

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Richmond Barbour

Themes of authorship in Aphra Behn's Oroonoko and Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe highlight locations in the stories that expose the author's concerns with their responsibilities and contributions to society. In order to frame a discussion of authorship in Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe, it is essential to position Behn and Crusoe as travelers who write autobiographies of their involvement in exotic circumstances. Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe betray the tensions that arise from the barriers separating travel and colonial objectives, individual agency and social action. Although the stories may incorporate truth and fiction, writing enables the authors to present, with symbolic images, concerns with their participation in situations that hinder the free expression of their will. I refer to Aphra Behn and Daniel Defoe as "geographers" of writing because they identify tenuous boundaries that organize social views concerning gender, responsibility and behavior in contrast to individual desires. Aphra Behn's narrative role in Oroonoko charts the tragic outcomes of Oroonoko's rejection of slavery and also draws attention to the reception of a female author. Behn's identity as an author, as it is constructed within Oroonoko, is intertwined with the murder of a slave prince, and with a woman's freedom to write and publish in the 1680s.

Although Defoe is the author of the text, he manipulates the presentation of the story to convince readers that Crusoe wrote an authentic account of his years as a

castaway on an unnamed island. In his journal, Crusoe discusses his position in his culture and the resulting circumstances that result from his rejection of family and economic position in search of adventure. With limited resources, Crusoe uses writing to redefine his agency in contrast to the threats of the island and his responsibilities to God, family and society.

Although there may be discrepancies that blur the “true” identity and involvement of the author in autobiography, these narratives raise discourses concerning the balance between the individual’s desires and society’s expectations for behavior. Attention to authorship identifies the discourses and contradictions faced by Behn’s and Crusoe’s participation in travel and the subsequent translation, resolution and apology enabled by authorship.

**Geographers of Writing:
The Authorship of Aphra Behn and Daniel Defoe
in Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe**

**by
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APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy

Major Professor, Representing English

Redacted for Privacy

Chair of Department of English

Redacted for Privacy

Dean of Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Autumn Klinikowski, Author

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Geographers of Writing: Authorship in Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe

The Ambiguous Truth: An Introduction to Views of Authorship in Aphra Behn and Daniel Defoe

It is difficult to ignore the contradictions that emerge within one author's references to their own writings. Aphra Behn acknowledges "faults" in her authorship in the dedication to her patron, Lord Maitland: "Twill be no commendation to the book to assure your Lordship I writ it in a few hours, though it may serve to excuse some of its faults of connection, for I never rested my pen a moment for thought" (5). Within the book's "faults" are converging points of criticism that are more than errors. "Faults" reveal the author's desires or preoccupations within the unstable and removed spaces of travel and colonialism. Authorship in Aphra Behn's Oroonoko and Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe emerges from the narrator's initial role as travelers. The issues that I am discussing here involve how the author emerges in narratives of travel through discussions of social and cultural boundaries. Writing channels their preoccupations with their responsibilities and contributions to their culture. These boundaries are evident in the literature as contradictions, breaches or "faults of connection" that locate where the author's individuality and intent is limited or denied by situation, fate and gender. In order to map the locations of the social constructs that position Behn and Crusoe as narrators, it is important to address their involvement in the colonial project as well as in the literary marketplace.

"Authorship" emerges from the contradictions, abstract questions and discourses central to a composer's experience. The role of the author is a significant concern in

Roland Barthes's landmark essay, "The Death of the Author:" "the history of our thought is bound up with conceptions of what it means to author a text" (Burke xvi). Barthes addresses an author's objectives in the ways that a text delivers meaning. Authors use a creative response to draw out ambiguous or different perspectives of cultural discourses. The question "What is an Author?" (Foucault 205) encompasses more than an identification of *who* composes the text, but also considers the underlying reservoirs of tension that circulate authorial investments within the narrative. The Early Modern texts presented here, Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe, are dynamic sources for the investigation of authorship since Aphra Behn and Daniel Defoe utilize narrative voice to shape their participation in autobiographical experiences of travel. Travel tests behaviors and ideals because it is a source of awe; it inspires alternative emotional reactions which are then interpreted through writing. Robinson Crusoe and Oroonoko offer "conceptions of what it means to author a text" by utilizing story to expose the implications of the narrators' roles as travelers, participants in colonial projects and as writers situated in colonialism and in London's literary world.

As European travelers in "the other world" (Behn 5), Aphra Behn and Robinson Crusoe compose stories that emerge from their "authentic" first-person experience. The assumed authors of Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe are characters in the stories. A significant distinction, of course, is that Robinson Crusoe is a fictional narrator who is presented as the actual author. While Aphra Behn is the author and narrator of Oroonoko, Defoe gives to Crusoe the illusion of authorship by assuming a position as editor. A focal issue of this comparison is that the authors are involved participants who

assert their objectives, weaknesses, passions and choices in the dynamic mix of events which compose the plots of the stories.

Foucault's analysis of author and society suggests that the "author function" is "characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society" (Foucault 211). The pressures between author and society are codified through language. In other words, Foucault proves that an author generates comment upon social ideals by identifying sites that resonate with implications for the individual who is the composer. Enabled by this perspective, authorship serves as a mode of explanation that considers how behaviors and ideologies are limited or enabled by cultural structures and then acts upon or influences these discourses through publication.

In a discussion of an individual's motives for action within collective social structures, The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre, Louis Montrose quotes Paul Smith, who considers how language shapes the distinctions between an individual's desires and social ideals: "The symbolic realm, the *place* where we are in language and in social formations and which is also the *process* whereby we fit into them, *constructs* the ideological" (Montrose 15). Smith describes the symbolic realm as the place where "social formations" are tested and understood as components of the ideal. If the "symbolic realm" is the space of language, then language enables an evaluation of the limitations and possibilities of the social constructs that inform an author's experience. In the autobiographical narratives presented here, the authors filter the problems they confront as participants in action through a creative language that reshapes and interprets difficult and perhaps, irresolvable experiences. By considering the tragic circumstances in which they are involved, as

authors, they consider alternative or contrasting outcomes. Behn and Crusoe (the assumed author) write their responses to the social constructs which influence the outcomes of events.

In their primary roles, Behn and Crusoe are travelers who are intrigued by the space of adventure and the fantastic odyssey of travel. Their writing emerges from this inclination toward awe and the bizarre. Philip Edwards, in Last Voyages: Cavendish, Hudson, Raleigh, draws upon a theme from Shakespeare that addresses travel's hold on imaginations. Edwards interprets Desdemona's captivation with Othello's exotic stories: "She recognized in the exotic a quality of difference, and was awed by it" (Edwards 5). Difference holds a transformative fascination that transports the self. There is a subsequent urge to participate in the exotic because it holds rare emotions of awe and surprise. This emotional attraction results in a convergence of traveler and new encounter. In their primary roles, Behn and Crusoe are travelers who enter "contact zones" (Pratt 6) and encounter differences in geography and culture. In Imperial Eyes, Mary Louis Pratt defines a "contact zone as:

the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (Pratt 6)

This phrase applies specifically to the conditions surrounding Behn's contact with Oroonoko. She is awed by Oroonoko's difference and is curious to know more of the culture and history he was forced to leave behind. An inevitable conflict results when Behn is unable to prevent the violent repercussions of the slave revolt and Oroonoko's murder.

These stories and the conflicts they contain emerge from “contact zones.” This meeting of difference is inspired by the author’s wanderlust, a desire to move outside of boundaries into frontier territories and experience the mythic and the fantastic. The word “Oroonoko” or “Oroonoque” as it appears on the title page of Robinson Crusoe, resonates as a symbol for the space of contact; a location the traveler crosses into and confronts difference. As a person and as a geographic location, this word suggests a parallel between topography and character that emphasizes travel’s centrality to the themes of authorship that will be discussed here.

Behn and Crusoe describe similar motives of curiosity and wonder that inspire the pursuit of story. Crusoe describes a “rash and immoderate desire” to “wander” abroad (58). Behn also describes a “curiosity” and will to explore the jungles of Surinam outside the plantation. By seeking adventure and the different, she may confront the mythical and exotic. For example, tigers that hunt in Surinam are more like magical beasts who resist bullets and arrows. Yet, Oroonoko is the hero who matches and overcomes “this monstrous beast of might, size and vast limbs” (49). Yet, Behn and Crusoe betray a distinct removal from the settings through which they move, since travel and the pleasure of wonder are enabled by the wealth gained from exploitation of colonial endeavors.

Both narrators weigh the implications of their roles as participants in the colonial imperative. Throughout these narratives, there exists a subtle thread of guilt that returns to their implication in the colonialist project. For Behn, that guilt resides in the undeniable horror of Imoinda’s and Oroonoko’s mutilated bodies. Their will toward freedom is denied by the European Governors’ reliance upon the slave trade. Her authorship answers to an inability and powerlessness to act in their defense. Robinson

Crusoe also relies upon the premise of guilt characterized by greed for the pleasures of danger and wealth. Crusoe intimates that his selfish desire for the unknowns of the sea results in spiritual punishment: “how justly I was overtaken by the judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my father’s house,” (31) and Heaven “reproached me with the . . . breach of my duty to God and my father” (31). For Crusoe, travel represents a paradox: it is the site of the mythical testing of an individual’s prowess, yet it also represents a disavowal of the moral codes that balance middle-class behaviors. In travel, Crusoe enacts a “breach” of responsibility toward those he should honor with selfless duty. Within these intimations of failed responsibility in travel, both narrators betray a weakness in character and an inability to fulfill agency. This is the intersection in which travel serves as an impetus for narration; writing emerges as a vessel for the irreconcilable conflicts between an author’s agency and society’s directives.

