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Daniel Defoe and the
Representation of
Personal Identity

By

Christopher Borsing
Declaration

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Summary

This thesis explores Daniel Defoe's treatment of the concept of personal identity as a literary construction and as a social fiction. An active contributor to the burgeoning print market of early eighteenth-century England, Defoe capitalizes on popular taste but he also alerts readers to issues of textual credibility. His provocative destabilization of any fixed definition or image of a personal identity is at the heart of the thesis.

As well as taking into account the political, economic and cultural context for Defoe's work, two major philosophical articulations of the nature of personal identity inform the analysis the thesis provides. John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) is crucial to the modern concept of an autonomous and coherent individual identity. Jean-François Lyotard's *The Differend* (1983), on the other hand, contends that the concept of personal identity does not withstand challenges from incommensurable epistemological and cultural pressures.

Ever since Ian Watt's study, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), Defoe has been read as a literary spokesman for an image of the empiricist and secular individualist. Defoe also, however, held religious convictions and urged programmes for social reform that attest to his commitment to community values. At the least, he embodies contradictions and discomforts in cultural attitudes as a traditional, hierarchical social order altered towards an atomized society of individuals.
The True-Born Englishman (1700/01) stirred up public support for William III at a time when the King came under concerted attack from republican, Tory and High Church propaganda. Defoe’s satire interrogates national and public images of public identity but, at the same time, he advertises his own presence within the print market. The Family Instructor (1715; 1718) also conveys a dual and contradictory message as it espouses religious and family harmony through traditional hierarchical authority but foregrounds instances of justifiable individual rebellion, acting out revolutionary principles within the setting of the domestic household.

Robinson Crusoe has become the culturally mythic figure who endures twenty-eight years on a tropical island. However, Robinson Crusoe (1719) also constructs multiple interpretations of Crusoe’s memories and experiments with readers’ imagination of identity. Captain Singleton (1720) highlights the difficulty of constructing and maintaining any cohesive personal identity as Defoe’s characters engage in theft, piracy, and other interpretations of trade and exchange. Moll Flanders (1721) and Roxana (1724) emphasize individual viewpoints as Moll and Roxana resist systematic social expectations. However, both characters also become imprisoned or lost within their own fictional representations.

The thesis examines Defoe’s literary treatment of fictional personal identity as correlative with hopes and anxieties for the contemporary implications of individual autonomy.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge funding from the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

I would like to offer my gratitude and appreciation for the extraordinary commitment and energy of Dr Aileen Douglas who supervised my work. Thank you, Aileen.

I thank my colleagues in the School of English for their inspiration and good humour, in particular, Niall Gillespie, Anne Markey, Dara Downey, Amy Prendergast and Wendy Mooney.

I would like to offer my appreciation and thanks to my parents, Gerard and Joan, and my brothers and sister, Nicholas, Ian and Erica, for their belief and encouragement through all my years.

I would like to thank my parents-in-law, Rolf and Marlene, for their support.

I thank my son, Janto, for the inspiration of his good example and my daughter, Anaïs, for her humour and wisdom that sustained me throughout this work.

I thank my wife, Urte, for absolutely everything.
Contents

Declaration i
Summary ii
Acknowledgements iv
Abbreviations vi

Introduction 1

Chapter 1
“The True-Born Englishman”: The Construction of a Persona 22

Chapter 2
*The Family Instructor*: One-sided dialogue 65

Chapter 3
*Robinson Crusoe*: Spoken by an Other 105

Chapter 4
*Captain Singleton*: Incommensurable Exchanges 151

Chapter 5
Questionable Identities: *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* 203

Afterword 246

Bibliography 249
Abbreviations


Introduction

In *Serious Reflections* (1720), the third volume of his memoirs, Robinson Crusoe regrets the ferocity of current debates between religious sects and begs Christians to afford each other more charity. He invites them to take an imaginative leap, asking, "How many Actions of Men, which we, seeing only their Out-side, have now censur'd, shall we find there, by that Penetration that cannot err, be accepted for their in-side Sincerity?" Crusoe presupposes the existence of an "in-side" to a person that is knowable only to God, or "that Penetration that cannot err". John Richetti notes in his critical biography of Defoe that, despite extensive records of Defoe's financial, political and literary life, "almost nothing is known or certain about his inner life except what he chose to reveal about himself in his writing and in his surviving letters". Crusoe and Richetti distinguish between an external, public self and an interior, private self, reinforcing a modern expectation that there is an "inner life". Defoe used anonymity, deployed personae and delighted in representations and misrepresentations that have resulted in contradictory biographies and contentious attribution and de-attribution of his publications. It is difficult to pass judgement on somebody who may be, and whose works may be by, somebody else, somebody other.

This thesis examines concepts of personal identity in Defoe's literary construction and as a social fiction. It explores disjunctions

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between private identity and its public presentation as the source for multiple versions of personal identity and will discuss Defoe’s constructions of the autonomous, self-authorized individual within the context of negotiations for identity with the global ‘Other’ in early eighteenth-century English society. Michael McKeon’s The Secret History of Domesticity (2005) provides a useful historicist narrative of subjectivity that traces down from the objective, exterior representation of identity in a national, patriarchal monarch to the subjective and domestic sovereignty of individual private conscience. My argument follows a parallel path in discussion of Defoe’s texts from state satire and religious conduct books, through individualized traveller and pirate narratives to gendered and marginalized criminal biography and secret history.

The argument of the thesis draws on John Locke’s contemporary assessment of personal identity in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689) and on a postmodernist view of personal identity in Jean-François Lyotard’s The Differend (1983; trans. 1988). Locke grounds the sense of a coherent personal identity on an individual’s identification with memories that entail responsibility for past actions. Defoe’s fictionalized autobiographies, however, demonstrate scepticism towards the individual’s memories and their representation. Perhaps more useful then is The Differend and its address of personal identity under pressure within incommensurable epistemological and cultural frameworks. Such a self becomes an instrumental fiction, an empty link.

that affirms reality but "registers a profound dislocation of narrated worlds." Defoe's fictional characters adapt to alien circumstances and negotiate with other individuals and other worlds. These encounters highlight disjunctions in language, value and perception that disrupt cohesive interpretation, exemplifying Lyotard's "incommensurable discourses". Defoe's characters repeatedly demonstrate irreconcilable dislocation between the self as a pragmatic and materialist being and as a soul on a journey of awakening, repentance and redemption. Defoe's enthusiasm for individual enterprise, for instance, is clearly at odds with his religious and moral support for family and community networks of obligation.

Such a binary or disjunctive division between modes of thought and behaviour is exemplified in the opposing contemporary critical views of Katherine Clark and Wolfram Schmidgen. Clark argues for Defoe as a religious Dissenter who credits reason as man’s gift from God, while Schmidgen is adamant that Defoe shares Locke’s philosophical empiricism and celebrates the world’s “infinite variety”, a position that pre-empts any prescriptive moral or religious application. Defoe may have suspected that Locke’s rationalist views were suspiciously materialist but he was also an enthusiastic participant in the modern world of projects, credit and globalized trade. Negotiation, compromise, and occasionally necessary dissimulation undermined strict

spiritual principles. Crusoe adroitly combines scripture and common sense when he invokes the account of Jesus breaking a commandment when he ate on the Sabbath: "Things otherwise unlawful, may be made lawful by Necessity, Matth. xii. 4."

Historically, Locke's ideas mark a profound shift in perspective that disconnects personal consciousness from the security and guarantee of any external authority, divine or earthly. Almost all views on the self and the sense of personal identity prior to John Locke relied upon the presence of an immaterial and immortal soul. Charles Taylor describes Locke's process of thought as revolutionary. As it essentially involves the first-person standpoint, "this model of reason is radically and intransigently exclusive of authority". Locke insists that human knowledge relies upon information from the sensory world. In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), Locke proposes that personal consciousness constitutes identity as a self-reflexive mental function of the physical body. "I suppose," Locke muses, "no body will make Identity of Persons, to consist in the Soul's being united to the very same numerical Particles of matter: For if that be necessary to Identity, 'twill be impossible, in that constant flux of the Particles of our Bodies, that any Man should be the same Person, two days, or two moments together". The problem for many of Locke's opponents was that this barred any meaningful sense of identification of the body with the soul.

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6 Defoe, Serious Reflections, p. 83.
and so threatened the moral order of Christianity that depended upon divine reward and punishment upon resurrection after death. To counter this, Locke needed to show how a person persists through changes, including the change entailed by death.  

Consciousness could unify a person both over a period of time and at any one point in time. Locke drives home this argument in permutations of sub-headings: “Consciousness makes the same person”, “Self depends on consciousness” and “Consciousness alone makes self”. Personal identity as a persistent self-aware consciousness is, however, contingent on the physical organism and so cannot be identified as an indwelling, governing spiritual essence. Perhaps the closest equivalent to any such authority that may direct a person’s life is the faculty of ‘reason’, except that a man may be without ‘reason’ at times, through drunkenness or madness for example, with a consequent loss of accountable identity. 

There is common ground between Locke’s philosophy and the standpoint of Dissenters like Defoe. Gary De Krey points out that the greatest charge Dissenters held against the Restoration church was its attempts to suppress religious liberties. Dissenting spokesmen “hammered out a definition of conscience as a faculty that requires each individual to come to a personal judgement about divine expectations for one’s self”. Thus, Locke’s model of the mind that exercises individual faculties of active reasoning and interpretation aligns with the

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10 Martin and Barresi, *Naturalization of the Soul*, pp. 18, 19.
Dissenters’ political agenda, and both identify with the new science of empiricist knowledge that favours active experimentation, reinforcing production of a modern secular identity even as they might look for God in the operations of Nature.¹³

G. A. Starr has drawn parallels between the genesis of the autobiographical novel and the practices of spiritual autobiography. Each Protestant was supposed to take responsibility for the condition of his or her own soul and the spiritual diary answered the need for such “constant, almost clinical self-analysis”.¹⁴ The inspection of one’s own works was not intended for the examination of one’s own motives and desires but to look for evidence of God’s presence and intervention.¹⁵

Examination of the soul may, however, become as empirical and as scientific as the examination of any other phenomenon. The third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose early education Locke supervised, championed the device of the Socratic philosophical dialogue because the poet’s public character engages with his private character in an exemplary process of thought and communication. Readers who engage with such dialogues, “wou’d acquire a peculiar speculative Habit; so as virtually to carry about with ’em a sort of Pocket-Mirrour [...] we shou’d, by virtue of the double Reflection, distinguish our-selves into two different Partys. And in this Dramatick Method, the Work of Self-Inspection wou’d

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proceed with admirable Success".\textsuperscript{16} The reader uses the book to read himself.\textsuperscript{17}

Such intense self-dialogue and the internalization of an identity may lead to nothing better than seeing one’s own reflection in everything. Jonathan Swift’s \textit{Gulliver’s Travels} satirizes the autobiographical claims of such new fictions as \textit{Robinson Crusoe}, taking authorial solipsism to its logical extreme. Gulliver is at best a liar and at worst a madman who will relate to nothing other than his own fantasies of persecution.\textsuperscript{18} Crusoe, it must be interjected, fully agrees, recommending human conversation, or sociability, “otherwise a Lunatick in \textit{Bedlam} is a compleatly happy Man; he sings in his Hutch”.\textsuperscript{19}

Individual sovereignty was a suspect proposition. Locke sidestepped the fear of solipsism by studiously using such passive phrases as ‘imprinted’ and ‘furnished’ in his empiricist explanation for the development of the brain. This avoids the question of there being any pre-existent, or innate, mental structure or faculty that orders random sensory experiences into meaningful patterns. However, without innate mental structures, the human individual becomes the product of random information that may lead to as many measures for judgement and evaluation as there are people.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} McKeon, \textit{The Secret History of Domesticity}, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{19} Defoe, \textit{Serious Reflections}, p.103.
No more than in Locke can issues of self-understanding in Defoe be separated from high politics. Modern discussions locate the distinct emergence and assumption of a personal and autonomous identity in the great upheaval of political, religious and social hierarchy that culminated in the 1688 ‘Glorious Revolution’. The term, ‘Glorious Revolution’, reflects the Whig historiography of events that celebrates a constitutional shift from Stuart monarchical autocracy to a contractual arrangement between Crown and Parliament. For Michael McKeon, this transference of sovereignty from the crown to a wider body of people “fed the notion that even, perhaps only, the individual was endowed with an absolute authority”. Sovereignty was the central issue for seventeenth and early eighteenth-century England. The Civil War had exposed an irreconcilable split in the nation as the Commons deposed King Charles I and appeared to turn England’s inherited structures of governance upside down. Charles II’s Stuart resumption of the throne in 1660 confirmed an end to the republican experiment, whose government by Commonwealth had already given way to Cromwell’s Protectorate. Charles II worked to reinstall centralised rule along the lines of Charles I’s past or Louis XIV’s present monarchies.

Charles II’s secret Treaty of Dover with Louis XIV (1670) showed a readiness to use a foreign army while the attempts of the king and his son James to rehabilitate Catholicism contributed to growing division between the Court and Country factions in Parliament. This division was the basis for the later Tory and Whig parties, the Whigs

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tending to represent Dissenter and parliamentary interests while the Tories favoured High Church Anglicanism and the royal court. By the end of the second 1675 parliamentary session, the quarrel between Court and Country “inflamed the press, the coffee-houses, and public discourse”. An important and unexpected side effect of Charles II’s 1679 prorogation of Parliament was the temporary lapse of the 1662 Licensing Act as there had been no time for its renewal. This enabled a saturation of “sharp and divisive writing that assisted ordinary people in raising their voices about the numerous issues that confronted the kingdom”. Between parliamentary sessions, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, appealed to the nation with publication of his *Letter from a Person of Quality*, effectively asserting political discourse outside of hierarchical institutions. The wider population was involving itself once again in sovereign decisions.

James II’s drift towards militarist absolutism united Tory and Whig to welcome William of Orange’s invasion in 1688. While he certainly exhibited and expressed greater recognition of his subjects’ rights, William, it must be noted, also rejected the proposal that he should affirm the Whiggish Declaration of Rights prior to coronation because of the contractual implications. Moreover, any wording that suggested William and Mary were replacing James because a King had violated a contract with his subjects was removed. The Convention Parliament enacted the Declaration as the Bill of Rights after William and Mary’s proclamation as monarchs and, however late and grudgingly

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accepted, the Bill did significantly enhance the rights of parliament and subjects, "and it did so in language that would have been unacceptable to all previous monarchs".\(^{24}\) Once obedient and subordinate to the Crown as 'subject', the subject increasingly assumed power as an autonomous, even sovereign agent.

Sovereignty and power, as McKeon argues, dispersed beyond and below traditional elite power structures. The main participants and beneficiaries of the 1688 Revolution were the landed gentry whose interest lay mainly in preserving property and privilege against royal autocracy. This interest may have taken form as nostalgia for classical Roman republican virtues, or for ancient rights of the Gothic freeholder as J. G. A. Pocock has described in his study, *The Machiavellian Moment*. This perspective looked backwards to history for its justification. A common modern narrative for early eighteenth-century England, however, depicts increasing ambivalence in social attitudes as city merchants, speculators and financiers challenged and destabilized inherited, landed authority. Professions such as the law and accounting, banking and investment did not depend upon status by birth but enabled independent means through individual application.\(^{25}\) Lands may fail and property be broken up but mobile skills will always provide employment.\(^{26}\) Economic autonomy reduces the power of external hierarchical authority.

\(^{24}\) De Krey, *Restoration and Revolution in Britain*, p. 264.
Ideas of a modern, independent individual occurred more readily within the context of the institutions for a credit economy that emerged towards the end of the seventeenth century. In order to help fund his war against Louis XIV, William III reduced reliance on land taxation and turned to private investment. Merchants supplied over a million pounds and established the Bank of England to manage the funds, instituting the National Debt. The Bank was granted the right to receive money from the public and to lend out money at interest. Credit and money are mobile and can transform material property, including inherited land, into speculative goods. Stocks, funds and credit look to the future rather than to the past, promoting expectations, projecting images to attract speculative investment. Credit expanded international trade, introducing still more mobility with increased wealth, wider access to luxury goods, and rapid and unpredictable fluctuations in social status. Colin Nicholson describes how “self-hood and personality were now increasingly identified through the tactics and strategies of exchange, while stock markets encouraged fantastic self-projections that for some visibly materialised in the insignia of wealth”. Other commentators have also seen the influence of the new financial instruments on fashion, disguise and deception as a market for trading consumer fictions.

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Crusoe’s father recommends Robinson to make the most of his prospects in “the middle Station of Life”.

Jürgen Habermas has argued influentially that this ‘bourgeois’ social stratum, comprising the new ‘capitalists’ of manufacturer, merchant, banker and entrepreneur, was the cradle for the private individual. Engaged in international systems of trade and intelligence on trade, this mercurial individual learned to exert public power through the technology of print. At the same time, Habermas emphasizes the importance of private diaries and letters in the formation of subjectivity, enshrining separate spheres for communications within the conjugal, intimate family and the discourse of the public sphere for business and political power.

Lorna Weatherill observes that, by 1700, London accounted for half of the English urban population and that the stress of closer living created, “a greater desire to look inwardly to the living space”. Higher ownership of luxury goods is witness to people’s care and attention for this space. Wetherill refers, of course, to the physical space within the house but there is also the suggestion of a retreat into a parallel interior, psychological space of private imagination.

Against this picture of the emergence of an interiorized personal identity, Dror Wahrman argues that eighteenth-century intellectual debate moved from the study of the essence of a self to a relational self. According to this interpretation, ‘identity’ meant ‘identicality’ which

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“implied looking outward, toward what one shared with others, rather than inward, at one’s quintessence”. This would accord with views of ‘coffee-house’ culture as an arena for sociable civility and conversation. Wolfram Schmidgen similarly opens personal identity beyond the sphere of private self-reflection when he discusses the reliance of Locke’s political and epistemological philosophy on concepts of ‘mixture’ and ‘appropriation’. Crusoe, and by extension the propertied classes which are Locke’s beneficiaries for political liberties, expands ownership over and identification with his island by his investment of labour. Conversely, Crusoe fears the cannibal whose footprint upon his island threatens his physical integrity. The private, individualized self becomes watchful and wary of others in a world of competitive individuals.

The individual acts according to its relationships with others and adjusts accordingly. This opens divergence between the public and the private, the presented and hidden identities, and confirms that there can be no core or essentialist identity. Instead of agency, Richetti believes that Defoe’s characters illustrate “defensive participation within [society] as a series of discrete and essentially discontinuous moments”. Habermas’s vision of a rational and open public discourse presupposes a shared understanding of terms of reference. However,

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Anne Barron’s reading of Lyotard points out that the social self fears exposure and destabilization by being different, and the individual finds identity by becoming like others. Others, of course, engage in the same process and the “social bond is therefore composed, not of the exchanges of free-standing, self-possessed individuals, but of the ‘moves’ within a multiplicity of language games, which, because innumerable, unstable and interlocking, produce a plurality of identities”. This is beginning to sound like Defoe’s production of multiple, irrepressible personae and fictionalized characters.

Habermas’s portrait of the emergence of a public sphere in the early eighteenth century that facilitated rational Enlightenment discussion was restricted to a relatively small, if politically influential, body of people. Political reduction of sovereign authority and accompanying disturbance of traditional hierarchies, however, contributed to wider social insubordination. As Roy Porter puts it rather more colourfully, “having bid absolutism good riddance at the Glorious Revolution, enlightened élites were confronted with a truculent populace”. Richetti believes that eighteenth-century novels “render a bargaining for identity and authority which is at the heart of the profound changes in consciousness taking place in those years”. Loss of any overarching authority, whether as king or other hegemonic narrative, encourages fragmentation and the “proliferation of new forms of subjectivity”, subjectivities that asserted their existence against

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38 Richetti, The English Novel in History, p. 15.
devaluation by the dominant political culture. Women, the poor and the dispossessed became a focus for textual attention. They also “became subjects as well as objects of representation and could give their own reasons and meanings to events”. Famous criminals like Jack Sheppard, for instance, professed the desire, at the point of execution, to tell their own story and not have it told for them.

Defoe’s criminal narratives display two kinds of truth, as outward events and as inward expression. This once again exploits a slippage between external and internal, or public and private versions of identity. Bernard Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees: or, private vices, publick benefit* (1714) rationalises individual behaviour as market-led. Well-bred concealment masks exchange so that, as Nicholson describes, “Wheeling and dealing find sociable forms as polite hospitality is conscripted in the service of confidence-trickery and mutual deception”. Mandeville praised the new social mobility in which men may rise above their actual station by dressing as gentlemen. In the expanding population of London especially, strangers would esteem such disguises as reality.

Defoe was infamous for acting out roles. One hostile contemporary branded him as “An Animal who shifts his Shape oftner then Proteus, and goes backwards and forwards like a Hunted Hare; a thorough-pac’d, true-bred Hypocrite, an High-Church Man one Day, and

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41 Ibid., p. 121.
a *Rank Whig* the next". After arrival in Edinburgh in 1706 as a secret agent to assess Scotland’s readiness for the Act of Union, Defoe reported to his employer, Robert Harley:

> I talk to Everybody in Their own way. To the Merchants I am about to Settle here in Trade, Building Ships & c. With the Lawyers I want to purchase a House and Land to bring my family & live Upon it [. . .] I am all to Every one that I may Gain some.

The new kind of economic individualist depends upon credit or reputation but these are “subject to fictions constructed by others”. Crusoe escapes his island after a mutiny brings an English ship to his shore. He uses disguise and subterfuge to rescue the captain and directs a counter-attack on the mutineers. Under cover of darkness, the captain threatens the rebels with talk of the island’s ‘Governor’ and the Governor’s army. Crusoe stays out of sight “for Reasons of State” and lets the captain use the title as a threat, “though this was all a Fiction of his own, yet it had its desired Effect”. Neither words nor identities are vehicles for truth but instruments that fashion new and different versions of reality.

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43 *JUDAS Discover’d, and Catch’d at last: Or, Daniel de Foe in Lobs Pound* (London, 1713), p. 3.
The lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 led to a rapid proliferation in printed texts. Publication increased from about 6,000 titles in the 1620s to almost 21,000 in the 1710s.\textsuperscript{47} Literacy expanded as abridged, pirated versions became available. In Charles Gildon's parody of *Robinson Crusoe*, 'D — I' reminds Crusoe that, "I have made you, out of nothing, fam'd from *Tuttle-Street* to *Limehouse-hole*; there is not an old Woman that can go the Price of it, but buys thy Life and Adventures".\textsuperscript{48} Mandeville's multiple identities of the modern economic person become even more fugitive between the covers of a book. As Robert Phiddian notes, in "the anonymous medium of print, authority can seem to come from the circumstantial plausibility of the narrator, but it is only a trick of language and technology [...] 'I am telling you [...] is no grounds for trust in communication".\textsuperscript{49} A Portuguese pilot admires Crusoe's ability to alter others' perceptions with his ability to talk "in Colours [...] Why, you speak what looks white *this Way*, and black *that Way*".\textsuperscript{50} Furbank and Owens argue that Defoe's fascination with people's credulity is an important part of what makes attribution and interpretation of his works so difficult.\textsuperscript{51} In his persona as a French agent, Monsieur Mesnager, Defoe confides, "Certainly there is not a Nation in the World like *England*, for imposing on the People with false Rumours, nor a People easier to be imposed on, even by things which

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{47} Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 73.
\end{flushright}
have not the least probability, and indeed by some that are scarce
Rational".  

Robert Mayer argues that Defoe ought to be taken at his word
that his ‘novels’ are ‘histories’, pointing out that ‘histories’
conventionally used fiction as a device to reinforce their narratives.
Mayer also, however, recognizes that fiction becomes the novel essence
of Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe’s consciousness as observer overtakes the
importance of what he observes. This confronted readers with the
realization that they were not in fact reading a history, a moment “during
which the horizon of expectations definitively shifted”. Such a
statement involves a degree of hindsight, common in most studies and
probably inescapable, that presumes a progressive shift from readers’
previous expectations of literal, if embellished facts to a modern
understanding and appreciation of creative fiction. It is inarguable
though that readers’ belief in the authority of the printed word did
encourage authorial experimentation with truth-expectations. Mary
Poovey agrees that Defoe resisted separating fact from fiction because of
a fascination with how the technology of print could generate belief, but
she also connects literary fiction with the new world of credit. Paper bills
and promissory notes generated economic abstractions “which could
claim to be simultaneously true and not to be referential”. This echoes

52 Defoe, Minutes of the Negotiations of Monsr. Mesnager (1717), ed. P. N. Furbank,
Satire, Fantasy and Writings on the Supernatural by Daniel Defoe, Vol. 4, ed. W. R.
53 Robert Mayer, History and the early English novel: Matters of fact from Bacon to
54 Lisa Zunshine, “Eighteenth-Century Print Culture and the ‘Truth’ of Fictional
55 Poovey, Genres of the Credit Economy, p. 89.
Crusoe's affirmation that his "Story, though Allegorical, is also Historical". Srinivas Aravamudan observes that in the end of Captain Singleton, "the narrator vanishes into thin air, indeed into a rarefied 'Air-Money', Defoe's favorite alchemical trope for finances or accounts that escape the cognitive grasp of moving fingers and outstretched hands".

Defoe has a very large and unstable canon of works ascribed to him as a result of anonymity at the time of publication and because of his range of assumed personae. Scholarly assessments have ranged from over 570 canonical items listed by John Robert Moore in his second edition of his Checklist (1971) down to about 270, including 'probabilities' after de-attributions by W. R. Owens and P. N. Furbank (1998). The texts chosen for the thesis represent a cross-section of genres in Defoe's well-established publications that address the argument for a chronological development of first-person narrative and fictional subjectivity. Categorical instabilities that flow from political, commercial and cultural changes reformulate the identity or sense of self. Individuals set themselves against traditional considerations. Defoe's narratives detect and explore a widening disjunction between self-identification as a secular, rationalist or as a religious, inspired consciousness. This thesis addresses aspects of political, social and personal identity through a variety of literary genres that include state

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56 Defoe, Serious Reflections, p. 51.
satire, didactic literature and first-person history. Chapter One, "The True-Born Englishman: The Construction of a Persona", addresses Defoe’s construction and deconstruction of public and national identity in verse satire. Originally published to defend the authority of the Dutch-born King, William III, against xenophobic attacks, The True-Born Englishman (1700/01), first brought Defoe’s name to widespread attention and established an image that he continued to exploit through the rest of his public career. Chapter Two, "The Family Instructor: One-sided dialogue", engages with two volumes of Defoe’s religious conduct literature (1715; 1718). Defoe’s dramatized scenes of family life highlight tensions between public and private life and the disjunctions between internal beliefs and external behaviour. Chapter Three, "Robinson Crusoe: Spoken by an Other", addresses Defoe’s most successful work which was his first to offer an account of an individualised identity as it attempts to separate and distinguish itself from external authority. Crusoe’s autobiography offers a detailed model for how any person, living or imaginative, is the organizing reader, interpreter and author of his own narrative. Chapter Four, "Captain Singleton: Incommensurable Exchanges", analyses Defoe’s fiction of adventure and piracy that confronts the moral implications and practical disruptions of social and global mobility. Captain Singleton (1720) is the autobiography of a man kidnapped as a child from a middle-class English family and transplanted into a criminal environment. Trade and exchange, theft and exploitation, drive the events; exchange and disguise characterize its plot of identity. Chapter Five, "Questionable identities:
"Moll Flanders and Roxana" (1721; 1724), emphasizes gender as an element in the social construction of public identity and in the fragmentation and disintegration of private identity. Self-reliant, Moll becomes a prisoner of her own fictions; dependant upon show and display, Roxana’s narrative and identity disintegrate under scrutiny.

This thesis will honour Defoe’s refusal to accept restrictive and binary terms of fact and fiction and does not treat his writing as an ambiguous transition from one settled understanding to another. The thesis emphasizes ‘textual’ elements primarily as a study of how individuals such as Robinson Crusoe, Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders and Roxana communicate a modern construction of personal identity. The discussion will approach Defoe’s representations of personal identity as textual simulacra for the real or illusory, agreed or delusional, experiences of early eighteenth-century subjectivities. Defoe’s texts unfold the possibilities, deceptions and disturbances in the image of an ‘individual self’ when thoughts of such an atomistic, disconnected consciousness were neither yet normal nor necessarily welcome.
Chapter 1

"The True-Born Englishman": The Construction of a Persona

Daniel Defoe published his satire, The True-Born Englishman (1700/01), to counter rising hostility to England’s Dutch-born King William III, a political hostility occasioned not only by William’s foreign birth but also by his desire to maintain a standing army. Though anonymous, The True-Born Englishman brought Defoe’s name to widespread public attention and though topical, it was to become the most frequently reprinted poem of the early eighteenth century, achieving fifty editions by 1750.\(^1\) It established his literary authority and added to his reputation or self-portrayal as, “one of the most embattled public figures in history”.\(^2\) The chosen genre of state satire signalled Defoe’s engagement in the political cockpit of public print, lately energized by the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 and consequent absence of official pre-publication censorship. Most immediately, the poem rehearses versions of national identity, taking a long historical view and an incisive satiric perspective to expose their fictional bases. Questions of authority are crucial to Defoe’s argument, both for the king and for the poet. Defoe’s literary persona shadows and intertwines with royal authority, shifting focus from the king to the poet. Such a rhetorical strategy may appear to illustrate and support an argument for the cultural

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and constitutional switch from an external, superior, symbolic authority towards an independent, individualized agency. However, *The True-Born Englishman*’s inversions, parody and other patterns for satirical reflection undermine and destabilize elevation of any public image, whether that of king or poet.

In the preface to his second edition of collected works, Defoe records that nine authorized editions of the satire were published within the first five years of first appearance. He also complains that 80,000 unauthorized and inferior additional copies, along with a dozen pirated editions, deprived him of at least £1,000 in earnings.³ Despite such obvious popular appeal, however, the critical view of Defoe has been as, at best, a competent poet whose verse is of political and cultural rather than of literary or aesthetic interest. Although one of the most widely read of poets between the death of Dryden and the emergence of Pope, Defoe does not tend to feature in anthologies or studies of eighteenth-century poetry, as attested by Andreas Mueller, the exception to the rule who does pay Defoe’s poetry serious and detailed consideration.⁴

Defoe’s early biographer, Walter Wilson (1781-1847), attributed contemporary appreciation to “the excitement of the times, and the temporary nature of his subjects”. Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) delivered the laconic verdict that “De Foe, in truth, was little enough of a poet”.⁵

Modern critical biographies have rehabilitated Defoe’s verse within the

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context of literary practices and standards of the period but, necessarily in works that discuss the whole of Defoe’s life and literary output, *The True-Born Englishman* receives only a brief overview.\(^6\) Even those, however, who incline to minimise Defoe’s skill in verse, regard *The True-Born Englishman* as the success that does bear literary as well as historicist analysis.\(^7\) Mueller’s book-length study, on the other hand, refreshingly and unashamedly champions Defoe’s poetic accomplishments. Concentrating a substantial part of his discussion upon *The True-Born Englishman*, Mueller analyses the poem as a formal, classical satire and discusses its role in Defoe’s campaign for a modern and professional national army.\(^8\) While this chapter draws upon discussion of *The True-Born Englishman* involving political and constitutional matters, its focus is on *The True-Born Englishman* as an early, even foundational, example of Defoe’s literary construction of personal identity as public property.

