## **Eighteenth-Century Fiction**

Volume 23 | Issue 3 | Article 1

4-14-2011

# `New People in a New World'?: Defoe's Ambivalent Narratives of Emigration

Joseph F. Bartolomeo
University of Massachusetts Amherst

#### Recommended Citation

Bartolomeo, Joseph F. (2011) "'New People in a New World'?: Defoe's Ambivalent Narratives of Emigration," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*: Vol. 23: Iss. 3, Article 1.

 $A vailable\ at: http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vol23/iss3/1$ 

Copyright ©2013 by Eighteenth-Century Fiction, McMaster University. This Article is brought to you by DigitalCommons@McMaster. It has been accepted for inclusion in Eighteenth-Century Fiction by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@McMaster. For more information, please contact scom@mcmaster.ca.

# `New People in a New World'?: Defoe's Ambivalent Narratives of Emigration

#### **Abstract**

Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*, both published in 1722, have often been read as propaganda for emigration, transportation of criminals, and involuntary servitude. Both title characters find financial security and social status after being transported as indentured servants, and they eventually return to England. Each protagonist, however, makes an additional transatlantic journey out of choice rather than necessity, which paradoxically leads to greater risk and a more coercive atmosphere. Defoe complicates matters further by reversing the order of these journeys in the two novels, thus qualifying and in some respects subverting a purely optimistic view of colonial prospects. And while both Moll and Jack clearly distinguish themselves from African slaves, each is subject to more subtle forms of subjugation because of the connectedness of a transatlantic world that proves surprisingly small.

#### Keywords

Daniel Defoe, New World, narratives of emigration, emigration, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, transatlantic, propaganda, subjugation, colonialism

# "New People in a New World"?: Defoe's Ambivalent Narratives of Emigration

### Joseph F. Bartolomeo

Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*, both published in 1722, have often been read as propaganda for emigration, transportation of criminals, and involuntary servitude. Both title characters find financial security and social status after being transported as indentured servants, and they eventually return to England. Each protagonist, however, makes an additional transatlantic journey out of choice rather than necessity, which paradoxically leads to greater risk and a more coercive atmosphere. Defoe complicates matters further by reversing the order of these journeys in the two novels, thus qualifying and in some respects subverting a purely optimistic view of colonial prospects. And while both Moll and Jack clearly distinguish themselves from African slaves, each is subject to more subtle forms of subjugation because of the connectedness of a transatlantic world that proves surprisingly small.

WHEN SHE is reunited in Newgate with her once and future husband Jemy, Moll Flanders renews the proposal that she had originally offered as a solution to their mutual poverty, this time as a means to overcome their current status as felons: to go to America, a place "where no Body could upbraid us with what was past, or we be in any dread of a Prison; and without the Agonies of a condemn'd Hole to drive us to it, where we should look back on all our past Disasters with infinite Satisfaction, when we should consider that our Enemies should entirely forget us, and that we should live as new People in a new World, no Body having any thing to say to us, or we to them." Her accompanying promises of material success are founded on the example and instruction of her mother, a transported criminal who eventually married her master and assumed a respectable position in Virginia, and who assured Moll that "many a Newgate Bird becomes a great Man" (71) in the colonies. In Colonel Jack, published later in the same year (1722) and often regarded as a

Eighteenth-Century Fiction 23, no. 3 (Spring 2011) © 2011 ECF ISSN 0840-6286 | E-ISSN 1911-0243 | DOI: 10.3138/ecf.23.3.455

Daniel Defoe, Moll Flanders, ed. Albert J. Rivero (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 238. References are to this edition.

male version of Moll Flanders,2 the title character echoes these sentiments: "People, who are either Transported, or otherwise Trappan'd into those Places, are generally thought to be rendered miserable, and undone; ... on the contrary, I would encourage them upon my own Experience to depend upon it, that if their own Diligence in the time of Service, gains them but a good Character, which it will certainly do, if they can deserve it, there is not the poorest, and most despicable Felon that ever went over, but may after his time is serv'd, begin for himself, and may in time be sure of raising a good Plantation." Sentiments like these, and the fictional success stories that prompted them, lent cultural support to the Transportation Act of 1718, which allowed courts to sentence felons to transportation and provided merchants with subsidies for transporting them, codifying and in some ways altering a more informal practice in wide use in the previous century, a practice in which Defoe himself had participated as a merchant. Both novels, therefore, have often been read as propaganda for emigration, transportation of criminals, and indentured servitude.5

