heights. How likely was it that a beautiful, powerless woman on the middle passage and a South American plantation, private property of European colonialists, would be accorded “private space” and remain unviolated? In this case, Oroonoko voices more realistic colonial sentiments, notably as an African who is (of course) ultimately less civilized than plantation overseer Trefry. And notably too the slaves act as one massive, unindividuated, corporeal body in eternal adoration.³⁶

The royal prince expresses his amazement at Trefry’s refusal to capitalize on his command and rape Imoinda, also called Clemene. In the same breath assuming a different posture, he praises Trefry’s nobility of manner. (Imoinda’s fear of rape is being conveyed through Trefry’s projection of Imoinda’s feelings.) The end of the passage punctuates the complexities of power relationships:

"I do not wonder!" replied the prince, "that Clemene should refuse slaves, being, as you say, so beautiful, but wonder how she escapes those that can entertain her as you can do, or why, being your slave, you do not oblige her to yield?" "I confess," said Trefry, "when I have, against her will, entertained her with love so long, as to be transported with my passion even above decency, I have been ready to make use of those advantages of strength and force nature has given me. But Oh! she disarms me with that modesty and weeping, so tender and moving, that I retire, and thank my stars she overcame me." The company laughed at his civility to a slave, and Caesar only applauded the nobleness of his passion and nature, since that slave might be nobler, or what was better, have true notions of honour and virtue in her. Thus passed they this night, after having received from the slaves all imaginable respect and obedience. (39–40)

Imoinda's name change to Clemene, a variation on Clemence or clemency (mercy and mildness), underscores her beautiful virtue admired on all sides. More importantly, Behn also raises the issue of "native alienation," of predators trying to expropriate the identity of their victims by renaming them. Like married women (Behn was one), captives lost their name or identity, legally bearing their owner's name until they died.³⁷ Beyond that, connections exist among superficially unrelated situations: aspects of Imoinda's plight, Behn's disquiet about the treatment doled out to her as a female dramatist, her displaced displeasure in being denied proper authority as a writer, and the status of British women in forced marriages. Yet Imoinda's protests on the eve of giving birth—she does "nothing but sigh and weep for the captivity of her Lord, herself, and the infant"—are represented as fitting responses for a prince's wife. Restoration society required a wife to be the family's moral guardian. (Oroonoko does not recognize the rebel wives' moral trusteeship.) What contradicts social prescription unexpectedly, however, is Imoinda's stance as the instigator-rebel who (like Behn in her fight to be recognized as a writer) fights to the bitter end. During the rebellion, she becomes the "heroic Imoinda, who grown big as she was did nevertheless press near her lord, having a bow and a quiver full of poisoned arrows, which she managed with such dexterity, that she wounded several, and shot the Governor into the shoulder" (60). (Below I discuss analogies between Imoinda's wounding of the Governor and Behn's use of her text to wound deputy Governor Byam.)

A sense of family and class status transforms Imoinda from victim to rebel and back to victim. Fearing that "if it were so hard to gain the liberty of two, it would be more difficult to get that for three," she then "puts Oroonoko up" to orchestrating a rebellion.³⁸ Curiously

enough, the narrator consistently calls Oroonoko by his new name, Caesar, while dropping back (deliberately) into calling “Clemene” by her given name, Imoinda, almost immediately. Symbolically, leader Caesar with his European nomenclature placates the European bureaucracy by turning his back on the slaves and arranging the suicide pact. Behn subtly suggests links between sexual and economic (cross-race, patriarchal) rapacity. Imoinda’s body is a “private family commodity for which the man could reasonably fight or go to law,” or, in this case, assassinate by consent.³⁹ No woman’s body should be, Behn protests, a site of sexual and economic exploitation. This time she excuses her personal withdrawal from the scene by suggesting that Oroonoko himself—the living symbol of honor—is tainted.