In *An Appeal to Honour and Justice, tho’ it be of his Worst Enemies* (1715), Defoe states that *The True-Born Englishman*, “was the Occasion of my being known to his Majesty; how I was afterwards receiv’d by him; how Employ’d; and how, above my Capacity of deserving, Rewarded”.\(^9\) He published this testimony in 1715, thirteen years after William’s death. Scholars disagree as to when, exactly,

Daniel Defoe came under William III’s patronage, if ever. In 1971, John Robert Moore argued that Defoe had acted as the king’s covert spokesman and intelligence agent from as early as 1692. In 1981, Frank Bastian suggested that Defoe had had his first audience with William in Holland in August or September 1700. Contrariwise and more recently, Philip Furbank and W. R. Owens have proposed that in 1703, when in prison for writing *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* and under pressure from the Earl of Nottingham’s interrogation, Defoe invented a retrospective and self-protective relationship with William that he continued to exploit and elaborate for the rest of his career.

Critics, both past and present, have suspected that Defoe’s claims to defend the King scarcely conceal Defoe’s ambitions for self-promotion.

The immediate background to *The True-Born Englishman* lay in a struggle for executive power between William III and the English House of Commons. The majority of Members of Parliament represented the interests of country landowners who expected that the Treaty of Ryswick of 1697, formally ending war with France, should reduce William’s need for land tax. The king, however, wished to retain a military force, a standing army, powerful enough to deter or contain any resumption in Louis XIV’s ambitions. In 1698, the Commons voted to reduce William’s troops from nearly 66,000 to 7,000. In 1699, a Parliamentary Commission found that forfeited estates of the Jacobite rebels in Ireland did not fund William’s Irish campaign, as anticipated.

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but were redistributed as gifts to his foreign-born favorites in Court. In August 1700, while William was absent abroad and seriously considering abdication, John Tutchin, a Whig radical with republican inclinations, capitalized on the atmosphere of public resentment by publishing his xenophobic satire, *The Foreigners*. Defoe claimed later that ‘Shamwhig’ Tutchin’s poem drove him, in a fit of rage, to publish *The True-Born Englishman*.\(^{13}\)

Since the 1680s, satire had become increasingly associated with ideas of party and party division, concepts that Harold Love believes “it assisted in clarifying”.\(^{14}\) Whig and Tory were first exchanged as pejorative labels during the 1680-81 parliamentary sessions. Whigs referred to radical and rebellious Covenanters of south-west Scotland, notorious for resisting religious and national authority, while Tories referenced Irish Catholic rebels, vilified for terrorizing Protestants in Ireland during the 1640s.\(^{15}\) By the 1690s, state satire had become a common vehicle for public disputation and appeared to legitimize and demonstrate a belief that almost anybody, any private person with literary inclinations, felt entitled to pass public judgment on state affairs.\(^{16}\)

*The Foreigners* attacks William and his Dutch entourage of advisors and soldiers as foreign occupiers who threaten national identity.

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\(^{13}\) Defoe, *An Appeal to Honour and Justice*, p. 6.


Tutchin's satire draws on John Dryden and John Milton, earlier poetic champions for the Commonwealth republican and Stuart royalist camps respectively, to lend weight to his assault. John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) was probably the most famous and influential of recent political satires, published in support of Charles II against the succession claims of his illegitimate but Protestant son, James, the Duke of Monmouth. The poem displaces current events into Old Testament history, avoiding direct and dangerous political commentary. Based on a biblical passage from II Samuel, the satire draws parallels between the modern English and the Ancient Israelites, casting Charles as King David and Monmouth as his son Absalom. It warns against evil, duplicitous counsellors such as the biblical Achitophel, supposed to represent Monmouth's advisor, Lord Shaftesbury. Dryden published *Absalom and Achitophel* to coincide with Shaftesbury's trial for treason.\(^\text{17}\)

Tutchin similarly sets current affairs in Biblical times so that William can be figured as a rescuing Gibeonite prince who successfully deposes and takes the place of a native-born Jewish tyrant. He also, however, brings with him an unwelcome body of compatriot counselors: "A Boorish, rude, and an inhumane Race; / From Nature's Excrement their Life is drawn" (*The Foreigners*, 82–83). In populist vein, Tutchin goes on to mock the way that Dutch courtiers spoke English—"Their untun'd Prattle does our Sense confound" (147) —and then renders their tongue twisted and sinister: "The self-same Language the old Serpent

\(^{17}\)De Krey, *Restoration and revolution*, p. 190.
spoke, / When misbelieving Eve the Apple took” (149–50). In this way, Tutchin both adapts and bypasses Dryden’s literary and royalist authority to link up with *Paradise Lost* and claim mythological association with his fellow republican, John Milton.

*The Foreigners* draws on two political and cultural strands that ran throughout the seventeenth century: the rights and privileges of the landowning gentry as represented in the House of Commons, and trade rivalry between England and the United Provinces. Charles I’s tax on landowners to fund naval military strength, known as Ship Tax, and John Hampden’s refusal to pay, accelerated the outbreak of the Civil War as parliamentarian gentry defended what they regarded as their ancient and traditional liberties against absolutist monarchy. In a separate development, London mercantile interests, meanwhile, grew as fearful and as exercised by the United Provinces’ pre-eminence in global trade. The Dutch dominated the Caribbean sugar trade, the importation of silks and spices from India and South-East Asia, and were expanding colonial possessions in the Americas and Africa. The Commonwealth waged the first Anglo-Dutch War (1652-54) because of trade rivalry spiced with some republican animosity for the quasi-royal House of Orange. Charles II entered the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-67) avowedly for the same reasons of trade but with fresh enthusiasm from Anglican Royalists, who despised the United Provinces as a sanctuary for former Commonwealth leaders, conspirators like Shaftesbury, and intellectual defenders of revolution like Shaftesbury’s secretary, John Locke. At the same time, Charles’ build-up of 10,000 troops near London in readiness
for the Dutch war confirmed fears of the landed gentry or ‘Country’ MPs that Charles planned military force to reinstate a government of Stuart absolutism. After the 1685 Monmouth Rebellion, James II strengthened such suspicions when he almost doubled the army to 20,000.18

The Heads of Grievances document that informed the Declaration of Rights, presented to William and Mary of Orange in 1689, included a denial of any crown prerogative to maintain an army without parliamentary authorization. The demands of William’s Nine Years’ War meant that he summoned annual sessions of parliament as much for raising necessary revenue as because of any requirements in the Bill of Rights. James’ government had cost £2 million a year; William spent nearly £50 million between 1689 and 1697, three-quarters of it on war. The size of the military and civil establishments that this created worried Country MPs. In 1692-93, 130 MPs depended upon ministerial favour for retention of their offices and Whigs led attacks on these royal placemen. This position became complicated as the Whig Junto, governing from 1694 to 1699, became part of the growing military and civil bureaucracy.19 Whigs split between Old or Country Whigs, with traditional landed interests, and Court or City Whigs, with financial interests in foreign trade, a rift that informs the satires of John Tutchin and Daniel Defoe as representative of Country and Court Whig positions.20

Perhaps in view of such an entanglement of national sensitivities and party loyalties, The True-Born Englishman’s narrator wonders

18 De Krey, Restoration and revolution , pp. 48, 193, 149, 115, 217.
19 De Krey, Restoration and revolution, pp. 262, 268, 269.
20 Novak, Master of Fictions, p. 150.
rhetorically, "Who shall this Bubbl'd Nation disabuse". He acknowledges satire as the correct and authoritative vehicle for poetic remedy: "Search, Satyr, search, a deep Incision make; / The Poyson's strong, the Antidote's too weak" (37–38). The surgeon's blade enters the body _in extremis_ just as William's military invasion excised a tyrannical king from a sick body politic. In addition, the image of satire as a surgeon's blade aligns the poem and poet with William's executive power as national redeemer. William alone can heal the nation, and only satire may anatomize and purge the poisoned political body: "'Tis pointed Truth must manage this Dispute, / And down-right English _Englishmen_ confute" (39–40). In other words, _The True-Born Englishman_ will turn the true-born Englishman's speech back on the true-born Englishman.

The phrase 'true-born Englishman' conveyed the xenophobic thrust of the campaign against William III's government. If Tutchin attacks William and his allies as foreigners, Defoe turns the argument to attack the concept of Englishmen as pure-bred natives. Defoe later claimed that his satire ended the widespread use of the phrase "true-born Englishman." At first sight, or upon first hearing, the poem's title would appear to herald the robust celebration of a recognizably admirable figure, English to the heartwood. Instead, the satire deconstructs such an image, reducing nationalist exclusivity to absurdity, recapitulating English history as a narrative of invasion, rape, and occupation. As a consequence, and countering Tutchin's excremental

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21 Defoe, _The True-Born Englishman, A Satyr_ (1700/01) in _Poetry_, l. 27. Future references to this edition will be made parenthetically by line number.
22 Defoe, "Preface by the Author" in _Poetry_, p. 119.
slur on the Dutch, England is "Europe's Sink, the Jakes" (249). Any pride that the 'True-Born Englishman' boasts of is a mere literary and self-deluding sleight-of-hand, "A Metaphor invented to express / A man a-kin to all the Universe" (376). In the preface to the ninth edition, which appeared within the first twelve months of original publication, Defoe mocks the concept of a separate and inviolable identity, inviting the reader to participate in their own transformations over time: "what they are today, we were yesterday, and to morrow they will be like us".23 English hybridity, "Deriv'd from all the Nations under Heav'n" (174), is neither an amalgam nor a seamless fusion of identities. A slippery, protean condition resists final settlement and definition.

The satire first recounts a history of serial conquest and then demonstrates how successive settlers mutate into Englishmen. King Alfred's Angles won military command of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy and imposed the name of England (357). William the Conqueror legitimized his creation of aristocracy with the Domesday Book. Frenchmen become Englishmen by dint of the sword, and devilish linguistic trickery rewrites a "military" action as "civil" (232). English national identity has always been a speech-act enforced by the sword. It is "in Fact a Fiction" (373). Henry V's reign oversaw an influx of exiles. They acclimatized, realizing their English title when they condemned the rest of the world as foreign. Queen Elizabeth welcomed 100,000 economic, criminal and religious refugees who united to denounce the Scots when they travelled south with James VI. The first history

23 Defoe, "Explanatory Preface", in Poetry, p. 80.
chronicles the serial advent of different nations; the second describes migration from one identity into another, as the King of Scotland, James VI, became the English King James I, or just as now, as it ought to go without saying, a Dutch Prince of Orange becomes an English King, William III.

Foreign blood intermingles with English blood while “Customs, Surnames, Languages and Manners” express the true constitution of “Your Roman-Saxon-Danish-Norman English” (189, 194). The ‘True-Born Englishman’ is a self-deceptive, literary sleight-of-hand, “A Metaphor invented to express/A man a-kin to all the Universe” (376). Defoe mimics this wandering recombination of genetic code as ‘sowre’ mutates into ‘worse’ within the lines, “The Pict has made ’em Sowre, the Dane Morose; / False from the Scot, and from the Norman worse” (435-36). Certainly, William was seen by many as ‘sowre’ and possibly even ‘worse’. He aggravated public suspicions with a reserved, even frosty, demeanour, and alienated supporters with high-handed, politically inept actions. For example, soon after his triumphant arrival in London but before he was crowned, he ordered English troops to defend the borders of the United Provinces.24 Throughout his reign he was often absent from the country, leading military expeditions on Continental Europe. Jacobites and other critics could easily represent him as the Dutch ruler who taxed English men to fight Dutch wars. Defoe’s satire counters this negative image through reversal and inversion and, of course, there is no better way to deal with opponents than to demonize them. The True-

Born Englishman casts opposition to the king as rebellious and unnatural, and part of a struggle with sources far deeper than any party politics:

Whereever God erects a House of Prayer,
The Devil always builds a Chappel there:
And' twill be found upon Examination
The latter has the largest Congregation:
For ever since he first debauch'd the Mind,
He made a perfect Conquest of Mankind.
With Uniformity of Service, he
Reigns with a general Aristocracy.
No Nonconforming Sects disturb his Reign,
*For of his Yoak there's very few complain.*
He knows the Genius and the Inclination,
And matches proper Sins for ev'ry Nation.
He needs no Standing-Army Government;
*He always rules us by our own Consent:*
His Laws are easy, and his gentle Sway
Makes it exceeding pleasant to obey. (56-71)

Secure in the knowledge that both Tory and Whig originally greeted William's invasion of the nation as unifying, Defoe's portrait of the fallen angel echoes and distorts the fallen Stuart administration. Satan's supporters are aristocratic, while acts of apparent toleration mean that there is no Dissent. Satan requires no standing army and so no
landowner pays tax. Heroic couplet, parodying its own form, illustrates how the Devil mimics, rivals and empties God’s House of Prayer. The line, “His Laws are easy, and his gentle Sway”, leads into the lightly tripping jingle, “Makes it exceeding pleasant to obey” (70-71).

Predictable rhythm and chiming rhyme soothe the ear and dull critical faculties while the final vowels induce an artificial, involuntary smile. Seduced within his freely bestowed estate, humanity lays open for the Devil to “plant Infernal Dictates in his Mind” (81). The parody of past and present issues merges High Church Jacobite with Country Whig as deluded followers of Satan, the archetypal rebel and traitor. Defoe reclaims Milton from Tutchin and ensures that the reader knows which political faction is of the devil’s party.

The Triennial Act of December 1694 and the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 came into effect at almost the same time. As Alan Downie points out, an immediate connection became apparent between the fevered increase in electioneering and the rise of a largely unregulated political press. John Hampden, grandson of the John Hampden of Ship Money fame, urged country gentlemen to unite around the rights of liberty and property. John Trenchard and Walter Moyle took up the parliamentarian challenge with the pamphlet, An Argument Shewing, that a Standing Army is inconsistent with a Free Government, and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy (1697). William’s authority came under pressure as Country Whigs joined with Country and High Church Tories to form a sizeable

opposition. Robert Harley, a moderate Tory who was once part of the Court administration, gave tacit approval to placing extra-parliamentary pressure on candidates to oppose William’s standing army. Writing pamphlets appeared to be the only way to inspire and inform opposition outside of the House. Harley also realised the value of coordinating parliamentary and press activity. Meetings of Country Whigs at the Grecian coffeehouse in Devereux Street evolved campaigns so that opposition pamphlets paved the way or reinforced the parliamentary activities of Country Members. Harley fed appropriate materials to Trenchard, while Members of Parliament quoted directly from pamphlets. Defoe observed sardonically that Trenchard’s *Second Part of an Argument* and Fletcher’s *Discourse Concerning Militias and Standing Armies* “seem to me to be wrote by the same Hand”. William, however, was also experienced in the art of public persuasion. Before landing in England, for example, he had been in contact with printers and publishers and set into motion an effective propaganda drive to legitimize his invasion force. Despite most analyses that emphasize the domination of parliamentary legislators after 1688, the royal court shaped the events of the 1690s through an impressive publicity campaign. Leading supporters included Defoe as the Court’s voice outside of parliament. Defoe claimed that *The True-Born Englishman* was intended to defend the king against those “who

Print Scurrilous Pamphlets, virulent Lampoons, and reproachful Public Banters". At least one of his contemporaries, however, complained that Defoe was responsible for generating his own flood of propaganda for King William’s cause. His first essay to defend William, Reflections Upon the Late Great Revolution, had appeared on 9 April 1689. It is likely that Court Whigs paid Defoe for at least some of his contributions. These included the pro-army pamphlets: Some Reflections on a Pamphlet lately Publish’d, Entitul’d, An Argument Shewing that a Standing Army Is Inconsistent with a Free Government, and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy (London, 1697); An Argument, Shewing, that a Standing Army, with Consent of Parliament, is not Inconsistent with A Free Government, etc. (London, 1698); A Brief Reply to the History of Standing Armies in England (London, 1698).

The True-Born Englishman’s “Introduction” projects a magisterial, balanced and disinterested voice:

The Grand Contention’s plainly to be seen,

To get some men put out, and some men in

(13-14)

The poem would raise King William above the political squabble and, for this reason, might wish to deflect attention from its author as a distraction. Defoe claims that he later issued The True Collection of the Writings of the Author of the True-Born Englishman to counter an earlier

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31 Novak, Master of Fictions, p. 159.
pirated collection. Yet even here, he withholds his name from the title, presenting himself as ‘the Author’ of his most well known work. In this case, he may have hoped to capitalise on the reputation of the satire that attracted fame and delivered high sales. At the same time, persistent anonymity may suggest that an author hopes to focus attention on the work itself and away from any personal or literary reputation. However, another motive for authorial anonymity was to ensure publicity as people discussed who might be responsible for the latest scandalous satire or pamphlet. In 1700, London’s population numbered about 500,000 and its concentrated reading and writing body was well versed in searching out an author’s hand. As The True-Born Englishman’s popularity became apparent, William’s political opponents would have become increasingly interested in its author’s identity.

Pamphlet warfare and appeals to public opinion may have become a common political discourse of the 1680s and 1690s but the passions invoked threatened to reopen Civil War divisions. In this atmosphere, politicised readers searched for the Commonwealth or Jacobite ideas that they suspected lurked within opponents’ language. Discovered and decoded, these would cast their authors’ work beyond the respectability of any rational consideration and engagement. Paradoxically, knowledge of the author’s identity becomes crucial to any evaluation of a text. An author could have a work printed at his or her own expense and issued through a bookseller, using an imprint designed

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34 Downie, Robert Harley and the press, p. 33.
to keep authorial identity disguised. By the terms of the 1662 Licensing Act and, when that lapsed, the 1681 ordinance of the Stationers’ Company, every printed item had to bear the name of the printer or of the bookseller. During the eighteenth century, the printer’s name was rarely supplied. Instead, a common phrase such as, “printed for A, and sold by B”, were collapsed into the same printer and bookseller and identified as the ‘publisher’, B. The publisher, however, does not own the copyright and is not necessarily an item’s printer, nor even know the identity of its author.36

Anonymity for satires and pamphlets was common practice in the literary battleground of the 1690s, sometimes for protection from State prosecution and sometimes for protection from personal violence.37 New freedom to print made publications difficult to control but publishers could still be arrested and interrogated if they tried to preserve the author’s anonymity.38 Defoe alludes to this danger when he talks of his printer being, “Newspaper’d into Gaol”.39 George Chalmers limited his first list of Defoe’s works in 1785 almost entirely to Defoe’s own selection in the True Collection of the Writings of the Author of the True-Born Englishman (1703) because Defoe almost always used the mask of anonymity for his work.40

38 Mullan, Anonymity, p. 173.
40 Novak, Master of Fictions, p. 3.
William Pittis, Tory critic, was one of a number of London pamphleteers who made a career out of attacking Defoe. However, while he questioned the status of *The True-Born Englishman*’s author as a poet and a thinker, he could not identify the individual responsible. In *The true-born Englishman: a satyr, answer’d, paragraph by paragraph*, Pittis names “Captain Darby” as the printer, “if common Discourse be not False”. John Darby often attracted official scrutiny for the production and dissemination of republican and Dissenter works. Mueller remarks that if Pittis was correct, that Defoe should place his satire amongst a range of radical Whig and anti-army publications adds “a deliberate piece of piquancy to Defoe’s attack on the Country opposition”.

Long before *The True-Born Englishman*, Defoe engaged in countering Country propaganda against William, much of it published by Darby. Defoe’s *A Modest Vindication of Oliver Cromwell* (1698), for example, was not so much a defence of the regicide dictator as a reply to antimonarchical sentiments recently aired in *The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow* (1698). This particular edition afforded historical depth to the hostility against standing armies but, according to one historian, distorted the original text to this purpose. Edited by John Toland, the republican and deist’s gloss ensured that Ludlow acquired the image of a

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46 Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, p. 54.
modern, secular country gentleman. Defending landowners' native liberties, Ludlow first fought against the tyranny of King Charles I and then defied the dictatorship of Lord Protector Cromwell. In such a guise, the respected soldier and Commonwealth Parliamentarian embodies the best of modern landed virtues and sets a precedent for resistance to William’s standing army. If Country Whigs recruit a national dead hero to their cause, Defoe seems to be equally provocative when he places his Williamite and royalist counter-attack amongst their republican canon.

In 1688, William invaded England by invitation, James II fled to France, and a Convention Parliament gave legislative confirmation to William’s assumption of the throne. At least, that is one version of events. The words ‘invaded’ and ‘invitation’ indicate the kind of terminological confusion, misdirection or outright paradox that The True-Born Englishman’s narrator calls upon Satyr to clarify. Not everybody, however, might welcome such clarification. The Convention Parliament had attempted to avoid political polarisation because any agreement on William’s status, and by extension any hope for national stability, depended on the support of both Tories and Whigs. Such euphemistic concepts as a ‘vacant’ throne emerged during the debate, as did also the concept that William would hold the throne in trust for the nation. Another suggestion was that this regency would devolve on William’s Stuart and Anglican wife, Mary, the daughter of the king who had performed his constitutional vanishing act. James’s flight to France further complicated constitutional deliberations, since only a parliament decreed by a reigning monarch could hold legal status. Indeed, when he
fled London, James tossed the Great Seal of England into the Thames, thereby hoping to prevent its use for authorizing future parliaments, preempting government and strengthening his position for a return on his own terms.\(^47\) No reigning monarch summoned the Convention Parliament and so, arguably, it had no legislative power.\(^48\) However euphemistically worded, the eventual compromise of the Revolution Settlement exchanged a hereditary for an elective monarchy. This could satisfy neither William, who needed the executive authority of a royal commander to prosecute war against Louis XIV, nor would it ease the conscience of loyalists to the Stuart succession. Constitutional compromise would in any case always appear to be impossible when Whigs believed that Tories were “dupes for popery and arbitrary government [and] Tories thought Whigs were agents of republicanism and fanaticism”\(^49\).

Accounts of history were crucial as political opponents appealed to past decisions to govern future policies. The True-Born Englishman’s narrator dispatches Satyr to discover the origins of the ‘true-born Englishman’ in “Old Britannia’s Youthful Days”. At the same time, he confides in the reader his knowledge that Britannia, the soul of the nation, “freely will disown the Name” (47, 49). Satyr must dig still deeper:

Go back to Causes where our Follies dwell,

And fetch the dark Original from Hell

\(^{47}\) De Krey, *Restoration and revolution*, p. 257.


\(^{49}\) De Krey, *Restoration and revolution*, p. 149.
The ‘dark Original’ puns on English division and conflict as sourced in Hell, the primal antithesis to heaven’s clear and indivisible authority. It also evokes the obscurity and confusion of there being any ‘Original’ at all. Tories emphasised obedience to the Crown, whose authority was rooted in blood lineage and blessed by religious hierarchy. Whigs rooted the authority of the government in an ‘Original Contract’, property rights negotiated between the Crown and the landowning ‘People’. These constitutional extremes supposedly reached back through time either to Adam as the familial father, God’s representative authority over mankind, or to nations that emerged from a state of nature by way of agreements that traded individual freedoms for common security. The Revolutionary Settlement exposed weaknesses and introduced complications into both arguments. A hereditary crown was excluded on the grounds of religious allegiance, and the ‘Settlement’ seemed more concerned with securing a Protestant succession than with underwriting any contract between partners. One historian even doubts the Bill of Rights as the expression of any ‘Mutual Contract’, describing it as, “almost an afterthought”, whose provisions omitted any legal obligation upon the monarch to recognize any contractual ‘rights’ of his subjects.50

The Revolutionary Settlement was largely the product of a triumphalist Whig party. Tory and High Church supporters were uneasy at their own part in the ejection of a legitimate Stuart monarch and acquiescence in the transfer of sovereignty to a foreign military leader.

William had ensured more electoral support in the 1688 Convention when he removed the obligations of oaths and sacramental tests from the members of the London commons council. Defoe's own upbringing as a London Dissenter almost certainly ensured that he would be a Whig. Like his father, a successful butcher and tallow-chandler, Defoe was a 'freeman' of the City of London with the right to trade within the city precincts. Also like his father, he was a 'liveryman', entitled to vote for councillors and Members of Parliament. In this capacity, Defoe was a member of a body of citizens who had grown increasingly confident and articulate since William's accession. Between October 1688 and June 1690, liverymen were called upon for electoral decisions at an average of once every seven weeks. This contrasted sharply with the democratic drought of five years that Charles II had imposed when he removed the city's royal charter in 1682.

If 'democratic' may sound anachronistic for late seventeenth-century England, it has some justification in application to London where all adult rate-paying males were entitled to a degree of participation in the affairs of the Corporation, albeit at unequal levels. At election times, Common Hall, precinct and ward meetings often became rowdy and violent as partisan politics struggled to authorize a new 'settlement' in the City, just as Whigs and Tories struggled nationally to embed their version of a constitutional settlement.

52 Furbank and Owens, A Political Biography of Daniel Defoe, p. 5.
January 1701 offered the keenest competition for seats in London since the election of 1690. *The True-Born Englishman* shifts from satire to personal lampoon when it introduces Sir Charles Duncombe, a Tory candidate, as the local and immediate example of a True-Born Englishman. Duncombe has been judged historically as probably the most publicity conscious politician of the period. When he entered the mayoral contest of October, he promised that he would invest £40,000 in the city. As sheriff, he released fifty debtors from prison, paying off what they owed and hiring them to support his cause in the streets. Defoe has Duncombe boast that, as an absurd doppelgänger to Defoe’s King William, “In Print my Panegyricks fill the Street” (1185). While Whig magistrates blocked Duncombe’s Common Hall vote and Whig aldermen worked on Tory doubts about their candidate’s record, *The True-Born Englishman*’s public print subverts Duncombe’s bid for election.54

*The True-Born Englishman* promises that Sir Charles Duncombe, as a well-known figure, will speak for himself “by Rote” (1047). In other words, this representative ‘true-born Englishman’ will speak from a script as an automaton or mechanical public identity. Heroic couplets jingle out in parody of a breathless welcome:

\[
\text{The Parish-Books his Great Descent record,}
\]

\[
\text{And now he hopes e’re long to be a Lord.}
\]

\[
\text{And truly as things go, it wou’d be pity}
\]

But such as he should Represent the City:

While Robb’ry for Burnt-Offering he brings,
And gives to God what he has stole from Kings:
Great Monuments of Charity he raises,
And good St. Magnus whistles out his Praises.

To City-Gaols he grants a Jubilee,

And hires Huzza’s from his own Mobilee.  

(1052 – 1061)

Tutchin’s caricature of the Dutch as “A Boorish, rude, and an inhumane Race” (The Foreigners, 82) is redressed when Duncombe steps up in mirror image:

With Clouted Iron Shooes and Sheepskin Breeches,

More Rags than Manners, and more Dirt than Riches  (1064-65)

The true-born Englishman claims aristocratic purity of lineage. The True-Born Englishman reveals that this Tory candidate for Westminster and for ennoblement has emerged from a very modest provincial background. Instead of blood lineage, Duncombe’s early life exemplifies an end to feudal certainties:

Born to the Needful Labours of the Plow,

The Cart-Whip grace’t me as the Chain does now.

Nature and Fate in doubt what course to take,

---

55 Owens, Poetry, p. 466, 104n.
Whether I shou'd a Lord or Plough-Boy make;
Kindly at last resolv'd they wou'd promote me,
And first *a Knave*, and then *a Knight* they vote me.
What Fate appointed, Nature did prepare,
And furnish'd me with an exceeding Care,
To fit me for what they design'd to have me;
And ev'ry Gift *but Honesty* they gave me.  

(1070-79)

Jacobite and Country critics portrayed William and his Dutch entourage as barbarian pillagers of England's national estate.\(^{56}\) *The True-Born Englishman* reverses the myth as their hope for the resumption of city power rests upon a country cowherd who built his career on the abuse of city generosity. Alderman Edward Blackwell apprenticed Duncombe as a goldsmith and, though a financier and one of the first of England's public bankers and therefore the bogeyman of Country demonology, he was noble by nature. He treated his apprentice with the paternalist generosity of an idealized landed gentleman, for "Large was his Soul, his Temper ever Free" (1096). In contrast, Duncombe associates himself with Judas Iscariot, "I who was before decreed by Fate, / To be made Infamous as well as Great" (1098-9). Charles II ordered a stop on all Exchequer payments in 1672. Forewarned, Duncombe saved himself but failed to pass on the warning, ruining Blackwell.\(^{57}\) Duncombe becomes the serpent figure of Satan who turns on both God and Man:

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\(^{56}\) Claydon, *Godly Revolution*, p. 126.
\(^{57}\) Owens, *Poetry*, p. 467, n. 112.
So Vipers in the Bosom bred, begin

To hiss at that Hand first which took them in.

With eager Treach’ry I his Fall pursu’d,

And my first Trophies were Ingratitude

(1104-07)

As a City Tory candidate and a London financier, he emerges as an unholy hybrid of the Country caricature of a profiteering, corrupting stockjobber and of the Court portrait of the Country Member who frustrates the king’s will.

The True-Born Englishman presents Duncombe as a microcosm of national history. He started from nothing, much as England, “unpeopled lay” (150). He was “first a Knave, and then a Knight” in a system by which “Draymen and Porters fill the City Chair” (421). Knave and knight exchange title and place as Duncombe corrupts every position that he occupies. The silent initial ‘k’ also hints at aspiration to the land’s highest position of king. English Duncombe poses the threat of usurpation, not Dutch William.

Duncombe shares the Devil’s powers of negation. When he extracted twenty thousand pounds from William’s resources, he erased their substance: “Which ne’re was lost, yet never cou’d be found” (1147). When he forged treasury bills, his touch contaminated William’s authority because only the Crown may authorise money. The House of Lords, the authenticating nobility for true-born Englishmen, saved him from execution by one vote and so they ally themselves with the Devil who preserves Duncombe for further work (1158). Milton’s Satan held
himself up against God’s authority as a corrupting and debasing copy, a forgery that would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven. This true-born Englishman, Duncombe, is a shadow, a shade, a copy of a copy of “the dark Original from Hell” (54).

When he describes how “The silent Record blushes to reveal/Their Undescended Dark Original” (224) Defoe’s narrator hints that the English nobility bear the earthly copy of the Devil’s imprint. Part I’s final line, “Lords, whose Parents were the Lord knows who” (428), parallels disputed authority and paternity, linking conceptual doubts back to the opening invitation to worship in either God’s House of Prayer or in the more popular but illegitimate Chapel of the Devil. English aristocracy stems from William I’s travesty of noble creation. Their power relies on shaky authority. The conclusion does not mention James II but it is implicit that the Stuart lineage must be equally questionable. In any case, there is no need to call upon James II. He is not there. His absence, or abandonment of the crown, annuls paternal rights. As a Catholic monarch, subject to the Pope and living on sufferance at Louis XIV’s Court, he has become a terminological conundrum and a modern exemplum for the Devil’s Dark Original.

The poem’s “Introduction” emphasizes unnatural and illogical inversion in the nation and suggests that the relationship between the King and his subjects has been obstructed and perverted. The narrator reminds readers how England cried out for foreign aid. He represents William not as the problem but as the vital connection between God and
his people. *The True-Born Englishman* engages in explicit discussion of the relationship between Crown and subjects:

But if the *Mutual Contract* was dissolv’d,
The Doubt’s explain’d, the Difficulty’s solv’d;
*That Kings, when they descend to Tyranny,*
*Dissolve the Bond, and leave the Subject free.*

[. . .]

