

INTERVENTION, IMPROVISATION, AND SPECTRAL SANCTION:

ADAPTATION AND STRATEGIES OF LITERARY

AUTHORIZATION IN *OROONOKO*

By

Jane Miller Wanninger

Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

English

August, 2008

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the support and instruction of Professor Bridget Orr both over the course of this past semester and in the construction of this thesis. Her creativity, passion, and knowledge made her a wonderful and invaluable mentor for this project.

I would also like to thank Megan Minarich and Matt Duquès for their thoughtful advice and friendly support during the writing of this thesis and Patty Wanninger for always keeping me on the level.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
ORIGINATING AN AUTHENTIC MYTH.....	3
A LEGACY OF INTERVENTIONS.....	8
IMPROVISING COLLABORATION	13
A MODERN REVISIONING.....	18
CODA	22
NOTES.....	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY	30

Introduction

Near the end of her novella entitled *Oroonoko*, Aphra Behn describes her reason for telling the tale of the eponymous African prince-cum-slave: “to make his glorious name survive all ages.”¹ This wish has certainly come true, for over the course of more than 300 years, the story of Oroonoko has been told and retold through myriad adaptations, most recently surfacing in playwright Biyi Bandele’s innovative 1999 restaging of Behn’s germinal work. The long history of dramatic re-visioning sparked by Behn’s novella has produced a concomitant legacy of authorial positioning and framing as collaborating and competing literary voices seek to situate themselves in relation to a mythologized text. The genealogy of *Oroonoko*, from its origins in Behn’s novella through various theatrical incarnations, is one which exposes in dramatic relief the mechanisms of literary authority as it is constructed and contested. Bandele’s *Oroonoko* is largely framed in terms which suggest that it attempts to restore a perceived lack of cultural particularity to the text in transhistorical and transcultural terms which privilege Aphra Behn’s role as authorial originator over intervening writers whose work helped shape the text. The cultural particularity Bandele envisions is imbricated in a history of maneuvers of authorial legitimation not limited to the figures who bookend it; the story in its modern incarnation is shaped by the mutable nature of generic convention and cultural performance on the contested grounds of literary property and authorial ownership which characterize the protracted genesis of a modern *Oroonoko*.

The contested and contingent stakes of literary authorization in the case of adaptation as illustrated by the genealogy of *Oroonoko* are by no means limited to this tale. Situated as it is, however, at the crux of genres (narrative and theatrical) and as a

seminal text in moderns literary discourses of race and gender, this text's legacy of interventions throws the self-conscious mechanisms of authorial legitimation into sharp relief. Virtually all versions of the Oroonoko story may claim to have made a "necessary" intervention into the text, improving a perceived defect in an older version by virtue of their innovation- for example, Thomas Southerne would excavate it from the page, John Hawkesworth would heighten the tragedy of Southerne's dramatization, and Bandele would seek to suffuse a Eurocentric depiction with a Yoruban ethos. Though each incarnation of *Oroonoko* makes claims towards fullness or plentitude, in being shaped in opposition to its antecedents, elements of each story are lost or transmogrified, and no one version of the story can be considered "authentic:" all are interested representations with a stake in the contest over authority.

A crucial kind of "particularity" significant to the reading of these texts thereby emerges through the culturally and historically situated mechanisms through which these authors flex their authoritative might, and with Bandele's intervention a new formulation for the nature of adaptation itself emerges. By invoking the hybrid cultural form of jazz in the framing of an adaptation filtered through a transcultural lens, Bandele posits a new kind of collaboration which simultaneously privileges Behn's authority and naturalizes Bandele's interventions. Bandele's adaptation is born of its post-colonial context, reflecting Srinivas Aravamudan's call for revised literary histories "updated... by geocultural histories"² which in this case promise to revise the terminology of situated authorial legitimation. Focusing not just on the substance of the textual revisions in question but also on the ways in which they are foregrounded and expressed³ through Bandele's innovative collaborative rubric demonstrates the extent to which the

burgeoning canonicity of *Oroonoko* is predicated on its history of contested transformation.

Originating an Authentic Myth

The genealogical trajectory of *Oroonoko* essentially begins with Aphra Behn, who penned the original novella in 1688. Billed as a “true history,” the novella tells the tale of an African prince separated from his wife, Imoinda, tricked into slavery and taken to the British colony of Surinam. Once there, he finds himself reunited with Imoinda, and when she becomes pregnant, he is persuaded to lead a slave revolt, which ultimately fails, leading to Oroonoko’s horrific execution. Virginia Woolf famously wrote that woman writers were indebted to Aphra Behn for having “earned them the right to speak their minds”⁴; and indeed, Behn is often constructed as a locus classicus for a feminine literary tradition as well as the progenitor of an enduring literary figure. Neither Behn, nor Oroonoko, however, burst fully formed into a nascent canon; both are enmeshed in a pre-existing discourse. The novel as literary form was still in a state of emergence at the time *Oroonoko* was penned, and Behn herself was a popular dramatist who based her claims for literary recognition largely on her plays and poetry, rather than on her fiction.⁵ Given the time of its writing and its author’s own body of work up to that point, it is perhaps unsurprising that *Oroonoko*’s more salient literary antecedents are not found in prose fiction. Laura Brown argues that both plot and protagonist of Behn’s novella are inflected by the popular dramatic tradition of heroic romance, claiming that “the main direct source of heroic convention in *Oroonoko*, then, is the aristocratic coterie theater of the Restoration.”⁶ This claim has provocative implications for an investigation of the

adaptation of *Oroonoko* from the page to the stage since the competing authoritative voices invested in this story often posit their legitimacy in terms of genre, it destabilizes the trajectory of that sequence of generic adaptations.

In appealing to the tropes and aesthetics of a recognizable literary form, Behn lends her work a kind of recognizable contemporary artistic authority. Brown suggests that it is by way of these generic conventions that Behn is able to carry out the ethnographic work of what Mary Louise Pratt calls “reductive normalizing:” the codification of difference through the discourse of manners and customs.⁷ In *Oroonoko*, alterity is represented through the lens of literary decorum such that the story’s protagonist is rendered great by the unique blend of the exotic (his body carved all over “as if it were japan’d”⁸) and the familiar (the “arbitrary love and honour codes of heroic romance”⁹) which he manifests. Behn’s invocation of the stylistic typology of heroic drama is significant not only because it provides the grounds for her figuration of alterity, but also because through those conventions, she is able to establish her claim to sentimental authenticity. By domesticating Oroonoko through descriptive Europeanization and highlighting his aristocratic and/or admirable characteristics, Behn aims to produce a sentimental association between the reader and her protagonist. Though it might be purchased at the expense of a more nuanced (in modern conceptions) depiction of exotic difference, the appeal to sentimental accord, both within the novella (between characters) and of the novella (between characters and reader) is key to Behn’s efforts at narrative legitimation.