Both protagonists indeed attain considerable financial security and social status after coming to America as indentured servants, and their stories offer powerful exempla of transatlantic opportunity for Defoe's contemporary readers. To be sure, neither is or claims to be a typical colonist,<sup>6</sup> but propaganda is commonly

- <sup>2</sup> See Srinivas Aravamudan, "Defoe, Commerce, and Empire," in *The Cambridge Companion to Daniel Defoe*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 58; Hal Gladfelder, "Defoe and Criminal Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Daniel Defoe*, 73; and David Blewett, *Defoe's Art of Fiction: "Robinson Crusoe*," "Moll Flanders," "Colonel Jack," and "Roxana" (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 93.
- <sup>3</sup> Defoe, *Colonel Jack*, ed. Samuel Holt Monk (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 152. References are to this edition.
- <sup>4</sup> See Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: His Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 485–87; and Brett C. McInelly, "Exile or Opportunity?: The Plight of the Transported Felon in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*," *Genre* 22 (2001): 210–11.
- <sup>5</sup> See Maximillian E. Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 147; John Richetti, *Daniel Defoe* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), 82; J.A. Downie, "Defoe, Imperialism, and the Travel Book Reconsidered," in *Critical Essays on Daniel Defoe*, ed. Roger D. Lund (New York: G.K. Hall, 1997), 83; Lois Chaber, "Matriarchal Mirror: Women and Capital in *Moll Flanders*," in *Critical Essays on Daniel Defoe*, 196; Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe*, 487–89; and McInelly, 210–17.
- <sup>6</sup> See Novak, Economics and the Fiction of Defoe, 148, 150.

advanced by an emphasis on atypical extremes. Other critics, to whom I am indebted, have identified aspects of the two novels that raise more substantial challenges to a reading of Defoe as an unalloyed apologist for colonial traffic and trafficking. In my view, the most significant complicating factor arises from an obvious but under-examined structural similarity: the representation of not one, but two transatlantic journeys, or as Srinivas Aravamudan puts it, "a colonial double circuit from London to Virginia and back again, twice." Paradoxically, the crossing that is prompted by conscious choice rather than by force or necessity actually leads to greater risk, less autonomy, and psychological tension. Just as the protagonists' atypical success supports a case for emigration, their equally unique travails undermine it. In Moll Flanders, the destabilizing colonial narrative comes first and casts a shadow over the triumphant final journey, while in Colonel Jack, Defoe reverses the order and thus even more emphatically calls into question a purely optimistic view of colonial prospects. This doubling also helps account for the odd endings of both novels, in which a final return to England is represented, but almost as an afterthought. Although Moll and Jack both take pains to distinguish their servitude from that of African slaves, these patterned repetitions emphasize how each is subject to more subtle forms of coercion because of the connectedness of a transatlantic world that proves surprisingly small.

The transportation of Moll Flanders to Virginia serves its ostensible legal purpose by substituting for a death sentence, but otherwise the coercive circumstances of her punishment are essentially superficial, allowing her to pursue commercial profit and domestic contentment, including a rapturous reunion with a son she had left behind. The narrative of her crossing immediately establishes the uniqueness of her position, the difference between her circumstances and those both of the ordinary convict and of her husband, as it details her use of the proceeds of her criminal career to secure a comfortable passage for herself and Jemy. Unlike the condemned Moll, Jemy is able to submit voluntarily to transportation in lieu of a criminal trial, a situation more in keeping with pre-Transportation Act practice, which, as John O'Brien has detailed, involved "a legal fiction under which criminals were imagined as appealing for a pardon that would be conditional upon their agreeing to transportation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Aravamudan, 58.

abroad."8 As a "Gentlemen," Jemy regards transportation even in this officially voluntary form as an intolerable blow to his pride, having "a kind of Horror upon his Mind at his being sent over to the Plantations as Romans sent condemn'd Slaves to Work in the Mines" (236). The more canny and pragmatic Moll, who understands that "with Money in the Pocket one is at home any where" (141) and had in Newgate "obtain'd the Favour by the help of Money, nothing being to be done in that Place without it, not to be kept in the Condemn'd Hole, as they call it, among the rest of the Prisoners, who were to die" (227) but instead to have private accommodations, leavens any putative degradation with the physical comfort that money can buy. Her assurance to the ship's boatswain that they "had been Persons of a differing Character from the wretched Crew that we came with," tellingly accompanied by her putting "a Guinea into his Hands" (245), reflects a distinction founded on neither morality nor social class, but on material wealth.