The social predicaments carried by Behn’s and Defoe’s creative expression involve agency and authorship: interlinked concepts that aid in the explanation of a narrator’s empowerment in experiences of travel. Robinson Crusoe and Oroonoko are complementary texts for analysis, since, as discussed previously, they consider the authors’ perspectives on their agency, or the problems, limitations and freedoms of the “collective structures” (Montrose 16) of which they are a part. For Behn and Crusoe, writing is a medium that lends images and metaphor to the contradictions or conflicts between their behavior in travel and the idealisms and injustices of colonialist endeavors. The meaning generated by writing explains the dynamics influencing a traveler’s agency. Within these stories, Behn and Crusoe do not confront the reader with the question, “What is an author?”, but their voices give a penetrating awareness of how writing is a

product of the commingling between their participation and complicity in colonialist imperatives.

A preliminary intent of authorship is to document accounts of events external to the self. Yet, writing requires an extension beyond the role of traveler and experiencer to one of self-evaluation. Although Oroonoko is written as “truth” and Robinson Crusoe is fiction, both stories are “chronicles” of the author’s perspectives of travel. “’Tis a short chronicle of those lives that possibly would be forgotten by other historians, or lie neglected there, however deserving an immortal fame” (Behn 4). The authors claim to write factual histories of the lives they encounter in new geographic locations. Yet, the authors of Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe also write accounts of their involvement. If travel represents the freedom to pursue wonder, then the authors are more than chroniclers since they cross emotional boundaries as well as physical ones. Language identifies changes in emotion, location, and experience and ameliorates an emotional chaos and uncertainty.

Writing, it may be argued, is an inevitable and necessary relief from an Early Modern traveler’s deep immersion within the intersections of travel and new indigenous cultures. Narration emerges as a product of the traveler’s wonder and incredulity: “The expression of wonder stands for all that cannot be understood, that can scarcely be believed” (Greenblatt 20). Writing is proof of that which resists explanation and interprets the inescapable confusion that this collusion produces. As a result, a travel narrative may not necessarily divorce an author’s interpretation and emotive response from an objective delivery of an observed situation in which the narrator was not a central participant. A narrative emerges from the blending of a wondrous appreciation

for the exotic difference represented in travel and the self's immersion within it, while asserting its urgent and essential value, the "exigency of the experience" (Greenblatt 20). As Greenblatt describes, the author produces the value of the experience by writing into it a meaning, or a symbolic import that carries the writing beyond a factual chronicle of events.

Like adventure, writing stems from an impulse to translate situations which incite curiosity and fear into a language that may be recognized and understood. This is why writing is an essential component of Behn's and Crusoe's travel experiences. "The expression of wonder stands for all that cannot be understood, that can scarcely be believed. It calls attention to the problem of credibility and at the same time insists upon the undeniability, the exigency of the experience" (Greenblatt 20). The "expression of wonder" is the carrier of meaning in situations which seem outside of the real and the reliable. If meaning is that which the authors attempt to gain from adventure, then the authors must assert credibility, why that meaning is real. Meaning relies upon "the exigency of the experience," the weight of true experiences. The authors then rely on composition and credibility to assert the value and learned wisdom of their adventures.

Yet, how much of the composition is truth, and how much may be imagination? Fiction may be a necessary component of travel writing. Within "true" autobiographical writing, elements of fiction may parallel authentic "chronicles." "Their writings are an extension or a continuation of their participation, as (for the most part) they reshape events in the effort to assert themselves, defend themselves, justify themselves" (Edwards 7-8). As Edwards suggests, travel writing is proof of an individual's participation in exotic experiences, yet an author may also reshape certain elements of their involvement

in order to cast themselves to their readers in a certain way. Since the authors are not distant, third-person voices, but immediate participants in the story, events may be disjointed and distant from the author's actual experience and may incorporate "faults of connection" in order to justify a certain behavior. As a result, travel writing blends, in inseparable ways, events with the author's evaluation and interpretation by blurring the actual with shades of meaning.

Since an author's presentation is colored by wonder, curiosity and emotion, a text may contain shades of innovation and artistic techniques that blend the intrigue of a travel narrative with the author's perspective. Autobiographical travel writers are more than reporters who catalogue facts. their descriptions are influenced by responses to wonder, curiosity and emotion. Within this view of writing, an author is a painter who embosses and imprints a text with impression. Behn acknowledges this: "A poet is a painter in his way; he draws to the life, but in another kind; we draw the nobler part, the soul and mind; the pictures of the pen shall outlast those of the pencil, and even worlds themselves" (Dedication to Oroonoko 3). In Behn's language, an author and a poet are synonymous because their language shapes a symbolic realm by repainting "worlds." Behn and Crusoe are artists who "draw to the life" by publishing an interpretive record of the worlds in which they participate.

Within the artistic composition of language, there are hints of the imaginary that blend creative flourishes with actual events. "Perhaps the most interesting, because free-ranging self-portraits are those where the writer mingled fiction with autobiography, simultaneously projecting herself in fantasy and trying to justify herself to the world" (Spencer 41). The imaginary and the exaggerated, Spencer suggests, are inherent in

autobiography. Although narration may claim to hold factual documentation, it is also a mirage, a replication removed from realism. The narrator in the story is a fictional persona of the author, a representation of the self who experienced. As a result of the distance between narration and authorship, realism fades into fiction and myth. Early travel writing such as Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe must be read with an awareness of the ambiguities that rest in event, participation and composition.

Behn asserts the truth of the story she tells in the following passage -- "this is a true story of a man . . . I had the honour to know in my travels to the other world" (5) -- and claims that Oroonoko is a factual and honest description of her involvement on a plantation in Surinam before the colony was given to the Dutch. "I do not pretend . . . to entertain my reader with the adventures of a feigned hero" (6), Behn writes, revealing her concern for the truthfulness of her story. Behn attests to the authenticity of her account in the Dedication to her patron, the Lord Maitland. "What I have mentioned I have taken care should be truth, let the critical reader judge as he pleases" (5). Dedications, at the time in which Behn wrote were letters of homage acknowledging noble, wealthy individuals who might extend patronage to the author and they are also indirect statements to the readers. Behn comments in the prefatory material, "This is a true story of a man gallant enough to merit your protection" (5). Oroonoko is a "gallant" man who matches the esteemed character of Lord Maitland. Behn asks "the critical reader" (5) to accept the truth of this story, although it may contain doubtful, romantic elements. "If there be anything that seems Romantic, I beseech your Lordship to consider these countries do, in all things, so far differ from ours, that they produce unconceivable wonders; at least they appear so to us because new and strange" (5). Since Behn's

experiences were unique and unfamiliar to many in Early Modern England, Behn asks her readers to broaden their imaginations in order to accept as truth accounts of travel in the exotic locale of Surinam.

Yet, despite these statements of truth, critical research has not yet proven whether or not a man named Oroonoko existed. Janet Todd, in a comprehensive biography, The Secret Life of Aphra Behn, suggests that it is highly possible that Behn did travel to Surinam, perhaps as a spy with the code name “Astrea” in the service of King Charles II in the 1660s (Todd 5). Behn’s mission may have been to report upon the loyalties of those governing the King’s territories in the West Indies, specifically upon the management of the King’s properties in Surinam. However, there is no concrete historical documentation that proves Behn traveled to Surinam or that a man named Oroonoko existed. Behn’s assertions of truth may carry doubt.

Even within the narrator’s assertion of actuality, and eye-witness accounts, there is the inescapability of the untrue, the exaggeration, and so “truth” is naturally aligned with fiction. Autobiographical narration is an inherent deviation, an elusive reconstruction of the author’s actual voice and experience and their understanding of their world. As a result, Behn’s autobiography requires the critical suggestion that it is a fiction. Although Behn defends the honesty and truth of her writing in the dedication and realism is an essential goal, the narration may betray the inescapability of fiction.

Autobiography is a natural complement to travel writing, since it links historical actuality with imaginative conceptions of the self. The translation of memory is a creative effort, since the self is removed from the actual experience by the distance of recollection. “The writer creates the narrator to act in an imagined world in much the

same way he or she projects, or transfers, unconsciously held needs and desires onto the real-world among whom he or she lives” (Tracy 17). In this view, the narrator is a projection of the author and carries the author’s unconscious concerns with their stake in the “real-world.” Authorship “projects” needs and desire through the narrative voice. “The autobiographer’s persona finds its mirror image in the narrator of the fictional text; each participates in the writer’s imagined world in ways the writer unconsciously and consciously desires to behave in the real world” (Tracy 17). The power of an autobiographical structure lies in the use of narration as a projection of the author’s desire. As a result, authorship is a necessary conclusion of travel and the individual’s complicity in the colonial drive for wonder and wealth. A motive for publishing is to ease the conflicts between the fulfillment of desire and the repercussions desire produces in the space of travel.

Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe cross boundaries of identification and fit in to diverse literary classifications including autobiography, travel narrative, prose fiction. However, although there are broad similarities in genre, a key difference between Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe lies in realism. Although both assert the authenticity of the narrator’s participation in the extraordinary events cataloged in its pages, Crusoe is a product of Defoe’s imagination. A cohesive integration of myth and realism may be one of the reasons why Robinson Crusoe is considered a “prototype” (Ross 13) of the modern novel. A voracious reader, Defoe discovered the authentic accounts of a Scottish sailor, Alexander Selkirk (Ross 16) and wrote Robinson Crusoe from this premise of actuality. Although the story is inspired by Selkirk’s life, Defoe invents a character who confronts

imagined challenges. Defoe duplicates actual experiences with a reporter's eye for detail through the viewpoints of a fictitious character.

Although Behn's biography and mission in Surinam remain highly speculative, Behn may have turned to poetry and fiction writing as a secondary career when her role in espionage ended (Todd 63). Beginning in the 1670s, Behn represented herself as a public playwright and in the production of her plays, according to Todd, she was "second only to the Poet Laureate, John Dryden" (Todd 7). Although she was a public, literary figure, there are obscurities in Behn's biography including her birth name, family, and her marriage that complicate an understanding of Behn's position in her culture.

Regarding the truth and fiction of her role in Surinam, Behn eludes her readers with the same clandestine tactics she may have employed as a surreptitious agent in Surinam.

Behn claims in the introduction that Oroonoko, published in 1688, (Salzman x) is an autobiographical account of her experiences as an unwed and independent female traveler in Surinam who was, with provocative emphasis placed on the insinuations of the phrase, Oroonoko's "Great Mistress" (45).

There are multiple facets of criticism that echo within the term "authorship." In addition to a social commentary, authorship is also a private and profound accomplishment that resonates with the imperatives close to the individual who holds the pen. Authorship is proof of an individual's *industry*. In the Dedication, Behn proudly writes: "such humble fruits as my industry produces I lay at your Lordship's feet" (5). The story is a product, proof of the self-generated industry of its author, yet it is also a vessel carrying philosophical reflections of the author's concerns. Although Behn produces a product for public distribution, the material pages contain the intimations of

Behn's anxiety concerning female authorship. An unavoidable component of her authorship, a paradox emerges contrasting the pages she produces and an inherent "absence" carried within her female industry. Absence is an indicator of her desire for literary authority. As a result, female authorship is a theme infused within a tragic story of slave murder.

While recording the fate of Oroonoko and Imoinda, lovers forced into slavery on the plantation where Behn resides, she commemorates the tragic death of these individuals and their heroic search for freedom. In the narrative, Behn acknowledges an inability to protect Oroonoko and Imoinda from harm, and draws a simultaneous attention to the limitations of female authorship. At the time Behn wrote, very few women's names appeared in print. She writes with an awareness of the cultural standards that valued feminine virtues of silence above female literary merits. Thus Behn apologizes for her literary license: "But his misfortune was to fall in an obscure world, that afforded only a female pen to celebrate his fame" (40). The use of the word "misfortune" is a resonating indicator of the skeptical tenor surrounding female literary productivity. Yet, "fame" and "female pen" are also wedded in the tone of demure apology that Behn addresses to her readers. An elusive relationship, an undeniable literary correlation exists between Oroonoko's fate and "only a female pen."

Behn's authorship, including her attention to the reputation of her pen, is entwined with the conditions of slavery she confronts as a temporary traveler in the culture of European colonization. Behn exposes the disparity in agency and power that prevented her from protecting Oroonoko and Imoinda from tragic murder by the colony landowners. Behn utilizes references to Oroonoko's and his wife's Imoinda's bodies in

slavery and in death to draw attention to limitations of female agency present in her contemporary culture. Behn gives to Imoinda's sacrificed and concealed body the significance of a woman's lack of agency within patriarchal European social structures. This limitation in agency includes also a woman's publication freedom. Imoinda carries the symbolic impact of the suppression of a woman's literary expression by the social controls that required female silence. Imoinda is a silent victim whose body signifies the similarities between colonial violence and the oppression of female literacy. Her death represents a stifled authorship and a woman's impotence in agency. Behn transfers onto Imoinda's body a woman's alienation from agency in action and in publication.

Behn's absence results in a failure to protect Oroonoko and Imoinda and frames a metaphor of Behn's enslaved and denied authorship. This crux is the link that joins Behn's agency with the elusive question "What is an Author." The following analysis continues to explore the complications inherent in Behn's assumed protection of Oroonoko and Imoinda and the interconnections of their deaths with her authorship.

Rather than serving as a contrast to the themes Behn proposes in *Oroonoko*, Robinson Crusoe casts an intriguing parallel onto issues of authorship as it emerges from an individual's experiences in travel. Robinson Crusoe follows the structure of travel narratives published prior to the 1720s that capitalized on the entertainment of adventurous sea voyages. Crusoe begins his journey as a sailor lured in to the mysticism of the sea and yet confronts the basic essentials of survival on an island that lacks a geographic specificity. Like many heroes of mythical adventures, Crusoe offers, as a guide to others, the gift of his story in narrative form.

Crusoe writes his memoirs as a castaway, and through the self-investigation that writing requires, evaluates his identity, motivations and “rash” choices that culminate in his fate of imprisonment on an unnamed island. With a limited supply of pen, ink and paper, Crusoe writes a journal that documents his powerlessness in isolation and subsequent emotional responses by posing questions including “Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus used?” (107). With philosophical questions debating his punishment and eventual redemption, Crusoe’s authorship explores the religious implications of his decisions to reject the standard social structures of his prescribed middle-class existence by seeking the dangers of the sea. The Journal captures moments of intense emotional introspection that add significance to the problems of agency that face Crusoe in isolation.

The addition of the journal in Crusoe’s autobiography proves that writing draws Crusoe away from a primary concern with external threats like earthquakes, beasts and cannibals, to an introspective analysis that transforms emotional chaos into spiritual realization. The following lines indicate the tenuous hope that Crusoe discovers in writing: “I then reflected that God, who was not only righteous but omnipotent, as He had thought fit thus to punish and afflict me, so He was able to deliver me” (165). Serving as the foundation for spiritual relief, writing emerges as an essential aspect of the development of Crusoe’s psychology. Authorship translates into a reclamation of agency, a reintroduction to the social structure which he had hastily rejected in his youth, and culminates in a temporary acceptance of his fate.

Crusoe says, “I husbanded” (82) pen and ink. Authorship, represented by the value of ink, enables him to create a productive existence on the island. An act of self-

defense and a creative diversion that adds depth to his character, writing draws meaning and truth from events in which Crusoe is powerless. Authorship enables the self-investigation and transformation of the hero by itemizing and elaborating upon the beneficial and miserable aspects of his situation.

Defoe creates a romanticized hero, a wanderer, and bases Robinson Crusoe upon the premise that it is a recreation of Crusoe's authentic travel experience. By yielding authorship to the fictional narrator, Defoe lends convincing realism to a fantastic story of shipwrecks and cannibals. Under the guise of the "Editor," Defoe verifies the truth of Crusoe's adventures. Defoe writes in the Preface, "The editor believes the thing to be a just history of fact; neither is there any appearance of fiction in it" (Defoe 26). This illusion of a first-person authorial voice enhances a perspective of truth that lends credibility and authority to the assumed author.

Robinson Crusoe is often recognized as an early example of the realistic novel because it creates a self-contained world that mingles truth with imagination.

Fiction moves toward self-sufficiency, self-definition; towards the autonomy of the worlds it creates . . . it is always in relationship with a series of actual happenings which can never be fully or truly known; it depends for its meaning on this relationship. (Edwards 11)

Edwards suggests that fiction occupies an autonomous world and may hold elements of factuality and perhaps myth, as well as the author's creative translation of images into language. Fiction holds the potential for actuality, but exists without requiring proof. Although, as Edwards suggests, there are inescapable fictional elements in every example of autobiographical writing, the strength of the written text lies in its closeness to real life. This is one reason why Defoe emphasizes the actuality of Crusoe's experiences. This guise of actuality transfers illusion into authenticity.

I will suggest in the following sections that there is more to an author's textual persona than a reporter's attention to facts and dates (Tracy 15). Impression and an imaginative conception of the self contribute to a complicated blend of truth and imagination. In other words, the author and narrator are not necessarily one and the same and an attention to the author's self-construction on the page may carry with it exaggeration, imagination, and the distortions of memory. Although the narrator's voice emphasizes the authenticity of events told, there are many components that may detract from truth in autobiography. This is the point from which contradictions emerge in authorship. However, although there may be discrepancies that blur the "true" identity and involvement of the author in their autobiographies, the narratives still raise discourses concerning the balance between the individual's desires and society's expectations for behavior.