Behn also stakes her authority in the telling her “true history” on the basis of her first-person narrator’s stated position as eye-witness to the acts and personages depicted

in the narrative.¹⁰ Unique amongst the bevy of theatrical adaptations which would follow, the novella is filtered through the perspective of its female narrator, who participates in and mediates the actions she describes. From the outset, the narrator claims to present a round unvarnished tale, not that of a “feign’d Hero” and not “adorn[ed] with any Accidents,” but rather a first-hand account “recommended by its own proper Merits, and natural Intrigues.”¹¹ The narrator acts as a guarantor of sentimental and factual veracity, attesting to the affective power and immediacy of the actions described to an audience interpolated into her figurative “we,” which is constructed according to shifting criteria, including those of gender, race, and class as the text progresses.¹² The instability of this “we” is indicative of the uncertain nature of the narrator’s sense of affiliation for or complicity with the events she relates; for example, when Oroonoko and his followers stage their revolt in Surinam, the women of the plantation including the narrator flee to the woods so that she is not present to stop the brutal punishment he receives upon being captured, though she “had Authority and Interest enough there, had [she] suspected any such thing, to have prevented it.”¹³ The deep admiration and affiliation for Oroonoko which the narrator professes is belied by such reminders of the intractable difference between narrator and subject produced by class, race, and gender. However, in spite of those barriers, the narrative structure of Behn’s *Oroonoko* seems to generate an implicit connection between Behn (the free white woman) and her protagonist (the black male slave), and indeed, critical readings of the tale often point to ways in which women, subject to gendered oppression, are sympathetically and ideologically linked to other subjugated people, in this case African slaves.¹⁴

The implicit correspondence between Behn the author and her narrative voice in *Oroonoko* plays into the biographical authority suggested by the first person perspective. Though little concrete information about Behn's biography is available (for example, neither her date of birth nor her parentage are known for sure), the earliest accounts of her life focus on her as an "amorous adventuress" who actually spent time in Surinam.¹⁵ Buttrressing the assertion that *Oroonoko* is the true story faithfully recounted by a narrator, Behn's claim to having spent time in the colonies quickly became key biographical data; in light of this, concerns that arose in the twentieth century about the veracity of those claims became grounds for attacking the "legitimacy" of Behn's work. Ernest Bernbaum, an influential detractor of Behn's authenticity, suggested on the basis of inconsistencies he found in her biography that Behn never visited Surinam at all.¹⁶ Though critical consensus is now that Behn did in fact spend time in Surinam, the fracas stemming from arguments destabilizing Behn's biographical authority highlights what is perhaps an ironic ramification of that particular strategy of authentication.¹⁷ Behn's emphasis on the historical truth of her tale in service of a self-conscious narrative legitimation undermines her creative authority.¹⁸ Her eye-witness narration and appeal to personal experiences helps earn her literary imprimatur, but it is ultimately purchased at the expense of (fictional) narrative autonomy.

Behn's depiction of Surinam may be underpinned by a sense of biographical authority, but she had to draw on different resources for her construction of the African kingdom of Coramantien. While seventeenth century English people cognizant of the triangular trade might have been wont to view Africa more as a coast than as a continent,¹⁹ accounts of contact with African culture were available in the burgeoning

metropole. The fact that Behn provides place names for her African setting which would have appeared on contemporary maps suggests, as does the ethnographic bent of the early section of her novella, that Oroonoko's Coramantien was drawn at least in part from contemporary travel narratives, not simply fictionalized. Potentially biased and incomplete though these depictions may be, their correspondence with Behn's depiction shows that her self-conscious efforts at representational authenticity extend to her treatment of Africa; her narrator's reluctance to sketch in the substance of a Coramantien wedding ceremony without an eye-witness account to go on is indicative of this tendency.²⁰ As Oroonoko's interaction with both his French tutor and the British slave traders demonstrate, the fruits of contact between Europeans and Africans on the Guinea coast were not one-sided. Centuries of interaction instigated increasing hybridity in coastal tribal life; trade introduced new crops and textiles to Africa and brought with it new systems of currency and politics of slavery.²¹ I stress the role of this seventeenth century cultural interchange between England and Africa not to suggest that Behn succeeds in producing the sort of "cultural authenticity" that Bandele will later strive for,²² but rather to emphasize the historically contingent nature of such bids for authenticity. The authorial gravitas of Behn's first person narration is predicated on accepted wisdom regarding the Guinea coast and Behn's own experiences in the colonies; together they entail a fictionalized evocation of the travel narratives at play in the background of the text.

A Legacy of Interventions

Behn's sovereign claim to creative authority predicated on her unique association with her subject matter was quickly complicated; in 1695, the playwright Thomas Southerne adapted *Oroonoko* for the stage. In the context of a discussion of privileged authorial legitimacy, the role of genre becomes paramount. Jane Spencer argues on the basis of "a hierarchy placing form above matter in the discussion of textual transmission and construction of literary lineages," positing that it is through changes in form that an author lays claim "to legitimate ownership of borrowed material."²³ The anxious nature of ownership engendered by the process of literary borrowing comes through in the original preface to Southerne's *Oroonoko*: he describes his debt to the novella's author while simultaneously chiding her for "bury[ing] her favorite hero in a novel," to justify his decision to render her story for the stage.²⁴ Southerne's dramatic career was largely built on adaptations of Behn's works, so he had a significant interest in positioning himself in relation to or against his literary antecedent. Though Southerne lauds Behn's "great command of the stage," he faults her inability to "bear [Oroonoko] represented," implying, perhaps, that her sentimental attachment to her subject was too great to do it justice. Lacking the experiential authority of Behn's narrative voice and grappling with the prospect of indebtedness to a female author, Southerne invokes the authority of his literary patron, the Duke of Devonshire, saying that Oroonoko "was born here under [his] Grace's influence;"²⁵ under the Duke's aegis, Southerne is able to posit a new origin for his protagonist apart from Behn, the literary mother. The slew of theatrical adaptations which followed Southerne's initial dramatic effort²⁶ arguably share two competing

originary sources in terms of form: Behn for her creation of the original narrative and Southerne for his move to enter it into a performative tradition.