The wealth that distinguishes Moll from the common transported felon and the ambition that distinguishes her from her husband also underlie her conspicuous success after her arrival in America. She immediately purchases freedom for herself and Jemy; the putative indentured servants quickly become masters to an "English Woman-Servant" and a "Negro Man-Servant" (258) and soon establish "a sufficient Plantation to employ between fifty and sixty Servants" (259). Liberated by her financial resources from any possible identification with slaves, she need draw no distinction between English servants who labour for a contracted period and African slaves in bondage for life. Moll's emphasis here and throughout the final section of the novel on productive colonial activity, replete with the material and financial detail so characteristic of Defoe's fiction, befits her status as a propertied entrepreneur who supplies much more working capital than Jemy, whose aristocratic pretensions render him a liability and ironically enough lead her to identify him with the colonial servant class: "the Case was plain, he was bred a

<sup>8</sup> John O'Brien, "Union Jack: America and the Law in Colonel Jack," Eighteenth-Century Studies 32, no. 1 (1998): 72. The precise circumstances of Jemy's sentence have been obscured by the presence of two conflicting passages in the first edition. Rodney M. Baine argues convincingly that the second passage, which indicates that Jemy was ordered to be sold in America and was able to return to England after completing the term of his transportation, was a revision missed by the compositor. Baine, "The Cancelled Passage in Moll Flanders," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 76 (1972): 55–58.

Gentleman, and by Consequence was not only unacquainted, but indolent, and when we did Settle, would much rather go out into the Woods with his Gun, which they call there Hunting, and which is the ordinary Work of the *Indians*, and which they do as Servants; I say he would much rather do that, than attend the natural Business of his Plantation" (256). This attitude may help explain her quickly retracted but not easily ignored statement after her ecstatic reunion with her son: "thus I was as if I had been in a new World, and began secretly now to wish that I had not brought my *Lancashire* husband from *England* at all" (262). This geographic identification of Jemy marks him, unlike Moll, as alien in and to the colonial context. Moreover, the customary gender roles are reversed, as Jemy becomes a decorative appendage. <sup>10</sup>

Moll's agency relative to her spouse contrasts sharply with her first, disastrous journey to America, during which her apparently more privileged position as the wife of a successful planter is quickly exploded by her reunion with her mother and the revelation that she has married her brother. The incest episode has been interpreted as "the result of excessive circulation in the colonial economy—the effect of her mother's transportation to Virginia—[which] has resulted in the ruin of her deliberative efforts to lay up an estate with her husband" by Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, and as "a warning about the enormous power of the husband over the person" by Lois Chaber. <sup>11</sup> I consider both views not only persuasive in their own right, but also mutually reinforcing and helpful in explaining why the episode takes place in America. Moll is left repulsed by the incest but in the completely dependent position of the feme covert, and her husband's power is magnified by Moll's

- <sup>9</sup> Richetti points out that in Virginia "Moll implies her own superiority ... her own superior power as a covert and indirect force." Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 143.
- <sup>10</sup> In Chaber's words, Jemy is "consigned to the realm of leisure, conspicuous consumption, and status symbol" (196).
- Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, "The Original American Novel, or, the American Origin of the Novel," in A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture, ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 249. Chaber, 188. In her extensive discussion of incest in the novel, Ellen Pollak considers "the ambivalence and contradictions inherent in the position of the European female colonial subject as simultaneously the renderer and recipient of service," an ambivalence "both enabled and resolved" at the end of the novel "when Moll trades the dream of uncompromised female agency in the domestic realm for colonial supremacy abroad." Pollak, Incest and the English Novel, 1684–1814 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 126.

isolation in the colonies. In England, according to Moll, "he assur'd me he would never desire me to go to Virginia with him, or go thither himself without me, unless I was perfectly willing, and made it my Choice" (67), but once in America he abrogates his promise to allow her to return should she find "the Country not to agree with" her (74). Since these requests occur before she has revealed their "dreadful Circumstances" to him, Moll recognizes and concurs with his perception of her demands as "unreasonable," but she keeps renewing them and confronting her powerlessness: "it was plain there was no bringing my Husband to any thing: he would neither go with me, or let me go without him, and it was quite out of my Power to stir without his Consent, as any one that knows the Constitution of the Country I was in, knows very well" (74, 75). The novel repeatedly shows how in England she could, with impunity, discard—or be discarded by—husbands, but Virginia offers no such refuge for a woman without property, nor ways to avoid disgrace if she were to leave her husband. Moll's fears of what might happen were she to reveal the truth to him exposure, a divorce, and a lawsuit for "the little Portion" (78) that she has; the "ruin" of herself, her mother, and her children; and the possibility of seeing her husband "in the Arms of another Wife in a few Months" (79)—underscore the extreme subordination and vulnerability of the colonial wife.