If to a King they do the Reins commit,
All men are bound in Conference to submit:
But then that the King must by his Oath assent
To *Postulata’s* of the Government;

Which if he breaks, he cuts off the Entail,
And Power retreats to its Original. (802-819)

"*Mutual Contract*" repeats the language of the 1689 Bill of Rights. The passage appears, inescapably, to be a poetic gloss on John Locke’s theories of the rights of propertied freeholders. Locke wrote and published the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) to counter Sir Robert Filmer’s popular and influential *Patriarcha: or the Natural Power of Kings*, published in 1680, some fifty years after its original circulation in manuscript. Filmer argues for the patriarchal, divine and inalienable prerogatives of the monarchy. Locke insists on an alternative basis for government under the principles of natural law, mutual contract and

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This affirmation of a social contract between freeholders and the Crown reinforces the satire’s claim that legitimate political authority arises from a right of English freedoms that is proof against bloodline usurpation.

Manuel Schonhorn remarks it as odd that Defoe, in an earlier work, *A New Discovery of an Old Intreague* (1691), should pattern his praise for William III upon Dryden’s praise for Charles II. Defoe’s acknowledgement of Dryden’s poetic authority may well extend to some common ground in admiration for royalty. However, Defoe was probably once again adapting and turning a rhetorical weapon to his own purpose. Dryden wrote *Annus Mirabilis* at a time when many interpreted England’s Great Plague and Fire as divine punishment for the Court’s licentious behavior. Dryden promoted Charles II as a caring, if over-indulgent father figure for a nation that was still at war with itself. In this reading, the people’s residual rebelliousness has precipitated divine judgment. William was now subject to similar widespread disquiet. Like Dryden, Defoe lays responsibility upon the people’s divisive passions but, in particular, holds Country opposition tactics responsible for tempting the electorate to forget their love for William. Even as he berates William’s critics for their ingratitude, Defoe offers a reassuring and homely image of the king. *The True-Born Englishman* makes the

colloquial comparison that Members of Parliament who oppose
William’s actions are like those who grumble about the price of a job
after it is complete, or who question the doctor’s bill once they are well
again. Called into the national home to offer professional assistance,
William is no longer an unwelcome and aloof foreigner but is as
comforting as the visit of a local apothecary. Englishmen are his
“frightened Patients” (980) who deserve sympathy and understanding as it
becomes clear that their cranky thoughts and behaviour are the result of
feverish delusions.

_The True-Born Englishman_ identifies ingratitude as the first devil
that possessed England’s “First-born Race”. Originally,

*England unknown as yet, unpeopled lay;
Happy, had she remain’d so to this day,
And not to ev’ry Nation been a Prey.*

(150-52)

This portrayal of Ancient England may suggest a prelapsarian world in a
benign state of nature. However, the accusation of ingratitude suggests
that England’s “rude” natives (165) do not have a proper understanding
and appreciation of foreigners’ contribution to their national history,
even if this did stem from “eager Rapes, and furious Lust” (336). In a
similar, paradoxical modern variation of unforeseen, providential gain,
William’s commitment to foreign wars increased rather than diminished
England’s prosperity and strength. In 1692, the traditional method of a
Land Tax levied revenue for the military campaign. Naturally,
landowners grumbled, but at least they held the purse strings and could hope to influence Court policies. The Land Tax, however, proved insufficient and William's reign experimented with new ways of raising income.

In his introduction to *An Essay on Projects* (1697), Defoe famously named the decade as "*The Projecting Age*", and attributed the proliferation of invention and production of wealth to "this long, this Chargeable War". Following England's entry into war with France in 1689, just a year after the 'Glorious Revolution', flotation joint-stock companies were formed to generate funds. By 1695, about 150 joint-stock companies capitalised mines and manufactured armaments, paper, glass, fabric, anything that promised profit. In March 1694, the Government enacted the Million Lottery, and a month later invited London merchants to invest a total of £1,200,000 to support William. These merchants instituted the Bank of England to manage these funds. The King spent the loan, and asked for more. The Bank was granted the right to receive money from the public, and to loan out money at interest. To facilitate the credit boom, payments of money, or promissory money as bills of exchange, became extensive, reducing reliance on material coinage.

Credit was independent of the tangible, visible security of land. It was mobile. It could transform material property into speculative goods and, in effect, appeared to offer the government itself as a marketable,

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64 Owens, "Introduction", in *An Essay upon Projects*, p. 2.
profitable business. In fact, as the Commons intensified pressure to control and disband William’s army, it became a commonplace belief of Country Whigs and Tories that Court supporters wished to continue the war for purely personal profit.

Upon first consideration, it might seem that a London Dissenter engaged in trade and exchange should hold more affinity with a parliament of elected representatives than with a royal individual. Certainly, Defoe’s account in *The True-Born Englishman* of James II’s replacement by William, Prince of Orange, presents a historical case for parliamentary power over court privilege. Yet even as his poem looks to history, it defends the King against Parliament’s present supremacy. Schonhom credits Defoe with prescience in understanding that parliament could become another tyranny, supported by self-serving corruption, a concern that was to become widespread under Sir Robert Walpole’s future administration. As a new form of parliamentary constitution began to strengthen during William’s reign, Defoe still believed, unfashionably, in “a sword-bearing redeemer king”. As a young man in 1685, Defoe is believed to have joined the rebellion of James, Duke of Monmouth; he certainly received a pardon in 1687, which presumes involvement. Many Dissenters greeted Monmouth as a royal conqueror who would defend England against popery and slavery. When Monmouth’s Rebellion failed, many of Defoe’s Dissenter friends and allies were executed or transported. At the Dorchester ‘bloody assizes’, Judge Jeffreys delivered the sentence that

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66 Schonhorn, *Defoe’s Politics*, pp. 69, 4, 18.
John Tutchin was to be whipped through all of the Dorset market towns annually for his involvement in armed insurrection. In Defoe's eyes, William's accession to the throne fulfilled Monmouth's promise while Tutchin's satirical attack on William demonstrated ingratitude and betrayal.

When he pillories 'Shamwhig' Tutchin and lampoons Magistrate Duncombe, Defoe intends that his voice of righteous anger should irritate and inflame both Country Whigs and City Tories. The True-Born Englishman's narrator anticipates with relish that publication will provoke "a storm of Ill Language from the Fury of the Town".67 Amongst the replies by the predictably outraged, The Female Critick complains, misguidedly, that the satire's author must be a Dutchman. She deduces from internal evidence from the poem that he is a disgruntled courtier who must be pressing for a title from his compatriot master. Because surely, she argues, no Englishman would insult his own ancestors in such a way, calling them bastards and so forth. At first glance in a similar vein, The Fable of the Cuckoo (1701) depicts the author of The True-Born Englishman as a foreign-born but native-hatched ungrateful cuckoo. The Fable, however, is a rather more nuanced and entertaining response. Its anonymous author claims to be a loyal Dissenter who introduces The Fable as the dream-vision of another, drunken dissenter. The drunken vision suggests a further possibility for the authorship of The True-Born Englishman.68 The Eagle-Queen, emblem for England, suspects that the poem's attacks on

the clergy reveal its author to be a cuckoo and a Dissenter. The dreaming Dissenter hastily disowns this foul-nibbed squatter in English nests but must acknowledge the faults of his companion worshippers who

Can stick together like a Swarm of Bees,
When we would set a Mayor up as we please,
Or choose a Senator to be a guide
To th’rest, and vote on our East-India side.

(The Fable of the Cuckoo, 666-69)

A major cause for the resentment of High Church Tories against William’s rule was a major cause for Defoe’s support. William favoured religious toleration of Dissenters. It may have been thought natural that the king, as a Dutch Calvinist, would feel sympathetic identification with the spiritual descendants of Commonwealth Puritans. However, in the early years of his reign he attempted to rule with a balance of Tory and Whig, High Church and Low Church interests. This only intensified party strife as politicians competed for place and power, much in the way that Defoe describes in the satire’s “Introduction”.

Tory and High Church adherents believed that the money interest was forging an unbreakable link between Dissenters and government power, accelerating the Dutchman’s unnatural interference with England’s inherited order. They also feared that Dissenters threatened to undo the intertwined primacy of Church and State within the national body. Such

69 Claydon, Godly Revolution, p. 155.
apprehensions appeared to be well-founded when, in 1697, the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Humphrey Edwin, led public processions in full mayoral regalia from morning prayers in St. Paul’s to afternoon sermons at Dissenter meetings. High Church Tories probably also feared that Dissenters would increase in power with or without William’s protection. At least 17 per cent of the London merchants active between 1695-96 were Dissenters or had strong Dissenter family ties. By the turn of the century, at the time of Defoe’s satire, Dissenters constituted a large minority of 15 to 20 per cent of the City of London population, and their influence was disproportionately high. Investment in City joint stock offered wealthy but disenfranchised Dissenters an alternative route to political influence. The new mercantile and financial Whig oligarchy was no longer represented as a party of opposition in the City Corporation. Court ministers consulted the directors of the Bank of England and the New East India Company. After Defoe acknowledged authorship of *The True-Born Englishman* in his first collection of writings, Pittis was explicit in his denunciation: “As he got in with the Dissenting Tribe. / And from a Broken Hosier, turn’d a Scribe” (*The true-born-Hugonot*, 123–24).71

Defoe provokes and courts attack on literary as well as religious and political grounds. His anonymous Preface predicts, “And without being taken for a Conjurer, I may venture to tell, That I shall be Cavil’d at about my Mean Stile, Rough Verse, and Incorrect Language”.72 *The

Female Critick (1701) duly pronounced The True-Born Englishman to be “a hotch-potch of Satyr, Panegyrick, Heroick, and Burlesque”. Such a critique reflected strict classical literary tenets. Milton’s Eikonoklastes (1649; publicly burned, 1660), criticized Charles I’s highly popular and influential Eikon Basilike (published within a day of Charles’ execution) for such generic hybridity. Milton ridiculed the royalist magnum opus as a farcical farrago of genres that mixed pagan lyric and romance within what purported to be a Christian tragedy. Form, however, closely fits function for The True-Born Englishman as its ‘hotch-potch’ of voices underpins Defoe’s assertion that the phrase, ‘true-born Englishman’, is an ill-fitting patchwork that cannot cover over England’s bedevilled and quarrelling jostle of identities. Also, might it not be that Defoe is no more in awe of the inheritance of poetic genre than he is of inherited nobility? “Speak, Satyr” is the confident opening, indicating that the poet invokes his text as from a commanding position. Like William, he governs from both within and without established borders.

The True-Born Englishman’s title page reproduces William I’s “Charta Regis Willielmi Conquisitoris de Pacis Publica”, or “Charter of Public Peace of William the Conqueror.” This grants the foreign king, and the satire, historical and classical authority. However, just as the English native carries foreign blood, Defoe’s classicist iambic pentameter of heroic couplet bears a subversive rhythm of amphibrachic trimeter. The exaggerated counter-beat infects serious, even portentous matter with a jaunty, humorous air:

74 Zwicker, Lines of Authority, p. 52.
The great Invading* Norman let us know * W" the Conq.
What Conquerors in After-Times might do. (195-96)

The active verb, “Invading”, separates William’s ‘greatness’ from his native Norman root. Its rhythmic lull renders the act of aggression sotto voce, oddly subdued, as if glossed over in shame. The poet’s marginal key provides an off-stage comic prompt as though anybody could be ignorant of the identity of this particular “great invading Norman”. The past and present kings may share a name, they are both foreign and have both ennobled military favourites, but how could anybody confuse that ‘dark original’ with this modern enlightened William? The narrator insists, instead, on the paradoxical contrast that William of Nassau “Fights to Save, and Conquers to set Free” (918).

If the opposition is demonic, William is divine. The True-Born Englishman turns Tory ideology about, presenting William III as England’s true father, divinely anointed to save England. When threatened by James II’s Catholic and absolutist rule:

Thus England cry’d, Britannia’s Voice was heard;
And Great Nassau to rescue her, appear’d:
Call’d by the Universal Voice of Fate;
God and the Peoples Legal Magistrate. (844-47)
The True-Born Englishman distinguishes the character of a modern and compassionate leader from the Stuart pedigree of tyranny:

He dwelt in Bright Maria’s Circling Arms,
Defended by the Magick of her Charms,
From Foreign Fears, and from Domestick Harms.
Ambition found no Fuel for her Fire,
He had what God cou’d give, or Man desire.
Till Pity rowz’d him from his soft Repose,
His Life to unseen Hazards to expose:
Till Pity mov’d him in our Cause t’appear (858-65)

An image of primal innocence revives earlier images of England as once “unknown as yet, unpeopled lay” (150), a tempting paradise for foreigners. However, a turbulent and oppressed England now summons William of Nassau from his modern Dutch Eden. Arising from his prelapsarian origins of “Bright Maria’s Circling Arms”, William is not moved by calculation but by the stirring of “Pity”. The poem’s narrator had dispatched Satyr to discover the origins of the ‘true-born Englishman’ in “Old Britannia’s Youthful Days”, confiding that the soul of the nation “freely will disown the Name” (47, 49). Now, Britannia returns with the national verdict, “William’s the Name that’s spoke by ev’ry Tongue: /William’s the Darling Subject of my Song” (931-2). A Dutchman rescues Britannia from a tyrant king who rules by hereditary right. The soul of the nation privileges foreign achievement over native
genealogy, meritocracy over aristocracy. In a reciprocal act of creation, parliamentary agreement made William England’s King. Britannia addresses William as “My Hero” because he brings honour to the throne. The throne does not make the king, it is the man who makes the monarchy.

To re-authorize William, however, is to admit that William’s authority has come under question. When The True-Born Englishman recounts how William I rewarded his foreign followers by making them lords over stolen lands, Defoe comes dangerously close to acknowledging similar complaints against William III. Dryden also wasted little poetic energy in denying charges of licentiousness against his king. Instead, he compared Charles II with King David, the divinely abundant father of a whole nation who “Scattered his maker’s image through the land” (Absalom and Achitophel, 10). Charles II’s reputation was initially welcomed as a sign of English regeneration and abundance after years of Puritan restriction. The True-Born Englishman makes sardonic reference to such a reading: “The Royal Refugee our Breed restores, With Foreign Courtiers, and with Foreign Whores” (289-90).

Now, instead, William of Nassau sheds a godly radiance and Britannia enjoins England’s Virgins to “Make him at once a Lover and a King” (936). The poem goes so far in its enthusiastic mimicry and appropriation of Stuart manners that it invites readers to drink a toast: “May ev’ry cheerful Glass as it goes down / To William’s Health, be Cordials to your own” (947-8).

Zwicker, Lines of Authority, pp. 134, 92.
When Dryden allegorized Charles II as King David in *Absalom and Achitophel*, he recaptured the title from Commonwealth songs of praise for Cromwell as the David of England’s New Israel. Charles I’s *Eikon Basilica* enabled royalists to present the dead king as Christ, crucified by his own people. Walter Montague’s *Jeremias Redivivus* (1649) highlighted the providential sign that the day’s liturgical lesson, which had to be read aloud before Charles I could be led to the scaffold, was Matthew 27, telling the story of Christ’s Passion. Defoe’s satire does not exactly and unambiguously identify William with Christ, which would perhaps come a little too close to reinstating a divine right of kings. Instead, it aligns the king’s enemies with Christ’s historic priestly opponents and grants William the present virtue of an indirect, subjunctive association with the Christ yet to come:

The Bad with Force they eagerly subdue;

The Good with constant Clamours they pursue:

*And did King Jesus reign, they’d murmur too.*

Anonymous Defoe declares in his preface to the ninth edition, “I am content to be Ston’d, provided none will Attack me but the Innocent”. In this conceit, he manages to identify himself both with the woman Jesus rescues from the mob and with Jesus, whose challenge he adopts and adapts. If *The True-Born Englishman* elevates William III to an equivalence with Jesus Christ, or at least to virtue by association, it

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76 Zwicker, *Lines of Authority*, p. 41.
insinuates a comparable relationship between the Dutch King of England and Defoe. William and Defoe are men of the people who serve the people. William is a doctor who administers healing in the home; Defoe wields satire as the surgeon’s knife. Even when unappreciated and unpaid, both persevere in a God-given task. Such dedication is necessary when a patient, or when a nation, or an individual like Tutchin, is so deluded as to attack both friend and saviour.

The ‘Female Critick’ wonders, “Whom was this Poem calculated to please?”\textsuperscript{78} *The True-Born Englishman* insinuates a special relationship between the author and the King that was certain to irritate and annoy political observers of all persuasions. *The True-Born Englishman* projects a hybrid voice, addressing the gentlemen of the Commons both through the mobilized street and the fashionable coffee house, connecting Crown and commoner. Such observation also precludes any suggestion that the names Defoe, a London commoner, and William, the king, are not to be spoken within the same breath. Ironically, *The Fable of the Cuckoo* appears to be comfortable when charging the author of *The True-Born Englishman* as both a Dutchman and as a London Dissenter, so conjoining Daniel Defoe with King William III.

In Mueller’s assessment, virtually all of Defoe’s poetry is modeled on the Juvenalian satire of late seventeenth-century state verse. Taking a viewpoint of moral superiority, such poems attack the faults of “socially prominent individuals, and by extension undesirable social

\textsuperscript{78} *The Female Critick*, p. 123.
mores”. The True-Born Englishman’s closing epigram translates Juvenal’s Satires (VIII, 20) into modern vernacular: “For Fame of Families is all a Cheat/’Tis Personal Virtue only makes us great” (1215–16). The model for state satire stamps his imprimatur on this poem’s rejection of inherited authority. At a time when William was losing political friends, The True-Born Englishman offers a figure of its author in a kind of poetic parallelism. It was as though Daniel Defoe, Dissenter and failed merchant, wrote to protect William from Country and Church hostility in order to attract royal protection for Defoe. To defenders of royal succession and literary and social hierarchy, William III and Defoe are both unwelcome newcomers. They assume and exert more power and influence than their origins warrant. William of Orange is not a native noble. Defoe is not a gentleman born. William is a foreign warmonger. Defoe is a merchant with literary pretensions. William was elected as Dutch Stadtholder on the strength of armed accomplishment and all but elected as conquering King by an English Parliamentary Convention. When parliament threatens to turn against the king, Defoe advances unpopularity as a sign of incorruptible virtue. When Defoe points out that the same blood flows in tradesmen as it does in aristocrats, he appeals to a popular audience. Defoe may be a ‘broken hosier’ and a member of a dissident religious minority, but he writes poetry that is published, pirated and popular.

William III makes the throne, not royal lineage, and Defoe writes the poem, not literary tradition. The Dutch King and the Dissenting

80 Novak, Master of Fictions, p.105.
merchant-poet are as hybrid and transgressive, and perhaps as self-reflexive, as *The True-Born Englishman*’s analysis of the ‘true-born Englishman’. Defoe positions himself with England’s foreign redeemer as both insider and outsider to the political and literary establishment, assuming a fluid and vagrant *persona* that grants considerable freedom and authority to a writer on national affairs. Short of discovery of new documents signed by William III that would confirm Defoe’s position as the king’s closet companion, political counsellor and poetic spokesman, we cannot know whether Defoe’s retrospective claims are true. At the same time, if William does not affirm, neither can he deny. Daniel Defoe remains in that perfect place of his own creation, a textual mirror that invites readers to reflect upon inherited beliefs and received interpretations. *The True-Born Englishman* establishes Defoe’s literary persona at the same time that it advertises its construction as a fictional device. In true Puritan iconoclastic spirit, Defoe dismembers any such public image:

*A true-born Englishman’s a Contradiction,*

In Speech an Irony, in Fact a Fiction (372-73)
Chapter 2

The Family Instructor: One-sided dialogue

In the True-Born Englishman Defoe interrogated the very concept of a national identity and dismissed it as a 'fiction.' This chapter moves from The True-Born Englishman's interrogation of a national sense of identity to The Family Instructor's treatment of the domestic household's equally fractious identity. Children, women, apprentices and servants disrupt hierarchical expectations within the family as failure of paternal authority parallels national divisions on royal and religious government. The Family Instructor, published in two volumes in 1715 and 1718, presents itself in the familiar guise of a conduct book, a non-partisan manual for Christian families, whether Dissenter or Church of England, calculated to reaffirm social mores and the way things are. No more than Defoe's poetic satire, however, does this particular conduct book comfort the reader; rather, it deals almost exclusively with the breakdown of paternal authority and the hierarchical relationships that authority supposedly guarantees, and, in the process, generates a space for the painful emergence, through contestation, of individual authority and autonomy. While a range of commentators have pointed to the early eighteenth century as a period in which concepts of a sovereign individual took form, in The Family Instructor this process can be
interpreted as a version of what Lyotard calls “a profound dislocation of narrated worlds”.¹

Michael McKeon’s *The Secret History of Domesticity* supports the idea of an emergence of the ‘private individual’ in the early eighteenth century, arguing, in effect, that royal absolutism devolved to any individual who asserted autonomous identity. Paradoxically, the tendency for discussion and argument to replace absolutist decree, both in the political and religious worlds, encourages the individual, once ‘subject’ to the Crown and its representative agents, to become the ‘subject’ as authoritative agency. McKeon also notes that government authorities had to acknowledge that many of the merchants vital to national economic interests were dissenters, and so it was becoming expedient to accept the fact and right of a person’s private conscience within the private household. Indeed, trade and private conscience were both wary of state prohibition. Increasingly, “the interiority of conscientious experience and experiment was correlated with the interiority of the domestic spaces in which these activities occurred”.² In contrast, and against the grain of the historical narrative that profiles emergent capitalist individualism, Dror Wahrman emphasizes how the eighteenth-century self was “externally constituted and socially turned rather than inward-looking”.³ The soul, or self, is not an individualised, privatized essence but a focus for communal interests and

interconnectedness, and is formed and governed by a network of responsibilities and interests. This duality in modern critical interpretation reflects the discomfort of family members who must conform to hierarchical obligations, or rebel and suffer expulsion, or find themselves silenced because, in anticipation of Lyotard’s analysis, there is no resolving discourse for their new position.  

Religious convictions and programmes for reformation disrupt even as they profess to bring households into inward communion with themselves and outward harmony with the world. Defoe’s dramatized narratives give lively examples of families whose members act as wilful individuals. Rather than working towards mutually supportive harmony, they compete, almost as though constitutionally driven, for individual authority and autonomy. Defoe’s *The Family Instructor* hits against the expected trajectory of the conduct book as it gives voice to the family’s subordinated characters of child, wife, adolescent, servant and apprentice. Taking up the challenge of Defoe’s idiosyncratic treatment of the genre and subject matter, this chapter will explore how *The Family Instructor* foregrounds divergence from, or anomaly within, the prescriptive and didactic framework of family conduct books. Defoe’s scenes of family life play out the tensions between family and community, public and private obligations, and the gaps between internal belief and external practice that foment self-conscious identity. Picking up from Tony Tanner’s discussion of the literary importance of city and field spaces in literary history and McKeon’s correlation of

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architectural aspects with emergent identity, this chapter considers how Defoe’s dramatized representations of household spaces amplify family psychology while his dialogic text draws the reader into his fiction as a virtual structure for the self-conscious rehearsal of identities.

In recent years, The Family Instructor has attracted critical attention for its political ramifications and dramatization of the gendered household. Critics generally agree that Defoe wrote The Family Instructor in response to the Schism Act of 1714, formulated under High Church pressure. This would have imposed a legal obligation that any teacher or tutor must be Anglican, threatening Dissenter academies with closure. The Schism Act concentrated minds on forming the future through the education of children. It would be difficult to imagine that Defoe was unaware of the political implications in his narratives of divided and rebellious family members. Showing the family turned upside down arguably underlines Defoe’s resistance to established High Church and Tory hierarchies. Rachel Carnell also believes that Defoe’s Family Instructor engages with “the contradictions and complexities of Whig social-contract theory, a theory he apparently believed was solid enough to withstand the rigorous critique to which he subjected it”.

Similarly crediting Defoe with a solid ideological platform, Nancy Armstrong argues that Defoe’s didactic aim in The Family Instructor, as it would be in Robinson Crusoe, was to turn social misfits into creditable

citizens. Geoffrey Sill outlines Defoe’s work as a dramatization of tensions engendered by unruly ‘passions’. The quarrels of the first volume are resolved through talk whereas those of the second volume demonstrate passions so extreme that rational means have no effect, even when prescribed by professional ministers and physicians. Sill examines The Family Instructor as a case study that demonstrates how secular, physiological approaches supplant, or at least assume equal weight with, traditional, spiritual diagnoses of disease.

These interpretations appear to accept that Defoe’s work is quite conventionally didactic and reflects the stated ambition to reform modern manners, support subordination and mend family quarrels. Sill’s discussion also, however, implicitly recognizes that Defoe undermines the trajectory of conduct books whose task is to recommend and represent courses of action that uphold the status quo in pious deference towards divine and earthly authority. Defoe’s stories show not only that the recommended courses of action may be counter-productive but also that the means and ends of rational education are not always sufficient. Reading even more against the grain, Christopher Flint suggests that conduct books were popular precisely because their representations of normative domestic life differ from readers’ experience of family discord. This created demand for the comfortingly authoritative and

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instructive genre, but it was also understood that they represented only wishful thinking and provided, in effect, a novel form of escapist fiction.

The title page for Richard Allestree's *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658) reassures potential purchasers that it is “Laid down in a Plain and Familiar Way, for the Use of All, but especially the Meanest Reader”.

In his preface, Allestree acknowledges that simply telling people to do their duty is in vain and pledges to bring men to take care of their souls by rational persuasion. Similarly, the title page to Richard Baxter's *The Poor Man's Family Book* (1697) promises instruction in becoming, living and dying as a Christian, "In plain familiar Conference between a Teacher and a Learner". Reprinted almost annually for the half century after its publication, *The Whole Duty of Man* details the moral behaviour appropriate to every category of household member. Puritan dialogic texts enable individualized voices to play out discussion of issues and viewpoints in order to defuse, incorporate and guide arguments to their intended doctrinal conclusion. *The Family Instructor*’s dialogues, however, disturb any sense of comfort or reassurance as they interrogate and resist assumptions of paternal authority in an entertaining mix of verbal logic and behavioural fireworks.

The first volume of *The Family Instructor* addresses family worship in terms of the relations between fathers and children, masters and servants, and husbands and wives. The second promises to illustrate how family breaches obstruct religious life, and how passions may

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13 Carnell, *Partisan Politics*, p. 82.
govern and subvert parental discipline. Defoe allows that he inverts the normal pattern to show children teaching parents and servants teaching masters but he justifies this with the claim that parents and masters have too often neglected their proper responsibilities. His foremost aim is to alert readers to the breach in modern life between private behaviour and public belief, a disjunction that people prefer not to acknowledge:

But we are, I say, arrived at a Time in which Men will frankly own a thing to be their Duty which at the same time they dare omit the Practice of; and innumerable Arts, Shifts and Turns they find out to make that omission easie to themselves, and excusable to others.¹⁴

Conduct book authors usually engage in one-sided dialogues, ventriloquizing and then silencing alternative voices. Defoe’s dialogues highlight resistance and disagreement. Allestree acknowledges that external admonition does not always work. Defoe extends this logic by giving didactic anti-examples that tempt readers to identify with dissident and ill-governed characters. Shamed by his youngest child’s innocent questions about God, the opening story’s First Father attempts to establish regular family worship.¹⁵ The Family Instructor’s account of his older children’s outrage and rebellion draws Philip Furbank’s


¹⁵ To facilitate consistent identification, I distinguish Defoe’s unnamed protagonists with such capitalized descriptions as First Father, Angry Widower and Citizen.
observation that “We come here to a problem. For, quite often, we find ourselves sympathizing with the wrong side: that is to say with the rebels against family worship or against religious instruction for infants”. It is easy, for example, to sympathize with a Wife’s efforts to deflate a Citizen’s religious solemnity even when her words come by way of the husband’s account. The Citizen complains to his Country Friend that she wondered after prayers, “why I did not pray for a better Wife, [and] tell me, I forgot to pray for such a Thing and such a Thing” (II, 32). She diminishes his sacred petitions to a series of petty, self-centred demands. Defoe’s course of instruction progresses, or perhaps regresses, through a series of increasingly violent and irrational families. The same trajectory repeats in discrete stories so that, for example, one Pious Neighbour soothes an Angry Widower by promising to tell of another man, known to both, who is guilty of still more extreme and outrageous behaviour. This last of Defoe’s cautionary patriarchs, the Inflamed Father, is a chaotic, quasi-lunatic who once even stabs himself in the belly for want of a better target.

As with The True-Born Englishman, The Family Instructor acknowledges that dissension originates in disputed authority. Discussion of authority within the home parallels political discussion of authority over the nation, particularly when it links with the father’s wish, or duty, to establish a specific religious regime. To counter Filmer’s traditionalist, hierarchical order of government in Patriarcha, Locke’s Two Treatises of Government distinguishes between the head of

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the nation and the head of the family. Locke denies that Adam had original patriarchal rights over Eve but argues that he enjoyed a husband’s right of subordination from his wife, having ownership of and prime responsibility for their goods and land. The father/husband has similar grounds for authority over the younger generation to secure a regulated transmission of property and wealth.17

In an unusual opening for a didactic manual that supports God’s institution of family hierarchy for the proper transmission of religious worship, it is the youngest child who first interrogates, or catechizes, the father. Walking outdoors one evening, the First Father observes his child absorbed in a silent pantomime, pointing upward, downward and to himself. When asked why, Tommy points up again and explains, “I was wondering what Place that is”. The father replies easily that that is the air, or sky. The trouble with answering a child’s questions is that one will lead to another. The infant asks what is beyond the sky. His father explains indulgently that beyond the sky is heaven, where God lives. This excites the child who recalls that his nursemaid told him that God had made him. This opens the further puzzle that, “if God made me, how did I come from thence hither Father? I was a wondering, for ’tis a huge Way”. The father’s, awkward, unpractised, and increasingly unconvincing responses indicate discomfort as the child’s unimpeachable curiosity draws closer and closer to his place in the order of things. Hoping to end the interrogation, the father advises his child to give thanks to God in his prayers for making him. Tommy replies with

17 Flint, *Family Fictions*, p. 42.
the simple but searching observation, “I never heard you do so Father” (I, 49). Defoe insists that the child has “no Questions put into its Mouth but what are Natural, and Rational; consistent with Principle, and as near as could be are such as are proper even to a Child” (I, 47). The child who questions his father, the commoner who questions his monarch, are innocent of mischief when they ask questions that come only naturally to mind.

The First Father receives support from his wife when he moves to impose family reformation. Defoe adds approvingly that they are not “diligent, like Adam and Eve, in throwing the Guilt of it off from themselves, either upon one another, or upon Accidents and Circumstances” (I, 93). The parents consult with each other, practising a Whig partnership over their household nation.\(^\text{18}\) The First Father does encounter resistance from his eldest children. Upstart children are a predictable metaphor in any argument against revolution. William III’s Tory and High Church opponents presented England as a magnified Country household that was being plundered and ruined by James II’s rebellious children, William and Mary.\(^\text{19}\) George asks for reasons for such a sudden change in family life. The father reacts angrily, complaining, “I might with much more Justice insist upon my undoubted Right to govern my own Family, without giving an Account to my Children of what I do” (I, 133). George counters with an argument for liberty of choice as his natural right. The father offers the simple choice that, “if you will not submit to my Government, you must quit my

\(^{18}\) Carnell, *Partisan Politics*, p. 84.