Behn's identity as an author, as it is constructed within Oroonoko, is intertwined with the murder of a slave prince. Authorship is an investment, not only in the truthful documentation of Oroonoko and Imoinda's tragic lives, but also in Behn's claim to a respected "female pen" in the period of the English Restoration. It is important to clarify the cultural opposition that Behn confronted in this period. Early Modern views dictated that women whose names were printed on texts for public enjoyment sacrificed their private virtue. Women who attracted public notice betrayed an indiscretion regarding refined and appropriate behavior (Spencer 18-19). Due to this situation, writing was a dangerous and volatile pursuit for women, especially for women who claimed writing as a money-making career. By publishing Oroonoko and exhibiting a literary ambition, Behn threatened her reputation in her culture. Behn, however, distanced herself from the

trends of the period because she publicly pursued a literary career and earned an income from the distribution of her plays, poetry and narratives. “Behn’s confidence in her own authority as a woman writer is not matched in the century following her death” (Spencer 52). Attempts to legitimize her female authorship and authority converge in Oroonoko.

Behn’s autobiographical position is complicated by multiple levels of involvement in the lives of Oroonoko and Imoinda. Behn’s concern for her authority and influence is told through a description of her role in the colony and in the fate of Oroonoko. She links Oroonoko’s powerlessness as a slave prince on the plantation with her authority and position as a recognized female author. Spencer argues:

the autobiographical element means that Behn’s interest in the narrator’s position develops into an examination of her own role as woman and as writer. This fascinating novel marks an important stage in the history of women’s quest for literary authority. (Spencer 47)

Among Behn’s quests is to win, for women, publication freedom and to gain an agency as a female writer. The final lines of the story prove that Behn not only gives homage to Oroonoko and Imoinda, but also reminds the reader of her female authorship: “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). Her “pen” is joined with the nobility that she gives to the slave prince and princess.

**Petals on the Grave: The Complexities of Authorship in
Oroonoko, Or, The Royal Slave. A True History**

Virginia Woolf gives homage to Behn's literary contributions in this resonant line from A Room of One's Own: "All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, which is, most scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak" (ix). Behn claimed, in the period, perhaps scandalously, a space for the reception of female writing. With Woolf's lovely gesture of flowers on the grave, Behn's authorship is honored. An intriguing connection, a metaphor of flowers scattered over the female's resting body is a resonant image within Oroonoko. Behn describes the laying of flowers onto the body of her heroine. "As soon as he had done, he laid the body decently on leaves and flowers, of which he made a bed and concealed it under the same coverlid of nature, only her face he left yet bare to look on" (68). Oroonoko severs Imoinda's throat to protect his love and his unborn child from the indignities of slavery. Oroonoko then gently conceals Imoinda's sacrificial death with leaves and flowers. The rise of a woman's honor given with the scattering of flowers draws together heroine and author.

The "continent" of Surinam, in Behn's early descriptions, is an aesthetic utopia. "'Tis a continent whose vast extent was never yet known, and may contain more noble earth than all the universe besides" (47). It contains a perfection and innocence lost from the European culture from which she came. The native inhabitants of Surinam are "so like our first parents before the Fall" (7) and "these people represented to me an absolute idea of the first state of innocence, before Man knew how to sin" (8). As if she is the first

to witness this Edenic purity, Behn is a discoverer who observes the vastness of an unknown territory and an author who composes her impressions for a European audience. Curiosity is a response heard in Behn's narrative voice as she describes the unfamiliar sights: "where there is no novelty, there can be no curiosity" (8). Behn unites the traveler's urge to order the novelty through writing. Travel relies on writing to create metaphors for the new and curious world that an author experiences. Surrounded by the difference of strange, new species, "a thousand other birds and beasts of wonderful and surprising forms, shapes, and colours" (6), Behn "discovers" Oroonoko and is captivated by his exotic appearance and strange tales.

Intrigued by the story of his youth and sensitive to the tragedies he faces as a noble "slave-prince," Behn engages Oroonoko in conversation and friendship. The following lines from the Dedication introduce Behn's role as an "eye-witness" in the text, as a caretaker of Oroonoko, and as a protector of his stories.

I was myself an eye-witness to a great part of what you will find here set down, and what I could not be witness of I received from the mouth of the chief actor in this history, the hero himself, who gave us the whole transactions of his youth, . . . But we who were perfectly charmed with the character of this great man were curious to gather every circumstance of his life. (6)

Oroonoko's circumstances incite curiosity and wonder, but he is also intriguing for his adventurous youth and regal character. Behn composes a theatrical prelude to the scenes of Oroonoko's forthcoming adventures, while also describing her involvement as a witness and participant. She is, she asserts, an essential character who acknowledges Oroonoko's distinct influence on the plantation and who recognizes the tragic significance of his life.

Behn is intrinsically linked to Oroonoko because he entrusted to her the stories that led to his enslavement on the plantation in Surinam. She received the dramatic tale “from the mouth of the chief actor” and distinguishes the black slave to the audience as a “great man.” Behn’s description of Oroonoko’s life spans diverse geographic regions and begins with an account of Oroonoko’s early life as a prince in Africa. He is heir to his Grandfather’s native throne and is also educated in western language and culture. He is duped into boarding a European slave trade vessel and sold to a plantation owner in Surinam. Here, he finds his love. Imoinda, who he had thought lost many years before in Africa. Due to his noble appearance and education, Oroonoko is not forced into demeaning labors, but holds a position of honor among the European women of the colony. Oroonoko represents to Behn a classical ideal of warrior and lover who “was adorned with a native beauty . . . he struck an awe and reverence even in those that knew not his quality, as he did in me, who beheld him with surprise and wonder” (Behn 10). The name “Caesar” given to Oroonoko by the Europeans reflects his bearing and stature: “by that name only he was known in our Western world” (44). Behn compares Oroonoko’s royal bearing to the physical perfection of European statues. “The most famous statuary could not form the figure of a man more admirably turned from head to foot” (11-12).

Although he exhibits a noble and princely bearing, Oroonoko’s freedom, however, is continually denied by the plantation owners and he eventually rejects a life of enslavement for his wife Imoinda, and his unborn son. Behn’s story focuses on Oroonoko’s plight and the aftermath of a slave revolt and attempt to escape into the jungles surrounding the plantation. The result of Oroonoko’s desperate attempt for

freedom culminates in a violent, almost demonic scene of Englishmen inflicting dreadful punishment on Oroonoko's body. Behn conveys the violent stages of his torture: "So inhumane were the justices who stood by to see the execution, who after paid dearly enough for their insolence. They cut Caesar in quarters and sent them to several of the chief plantations" (72-73). Oroonoko's body is transformed into a trophy of colonial dominance as revenge against his attempted slave revolt.

Throughout the narrative, Behn asserts a descriptive elevation of Oroonoko's demeanor and plight and through her own empathy, creates sympathy for Oroonoko's character. Yet, in the early stages of Behn's experiences with Oroonoko, Behn is not just an observer removed from a participation in events, since she identifies herself as a guardian of Oroonoko's vulnerable slave-nobility. She claims that the women of the plantation "had all the liberty of speech with him, especially myself, whom he called his great mistress; and indeed my word would go a great way with him" (45). Why does Behn give to herself such a potent role as a bearer of authority in Oroonoko's life? As his "Great Mistress," Behn alludes to a singular relationship with Oroonoko that, on one level, indicates that she is the most affiliated and, thus, qualified to relay the incidents and accounts of his death to history and yet, on another level, she creates an aura of mystery that intimates an illicit and provocative relationship with the slave prince. Here, Astrea, the spy seems to intentionally mystify her role as an observer who is curious to gather the events of his life. A mistress is one who holds authority and control. Behn assumes and escapes these roles, while tantalizing the reader with questions of her complicity and responsibility in Oroonoko's life.

In addition to the communication Behn and Oroonoko shared, she held a position in the English colony in Surinam that was unique to unmarried women. Free to travel throughout the colony, Behn holds an autonomy as a woman of status in the English community. “As soon as I came into the country, the best house in it was presented me, called St John’s Hill. It stood on a vast rock of white marble, at the foot of which the river ran a vast depth down” (48). Emblematic of a position of power, or a proprietary stake, the house Behn receives as a gift by the landowners represents an autonomous status. From this elevated status, she assumes an independent perspective from which to judge the activities of the plantation.

Nevertheless, Behn admits “and though I had none above me in that country, yet I wanted power to preserve this great man” (5). Although she holds a certain degree of influence, she was powerless to protect Oroonoko from tragic murder by the colony landowners. The phrase that encapsulates the complications surrounding her responsibility to aid Oroonoko and Imoinda is: “I wanted power.” This “wanting” of power signals a breach, or lack in Behn’s agency and influence that prevents her from acting on behalf of Oroonoko and Imoinda. A lack of power is a discourse that links Behn’s purposes in writing with a larger cultural commentary surrounding the morality of the actions of those who held power over the slaves. This concern with the violent behavior of the gentlemen stakeholders is also an illuminating component of Behn’s authorship.