Moll's nightmare scenarios do not come to pass, as she carefully manages the revelation of the truth to her husband and is able, after his consequent physical and mental debilitation, to persuade him to allow her to return to the safe haven of England. In the paragraph immediately preceding this revelation, she opens the possibility of an alternative resolution, only to reject it: "In this Distress I did not know what to do, as his Life was apparently declining, and I might perhaps have Marry'd again there, very much to my Advantage, it had been certainly my Business to have staid in the Country; but my Mind was restless too, and uneasie; I hanker'd after coming to England, and nothing would satisfie me without it" (84). Dillon argues that Moll's "innate desires lead her ... to return to England and to the national (and seemingly more natural) marriage market there."12 I would agree to a large extent, but would classify the desires as less innate than formed by an experience of emotional anguish and also one of potential dispossession, which is usually more important for a Defoe

<sup>12</sup> Dillon, 250.

protagonist. The retrospective narrator may plausibly consider another marriage in America a viable option, but Moll's harrowing experience argues against the protagonist's—or Defoe's—adopting it, at least until a point at which she can enter a marriage with independent means and a more pliable spouse.

Given Moll's lack of personal resources and agency, it is not surprising that this first narrative of colonial settlement has little of the celebratory tone and copious detail of the second: America initially represents a place of peril and not of promise. Moll's initial return to England, by contrast, empowers her in several respects. For one, distance allows her to assume the upper hand over her brother/husband, who no longer represents a threat: after he has shipped cargo to her under the promise of a "general Release," she manages to procure the shipment without signing, and always finds "something or other to say to evade the thing, and to put off the signing it at all" (101–2). More important, she is no longer threatened by her story and turns it, like most other aspects of her life, to her advantage. With no one to contradict her, she controls the representation of her recent experience, which she can exploit to varying degrees in subsequent courtships. At one point, she mentions some innocuous circumstances of her American sojourn to her Bath lover, and upon the dissolution of their affair begs him for money to return there, but quickly informs the reader that this "was indeed all a Cheat thus far, viz. that I had no intention to go to Virginia, as the Account of my former Affairs there may convince any Body of" (101). Following her marriage to Jemy and their discovery that each has deceived the other about being wealthy, she offers another sanitized version of her earlier colonial experience and proposes that the two of them buy and settle land in Virginia, with the goal of being "in a Posture to leave our Plantation in good Hands, and come over again and receive the Income of it, and live here and enjoy it" (125). Jemy advances a similar plan, with two significant differences: he wishes to move to the closer colonial outpost of Ireland and to settle there permanently. Moll's withholding of important details of her "former Affairs" in Virginia renders the sincerity of her proposal suspect, but, even at face value, unlike Jemy's scheme it relegates America to a way station for accumulating enough wealth to return to England. Neither plan, of course, is pursued in the short term, and the eventual adoption of Moll's plan happens primarily because of juridical coercion, making the Virginia of the second triumphant journey an almost accidental Utopia.

The second time Moll proposes emigration, she never mentions returning to the "mother country," but as several critics have noted, the novel ends with Moll and Jemy back in England, a resolution that seems to provide ideological closure at the expense of formal integrity. Dillon argues that "Moll's circulation among marriage partners and through colonial geographic spaces is ultimately recuperated to a stabilizing national narrative," with a return to "the national space that property and social relations entitle her to comfortably inhabit."13 With a different emphasis but along similar lines, Amit Yahav-Brown, who credits transportation ("the absence of such institutions as national orphanages and pension offices") as "the first and only occasion for recognizing a citizen" at the same time "as it revoked the actual citizenship of the population it targeted," concludes that with Moll's repatriation "Defoe revises this grim reality, idealistically projecting citizenship as an inalienable status."14 From a narrative point of view, however, the ending is abrupt and jarring. Only a few passages anticipate the final resolution, such as when as Moll's son Humphrey mentions that she "might perhaps have a mind to go back to England again," and shortly thereafter suggests that since she "talk'd of going back to England," she should send him a wife from London (262, 263). There is, however, no representation of conscious deliberation or decision-making, as Moll matter-offactly announces in a meandering and anything but emphatic final sentence, "I am come back to England ... having perform'd much more than the limited Terms of my Transportation ... my Husband remain'd there sometime after me to settle our Affairs, and at first I had intended to go back to him, but at his desire I alter'd that Resolution, and he is come over to England also" (267). The ideological commitments described by Dillon and Yahav-Brown do conflict in some important ways with the earlier explicit advocacy of transportation, which is not predicated on the ability to return, and that conflict may help account for the structural and stylistic awkwardness of the ending—a pattern that is repeated in a more glaring way in Colonel Jack. 15 The final return

<sup>13</sup> Dillon, 251.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Amit Yahav-Brown, "At Home in England, or Projecting Liberal Citizenship in *Moll Flanders*," *Novel* 35 (2001): 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> This conflicted attitude may also manifest itself in the preface, in which the "editor" mentions "many pleasant things" that happened in Moll's "last Scene at *Maryland*, and *Virginia*," only to exclude detailing them on the grounds

home thus recalls and reinforces—for the reader and perhaps for the heroine—the tensions engendered by Moll's earlier crossing.

