

Defoe and Behn: an Investigation of their Misunderstood Outcasts

Through my research of Aphra Behn's *The Lucky Mistake* (1689) and Daniel Defoe's *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724), while referring to the critical works of Michael McKeon, Shawn Lisa Maurer, Toni Bowers and Mikhailovich Bakhtin, I found an interesting pattern between the two works of literature, and the link is between their two minor, misunderstood outcasts, who use underhanded measures and tactics to achieve authority and power, which eighteenth century European society has denied them, based on their physical appearance, financial status, and even their religion. Their methods involve black mail, threats, and even violence, but I believe these characters are actually just victims of an unfair society that has denied them opportunity of social advancement from the very beginning of their lives, so they feel the need to lash out to achieve the power they want. Vernole, from Aphra Behn's *The Lucky Mistake*, is the mentor of the protagonist, Atlante, but he eventually tries to become her lover, but Atlante is disgusted by him, and is interested in another man, Rinaldo. Vernole, in order to obtain her, threatens to blackmail Atlante, saying she has slept with a man before marriage which would ruin her reputation, and hires thugs to scare off Rinaldo. The Jew, from Daniel Defoe's *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress*, is a jeweler who was hired along with another merchant, by Roxana, the protagonist of the novel, to inspect her jewelry. The Jew's expertise and opinion is cast aside during this interaction, because the Jew suspected and accused Roxana of stealing the jewels she came to get appraised, but his opinion is discarded with the excuse being his religion. In their society, they are men without authority, but throughout the story they attempt to gain power through underhanded methods, but their outcome in the end is not the one they desired. When they find out they cannot obtain what they want, they settle for what society has given them. Vernole does not get Atlante, the famously beautiful daughter, and settles for Charlot, the younger more rebellious daughter. The Jew wanted to black mail Roxana, but because of his attempt he got his ears cut off for speaking poorly of a woman of upper class, like Roxana. After that folly, he stops and leaves Roxana alone. These characters are seen as antagonists throughout their respected novels, but to me they are just characters beaten down by the expectations of society.

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