A problem essential to a larger consideration of Behn’s authorship in Oroonoko is her preoccupation with the authority held in her signature. If her writing holds little import in her culture, then is there no breadth of consequence to the horrible mutilation of

slave bodies? Behn seems to challenge her contemporary readers to disavow the significance of her story merely because it was written by a woman. She extends a challenge to readers: they risk discrediting the moral implications, the truth, of the events the story contains if they refuse to acknowledge the female author. Her authorship exposes an anxiety concerning the worth of her work in a society that devalues women's creative products. "Oroonoko is partly concerned with Behn's struggle to represent herself as a female writer, to assume a certain power that would go with such a representation" (Salzman xiii). The text is not only concerned with Behn's agency to protect Oroonoko, but also with the complications of female literary authority and the dire significance that a woman's writing may hold.

Oroonoko reflects a concern with Behn's authorship since it serves as evidence of a "woman writer's struggle for artistic self-definition" and her aim to "differentiate her efforts at self-creation from those of her male counterpart" (Gilbert 158). Behn projects herself to European audiences as a female author of reputation whose name carries a certain degree of fame: "I hope the reputation of my pen is considerable enough" (73). Behn attempts to project a representation of herself as an autonomous individual who is capable of wielding literary authority. Yet, this claim to respected status in the literary world is denied, written through the phrase: "I wanted power." An undermined literary power is proven in the violent deaths of Oroonoko and Imoinda. Behn links their deaths with her own reputation as a "female pen." "But his [Oroonoko's] misfortune was to fall in an obscure world, that afforded only a female pen to celebrate his fame" (Behn 40). Oroonoko's "misfortune" and "only a female pen" are parallel discourses that are essentially interconnected motivations of Behn's authorship. These lines indicate that

Behn perceives an inability to gain recognition in the world of letters, not for a lack of artistic ability, but due to cultural barriers. In one interpretation, Behn translates this failure into the metaphor of the Great Mistress's aborted protection of the vulnerable slave prince and princess.

Behn uses a claim to a female pen to draw attention to an authority and power that she was unable to wield, as a woman, in the climactic moments that led to violent deaths. Impotence in action is manifest through references to an undermined authorship. As a result, Behn's writing may carry a regret for an inability to counteract the climactic events which culminate in the mutilation of bodies. Although Behn carries the responsibility for Oroonoko's story, she comments on the cultural barriers resisting female authorship in the last lines: "Thus died this great man; worthy of a better fate, and a more sublime wit than mine to write his praise" (73). She devalues a suggestion of her reputation as a "sublime wit" and discredits the authority she might have earned as the bearer of Oroonoko's and Imoinda's story by giving to a masculine author a greater ability and authority to tell their story. That lack of the sublime may be a coy hint of humility, or perhaps it is a sly indication of what it means to hold a female pen in Restoration England: women's writing is perceived as lacking in the sublime.

Oroonoko's and Imoinda's bodies may be understood as physical reminders of Behn's continued disenfranchisement from the implicit dominance of masculine authorship. Imoinda's silent and mutilated body and the subsequent death of the unborn child is a graphic translation of Behn's inability to claim an authority as an author. The charged descriptions of Oroonoko's and Imoinda's love during the final moments before Oroonoko kills Imoinda emphasize the tragedy and imminent destruction of the potentials

contained in Imoinda's pregnant body. Oroonoko rejects the birth of his child into the intolerable situation of slavery by resolving to kill Imoinda.

All that love could say in such cases being ended, . . . the lovely, young and adored victim lays herself down before the sacrificer, while he, with a hand resolved, and a heart breaking within, gave the fatal stroke; first cutting her throat, and then severing her yet smiling face from that delicate body, pregnant as it was with the fruits of tenderest love. As soon as he had done, he laid the body decently on leaves and flowers, of which he made a bed and concealed it under the same coverlid of nature. (68)

Imoinda is a willing victim who stoically accepts her own sacrifice and that of her child.

The death of the mother and the simultaneous death of the unborn may be read as a metaphor for the conditions of female writing which are ambiguously debated through Behn's authorship. For the purposes of examination of this theme, a simplified comparison may be drawn: the mother is a female author who is forced to sacrifice the "birth" of a creative product due to the binds which encircle literary freedom. Feminine authorship remains unfulfilled. Imoinda's identity is silenced and concealed by Oroonoko's rejection of the culture which binds him and his unborn child into slavery. Imoinda is also a sacrifice to the demands of suffering enacted by colonial endeavors. Behn's writing emerges as a voice for the silent, female victim who lacks an agency within cultural constructs isolating her from literacy and freedom.

Behn's significant absences during peak moments of action prevent her from suppressing and subverting the revolution of violence that ultimately converges in Imoinda's and Oroonoko's deaths. She claims that this absence is due to a feminine limitation, a debilitating "melancholy" that threatened her health. These absences during moments of crisis in which she might have fulfilled her role as Oroonoko's and

Imoinda's protector are suggestive because they too are indicators of an absent and melancholic authorship.

Some criticism suggests that Behn betrays a failed investment in the lives of those whom she protects. In "Juggling the Categories of Race, Class and Gender" Margaret Ferguson writes: "the authorial 'I' seems at once extraordinarily lucid and disturbingly blind about her own complicity in her hero's capture and humiliating punishment" (Ferguson 216). As Ferguson acknowledges, Behn writes into the text a breach in her role as Oroonoko's "Great mistress" (45) and confidant. Behn transfers the care of Oroonoko to others, flees down the river with other women who were in fear of a slave revolt. Ferguson's comment anticipates questions of Behn's naiveté to the impending violence directed toward Oroonoko. And, it also betrays her complicity in and awareness of the tensions produced by the colonial project. In Behn's absence, Oroonoko is left as a dying victim of a savage whipping.

His discourse was sad and the earthly smell about him so strong that I was persuaded to leave the place for some time (being myself but sickly, and very apt to fall into fits of dangerous illness upon any extraordinary melancholy), the servants and Trefry and the chururgeons promised all to take what possible care they could of the life of Caesar, and I, taking boat, went with other company to Colonel Martin's, about three days journey down the river. (71-72)

Due to an "extraordinary melancholy" which may be coded as irrationality and hysteria, Behn reacts to her own "body" and relinquishes a protection of Oroonoko. Proven in this description is a failure in action that explodes with violence and tragic consequence. As soon as Behn travels down the river, Oroonoko is "carried to the same post where he was whipped, and causing him to be tied to it, and a great fire made before him" (72). With inexplicable brutality, the severing of Oroonoko's limbs becomes a spectacle of victory

of the European justices. He dies, staked to the pillar of European colonial dominance; his body is quartered and burned, and then sent to various colonial officials as a prize of mastery over the slaves who attempted to overthrow their power in the slave revolt and attempted escape.

The line separating a failed responsibility and an awareness of the implications of her decision to leave the plantation in fear remains unclear. With what degree of complicity should Behn be judged? She does acknowledge a dispensing of justice for the culprits involved: “and so inhumane were the justices, who stood by to see the execution, who after paid dearly for their insolence” (72). Those involved suffered the consequences of their guilt, Behn writes, and yet, there is no reference to her own potential for disarming the mad “rabble.” Although she was Oroonoko’s “Great Mistress,” this responsibility did not save him.

Writing, ultimately, does not serve as a container of Behn’s guilt or as a record of responsibility, but rather as a forum emphasizing how the overlap between her role as character and author raises discourses exploring the agency and limitations of female authors. Behn illuminates the “great melancholy” or void of female authorship within the metaphors of death and absence. Absence may be read as a visualization of Behn’s underlying preoccupation with her identity as a writer. Absence and presence are not dichotomies that prove Oroonoko’s death could have been prevented, but elucidate the emptiness associated with a female writer’s product.

Authorship enables, through the suggestions of Behn’s absence and complicity, a commentary on tragedy, on the violence enacted over the bodies of slaves, and ultimately, on the female author’s illustration of literary restrictions. The concluding

lines of the text draw attention not only to Oroonoko, but to Behn's claim as a writer; "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" (Behn 73). The reference binds Behn's name, "the reputation of my pen" to "his glorious name" and "Imoinda." A triangulation of emphasis links Behn's pen to the lives of those she records. This assertion of a humble, yet "considerable" authorship is a component of the eulogy that delivers Oroonoko's "glorious" name to "all ages."

Behn complicates and illuminates a variety of responses to the question, "What is an Author?" Authorship is partially a response to the curiosity and wonder inspired by unfamiliar travel settings. It is also motivated by a will to contain and memorialize a story that holds a tragedy and that documents the moral environment of a European colony. Authorship carries dynamic and powerful discourses that comment upon cultural practices. Behn addresses the significance of a text generated by a female author and the difficulties inherent in a woman's effort for literary fame. Oroonoko holds a tenuous balance between tragic plot and authorship by incorporating the deaths of the hero and heroine with her concern with her pen. Behn's authorship comments upon the impotence of female writing, specifically, Behn's desire for fame, "I hope the reputation of my pen is considerable enough" through the tragic outcomes in the narrative. She projects this essential tragedy into a culture in which she is a rare voice: a woman who writes her way into a space of masculine autonomy. Writing's dual impotence and power is the contradiction that remains wrapped into Behn's identity as an author.