Southerne's popular play transformed the source material, changing Imoinda from black to white, omitting the beginning, set in Africa,²⁷ adding a comic subplot amidst the colonial settlers of Surinam, and depicting Oroonoko committing suicide rather than undergoing the torture and dismemberment he faces in the novella. These changes are largely precipitated by the generic metamorphosis undergone by the text: for example, the centrally situated white female narrator of the novella is omitted from the dramatization, for by virtue of its being performed, the authenticating presence of the eye-witness becomes less important (each audience member, in a way, serves as an imaginary eye-witness to the tale). The whitened Imoinda and the women of Southerne's comedic subplot serve to some extent to supplement (or replace) the loss of the narrator's voice.²⁸ Charlot Welldon, a cross-dressed female character attempting to manipulate successful marital situations for herself and her sister in the colonies, is often read as a mock-Behn or a Behn surrogate, representing in Aravamudan's terms both "Southerne's hostility and indebtedness towards Behn's influence on him."²⁹ The whitening of Imoinda has other generic precedents, symbolically linking Oroonoko to his "popular miscegenetic predecessor in *Othello*,"³⁰ exacerbating the extent to which Oroonoko's heroic singularity is linked to his recognizability in terms of dramatic tradition and decorum. Thomas Brown, a contemporary of Southerne and acolyte of Behn, also suggested that the whitening of Imoinda served to emphasize the resemblance of the latter to the former.³¹ In eliminating Behn's narrative voice in adapting her work for the stage, it seems that Southerne left room for her influence to be obliquely referenced while

sublimating her authority under his own, and the carefully constructed patina of truthfulness so important to authorial grounds in Behn's text is undermined when her presence is rendered decidedly fictional.

The symbolic splitting of Behn's voice in Southerne's telling of Oroonoko's tale casts her and her surrogates in an amatory role that reflects the way she was cast in contemporary reflections on her authorial career. In Thomas Brown's "Letters from the Dead," he imagines meeting Aphra Behn in the afterlife, where she is depicted as a sexualized spectral object. He writes of encountering Behn's ghost in Westminster Abbey amidst Chaucer, Spenser, Jonson, and Dryden; she amongst all the illustrious writers captures Brown's attention, but it becomes clear that this has more to do with the ways of the flesh than meetings of the minds: Brown says "[she] laid her head in my lap, as much as to say she was at my disposal and had no manner of aversion for a stranger, who she had been told had none for her sex. I perceived she retain'd the same passions she had formerly been famous for."³² Brown's imaginary conversations with the specter of Behn also become significant in terms of formulations of adaptive authorization (as I will further elucidate in the context of Bandele's rubric). Brown informs Behn's ghost that Southerne has "christen'd into a play" her story and "done her justice as to the drammatrical part of it."³³ Behn asks Brown to report on the adaptation, on the literary market, and on the status of other female authors, but this conversation quickly gives way to one of Behn's overt sexual availability.³⁴ Even as he praises Behn, Brown renders her sexually available, preserving her legacy not for her intelligence amongst the male writers, but for her frank seductive allure, a further demonstration of the way appropriations of Behn's literary identity seem to be facilitated by her gender. Brown is

also imaginatively sanctioning Southerne's adaptation of *Oroonoko* through his conjuring of Behn's voice and implicit approval in a way that retroactively affirms Southerne's self-consciously assumed authoritative grounding.³⁵

In reworking Behn's prose work for the stage, Southerne opened the door to other later versions of the play, produced throughout the eighteenth century, which would further transform the story of Oroonoko. A reworking by John Hawkesworth, first performed in 1759, eventually supplanted its predecessor on the stage; Hawkesworth's *Oroonoko* left much of Southerne's writing intact, but it removed the controversial comic subplot, deeming those scenes "some of the most loose and contemptible that have ever disgraced our Language and our Theatre." Hawesworth's chief aim was to move the focus back to the tragic/heroic elements of the drama in keeping with a strong popular taste for sentimental theatrical representation such that "all the Passions of the Audience, moved by the most tender and exquisite Distress, [would be] concentered" into the tragedy of Oroonoko and Imoinda.³⁶ In Southerne's version, Oroonoko elects to act first against his captors, thus (in Hawkesworth's view) instigating the tragedy, but in the Hawkesworth, Oroonoko is cast more squarely as a victim of tragic circumstances designed to arouse sympathy in the audience, and the plight of the slave is more explicitly referenced.³⁷ While not directly imbricated in an abolitionist campaign, Hawksworth's amendments expand the realm of sympathetic potential beyond the royal protagonist to further facilitate a sentimental consideration of the enslaved more generally. Though Hawkesworth leaves the bulk of Southerne's dramatic scenes intact, he is able to set himself somewhat apart from his source material through his condemnation of

Southerne's comic scenes; and he doesn't mention Behn at all, indicating that the play's dramatic rather than narrative antecedents are being privileged.

Another notable *Oroonoko*, produced in 1788 by Ferrier (called *Prince of Angola*), sought to revise the drama to strengthen its correspondence with an abolitionist agenda. Contending that Hawkesworth's version was weak in an abolitionist context because of its close correspondence to Southerne's text, Ferrier rendered *Oroonoko* as a more vehement voice against the destructive tyranny of colonial slavery. Ferrier, writing amidst the anti-slave trade movement of Manchester, conscientiously casts himself as a writer of his time, praising the ladies of Manchester in his prologue for their capacity for pity and setting them against the "gross and depraved" audience for which Southerne was writing a century before and excoriating his predecessors for their "govelling apology of slaveholders."³⁸ Though he specifically cites the story's "authenticity as well as its pathetic incidents" in explaining his decision to use it the abolitionist context, Ferrier ultimately deemphasizes the African-ness of his enslaved protagonist³⁹ and like Hawkesworth, he scarcely mentions Behn. The emancipationist mobilization Ferrier sought in his adaptation minimizes the ambivalence about slavery evident in the Behn's novella in a way that enabled the latter to be recast in a new way. For example, when Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852, Behn's *Oroonoko* was often identified as an abolitionist antecedent;⁴⁰ later versions of the drama retroactively lent an activist telos to the novella where none might have existed originally. The transitive intentionality of the play in the abolitionist discourse as it emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century is indicative of the extent to which representations of this tale (and indeed any tale), are historically contingent.

Improvising Collaboration

The legacy of literary appropriation triggered by Behn's novella continues through to Biyi Bandele and his modern reworking which was born of and works to transform this complex matrix of authorial positioning. A note by Bandele in the playbill for a 2008 Theater for a New Audience production of his *Oroonoko* describes the genesis of his adaptation: The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) initially commissioned Nigerian born Bandele to write a short monologue to precede a production of Southerne's *Oroonoko*, "a speech to be spoken by a character based on Aphra Behn... the conceit being that Aphra Behn was introducing Southerne's 17th century play to a modern audience."⁴¹ This proposed monologue is yet another example of the way an original author can be imaginatively invoked to "legitimize" a new project; where Southerne supplied Behn-like surrogates in his dramatization, this prologue would literally fictionalize Behn's voice, furthering the attenuation of her authorial agency also suggested by Brown's dream communications. The RSC, as the arbiter of institutional literary tradition, in this case acts in the vein of the patron, and its decision to revive *Oroonoko* is indicative of broader rush to canonize the text, a process which ironically continues to occur through revisioning and intervention in a post-colonial context.⁴² *Oroonoko* (Behn's narrative and its theatrical afterlife), a text increasingly cast as canonical, is rapidly achieving its institutional status not by virtue of being somehow sacrosanct but rather through its extraordinary apparent adaptability gleaned through its place at the crux of key contemporary critical discourses (such as race, gender, and colonial economics). In charging a contemporary Nigerian playwright with conjuring

the authorial voice of a seventeenth century British woman in order to naturalize and anachronistically authorize intervening adaptations, the RSC (perhaps unwittingly) commissions a new rubric of transhistorical literary collaboration.