Dominions” (I, 134). George reports to his sister, Mary, that “truly, tho’ he kept his Hands off from me, he has not spar’d abundance of Threatnings, and other positive Testimonies of his Patriarchal Authority” (I, 143).

A Whig partnership is not an equal partnership. As the male propertied enjoy full political participation in the fruits of the Glorious Revolution, so also Locke’s political philosophy prioritises male authority within the family. At the same time, Locke insists that the wife, at least, has an “equal share” in the paternal power. The Citizen of the second volume finds no support from his sceptical wife, having committed the primal error of attempting to dictate his will. He insists that, whatever her opinion, he expects the children to attend family worship. She predicts that they will be Dissenters but trusts that he will allow them liberty of conscience. If he does not, she warns, he is guilty of persecution and tyranny. She also advises her husband, “I know I am your upper Servant, but I am not such a Servant but I may have Liberty to laugh at my Master when I think proper” (II, 43), a comment that may also justify Defoe’s satire in poetry and humour in conduct books as a healthy form of political and social criticism. For this wife conveys the valid complaint that as women’s work, and metonymically therefore women, becomes devalued outside of domestic services, the husband comes to treat the wife as an unpaid employee. The Citizen denies that he has ever treated her as a servant. Invoking the subordination that traditional patriarchal law considers common and natural, the father

insists only that she treat him and his wishes with “the common Respect such Things require” (II, 38). The children divide in their loyalties and the father abandons family worship altogether, declaring pettishly, “If Half the Family, or any of the Family separate, it is a Schism in the House; and the Unity being broke, the rest is private Worship, and may as well be done alone”. The end to family prayer becomes the end of private prayer; lack of conversation about God becomes an end to all conversation and Defoe concludes how “the Decay of Family-Worship, like a Gangreen in the Religious Body, spread it self from one Limb to another, till it affected the Vitals, and proved Mortal” (II, 11).

The First Father’s authoritarian example is replicated in his older children’s treatment of family servants. Under his master’s directive, a coachman declines to take George for his Sunday drive. Outraged, George declares that there is no better day for breaking a servant’s head than the Sabbath-day. When a maid tells how this same coachman thanked their master for their first experience of household worship, George explodes: “He is a hypocritical Rascal, I owe him a Caneing for all this” (I, 150). The maid prefaces her account of her father’s first family prayers by wishing that Mary could have been there to hear “what you never heard in your Life”. Mary replies, “That’s true, Pru, for I never heard him pray in my Life, nor no body else, I believe” (I, 151). The servant is shocked at such open disrespect and George reprimands his sister, suddenly conscious perhaps that rebellion undermines his own position as the eldest son and inheritor of his father’s power.
Authority that depends upon compulsion may be misapplication of a father’s pre-eminence, but the opposite error of indiscipline may also apply. A Pious Neighbour tells an Angry Widower that the ungovernable rage of a mutual acquaintance once drove the youngest son to jump out through a high window (II, 150). Both the man’s eldest sons leave, unable to tolerate their father’s tyranny. When his daughter refuses to marry the man that he chose for her, he imprisons her within the house. Realizing that he is running out of family, he moderates his temper only to find that the next son holds him in contempt for his weakness and that the youngest son insults, betrays and steals from him. The Pious Neighbour concludes with the bemused observation that “Family Passions are the worst; they generally are in their Beginnings more extravagant, rise to the greatest Height, are acted with the greatest Violence, and attended with the worst Consequences” (II, 275). This echoes an assessment of England’s national divisions by *The True-Born Englishman*’s narrator’s as proof of “An Ugly, Surly, Sullen, Selfish Spirit” (*The True-Born Englishman*, 161).

That Defoe may foreground difficult individuals sympathetically does not necessarily mean that he accepts or champions insubordination. Despite tales of extreme fathers, the Pious Neighbour reiterates the sanctity of and necessity for family hierarchy. He insists, “the Child’s Obedience is not founded upon the Father’s Conduct but upon the Laws of Nature. A Son can never argue that the breach of Duty in his Father is a Superseadas to his Obligation: Obedience of Children to Parents is a natural Law; ’tis a first Principle, Neither Humanity or Christianity can
subsist without it” (II, p. 156). God’s presence beyond the sky, where the First Father locates it for Tommy, blesses paternal authority as incontrovertible. Another precocious child, Jacky, certainly maintains this as a self-evident truth. He recalls, when he is nearly twelve, how his eldest brother had once been praised for beating another brother who had spoken ill of their father. Jacky argues that he deserves greater approbation now when he vows to beat his older brothers for swearing. He demands, “is not GOD my heavenly Father, shall I suffer them to affront and abuse him, and take no Notice of it?” (II, 233). Defoe discloses a problem in the system. Jacky, the youngest, would impose punishment on the oldest in order to maintain hierarchical degree and discipline. In effect, he threatens to overturn family hierarchy in the name of a higher father just as William of Orange overthrew James II’s royal inheritance in the name of religious and political liberties. The early eighteenth-century family hierarchy appears to be as unstable as the national constitution.

Monumental inscriptions in churches, the maintenance of chapels in great houses, diaries and the popularity of books of devotion offer proof that prayer and devotional reading were important in people’s daily lives in the early eighteenth century. Civil War memories and current factional struggles and outbreaks of party rage in street disturbances may have encouraged a trend to exclude religious, political and commercial pressures from the home. However, as the household clearly included all of those aspects, the local community could act as

responsible overseer and interventionist mediator. As shown in Defoe’s scenarios, a household may include young adult unmarried children, visiting relatives and business guests, employees and apprentices, ensuring daily interaction across social boundaries. This could undermine hierarchy but could also encourage efforts to emphasize communal over individual or factional interests.

Servants and apprentices occupy a place somewhere between the parents and children in *The Family Instructor*’s ideal of a paternalist and pedagogical household. As most apprentices and servants entered service as children or as adolescents, this would have seemed quite natural. Defoe gives an example of apprentices who serve as ill-placed members in neighbouring households. Will and Thomas contrast in attitude, situation and behaviour; they also act as Defoe’s exteriorized, semi-detached reporters on their families. Will grumbles that “we are haul’d out of our Beds every Morning by Six a Clock to come to Prayers, before we open the Shop, or go into the Work-house, and at Night we are kept up, I know not how long, to read, and go to Prayers, when we might be all a bed and asleep” (I, 166). Thomas, on the other hand, regrets that he must live with an unreligious shopkeeper. He fears that God will carry out the threat to “Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name” (Jeremiah 10.25). Whether he manages to pray in private is beside the point. It is the family as household that invites God’s wrath because, as

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an apprentice, "I am one of the Family now" (I, 174). Will listens to Thomas and comes to believe that he is lost because he is untaught. Thomas complains that he risks losing all that he learned. Will questions Thomas who, protesting that he has no skill or knowledge, nevertheless recalls his lessons as he answers, and so teaches. The child, Tommy, who initiates family instruction through posing naive questions, divides into a pair of polarised youths who teach and learn through dialogue. This presages the religious conversations between Robinson Crusoe and Friday in which Crusoe learns through teaching and by reflecting on Friday's questions and objections.

Thomas’s religious consciousness infiltrates his friend’s worldly habits. Will’s employers puzzle at the strange alterations in his behaviour, such as an absence of cursing, playing or even smiling. The apprentices’ prevarication under questioning, the awkward silences that their masters interpret as sullen rebellion and other misunderstandings that arise from insufficient information reveal the discomforts of hierarchical instability. Servants influence and support each other but when they try to act properly under a failing authority, they disturb social order. The master complains to Thomas's father that his son has been missing from the household, both in and out of business hours. Thomas is reluctant to admit he has been attending the neighbour’s family prayers. Upon discovering the truth, Thomas’s father castigates himself for placing his son with the alderman, “having regarded the Trade, and the Prospect of worldly Advantage only” (I, 201). The Alderman ultimately also recognizes that “I have neither been Father nor
Master to my Family, but have been driving after the World as if I had no other Portion, I have lived as if I were never to die, and I am afraid that I shall die as if I had never lived” (I, 223). McKeon points out that domestication is at the heart of the Christian drama of God’s incarnation, and that “Protestants tended to put a special premium on the humblest – the ‘meanest’, ‘barest’, ‘homeliest’ – signifiers of grace”. As with Tommy and Jacky, the least in the household, the overlooked and ill-supervised apprentices teach themselves in private and then teach the master his public duty.

The household may present as a community of individual relationships but it also reads as an individual unit in relationship to other households. The Pious Neighbour interrupts the Angry Widower as he beats a son for some perceived misdemeanour. The Neighbour invites the Widower to drink wine with him in a local tavern and, after some conversation, sets out to persuade him to apply discipline without anger. They are both adept in quoting Scripture and the Neighbour uses the shared discourse to moderate the Widower’s accustomed beliefs. The Neighbour offers examples of other neighbours who embody positive and negative extensions of the father’s case: one is more tyrannical, the other is too lenient. He insists that there are natural advantages “in this Christian dutiful engaging Treatment of one another, than in continual Breaches and Discontents” (II, 178).

In conversation with his more tractable second son, the First Father realizes that the worst disaster has already visited his home. He

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vows to carry out his course of reformation whatever the opposition, because “I wonder that the Judgments of God have not distinguish'd my Family, and made us as publick, and as much the Amazement of the World for our Punishment, as we have been Notorious for our Sin”. His son agrees but offers the more down-to-earth observation that, “for some time past I have begun to see, we have not been right: It is true, we do not live as other Families do” (I, 125). The Country Friend admits that he became accustomed to living in a house without religion as “Habits of Levity grew insensibly natural, sapping the Foundation of all religious Inclination” (II, 17). The composition of a household and its performance as a household determines identity.

Individuals present a ‘public’, or shared family identity, as in a ‘face’ or ‘facade’. Social and financial mobility, however, foments anxieties of personal or individual status and self-presentation. The First Father confesses to his wife that “I have often thought, if I was a Nobleman I would keep a Chaplain, but I was asham’d to pray in the Hearing of my Servants and Children, as if that was dishonourable and mean”. His wife admits, conversely, “I have slighted it, and ridicul’d it in others, and thought it meer Ostentation, and Form; as if none but Persons of Higher Quality should have Prayers in their Family, and thought it look’d too big for us” (I, 87). The Country Friend’s aristocratic wife, subject to yet another perspective, believes that family prayers signify lower social status. When her husband informs her that it has become common practice, even in “very good” families, for the head of household to say prayers at the table, she becomes uneasy: “it’s an
odd thing for a Gentleman to meddle with it”, and then dismisses the
idea: “O! ’tis perfectly ungeeel to do it publickly; can’t they mutter it
to themselves?” (II, 19).

“Publickly” is the key word and public representation has
changed, constitutionally and socially. Early manorial households
focused power on the Lord who sat at High Table in a Great Hall that
displayed his authority. The head of household overlooked all others in a
receding hierarchy of supervised degree.\textsuperscript{26} The authority of the head of
household was equally open to appraisal. Over the course of the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, little effort was spent on defining
the ‘family’, in the modern sense of immediate kinship, apart from the
‘household’ as a cultural and economic space.\textsuperscript{27} This does not mean,
however, that family members did not feel that there should be very
distinct differences. \textit{The Family Instructor} concerns itself with fathers of
the new ‘middling’ households who are not in a position of inherited
authority. Members of the First Family betray anxiety that their servants
may pass judgement on their performance. The First Father avoids
family prayers because of embarrassment. George resents the
humiliation of paternal punishment in front of the servants. It may not be
far-fetched to imagine that such middle-class families were self-
conscious in their exploration and rehearsal of unfamiliar roles. Just as
manuals gave instruction on how to write letters to those not accustomed
to the practice, so religious conduct books may have advised people
recently raised in wealth and status, and unfamiliar and insecure in

\textsuperscript{26} McKeon, \textit{The Secret History of Domesticity}, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{27} Flint, \textit{Family Fictions}, p. 58.
running a household that included people of a lower status, a status they might once have shared.

*The Family Instructor*'s households exhibit rituals of ceremonial display that were once the preserve of the nobility and the Crown.

Tommy believes that church attendance must be a form of fashion-parade rather than a religious event:

for when it Rain'd, and I could not wear my best Cloaths, my Mother would not let me go; and I heard you say, Father, *last Sunday*, that you could not go to Church, *because* the Barber had not brought your new Perriwig home; and *another Sunday*, for want of a pair of Gloves you staid at Home and play'd with me all *Sunday* long, or lay down on the Couch to sleep: I thought, Father, I had gone thither for nothing but to *shew my fine Cloaths*. (I, 65)

Mary resists her mother’s request not to go the park on Sunday, arguing a prior engagement. She worries that if she were to break it, “I cannot look my Lady *Lighthead* in the Face” (I, 112). George is equally horrified because “I shall affront all the Persons of Quality of my Acquaintance, and shall always look like a *School-boy*” (I, 147). Public attendance of worship is on a par with walking in the park or attending any other social event. Older children frequent plays and promenades, not family worship; apprentices either expect to work, not pray, for their
bread, or not to sacrifice prayers for their work; employers and parents are confused as to whether they are raising children as a workforce and a return on investment, or as loving kin. These difficulties and contradictions may originate in what Habermas describes as the developing “bourgeois consciousness” of the new patriarchal-conjugal structure of a private family. The family holds dual and incommensurable roles: it is independent of government and business, bound instead by spontaneous human affections (it is private); it underpins the defence and transmission of patriarchal wealth and property, securing the wider social order (it is public). The family has a public face and a private face that do not always share the same space. Uneasy relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and between the family and working residents, reflect in the physical structures that are the stage and scenery for Defoe’s “Religious Play”. By the eighteenth century, architectural changes created the main division of a ‘front’ and a ‘back-stage’ for families’ public and private self-representation. House space then divided into smaller spaces dedicated to household members and specific individual roles. Entrances and exits facilitate the expression and importance of speech and acts. The Country Friend admits that he and his wife “differed once to such a degree about nothing, but whether we should go into the Garden by the Hall Door, or the Green-house Door [. . .] You will always be Dissenter from your Wife says she” (II, 59). Physical barriers

impair communications, breed suspicion and provide cells for conspiracies. George and Mary hatch plots and manipulate servants from the fastness of Mary’s chamber. The Citizen’s Wife forestalls family prayer by abducting three of the children into her rooms. The following morning, the Citizen summons all the children and servants and locks the door against his wife. He explains that his call to “Publick Worship” in the “Parlour” will take precedence over any prayer in his wife’s “Closet” (II, 44).

Subordinate family members find no independence or retreat within the home. Mary may hide in her chamber and refuse her father’s summons but he threatens her with exclusion from the whole family, even the servants, if she does not comply with his wishes (I, 108). George and Mary insist upon the right to resistance even when this entails separation. Ordered not to leave the house on a Sunday, George and Mary test the limits. They leave the building but stay within the grounds, acting the role of disobedient children. When his father confronts him, George rebels against a regime that would transform his home into a monastery: “I had as live you would turn me out of your Door: I’ll be content to go to the West Indies, or be a Foot Soldier, or any thing, rather than be made such a Recluse” (I, 139). Years later, war wounded and destitute, George drags himself home to seek forgiveness and financial rescue. When he is barred entry, he believes his father is deliberately humiliating him, claiming that, “I could have made any Submissions, had he not brought me thus, as it were upon a Stage, to be a Spectacle to all People” (I, 314).
If there is no strict border between kinship family and the wider family of servants, apprentices and others within the same household, there is also a confusing interpenetration of outside business with emotional intimacy. Walls, doors and corridors that honeycomb and partition “made the house more of a home for each individual, but left less room for the family as a whole”. The physical space contains a contradictory cohabitation of hierarchical authority and voluntary affection. Defoe’s errant fathers permit business to dominate their home. The Inflamed Father may work outside the family home but, “if he met with any extraordinary Disappointment in his Affairs abroad, the Distemper of his Passions was sure to vent it self upon his Family at Home” (II, 257). Jack’s father is an alcoholic because his occupation necessitates business entertainment. As a public servant connected with maritime affairs, “Company of the worst Sort” visits his house. The Sea Captain understands that this father “is oblig’d to keep Company with these great Men, there’s Admiral – and Captain –, and the Commissioners of the –, and he cannot get away from them” (I, 196). The Captain pays the boy’s serving-maid, Margaret, to teach Jacky basic Christian doctrines and practice. Many years later, the captain returns rich from his voyages to find that his wife has died. His mentor, a Cousin to Jacky’s family, becomes alarmed that he now may wish to marry Jacky’s servant. Personal affection threatens social order. The Citizen who refuses to continue family worship in the face of family defections meets with his Country Friend who is in town because of a similar

Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 45.
marital breach. However, while he sympathizes with his Friend, the Citizen tells him that he no longer lets his wife’s resistance prevent him from performing his duty. In fact, he owns that the only fault in his wife is that she is not religious, and this was something that he knew before he married her when “I looked at the Money, I went for it, and I had it; and now I feel the Curse that came with it” (II, 13).

Money and mobility, and the mobility of money, undermine established hierarchies. Tory neo-classicists regarded ownership of land as the proper basis for political and social power. It guaranteed stable civic virtue in the enduring, and personally accountable figure of the patriarchal head of household.32 Charles Davenant, a Tory political economist, argued that the mix of revenue from both landed gentry and urban merchants brought the worst result as both bodies came under the control of professional creditors. Economic individualists destabilized traditional values as money, credit and investment became interlinked with personal and emotional considerations. The Country Friend blames his divided home on himself for marrying a woman for her money; the Sea Captain spends his wealth on a serving-girl, at first as a child’s religious instructor and then as his second wife and mother to his children. Tommy’s master, an alderman, is honest and sober, and fair in his dealings (I, 162). He appears to be an ideal citizen except that business keeps him from his Christian obligations. He tells Tommy’s father that his responsibility to his son as an apprentice is to teach him the trade, not religion. Referring to the new wealth and mobility, and the

concomitant disturbance of social hierarchy, he explains that apprentices now bring more money to pay for their training and consequently consider themselves as “too high for Reproof and Correction”. The father insists, however, that the apprentice is “under your Family Care, as to his Body, he is your Servant; but as to his Soul, I think, he is as much your Son as any Child you can have” (I, 206). In a complementary approach, the Sea Captain insists three times that he is paying the maidservant, Margaret, for Jacky’s education on God’s behalf. She becomes frightened when he insists that “I have hir’d you for God, you see, and you have taken his Wages; look you to do your Duty” (II, 193).

_The Family Instructor_ may focus on ‘middling’ households but also includes both urban and rural characters, landed gentry, sailors, and a child-slave from Barbados. Characters recapitulate events as they retell their stories to new listeners who relay the tale to others. Defoe opens the enclosed private home to a wide social canvas while his dialogues advocate persuasion over compulsion and example over dogmatic instruction. Most of the didactic matter develops within the conversations and interactions of ordinary, theologically untrained people. _The Family Instructor_’s dialogues amongst family, neighbours and friends manage to naturalize the peculiarity that a book that promotes religious instruction permits only marginal, one might say cameo, appearances by clergy from any church within its pages. The Country Friend complains that the rift with his wife bears out a scriptural injunction, “Be not unequally Yoak’d” (II, 14). However, he emphasizes that visiting clergy at Sir Richard’s table might be the local parish
minister, a neighbouring gentleman's chaplain, or even the town's Presbyterian minister. His anxiety for his wife has more to do with her general contempt for religion than from belonging to another church.

When seventeenth-century clergy addressed other churchmen or gentry, they used classical quotations and referred to church fathers. However, they learned to write for the middle and lower classes in a plain style and drew on modern, everyday experience in the tradition of New Testament parables. Defoe's vignettes evoke family life through dialogue, which he acknowledges has led some commentators to think of his work as a "Religious Play". He observes archly that "some Parts of it are too much acted in many Families among us", but offers pious readers his reassurance that the style is "design'd both to divert and instruct" (I, 44). He is drawing on earlier lessons for maximizing and influencing an audience. The medieval church used liturgical drama and morality plays to involve local communities. Mankind and The Second Shepherd's Play include slapstick humour and scatological language in their treatment of sacred matter. As drama secularized, preaching friars turned to fables and buffoonery while others preached in a plain and accessible style. In a more recent period, Thomas Becon's Sick Man's Salve (1651), one of the most popular books to teach the art of dying, used plain and colloquial language in the conversations of friends and neighbours as they attend a dying man. Conversations and dialogues

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encourage vicarious participation in the scripted development of arguments of doctrine and belief.  

Defoe’s Preface to his second volume blames his readers for his unorthodox approach at the same time as he takes credit for being innovative. He boasts that “if Novelty, the Modern Vice of the reading Palate, is to judge of our Performance, the whole Scene now presented, is so perfectly new, so entirely differing from all that went before, and so eminently directed to another Species of Readers, that it seems to be more new than it would have been, if no other Part had been publish’d before it” (II, 4). According to Defoe, not only is the writing new, but then so also is his audience. Defoe assures his readers that while his stories emanate from real people and situations, he will leave their status as fact or as parable uncertain, “resolving not to give the least Hint that should lead to Persons”. The Family Instructor teaches Defoe’s new, novelty-seeking audience how to read and to interpret stories that may represent people that they know. Elsewhere, he discloses his desire to draw his readers into self-recognition: “May they see it and blush” (I, 47).

Defoe gives an account of Sir Richard, the Country Friend’s aristocratic brother-in-law, who comes to self-knowledge through books. After his sister shocks him with her wayward opinions and behaviour, Sir Richard reflects upon the word, ‘Duty’. Defoe alerts the reader to a textual self-reference, “mention’d a little before, p. 78” (II, 88). During their quarrel, the sister fends off her brother’s prayer for her with the

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scriptural misquotation that "The Prayers of the Wicked are an Abomination". Desultorily leafing through books in his library, Sir Richard picks up "an old, torn, dirty imperfect Book". In it, he chances upon a passage, an anecdotal tale that teaches him right and wrong ways to read scripture. *The Family Instructor*’s reader is now reading about a man who needs instruction, who is reading about a man in the same condition of ignorance and despair. A minister in the library book takes up the Bible and demonstrates how to read past verses of judgement and condemnation to verses of comfort and redemption. This virtual minister teaches Sir Richard from a book just as the book teaches Defoe’s reader. Sir Richard continues to read because he is "willing to know what became of the Man" (II, 90). He learns about himself because he forgets himself through identification with a fictional representation of his own situation. Defoe creates sufficient parallels between the situations of the two characters, between the fictional man, Sir Richard, and the man he reads of in his fictitious book, for his readers to replicate parallels and reflexively apply them to, or even revise and readjust them to their own experience. The reader discovers or learns self-awareness, or personal identity, by way of an imagined, textual identity.

*The Family Instructor* accords with conventional conduct literature in its stated support for a normative as well as a shared understanding of social practices. Sir Richard guides the reader into the library, into his books, and into his mental processes. Conduct manuals take people into representations of their own living and thinking spaces.

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However, Defoe tests conventional design to the breaking point. Charles Taylor argues for the eighteenth century as the location for the emergence of a western sense of individual sovereign entitlement. He describes how

the new buffered identity, with its insistence on personal devotion and discipline, increased the distance, the disidentification, even the hostility to the older forms of collective ritual and belonging, and the drive to reform came to envisage their abolition. Both in their sense of self and in their project for society, the disciplined elites moved towards a conception of the social world as constituted by individuals.  

Defoe’s dialogic narratives appear to strengthen and develop individualized perspectives. In a more complicated move, however, family members display strong social and epistemological disturbances. The Family Instructor’s conflicts expose a disjunction between socially constituted behaviour and the sovereign sense of selfhood. Protestant reliance on the Bible and the inner light of faith over institutional instruction had correlated in a trend from the seventeenth century onward for private and individual worship within a ‘closet of devotion’. Compartmentalizing domestic spaces and strengthening individual conscience and responsibility diminished the primacy of State and

Church direction. The Wife admits that she left her husband’s household because she believes that he chose family prayers over his feelings for her, and will not accept second place. Sir Richard cannot believe her but she insists, “It justifies it to me and that’s enough; I am accountable to no Body” (II, 83).

Autonomous identity may lead to loss of communication and isolation. Cultivating an outward self to conform to social norms may suggest a lack of, or a divergence from, a ‘true’ inward self, enabling disruption between inner and outer images of identity. The Country Friend applauds Sir Richard’s worldly sincerity: “that Plainness you speak of, is the thing I have hope of you from [. . . ] Sincerity is a Foundation for all that’s religious to build on” (II, 62). The aristocrat confesses that religion disturbs and confuses him so that he gets drunk; by the morning, all is well again. He chooses, in other words, to suppress feelings that threaten to change the behaviour expected of a man in his social position. When Sir Richard recognizes and regrets his life of wickedness, he entreats his brother-in-law to give him guidance but warns, “You must talk to me as if you were instructing a Child; all my Infant-Work is yet to do” (II, 114).

The image of the child is recurrent in The Family Instructor. Two infants speak as though they are God’s direct mouthpiece to the family. Tommy’s mother believes that “he has certainly been sent from God to me” (I, 86). Jacky’s father tells a Lady, “He is taught from GOD, Madam” (II, 224). Of course, such direct instruction from the Creator

was not the usual Lockean narrative for childhood development but Defoe emphasizes that his extraordinary and fictional children, who practice prophetic methods that are unfamiliar to the modern world, are the consequence of parents who have not been undertaking their responsibilities in instruction. The father holds Tommy up to his family, declaring, “This little Creature has been the blessed Messenger from God to alarm me, and convince me of the great Breach of my Paternal Duty” (I, 150). More conventionally, the Pious Neighbour believes that a maidservant has power over a child because, “The plain little Hints of Things given so early, are like small Plants or Seeds deposited in Nature’s best Soil, which grows insensibly up to maturity, and, I believe I may say, are never entirely rooted out of the Mind” (II, 181).

Locke argued that ideas are not innate and that moral principles are not God-given. Different communities formulate different moral languages. Naturally, this may open moral relativism as an individual determines individual judgement when given systems differ or collide. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding privileges empiricist and individual experience over locally imposed or imprinted customs. Such an individual self-reflexively identifies over time with memories written upon reflection. In this reading, the self is not a passive collector of and reflector on sensations but actively appropriates experience to grow and

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justify its determining presence in the world. This process begins from early childhood, explaining why parental and community involvement in a child’s education becomes such an issue in politics and religion. Ironically, the community decides upon and inculcates the values that form the next generation of individuals.

Defoe explains that *The Family Instructor*’s opening scene “is not laid very remote, or the Circumstances obscure; the Father walking in a Field behind his Garden, finds one of his Children wandred out, all alone” (I, 47). Such a setting simultaneously invokes common everyday experience and the prelapsarian scene of Genesis in which the Father-God looks to converse with Adam, his first human son. *The Family Instructor* presents the ‘self’ as an inquisitive child, or soul, that comes into awareness through questions that Defoe characterizes as “the most plain, most natural, and most easie Questions that it is possible a Child can ask” (I, 82):

Who made me?
What was I made for?
What am I?
What Business have I here?
How came I hither?
Whither am I going?
What is my End?
What is Good?
What is Evil?

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The Captain offers Jacky as an example of grace at work and as proof of the 'Divine Original'. This obviates human hierarchical authority because divine instruction "is not the Effect of Priest-Craft, or of the Prejudices of Education; clamour'd into our Heads by Nurses, and whipt into us by School-mistresses, Mothers and Pedagogues while we are little, and then whin'd into us by the Parsons, as we grow up" (II, 188).

Direct and personal revelation is, however, not sufficient basis for either divine or secular knowledge or authority. Questions betoken the hunger of curiosity; the Tree of Knowledge triggered temptation. Individual reading may lead to individual thoughts. The individual's duty to read the vernacular Bible was axiomatic in Protestant theology but reformers were concerned that individuals needed correct knowledge. Approved scriptural interpretation would be proof against the extremes of authoritarian Roman Catholicism and rationalist Deism. The Citizen quotes a scripture that recommends humility and mutual subjection in the practice of family worship. His wife wonders that he does not go on to quote that wives are subject to husbands. When he selects another passage that recommends the avoidance of strife and pride, she mocks his ignorance, telling him she is ashamed that he should parallel their "little debate" with the troubles of the early churches. Stung by her superior knowledge and debating skills, the Citizen reasserts his patriarchal supremacy, reminding her that "the Scripture is not of private Interpretation, but was given for general Instruction" (II, 49).

The Family Instructor's opening dialogue between Tommy and his father threatens to become more "remote" and "obscure" when it is noticed that Tommy's perplexing questions arise when father and son meet as both wander outside the family household. Tony Tanner has discussed how, in English literature, the area outside of society, the field outside the city, affords socially displaced individuals a greater sense or expression of freedom. In addition, avoiding the binary choice of total assimilation or exclusion from social norms, an image of a temple is often also present, "in the general sense of a disturbed consciousness trying to locate itself in relation to these two realms – not in abstract sociolegal terms, but in the language, or silence, of personal experience". As he attempts to satisfy Tommy's curiosity, the First Father realizes that he can rely on no precedent authority and is as naked and in the open as his child. After he returns Tommy to the house, the father walks out again, "till he was gotten to a Retirement, and then breaks out in a most passionate manner upon himself, giving full Vent to his Convictions" (I, 66). When he discovers a neighbour had given religious instruction to his second son for years, again he "retir'd to give vent to his Passions" (I, 130). The Citizen storms off after his wife passes slighting remarks on his performance of the family service. He indulges in an acrimonious conversation with himself that stokes his anger, unchecked by reason or any other voice, "being gotten into a Field near his House" (II, 7). After newly wed Mary drives her husband from her in her anger, she happens to look out through an upstairs window and

42 Tanner, Adultery in the Novel, p. 23.
watches him, "at a Distance walking very melancholly in some Fields near the House all alone by himself" (II, 288). Tommy is experimental, talking with himself in the open temple of the natural world; his father engages with self-knowledge that shames him; the Citizen lets loose his fury; the religious Husband his sadness. Each occasion highlights a person’s need to express thoughts or feelings unconstrained and unfiltered by others’ interpretation, judgment and argument. The Family Instructor demonstrates how family members exit the household and its structural relationships to explore uncomfortable new questions or the sensations that make them feel apart from society or, in other words, individual.