The Adventurer's Journal: Writing as Self-construction in Robinson Crusoe

A travel adventure that extends over a period of twenty-eight years, Robinson Crusoe is based upon Crusoe's lived experience, and presented as if it is "a life in progress" (Backscheider 8). In other words, the "progress" of time in the text continues in the present by creating an illusion of a "present" individual's experiences. This process relies on journalistic tactics for the documentation of an authentic account, while interweaving fictional and fantastic elements; Defoe "invented the imitation of reporting and imitating" (Backscheider 9). Defoe writes a fiction of island entrapment that describes the realistic emotional reactions associated with such an experience.

As a generator of literary change from Renaissance perspectives of art (Backscheider 7) which represented the ideal and heroic, to a mode emphasizing individual uniqueness and weakness, Defoe concentrated on the complications of an individual's relationship to society. This emphasis includes the undercurrents of human nature and personal experience that shape an individual's function in society. Defoe writes with a concern for the details that "characterize," in Foucault's terms, an individual's responsibilities to family and religion. The points of interaction that may be identified as discourses in Robinson Crusoe center upon the repercussions of Crusoe's uncontrollable desires. Crusoe confronts the tension between his own will and the theme of temperance, dictated by his father's middle-class wisdom, in his role as European gentleman who assumes proprietary ownership over an unknown geographic region. The island condition in which Crusoe investigates the boundaries of his behavior is a source

for themes of authorship because it emphasizes the intersections between Crusoe's agency and the controls of fate and religion. As a literary character, Crusoe tests the boundaries between ideal behavior characterized by rational pursuit of comfort and balance and contrary desires seeking the fulfillment of free will. Within the process of writing, Crusoe's motives for action and the limitations he faces are developed. For Crusoe, authorship is a method of understanding and making sense of his situation. For Defoe, authorship unravels the sites of meaning forged by the desires, conflicts and contradictions of an individual's participation in the world.

Rather than replicating abstract ideals of art in his writing, Defoe isolates the real confusions and problems that a single individual might face in a situation of island entrapment. "Defoe wanted to communicate a picture of the world that would reveal a truth deeper than the accurate rendering of its surface" (Bakscheider 9). In addition to accurately presenting Crusoe's physical surroundings, Defoe writes the inner complications of an individual's psychology. An exploration of emotional interiority is enabled by exposure to Crusoe's inner thoughts. "I walked about on the shore, lifting up my hands, and my whole being, as I may say, wrapt up in the contemplation of my deliverance" (66). This type of language that describes "contemplation" and "lifting" of the spirit is characteristic of Defoe's efforts to emulate an individual's true interiority. Robinson Crusoe is written as a memoir in order to duplicate a real, lived experience within dramatic occurrences.

Early in the text, Defoe promotes the authenticity of Crusoe's experiences. First published in 1719, the original title page of the first edition of Robinson Crusoe introduces the story:

The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York. Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last strangely deliver'd by PYRATES. *Written by Himself.* (25)

The illusion of Robinson Crusoe's authenticity begins on the title page. Included is not only the promise of entertainment through stories of suspense and pirates, but the guarantee that it is told by one individual who had first-hand exposure to unfamiliar and strange settings. The indication that Crusoe writes from his own point of view suggests that the story holds authentic and real adventures. In an attempt to overcome fiction, Crusoe's signature, rather than Defoe's, is printed on the title page as the author.

In addition to entertainment, there is another reason for the publishing of the self on the page. The shift from writing a private adventure to the imperative of its public distribution is emphasized by Defoe. Defoe suggests that by publishing Robinson Crusoe, he extends a valuable contribution to his community of readers. The Editor's sincere perspective of the story's worth lends an urgency and an importance to this specific tale that distinguishes it from other replications of a common plot scenario. The reason why this text deserves publication, Defoe argues, is that it holds a lesson for other readers of this type of literature. Speaking as the Editor in the Preface to the story, directly after the title page, Defoe acknowledges the value of Crusoe's "modest" story: "The story is told with modesty, with seriousness, and with a religious application of events to the uses to which wise men always apply them, viz. to the instruction of others by this example, and to justify and honour the wisdom of Providence in all the variety of our circumstances" (Defoe's Preface 25). The story serves as a justification for Providential wisdom and the respect which religious principles inspire in the wise.

Although circumstances may differ, there are lessons for many readers held in its pages. With a recommendation of the story's public value, Defoe claims to his readers: "he does them a great service in the publication" (Preface 25).

Robinson Crusoe is, as Defoe argues, primarily a publication of instruction, but also a "diversion" (Defoe 25) that "sells itself on the vital element of *adventure*" (Downie 79-80). As a method of advertisement, the title page relies upon the popular interests in adventure and intrigue. It promises entertainment with the lure of shipwrecks and pirates. Emerging from the early 1660s and popular during the periods in which Behn and Defoe wrote, "sentimental travel writing" dramatizes slavery, "castaways, mutinies, abandonments, etc." (Pratt 86). These stories stem from European colonial expansion and are told from the point of view of the returning European (Pratt 87). Both Defoe and Behn rely on the intrigue of adventure that stems from European colonialist ventures.

Evolving from Crusoe's will toward adventure, represented by the dramatic open space of the sea, the narrative relies on the supposedly true observations of the hero and on his responses to the challenges which threaten his survival. Marooned on an island that had not yet been discovered by colonial exploration, Crusoe is a heroic wanderer who is shaped by the shipwrecks, earthquakes, threats, and providential occurrences that act upon him. An evolution of his psychology is enabled by the mythical, and perhaps, allegorical threats and risks he faces alone on the island. Yet, Crusoe is also a representative of the colonial situation that pursued the appropriation of new territories and resources. Exploration offered opportunity and the potential to alter the life into which he was born.

The island setting removes Crusoe from the culture which shaped him, from the expectations explained in the now familiar phrase, “mine was the middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low life,” which was most conducive to “human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labour and sufferings of the mechanick part of mankind” (28). The lifestyle into which Crusoe was born represents the antithesis to the one which his will compelled him toward. By rejecting the stability and comfortable happiness of his father’s situation, Crusoe was delivered into a “mechanick” existence of basic toil and labor. It was an unexplainable “propension of nature” (27) that culminated in what he deemed a situation of “misery” (28) and hardship. In this presentation of contrasting states of existence, Defoe suggests that a life of ease removed from risk holds a cultural value. Yet, the story also celebrates the undeniable presence of a free imagination and the transformative power of a quest for self-fulfillment. On the island, Crusoe engages in a solitary dialogue that weighs the value of these two contrasting principles.

Defoe utilizes the island setting as a literary backdrop for a psychological construction of his hero. “For Crusoe, the island is a way of defining moods; for Defoe, it is a way to shape a story” (Zimmerman 41). The island “is the wilderness where Crusoe must undergo the suffering that will take him through repentance to the promised land” (Zimmerman 41). The island is more than a specific location since it enables Defoe to engender a setting that serves as a reflection of Crusoe’s psychology. Within the collage of geographic variance, Crusoe’s impressions are interconnected with the island.

The bounty of the island translates into reflections upon the potential virtue and strengths of his situation. Descriptions of the island are part of the process of realization

and acceptance that follow the evolution of Crusoe's psychology. The following passage indicates a shift in his perception of the island from imprisonment into realization of potentials for cultivation.

I saw large plants of alloes, but did not then understand them. I saw several sugar canes, but wild and, for want of cultivation, imperfect. I contented my self with these discoveries for this time, and came back musing with my self what course I might take to know the vertue and goodness of any of the fruits or plants which I should discover. (113)

Self and setting are joined in such a way that meaning evolves through the changes that writing provides. Crusoe considers the "course" he might follow to amend "imperfections" and "cultivate" the virtuous and the beneficial aspects of his lifestyle. He continues to describe the environment around him: "and the country appeared so fresh, so green, so flourishing, every thing being in a constant verdure or flourish of spring, that it looked like a planted garden" (113). In the "garden" of his new habitation, Crusoe may participate in the "flourishing" "verdure" with calm contemplation. Contained in the religious overtones of a lush "garden," Crusoe's self-realization and religious understanding is transferred to the island

Yet, the text is also a template for the moods of colonial expansion that filled Early Modern imaginations. Travel and discovery are essential themes of Defoe's literature. He believed in the social value of an ambition to expand trade and resources through colonial projects. In his view, European prosperity relied on the discovery of human knowledge and potential that hid in untapped geographic locales. "The abundance of the earth and its possibilities become not just God's gift to man but his admonition to them to explore the world" (Backscheider 111). As a member of a culture engaged in exploration, Defoe emphasized the religious and political imperatives of the

utilization of resources. For example, Crusoe sails the circumference of the island in order to explore potentials for the improvement of his situation: “I had a great desire to make a more perfect discovery of the island, and to see what other productions I might find, which I yet knew nothing of” (112). Defoe’s story carries with it the social imperative to utilize the boons of the island. Defoe integrates this colonial purpose into Crusoe’s labors including cultivating sheep for milk and cheese, harvests of tobacco and rich “clusters of grapes” (113). Defoe’s underlying objectives in writing carry nationalistic interests in themes of exploration. Defoe inserts into Robinson Crusoe a curiosity for geography and knowledge that reflects upon his interests in Early Modern England. Within accounts of Crusoe’s productivity in harvest and exploration, the narration carries Defoe’s political imperatives.