Since Oroonoko must now honorably avenge his punishment—in the manner of an aristocrat—he fears that Imoinda will be left “a prey, or at best a slave to the enraged multitude” (66). She will become someone else’s property (66). He therefore proposes a mutual suicide pact to be undertaken after he avenges them both. Imoinda concurs, sweetly resigned in accordance with African beliefs.⁴⁰ Or at least spiritual beliefs are an acceptable (and ostensible) rationale. But Behn also interrogates the injurious consequences of European ideas concerning virtuous, submissive “womanhood” while discursively stressing the “racial-cultural difference” of Oroonoko and Imoinda compared to the narrator:

He told her his design, first of killing her, and then his enemies, and next himself, and the impossibility of escaping; and therefore he told her the necessity of dying. . . . While tears trickled down his cheeks, hers were smiling with joy she should die by so noble a hand, and be sent into her own country (for that is *their* notion of the next world) by him she so tenderly loved, and so truly adored in this; for wives have a respect for their husbands equal to what any other people pay a deity; and when a man finds any occasion to quit his wife, if he loves her, she dies by his hand; if not, he sells her, or suffers some other to kill her. (66–67; my italics)

Oroonoko’s decision not to complete the pact bespeaks male-marital power and (a restricted) freedom of choice, although compelling reasons dictate his noncompletion. Imoinda is reunited with Oroonoko after the rebellion, only to be monstrously and finally separated from him, voluntary victim of the unwilling sacrificer. Their terminal effort to create a reintegrated family unit (including the unborn prince or princess) constitutes their suicide pact. After Oroonoko slices Imoinda’s “face” from her skull (is Behn restoring stereotypic

notions of alleged African ferocity?) he seesaws in torment between revenge and self-sacrifice: "He tore, he raved, he roared like some monster of the wood, calling on the loved name of Imoinda. A thousand times he turned the fatal knife that did the deed toward his own heart, with a resolution to go immediately after her. But dire revenge, which was now a thousand times more fierce in his soul than before, prevents him" (67–68). But only temporarily. Behn wills the last positive sentiment to Imoinda after the final baroquely rendered death of Oroonoko, who avenged both of them through awesome bravery, honorable (in his own terms) to the end: "Thus died this great man, worthy of a better fate, and a more sublime wit than mine to write his praise. Yet, I hope, the reputation of my pen is considerable enough to make his glorious name to survive to all ages, with that of the brave, the beautiful, and the constant Imoinda" (73).

As an unmarried, sexually abused female, a disenfranchised slave or colonial object, a grieving, pregnant mother, a heroic rebel-warrior, and as a speaking individual within and despite a patriarchal colonial system, Imoinda cannot survive. Imbedded within her tragic tale is Behn's explosion of the customary life-denying conceptualization of romantic love as desirable for women, albeit mishap-prone. The killing of Imoinda may be a perceptibly loving act but in shooting the scene as she shot the seduction and emancipation scenes—seemingly from the vantage point of Oroonoko—she invokes Imoinda's perspective and her own. Women and power may seem to be mutually exclusive terms but in being enabled to contemplate their own disempowerment women partially resist its effect and refuse to internalize it.⁴¹

III. Indictment or Projection: Eulogy or Expiation

A formerly powerless child and now a celebrated writer, forced off the stage as a dramatist in 1688, Behn enables herself through the text's authority and influence to reclaim an authority denied her (or expropriated from her) in Surinam twenty years earlier. More elaborately and speculatively, she travels textually outside her own society to explore personal and political destabilizations she had witnessed.⁴² In the Epistle Dedicatory to *Oroonoko*, Behn mentions her inability to save Oroonoko, even though "I had none above me in that country."⁴³ She probably refers here to the governor's death by drowning en route to Surinam that had stripped Behn of any semblance of power.⁴⁴

Behn's incensed depiction of colonial officials who ignore her wishes and brutally torture and kill Oroonoko permeates the text. (Concurrently, her specific anger at some entrepreneurs mystifies the evil of slavery.) At the opening of the tale, she equates a brash pride in profiteering with a chauvinistic insensitivity toward slaves. After arriving in Surinam, the merchants and gentlemen sold off the transported Africans as slaves, "not putting any two in one lot, because they would separate them far from each other, nor daring to trust them together, lest rage and courage should put them upon contriving some great action, to the ruin of the colony" (34).