While the RSC proposal which sparked Bandele's adaptation would have had the contemporary playwright put words in the mouth of the 17th century author, the dramatic re-visioning which followed is cast in terms which continue to paint the two as being in rapport. Bandele describes how, upon reading Behn's *Oroonoko* for the first time, he "felt an immediate bond" with her,⁴³ and in the foreword to his published play script, he describes the process of adaptation as a "jam session between a myth and two myth makers situated 300 years apart."⁴⁴ This image posits an interactive collaboration between two disparate figures, yoked through a shared relationship to a story which has been granted a life of its own. The "jam session" with its implicit reference to jazz and improvisation is an evocative metaphor to describe the model of adaptation Bandele is suggesting. Suggesting a model of collaboration which is dialogic and contingent rather than antagonistic and sequential, the jam session provides a space for aesthetic agency which is both informal and synergetic, and reference to in conjunction with the revisiting of a three hundred year old text is testament to the hybrid cultural form of a modern *Oroonoko*. Associated with the performative space, the jam session in practice is peculiarly theatrical insofar as while they are staged, they are "never intended to be public spectacles."⁴⁵ In his foreword, Bandele effects the public negotiation of authorial legitimation which (in some form or another) characterizes any such adaptation while recasting his literary borrowing in exciting new terms enabling him to claim creative license in his engagement with Behn's text. The impression of free collaboration

suggested by Bandele's phrasing is undermined by the fundamental asymmetry of the jam session he proposes; the nature of his interventions emphasizes the fact that Behn is present in spirit only. The ghostly collaboration Bandele conjures with his literary predecessor bears a strong resemblance to the spectral encounter Brown described, which imagined Behn's ceding of authoritative sovereignty, and facilitates the same kind of manufactured ghostly sanction.

The spiritual connection imagined in this proverbial authorization can be linked to the discourse of problematic literary paternity with which Behn and Southerne have become associated. Bandele chooses to publicly privilege not Southerne, his theatrical forbearer from whom he draws a significant portion of his play's second act,⁴⁶ but Behn. Bandele accesses the cache of individuality associated with "the original" by affiliating himself with Behn in the presentation of his *Oroonoko*, and in doing so, any debt he might owe to intervening dramatists is minimized.⁴⁷ This suggests that Bandele is interested in staking his authorial claim not in relation to other adaptations, but in relation to an original author freshly imbued with the imprimatur of authenticity by way of a paradigm privileging content over form. In creatively materializing a spiritual relationship of source (while effectively minimizing the more literal role it plays in his liberal use of Southerne and Hawkesworth), Bandele is able to draw on the constructed authority of an original source in an effort to buttress his own creative voice as fellow "myth-maker." He is not the first *Oroonoko* writer to finesse the origins of his work to suit his ends; Southerne, whose substantial role in the assembly of Bandele's play is almost wholly occluded, made a similar move in depicting a new birth for his story at the behest of his patron. Bandele invokes his source material in the act of transforming it

under a rubric of jazz collaboration, but in certain respects, he demonstrates another attribute Ingrid Monson ascribes to jazz performance: precomposition (which works cyclically in tandem with improvisation).⁴⁸ While Bandele's mention of a jam session with Aphra Behn (overtly privileged with ownership of the tale, entitled as it is *Aphra Behn's Oroonoko*) suggests on one hand a kind of sanctioned collaboration, it also calls to mind the way in which each participant in a jam session, Bandele included, brings their own modes of performance to the figurative table.

Despite its performative nature, the jam session is ultimately the work of an in-group, concerning the players rather than the audience,⁴⁹ and a characteristic which is ultimately key to its function in Bandele's effort to stake his authorial claim on the material. The jazz model Bandele proposes carries with it the ineffable aura of the "hip" as opposed to the "square" such that he derives authority not only from his entrée into a imagined creative jam session with Aphra Behn, but also because of the access to elusive (at least in the context of Restoration drama revivals) coolness by virtue of its culturally hybrid framing.⁵⁰ This hybridity emerges as key from the outset: the forward foregrounds the imagined partnership of Behn and Bandele in terms of a Yoruban proverb: "It is said of Eshu, the Yoruba trickster-God, who is the ubiquitous reverse hero of *Oroonoko*, that 'he threw a rock today, and killed a bird yesterday.'"⁵¹ If the preface of a Restoration play or novella marks the place where the author of an adapted work makes his case for authoritative legitimacy in relation to others who are affiliated with the same text,⁵² the placement of this proverb where it is is a telling indicator of the nature of Bandele's strategies. Bandele's status as a Nigerian-born post-colonial writer suffuses his authorial positioning; he grounds the tale with generic intertextuality through the folk-

lore of his native country and relocates Coramantien to reflect the Yoruban aesthetic that he reads in the text.⁵³ Whereas the travel narratives Behn would have drawn on (fatally incomplete though they may appear to a modern eye) would have been charged with rendering the exotic (in this case Africa) recognizable to an English audience; Bandele's introduction reverses that trajectory, destabilizing his reader's sense of familiarity with an increasingly canonical text and in doing so, effacing the perspective of the original novella's narrator.

The aesthetic agency which comes through Bandele's selective intervention in the series of *Oroonoko* texts, to some extent indicative of a dialogic transhistorical adaptation, could also be seen as a strategy of resistance insofar as it subverts the ethos of adaptation his "jam session" model appears to supplant. Sell describes the improvisational rebelliousness of jazz music as indicative of a "struggle against the institutions that enabled it to exist,"⁵⁴ and Bandele invokes the jazz metaphor as he seizes his own narrative voice from an institution which originally hired him to parrot another's. Critical reception of Bandele's *Oroonoko* was also quick to stress his biographical correspondence with his protagonist perhaps to suggest the authorial clout born of a project of cultural reclamation. Though the nature of Bandele's aura of biographical authenticity appears to be very different from that of Behn's, they both appear to be connected to the story by way of personal experiences, emphasizing the apparent significance of that mutable breed of literary authenticity.⁵⁵ The unexpected correspondence which arises between Bandele and Behn prompted by Bandele's decidedly modern invocation of jazz and culturally specific reference to his African roots is revealing: in many ways, Bandele's exciting new formulation for literary adaptation

finds itself participating in extant modes, and the power he derives from his framing stems from the novelty of his expression, rather than his methods.