The stories in The Family Instructor demonstrate that communal values and practices do not always provide satisfactory solutions for private crisis. Mary insists that she cannot marry and live with a man who would always believe that she is in the wrong when she believes that she is in the right. The cousin assures her that he would never attempt to change her ways by anything but affection and persuasion. Fever brings Mary to contemplation of death, prompting her religious husband to broach the taboo subject of her father and of God. She begs forgiveness of both for her rebellion and, as she recovers, exchanges scriptural verses with her husband, “and this Way of Conversation between them, lasted till she was thorowly well’ (I, 304). The husband tells Mary, “I can allow of no Submissions and Subjections between you and I, but those of Love” (I, 295). Mary reassures her husband that her newfound dedication to family worship is no artificial adherence to duty.
because “where the Heart is engaged, there will be no Omission of the outward Performance” (I, 305). The story, however, tells how Mary’s discourse alters from rebellious rationalism to devout communion only after a breakdown in her physical health. Fever and sickness play a similar role in Robinson Crusoe’s religious conversion, short-circuiting rational thought.43

A genuine, open and rational discussion can only take place when participants agree on the terms of reference. In his deconstruction of any determining, overarching ‘grand narrative’, Lyotard analyses methods for claiming authority:

Attempts to legitimate authority lead to vicious circles
(I have authority over you because you authorise me to have it), to petitio principia (authorisation authorises authority), to infinite regression (x is authorised by y who is authorised by z), to the paradox of the idiolect (God, Life, etc. designates me to exercise authority, I am the sole witness to this revelation).44

Communal interests may decree that individual sovereignty is as self-deluded and self-serving as any one-man tyranny. The Country Friend’s Wife complains that her husband places religious duty above love for her. Sir Richard explains, “He believes it is his Duty, you would have him omit it; his Conscience tells him, he must not omit it; his Wife says,

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43 See Chapter 3 below, pp. 131-134.
44 Lyotard, The Differend, § 203.
he must omit it to oblige her: In this Case, I think I must quote some Scripture too, *Whether it is meet for a Man to obey GOD rather than his Wife, judge you?*" (II, 83). This may sound as much of a double bind for the husband as for the wife except that, in conduct books, God always wins. When the First Father calls his children to dictate his new regime, attendance concedes submission. God's patriarchal authority, and therefore that of his family representatives, is beyond dispute. The religious framework for discourse, explanation and behaviour assumes priority. The wives and children may only speak the same language, use the same terminology with its assumptions, or have no voice. In Lyotard's expression of the differend, those who do not or cannot agree the terms for discussion will not be heard. When George sees the light and confesses his faults on his deathbed, it is too late. George dies without forgiveness, reconciliation or redemption. His father is absent and unreachable; God is absent and unreachable.

What a religious man may see as good instruction by Scripture or by divine intervention, others may perceive as an intolerable imposition. When the Citizen asks his wife why she refuses to attend his family prayers, she tells him, "I do not look upon your Performance to be call'd Praying, because I do not see that your Lips and your Heart go together; or that your Life conforms to the Holiness of your seeming Expression" (II, 42). The Citizen's Wife finds no sympathy or support from the rest of her family and lapses, as Geoffrey Sill puts it, into a "languishing

melancholy". The Citizen’s Wife passes from passive self-exclusion from family life into uncomprehending, inexpressible silence, and finally into incomprehensible lunacy. When she returns, she does not recognize that her family are living in a different home. She resumes a normal life, is outwardly religious and, in a dark copy of Mary’s idealized reconciliation, she takes part in family worship. However, her husband has misgivings and cannot recognize her as his wife. She has no memory of her sinful condition and therefore cannot qualify for repentance and redemption. He worries that she has lost her soul. In modern terms, she has become a soulless automaton, a Stepford Wife. In a chilling judgement, mirroring his wife’s original charge of his soulless prayers, he tells his Friend that he does not accept her simulacrum: “I look upon my Wife as one dead, for while the Soul is disabled in its Operations, she is dead to all those Things which are necessary to a true Penitent” (II, 56).

Defoe exposes an uncomfortable divergence in conceptions of personal identity as either a self-governing rational self or as a Christian immortal soul. Either one determines the interpretations that reinforce its own experience and refute the validity of the alternative perspective. The Family Instructor dramatizes a major disjunction or fault-line in contemporary social understanding that is a good example of a ‘differend’. Lyotard describes the genesis of the awareness of a differend as follows:

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46 Sill, The Cure of the Passions, p. 89.
The differend is the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be. This state includes silence, which is a negative phrase, but it also call upon phrases which are in principle possible. This state is signaled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling: “One cannot find the words,” etc. [. . . ] In the differend something “asks” to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away. This is when the human beings who thought they could use language as an instrument of communication learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence (and of pleasure which accompanies the invention of a new idiom) that they are summoned by language, not to augment to their profit the quantity of information communicable through existing idioms, but to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist.47

Lincoln Faller points out that any process of secularization that critics tend to celebrate in Defoe’s texts was not necessarily a welcome or a comfortable process for people at the time as it involved “a stripping

away of old certainties and old guides to behaviour". Defoe gives multiple voices to a conflicted sense of self when secular and religious identities constitute the same cultural world but appear to be mutually exclusive.

The stories in *The Family Instructor* neutralize family dissidents but the dialogic, theatrical form enables public expression of their experimental, 'unthinkable' thoughts. The sense of being an individual distinct from definitions of and loyalties towards nation, religion and family, was one such unthinkable thought. An autonomous self takes no authorization from religious or political hierarchies, or from any social contract, all of which require prior agreement in any terms of understanding. The next chapter considers how the rebellious son, George, resurrects as Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe does not listen to his father's wisdom but exits the family household to adventure into unknown worlds under the direction of his, "rambling Thoughts". The discussion moves to a meta-level as Robinson Crusoe writes Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as the modern, mythological narrative of identity.

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Chapter 3

Robinson Crusoe: Spoken by an Other

The previous two chapters addressed *The True-Born Englishman* and *The Family Instructor* in which Defoe constructs an authoritative public and literary image for himself while he demolishes a national self-image, and in which disruptions of national and political hierarchy transfer into the world of upwardly mobile families of the 'middling sort'. This chapter will examine Defoe's best-known work, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), whose eponymous hero rejects his father's advice to be content within “the upper Station of Low Life”.

Crusoe’s account records, from an internal viewpoint, his fictionalized identity’s attempt to break from external and historical authority and enter new territory. The young man revels in opportunities for quick wealth and independence; however, shipwreck interrupts his career and forces him to live for twenty-eight years alone on a tropical island. Popular upon publication and still read, reworked, staged and filmed, *Robinson Crusoe* enjoys the status of a modern myth.

Robinson Crusoe’s first-person account of a private individual’s life contains, even illuminates the tensions and contradictions in early eighteenth-century dreams and anxieties stirred by English global ambitions. *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) establishes Defoe’s hero as an admirably resourceful and

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independent character. *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) thrusts Crusoe onto the global stage as a spectator and commentator, and exposes limitations to his influence and understanding. *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720) offers Crusoe’s mature considerations upon his experiences in an eccentric mix of philosophical discourse and personal anecdote. Defoe presents *Serious Reflections* in numbered and titled chapters, with sub-divisions, mirroring the print organization of such philosophical treatises as Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. However, the final volume also includes the supplementary text, “A Vision of the Angelick World”, which is more of a dream-vision than a work of intellectual rationalism as it narrates an out-of-body, extra-terrestrial journey, an experience precisely opposite to Crusoe’s earthly adventures of slavery, shipwreck, survival and riches. This chapter explores Crusoe’s bid for self-determination, the limits to his powers and the disconnections between event and interpretation that engender subjective identity as the unstable author of its own determining script.

Modern scholarship has played out variations on whether *Robinson Crusoe* is a secular modern text or a modern religious parable. By the first perspective, Crusoe’s career traces England’s economic expansion through gold, slaves and colonization, and glorifies early capitalism in the figure of an adventurer who subordinates religious faith
to scientific pragmatism. In the second view, Crusoe’s account is an extension of spiritual autobiographical writing brimming with patterns of spiritual allegory. Crusoe’s mental oscillations either reconcile secular and religious interpretations in a successful, “human internalization of the divinity”, or they demonstrate Locke’s model of a contingent, unstable, discontinuous self, “scattered among a world of things”.  

Conceptions of the self and the other are central in discussions of Crusoe’s interactions with Man and God. Leslie Stephen, Victorian critic, offered Crusoe as the embodiment of eighteenth-century Englishmen, “shoving their intrusive persons into every quarter of the globe; [...] stamping firmly and decisively on all toes that got in their way; blundering enormously and preposterously, and yet always coming out steadily planted on their feet”. For many, Crusoe’s treatment of Friday illustrates his role as the prototypical colonialist and empire builder. However, recent discussion has questioned any simple assessment of a master/slave partnership in the relationship between the lonely castaway and the stranger he shelters from harm. Instead, Crusoe demonstrates European insecurities in the new worlds: Crusoe’s

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disappearance from the sea routes reflects individual vulnerability within a global system for State expansion.\textsuperscript{7}

Sending Crusoe into the wide world enables Defoe to project and explore the fears and dreams of the modern isolated individual. Wolfram Schmidgen analyses Crusoe’s identification with the island, and assumption of ownership, as a reflection of Locke’s political argument for land as the property of the individual who cultivates it. It also parallels national vulnerability in global expansion as the island becomes an extension of a self trodden on and threatened by cannibals, wild animals and mutineers.\textsuperscript{8} Sailors’ and explorers’ belief in and terror of cannibalism provide “a graphic image of the decomposition of the self that is the price of failure”.\textsuperscript{9} Robert Markley argues that Crusoe’s contempt for China in The Farther Adventures, and his recommendations for a Crusado against the world’s pagan majority, reflects further contemporary fears that the powerful, self-sufficient empires of the Far East threatened to marginalize and diminish Western Christian identity.\textsuperscript{10}

Some critics believe that Defoe aimed to satisfy a taste for novelty in the print market.\textsuperscript{11} Others suggest that Defoe had little control over his pen, observing how a parable of Puritan awakening celebrates

autonomy over submission, and how a plain, empiricist account somehow transforms into “an immortal triumph of wish-fulfillment”. Defoe’s text is, in fact, rich with layers of interpretation as Crusoe restlessly changes position and perspective. Kevin L. Cope concludes that “Robinson Crusoe is a sort of multi-channel indeterminacy machine, a perverse if wonderful device for generating alternatives, diversions, and counter-interpretations, indeed for tacitly invoking versions of itself that have yet to be written”. This comes closest to the argument of this chapter, which regards Crusoe’s fictional identity as Defoe’s virtual, narrative focus. Parallels, binaries and replications of events and literary tropes in Crusoe’s text open alternative versions of self-image that act as experimental analogues for readers’ production of their own imagined identities.

A double and contradictory narrative runs throughout Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe promotes his story as religious and didactic: “Such are the historical Parables in the holy Scripture, such the Pilgrims Progress, and such in a Word the Adventures of your fugitive Friend, Robinson Crusoe”. His preface to Serious Reflections, the last of his trilogy, insists that the two volumes already published were the outcome of the third and, therefore, ought to be treated as the first: “The Fable is always made for the Moral, not the Moral for the Fable” (SR, 51). The trilogy is

a product of hindsight, organizing historical events with a religious interpretation. In *The Family Instructor*, characters occupy emblematic roles such as Father, Apprentice, or Citizen. However, emblem and allegory require consistent purpose to bear out their pattern in meaning. Crusoe’s history of his actions demonstrates that they have no particular purpose but are driven as much by chance as by choice. He announces that he does not and will not fit into family expectations since “my Thoughts were so entirely bent upon seeing the World” (*RC*, 59). He is not predetermined and he learns to distrust expectations. A chance encounter with a sea captain sets Crusoe on his first trading venture. The captain invites him into partnership on the strength of “taking a Fancy to my Conversation” (*RC*, 68). An investment of forty pounds returns gold that yields three-hundred pounds. When he sets off on a second voyage, Turkish corsairs capture him and sell him to a Moor: “At this surprising Change of my Circumstances from a Merchant to a miserable Slave, I was perfectly overwhelmed” (*RC*, 69). At this sudden trough in his fortunes, he reverts to his father’s conduct book homilies and sees the involvement of “the Hand of Heaven” (*RC*, 70). Notwithstanding, it is not long before he begins to counter-plot, stocking his boat in preparation for escape.

For Ian Watt, Crusoe embodies a philosophical agenda for individualist empiricism.¹⁵ He is opportunistic, persistent and repetitive to the point of measurable success or failure. Defoe’s detailed descriptions of Crusoe’s labour, “I had never handled a Tool in my Life”

(RC, 107), gives heart to the most inept of his readers, whether
eighteenth-century merchants in London coffee shops or twenty-first
century consumers of flat-pack furniture. Faithful to Lockean
philosophy, Crusoe points out that, with the use of reason applied to
mathematics, "every Man may be in time Master of every mechanick
Art" (RC, 107). Even a failure, like the boat that is too heavy to bring to
the sea and launch, serves as a "Memorandum to teach me to be wiser
next Time" (RC, 157). Crusoe organizes what is present and available
into manageable projects. On board the shipwreck, he divides and ranks
objects according to their use-value. He privileges his discovery of the
carpenter's chest of tools, for example, over all of the ship's gold.
Likewise, he controls his attitude through mental organization. He
designs his first list of classification and enumeration to strengthen his
resolve to fetch the ship's goods by raft: "I had three Encouragements, 1.
A smooth calm Sea, 2. The Tide rising and setting in to the Shore, 3.
What little Wind there was blew me towards the Land" (RC, 95). He
establishes his geographical coordinates and erects a cross on which he
marks off a calendar. Finally, entering the "Scene of silent Life" (RC,
104), he begins to keep a journal. Once he stops staring outward to the
empty sea for external rescue, adjusting to his situation, he begins to
look inward to the island.

Locke posits mental self-reflection as axiomatic to human
knowledge. Crusoe treats his first cavern or enclosed shelter as a
worksite and storehouse that echoes Locke's image for the mind in An
Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Locke vows to clear space,
"removing some of the Rubbish, that lies in the way to Knowledge". As physical exertion earns material property, intellectual exertion earns knowledge. Locke’s discourse introduces a narrative so that God-given Nature, and the field of knowledge, become sites for individual labour, acquisition and transformation. Crusoe’s physical work parallels Locke’s intellectual labour. Robinson Crusoe appropriates and regulates an unpopulated island. In parallel, he sets out marks on blank paper. The person operates and owns ideas that he fashions into shape within a focus of defined boundaries. Crusoe records experience in a journal that he later orders and reviews into memoirs. The process of writing creates a Lockean chamber for the reception, sorting and representation of information. *Robinson Crusoe* represents this process as though undertaken by another. Defoe doubles as the performative author, Crusoe. Crusoe’s statement, “I shall here give you the Copy” (RC, 108), is a textual indicator that the journal is about to be reproduced within the memoir. It is a speech-act as the character hands documents out from the printed page, a mental impression on the reader’s mind, an image of contact to reach and convince any doubting Thomas of its truth.

Charles Taylor’s *Sources of the Self* (1989) delineates the paradigmatic shift from classical perspectives to modern ideas of personal identity in western thought. Aristotle and Plato expected to locate truth, order and value in an objective, cosmic order. Descartes and Locke prioritized individual, first-person consciousness with the result

that “minds are now the exclusive locus of such realities”. Mental impressions constitute an individual’s reception of the world. Self-reflexive thought takes this material and constructs a body of understanding. Simple ideas are the building blocks for complex ideas. Images and metaphors from physical labour permeate Locke’s writing so that, as Taylor observes, “Locke reifies the mind to an extraordinary degree”. An individual’s ideas become the material for the individual’s reality. Ideas constitute that reality just as a virtual or analogue self facilitates the existence of a real or experienced self. Crusoe uses materials that Providence provides to build a viable life on an uninhabited island. Defoe constructs a fictional point of view that constructs an imaginary world that duplicates itself, with individualized variations, in his readers’ thoughts. This produces an exact likeness of Locke’s reflexive consciousness except that the image of an independent, self-constituting individual reproduces itself in a wider, multiple consciousness of print readership. Coleridge applauded Defoe’s skill in rendering Crusoe a sympathetic anti-hero who appeals to everyone because “nothing is done, thought, suffered, or desired, but what every man can imagine himself doing, thinking, feeling, or wishing for”. In The Family Instructor, Defoe creates parallels between a fictional character reading a book and The Family Instructor’s reader. A consequence of self-reflexive consciousness can be a sense of separation from the self, or of standing outside of oneself. Raymond Martin and

John Barresi describe this early eighteenth-century epistemological process as occurring when “you, the human organism, elevate yourself above the status of human organism, in the process creating yourself as a person”. The ‘person’ is already a meta-person without which there would be no ‘person’.

Locke does, in fact, theorize two ‘selves’ when he distinguishes the biological or scientific human from the self-conscious idea of a ‘person’. The ‘self’ is a sensory organism that feels direct and unmediated happiness, pain and self-concern whereas the ‘person’ is a self-reflexive by-product of consciousness. Locke’s pupil, Lord Ashley, third Earl of Shaftesbury, recommended Socratic dialogues because Socrates’s public character engages with his own process of thought. Invented ‘second’ characters learn self-reflection as they enter into the reflexive discourse. Reading such dialogues enables learning, “by virtue of the double Reflection, [to] distinguish ourselves into two different Partys. And in this Dramatick Method, the Work of Self-Inspection wou’d proceed with admirable Success”. In turn, the reader profits from the ‘pocket-mirror’ as he reads himself into the text.

Persons are, in Martin and Barresi’s important phrase, “merely virtual (that is, fictional) substances”. Readers may see their own image in self-reflexive identification with Crusoe’s narrative consciousness.

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23 Martin and Barresi, Naturalization of the Soul, p. 19.
Defoe delivers a realist text that meets Ian Watt's criteria for verisimilitude and simultaneously exhibits its artificial construction. Inserted dates distinguish journal entries within Crusoe's account, presenting a third-person, external view within a first-person narrative. The journal gives Crusoe's verdicts on his situation and his work that show dissatisfaction in comparison with his earlier revisions in the memoirs. Crusoe brings a chair "to a tolerable Shape, but never to please me, and even in the making I pull'd it to Pieces several times". Defoe immediately attaches a parallel breakdown in Crusoe's construction of time: "Note, I soon neglected my keeping Sundays, for omitting my Mark for them on my Post, I forgot which was which" (RC, 110). This highlights that the first account is a revision made after a longer perspective of time and is, in fact, Crusoe's second account. They resonate off each other, producing a double view, an immediate construction of a present self made in the past, and a reconstructed past, a remembered self made in the present. The autobiography and intertextualized Journal become as effective and as double a construction as the two rows of stakes that ensure "I was compleatly fenc'd in, and fortify'd, as I thought, from all the World" (RC, 101).

In "A VISION OF THE ANGELICK WORLD", the supplementary volume appended to Serious Reflections and the final word on all his adventures, Crusoe insists that a strong mind and "extended Fancy" will enable the soul of a man direct engagement with "the Invisibles in Nature, and upon Futurity" (SR, 236). In other words, one can work and shape the future as much as rework the past or, with
infinite labours, transform an island. Imagination, according to Crusoe, carries him to other mental worlds just as physical ships convey him to other countries. Crusoe records how simple reflection, or mental focus upon a particular discourse, sent him on a space voyage:

I had one Day been so long conversing [....] upon the common received Notions of the Planets being habitable, and of a Diversity of Worlds, that I think verily, I was for some Days like a Man transported into those regions myself; whether my Imagination is more addicted to realizing the Things I talk of, as if they were in view, I know not; or whether by the Power of the Converse of Spirits I speak of, I was at that Time enabled to entertain clearer Ideas of the Invisible World, I really cannot tell; but I certainly made a Journey to all those supposedly habitable Bodies in my Imagination. (SR, 235)

Crusoe characterizes his extra-terrestrial flight as both real and imaginary when he affirms that, "I certainly made a Journey to all those supposedly habitable Bodies in my Imagination" (SR, 235). G. A. Starr finds it odd that Crusoe makes such "stark juxtaposition of 'my ordinary Travels' against 'my imaginary Travels'".24 Crusoe, in his Preface, had already conceded his memoirs to be an "imaginary Story" (SR, 52).

24 Starr, "Introduction", in Serious Reflections, p. 3.
Defoe blends history and imagination as Crusoe’s memoirs flaunt ambiguous claims to truth and reality with such phrases as “just History”, “real History” and “parts of the Story are real Facts in my History”.

Crusoe’s imagination is potent, but not always realized. Possibilities hold reality in a kind of suspended animation. As Michael Seidel appreciates, it needs the reader’s close attention to take notice that “much of what happens on the island exists in the supplemental or projected realm”. After discovering the footprint in the sand, for example, Crusoe details various consequences in what might have happened had he chanced upon live cannibals. After the earthquake, Crusoe runs out from his shelter. He decides to build a replica home elsewhere, afraid that another earthquake will bring the roof down on his head, although he recognizes that “the Apprehensions of lying abroad without any Fence was almost equal”. He begins on his work of replication but then his discovery of a second shipwreck “wholly diverted my Thoughts from the Design” (RC, 118,119). Nevertheless, Crusoe’s description of his swift mental reconstruction of the first home (“a Wall with Piles and Cables, &c. in a Circle as before”) projects the second habitation so distinctly that it haunts Defoe’s text in a virtual secondary space.

As Crusoe lives and relives his experiences in three volumes, patterns resonate and reinforce each other like ties and joints in the construction of a house. In his third year on his Brazilian plantation,

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Crusoe realizes that, despite himself, he is entering the station of life recommended by his father, only five thousand miles away from the conveniences of home. With no regular company and confined to physical labour, “I liv’d just like a Man cast away upon some desolate Island, that had no body there but himself” (RC, 83). Crusoe’s figurative isolation becomes the fact of his shipwreck on a deserted island. Later again, Crusoe observes how “the Soul of a Man under a due and regular Conduct, is as capable of reserving it self, or separating it self from the rest of human Society, in the midst of a Throng, as it is when banish’d into a desolate Island” (SR, 60). Binary waves of ebb and flow bear him onto the shore of the island that becomes the locus for Crusoe’s self-knowledge. He divides time between his inner and outer island-self, “my Country-House, and my Sea-Coast-House” (RC, 132); only ‘second’ thoughts prevent him from moving altogether into the interior. The first habitation offers the hope of rescue but the danger of exposure; the second offers nourishment and protection but also perpetual bondage and disappearance from human knowledge.

Modern philosophers of psychology theorize that “mental acts are analogs of bodily acts”. People imagine externalized or objectified versions of themselves. There is no self before an externalized concept of a self is established. The fictional, imagined or virtual self produces and defines the self that is then supposed to imagine and dream its own alternative realities. Defoe offers vicarious participation as Crusoe imagines himself acting out various past or future alternatives. He

assumes roles that induce others to imagine him as somebody different, usually somebody with more power and authority than he actually has. Defoe’s replication in binaries, recapitulations, anticipations, and parallels delineate the individual as a fiction. Crusoe describes the allegorical correspondences between himself and the true subject of his memoirs whose life “chimes Part for Part, and Step for Step with the inimitable Life of Robinson Crusoe” (SR, 53). Richard Hallam explains, in almost the same terms, that the virtual self operates “as a special kind of model in which there is a point-to-point correspondence, as in a map, between the features and the terrain it charts”. Furthermore, he proposes that, “an analogue-self allows us to have a self”. This echoes Defoe’s manipulation of readers’ perceptions of his text, its subject and author. Defoe’s fictional creation, Crusoe, asserts his living reality and defends his autobiography as a work of allegory and as the history of a real person. On the first page of his memoirs, he records the death of an older brother in a specific location in an historical event. He then invokes a second older brother who had run away, like himself, but whose life remains suspended in a virtual alternative world: “What became of my second Brother I never knew any more than my Father or Mother did know what was become of me” (RC, 57).

Crusoe’s voice is conflated with that of the represented author. This hybrid identity candidly explains that a straightforward biography of a private individual would have received little attention, just as Christ’s miracles were dismissed by those who knew him as a

carpenter’s son, “whose Family and Original they had a mean Opinion of, and whose Brothers and Sisters were ordinary People like themselves” (SR, 53). Crusoe is at once an ordinary person, a common man, and a son of God who works miracles, much as Defoe presents himself in *The True-Born Englishman* as an outsider to the political establishment, a man of the street, and as a royal confidant and national prophet. Homer Brown identifies a compulsion in Defoe and in his characters both to hide from sight and to stand exposed.28 Crusoe finally escapes his island (self) by helping an English captain reclaim his ship from mutineers. The process demonstrates demystification of Defoe’s textual techniques as Crusoe co-opts others into his fabrications, “so that as we never suffered them [the mutineers] to see me as Governour, so now I appear’d as another Person, and spoke of the Governour, the Garrison, the Castle, and the like, upon all Occasions” (RC, 258). This has the same effect as the construction of the wall to his shelter which ensured “that there might be no Sign, in the Out-side of my Habitation” (RC, 116). A literary realism that both hides and signals an author’s presence subverts the textual apparition of fiction as fact. It also highlights the instability of the figure of the author for any purpose of identification and consequent interpretation of authorial intention and meaning.

The Editor’s preface to *The Farther Adventures* insists on

*Robinson Crusoe*’s literal truth:

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All the Endeavours of envious People to reproach it with being a Romance, to search it for Errors in Geography, Inconsistency in the Relation, and Contradictions in the Fact, have proved abortive, and as impotent as malicious.  

Defoe imports details from other published histories to authenticate his fiction. Crusoe similarly asserts an authorial right to incorporate and accommodate others’ testimony. When Crusoe returns to Lisbon after his deliverance from the island, he meets the Portuguese captain who had first rescued him as a runaway slave. In order to reclaim his Brazilian plantation, the captain “made me enter my Name in a Publick Register, with his Affidavit; affirming upon Oath that I was alive, and that I was the same Person who took up the Land for the Planting the said Plantation at first” (RC, 268). Written artefacts restore him from isolation to the world. Conversely, the fictional Crusoe affirms the reality of another person whose life “chimes Part for Part, and Step for Step with the inimitable Life of Robinson Crusoe” (SR, 53).

Until quite recently, readers and critics were content to find Crusoe’s original in the castaway, Alexander Selkirk. William Dampier, as a privateer commander, abandoned Selkirk on Juan Fernandez Island in the Pacific after a dispute. Four years later, Dampier was on board Captain Woodes Rogers’s ship, which happened to drop anchor at the
island and rescue Selkirk. However, while Selkirk may have been famous as the sailor who survived for four years alone on a tropical island, Crusoe’s story carries even greater resonance in Dampier’s report of another castaway on Juan Fernandez Island in own narrative, *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697). On this occasion, Dampier and his crew call on the island to check for a Moskito Indian crewman, abandoned accidentally three years previously by another English ship. The Indian had possessed only a gun, a knife, a small horn of powder and a few shot. When the ammunition was gone, he sawed the gun-barrel into harpoons, hooks and lances. He lived on goats and fish, built a hut lined with goatskins and wore a skin about his waist when his clothes fell away. When he saw the English ship approach the island, he killed three goats and dressed them with cabbage to make a welcoming feast. With the commanding and proprietorial assurance of a Crusoe, “He then came to the Seaside to congratulate our safe Arrival”. Like Crusoe, he appears to believe that he is rescuing the visitors rather than the other way around. An Indian crewman, Robin, leaped ashore and ran up to “his Brother Moskito Man, threw himself flat on his face at his feet, who helping him up and embracing him, fell flat with his face on the Ground at Robin’s feet, and was also taken up by him. We stood with pleasure to behold the surprise and tenderness and solemnity of this Interview, which was exceedingly affectionate on both Sides”. Dampier’s narrative sources the Moskito Indian as a model for Defoe’s

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complementary or oppositional characters, the resourceful English castaway, Crusoe, and his Indian companion, Friday.

Defoe's fiction fuses with fact in a reflection of contemporary readers' hopes and fears. Philip Boucher notes that at the same time Crusoe projects "the unmitigated, almost unmitigatable, English horror at the supposed cannibalism of Caribs", Defoe includes such genuine information as Carib abhorrence of salt. He also puts into Friday's mouth "the most sophisticated European explanation of Carib cannibalism: the eating of their enemies as an act of revenge".32 Dampier cast doubts on reports of Caribbean cannibalism altogether:

As for the common Opinion of Anthropophogia, or Man-eaters, I have never met with such People [. . .]

What strange Stories have we heard of the Indians, whose Islands were called the Isles of Cannibals? Yet we find that they trade very civilly with the French and Spaniards, and have done so with us.33

Dampier's first mention of any genuine threat of cannibalism, as it happens, relates to his English crew. After a long journey across the Pacific, he discovers that only three days' supply of food had delayed the crew's plan to kill and eat Dampier and their captain if they did not soon make landfall.34 The figure of the cannibal stands as the Other that

34 Dampier, A New Voyage Round the World, p. 133.
confronts civilized Europeans but that also bears the disturbing thought of a common ancestry, or blood, in the deep past. Montaigne’s well-known essay, “On Cannibals”, was more a self-reflexive critique of the values of civilization than a study of Native American eating habits, factual or not. Cannibalism served as the cultural anti-type, “used as an index of the barbarity of its civilized observer”.

Environmental pressures threaten to overturn the civilized man and resurrect the savage. Returning across the Atlantic to his island in *Farther Adventures*, Crusoe and the ship’s captain, his nephew, come upon a drifting, hurricane-hit ship. Its crew have almost starved to death. Crusoe understands why they kept three passengers locked away to save on rations, arguing that “Hunger knows no Friend, no Relation, no Justice, no Right, and therefore is remorseless, and capable of no Compassion” (*FA*, 25). He interrogates an imprisoned maidservant about “what she had felt, what it was to starve, and how it appear’d”. She tells him, “had my Mistress been dead, as much as I lov’d her, I am certain, I should have eaten a Piece of her Flesh, with as much Relish, and as unconcern’d, as ever I did the Flesh of any Creature appointed for Food” (*FA*, 116, 117).

Crusoe relays New World fantasies and fears. The eco-historian, Richard Grove, rejects *Robinson Crusoe* as a Puritan allegory of a shipwrecked soul, pointing out that the print market favoured contemporary travel narratives of Englishmen who find themselves isolated in hostile and alien environments. In such situations, traveller

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and reader alike shiver at the fragility of civilized identity.\(^{36}\) *Robinson Crusoe* may read as a manual for empire-builders but it is a species of empire-building that serves foremost to keep the wilderness at bay. Combining the Greek *agrios*, or wild, and *colonus*, or planter, the agricultural coloniser ‘cultivates’ and ‘civilizes’ the wild land at the edges of empire.\(^{37}\) Crusoe’s construction, defence and extension of ownership convert strangeness into productive familiarity. As he nests into the foreign and the unknown, Crusoe translates experience of the Other into mastery by the Self, regarding everything past a line of demarcation as hostile until he draws it into his circle. Fear motivates Crusoe’s labours against the unknown. In a state of nature, Crusoe is not a purified saint or hero, or even a noble savage, but is terrified of shadows in the moonlight and of his own words echoing from a parrot’s beak.\(^{38}\)

Crusoe does not inhabit the island but colonizes it with tamed animals, crops, and people. Those who become part of his design serve as companion workers; the rest qualify as targets for his guns. His “little Family” of animals are a tableau of a hierarchical royal household. The parrot is closest, acting as the court jester, mimicking human speech into Crusoe’s ear, the licensed speaker of random wisdom and foolishness. The dog is the silent and “trusty Servant to me many Years” (*RC*, 105). He adopts Friday as “my Savage” in the same way that he domesticates


wild goats and honours tame over feral cats, offering or withholding food and shelter as appropriate. Crusoe confines Friday to the adjoining, outer wing of his fortifications. Friday’s father and the rescued Spaniard occupy the next arc of protection between the outer wall and the grove. He allots duties, boundaries, rewards and punishments. He no longer groups individuals by religious or national affiliation but by how much they support his social harmony. When he bids Friday prepare a yearling goat for a sacrificial feast, he makes Friday the priest to his patriarchal Old Testament God.

Working the land is at the heart of Locke’s argument for individual sovereignty. Appropriation of the island articulates and secures Crusoe’s ownership of identity. While the sea carried Crusoe’s restlessness and instability, land establishes his permanence and cultivates his responsibility. His castaway, insulated, islanded self-image achieves equilibrium through work, prayer and rest in a self-affirming cycle that stands him apart from the frictions of normal, social, human struggle:

Thus I liv’d mighty comfortably, my Mind being entirely composed by resigning to the Will of God, and throwing my self wholly upon the Disposal of his Providence. This made my Life better than sociable, for when I began to regret the want of Conversation, I would ask whether thus conversing mutually with my

own Thoughts, and, as I hope I may say, with even
God himself by Ejaculations, was not better than the
utmost Enjoyment of humane Society in the World.