The ending of Colonel Jack is even more compromised and equivocal, largely because the circumstances of the two transatlantic journeys—the status of the immigrant, colonial activity, and psychological trauma—are almost exactly reversed. Kidnapped and sold into indentured servitude after avoiding punishment during a youthful criminal career, Jack arrives in America under the most oppressive circumstances; therefore he initially draws no distinction between himself and African slaves, identifying his lot as the "miserable Condition of a Slave" and speaking of his master having "abundance of Servants, as well Negroes, as English" (119). Even at this point, however, Jack's self-conception as a gentleman, to which he has repeatedly referred since the first page of the novel, manifests itself in what O'Brien calls Jack's "almost phobic relation to labor,"16 initially as he tells the story of his kidnapping to the overseer in a way that elicits the "sort of Tenderness" (118), but not the more lenient treatment, that he was seeking. His elevation out of slavery a year later is prompted by attracting his master's attention through tears for a young transported English thief and pickpocket, with whom, unlike the undifferentiated Africans, he can identify.<sup>17</sup> In the ensuing dialogue with his master, he adroitly distinguishes himself from the object of his sympathy by telling only the technical truth: "Indeed, Sir, I have been a wicked idle Boy, and was left Desolate in the World; but that Boy is a Thief, and condemn'd to be hang'd, I never was before a Court of Justice in my Life" (124). Equally if not more important, he produces a bill of exchange for £94, procured from his income as a thief in England, but in America a sign of property that wins the master's respect and Jack's immediate promotion to overseer. 18 Jack's capital pales in comparison to Moll's on her second journey to the colonies,

that "they are not told with the same Elegancy as those accounted for by herself" (7). Aside from reflecting Defoe's well-known propensities for misdirection and for preparing the ground for possible sequels, this passage both celebrates the colonial world and silences it.

- 16 O'Brien, 74.
- 17 See Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives*, who draws attention to the superficiality of the resemblance between the young convict and the "better and smarter" Jack; the protagonist "is made to feel guilty, and yet the narrative's implicit comparison of Jack's career with his double's rescues him in our eyes from any traces of real guilt and incompetence" (167).
- <sup>18</sup> For discussions of the significance of the bill, see Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives*, 167; and O'Brien, 66.

but his possessing some capital places him on more secure footing than Moll initially occupied as the dependent wife of a planter.

After Jack's promotion, he distances himself further from any connection with the dependency and powerlessness of slaves by developing a means of controlling them through psychological manipulation rather than brute force. As he explains to his master, he plans "first to put them into the utmost Horror and Apprehensions of the Cruelest Punishment that they had ever heard of, and thereby enhaunce the value of their Pardon, which was to come as from your self, but not without our great Intercession: Then I was to argue with them, and Work upon their Reason, to make the Mercy that was shew'd them sink deep into their Minds, and give lasting Impressions; explain the Meaning of Gratitude to them, and the Nature of an Obligation, and the like" (144). As George Boulukos demonstrates, Jack's initial kinship with African slaves and his recognition of their common humanity give way to, and actually contribute to, his authority over them: the novel lays bare "the manner in which deploying a strategic play of similarity and difference between Europeans and enslaved Africans allows a pseudo-empirical articulation of racial difference that actually reinforces European claims to superiority."19 Jack's subsequent conduct reinforces this distinction: too "cunning" to agree with his master's suggestion that he buy his liberty and go planting, he instead insists "that I would not quit his Service for the best Plantation in Maryland; that he had been so good to me, and I believ'd I was so useful to him, that I cou'd not think of it; and at last, I added, I hop'd he cou'd not believe but I had as much Gratitude as a Negro" (148), whereupon he is offered manumission, a salary, and his own plantation. Although he may share the "gratitude" that he has inculcated in the slaves, Jack deploys it with calculation and from a position of greater strength than slaves could ever hold.<sup>20</sup>