A Modern Revisioning

In preparation for his commissioned prologue, Bandele had to acquaint himself with the works of Behn and Southerne. Though he describes himself as having been inspired by Behn's novella, Bandele found the "depiction of Africa generalized, vague; too much riddled with obvious inaccuracies" and the Southerne's *Oroonoko* "really nothing more than a Noble Savage, a cipher whose humanity derived almost exclusively from the total absence of anything African about him." Most theatrical renderings of *Oroonoko*, including those of Southerne and Hawkesworth, neglected to portray the African-set portion of Behn's tale so that the audience's first sight of the former African prince would be of the chained colonial slave and the dramatic shock of that transmogrification would be occluded. As a result, Bandele proposed to the RSC that he write a full length play to be produced in a double bill with Southerne's, restoring the "missing African section" of *Oroonoko*'s story to Southerne's colonial drama. The antidote to that somewhat unwieldy suggestion was sought in the finished product: a production wherein the first act is set in Africa and composed of new material by Bandele, and the second act is primarily a reworking of the Southerne and Hawkesworth stagings, cut down substantially and featuring new scenes to tether it to the first act.⁵⁶ The stylistic asymmetry produced by the break between the first act, composed of entirely new material, and the second, three fourths of which came from Hawkesworth and Southerne, is such that the dramatic decorum of the latter half tends to mitigate the

horrors of slavery being depicted. While the staging of the second act looks bleaker and darker and it sounds more solemn than the first, the dramatic rendering of the play writ large is such that “both Coramantien and Surinam emerge as sites of betrayal, violence, rape, and cruelty.”⁵⁷

Bandele’s minimal intervention in the second part of the play makes it less appealing fodder for investigating the fruits of his model of adaptive engagement; the first section holds the main thrust of his attempt to imbue *Oroonoko* with cultural specificity he deemed to be lacking in the novella. This is evident in the language spoken by the African characters is deeply lyrical and totally saturated in the jokes, proverbs, and myths of Yoruba culture. Though he is writing in English, Bandele attempts to maintain the rhythms of the tribal language; Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace contends that in fact “instead of sublimating his Yoruban origins, Bandele calls attention to them. He aims to preserve in English powerful traces of his originary language.”⁵⁸ As a result, the action in the first part of the play is slowed by discourses redolent with culturally specific references which operate alongside costuming and music intended to produce a lively realization of tribal court life in Bandele’s Coramantien.⁵⁹ Kowaleski Wallace describes this staging as functioning to “deessentialize the category of Africa by reminding the audience that important geographic and cultural differences preceded the creation of national boundaries” and “counteract a pseudouniversalism” of Eurocentric depictions⁶⁰ in contrast to what Bandele perceives to be the underdetermined setting the first part of Behn’s novella. Ironically, Wallace’s appeal to an “originary” language is reminiscent of discourses of adaptation which privilege an originary text that she is otherwise attempting to refute. Behn’s depiction of Africa may be woefully incomplete, but it is far from the

fantastic conjecture which Kowaleski Wallace seems to imagine, but is, as Catherine Gallagher points out, historically situated and informed by narratives shaped in a different context destabilizing a uniform transhistorical ideal of representational accuracy.

Bandele knowingly subverts the historicity of his representation to interesting effect, but while the fruits of the apparent anachronisms he weaves into his depiction of Coramantien serve to reinforce to his audience the contemporary vantage point they share, the knowing humor they entail is not foreign to previous incarnations of *Oroonoko*. Knowing jokes about soap, the “newest innovation,” veiled reference to modern social situations, and visual cues like an American-style marine salute constantly remind the audience of Bandele’s production that they are no longer in the world of Southerne and Behn, let alone that of *Oroonoko* and *Imoinda*. A modern perspective also informs the first act’s hyper-sexuality, which emerges in humorous forms; an unremitting profusion of dick jokes and references to “your mother and me in bed together” are couched in the lyrical Yoruban folk language.⁶¹ The juxtaposition of these comedic touches and the horrific tragedy of the plot encompassing them is startling, and perhaps not unlike that generated by Southerne’s controversial inclusion of a comic subplot in his adaptation. Aravamudan also seemingly parodic moments which undercut the tragedy in the novella,⁶² and he suggests that the knowing “smirk” occasioned by the intersection of maudlin and burlesque is concomitant of the virtualization which characterizes *Oroonoko*’s ductile canonicity.⁶³

For Bandele, the puckish anachronism of his brand of humor serves at least in part to produce a sense of identification with his audience that distances them from the

tragedies they are viewing. The transhistoricism which this entails implicitly reveals the limitations of improvisational intervention such that he replicates some of the problems he identifies in his source material. Though Bandele criticizes the flattened characterization of the protagonists of his source material, an effective result of his intervention is an attenuation of thematic depth especially as pertains to his representation of slavery. This is thanks in large part to a newly created character in the Coramantien sections, the king's advisor Orombo, who emerges as the locus of responsibility for the evils of the slave trade.⁶⁴ He is the only African character ever depicted selling anyone into slavery, which is a striking departure from the novella, in which the cultural practice of enslaving defeated military opponents is described, and Oroonoko woos Imoinda with "a hundred and fifty slaves in fetters"⁶⁵ reflecting an ambiguous approach to slavery in which the practice takes many forms, some of which are implicitly sanctioned by the narrative. In Orombo, Bandele has fashioned a clearly "evil" character onto whom all guilt for racial and sexual crimes can be displaced, thus shielding other characters (black and white) from the more morally ambiguous positions made possible in Behn's original narrative in which complicity and guilt could not be so explicitly defined. Bandele has suggested that his play serves to mitigate residual feelings of victimization related to the slave trade by highlighting a black complicity which can be construed in terms of agency.⁶⁶ However, the consolidation of villainy into a pivotal new character exculpates to varying degrees both Oroonoko and white slave traders and ultimately serves to flatten the drama by simplifying questions of complicity in relationship to slavery. Orombo's villainy is extra-ordinary to the point that slavery in

Bandeles Oroonko seems almost as much the plot of a malicious royal lackey as a culturally embedded system of domination and captivity.

Orombo's polarizing vileness is complicated in a performative context of the way Bandele invites identification between the character and the audience in a way that destabilizes the audience's moral relationship to the tragedy before them. Orombo is the only character in Bandele's drama who breaks the fourth wall (a break in decorum in keeping with Bandele's improvisational credo), addressing the audience directly and incorporating them into his depravity. Behn used her first person narrator to inspire identification with her readers, and both she and the dramatists who came in her wake aspire to produce the sentimental identification in their bids for representational authenticity, but Bandele symbolically collaborates not only with previous authors, but also with a potentially unwilling audience in pushing them to explore their own culpability in a staging that hints at a role for them beyond the merely spectatorial. Ironically, in attempting to excavate new narratives of problematic agency through exploring complicity in the slave trade, Bandele both minimizes English involvement and strips the issue of political complexity in a kingdom which is culturally signposted but morally simplified.