(Re, 157)

The island has brought Crusoe’s ‘original sin’, his desire to ramble, to a
stop. Crusoe replicates his father’s ideal household, imposing regularity
and production. He takes his father’s place at the head of table,
surveying the animals and then the humans that constitute his family, or
kingdom. Frugality replaces self-indulgence as he husbands resources.
He holds back seed to ensure future crops. He becomes the active part of
a self-regulating system. By the eleventh year, he has separated tame
from wild goats and increased the flock, ensuring an abundance of meat,
milk and cheese. However, the elaborate layers of defence and
concealment disclose anxiety. When he alone supplies hierarchical
definition, he cannot be certain of mastery. If he may cross boundaries to
extend knowledge and resources, others may equally enter and master
him.

Defoe’s experiment insists that humans change appearance,
principles and behaviour under pressure. Crusoe’s connections to
civilization weaken as ink, bread, clothes run out or decay and he
reconstitutes his penitent self as an Other. He wears skins from another
species of animal. He sports “a large pair of Mahometan Whiskers, such
as I had seen worn by some Turks, who I saw at Sallee [that] in England
would have pass’d for frightful” (RC, 168). He makes an umbrella.
against the sun, "I had seen them made in the Brasils" (RC, 157), and builds a canoe, a Periagua, in native Indian style. Crusoe draws from and blends into his environment. Locke's equation of sovereignty and land unravels in the course of his argument that connects individual to land through labour. He offers the example of an individual who appropriates an acorn or an apple from a common tree in order to feed and live. He 'appropriates' it into the inalienable property of his body through the work of eating. Locke continues, "I ask then, when did they begin to be his? When he digested? Or when he eat? [. . .] Thus, the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my Property". Wolfram Schmidgen points out the consequence that, "as things become human-material hybrids through appropriation, private property becomes very private indeed". The footprint in the sand signals the return of privatized property to public space and threatens Crusoe's personal identity, disorienting his mind. He is not sure at first whether the print is human, animal, demonic or his own. Mutual interpenetration characterizes Crusoe's fear of cannibals and wild animals. Food supply connects and circulates through the human and animal, savage and Christian, transforming flesh and blood into other flesh and blood.

Subjectivity, whether recorded as a spiritual autobiography or as an explorer's journal, looks out from within. Crusoe reifies this furtive and watchful perspective with his cave and bower and the palisades that

defend and mask his presence. Crusoe spends his energies shoring up self-defence, thankful that he has civilisation’s tools that enable him to replicate civilisation in an island-miniature. Crusoe is a frightened English trader whose account offers armchair adventurers a fantasy manual for survival. Animals, or wild beasts, attack and eat people. Savages, or wild people, will likely do the same. At the same time as he may satisfy voyeuristic fears, however, Defoe undermines them.

Returning from one of his initial salvage trips, Crusoe worries that animals will have eaten the food he had rescued from the wreck. He finds a wild cat waiting: “she sat very compos’d, and unconcern’d, and look’d full in my Face, as if she had a Mind to be acquainted with me” (RC, 98). Ignorant that a gun ought to arouse fear, not having read an appropriate book on English visitors, she departs only when Crusoe tosses her a biscuit, who thus does feed her, voluntarily, and without bloodshed on either side. Crusoe transgresses family lineage and learns to live alongside a male cannibal, “my Man Friday, who was as true to me as the very Flesh upon my Bones” (RC, 44). Finally, Serious Reflections’ opening chapter, “Of SOLITUDE”, dispels any fantasy that an individual may exist apart from human society. At the same time, solitude is the natural condition because, “Every Thing revolves in our Minds by innumerable circular Motions, all centring in our selves”.

Crusoe insists it is impossible for us to experience others’ experience except in relation to ourselves since “it is for our selves we enjoy, and for our selves we suffer” (SR, 57, 58).
Such sentiments define and endorse the primacy of the Lockean individual whose experiences and judgements are independent and unique. Empiricist philosophy organizes mental perception of objects into a body of knowledge. Experience informs the language whose words build the concepts that reason develops into schemes for understanding. Reason establishes laws or principles for epistemological classification and acts as the ruling meta-principle in a hierarchy of power. Locke's epistemological rationalism reduces God's involvement in modern consciousness, arguing that the soul begins to think when it begins to perceive, thus identifying it with the newborn mind as inscribable white paper, and so free of any God-given ideas. However, Locke also believes that any sense of self cannot identify exclusively with the physical form. It would be "impossible, in that constant flux of the Particles of our Bodies, that any Man should be the same Person, two days, or two moments together". Furthermore, this soul or mind is not always conscious and so it is "hard to know wherein to place personal Identity". He discounts as absurd the idea that the soul may inhabit another body while the body sleeps and so rejects the idea of the soul as independent agent. Neither the body nor the soul is the basis for human identity, as previously understood, which enables Locke, "fully and finally to subordinate the Christian notion of soul to the Enlightenment notion of reason".

42 Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, II, i, 12, 11.
Dreams, however, indicate that an unruly soul may be busy while the body sleeps. Dreams come and go without reason, denying orderly discrimination in time and space. Dreams “threaten not only the regime of reason but also the autonomy of the subject world”. Multiple perspectives may constitute the healthy, dialogic experience of an internalized, reflexive self. However, uncomfortable or disowned thoughts may fragment to the point of dissociation or alienation and such a split self can create the experience of hearing a voice that “can sound like a mental intrusion”. Richard Hallam describes how such a fractured identity will attribute such voices to “impersonal forces, commonly understood to be natural, like an illness, or supernatural, in the case of God or the Devil”. Crusoe’s hard-won self-sufficiency on the island breaks down when he falls sick and calls on God for the first time since he encountered his first storm. He falls asleep and then into a deeper, “second Sleep”, a duplication in levels of dreaming that parallels his dwelling place’s double defence of wooden palings and living hedge. In the second sleep, he experiences a “terrible Vision, I mean, that even while it was a Dream, I even dreamed of those Horrors”. Disclosing the breach in ordered self-sufficiency, he finds himself “outside the Wall”. An angel, wreathed in dazzling flames, descends from a black cloud and advances apparently with a weapon, announcing, “Seeing all these Things have not brought thee to Repentance, now thou shalt die” (RC, 122).

44 Armstrong and Tennehouse, p. 182.
45 Hallam, Virtual Selves, Real Persons, p. 86.
Geoffrey Sill suggests that the angel’s terrible voice combines Crusoe’s memory of thunder and storm in the shipwreck off Yarmouth with the captain’s following warning. The captain told him to return to his father and to “not tempt Providence to my Ruine; told me I might see a visible Hand of Heaven against me” (RC, 67). The angel clearly occupies this role of chastisement. Crusoe’s vision mediates through a past traumatic event, already interpreted by the captain’s words to reinforce his father’s first warning. The residual information, unprocessed and suppressed, provides Crusoe with the ‘lesson’ that gives meaning to his future, strengthened by the guilt he attributes to an original sin of disobedience. Crusoe’s dream-figure casts the shape of a spear-wielding foreigner who speaks good English from the King James Bible. Crusoe experiences this part-phobic, part-scripted vision as his own cartoon caricature written large: outwardly savage, inwardly bearing Christian guilt and judgement. His illness continues for another two or three days, during which he reviews the events in his life that brought him to the island, and recalls his father’s prophecy of divine abandonment. After what he calls his first genuine prayer, a cry for help, he remembers that he has tobacco in a chest and that Brazilians use tobacco to cure illness. “I went, directed by Heaven no doubt; for in this Chest I found a Cure, both for Soul and Body”. Sill draws attention to the contemporary belief that American Indians used tobacco when sick to gain healing sleep through numbed rest and to experience prophetic

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Alongside the tobacco, Crusoe chances upon a Bible which, “to this Time I had not found Leisure, or so much Inclination to look into” (RC, 126). After smoking, he reads Psalm 50:15, “Call on me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me”.

At one point in his Serious Reflections, Crusoe mocks deists for inverting the act of creation when they erect a God in their own reasonable image, “a fine well bred good natur’d Gentleman like Deity, that cannot have the Heart to damn any of his Creatures to an Eternal Punishment” (SR, 118). God’s emissary certainly disrupts Crusoe’s composure of mind as it straddles the known and the feared, the light and the dark in self-contradictory signals that frustrate description. The angel also cuts across Crusoe’s narrative of sequential, rational history, interrupting his reproduced order of journal entries. In Lyotard’s terms, it is an ‘Event’ that “disrupts any pre-existing referential frame within which it might be represented or understood”. The angel breaks down Crusoe’s defences, while the dream stands Crusoe outside his range of comprehension and carefully constructed self-image. The angel does not kill him; Crusoe lives, but remission is probationary. The revelation compels Crusoe to reinterpret experience and text so that he “began to construe the Words mentioned above, Call on me, and I will deliver you, in a different Sense from what I had ever done before” (RC, 128). Up until conversion, Crusoe indulges “a rash and immoderate Desire of rising faster than the Nature of the Thing admitted” (RC, 85). He may be right to invoke original sin as the cause of his behaviour. Imitating the

48 Sill, The Cure of the Passions, p. 95.
hubris of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, he rejected his father's command only to set himself up in his place. Crusoe accepts subjection only now because authority comes from a higher, irresistible level of power.

Crusoe experiences himself as a convert, a passive reflector on the mysterious ways of Providence. G. A. Starr describes Defoe's definition of Providence as the administration of God's government on earth. Crusoe inserts himself into this chain of bureaucratic command so that "as Friday is to Crusoe, so Crusoe (eventually) is to Providence: grateful, alert and submissive". Starr also remarks, though, that Crusoe's relationship with Providence "threatens to become a brash megalomania". It is not long before he becomes God's active agent. Crusoe has a mission. He assumes an identity that does not depend on the genealogical and historical accident of a biological father but comes directly from God the Father.

Disobedience towards parents flouts the social and divine order because "any attempt to disrupt or elude their established pattern implies a denial of God's power, and by extension, challenges his very existence". Crusoe understands that he is 'bad' in relation to God and his father but he becomes 'good' as he becomes a father to his island subjects. This is Defoe's overt didactic message in both *The Family Instructor* and *Robinson Crusoe*. However, both texts present situations in which family hierarchy is dysfunctional and the books' events continually thwart the didactic pattern. Crusoe returns to England and

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50 Starr, "Introduction", in *Serious Reflections*, pp. 42, 43.
establishes a family and a country estate but his island authority collapses. The population at home do not recognize his supreme command, and takes little notice of his existence. Individuals who are dissatisfied with their role are, according to Nancy Armstrong, thematically central to novels. They highlight the point of contradiction or conflict in Locke’s philosophy of social contract in which the individual gives up rights in exchange for security.\textsuperscript{53} The experience of return also denies Crusoe’s claimed role as Prodigal Son for “there is no tearful reunion, no fatted calf, not even a sad visit to the father’s grave”. Such an abandonment of any allegorical message leads Leopold Damrosch to conclude that the novelty of Defoe’s narrative lies in “the effective withdrawal of God from a structure which survives without him”.\textsuperscript{54}

Crusoe’s vision denies interpretive mastery and its destabilizing, anti-hierarchical power reflects in the trilogy’s arrangement and publication of information. Crusoe writes the third volume first, the first second and the second third as he imposes myths of guilt, fathers and prodigal sons onto experiences to draw the Event of his vision of a savage angel into terms that he can understand and use to write a revised future. Autobiographical writing did not need to be ‘spiritual’ in ambition to act as a means to self-understanding. A Puritan autobiography may function as a vehicle for self-justification, an apologia, or as an investigative deconstruction of autobiographical assumptions. Indeed, Jürgen Habermas domesticates and privatizes the

\textsuperscript{53} Armstrong, \textit{How Novels Think}, pp. 4, 33.
genre as he describes a development in literary self-observation when feelings were written onto paper and the “diary became a letter addressed to the sender, and the first-person narrative became a conversation with one’s self addressed to another person”.

Crusoe’s account may claim, as Defoe’s third title advertises, to be an exemplary work of *Serious Reflections*. However, the remainder of the title undermines customary expectation since these *Serious Reflections* do not occur after but during the *Life and Surprising Adventures*. This implies that reflections are culled both at the time of the events and as retrospective interpretations that select and shape his record. When he proposes to pass on the Spaniards’ history of the island colony, Crusoe explains, “I shall collect the Facts Historically, as near as I can gather them out of my Memory from what they related to me” (*FA*, p.30). Casually attributing error or omission to the faulty memory of an old man pre-empts any suggestion that he writes a deliberately false or distorted ‘history’, but acknowledgement of frailty also records that he does not, and very likely cannot have full knowledge either of his past or of himself.

A sound mind and memory are, for Locke, two major indicators of the existence of a personal self that he describes as “the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking”. This sense of a cohesive and individual consciousness is perhaps the same as the consistent ‘voice’ or ‘character’ of a text’s author, whether purportedly

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factual or fictional. Against this, Lyotard observes that the ‘I’ that
functions to connect events into a narrative, to make sense of the self to
the self, is an “empty link”. He paraphrases Descartes as the
seventeenth-century voice for the modern sense of self-identity that says,
“This proposition, ‘I am’, ‘I exist’, whenever I utter it or conceive it in
my mind, is necessarily true”. Lyotard objects, “from one ‘whenever’ to
the next, there is no guarantee that I am the same”. 57 Discussing
Gulliver’s Travels, a text often regarded as Swift’s anti-matter to
Robinson Crusoe, Michael Seidel argues that “Crusoe is an image of the
reconstituted self that Swift so distrusted, the I-land whose fictional
experience reinforces the idea of enterprise, liberty, and self-sovereignty
in the modern world”. 58 Gulliver’s Travels parodies the subjective
account that would draw the world into its delusions.

One person reads Robinson Crusoe as a testimony to
Enlightenment rationalism; another interprets the same text as a
testament to religious faith. In An Essay Concerning Human
Understanding, John Locke recognizes reason and revelation as sources
for knowledge. He lays out “the measures and boundaries between faith
and reason” and then draws a distinction between original and
traditional revelation. The first is “that first impression, which is made
immediately by GOD, on the mind of any man, to which we cannot set
any bounds”. The second involves “those impressions delivered over to
others in words, and the ordinary ways of conveying our conceptions to

57 Jean-François Lyotard, The Differend: Phrases in Dispute (1983), trans. by Georges
Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), § 3, §72.
58 Seidel, “Gulliver’s Travels and the contracts of fiction”, in The Cambridge
Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel, ed. John J. Richetti (Cambridge:
one another”. This secondary order of revelation, its communication from one person to another, is subject to judgement by reason. Crusoe appreciates the ancient Persians’ pagan worship of the sun as understandable, “where Reason was its own Judge only, without the Helps of Revelation” (SR, 144). Friday demonstrates that reason is not sufficient when he disrupts Crusoe’s religious instruction with his logical objections. Crusoe’s dream-vision allows no space for rationalising reflections. The voice of God overwhelms Crusoe in body and in mind. At least, this is Crusoe’s trajectory in three volumes of memoirs and reflections.

Crusoe overwrites his original journal of chronological events with hindsight, claiming his adventures as evidence for a process of spiritual awakening, repentance and conversion. He highlights correspondences between dates and events to justify his belief in patterns for a reborn and meaningful identity. He adverts to a “strange Concurrence of Days”, noting he was captured on the same date that he left home. Similarly, he escaped the Yarmouth shipwreck on the same date that he escaped slavery, and was born on September 30th, the same day that he was castaway, “so that my wicked Life, and my solitary Life begun both on a Day” (RC, 155). In Crusoe’s view, “Providence causes the Revolutions of Days, to form a Concurrence between the Actions of Men, which it does not approve or does approve, and the Reward of these Actions in this World” (SR, 189). By the third volume, he is able to assure readers that “the Voice of God, even his immediate Voice from
Heaven, is not entirely ceased from us, though it may have changed the Mediums of Communication" (SR, 193).

The Angel as Event is the dynamic source for Crusoe’s autobiographical narratives of sin and redemption. At the same time, its aftershock continues the process of dismantling hierarchy initiated by Crusoe when he disobeyed his father. If Crusoe later rationalizes and acts upon the experience as his justification as a divine agent, other experiences and interpretations insist on disorientation. Some years after the vision, when still solitary, Crusoe fears he sees the eyes of the Devil shine out at him from a cave. He enters the darkness with a burning torch, chiding himself that there is nothing more frightening on the island than himself but stops short at the sound of a sigh, as of a man in pain, “follow’d by a broken Noise, as if of Words half express’d”. They are the sounds of a dying goat. Geoffrey Sill redraws this episode as an inverting reflection of Crusoe’s dream of revelation:

Just as the fiery figure had stood above him on rising ground with a long spear or weapon in his hand, and had spoken to him some unintelligible words that seemed to signify that he had come to kill Robinson, so in the cave Robinson advances towards the dying goat, holding his firebrand in one hand and his gun in the other, mumbling some words that might be prayers or
exclamations, but which would be unintelligible sounds to the goat.  

If Crusoe is to Friday as God is to Crusoe, when Crusoe’s vision becomes equivalent to a goat’s reception of Crusoe, the flow of authority reverses and breaks up imposition of meaning.

Defoe’s text allows for multiple interpretations but Crusoe attempts to enforce a particular vision. He would control experience as he masters the island, the sole historian and director of events. Crusoe relates to the cannibal by presuming a common but Eurocentric humanity. He ‘colonizes’ Friday with Western identities of name, clothes, diet and religion. Crusoe’s negotiation between experimentation in the outside world and inner acceptance of faith is acknowledged in Michael McKeon’s praise of *Robinson Crusoe* as an “astonishing descent to the subjective roots of objective and empirical reality”. Such a description of objective reality as rooted in subjectivity, however, might also reinforce a suspicion that any individual experience is of indeterminate value as a lesson or precedent for anybody else or any other situation. Crusoe changes secular and religious modes according to circumstance and need. He reads Bible passages providentially, “with a Sense of my Condition” (*RC*, 128). However, when Will Atkins, recently converted mutineer, imagines that he too is the special object for divine tuition, Crusoe smartly takes up a stance of sensible empiricism. Will is overjoyed when Crusoe gives him a Bible. Atkins tells his Carib wife

that this proves God’s existence: he had prayed for a Bible and now God has responded. Crusoe moves to disabuse the woman, gravely relieving her of any impression “that an express Messenger came from Heaven, on Purpose to bring that individual Book; but it was too serious a Matter, to suffer any Delusion to take Place” (FA, 114).

Geoffrey Sill observes that Defoe’s narrative is “deliberately ambiguous [. . . ] on the crucial question of whether it was the tobacco or the Bible that cured him”.61 When Friday asks Crusoe why God does not destroy the Devil, Crusoe quickly “diverted the present Discourse”, and sends his pupil on an errand while he prays for guidance. Crusoe had earlier considered his own disturbing thought, “why it has pleas’d God to hide the like saving Knowledge from so many Millions of Souls, who if I might judge by this poor Savage, would make a much better use of it than we did”. He dismisses the question as impertinent in the face of God’s unimaginable power, “as we are all Clay in the Hand of the Potter, no Vessel could say to him, Why hast thou form’d me thus?” (RC, 212).

In his volume of philosophical reflections, however, he returns to the troubling question of how an infinitely loving God can preside over the damnation of millions of souls. He claims that he has no wish to promote doubts or to undermine religion but “I only name Things” (SR, 134).

The Farther Adventures reinforces the random and purposeless character of the individual separated from community. Returned to England, married and settled, Crusoe tells that, “in the Middle of all this Felicity, one Blow from unforeseen Providence unhing’d me at once”

61 Sill, The Cure of the Passions, pp. 94, 95.
This blow is the death of his wife. Crusoe’s restless identity resurfaces and he accepts his captain nephew’s offer of a berth on his ship. Crusoe characterizes this “wandring Disposition” as “born in my very Blood” (FA, 9, 7), and so involves his dead father’s wandering genes in his own disobedience. Crusoe’s resurrected individualism also threatens his Christian identity. His initial justification for ‘farther adventures’ is that the ships will call on his island and so he may secure his colonial settlement. However, as soon as he feels he has decently completed this task, he is keen to continue voyaging, accompanying his nephew to the East Indies, declaring, “I have now done with the Island: I left them all in good Circumstances, and in a flourishing Condition” (FA, 119). Just three days out along the Brazilian coast, a flotilla of natives blocks progress. As ever, Friday is the interpreting intermediary. The natives show their contempt by mooning at him and then fire 300 arrows, three of which kill him. The Europeans scatter the attackers with cannon fire, bury Friday at sea and “so ended the Life of the most grateful, faithful, honest, and most affectionate Servant, that ever Man had” (FA, 123). This faithful servant of the servant of God dies on the third day, completing an ominous series of threes. Naturally, Friday does not rise again on the third or any other day. It is as though Crusoe’s attested spiritual rebirth, the justifying foundation to his colony and his autobiography, has never happened. Crusoe insists for a second time that “I have now done with my Island” and adds, “and all Manner of Discourse about it” (FA, 125).
Crusoe’s construction of inner identity balances against external analogues. When Crusoe appears to rescue him out of nowhere, the English captain’s reactions parody Crusoe’s dream of a savage angel, asking, “Am I talking to God, or Man! Is it a real Man, or an Angel!” They marvel at each other’s histories as contributions to their own miraculous rescue. The captain reflects that Crusoe endured twenty-eight years on the island “on purpose to save his Life”. Crusoe treats the captain “as a Man sent from Heaven to deliver me” (RC, 246, 248, 260).

Mid-way across the Atlantic from Brazil to the Cape of Good Hope and mid-way through The Farther Adventures, Crusoe announces that his story will see misfortunes happen more on land than at sea. This announcement also initiates a series of inversions in his fortunes. He loses influence with his nephew and crew after an incident at Madagascar, significantly notorious as a stronghold for pirates. Previously welcoming natives kill a sailor, who had molested a local girl, and tie his stripped corpse to a village tree. The ship’s crew slaughter the entire village population while Crusoe retreats to the ship, sickened and impotent. When five sailors disappear, taken as slaves or killed on the Arabian coast, Crusoe pronounces it as heavenly retribution. The boatswain points out that none of the men had been involved. This temporarily silences Crusoe but his resumption of “frequent preaching to them on this Subject” drives the crew to threaten mutiny and his nephew sets him ashore. Crusoe’s religious message that he brings to the world from his revelation on the island now places him “alone in the remotest Part of the World, as I think I may call it; for I
was near three Thousand Leagues by Sea farther off from England, than
I was at my Island" (FA, 140, 143).

The self-conscious, Lockean reflective self constructs itself in the
process of self-representation and is, then, necessarily doubled or two-
faced in relation to the self and to others. Crusoe boasts of his skill in
deceiving others when it suits his purpose. Defoe makes it clear that
Crusoe’s stories cannot be entirely trusted. Dishonesty creates an
uncomfortable sense of split identity and yet, “Necessity makes an
honest Man a Knave [. . .] A rich Man is an honest Man, no Thanks to
him” (SR, 79). An incident in Siberia captures Defoe’s treatment of the
complexities of human self-misrepresentation. Crusoe interrupts an
exiled minister’s discourse upon the might and magnificence of his
Emperor. Crusoe assures him, “I was a greater and more powerful Prince
than ever the Czar of Muscovy was, tho’ my Dominions were not so
large, or my People so many [. . .] and that never Tyrant, for such I
acknowledg’d my self to be, was ever so universally belov’d, and yet so
horribly fear’d, by his Subjects” (FA, 205). Defoe’s character lets the
reader know that before he tells his true story, he is deliberately puzzling
or “amusing” his listeners with “these Riddles in Government”. What
neither Crusoe nor his audience know, and Defoe never makes explicit,
is that his island-kingdom is in the throes of disintegration and that his
abandoned ‘Subjects’ are sending undeliverable letters begging Crusoe
to honour his contractual pledge and take them home. The third chapter,
“CONVERSATION”, insists that a contented mind must have a sound
basis, that is, it must share a common consciousness, “otherwise a
Lunatick in *Bedlam* is a compleatly happy Man; he sings in his Hutch” (*SR*, 103). Crusoe continues to describe, without any trace of ironic self-recognition, how such a hutch-dwelling lunatic’s delusion “makes him fancy himself a Prince, a Monarch, a Statesman, or just what he pleases to be” (*SR*, 104), words that recall Crusoe’s expressions of island self-entitlements.

Dampier and Crusoe in their travel autobiographies, factual and fictional, imply that received information can be misleading and unreliable. Dampier contradicts a common belief that Moskito Indians are dangerous and untrustworthy when he writes, “I must confess the Indians assisted us very much [. . .] it is much better to be Friends with them”.62 Crusoe’s experience also places primary, subjective experience above secondary, officially authorized report. English Church and government authorities mounted public exhibitions of English prisoners to emphasize Moorish ill-treatment of enslaved Christians and to glorify the Christian charity spent in redeeming them.63 Crusoe recalls his wonder that, as a captured slave, “The Usage I had there was not so dreadful as at first I apprehended” (*RC*, 69). After a year of sharing work and conversation with a savage cannibal, Crusoe reports that “I began to love the Creature” (*RC*, 215). He conventionally balances acts of native cannibalism against Spanish massacres of Incas but then learns to appreciate the Spaniards on his island. He insists, “let the Accounts of Spanish cruelty in Mexico and Peru, be what they will, I never met with seventeen Men of any Nation whatsoever, in any foreign Country, who

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were so universally Modest, Temperate, Virtuous, so very good
Humour’d, and so Courteous as these Spaniards” (FA, 58). Initially,
Crusoe is prejudiced against a clergyman on the three damming counts
that he is “a French popish Priest” (FA, 83), but the man’s combination
of faith and pragmatism wins him over. If Crusoe is the originating
textual representative of English individualism, his character also
establishes that individuals are not representative of species, race,
nationality or religion. Individuals throw classification awry.

Experiences that do not match expectations, however, introduce
confusion and doubt. When Crusoe returns to the island with his
nephew, they approach from a different direction. The fresh perspective
means that “I did not know it when I saw it, or know whether I saw it or
no” (FA, 26). The Spaniard he rescued from cannibals does not
recognize him either. New growth and new trees mean that he needs
guidance to his original home. When other Spaniards appear, Crusoe
cannot identify them, explaining that “In the Dress they were in, it was
impossible to guess what Nation they were of”. Crusoe, the island, and
everybody on the island have changed so much that recognition dawns
only as memory and expectation revise and reintegrate the new
experience.

Accident and misunderstanding mould perception and
interpretation as much as rational judgement. An Englishman at Bengal
invites Crusoe to hire a ship for a trading voyage to China as a joint
investment. The merchant argues, “what should we stand still for? The
whole World is in Motion, rouling round and round; all the Creatures of
God, heavenly bodies and earthly are busy and diligent, Why should we be idle?” This may sound like an appeal to Puritan enterprise but Crusoe understands that “if Trade was not my Element, Rambling was” (FA, 144). After making good profits, Crusoe persuades his partner to purchase a Dutch ship on offer at a bargain. Six years of successful trading follow. One day, when they anchor for repairs in the Bay of Siam, an English sailor gives them fair warning that Dutch and English ships stand close by. This puzzles Crusoe until he learns that his boat is stolen property. As Europeans name him as a pirate, his thinking reflexes Europeans into pirates as he understands he is now as afraid of seeing Dutch or English ships in these waters as Dutch and English ships are afraid of Algerian corsairs on the Mediterranean. The reflection distresses Crusoe: “I had chiefly been my own Enemy, or as I may rightly say, I had been no Body’s Enemy but my own: But now I was embarrass’d in the Worst Condition imaginable; for tho’ I was perfectly innocent, I was in no Condition to make that Innocence appear” (FA, 154).

Slippage widens between interpretations when Crusoe meets a Portuguese pilot. Offering his local knowledge, the pilot recommends Macao for business. Crusoe insists on his original itinerary of Nanjing and then Peking. The pilot quickly agrees, telling him enthusiastically that a Dutch ship has just gone before them. Crusoe observes that they are in no position to fight a large Dutch ship. Confused, the pilot reminds him that the English are not at war with the Dutch. Crusoe observes that the Dutch will act in whatever way they like beyond the reach of
European law. Still puzzled, the pilot reassures him that the Dutch would not molest merchants and points out reasonably, "Why, says he, you are no Pirates, what need you fear?" (FA, 160). Relentlessly keen to reassure Crusoe, the pilot tells him that there have been no pirates in the area for at least fifteen years, apart from one crew that recently murdered their captain and seized their ship. Abandoning subterfuge, Crusoe rounds on the pilot, telling him that "no Man ought to be treated as a Criminal, 'till some Evidence may be had of the Crime, and that he is the Man". He tells the pilot his own very different interpretation of events and records with some satisfaction that, "The old Man was amaz'd at this Relation". The pilot is 'amazed' because Crusoe's story contradicts all that he had been previously told. Crusoe assures him that the other story was "all a Fiction of their own" (FA, 162).

Locke believed that words no more held innate meaning than humans were born with innate ideas. Just as globally different practices and beliefs invalidate innate ideas, so the lack of any universal language indicates that signifiers are arbitrary, and culturally evolved. Locke's theory that a person receives the world as impressions through the senses that he then reflects into ideas means that another's self is mediated and readable only through words that operate as the signs for another's ideas. The Puritan self may be open to God and to self-introspection but the Lockean self is hidden to others, readable only by signs. Locke argues that even when two people use the same words, they do not necessarily invoke the same ideas in one another's mind.  

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64 Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III, ii, 1, 2, 4.
people can speak a language perfectly with each other but still have no meaningful communication. This becomes more complicated when communication becomes subject to deliberate manipulation, or rhetoric.65 Invited to admire the Great Wall of China, Crusoe drily agrees that it is excellent for keeping out Tartars. The Portuguese pilot laughs, knowing Crusoe’s contempt for Chinese accomplishments and even lower regard for the martial skills of Tartars. He identifies Crusoe’s rhetorical strategy as speaking “in Colours [. . .] Why, you speak what looks white this Way, and black that Way” (FA, 183). Whether something is black or white depends upon the position and the perspective of speaker and audience. Defoe also draws attention to the appearance of the printed page as a textual manipulation of perception and understanding.

The savage angel may be only a dream in a mind distorted by fever and Crusoe’s account may only be ink pressed onto paper but both stay there and, “If the impression is great enough, the truth is measured more by its power than by its verification”.66 In contrast to the savage angel’s eruption into his dreams, Crusoe’s “A VISION OF THE ANGELICK WORLD” fuses imagination and reality into a more conscious, daytime experience. Crusoe watches how devils insinuate lies and temptations into unsuspecting minds, “with my Eyes wide open”. He can only infer a parallel body of good spirits because as these “pass and repass invisible, I confess, I have yet had no Ideas of them, but those which I have received from my first View of the infernal Region” (SR,

The residence of good spirits is higher, and beyond mortal human vision. Crusoe mocks traditional images of heaven that feature "fine Walks, noble illustrious Palaces, Gardens of Gold". However, he understands and explains that "We can Form no Idea of any Thing that we know not and have not seen but in the Form of something that we have seen" (SR, 248). This almost provides a theoretical frame for Defoe's work as an attempt to express or describe something so new that words cannot apply except by suggestive allusions to a reality that "chimes Part for Part, and Step for Step with the inimitable Life of Robinson Crusoe" (SR, 53).