She deplores the fact that uncivilized British bureaucrats lack the "refinement" to make significant class distinctions among slaves. Even reigning liberal philosopher John Locke betrayed this contemporary prejudice when he exempted from his examination of natural rights prisoners of war who were taken as slaves.⁴⁵

While this classbound perspective that Euro-Africanizes West African reality obviously ties into orthodox attitudes, Behn's implied critique of family fracture further indicts the administrators. At the end of *Oroonoko*, the systematic dismembering of Oroonoko to dissuade potential rebels, the absence of any pretense of just law in the kangaroo court atmosphere—both unremittingly inculcate the savagery of European slaveowners and managers, among whom were many imported British felons accustomed to the likes of Newgate's harsh environment. Unlike the Duke of Albemarle, "these people" are uncouth colonial canailles, stalwarts of the status quo, no doubt, but from a traditional royalist's perspective, "not one of us."

Stated plainly, Behn's opposition to the colonial status quo is distinct from her response to slavery. Thus she vindicates herself, her role in a friend's death, and she indicts colonial predators—expatriate nouveaux riches—by presenting another version of the "facts." Intertextually her praise of Albemarle further highlights Byam's barbarism. *Oroonoko* is Behn's personal-public victory against Byam and his gang, a vendetta satisfactorily concluded. Behn's anger at the colonialist ruling class derived from her royalist politics. As Jerry Beasley, Maureen Duffy, and others persuasively argue, perhaps Aphra Behn could be using the African-Surinam narrative to denounce the recent regicide and the subsequent diminution in royal power: Oroonoko's "honorable" character, his sophisticated education by a French tutor who invokes Charles II's Francophilic court, discountenances (and comfortably displaces) the idea of usurping and then enslaving a prince of the royal line:⁴⁶ "Modern depravity is represented here by the invading force of colonialism, which

opposes to the true aristocracy of an ancient warrior culture the irresistible corruptions of exchange value."⁴⁷ In a society still negotiating for stability after fundamental social change, many royalist readers would embrace this interpretation and would have decoded the tale as such. With an African cover story, Behn may be subtly reaffirming her commitment to divine right and denouncing both seventeenth-century revolutionaries ("vilest creatures" who overthrew Charles I—alias Oroonoko) and collaborator-traitors to the King's cause (the slaves—"dogs, treacherous and cowardly"—who will not resist to the bitter end). More mischievously, a deeply embedded act of deft revenge against Charles II who landed Behn in prison when he refused to pay her for her spying services might lurk between the lines.

Lack of subsequent retribution may have fortified the ire of Behn, writing decades after the event. Professor K. A. Sey hazards a likely guess that the murderers were probably among the "notorious villains" who were "afterwards hanged when the Dutch took possession of the place, others sent off in chains" (65). Behn relishes flaunting the name of Byam, the chief administrator who took over her putative father's job after his death, and reducing it almost to a symbol of vice; the spelling out of still-living villains' names was integral to her revenge. She portrays a heroic daughter's return, but sadly stresses that she was, but no longer is, a silenced daughter not officially recognized (and perhaps not yet appropriately recognized), still smarting from emotional wounds.

Moreover, she probes beyond the debate about specifically royal power to the larger question of misogynous sway in general and its deleterious effect on unmalleable females. These include the fictional heroine, Imoinda, and Behn herself as youthful observer, symbols of lawful female authority corruptly denied.

Many oppositions and multiple subject positions coexist in *Oroonoko*: Behn upholds slavery, the status quo, and royal power in the face of a startling emancipationist episode, her abandonment of Oroonoko; she attacks the exploitation of women and colonial barbarity. The conflicts of the narrator over colonialist assumptions come most into play after the rebellion.⁴⁸ Objectively and silently, she condemns it while mourning the cold-blooded torture and murder of a royal prince, the destabilizing of power. Yet, despite being Oroonoko's companion who formerly diverted him from thoughts of escape, she fails twice to support him when he is in extremis. In point of fact she withdraws and may, in her own eyes, have forsaken her friend. Thus the "most fawning fair-tongued fellow in the world" could be as much a hidden self-projection as

it is a characterization of Byam. Part of the text's ambivalence springs from Aphra Behn's struggle or rather "her ego's struggle against [the] painful [and] unendurable idea" of abandoning her friend.⁴⁹ Text as rapprochement.