Coda

The RSC's initial impulse to "legitimate" its adaptation sparked a new chapter in a long history of claim-staking in which there is not one "legitimate" text but many, where new entries in a literary lineage are constantly entering into a discourse of self-authorization and re-authorization. Investigation of the myriad creative interventions in a

tale rendered as myth reveals that while all have a stake in foregrounding an impression of authorial validity for themselves, there is no single “authentic” version of a text possessed of a long history of mutable form and content. From Aphra Behn’s wish that protagonist she created should last forever to Bandele’s evocation of a past “forever echoed, distorted, amplified, invoked, and interrogated by the present,”⁶⁷ *Oroonoko*’s legacy of adaptation has been characterized by a series of interventions, each historically situated but participating in an imaginary collaborative process with subversive transhistorical potential. In Bandele’s project, a proleptic modern agenda of cultural reappropriation overwhelms the story’s historiographical genealogy of racial construction, and the jazz allusion with which he foregrounds his text formally embodies the hybrid Afro-European aesthetic in which the newest *Oroonoko* is cast. If the fodder for Bandele’s reworking proves perhaps too intractable for easy appropriation, it is perhaps indicative of the extent to which the new way of articulating adaptation being proposed is ultimately replicates what it purports to change.

This is not necessarily to say that Bandele fails at the improvisational model he proposes, but rather to suggest that *Oroonoko* was already an improvised text and that Bandele’s most unique intervention comes in the form of its expression. Bandele’s appeal to the jam session with its suggestion of dialogical collaboration is a canny way of placing himself as an authorial voice which ultimately grants him a great deal of creative authority. The emergence of this kind of aesthetic agency indicates the dynamic nature of what, in Monson’s words, “a community accepts as an authentic cultural expression,” a fluid social process which to her us is “not unlike improvising.”⁶⁸ The reductive normalization in the interest of sentimental appeal characterizing earlier manifestations of

intercultural negotiation in *Oroonoko's* past gives way to a pursuit of hybridity in Bandele's modern formulation, and the anxious nature of ownership in a climate of literary borrowing is finessed by the promise of collaboration. Suited though it is, however, to its contemporary post-colonial moment, Bandele's improvisational formulation also aptly depicts the strategies of literary adaptation which have marked the length of *Oroonoko's* history and masks its own contestatory maneuvers in its language of collaborative interaction such that the proleptic spectral sanction of literary intervention in the case of *Oroonoko* persists.

NOTES

¹ Behn, 141.

² Aravamudan, 10.

³ Aravamudan describes this process as the key factor in how “a postcolonial eighteenth century becomes disciplinarily relevant and critically meaningful” (Aravamudan, 329).

⁴ Todd, 6.

⁵ Spencer, 19. Spencer bases this claim not only on the relative position of prose works within Behn’s overall oeuvre, but also on the way Behn framed her novellas, calling them a “*little piece*” or “*little trifle*,” or in the case of *Oroonoko*, fruits of “*few Hours*” of writing. For Behn, the attachment of *literary* merit to novellas would have been complicated not only by the unstable canonical place of prose fiction at the time, but also by the frequent formulation (in part a product of still inchoate conception of the novel) of her texts as “true histories” (Spencer, 87).

⁶ Brown, 188.

⁷ Brown, 189, referring to Pratt, 121. In her article, Pratt is discussing nineteenth century African travel narratives, and she describes how “in the literature of the imperial frontier, manners-and-customs description has always flourished as a normalizing force and now retains a kind of credibility and authority it has lost elsewhere. In Pratt’s view, because this kind of discourse is typically “either embedded in or appended to a superordinate genre,” it is not and can never be considered “complete” on its own.

⁸ Behn, 73.

⁹ Brown, 189.

¹⁰ The strategic authentication afforded by the “see and tell” narration in Behn’s *Oroonoko* is, according to Michael McKeon, a recurrent rhetorical trope in narrative of the period (Ballaster, 93).

¹¹ Behn, 37. Behn accounts for parts of the narrative which her narrator would not have witnessed (the whole of the African section, conversations in Surinam amongst the slaves, etc, by saying that they were “receiv’d from the Mouth of the chief Actor in this History, the Hero himself.”

¹² Footnote about Fogarty (in Fogarty 9) we an impossibility when there’s a foreigner

¹³ Behn, 92.

¹⁴ Laura Brown and Moira Ferguson have suggested (in the words of Anne Fogarty) that “Behn’s assertion of women’s right to write and express themselves freely naturally feeds into a desire for the emancipation of slaves” (Fogarty, 5). Srinivas Aravamudan and Catherine Gallagher write of the “negative capability” suggested by *Oroonoko*’s blackness leading to a “nobodiness” also emulated by eighteenth century woman novelists (Aravamudan, 30). Susan Andrade takes issue with these correlations on the grounds that they fail “to recognize that differently oppressed groups in different historical moments often have conflicting political agendas that preclude ready alliances between struggles or easy understandings between individuals (Andrade, 189).

¹⁵ See Spencer, 34, which describes the 1696 “Memoirs” of Behn, commissioned or composed by Charles Gildon and their depiction of Behn as a amatory author and special attention to her as author of *Oroonoko*.

¹⁶ See Fogarty, 4. Fogarty is citing Bernbaum's 1913 article "Mrs. Behn's Biography a Fiction." Bernbaum accuses her of plagiarism in her fabrication of a biography and associated novella in which she "deliberately and circumstantially lied." In this account, Behn's life and work are mutually invalidated in such a way that demonstrates the extent to which biographical authority and artistic agency are intertwined in *Oroonoko*.

¹⁷ Biographical correspondence between Behn's life and that of *Oroonoko*'s narrator coupled with said narrator's insistence on a personal experience help evince an affective imaginary collapse between the two women, despite the fact that when the novella was written, the author was 48 and close to death, whereas the narrator is in her early twenties.

¹⁸ Fogarty suggests that modern readings of Behn's biography and "romantic verisimilitude" give her new authorial gravitas: "where once her autobiography and her gender were utilized as weapons to invalidate her writing, it now frequently appears to be the case that her life-story and perspective as a woman are the very things that act as a warranty for the history she records" (Fogarty, 5).

¹⁹ Gallagher, 208. Gallagher describes the brisk economic interaction between European trading nations and "Guinea," as the coast of Africa was known, and contends that at the time, European interest in Africa was primarily commercial, "in marked contrast to their ambitions in both North and South America."

²⁰ Behn, 46.

²¹ Gallagher, 214.

²² In fact, numerous critics have commented on the overall Eurocentrism of Behn's depiction: as Laura Rosenthal puts it, "In many ways Behn's representation repeats and contributes to European colonialist representations of Africa" (Rosenthal, 86). Furthermore, Joanna Lipking contends that in contrast to those pertaining to the New World, travel reports on sub-Saharan Africa were "both less frequent and more derivative" though Lipking does point out details that seem identifiably West African (Lipking, 170).