The self is neither innate nor an objective reality but an instrumental fiction that realizes itself through its own narration. Crusoe imposes religious significance on his story to the end but alternative interpretations shadow and undertow his reflections. Defoe involves the reader both in sympathetic and imaginative identification with a first-person narrative and in an equally alert and sceptical disassociation of its textual techniques. Such a process invokes readers' reflexive recognition of the construction of the perceptions, thoughts and reflections that constitute a personal identity. The truth does not lie 'out there' in the world, in other people, or in a printed text but is subject to continuous negotiation and interpretation. The next chapter considers another of Defoe's autobiographical inventions, Captain Singleton, whose protagonist is less assertive than Crusoe, more written than writing and marginalized in a world that has no settled border, definition or identity.
Chapter 4

_Captain Singleton: Incommensurable Exchanges_

In Defoe’s _The Family Instructor_, a child features as the tutor for a father who has lost sight of his religious duties as head of the family. After some resistance, the family and the wider community recognize the child as a miraculous medium for divine instruction. In other words, contrary to Locke’s refutation of innate ideas, this child appears to speak from a body of divinely implanted wisdom. _Captain Singleton_ (1720), in notable contrast, appears to take up Locke’s argument that worldly experience forms human understanding. _Captain Singleton_ takes the narrative viewpoint of a child snatched, as it were, from _The Family Instructor_’s protected domestic space and projects that child into a ruthless world of European exploration and exploitation. Bob Singleton’s account embodies disjunctions between ethical principle and business demand, government regulation and individual enterprise, integrity and survival. Unlike Crusoe, Singleton is a blank page without history and appears to be indifferent to the moral implications of his adventures as sailor, explorer and pirate. William Walters, a Quaker surgeon captured by Singleton and his fellow pirates, initiates a process of self-reflection that ends in Bob’s conversion and autobiographical confession. Bob’s habitual recourse to fiction, evasion and disguise, however, suggests that this presentation of an authentic, interior identity may be just another flag of convenience. _Captain Singleton_ deepens
Robinson Crusoe’s exploration of disjunctive views of personal identity as an unfolding divine soul or as the product of material circumstance.

Defoe’s moral ambivalence or equivocation, as well as his elusive biographical identity, has long been condemned as proof of a highly flexible, publicity-seeking self-serving ambition. An anonymous attack on his religious and political undecideability offers this colourful, but quite representative example:

Of all the Writers that have Prostituted their Pens, either to encourage Faction, oblige a Party, or for their own Mercenary Ends; the Person here mentioned is the Vilest. An Animal who shifts his Shape oftner then Proteus, and goes backwards and forwards like a Hunted Hare; a thorough-pac’d, true-bred Hypocrite, an High-Church Man one Day, and a Rank Whig the next.¹

Defoe reproduces such a portrait of elusive identity and responsibilities in the structure and matter of Captain Singleton. Its generic oddity, firstly, is brought out well in Timothy Blackburn’s observation that the first half is a travel narrative that is not like other travel narratives while the second half is piratical but is not pirate literature.² The travel narrative takes Bob across the unexplored vastness of Africa but offers

¹ JUDAS Discuver’d, and Catch’d at last: Or, Daniel de Foe in Lobs Pound (London, 1713), p. 3.
² Timothy C. Blackburn, “The Coherence of Defoe’s Captain Singleton”, The Huntington Library Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 2 (February 1978), p. 120.
little in the way of the usual observation and detail of exotic flora, fauna and indigenous people. In the novel’s second part, Bob’s piratical adventures minimize descriptions of bloody violence and emphasize clemency and circumspection, appearing to recommend piracy as a profitable branch of international commerce, if managed properly. William Walter’s position as a Christian prisoner who directs his outlaw captors well represents the contradictions and anomalies of Defoe’s narrative.

Personal identity is, in Locke’s analysis, changing sensory experience organized by memory and rational reflection. Defoe may have theological misgivings that such an unstable self, subject to local conditions, may imply that there is no guiding, immortal soul and no Judgement Day but he shares Locke’s empiricist and pragmatic attitude towards the material world. Crusoe embodies this contradiction as his memoirs and reflections attempt to interpret his experiences within a religious script while, in practice, he adapts and adjusts, even profits, from the random events that resist his allegorical patterns of reward and punishment. Locke allows that different moralities arise from different languages that express different cultural ideas and beliefs. It became a crucial theme of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that the accident of birth and growth amongst different situations informed disparate customs and beliefs.³ Locke promoted toleration of different, even opposing views as politically and socially vital, effectively creating

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“an epistemology of toleration”. Lyotard instead emphasizes irreconcilable disjunctions between different perspectives and interpretations as the ‘Differend’ that “marks a point of incommensurability, of dispute or difference where no criteria exist for judgement. The differend marks a point where existing representational frameworks are unable to deal with difference without repressing or reducing it”. Lyotard does not recognise only that foreign cultures develop different values by way of different speech, but that there are different languages within the native European tongue. Lyotard goes on to elaborate that many possible linkages may be made between phrases and will legitimately alter, for example, an ethical to an economic discourse; however, only one is possible at one time and that holds valid only until the next turn of phrase. Captain Singleton offers a good illustration of Lyotard’s analysis. John Richetti observes, for example, that many of the dialogues between the pirates Bob and William could as easily fit into The Family Instructor’s moral and didactic environment. It is true that William becomes Bob’s spiritual guide, “while in a vagrant Life, among Infidels, Turks, Pagans, and such Sort of People”, but the Quaker’s adaptability also defies any attribution of moral consistency. Readers may be left with the impression of being gullied as much as the

three English merchants when "the merry old Quaker diverted them exceedingly with his Talk, and Thee'd and Thou'd'em, till he made 'em so drunk, that they could not go on Shore for that Night" (205).

Economic and religious priorities often clash within Defoe's writings, a problem that occurs not simply because Defoe is theologically casuistic or plainly argumentative but because his writings reflect pressures and problems occasioned by England's commercial expansion into unfamiliar worlds. Defoe's engagement with the phenomenon that Lyotard names as 'the differend' illuminates the perceived shift to a 'modern' and 'secular' society. Such a society is subject to human interpretation, intervention, mastery, and no longer in a world that is God's creation and subject to God's command. Hans H. Anderson's article, "The Paradox of Trade and Morality in Defoe" (1941), is an important early study of Defoe's apparently mutually exclusive loyalties to religious morality and commercial profit. Andersen concludes that for Defoe, trade will always trump religion. This agrees with the foundational capitalist credo that trade will always obey the laws of supply and demand, regardless of religious or ethical rulings. Mocking Spain's refusal to trade with Moors, for example, Defoe insists that "Trade knows no Religions, no Sects, no Parties, no Divisions". However, Andersen's summary and explanation of Defoe's compartmentalized economic and ethical criteria also bring to mind Lyotard's description of incommensurable narratives and the generic shifts and twists from phrase to phrase: "A proposition wholly

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acceptable when viewed with reference to economic ends might be equally objectionable with reference to religious or political ends. His conclusion depended in each case on his frame of reference.” 10 Each case is local and immediate: there is no grand narrative and no final judgement day.

Locke affirmed the existence of the soul and of God but argued that such mysteries were in the province of revelation, and therefore beyond human comprehension; meanwhile, humans have the capacity and the duty to explore and understand the world to the limits of their God-given faculty of reason. Such an argument led some to suspect that Locke shared a rationalist, deist idea of God. Anglican clergy and, in more personal terms, Locke’s former pupil, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, tenaciously defended innate ideas to avoid giving ground to moral relativism. 11 Any entertainment of intellectual toleration in this area could lead to anarchy and social breakdown: if there were no God-given truths there may be no God-given soul and therefore, ultimately, no God. 12 Seventeenth-century philosophers such as Pufendorf and Locke acknowledged the challenge of relativism and scepticism when morality is figured as a human construct. One solution would be to find that moral powers are innate in human nature, present in institutions of family, civil and international community; this was the theoretical framework for

natural law. However, growing tendencies to ground moral agency in individual rights undermined the communal basis for natural law.\textsuperscript{13}

Blackburn suggests that Bob Singleton’s business in the novel is to decide whether he will exist as a pirate in a state of nature, in Africa and Madagascar, or to make his home in England as the location for civilized and socialized man, a process related through a religious parable of innocence, rebellion and repentance.\textsuperscript{14} The titles of Andersen and Blackburn’s studies are indicative of approaches that focus upon Captain Singleton either as a work of ‘paradox’ or a work that carries some internal pattern of ‘coherence’. Studies that are more recent have, on the contrary, embraced Defoe’s piratical characters as transgressive, portraying an outlaw culture that cuts across the economic and cultural mores of English society.\textsuperscript{15} Bob and William’s relationship both highlights and negates the emergent conventional opposition between public virtue and private affection, or business and domesticity, and instead celebrates “the inseparability of affection and interest”.\textsuperscript{16}

In his book on the contemporary importance of the concept of circulation in economic and physiological health, David Trotter remarks how Defoe’s protagonists realize that any “encounter with unintelligible jargons or languages is a sure sign that they have strayed from the grid of correspondence”.\textsuperscript{17} There is no doubt that Defoe wrote to the print

\textsuperscript{13} Knud Haakonssen, Natural law and moral Philosophy: from Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 61, 62.
\textsuperscript{14} Blackburn, “The Coherence of Defoe’s Captain Singleton”, pp. 120, 121.
market for travel and pirate narratives, and that characters like Crusoe and Singleton who confront and incorporate the hybridity and dichotomy of the strange and the familiar fascinated the European reader and writer. As with the other texts by Defoe already discussed, *Captain Singleton* also delights in upsetting expectations. Elisions of category between trade and crime, national states and international piracy, illustrate how the difficulty of applying any consistent moral discourse informs the fluidity of self-representational images and identities. In a world of disjunctive demands between cultural norms and alien environments, Singleton and Walters demonstrate how personal loyalty ranks higher than any other consideration. Trotter also observes, however, that individual identities open up an alternative economy as they trade different versions of the self for conversion and in which the spiritual autobiography becomes the only and self-reiterating evidence for an individual’s genuine conversion. Overall, critics appear to be still satisfyingly at sea when it comes to agreeing any coherent intention or achievement in *Captain Singleton*.

*Captain Singleton* highlights the risk of reliance on others’ words in a market of transitory, agreed terms. Kidnapped at the age of two, Bob is exchangeable goods. He is conveyed from kidnapper to beggar-woman to gypsy-mother-thief, from workhouse-master to merchant captain, seized by Turkish corsairs and exploited by Portuguese sailors. He comes of age when he takes part in an unsuccessful mutiny off Madagascar. Marooned with other malcontents, he leads them eighteen

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hundred miles across unknown, unmapped Africa, surviving wild animals, hostile natives, deserts, hunger, heat and thirst. They also encounter a naked Englishman with wild beard and long hair, a rogue trader who lives under the protection of an African tribe and who helps Bob and his crew locate and amass fabulous amounts of gold and ivory. After two years of dissipation in England from the proceeds, Bob returns to sea as his accustomed home and joins a second, more successful mutiny. Thereafter, he enthusiastically invites the reader to accompany him and "consort with the most famous Pyrates of the Age, some of whom have ended their Journals at the Gallows" (122). Bob supplies the reader with a methodical inventory of gains in goods, weapons, men and ships in the West Indies that could act as recruitment literature for the cruising way of life, saving a quick allusion to his captain's cruelty: "But this Part I bury in Silence for the Present" (124).

Seizure of William Walters introduces a new perspective. Walters, a pacifist Quaker, agrees to join with the pirates but on his own terms. Over the course of the rest of the narrative, he makes himself indispensable as an advisor to the pirates and as a friend and confidant to Bob. Gradually, William wins Bob over to an alternative moral and religious narrative. Historically, pirates were a hybrid of private and public maritime enterprise, nationally sanctioned or internationally outlawed according to current political and economic circumstances. If criminal society has constructed Bob, circumstantial pressures also contain and contaminate William's religious convictions. He camouflages his relationship with pirates in speech that misdirects,
masks involvement and resists responsibility. After successful expeditions in the East Indies, both piratical and legitimate, and laden with as much treasure as they could have ever wished for, Bob’s crew vote to return to Madagascar. At this point, William calls Bob aside and confides his desire to leave off their way of life. William guides Bob home to England, educating him in the doctrines of sin and repentance while he spins them through a series of disguises and transubstantiates pirate booty into private fortune. By the end of the story, they transform from capital outlaws into exotic foreign merchants. Bob marries the only other person who knows who they are, William’s sister, and they retire into rural anonymity.

Bob Singleton’s autobiography exhibits both picaresque and early *bildungsroman* elements as a narrative of personal growth and development that takes place within random disasters and opportunities. Bob begins life as an unlettered child without name or history and closes it as a wealthy pirate, teaching others lessons he has learned through his written account. Defoe’s novel appears to offer fictional support to John Locke’s epistemological foundation as it records a growth in consciousness that draws on and responds to circumstances. It may be useful to quote the original passage from Locke:

§ *The original of all our Knowledge*. In time, the Mind comes to reflect on its own *Operations*, about the *Ideas* got by *Sensation*, and thereby stores it self with a new set of *Ideas*, which I call *Ideas of Reflection*. These are
the Impressions that are made on our Senses by outward Objects, that are extrinsical to the Mind; and its own Operations, proceeding from Powers intrinsical and proper to it self, which when reflected on by it self, become also Objects of its Contemplation, are, as I have said, the Original of all Knowledge. Thus the first Capacity of Humane Intellect, is, That the mind is fitted to receive the Impressions made on it; either, through the Senses, by outward Objects; or by its own operations, when it reflects on them. This is the first step a Man makes towards the Discovery of any thing, and the Groundwork, whereon to build all those Notions, which ever he shall have naturally in this World. All those sublime Thoughts, which towre above the Clouds, and reach as high as Heaven it self, take their Rise and Footing here: In all that great Extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote Speculations, it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those Ideas, which Sense or Reflection, have offered for its Contemplation.

Locke famously describes the mind in a preceding statement: "Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all
Characters, without any Ideas; How comes it to be furnished? [. . .] To this I answer, in one word, From Experience”.

The child teaches spiritual wisdom in The Family Instructor by provoking his family into self-reflection. Tommy uses observation of the natural world and of his parents’ behaviour as the material that spurs his curiosity. However, his probing logic and the anomalous sophistication of his innocent questions bring adults to believe that God inspires him. Defoe supposes what might happen to a child redrawn from scratch, as it were, on a fresh sheet of blank paper. Unlike Crusoe who chooses activity and adventure over moderation and stability, Bob does not voluntarily exchange one way of life for another but is kidnapped into a train of events that bounce him around the planet like a Newtonian billiard ball of matter. Bob’s only education is criminal. He is a stage prop to increase a beggar-woman’s takings. He is bought by a gypsy who acts as his mother until she is arrested and hanged. He regrets that the gypsy ‘disappeared’ before she could teach him the tricks of the “Strolling Trade”. His Gypsy ‘mother’ purchased him for twelve shillings. He is literally alienated as merchandise, a part of a “Hellish Trade” (19). Since nobody knows his birth-name, the beggar-woman calls him Bob Singleton, “not Robert, but plain Bob” (20). The implication is that she bought him for one shilling: a ‘singleton’, or a plain ‘bob’. Parishes pass him around until a ship’s master takes him on as cabin boy. The master is captured and killed by Algerian rovers who, in their turn, are seized by Portuguese warships and taken to Lisbon.

20 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, II, i, 24, 2.
Abandoned on deck, sharing food scraps with a dog, Bob is taken under the wing of a Portuguese pilot. The pilot increases Bob's value from the price of a meal to the value of extra wages from the ship's captain. When Bob travels to the East Indies, he picks up some Portuguese language and a little knowledge of navigation but learns primarily how to be "an errant Thief and a bad Sailor" (22). He sums up his situation with the proverb, "He that is Shipp'd with the Devil must sail with the Devil; I was among them, and I manag'd my self as well as I could" (23).

Singleton's subjection to rapid and abrupt changes is representative of many people's experience in a period of increasing exploration and rapid, globalized trade. The early eighteenth century featured economically enforced mass displacements of people from countryside to city, from land to sea and from nation to nation. Rural inhabitants, many displaced by land enclosure, moved to the city to become wage labourers, or to the colonies as plantation labourers, often as indentured servants. Africans were transported to Europe and to the Americas as slaves. African and European humans became saleable chattel whose cheap labour increased the value of goods and enriched mercantile and financial entrepreneurs. This, in turn, encouraged socially competitive conspicuous consumption that further increased trade and profit. Probate inventories between 1675 and 1725 witness the greatest expansion in domestic ownership of such luxury items as china and the utensils required for the fashionable new drinks of imported tea, coffee and chocolate. Reorganisation of trade within China during the 1680s

increased the supply of goods through the East India Company and ‘chinamen’ developed a national retail network that facilitated the availability of decorated chinaware.\textsuperscript{22} Snatched away so young from his home, Bob has no memory of or attachment to any interior, domestic space. This lack of memory suggests an absence of any originating interior self and no room for self-reflection.

Locke states baldly that the human person is “nothing but a participation of the same continued Life, by constantly fleeting Particles of Matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body”. Bob is travelled, more than travelling, through a world whose events strike, turn and direct him in an external equivalence of Locke’s “constant Flux of the Particles of our Bodies”.\textsuperscript{23} Furthermore, Bob is indifferent to events and to consequences. Philip Furbank identifies Bob Singleton’s central character trait as ‘anomie’, an absence of hope or fear.\textsuperscript{24} The term derives from the Greek, \textit{a-nomos}, or ‘without law’, an apt characteristic for a pirate but in Bob’s case it perhaps applies more to an impression that he appears to stand apart from any common human emotion, thought or behaviour. When Algerian privateers capture him he claims, “I was not much concerned at the Disaster” (20). Marooned on an island, sailors debate how far away from Africa they might be. Bob shrugs, “For my Part, I knew nothing of this Matter one way or another, but heard it all without Concern, whether it was near or far off” (44). He looks back on himself and his companions as desperate pirates who are

\textsuperscript{23} Locke, \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding}, II, xxvii, 6; II, i, 12.
\textsuperscript{24} P. N. Furbank, “Introduction”, in \textit{Captain Singleton}, p. 1.
“as miserable as nature could well make us to be; for we were upon a Voyage and no Voyage, we were bound some where and no where; for tho’ we knew what we intended to do, we did really not know what we were doing” (42).

Bob’s adventures flow through his consciousness as a phenomenological series of events without issue; as he concludes the first part of his memoirs, his adventures are bookended by “a sad setting out, and a worse Coming home” (121). He appears to have no impulse, or innate drive, to search for improvement, satisfaction or meaning. When expecting to hang for his part in the mutiny, Bob claims, “I do not remember any great Concern I was under about it”. Self-reflection is not something that appears to come naturally to Bob. In fact, he shows a distinct lack of identification or involvement with his past self when he adds, almost as an aside, “only that I cry’d very much”. He concludes this sentence with the belated explanation, “for I knew little then of this World, and nothing at all of the next” (26). In other words, as a Lockean passive, inscribable identity without feeling for himself, or faith in a life beyond the sensory world, Bob Singleton is a machine that others set into motion.

At the genesis of the second part of the book, Bob blindly agrees to join with Harris, one of his new ‘Masters of Mischief’, because “I did not care where I went, having nothing to lose, and no Body to leave behind me” (122). Bob’s random progress, undirected by any higher motivation than change for its own sake, bears uncanny resemblance to a recent, and disapproving, characterisation of the postmodernist ‘self’:
As we proceed into the third millennium the human subject has become, in the eyes of some, little more than a postman circulating postcards in an endless communications network without sender or addressee. A shipwrecked navigator floating on the linguistic jetsam of differential anonymity.  

Defoe’s narrative begs the question of Locke: if the mind is entirely passive to sensory impression, how does any capacity or desire for self-reflection arise to be his averred secondary source for human knowledge? Michael Prince points out that Locke uses passive phrases for brain development to circumvent the question, “if all knowledge comes from sense experience, how do we come to have knowledge of what fits or furnishes the mind ahead of time to receive sense experience?”  

Defoe certainly appeals to a divine source for human direction, whether in government or in personal morality. He also invokes a natural sense of rational curiosity, as illustrated in the infant Tommy’s questions in *The Family Instructor*. When Defoe widens a discussion of current events in an edition of the *Review* (as he often does), he thrice repeats ‘What’s next?’ as the primary drive for any sequence of human ‘adventures’, and answers himself:

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Life it self is a Progression of Inquiry, a continued
Search after something new, something more; and,
WHAT’S NEXT, runs thro’ all Actions of Men, till
they come to a full Stop at the Grave; and then the
grand Eclaircissement, or the full Discovery of all that’s
subsequent, is made at once, and the Enquiry ceases.28

Bob repeatedly draws attention to the absence of any religious
feeling in himself. He was suited to the company of Portuguese sailors,
for example, since he had “no Sense of Religion or Virtue” (23). Bob’s
disillusioned coda to the first half of his story, in which he loses all of his
friends as he loses all of his money, suggests that an endless involvement
in adventures provides insufficient satisfaction. However, he twice
comes close to feeling a sense of direct and personal revelation. His first
episode happens during a storm at sea in an almost obligatory passage
for maritime prose that emphasises the sinful sailor’s realisation of
dependence upon the will of God. Crusoe, for example, believes that the
storm off Yarmouth first warned him against his errant ways, and a
second storm confines him to an island prison. A bolt of lightning comes
so close to Bob and his companions that the shock sucks air from the
sails, making the ship “lay, as we might truly say, Thunder-struck”. The
description of external and sensory events links into Bob’s state of mind:
“I was all Amazement and Confusion, and this was the first Time that I

28 Defoe, A Review of the State of the English Nation, Vol. 3, 1706, Part One: January-
can say I began to feel the Effects of that Horrour which I know since much more of, upon the just Reflection on my former Life. I thought my self doom’d by Heaven to sink that Moment into eternal Destruction” (163). William Dampier’s narrative recalls a similar storm and reflection: “But here I had a lingering View of approaching Death, and little or no hopes of escaping it. And I must confess that my Courage, which I had hitherto kept up, failed me here, and I made very sad Reflections on my former Life, looking back with Horror and Detestation on Actions which before I disliked, but now trembled at the remembrance of”. Storms at sea provide powerful sensory impressions that appear to induce religious reflections. As is also conventional, however, both Dampier and Singleton report how, after the shock has passed and they realise that they are safe, they return to normal thoughts. Bob admits “we were soon the same irreligious hardned Crew that we were before, and I among the rest” (164).

While that passage may prepare the way for Bob’s eventual repentance, the second occasion that stirs Bob’s religious awe is more idiosyncratic, and pertinent to Defoe’s divergence from Locke’s philosophy. After Bob and the marooned sailors have fought and subdued their first African natives, they heal one man, the son of a killed tribal chief. In gratitude, he becomes the white men’s overseer to his people. He and his tribe swear allegiance to the sailors by pointing to the sun and clapping hands, and then ask that the Europeans use the same

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ritual to swear to feed and protect them. The sailors oblige but Bob records his epiphany:

I think it was the first time in my Life that ever any religious Thought affected me; but I could not refrain some Reflections, and almost Tears, in considering how happy it was, that I was not born among such Creatures as these, and was not so stupidly ignorant and barbarous. (64)

Locke’s anthropological citations in his arguments for ‘human understanding’ invite toleration of cultural diversity, or even recognition of cultural relativism. For example, instead of being shocked or considering that the Siamese are backward because their language cannot translate the concept of ‘God’, Locke uses it as further evidence that ideas are cultural and not innate. Singleton’s awakened religious consciousness, on the other hand, is charged with a happy sense of cultural and epistemological superiority: Europeans not only have guns, they have the Christian God and so, it would seem, a right to authority over the “stupidly ignorant and barbarous”.

Defoe believed that international trade was part of the divine plan. God distributed material resources unevenly and this “insensibly preserves the Dependance, of the most Remote Parts of the World upon one another”. This distribution of different resources engenders the

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differing manufacturing skills of different cultures, further necessitating international trade.\textsuperscript{31} In \textit{An Essay upon Projects} (1697), Defoe eulogizes the merchant as a kind of Prospero whose vision unites the world:

Every new Voyage the Merchant contrives, is a Project; and Ships are sent from Port to Port, as Markets and Merchandizes differ, by the help of strange and Universal Intelligence; wherein some are so exquisite, so swift, and so exact, that a Merchant sitting at home in his Counting-House, at once converses with all Parts of the known World. This, and Travel, makes a True-bred Merchant the most Intelligent Man in the World, and consequently the most capable, when urg'd by Necessity, to Contrive New Ways to live.\textsuperscript{32}

Robert Markley argues that Crusoe's \textit{Farther Adventures} aggressively resurrects a seventeenth-century travel narrative trope that interlinks profitable trade and gospel dissemination for the purpose of national glory. This culminates in Crusoe's call for a holy war.\textsuperscript{33} As has been discussed in the previous chapter, such an assessment perhaps identifies Crusoe too much with Defoe but there is no doubt that Defoe did favour

\textsuperscript{31} Defoe, \textit{A Review of the State of the English Nation, 1706}, pp. 12, 14.  
a Christian trade mission to the world, even when dependent upon
slavery. He defends the African slave trade for its economic place in the
Atlantic trade triangle, “the Preservation of which, is of the last
Consequence to Britain, Viz. our Collonies in America, which could no
more be maintain’d, the Islands especially, without the supply of Negro
Slaves carried thither from Africa, Than London could subsist without
the River of Thames”.

Trade disseminates civilization and civilization
will eventually spread Christ’s gospel. He praises the ancient
Phoenicians for seeding civilization in England with their trade in metals
with primitive Britons, “bringing them such Trifles in Exchange as the
Ignorance of the Britains, were taught to put a value on; perhaps not
unlike the Baubles which we Exchange in Africa for the Gold and Ivory,
and for even their Sons and Daughters”.

Bob’s immediate assessment of continental Africa is hostile and
dismissive of both land and people:

The most desolate, desart, and unhospitable Country in
the World, even Greenland and Nova Zembla it self
not excepted; with this difference only, that even the
worst Part of it we found inhabited; tho’ taking the
Nature and Quality of some of the Inhabitants, it might
have been much better to us if there had been none.

(53)

34 Defoe, A Review of the State of the English Nation, Vol. 5:1708-9, Part Two:
p. 652.
In his study of relationships between empire, colonialism and land, Robert Marzec argues that terror of uncontrolled space generated colonial expansion. In England, the commons, owned by nobody, came to be identified with such dangerous and marginalized groups as gypsies and vagrants, an identification that transferred to the natives of new foreign lands. James Cook would claim Australia for England on the grounds that the aboriginal inhabitants made no visible impact. Bob appears to think it similarly anomalous and grotesque that Africa’s savage terrain should boast inhabitants, and then observes that these inhabitants serve no purpose.

Pressing inward, progressing up a river with their captured slaves as porters, Bob and company discover that the ‘desart’ is complex with humanity: “almost every ten Miles we came to a several Nation, and every several Nation had a different Speech, or else their Speech had different Dialects, so that they did not understand one another” (72). The fact that these natives have not learned to understand one another, that they therefore cannot trade with each other, and do not put the land to any visible use, reinforces the impression that such people are crying out for Christian masters. Seven hundred miles inland, Bob and his crew reach the top of a ridge “with infinite Labour”, only to survey the prospect of a “vast-howling Wilderness, not a Tree, a River, or a Green thing to be seen, for as far as the Eye could look; nothing but a scalding

Sand [. . .] nor could we think indeed of venturing over such a horrid Place as that before us, in which we saw nothing but present Death” (77). Bob’s entire African adventure with its easy discovery and even easier wastage of wealth may suggest that it may not be so much African resources and inhabitants that need Christian guidance but Captain Bob. His images of wilderness and death mirror his arid existence as a body without a soul.

If the first half of Captain Singleton focuses on African land and Bob’s soul as territory for Christian expansion, the second half reflects on piracy as rebellion against divine order. It also narrates how a Quaker, William Walters, earns leadership over his pirate captors and wins control over Bob’s life through acts of courage, wisdom and healing. Trade, or the circulation of money and goods, was of major importance in Defoe’s writings throughout his career, and pirates clearly constituted the threat of loss, disruption and blockage. The author of a pamphlet, an officer of a recently returned East India ship in 1701, explained that he felt driven to publication because he was “sensibly touch’d with the vast Discouragement now given to Trade abroad, by reason of those destructive Pirates that swarm in the Southern Seas”. 38 Pirates were deemed hostis humani generis, or beyond the pale of ordinary criminality. 39 Before revealing his plan for piracy, Harris compels Bob to swear to secrecy “upon the most Solemn Imprecations and Curses that
the Devil and both of us could invent” (122). Pirates blasphemed, denied authority and ignored the Sabbath. They revealed demonic madness in their riotous, drunken lifestyle and in their irrational destruction of property. They used the Jolly Roger and other symbols of terror, according to one modern enthusiast, as an announcement “to their respectable contemporaries: whatever you fear – violence, destruction, the devil, death – we are that. We embrace it. We are the other. We are your nightmare.”

The seas serve as an image for human darkness, as horrific in indifference to national sovereignties, as postmodernist theories are indifferent, for some philosophers, to such grand narratives as truth and justice. At times, William reads like a Christian saint in the material world, detached and untouchable in piracy’s anarchic hell. In the heat of a battle with a Portuguese man of war, Captain Wilmot points astonished at William. Heedless of shot flying about him, the Quaker stays on deck to direct and help sailors lash the attacking ship’s bowsprit to the pirates’ mainmast. William appears to be “as composed, and as in perfect Tranquillity as to Danger, as if he had been over a Bowl of Punch, only very busy securing the Matter, that a Ship of Fourty Six Guns should not run away from a Ship of Eight and Twenty” (131). When they chance upon a drifting ship occupied by African slaves, the pirates assume that the slaves had slaughtered the white crew and they contemplate revenge. William intervenes, appealing to their reason and humanity. When surgeons propose to amputate a wounded Negro’s leg, William carefully

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41 Baer, “The Complicated Plot of Piracy”, p. 3.
cuts away necrotic flesh, explaining, "I would cure him if I could, without making a cripple of him" (137). In a murderous dispute with natives of southern Ceylon, William is able to restrain the pirates' violence because "his Reputation was so great among the Men, as well as with us that were Commanders, that he could influence them more than any of us" (181). If the seas serve as an image for human darkness and the pirates embody their anarchic and destructive energies, William appears to act as a Christ-like figure, healing the lame and commanding the dark waves to be still.

William, however, is an ambiguous figure. Bob recalls that the surgeon was not averse to joining the pirate crew so long as they would act out an appearance that he is with them against his will. William demonstrates the tension of maintaining spiritual conviction in a world inimical or at best indifferent to faith. Such a dilemma is not new, and was arguably even essential to a Christian sense of life as a dark pilgrimage to test and purify the soul. The modern version of the dilemma lies in how to preserve spiritual values within a mercantile and financial world whose multiple exchanges continuously renegotiate worth and purpose. In a text published five years after Captain Singleton, Defoe argues unambiguously for flexibility:

CUSTOM indeed has driven us beyond the limits of our morals in many things, which trade makes necessary, and which we cannot now avoid; so that if we must pretend to go back to the literal sense of the
command, if our yea must be yea, and our nay nay; if no man must go beyond, or defraud his neighbour; if our conversation must be without covetousness, and the like, why then it is impossible for tradesmen to be Christians, and we must unhinge all business, act upon new principles in trade, and go on by new rules: in short, we must shut up shop, and leave off trade, and so in many things we must leave off living; for as conversation is call’d life, we must leave off to converse; all the ordinary communication of life is now full of lying, and what with table-lies, salutation-lies, and trading-lies, there is no such thing as every man speaking truth with his neighbour.  