Less fancifully, Behn abandoned Oroonoko when he decisively positioned himself, pioneer precursor of Toussaint L'Ouverture, against the interests of the ruling class. On the other hand, she vilifies his torturers, unsophisticated neophytes and parvenus holding the reins of power, no match in class for a nobleman who calmly smokes a pipe while being castrated. Not only that, but just as Oroonoko silences Imoinda on the hilltop, her tongue effectively cut, just as the narrator denies her protagonists' African physiognomy, so the colonists silenced the narrator and Behn herself as well as Oroonoko—or tried to. Forced into subjection like her hero (though the narrator's status as an "other" takes an entirely different form) she eulogizes Oroonoko, makes quiet reparation for deserting him, and softly disparages his treatment of Imoinda. The "I" also speaks Oroonoko and Imoinda in direct and indirect speech, sounding their heroism and martyrdom into the void. Read dialogically, Byam is there too, simultaneously upheld as a British bureaucrat convicted of rampant brutality.

Perhaps that is why, as dramatist Thomas Southerne informs us, Behn told the story of Oroonoko "more feelingly than she writ it."⁵⁰ And, Southerne might have added, she told it formidably because to assume or reclaim the speaker's voice after the fact and retell the tale allows her to claim a new power over the situation. It was as if, on the eve of her death with nothing to lose, Behn decided to reinterrogate her conduct as a young woman.⁵¹ And perhaps unwittingly she displaced quarrels with her former actions on to villains she already despised. In *Oroonoko*, then, Behn constructs a paradigm of slavery, fundamental aspects of which became constitutive elements in colonial discourse for the next century and a half until the Emancipation Act passed in 1834. First of all, Behn affirms an abolitionist and emancipationist perspective in Oroonoko's famed speech yet ends up implicitly privileging plantocratic ideology, intensifying Eurocentric attitudes toward Africans, and bolstering the colonial status quo. Furthermore, she airs the problematic of sexual politics in Restoration society by projecting anxieties about the condition of Anglo-Saxon women onto her discussions of class-gender relationships in West Africa and Surinam. Lastly, *Oroonoko* is Behn's reclamation of her eyes and ears, her witnessing and her voice, the avenging of the fifteen-year-old silenced subject, her life and her politics in retrospect.