²³ Spencer, 134-135. Spencer is in this case speaking about questions of legitimacy as pertaining to Restoration era literary world of Behn and Southerne. She calls for a feminist reading of this reception history, calling for new attention to be paid to the latter component of the form-matter dichotomy (to which Spencer attributes a feminine, subordinate position).

²⁴ Southerne, 4.

²⁵ Southerne, 4.

²⁶ Washington D.C.'s prominent Folger Shakespeare Library holds 25 separate adaptations of *Oroonoko* published between 1690 and 1791, and the Harvard Theatre Collection holds four additional versions not part of the Folger collection; this profusion of texts helps demonstrate the extent to which *Oroonoko* was an eighteenth century "blockbuster" (Trooboff, 108).

²⁷ Although Southerne does not depict the action set in Africa, he does recast *Oroonoko* as prince of Angola, rather than of Coramantien. Catherine Gallagher argues that this serves to alter the "commercial geography" of the story, because Angola was often omitted from accounts of the slave trade (as opposed to Coramantien, which would have been more explicitly linked to that kind of commerce) (Gallagher, 103).

²⁸ Rosenthal, 101. In her article, Laura J. Rosenthal describes the way Southerne's subplot bears an unacknowledged debt to Behn's *The Widdow Ranter*. Also, she relates Thomas Brown's assessment of Southerne's adaptation of Behn's female voices which holds that Southerne's white Imoinda stands in for Behn, hinting at a romantic or erotic entanglement between narrator and protagonist in the novella.

²⁹ Aravamudan, 50.

³⁰ Nussbaum, 157. Nussbaum suggests that the whitewashing of Imoinda was imbricated in discourses “positing a white European femininity in opposition to developing stereotypes of black womanhood” less well suited to the characteristic parameters of heroic romance, arguing that “a black Imoinda could not easily represent a decorous and heroic femininity on stage (Nussbaum, 158).

³¹ Brown says that Southerne made Behn’s Imoinda “not of the complexion belonging to the country she came from, but so very beautiful, as to give us a valuable idea of the fair person that gave being to her character” (sited in Rosenthal, 100). Rosenthal points out that in edition to Charlot and Imoinda, the Widow Lackitt is also symbolically connected to the novella’s author in Southerne’s adaptation (Rosenthal, 101).

³² As sited in Spencer, 124, from *The Second Volume of the Works of Mr. Thomas Brown, Containing Letters from the Dead to the Living*. (London: B. Bragg, 1707).

³³ As sited in Spencer, 223.

³⁴ Rosenthal, 101.

³⁵ I agree with Munns in her contention that subsequent heatrical adaptations (whether they include Southerne’s comic subplot or not) follow in the vein of his adaptation rather than constituting new dramatic versions of Behn’s novella (Munns 186).

³⁶ Hawkesworth, v.

³⁷ Munns, 181. For example, Hawkesworth’s version opens with planters callously describing the torture of slaves and includes a new scene in which Aboan laments his lost liberty.

³⁸ Ferrier, 3.

³⁹ Munns, 184. Munns describes how Ferrier cuts the speech in the Southerne and Hawkesworth versions in which Oroonoko worships the sun and minimizes Oroonoko’s heroic speeches. She cites Mita Choudhury in saying that “Ferrier’s well-meaning attempt to inspire abolitionism produces a didactic work in which ‘the hero loses his luster.’”

⁴⁰ Gallagher, 24.

⁴¹ Playbill Author’s Note

⁴² Considering the frequency with which *Oroonoko* is now thematically bracketed with *Othello*, it seems symbolically suggestive that the RSC, with its associated power of institutional legitimation, should elect to commission an authorizing preface from a post-colonial perspective for this text and not the Shakespeare, highlighting the perceived adaptability and contested authority of *Oroonoko*.

⁴³ Playbill

⁴⁴ As cited in Wallace, 265.

⁴⁵ Sidran, 202.

⁴⁶ In a line by line comparison between Bandele’s adaptation and the original texts of Southerne and Hawkesworth, Widmayer determined that 73% of Bandele’s Part 2 came from one of those editions (Widmayer, 203). Despite the verbatim duplication of these previous texts in the bulk of the production’s second half, Southerne is mentioned in the playbill only in the Author’s note, and Hawkesworth not at all.

The relationship is also occluded in a *New York Times* article which describes Bandele's version as merely "relying on some of the same plot points as the Southerne plot" (McGee, 2). Widmayer excoriates what she views as inexcusable plagiarism on the part of Bandele; while I see the relationship between Bandele's plays and its uncredited theatrical antecedents as a problematic one, I am not inclined to apply a contemporary label like "plagiarism" to a text with such a long history of borrowing and adaptation which antedates our present conceptions of those practices.

⁴⁷ Spencer cites Harold Bloom's differentiation between influence and source such that the "verbal resemblances" entailed by the former are not congruent with the spiritual relationship of the latter. This hypothesis, with its concomitant dismissal of "source hunters" in academia, may be somewhat polemical from a disciplinary standpoint, but it is useful to consider in terms of Bandele's framing (Spencer, 105). Spencer is undertaking a more substantial critique of the nature of "literary paternity" in terms of Behn's legacy with special attention to how gender informs the way understandings of influence play out.

⁴⁸ Monson, 286. Monson discusses this relationship, seen as supplanting "formalized jazz pedagogy" with emergent tropes of individualized music theory, in reference to Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz*.

⁴⁹ Sell, 96.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Sell is obviously not speaking of Behn, *Oroonoko*, or even of literature per se, but his discussion of the kind of community imagined by the jam session format was extremely helpful to me. He says that when the insider/outsider dynamic of the jam session moves outside the context of its in-group, its "implicit rules came to be perceived, by audience and performer alike, as evidence of a truer more "authentic" form of community, a jazz relationship that modeled a marvelous form of organization available even to nonmusicians. The difference between "hip" and "square" was the difference between somebody who absorbed and followed the unstated rules of the jam and somebody who didn't."

⁵¹ Bandele, 5.

⁵² For example, Susan B. Iwanisziw provides an interesting chart of para-textual references to Behn's and Southerne's *Oroonokos* in other adaptation (Iwanisziw, 157).

⁵³ According to the playbill for the TFANA production, the real 17th century kingdom of Coramantien, the African setting of the novella, was located in what is now Ghana, but Bandele recognized that the names of the characters in the novella came from the Yoruba tribe. Bandele thus elected to draw on Yoruba culture and language (associated with the territory now encompassing Nigeria) in his creation of *Oroonoko*'s new first half.

⁵⁴ Sell, 219.

⁵⁵ For example, in a *New York Times* article about the adaptation, biographical information about the two authors is given in counterpoint, and Bandele describes why Behn created *Oroonoko* in the way that she did, in contrast with his own interpretation (McGee, 2).