The transactional, utilitarian dimension of slavery shadows Jack's only two significant relationships during his first American sojourn, notwithstanding the narrator's emphasis on emotional and familial bonds. He refers to his former master as "Friend and Benefactor," "Father," and "Councellor" (158, 159), but as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> George E. Boulukos, "Daniel Defoe's Colonel Jack, Grateful Slaves, and Racial Difference," ELH 68, no. 3 (2001): 623.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> For a more positive view of the theme of gratitude and its connection to the ways in which Jacobites (including Jack) come to regard the power and mercy of the king, see Blewett, 100–1.

indicated above, their connection is rooted in use, especially on Jack's part, in much the same way that his treatment of the slaves ostensibly reflects the master's and Jack's mutual and commendable disdain for cruelty but ultimately promotes a more efficient means of the control that is essential to the plantation economy.<sup>21</sup> The roles are reversed, but the pattern is repeated and amplified with Jack and his tutor, a transported criminal who prefers slavery to sinfulness, who provides instruction in literacy and morality (the first more efficacious than the second) and who becomes Jack's closest companion after his master's death. In return, Jack claims, "I made him to me, what my Benefactor made me to him," but later specifies one notable exception: "I did not assist him to enter upon Planting for himself as I was assisted" (158, 173). He adds a few words indicating that his absence made him unable to do so, but this seems more an excuse than an explanation; perhaps having once been a slave also makes Jack reluctant to relinquish being a master. As important as the vexed nature of these homosocial relationships is the fact that they represent the extent of Jack's personal affiliations during his first colonial experience: his aggressive, conspicuous, and largely calamitous marital and extramarital career begins after this American interlude. Absent romantic or family entanglements, he is free to concentrate on his successful pursuit of property, a pursuit that Moll Flanders, as (incestuous) wife and mother, is effectively denied.

Jack differs from Moll not only in the motives behind his first departure from the colonies—instead of desperation, a curiosity that his resources enable him to indulge and a desire to convert colonial wealth to status in Europe—but also in his lingering attachment to Virginia after he leaves it. The tutor/servant serves as the catalyst for his journey: he "read History" to Jack "and where books were wanting," gave him "Ideas of those things which had not been Recorded by our modern Histories," thereby prompting in his student/master "an unquenchable Thirst" to see more of the world and a view of himself as "one Buried alive, in a remote Part of the World, where I could see nothing at all, and

<sup>21</sup> Everett Zimmerman argues that both Jack and his master "understand the debased conception of self-interest underlying their moral palaver." Zimmerman, *Defoe and the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 136. Lincoln B. Faller details how the "slavery Jack experiences, observes, profits from, and risks in Virginia becomes almost too powerful a metaphor for what is at stake in social relations," laying bare the egoism behind personal affiliations. Faller, *Crime and Defoe: A New Kind of Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 190.

hear but a little of what was seen, and that little, not till at least half a Year after it was done, and sometimes a Year or more" (171, 172). He is subject to "the old Reproach ... Namely, that even this was not yet, the Life of a Gentleman" (172), which for Jack can only be attained in Europe. 22 After many years, adventures in several countries, and marriages, when he nearly resolves to "go to Virginia again, and there live retired," he uses almost identical language to describe his resistance to isolation in a provincial backwater, especially unsuitable for someone with his "wandring kind of Taste" (233). Personal distresses, however, repeatedly evoke a renewed appreciation for the haven provided by colonial life. A physical attack that leaves Jack severely wounded just as his first marriage collapses leads him to resolve "to get myself out of Danger, if possible, and to go over to France, or home, as I call'd it, to Virginia" (204). Later, after the death of the wife with whom he was most happy and three of his children, he more emphatically longs for the "home" he has left and follows through with his earlier resolution: "And now I thought Heaven summon'd me to retire to Virginia, the Place, and as I may say, the only Place I had been bless'd at, or had met with any thing that deserv'd the Name of Success in" (250). Thus begins a pattern of oscillation between repulsion and attraction that will continue in an even stronger register later in the narrative.