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NOTES

- 1 Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: or, The History of the Royal Slave*, ed. K. A. Sey (Tema, Ghana, 1977); hereafter cited in text.
- 2 A cross section of these opinions on *Oroonoko* appears in Mary Anne O'Donnell, *Aphra Behn: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York, 1986), pp. 380, 392, 476, 481 and passim; Maureen Duffy, *The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn, 1640–89* (New York, 1977), p. 267 ff.; Angeline Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn* (New York, 1980), p. 59 and passim; George Guffey, "Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: Occasion and Accomplishment," in *Two English Novelists, Aphra Behn and Anthony Trollope: Papers read at a Clark Library Seminar, May 11, 1974* (Los Angeles, 1975). See Goreau, ch. 5, n. 23 for a refutation of Guffey. See also Thomas Tryon, *Friendly Advice to the People of the West Indies* (London, 1705). The influence on Aphra Behn of Tryon's perspective on slavery is discussed in Duffy, pp. 268–69, and David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, 1966), pp. 371–74. For a discussion of Tryon's empathy toward women and Behn's admiration for "Tryonism," see Ginnie Smith, "Thomas Tryon's Regimen for Women: Sectarian Health in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Sexual Dynamics of History: Men's Power, Women's Resistance*, ed. The London Feminist History Group (London, 1983), pp. 47–65.
- 3 Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1968), p. 94.
- 4 For a valuable discussion of differences that dramatist Thomas Southerne introduced into his play entitled *Oroonoko*, modeled on Behn's tale, see Thomas Southerne, *Oroonoko*, ed. David Stuart Rodes and Maximilian E. Novak (Lincoln, Neb., 1976), pp. xiii–xlii. See also the incisive argument in Laura Brown, "The Romance of Empire: *Oroonoko* and the Trade in Slaves," in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York, 1987), pp. 41–61.
- 5 See Frederick W. Link, *Aphra Behn* (New York, 1968), for further information about the biographical controversy and denials by earlier critics of Behn's visit to Surinam.
- 6 A valuable discussion of Tryon's account of black slaves follows Warren's commentary in Southerne, *Oroonoko*, p. xxx.
- 7 William Byam, "An Exact Narrative of the State of Guinea, as it Stood Anno 1665, Particularly of the English Colony of Surinam," Bodleian, Ashmolean Ms., fols. 109–22; quoted in Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra*, p. 65.
- 8 K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London, 1957), p. 477.
- 9 Walter Rodney, *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave-Trade*, Historical Association of Tanzania Paper No. 2 (Nairobi, 1967), p. 9.
- 10 For challenges to monopoly trading, see Davies, *The Royal African Company*, esp. sec. 1, ch. 3 and sec. 3.
- 11 Daniel Mannix, in collaboration with Malcolm Cowley, *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1518–1865* (New York, 1962), pp. 12–13.
- 12 I thank Oyekan Owomoyela for a helpful discussion of this point.
- 13 Behn's thinking on slavery concurs with contemporary ideology, notably Locke's position in *A Treatise on Government*, that war is one of the few justifications for slavery. I am also indebted to Homi Bhabha's analysis of fetishization, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," in "Race," *Writing and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago, 1985), pp. 163–84.
- 14 Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra*, p. 289.
- 15 K. A. Sey, Introduction, in Behn, *Oroonoko*, p. vii.

- 16 See Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 42.
- 17 Aphra Behn, *To the Most Illustrious Prince Christopher, Duke of Albemarle, on His Voyage to His Government at Jamaica: A Pindarick* (London, 1687), p. 7; hereafter cited in text. For further evidence of Behn's perspective, see "The Widow Ranter," in *The Works of Aphra Behn*, ed. Montague Summers, vol. 4 (London, 1925).
- 18 For references to the literature of Barbary Coast slavery, see *A True Relation of the Adventures of Mr. R. D. an English Merchant, taken by The Turks of Argeir in 1666 . . . sent in a letter to his Honored Friend, Mr. S. B.* (London, 1672). See also Davies, *The Royal African Company*, and Stephen Clissold, *The Barbary Slaves* (London, 1977), esp. ch. 1.
- 19 For discussions of how political affairs in West Africa were manipulated by European merchants see Mannix, *Black Cargoes*, pp. 69–103. See also Rodney, *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave-Trade*, p. 7 ff.
- 20 See Rodney, pp. 8–9 and passim.
- 21 Several critics argue persuasively that *Oroonoko* is a political allegory, among them Jerry Beasley in "Politics and Moral Idealism," in *Fetter'd or Free*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, Ohio, 1986), pp. 221–22. See also Rodes and Novak, *Oroonoko*, p. x, and Duffy, *The Passionate Shepherdess*, p. 267.
- 22 Many texts supply often variable information about fatalities on the middle passage. Several firsthand accounts by Africans themselves exist, notably Olaudah Equiano's *Equiano's Travels: His Autobiography. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African*, ed. Paul Edwards (London, 1789; rpt. 1967). See also Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York, 1944), ch. 1, n. 14; Basil Davidson, *Black Mother* (London, 1961); Mannix, *Black Cargoes*; and Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 141–74.
- 23 Equiano, *Equiano's Travels*, pp. 25–32.
- 24 From 1732 to 1750, Hogarth depicts Africans in his major satirical series much more authentically, suggesting that Behn Westernized Oroonoko's appearance to appeal verbally and aesthetically to her audience. See David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in 18th-Century English Art* (Mundelstrup, Denmark, 1985). Perhaps differences between Behn's and Hogarth's depictions stem from fears expressed in daily newspapers and periodicals about the influx of black people to Britain in the 1720s. See the *Daily Journal*, 5 April 1723.
- 25 Ellen Pollak included a valuable discussion of multiple inscriptions of incest in *Oroonoko* in "Gender, Doubling, and Incest in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*," a paper delivered at the MLA convention in San Francisco, 1987.
- 26 For information on African culture that elucidates Behn's embellishments, see John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, 1970); E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London, 1973); Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850* (Madison, Wis., 1964).
- 27 Jordan, *White Over Black*, pp. 370–71.
- 28 Patricia Meyer Spacks's perceptive commentary on female ethical development is especially relevant here, in light of Behn's future career. See Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Women's Stories, Women's Selves," *Hudson Review*, 30 (1977), 44.
- 29 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, tr. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Tex., 1981), p. 314.
- 30 Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra*, p. 77. See also Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York, 1977), pp. 77–78; and Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction 1800–1840* (Oxford, 1986).