⁵⁶ Munns describes how, in an interview with Simon Reade, a dramaturge at the RSC, she was told that Bandele was "not interested" in writing the Surinam section, leading them to cobble together the second part from extant texts with help from Bandele in generating the new scenes for the second part. The evident clout Bandele is shown to have through the dynamics of this encounter are further indicators of the nature of the authority the RSC seems to have imbued in him (Munns, 190).

⁵⁷ Munns, 191. Further, when members of an indigenous South American tribe attack the plantation in Surinam, they are depicted as "Indians" in elaborate headdresses accompanied by pan-flute, suggesting that other colonized peoples are not afforded the same sort of cultural specificity which Bandele accords the Coramantiens

⁵⁸ Wallace, 274

⁵⁹ The play opens with tribal drumming, chanting, and dance, and the first scene depicts inter-tribal African political negotiations between Coramantiens, clad in the dashikis and white linen agbadas of coastal Africa, and their foes, dressed in heavy green robes and turbans associating them with Northern Africa. In this scene, Bandele characterizes Coramantien culture as one with a brave but ruthless military tradition, a sense of spiritual providence, and a tricky sense of humor. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Bandele describes the prejudice he faced growing up as a Christian of Yoruba extraction in a largely Muslim part of Nigeria; in this light, his decision to depict contentious intertribal relationships in ways which specifically evoke conflict with Muslim peoples is a compelling example of the role of biographical inflection in the adaptation (McGee, 3).

⁶⁰ Wallace, 271

⁶¹ The modern inflection of Bandele's drama in its treatment of sexuality extends beyond the nature of its humor; sex and sexual violence are infinitely more explicit here than in previous theatrical incarnations, which were restricted by different regulations for dramatic decorum and also far surpass the frankness with which they were approached in Behn who was, as I've mentioned, known for being an amatory author. The body of Imoinda, threatened but inviolate in Behn and Southerne, is subject to brutal assault in Bandele's Oroonoko. Imoinda is stripped and held under water as she is forced to fellate the king in a pool onstage, and her character is repeatedly and brutally raped.

⁶² For example, Aravamudan points to how "at the high point of Oroonoko's and Imoinda's suicide pact, a telltale rhyme undercuts the moment of overkill" and the "sardonic... parenthetical explanation of Imoinda's equanimity before being dispatched by Oroonoko (Aravamudan, 60).

⁶³ Aravamudan describes virtualization, an idea key to his argument about the tropicopolitan thusly: "the term virtualization describes colonialist representations that acquire malleability because of a certain loss of detail, a process that enables readier identification and manipulation by readers, thus putting the trope of the tropicopolitan into motion toward an open-ended future" (Aravamudan, 17) and explores in relation to the way Oroonoko has been "petted" in the texts and critically.

⁶⁴ Orombo is also association with the more explicit sexual violence which characterizes Bandele's staging. His first action onstage is to give his unwilling 13 year old daughter to the king to satisfy the latter's lust for virgins, and he subsequently arranges the union between Imoinda and the king in spite or (or perhaps because of) his awareness of her marriage to Oroonoko. After Imoinda fatally wounds the king with a broken mirror to the groin as he attempts to sexually assault her, Orombo and his men rape her before selling her into slavery.

⁶⁵ Behn, 82.

⁶⁶ Munns, 190.

⁶⁷ Bandele, 5.

⁶⁸ Monson, 10.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrade, Susan Z. *White Skin, Black Masks: Colonialism and the Sexual Politics of Oroonoko. Cultural Critique.* No. 27 (Spring, 1994).
- Aravamudan, Srinivas. *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804.* Durham: Duke UP, 1999.
- Ballaster, Ros. *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1864 to 1740.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Bandeled, 'Biyi. *Aphra Behn's Oroonoko in a new adaptation.* Oxford: Amber Lane Press, 1999.
- Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko.* Ed. Catherine Gallagher.
- Brown, Laura. "The Romance of Empire: *Oroonoko* and the Trade in Slaves." *New Casebooks: Aphra Behn.* Ed. Janet Todd. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Gallagher, Catherine, Ed. *Oroonoko: Bedford Critical Edition.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2000.
- Ferrier, John. *The Prince of Angola.* Manchester: J. Harrop, 1788.
- Fogarty, Anne. "Looks that Kill: Violence and Representation in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko.*" *The Discourse of Slavery: Aphra Behn to Toni Morrison.* Ed. Carl Plasa and Betty J. Ring. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Iwanisziw, Susan B. "The Eighteenth Century Marketing of *Oroonoko*: Contenting Constructions of Maecenas, the Author, and the Slave." *Troping Oroonoko from Behn to Bandeled.* Ed. Susan B. Iwanisziw. Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2004.
- Lipking, Joanna. "'Others,' Slaves, and Colonists in *Oroonoko.*" *The Cambridge Companion to Aphra Behn.* Ed. Derek Hughes and Janet Todd. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- McGee, Celia. "Slavery as Seen From the Other Side." *New York Times.* 17 Feb 2008. nytimes.com
- Monson, Ingrid. *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.

-
- Munns, Jessica. "Reviving *Oroonoko* 'in the scene.' From Thomas Southerne to 'Biyi Bandele.'" *Troping Oroonoko from Behn to Bandele*. Ed. Susan B. Iwanisziw. Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2004.
- Nussbaum, Felicity. *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Oroonoko TFANA playbill. Ed. Judy Samelson. February 2008.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Scratches on the Face of the Country; Or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 12, No. 1, "Race," Writing, and Difference (Autumn, 1985), pp. 119-143.
- Rosenthal, Laura J. "Owning Oroonoko: Behn, Southerne, and the Contingencies of Property." *Troping Oroonoko from Behn to Bandele*. Ed. Susan B. Iwanisziw. Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2004.
- Sell, Mike. *Avant-Garde Performance and the Limits of Criticism: Approaching the Living Theatre, Happenings/Fluxus, and the Black Arts Movement*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.
- Sidran, Ben. *Black Talk*. New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1971.
- Southerne, Thomas. *Oroonoko*. Ed. John Loftis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976.
- Spencer, Jane. *Aphra Behn's Afterlife*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Todd, Janet. Introduction. *New Casebooks: Aphra Behn*. Ed. Janet Todd. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Trooboff, Rhonda M. "Reproducing *Oroonoko*: A Case Study in Plagiarism, Textual Parallelism, and Creative Borrowing." *Troping Oroonoko from Behn to Bandele*. Ed. Susan B. Iwanisziw. Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2004.
- Wallace Elizabeth Kowaleski. "Transnationalism and Performance in Biyi Bandele's *Oroonoko*." *PMLA* Volume 119, Number 2, March 2004, pp. 265-281.
- Widmayer, Anne F. "The Politics of Adapting Behn's *Oroonoko*." *Comparative Drama*, Vol. 37, 2003.