Colonial development and proprietary ownership is in the forefront of Oroonoko, as well. Both Behn and Defoe discuss the wealth generated by colonial development. Their writing acknowledges the social value of landscapes through which they travel. Behn meets Indians of “strange aspects” who emerged from the mountains carrying “bags of gold dust” (56). This discovery of a new culture is significant since it represents access to valuable products. Behn’s language suggests that Indians are guides who may lead Europeans to mountains of mythical wealth. Each encounter with new people or new commodities holds the potential for development and prosperity. Behn writes: “’tis to be bemoaned what His Majesty lost by losing that part of America” (57). In this phrase, Behn describes the loss of an economic interest when England gave Surinam to the Dutch. Surinam’s value to England was underrepresented and as a result, its potentials were lost.

Defoe's authorship holds overlaps between individual will, colonial interests and the contributions made to European culture. Like Behn, Defoe succeeds in exposing the ambiguities of agency that link travel, colonial imperatives and writing. The complications that a traveler faces are sorted through the release of authorship.

Crusoe's acceptance of the island and of the value it holds for his comfort is enabled through writing. Set apart from the rest of the narrative with the simple title, "The Journal," Defoe gives to Crusoe a language to express his identity within the island setting. Inserted into the narrative as a separate body of text with a different span of time, the journal indicates that Crusoe wrote with a limited supply of ink while trapped on the island. Defoe incorporates the journal as proof of the hero's authentic experiences and draws the reader in to a close analysis of Crusoe's immediate physical and spiritual space.

Foucault's consideration of the emergence of the author in "What is an Author" is relevant to a discussion of Crusoe's motives for writing: "the author provides the basis for explaining not only the presence of certain events in a work, but also their transformations, distortions, and diverse modifications (through his biography, the determination of his individual perspective, the analysis of his social position, and the revelation of his basic design)" (Foucault 214-215). Crusoe's authorship in the journal charts Crusoe's emotional transformations from a victim of fate to an individual who realizes that his life is a confluence of not only his own will, but also the determinations of society and religion. Writing explains how his social position, his relationship to Catholicism, his fidelity to family and his "fatal" "propension of nature," (27) a code for desires, are interconnected within his identity and to reject their presence is to risk threats

of isolation and futility. Crusoe's authorship emerges from the distortions produced by a blindness to the multiple components of his identity. Crusoe evaluates these "distortions" and "modifications" and their influences in his choices through the process of composition. This complicated array of impression and thought is sorted in the journal.

There is a distinction evident in the journal between the voice of the narrator who is trapped on the island and writes the journal, and the narrator's voice who is the assumed author of the entire text. The Journal is written as events evolve, while the whole text was written as a reminiscence by the rescued hero. For example, in a journal entry, Crusoe writes, "May 24. Every day to this day I worked on the wreck, and with hard labour I loosened some things so much with the crow, that the first blowing tide several casks floated out" (101). This narrative, distinguished from, but immersed in the flow of the story, documents Crusoe's tasks and purposes in the moment. "Jan. 3. I began my fence or wall; which, being still jealous of my being attacked by some body, I resolved to make very thick and strong" (92). This passage indicates Crusoe's efforts to build a fortification from remains of the ship as protection from unseen dangers. Like the construction of physical barriers, authorship is an internal fortress. The Journal entries are an insight into the hero's immediate tension and fear of unseen dangers. The distinction in time that the Journal provides is a significant method of day-to-day account keeping as well as a landmark of the "trapped" hero's daily emotional existence.

As a tool of authorship, the journal documents Crusoe's mental and spiritual evolution through the immediate language of self-discovery. Peter Hulme discusses Crusoe's process of self-composition through writing. "Schematically it could be said that the initial composition of the self lasts the twelve months that he has a good supply

of ink: a year's journal provides him with enough material to check for providential repetitions" (Hulme 197). As discussed earlier, Crusoe begins to write once he has forged a safe habitation protected from the uncertain threats of the island. "As I observed before, I found pen, ink, and paper, and I husbanded them to the utmost, and I shall shew, that while my ink lasted, I kept things very exact, but after that was gone, I could not, for I could not make any ink by any means that I could devise" (82). Ink is a treasure because it supports Crusoe's identity in the uncertainty of an unfamiliar place. Ink helps to minimize fear and threat since it "exactly" orders his physical and spiritual position. The precious quantity of ink, "I husbanded them," suggests that writing lends to him an autonomy in circumstances that inhibit his freedom. Authorship is not only a method of record keeping, but enables Crusoe to reshape his perception of his environment and his place in it.

The antithesis of writing is a state of insanity that hinders the steps requisite to survival. The hero who is capable of rational thought contrasts with Crusoe's previous state of mind of insanity or chaos in which he "ran about the shore, wringing my hands and beating my head and face, exclaiming at my misery, and crying out, I was undone, undone" (86). Crusoe composes his identity through the deliberate release of overwhelming passion with a tenuous supply of writing materials. Crusoe utilizes authorship to deliver thoughts from emotional confusion and thus, enhance self-preservation and productivity.

Writing enables Crusoe to order his identity and to seek protection from the uncertainties that surround him. The delivery of "my thoughts from daily poring upon them, and afflicting my mind" eases the weight of his despondency. Crusoe's

documentation of the work of the day factually records the accomplished activities. Chronological details unify a need for documentation with the relief of self-reflection by enabling him to clearly order his situation. A sequential deliberation of his situation produces a rational state of mind that inspires industry and progress.

I now began to consider seriously my condition, and the circumstance I was reduced to, and I drew up the state of my affairs in writing, not so much to leave them to any that were to come after me, for I was like to have but few heirs, as to deliver my thoughts from daily poring upon them, and afflicting my mind; and as my reason began now to master my despondency, I began to comfort my self as well as I could, and to set the good against the evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse, and I stated it very impartially, like debtor and creditor, the comforts I enjoyed against the miseries I suffered thus. (83)

With a parallel list of his “affairs,” Crusoe distances himself from emotional trauma by impartially weighing “the good against the evil.” Crusoe sets his condition on paper, he says, to ease his afflicted mind. Writing alleviates “despondency,” and creates a critical distance between the page and his own condition of psychological self-absorption. The words he sets out on the page affirm the “blessings” of his existence in contrast to the “miseries.” It is that distance which enables him to separate his negative emotions from the actual “comforts” with which he had provided himself. Writing clarifies the problems he is unable to resolve emotionally by balancing a list of the evil--“I am cast upon a horrible desolate island, void of all hope of recovery”--with the good: “But I am alive, and not drowned as all my ship’s company was” (83). Language is an aid that balances the contraries which hinder and assist his existence on the island.

A retreat from “too much discomposure of mind” (86), language creates a space of order and reason in which productive activity is possible. Language serves as a “fortress” (32) of feeling and spiritual uncertainty that redefines his identity and aids his

physical and mental condition. The process of writing provides an artificial release from Crusoe's state of physical isolation on the island. "It is not surprising then that one finds a frequent retreat from such manifestations of feeling into language—a journal, lists, elaborate ritualistic bargaining. As much as possible, language itself is concretized" (Zimmerman 24). The journal is a constant comfort in the hero's tenuous emotional and spiritual existence.

However, within the "relief" of language, there is still the lurking presence of uncertainty and danger. His habitation and language are tenuous shelters. "But the psychic reality that appears beyond language is terrifying, and words are also often sought as a defense against fears" (Zimmerman 24). Crusoe reveals a vulnerability to constant threats to his safety. The journal is a retreat from this frightening reality and enables an exploration of "manifestations of feelings." As a result, writing serves as an organizing structure in the absence of familiar cultural fortifications. Tension between precipitant danger and a temporary escape from it through language is evident in Crusoe's limited supply of ink.

Authorship enables Crusoe to distill the major contradictions that he faces as an individual and that affected the paths of his life. The psychological evolution Crusoe undergoes is evident in the following passage. Crusoe moves from a state of anxiety and frustration to one of penitence and realization.

Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus used? My conscience presently checked me in that enquiry, as if I had blasphemed, and methought it spoke to me like a voice: 'Wretch! dost thou ask what thou hast done? Look back upon a dreadful, misspent life, and ask thy self what thou hast not done. (107)

Crusoe reaches a point of self-reflection in which he can question the power of an unknown God that directs his life. A realization of fate and of a limited autonomy is reached through the process of writing the story. “God had appointed all this to befall me; that I was brought to this miserable circumstance by His direction” (107). Crusoe believes that because he disobeyed God’s purposes for him, God sends him to the island entrapment as a form of punishment. Crusoe then uses those years as a period of rehabilitation and self-investigation through the emotional catharsis enabled by writing. Crusoe struggles to reach a state of balance in his wild, “propension of nature” that will give to his life “a design” that was more than a “wandering inclination” (27).