In economic and personal terms, Jack's second migration appears to recapitulate the successes of Moll's. His plantations have flourished under the oversight of his tutor, and his return to the role of prosperous master facilitates a rapprochement with his formerly unfaithful first wife, a transported thief who explicitly identifies herself with the Prodigal Son and echoes his penitence and humility: "I have paid dear for all my wickedness, and 'tis just, 'tis righteous that God should bring me to your Foot, to ask you Pardon for all my brutish doings: Forgive me Sir, said she, I beseech you, and let me be your Slave or Servant for it as long as I live; 'tis all I ask, and with those Words, she fell upon her Knees again" (255). Repeated words and gestures of selfabasement follow, until after refusing a proposal of marriage from the tutor, which a newly smitten Jack half-heartedly encourages, she implores, "let me be as I am, or any thing else you please to make me, but not a Wife, to any Man alive but yourself" (262), a request he is happy to gratify from his position of unbounded

<sup>22</sup> See Blewett, 106.

authority. Jack's reunion with a former spouse resembles Moll's, but here the debts—literal and figurative—of the spouse to the protagonist are more obvious and extreme.<sup>23</sup> Her situation and conduct are anticipated in Jack's own resourceful subordination and devotion to his master, but even more directly in Moll Flanders with the character of Moll's mother, who upon transportation "very luckily fell into a good Family, where behaving herself well, and her Mistress dying, her Master married her" (72)—only in Jack's wife's case, she replaces her earlier, and now figuratively dead, self. Previously, when contemplating the prospect of another marriage after a series of failures, Jack reasoned to himself, "if I Marry an honest Woman, my Children will be taken care of; if she be a Slut and abuses me, as I see every Body does; I'll Kidnap her and send her to Virginia to my Plantations there, and there she shall work hard enough, and fare hard enough to keep her Chast, I'll warrant her" (245). These "mad, hare-brain'd Notions" (245) are effectively if not literally realized through the fate of his first and last wife, as transportation transforms a "slut" into an "honest woman," completely under his control.

However compromised the relationship might seem to the reader, Jack gains a domestic happiness that complements his material wealth. Narrative logic, and practical and ideological commitment to emigration, would therefore dictate ending the novel at this point, a move that Defoe pointedly and clumsily rejects. As narrator, Jack implies an imminent ending with what initially appears to be a coda: "And now I began to think my Fortunes were settled for this World, and I had nothing before me, but to finish a Life of infinite Variety, such as mine had been with a comfortable Retreat, being both made wiser by our Sufferings and Difficulties, and able to judge for our selves, what kind of Life would be best adapted to our present Circumstances, and in what Station we might look upon our selves to be most compleatly happy" (263). However, as Jack puts it, an "unseen Mine blew up all this apparent Tranquility at once" (264) and sent him wandering again. To explain, the narration abruptly shifts to Jack's recent past in England, during which his Jacobite sympathies encouraged him to join in support of the incursion at Preston, before disagreement about military tactics led to his escaping from the rebels before they were routed. Some of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Faller astutely comments that given Jack's unnamed wife's status "it is in her own best interest to give herself selflessly to him" and compares her submission to "Jack's slaves' grateful appreciation of their slavery" (190, 191).

defeated Jacobites are transported to the area of Jack's plantations, and although he can avoid them by declining to purchase them, he cannot prevent his neighbours from doing so. His fear of exposure, which would lead to forfeiture of his estates and repatriation to England as a traitor, results in an "uneasy Life" that he finds himself "utterly unable to bear," a sense of having been "reduced from a great Man, a Magistrate, a Governor, or Master of three great Plantations; and having three or four Hundred Servants at [his] command, to be a poor self condemn'd Rebel" (267). This turn in the plot seems a pure contrivance,<sup>24</sup> and the awkwardness is compounded by Jack's earlier reference to seeing among his servants "two or three of the Preston Gentlemen ... who being Prisoners of War, were spar'd from the publick Execution, and sent over for to that Slavery, which to Gentlemen must be worse than Death" (251). The "Mortification" he feels seems directed towards the unfortunate gentlemen rather than himself. A repetition of Jemy's sentiments in Moll Flanders, this is an unusual response given Jack's explicit recommendation of the benefits of indenture,25 and his insistent identification of himself, since childhood, as a gentleman. At this point, he alerts the reader that he will put off describing his words and actions: "I shall speak at large of it, when the rest of them came over, which more nearly concern'd me" (251). This delay seems designed to bring the narrative of a triumphant return to Virginia to closure, only to commence immediately to undermine it.