- 31 See Robert Root, "Aphra Behn, Arranged Marriage and Restoration Comedy," *Women and Literature*, 5 (Spring 1977), 8.
- 32 See *The Whole Duty of a Woman: Women Writers in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Angeline Goreau (Garden City, N.Y., 1985) and Hilda Smith, *Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists* (Urbana, Ill., 1982).
- 33 See Mannix, *Black Cargoes*, p. 44.
- 34 Critics have remarked on Behn's attentiveness to issues of rape and predation. See Behn's biographers, already cited, as well as Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writings 1649–1688* (London, 1988), esp. pp. 96–110, 114–27.
- 35 Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel* (New York, 1984), p. 41. For an interesting discussion of these ideas in their early formations, see Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London, 1986).
- 36 Edward W. Said's discussion in *Orientalism* (New York, 1979) of the construction of orientalism and Mary Louise Pratt's concept of homogeneity in "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," in Gates, "Race," *Writing and Difference*, were especially helpful in this essay's formulations.
- 37 For parasitism, see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), n. 24.
- 38 For expositions of slave rebellions, see Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, 1982); Hilary Beckles, *Black Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery 1627–1833* (St. Michael, Barbados, 1984); and Lucille Mathurin, *The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1975).
- 39 Todd, *Sensibility*, p. 19.
- 40 See Idowu, *African Traditional Religion*, p. 155 and passim.
- 41 For the notion of two voices harnessed in one, of the text resisting and inscribing contrary meaning simultaneously, see Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 439 ff.
- 42 Thomas Docherty suggests this possibility in another context in *On Modern Authority: The Theory and Condition of Writing, 1500 to the Present Day* (New York, 1987), pp. 49–50.
- 43 Mrs. A. Behn, *Oroonoko; or, the Royal Slave. A True History* (London: Printed for Will, Canning, 1688). Penultimate (unpaginated) page of dedicatory epistle.
- 44 Behn's relationship to Lord Willoughby is taken up extensively by Angeline Goreau who speculates that Behn may have been Lady Willoughby's "natural" daughter; See Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra*, pp. 44–52.
- 45 For Locke on slavery, see n. 13.
- 46 For arguments that Oroonoko is a royalist allegory, see n. 21.
- 47 Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600–1740* (Baltimore, 1987), p. 250.
- 48 The idea that Western norms need to be the moral order of business on a global scale is carefully discussed in Howard Temperley, "The Ideology of Anti-slavery," in *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas*, ed. David Eltis and James Walvin (London, 1985), p. 22.
- 49 Anna Freud, *The Writings of Anna Freud: The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (New York, 1966).
- 50 Southerne, *Oroonoko*, dedicatory epistle (unpaginated).
- 51 By the late 1680s, Behn was chronically ill and seriously short of money, the theater having failed due to social upheaval around the succession.