This purpose helps him to move from a state of primitive survival to a respect for the design of “Providence.”

I had hitherto acted upon no religious foundation at all; indeed I had very few notions of religion in my head, or had entertained any sense of any thing that had befallen me, otherwise than as a chance, or, as we lightly say, what pleases God; without so much as enquiring into the end of Providence in these things, or His order in governing events in the world. (94)

Crusoe begins to accept a vulnerability to errors in his behavior and that he must continue to rely on God’s guidance. A spiritual transformation is gained through the self-questioning and inner deliberation enabled by writing. Crusoe describes a self-sufficiency and hope in certain journal passages: “for now I prayed with a sense of my condition, and with a true scripture view of hope founded on the encouragement of the word of God; and from this time, I may say, I began to have hope that God would hear me” (111). This process of reaching a state of hope, a faith that God would hear his plight and aid him is described as the years of Crusoe’s entrapment continue.

Crusoe's character combines a deep sense of individuality with an awareness of how his life is influenced by God and fate. Crusoe intimates that his life is not completely autonomous, but bound to a higher structure and order. God and fate act upon him in ways that he can not control, alter, or understand. Crusoe reaches a realization of his limited agency by questioning why fate delivered him to the island isolation, and declares his own interpretation of the contradiction surrounding his life: "Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus used?" (107). Crusoe distills the steps which lead to his island isolation by questioning an unknown destiny or fate. Why am I here? is a core question that drives Crusoe's self-questioning and action on the island. The island enables him to confront the essential components of his existence including his drive to move beyond an acceptance of his economic station and urge for the open possibilities represented by sailing ships. Travel is a threat to the rational acceptance of fate's design for him. The "sin" of Crusoe's behavior lies in his weakness to human impulses and intentional overstepping of social boundaries that yield a subtle rejection of God's purpose. Crusoe brought upon himself misery because he did not seek a spiritual and religious guidance, but blindly sought the unknown as an escape for his dissatisfactions of the life which was expected of him. Self-investigation through writing enables Crusoe to analyze and perhaps, reconcile the spiritual tensions that confront him.

Crusoe realizes that his actions have repercussions. Crusoe suggests that a blind adherence to his will in his youthful wanderings betrays a dangerous irresponsibility. "I do not remember that I had in all that time one thought that so much as tended either to looking upwards toward God, or inwards towards a reflection upon my own ways; but a

certain stupidity of soul. without desire of good or conscience of evil, had entirely overwhelmed me” (103). Crusoe describes a blindness in his soul that prevented him from desiring the “good.” This is a crux that confronts Crusoe’s process of understanding and repentance on the island: a consciousness of good and evil within choices and how these choices not only affect himself, but also the fabric of his family and their expectations.

Crusoe reaches a point of resolution that aids his productivity on the island. “I resolved it at last all into thankfulness to that Providence, which had delivered me from so many unseen dangers, and had kept me from those mischiefs which I could no way have been the agent in delivering my self from” (181). Providence watches over him, Crusoe says, and delivers him from other dangers he may not anticipate. This protection under Providence’s will reaffirms his faith in the omnipotence of his spiritual guide. Crusoe regains agency, he is rescued only after he has embraced the purposes that God outlined for him and offered repentance. Crusoe affirms the value of seeking restraint in the excesses of his temperament and avoiding the temptations of deceptive adventures. The sea may represent the fulfillment of a wandering inclination, but it is a false direction for a life of piety and moderation.

Maps of Contradiction and Resolution: Authorship as Clarity

Behn and Crusoe eventually return to England from their travels in the “other world.” From the memories of their geographic explorations, they translate their experiences into a published product for the entertainment of Early Modern readers. They produced records that contextualized and memorialized their experiences. Publication formalizes the value of an author’s interpretations of their challenges and adventures in travel. Behn and Defoe interpret, through writing, the cruxes of their involvement in the world. Through the narration, Behn and Crusoe evaluate and communicate the essential disjunction between their individuality and the intersections of their lives with the world.

Behn and Crusoe suggest through autobiographical voice that they are aware of the repercussions that choices and decisions inflict on others and themselves. If Behn had remained by Oroonoko’s side, would death have been avoided? If Crusoe had heeded warnings, against an “obstinate inclination” for wandering, would he have avoided the pain of his isolation? Both authors manipulate the complications of these questions while relaying their deep investments in the story as well.

It is impossible to understand these stories without hearing the author’s voice. If, as Foucault suggests, writing is an extension of the author’s conscious or subconscious desire to overcome contradiction, then the author’s imperatives are indirectly involved in the way that meaning is delivered. Foucault addresses themes of contradiction as driving forces of composition. He writes, “there must be – at a certain level of his thought or

desire, of his consciousness or unconscious - a point where contradictions are resolved, where incompatible elements are at last tied together or organized around a fundamental or originating contradiction” (Foucault 215). Within this principle, stories are shaped by, intentionally or unintentionally, the social structures that guide an author’s life as well as their own judgments of their decisions. For Behn, the complications she faces include her inability to protect Oroonoko and Imoinda and translation of that through female authorship, and Crusoe, an emotional transformation from fear and chaos to realization and acceptance. Within the projections of the narrative voice, Defoe is able to examine the economic and social standing of his hero, including the wealth gained by colonial expansion.

Behn’s writing carries with it the indications of a “conscious or subconscious desire” to question the barriers resisting her female voice. This is why the tragedy of Oroonoko’s and Imoinda’s deaths is united with the significance of Behn’s absence. Her absence does not only suggest a lost opportunity for protection, but also signals that the female voice carries an inherent absence that can not wield a power for change in a culture that is contained by patriarchal voices. Behn’s investment in Imoinda’s and Oroonoko’s fate attaches the breadth of significance to the focal issue, which is the brutal murder of these lovers. Yet, although Behn does not directly appeal to her audience with an obvious statement of her intent, her desire for literary recognition as a female author is projected onto the lives of the hero and heroine.

Behn proposes a discourse that opposes a cultural philosophy concerning women’s writing. As the composer of the text, Behn’s will or “desire” is reconstructed in writing: “I hope the reputation of my pen is considerable enough” (73). A simultaneous

humility and call for fame are held in the quiet phrase, “considerable enough.” The subtle attention to the fame of her pen, her name and her worth in a social construct do not provide a resolution to the discourses she proposes in the text, but delivers them for consideration. Perhaps Behn divulges a will to yield the story to those who may continue to circulate and investigate the problems contained in the text.

Oroonoko and Robinson Crusoe betray the tensions that arise from the barriers separating travel and the colonial objectives, individual agency and social action. Writing gives to this tension a metaphor and a language that lends significance to the tragic interactions of these imperatives. Unlike Behn, who interprets her concern with female authorship through a deep metaphor, Crusoe uses writing to draw his motives and concerns to the surface. He distills a fundamental individuality and resourcefulness through a descriptive catalog of his existence.

The practice of writing enables both authors to unearth the hidden complications and desires that influence their participation in travel. Authorship enables them to maneuver through the labyrinth of doubt, confusion, action and decision concerning their participation in geographic unfamiliarities and their involvement in tragic events. The genre of autobiography opens the possibilities for the narrators to question and define the guidelines or boundaries posed by the demands of their cultures. Behn and Crusoe may be understood as the interpreters of complicated interplays between the events they witness and the filtering interpretation of those events through writing. Perhaps writing is a relief of responsibility that distances the author from the tragedies that surround their involvement in events. Writing is an undiluted space where the difficulties, irresolution, and contradiction can be delivered beyond the author, to “mortality and to the afterlife of

the written sign” (Burke 289). Burke argues that a text moves beyond an author and continues to exist beyond the author. Perhaps authorship and, subsequently, publication are personal gestures of acceptance and amelioration that ease the “originating” contradictions.

Barthes describes a text as “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture” (Barthes 128). Behn and Crusoe draw from this live tissue of cultural variance and weave into the “multi-dimensional” (Burke 128) spaces of their stories, a composition of their intents. The author is the source of this dynamic investigation into the fears and regrets of irresolvable circumstances. Their writings create an “afterlife” which progressively circulates the discourses of authorship and meaning. They pose their own questions concerning contradiction and involvement through the interpretation of writing. The “courage” of authorship is the willingness to risk exposing the underlying desires or will that contradict an accepted way of thinking. Crusoe’s and Behn’s voices are not absent, but continue to resonate throughout the texts.

“What is An Author?” (Foucault 205) remains an intriguing and problematic question in current criticism. It too resists the relief of resolution. Authorship continues to exert a cultural influence as a point of power from which to present contradictions faced by the authors as they participate in situations that aggravate and disrupt social perceptions. Issues of literary freedom, wealth and travel complicated the ideologies of Early Modern England and continue to reverberate within contemporary critical research and discussion. Behn and Defoe set precedents for the unfolding of future novels since they exposed moral and ideological difficulties through the textual manufacture of their travel experiences.

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