Whatever the reasons behind such a clumsy narrative move—the need to emphasize Jack's restless energy; a desire to add accounts of (illegal) Caribbean trading, on which Jack embarks after his flight from Virginia; the punishment of the hero for Jacobite sympathies that Defoe strongly rejected<sup>26</sup>—the effect is to problematize, in several different ways, the novel's advocacy of transportation, emigration, and colonial settlement. Most obviously, the transatlantic exchange that made Jack's fortune now threatens it, as the erstwhile indentured servant sees himself at the mercy of others in a similar situation. As with Moll in her first American sojourn, his past catches up with and haunts him, but he bears much more responsibility for it, having consciously

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Richetti argues that the circumstances prompting this turn in the plot are simply invented in order to allow for the "movement, energy, and variety" that the hero and his story require (*Defoe's Narratives*, 188).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> See Zimmerman, 131.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Blewett discusses in detail the novel's treatment of Jacobinism (95–101).

decided to support the Jacobite cause, and earlier, to leave America in the first place. The presence of the Jacobites also recalls the origins of the Transportation Act: as O'Brien discusses, the more formal juridical process arose out of the Hanoverian response to the rebellion, in which transportation allowed the Jacobites to escape execution and the government to avoid treason trials and any resultant sympathy for those tried.<sup>27</sup> The policy that the novel appears to endorse is related to the threat that disrupts a colonial haven. Finally, the emphasis shifts away from Virginia and towards Jack's continued adventures, and profits, as a trader, so much so that even after a royal pardon of the Jacobite rebels allows him to return to Virginia and he discovers that none of the Preston transports recognize him, he refuses to sit "still contented" or to follow the counsel of his "prudent Wife," but instead dreams "of nothing but Millions and Hundred of Thousands" (296-97) that could come from further Caribbean trading.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps this shift helps account for a final return to England that seems even more haphazard and unpremeditated than Moll's. After detailing the writing of his memoirs in Spain and the moral purpose he hopes they will serve, Jack resumes narrating events for a single laconic paragraph:

I have only to add to what was then written, that my kind Friends the *Spaniards* finding no other Method presented for conveying me to my home, that is to say, to *Virginia*, got a License, for me to come in the Galeons, as a *Spanish* Merchant to *Cadiz*, where I arriv'd safe with all my Treasure ... and from *Cadiz*, I soon got Passage on Board an *English* Merchant Ship for *London*, from whence I sent an account of my Adventures to my Wife, and where in about five Months more, she came over to me, leaving with full satisfaction the Management of all our Affairs in *Virginia*, in the same faithful Hands as before. (309)

Home is elusive, but so are Jack and Defoe about the reasons why: once in England, he could have returned to America. Like the critics who have discussed Moll's return, Lincoln Faller suggests that nationalism may have led Defoe, despite his support of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> O'Brien, 72.

Novak regards the final section as "a disaster for the structure of the novel. That Jack should suddenly become incredibly avaricious and turn toward making a fortune by such a risky series of adventures has little to do with the rest of the work." Novak, *Daniel Defoe, Master of Fictions: His Life and Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 615. As Faller observes, the final section de-centers the novel, and so "Virginia no longer appears quite the idyllic place it otherwise might have done" (181).

colonization, to feel that "distant climes were no place for him and, presumably, for his comfortably moneyed readers finally to repose their imaginations," and that "to have kept his characters abroad may have seemed in some way to impugn England."<sup>29</sup> Conversely, as in *Moll Flanders*, Defoe's commitment to colonial settlement may have resulted in the depiction of the return in such a muted register. Yet by placing—however awkwardly—the narrative that stresses the dangers of the colonial home later in *Colonel Jack*, Defoe more obviously encourages readers to regard England as a more secure refuge, even if he refrains from representing it as such by ending so abruptly.

A few paragraphs before this final one, after Jack describes how composing his memoirs in enforced leisure in Mexico led him to penitence, he asks readers to

remember with how much Advantage they may make their penitent reflections at Home, under the merciful Dispositions of Providence in Peace, Plenty, and Ease, rather than Abroad under the Discipline of a Transported Criminal as my Wife and Tutor, or under the Distresses of a Shipwreck'd wanderer, as my Skipper or Captain of the Sloop, who as I hear dyed a very great Penitent, labouring in the Deserts and Mountains to find his way home to *Virginia*, by the way of *Carolina* ... or in Exile, however favourably circumstanced as mine, in absence from my Family, and for some time in no probable View of ever seeing them any more. (308–9)

So neatly distinguished here, the concepts of "Home," "Abroad," "Exile," and "the Discipline of the Transported Criminal" are repeatedly merged and destabilized throughout the novel, as they are in *Moll Flanders*, despite its ostensibly less fraught ending. Structuring both narratives around a "colonial double circuit" foregrounds the seamlessness of the circuit, which renders colonial life both liberating and inhibiting and promises those who pursue it both riches and shackles.



Joseph F. Bartolomeo, professor and Chair of English at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is the author of *Matched Pairs: Gender and Intertextual Dialogue in Eighteenth–Century Fiction* (2002) and the editor of Susanna Rowson's *Reuben and Rachel* (2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Faller, 194. He adds that of "all the novels, *Colonel Jack* might most have seemed to support this inference."