Defoe’s emphasis on archaic forms of yes and no in this passage may refer ironically to past ‘literal’ times of business but also adverts to the proverbial Quaker reliance on uncompromising honesty with their use of such archaic terms as ‘thee’ and ‘thou’, and of which Bob makes great amusement in his reports of William Walter’s conversation. Bob’s first impression of the Quaker is that he is “one very merry Fellow” who neither refuses nor complies with the pirates’ invitation to join with them. He does not sign his soul to the Devil. Instead, he persuades the pirates to sign a document to the effect that they have seized him, while Bob directs a charade of having him tied up and brought on board by

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force. Bob observes that William has the better side of the bargain since “if we were taken, we were sure to be hang’d, and he was sure to escape, and he knew it well enough”. When he stipulates that he will not take part in any fighting, Captain Wilmot makes the sardonic prediction that he will no doubt take part in any gains from fighting. William’s reply allows for broad interpretation: “Those things are useful to furnish a Surgeon’s Chest, says William, and smiled; but I shall be moderate” (125). William negotiates a compromise that protects his principles, preserves his life and still yields a profit.

It is not that an individual may or can lie, cheat, steal or kill to survive, or not even that he must, but that he or she will. Circumstance and opportunity make the person or, as Crusoe puts it, “A rich Man is an honest Man, no Thanks to him”. Defoe consistently argued that circumstances create behaviour. He insists that starvation will drive a person to theft, adding that, “those that have never had occasion to try their Integrity, are too apt to censure those that have”, and he frequently advances self-defence as the pre-eminent natural law. It is part of The True-Born Englishman’s argument that subjects have the right to eject a monarch turned tyrant:

No man was ever yet so void of Sense,
As to debate the right of Self-Defence;
A Principle so grafted in the Mind,
With Nature born, and does like Nature bind:

44 Defoe, A Review of the State of the English Nation, 1706, p. 147.
Twisted with Reason, and with Nature too;
As neither one nor t’other can undo. (828-33)

In protecting African slaves and Sinhalese villagers from bloody
vengeance, William cites natural law. He tells the pirates that “the
Negroes had really the highest Injustice done to them, to be sold for
Slaves without their Consent; and that the Law of Nature dictated it to
them” (13). Of the Sinhalese, he insists that the “poor naked Wretches”
acted as “the Laws of Nature dictated” (181). Natural law is involuntary;
humanity, now, appears to be common and universal in contradiction to
Locke’s reports of cultural diversity.

The natural law of Scholastic philosophy taught that God’s will
resided within the workings of the world and that human reason needed
to interpret and mediate it into action. Renaissance and Reformation
thought became sceptical, however, as new worlds opened to exploration
and trade, and argued that such a law could only be ‘natural’ if it were
present throughout humanity. 45 Bob certainly presupposes some
common humanity with the various indigenous people. He expects to
trade and barter, and permits his prisoners to keep their weapons for
hunting after he instructs them in the ‘Law of Arms’ and ‘Articles of
War’. These include tenets of natural law: a weapon may be used only in
self-defence; do not harm when peace has been offered and weapons laid
down; never harm women and children (70). This element of education
suggests, however, that ‘natural’ law is not innate but akin to putting

45 Haakonssen, Natural law and moral Philosophy, pp. 17, 24.
clothes onto natives for a show of civilisation. The prisoners quickly and easily cast off these ‘natural’ laws when they take revenge on other Africans for an ill-judged assault on the party.\textsuperscript{46}

Locke’s \textit{Essay Concerning Human Understanding} leaves the theoretical drawing room and debate amongst like-minded friends to range the world where it becomes axiomatic to his analysis that the accident of birth in differing circumstances leads to disparate customs and beliefs.\textsuperscript{47} Ideas of morality, for Locke, are complex ideas that arise in and reflect different social situations. Because different groups of individuals construct morality through a particular shared and evolved language, different moral languages develop. Man imposes morality on nature.\textsuperscript{48} Crusoe comes close to this line of reasoning when he restrains his impulse to slaughter local natives, recognizing that the practice of cannibalism comes under local or ‘National Laws’. Only God, he reasons, has jurisdiction over all nations and at all the same time. Such logic appears to confirm that Defoe, Crusoe and William Walters apply moral judgement provisionally, contingent on the duration of specific circumstantial requirements.

Lyotard believes that the limitation on the practical application of ethics, “results from the absence of a homogenous language”.\textsuperscript{49} The ethical imperative implied by a phrase that features the word ‘ought’ can be at odds with a cognitive phrase that recognizes a different apprehension of reality. Bob is shocked when William advises him to

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item Blackburn, “The Coherence of Defoe’s \textit{Captain Singleton}”, p. 125.
\item Paxman, “‘Adam in a Strange Country’”, p. 466.
\item Haakonssen, \textit{Natural law and moral Philosophy}, p. 52.
\item Lyotard, \textit{The Differend}, “Kant Notice 2.3”.
\end{thebibliography}
refuse to parley with the natives of Ceylon. William warns that they will be murdered either because the people are barbarians who follow their own laws, or are Christians who follow the local custom of betraying strangers. For the first time, Bob questions William’s advice, insisting that “all Nations in the World, even the most Savage Peoples, when they held out the Flag of Peace, kept the Offer of Peace made by that Signal, very sacredly” (183). William replies that people act differently because they are different, and will adapt any would-be universal discourse, such as Christianity, to suit local custom and circumstance. When William defends African slaves, he places human life as the top priority; when he sells them illegally to Portuguese planters in Brazil, he prioritises profit to the pirates and satisfaction to the planters. Perhaps William ‘ought’ to help the Africans return ‘home’ as he later helps Bob return to England. Instead, William uses the persuasive ‘ought’ on the pirates to accomplish his immediate aim, which is to avoid violence and bloodshed. Once accomplished, circumstances change and he adjusts: the African slaves are alive and their sale will benefit the pirates.

Captain Singleton has been seen as a precursor to slave narratives in part because the normal genealogical background of a biographical account is disrupted by a series of invasive financial transactions. It also shares features of hierarchical and categorical dislocation and inversion. Both Singleton and Olaudah Equiano, for example, promote the belief that they were stolen from a ‘good’ family and sold into anonymous degradation. Bob was in the care of a maidservant, the sign

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of a respectable, middling family; Equiano emphasizes his father’s status as “one of those elders or chiefs [. . .] styled Embrenché; a term, as I remember, importing the highest distinction, and signifying in our language a mark of grandeur”. Such accounts may suggest a polarized depiction of themselves as good and their captors as evil whereas, in fact, both stress individual, pragmatic motives within a wider, irresistible social and economic system. The maxim runs throughout Defoe’s writings that no insulation or isolation guarantees purity because “what they are today, we were yesterday, and to morrow they will be like us”.

Bob’s kidnapper, beggar, gypsy and sailor are all at the bottom of a transnational chain of supply and demand. Bob advances his status and value through theft and exploitation. He takes part in the first mutiny to satisfy his rage against his master’s ‘theft’ of wages. If Bob learns to be a thief from his Portuguese mentors, he also learns the importance of trading up. His early adventures lay out a pattern that legitimates theft as justifiable war, similar to the gains of England’s early vagabond conquerors in The True-Born Englishman. He suggests to the castaway mutineers that they should build a canoe and cruise the coast until they find and seize a bigger boat, and then repeat this pattern until they have a ship large enough to carry them to India. Bob and his fellow castaways exchange worthless trinkets for fish while they inspect the native fishermen’s boats as potential prizes. The Europeans cure small amounts

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of the beef given by friendly locals and trade it back for live cattle. Bob suggests that they foment a quarrel so that they may seize some of their hosts as prisoners and make them porters for their journey across land. In the battle that follows, the Europeans’ mysterious ability to kill at a distance overcomes native numbers and Bob justifies enslaving prisoners “by the Law of Arms” (58). In the unexplored interior of the African continent, Bob capitalizes on native ignorance but as he approaches the west coast, he encounters Africans with more experience. He describes them as fierce and cunning because they know about guns and are unimpressed by toys and trinkets, “consequently nothing was to be had from them but by Exchange for such things as they liked” (110). Bob is not interested in fair trade.

Trade wars replaced religious wars as European nations competed for the Atlantic wealth of “gold, silver, fish, servants and slaves, sugar, tobacco, and manufactures”. The history of the emergence of modern European states has been characterised as not so much the product of social contracts, consumer-driven markets or any society of shared manners but as a “portrait of war makers and state makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs”. European heads of state relied on non-state violence because of lack of revenue. Individuals and groups were authorised to exercise violence for profit on the government’s behalf, “legitimated with the concept of plausible

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53 Rediker, Villains of All Nations, p. 21.
The end to such wars as the War of the Spanish Succession meant a decline in seafaring work. The Royal Navy dropped from 49,860 men in 1712 to 13,745 in 1715. An initial post-war boom in trade became a slump that lasted into the 1730s. During this period, merchant sailors’ wages dropped by half and work conditions worsened. At such times, sailors might turn to piracy as a starving woman in Defoe’s works might turn to begging and thieving. In fact, it was almost expected. Piracy may have been declared high treason in 1413 but monarchs often tolerated piracy, allowing sailors to maintain their skills for when needed once more as privateers in times of war.

Definitions of the status and legality of sailors depended upon the prevailing economic and political priorities, although sailors were involved in the very same actions of fighting other vessels to plunder their goods.

In 1693, a North American privateer captured a Mughal ship with luxury goods and £100,000 in gold and silver coins, initiating the myth of Captain Avery, supreme pirate. This brought a flood of pirates from the West Indies to Madagascar, an island that came close to asserting itself as an independent sovereign state with its own customs, rules and flag. In a previous fictional autobiography, *The King of Pirates*, Avery, posing as one of his own men, boasts to English sailors, “I told them the Romans were, at first, no better than such a gang of rovers as we were,

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58 Ibid., pp. 47, 48.
and who knew but our General, Captain Avery, might lay the foundation of as great an empire as they”. Such a view was widely held in Defoe’s day. Matthew Tindal’s *Essay on the Law of Nations* (1694) suggested that pirates who formed themselves together as ‘nations’ ought not to be treated as pirates. This was because “the beginning of most of the Empires were not much better: whatever any were at first, yet when they had formed themselves into Civil Societies, where Foreigners as well as Subjects might have Justice administered, then they were looked an as Nations and Civil Societies”.

Tindal’s *Essay* is an anti-Jacobite tract that goes on to argue, as corollary to its redefinition of pirates and nations, that James II’s military forces should be seized as pirates as soon as they set out to sea because they are in the service of a private man, who is no longer a king, and so act outside the law. Displaced persons operate in a world of destabilised references. Ambiguities in definition reflect the loosening of social hierarchical networks in the globalizing mobility of the early eighteenth century. As national governments altered people’s status as seaman, buccaneer, privateer or pirate according to national policies, so profit motivated merchants to obey or ignore their governments’ laws. Sailors likewise asserted their interests as much as merchants and

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59 Defoe, *The King of Pirates* (1719; repr. London: Hesperus, 2002), p. 75. P.N. Furbank and W. R. Owens have dismissed this as a work by Defoe in Defoe De-Attributions: A Critique of J.R. Moore’s Checklist (London and Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon, 1994), p. 122. However, this is still under discussion by such other scholars as Maximillian Novak. Tropes and parallels indicate the author as at least an admirer and close imitator of Defoe, not least in the narrator’s use of disguise and impersonation, and in the appearance of a Quaker pirate who bears a strong resemblance to William Walters.


monarchs. Bob understands piracy as a means to gain money "in our honest Way" (133). One of the ships in Dampier's buccaneering fleet, the Cygnet, was equipped for trade with Spaniards and Indians in Central America, but "meeting with diverse Disappointments, and being out of hopes to obtain a Trade in these Seas, [the captain's] Men forced him to entertain a Company of Privateers".62

The painting of William Dampier that hangs in London's National Portrait Gallery illustrates the hybridity of and confused attitude towards those who live on the borders of crime and trade. The artist, Thomas Murray, (1663-1735) subtitled his work, "Captain William Dampier: Pyrate and Hydrographer".63 At sea, and in distant places, and clearly even at home, crime and business become indistinguishable. Bob Singleton and the merchants he encounters are often as uncertain and fluid in their status and business. Cruising off the Chinese coastline, he and his crew capture a small junk that carries rice and tea. However, merchants on board are travelling to meet a larger ship at Formosa that is laden with Chinese goods and gold that they plan to trade for spices and European merchandise in the Philippines. Bob's ships are awash with such booty, "so I resolved now that we would leave off being Pyrates, and turn Merchants". The merchants are naturally afraid to trust pirates who have just plundered them while the pirates, comically, "were as diffident as they, and very uncertain what to do" (166). William, as so often, resolves the difficulties and oversees the exchange. Bob reports, "we made very good Market, and yet sold

62 Dampier, A New Voyage Round the World, p. 73.
63 National Portrait Gallery, Primary Collection 538.
Thieves Pennyworths too” (167). William’s repeated reminder that their business is to make money reinforces the equation between merchants and pirates, while merchants favour trade with pirates because stolen goods obey the imperative of maximum profit at minimum cost. When pirates first established themselves in Madagascar, North American traders followed to buy and to sell colonial products and luxury goods, knowing that the pirates targeted the holds of both Mughal and East India merchant ships. A law passed in 1721 recognised this relationship, making trade with pirates an act of piracy. Merchants now become pirates through the simple act and contamination of exchange.

*Captain Singleton* is not a trading account that may be summarised in any simple reckoning of profit and loss. Slippages in definition defer final evaluation, much as the ‘true-born Englishman’ is lost in the ‘Dark Original’ of hybrid generation and questionable nobility. In Cadiz, Harris and his fellow mutineers sell goods from their commandeered ship to Spanish merchants. They exchange the fruits of an act of piracy for arms and munitions that capitalise further piracies. In addition, the mutineers take on board brandy and wine, “for we that were now all become Gentlemen scorn’d to drink the Ship’s Beer” (123). Sailors become mutineers who become pirates who regard themselves as merchant-aristocrats. Acts of self-creation supplant external authority. Wilmot makes himself captain. Bob imitates this manoeuvre of usurpation when the Portuguese warship that William binds to the pirate ship surrenders: “Captain Wilmot made me, or rather I made myself,

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Captain of her for the present" (132). Before seceding from Wilmot’s command altogether, Bob takes unilateral actions which offend Wilmot in their clear disobedience, “but we stopt his Mouth with his Share of 200000 Pieces of Eight to him and his Ship’s Crew” (150).

Competing private, commercial, scientific or national interests inform and shape accounts, narratives and histories. When members of Avery’s crew were tried for piracy in 1696 in *Rex v. Dawson*, the Admiralty judge, Sir Charles Hedges, ruled that English courts and judges held jurisdiction over anybody anywhere in the world who interfered with English commerce.\(^{65}\) We see in such legal pronouncement support for Lyotard’s view that imperialism’s drive derives from a presumption of supreme rights for English trade in that, “since the prescription is legitimated by the norm, how can it admit that others are not subject to what it prescribes?”\(^{66}\) Pirates actively and symbolically resisted such overarching hegemony. Piracy paralleled the destabilization of landed wealth by the new financial practices that encouraged “dispossession, speculation, and bankruptcy”.\(^{67}\) Common sailors could rarely rise through the ranks into positions of power and wealth but they could seize their ship, the means of production, and rank themselves as officers and gentlemen. Terms for wages and conditions on a seized ship were by collective agreement. The highest authority was the common council that elected the captain who then held no special privileges such as an exclusive captain’s cabin.\(^{68}\) The pirate parodies and

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\(^{66}\) Lyotard, *The Differend*, §209.
\(^{67}\) Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, p. 91.
\(^{68}\) Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, pp. 65-68.
undermines authoritarian discipline. New recruits like Walters are plied with drink (125, 145). Bob resists the temptation to buy spices as a conventional trader because “our People abhorred paying for anything” (161). The pirate ship shadows the merchant ship in more than one way.

William acts the role of a fictional William Dampier as both ‘pirate and hydrographer’. He sets out to join his berth in the West Indies as a common sailor but when he is captured, discloses he is a surgeon and a pacifist Quaker, of use and of no use to pirates. Throughout Bob’s narrative, William’s idiosyncratic, comical or hypocritical discourse controls the men of violence. In one of their first actions after capturing William, the pirates track a ship through the night. The Quaker approaches “Friend Singleton” to suggest that it may be that the other ship is tracking them, saying, “I am afraid, adds he, thou art turned Quaker, and hast resolved not to use the Hand of Power, or Art a Coward, and art flying from thy Enemy”. Still smarting from the cunning of a man who bests pirates by claiming immunity from prosecution, exemption from fighting and still shares prizes, Bob protests, “what do you sneer at now? you have always one dry Rub or another to give us” (128). After successful capture of the man of war, William counsels the pirates to make a swift exit, coating his argument in benign terminology: “To borrow thy Neighbour’s Ship here, just at thy Neighbour’s Door, and never ask him Leave; now dost thou not think there are some Men of War in the Port [ . . . ]?” (129). William accommodates competing economic, military, emotional and religious demands by applying one kind of language to a different kind of situation, offering tactical military
advice as a neighbourly Quaker act. Conversely, as they approach the drifting ship of Africans, he offers a method of successful capture, "without making use of those things call’d Guns" (135). He first alienates weapons as a concept ("those things call’d Guns") and then their purpose as the pirates’ ‘arms’.

William’s command strengthens through manipulation of appearance and speech. It is possible that the Quaker informs Bob’s random Lockean experiences with a religious meta-narrative, teaching an interpretation that may yet master experience. However, Defoe also subjects William’s meta-narrative to material control and encourages scepticism of William’s sincerity. Pirates, emblematic of chaotic forces, capture William and he must compromise or die. William’s manipulation of expectations encourages and then enforces suspension of judgement as he creates mutually exclusive interpretations of himself. Furthermore, as others review their reading of situations under his tutelage, as with the pirates’ treatment of the slaves on the drifting ship, he often reverses their behaviour against habitual inclination. He gradually guides the pirates into better behaviour but a hinge in Captain Singleton’s narrative structure appears to change William’s soul, or core identity, and he acts against previous character.

The reflexive moment meshes through an intricate mechanism of religions, practices and cultures that begins with the capture of a junk that carries Chinese merchants. William accompanies some of these agents to Formosa where they trade the pirates’ spices and European goods for gold. William returns with financial profit, a surfeit of luxury
goods, two more merchants to help broker further trade, and some unusual information. While in Formosa, William had conversed with a Japanese priest who explained that he had learned English from men he had rescued in a shipwreck off the northern coast of Japan, and who now lived there as a tolerated but separate community. William is excited, realizing that these Englishmen could have reached that part of the world only by way of the legendary North-East Passage, a route that would be “one of the most noble Discoveries that ever was made, or will again be made in the World, for the Good of Mankind in general”. However, the pirates refuse to sail with him and rescue the Englishmen. He is mortified that they lose an opportunity that “would be in some Measure making amends for the Mischiefs we had done in the World” (169).

Denial of William’s choice opens a sequence of events that reverses their fortunes and alters William’s behaviour.

The pirates turn south and west towards their ‘home’ of Madagascar, forcing William to abandon his mission for redemption to the north and east. Bob believes that they are approaching “the End of our Cruise” since they had “not only enough to satisfy the most covetous and the most ambitious Minds in the World, but it did indeed satisfy us” (169). In order to avoid Dutch shipping, they cross the Indian Ocean due south, which promises to be as much a desert of water as Africa had been a desert of land. The coast of New Guinea proves to be their last known territory but even there the inhabitants flee from them and are “altogether incomversable”. After that, “we left all behind that any of our Charts and Maps take any notice of” (170).
When they put into land for food and water twenty days later, unknown and unknowable natives shoot arrows at their flags of truce. When the crew forages for cattle and crops, they come under further attack. The men fight back and trap the natives up a great tree. However, whatever tactic the Europeans use to bring them down, the natives outwit them. Bob soon realizes that William has taken charge of the siege and has apparently become another bloodthirsty member of the European company, "enraged to see our selves so baulk'd by a few Wild People" (174). William speculates that the tree is hollow and on top of an underground passage. He directs carpenters to drill holes into the trunk, fill them with gunpowder and blast the tree apart. A passage is revealed and William leads the charge in. The natives drive them back with smoke. Bob assumes William's role of counselling restraint and pragmatism but William persists. In the end, they give up but the gunner, as a parting experiment, turns the tree's passage into a mine, setting off an explosion to see where the smoke vents. A concealed cavern blows out, turning the natives' sanctuary into another weapon that shoots them out like bullets so that "some of them had no Arms, some no Legs, some no Head". Bob concludes, "We had now our full Satisfaction of the Indians, but, in short, this was a losing Voyage" (177).

William Walters experiences his transformation through cultural exchange not so much with foreign natives as with fellow Europeans within foreign worlds. The partition between Quaker and pirate is porous. Daily experience contaminates William or, alternatively, there never has been a border between self and other and there is no exclusive
inner identity. He may lay down terms for his pirate captivity or, if an allegorical reading is desired, terms for the existence of his immortal soul in mortal flesh, but any assertion of a distinct and incorruptible identity wears thin. Bob recounts how William coaxed and enticed Portuguese planters to enter into criminal compact, buying Africans from him to work as slaves, by telling “a very plausible Tale”. He summarises William’s simultaneous presence and essential absence in the explanation, “William past for what he was; I mean, for a very honest Fellow” (141). If Bob must explain what he means because his meaning is obscure, and if William’s honesty is a tool for profit and survival, honesty becomes another alienated commodity that ceases to have intrinsic or pure value but like everything else, acquires definition only through use or exchange.

Tropicalization once referred to the adjustment of plants and animals, even machinery, to warmer climates. Srinivas Aravamudan has now applied the concept to the global cultural migrations of the eighteenth century. He notes specifically how “Defoe keeps the reader aware of colonizers and colonized in the process of mutually constituting as well as deforming each others’ identities”.\(^\text{69}\) When native and foreign cultures create boundaries upon interaction, foreign terms are often adopted that reflect and describe the new experience. This reveals that as “the foreign seeps into the discourse of the home culture, then the external has become the internal”.\(^\text{70}\) This works in both directions.

\(^{69}\) Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*, pp. 6, 18.

William Dampier records ways in which natives appropriate foreign beliefs and images in a form of counter-colonisation:

One thing I have observed in all the Indian Town under Spanish Government is that the Images of the Virgin Mary and other Saints, with which all their Churches are filled, are still painted in an Indian Complexion, and partly in that Dress. But in those Towns which are inhabited chiefly by Spaniards, the Saints conform to the Spanish Garb and Complexion.  

Such pragmatic assumption of the acceptable parts of an alien other increases doubt that any intrinsic identity, of nation, people or individual, exists. Camouflage that covers a person to ensure survival may become all that a person is, as with Crusoe’s adoption of native customs and animal skins.

Locke argues that people receive the thoughts of others only through the indirect and mediated representations of behaviour and speech. Intention and meaning, however, may be misread. Navy personnel go “upon the Account” when they agree to be paid in shares of prize money rather than by wages. Bob tells the reader plainly, on the other hand, that the expression of going on the account, “by the Way was a Sea Term for a Pyrate” (144). Bob Singleton never knows what his ‘real’ identity is but earns the title ‘captain’ when he directs the

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panicking mutineers against the first attack from Africans. *Captain Singleton* is a world in which names are seldom real, intentions are difficult to determine and definitions temporary. Does a sailor serve in the merchant or royal navy, or is he a privateer or pirate? Is an approaching boat a friend or foe? Can the flags they fly be trusted? Bob and his pirates use a black ensign and bloody flag to cow a merchant ship but pirates displayed flags with the death's head or hearts dripping blood that signify battle with no quarter, to *avoid* battle, "for which most pirates showed little inclination". More than once, William is treated as an enemy on sight. After he sells the Africans to Brazilian planters, he returns in a Portuguese sloop, alarming the pirates as he closes in on their hiding place. They fire on him. He returns a five-gun salute and raises an English ensign (141).

William assumes that Bob longs to be at home, as would any Englishman, and is shocked when Bob responds, "Why, Man, I am at Home, here is my Habitation" (209). Bob owns that when he turns pirate under Harris's direction, he "was now in my Element, and never undertook any Thing in my Life with more particular Satisfaction" (122). When he tells William that he is happy to abandon piracy and follow his direction, though he may not yet understand what that means, he confirms the decision with an equal enthusiasm. Before detailing their proposals, both Harris and William extract Bob's promise that he will tell nobody else, whether he joins with them or not. He binds himself to Harris with diabolical oaths. He gives his Quaker friend the plainer

word, “Yes, William, says I, freely, and I’ll perform it faithfully” (211).

In both cases, however, Bob may be motivated more by a promise of brotherly intimacy than by the particular prospect of piracy or not-piracy, for in either case he is in the dark until after his pledge of faith.

Not long after capturing William, an English man-of-war captures ‘Captain’ Harris, who dies on his way home to trial in England.

Although Bob may remain indifferent to prospects and consequences, when he exchanges one boon companion for another, he changes direction and identity. He alters from a pirate and cold-blooded murderer to a man who defines himself by an affectionate relationship with a Quaker surgeon.74

Bob’s use of such terms as ‘freely’ and ‘satisfaction’ may suggest he makes conscious and informed choices when, in fact, he chooses a man rather than a philosophy or a way of life. If Crusoe rewrites his relationship with his father, earthly and heavenly, it is as tempting to advance William as the father figure that Bob has lacked. Against this, Bob has been the object of the attentions of a string of father figures whose purposes have not always been straightforward or transparent. Bob has spent as much time resisting and exploiting them as they may have cared for him. An orphan boy, for good or bad, is other men’s property. The first ship’s master who took him to sea “called me his own Boy” but refused the name of father. The phrase, “took a Fancy to me” (20), reinforces a particular critical reading that Bob is the victim of maritime practices of pederasty. This appears to be supported when a

74 Turley, “Piracy, Identity, and Desire in Captain Singleton”, p. 203.
Portuguese Captain “took a particular Liking to me”, on a boat whose company practises the sins of thieving, perjury and lying that are, Bob reports, “joined to the most abominable Lewdness” (22, 23). Bob, however, offers no explicit description or explanation, nor is he likely to pass judgement when he has grown up outside the domestic walls of common morality. A young man without a family or any other ties and with little regard for authority, Bob’s presence alone is enough to incite disturbance and discomfort. In the fatherly warning of the Portuguese gunner who reads Bob’s palm: “My Lad, says he, thou art born to do a World of Mischief” (37).

Bob Singleton, sailors, and Africans assert individual identity as they resist others’ authority and claim ownership for themselves. Locke asserts the human body as the individual’s primary inalienable property. In Wolfram Schmidgen’s reading, Crusoe cultivates a widening sphere of influence until he believes that he owns the whole island to the point that he almost feels that he is the island. Crusoe’s anxiety over cannibalism indicates the shadow and the threat of reversal of mastery and ownership. A mobile and responsive border between flesh and environment opens the body to incursion. Food transforms one body into another but only the one who eats maintains identity. This identity is forever on watch for a greater predator, a metaphor that still enthrals financial commentators. Defoe opens up the implications and complications of competition. When Bob and the marooned explorers hunt for food in the African forests they “often met with wild and

75 Schmidgen, Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Law of Property, pp. 55, 56.
terrible Beasts, which we could not call by their Names, but as they were like us seeking their Prey, but were themselves good for nothing, so we disturbed them as little as possible” (36). A herd of elephants discount the watching humans either as a threat or as food, ‘tho’ they often shew’d our Men that they saw them, yet they did not turn out of their Way, or take any Notice of them, than, as we might say, just to look at them” (81). Caution and common sense advises avoidance of outright confrontation. Camped by a river for the rainy season, the travellers find that because the location is good for food and shelter, it also attracts deer that in turn attract such predators as lions, tigers and leopards. The animals hunted by humans are frightened away and the remaining concentrated predators turn upon one another.

Assuming a competitive, hostile, defensive stance presupposes that all others are either predator or prey. This has been Bob Singleton’s experience until he meets William Walters. Bob engages in an open and intimate communication with the Quaker that is different from all of his previous relationships. Hitherto he has been at a disadvantage as a child or as a servant, or in command over Portuguese castaways or African prisoners. Bob recognises ironic dissemblance in William’s grave and anxious request for certification that the pirates take him by force, for “he said this with so much Satisfaction in his Face that I could not but understand him” (125). Bob responds in kind, acting out a charade of tying him up and manhandling him aboard, but telling him that he does not believe that joining with the pirates is, in truth, against William’s desires. Bob learns respect and appreciation for the Quaker until he must
finally confess dependence, warning, “I cannot part with you upon any Terms whatever” (208). This opens William’s opportunity to test Bob’s willingness to view life outside terms and conditions, the world of cutthroat business. William persuades him, “no body trades for the sake of Trading, much less do any Men rob for the sake of Thieving” (209). Bob submits: “Well, says I, I give you my Word, that as I have commanded you all along, from the Time I first took you on Board, so shall you command me from this Hour; and every thing you direct me, I’ll do” (211).

William teaches Bob that he must “apply my self to a sincere humble Confession of my Crime, to ask Pardon of God whom I had offended, and cast myself upon his Mercy” (219). It is tempting to view this process as a pattern for Bob’s relationship with William. William has acted as a Quaker light in piratical darkness. If he has betrayed human failings, the Christian narrative tells that when God took on mortal flesh, God experienced human vulnerability and confusion. Bob mates the parallel explicit, acknowledging that “as I had a merciful Proector above me, so I had a most faithful Steward, Counsellor, Parner, or whatever I might call him, who was my Guide, my Pilot, my Gov’nor, my every thing” (220). William becomes Bob’s only meaning in the world. Such an act of faith yields responsibility to the Other. Yet stolen, exchanged, traded and reworked as any piece of silver, gold or leal, Bob cannot be said to have ever owned a self that he can redeem or surrender. Self and other are mutually constitutive. Bob may look up to William as his saviour but, as Lyotard cautions, “What you judge to be
the Lord’s call is the situation of you when I is deprived of experience, ‘estranged’, ‘alienated’, ‘disauthorized’. Such a sense of self comes into existence only when hailed by events as shocking as Crusoe’s dream of an angel, or when God calls for Adam and Adam tries to hide a sudden sense of self-awareness.

Puritan spiritual autobiography acted as the written evidence and demonstration of an individual’s conversion. Such a conversion requires a complete re-reading of a life under a new light so that “Everywhere event can be replaced by meaning”. In Locke’s model for epistemology, knowledge grows through reflection upon sensory experience. Theoretically, knowledge may be acquired faster through education in the form of others’ distilled and refined experience. Captain Singleton’s opening paragraphs introduce scepticism into the conventions of autobiographical literature and into the value of education. Aravamudan believes the novel was treated as an illegitimate discourse, as suspect as any other paper currency, because it justifies itself by assertion alone: “Telling stories and telling money, accounts are narrative and financial, conflating credit with credibility”.

Bob allows that great people usually begin the record of their lives with an account of genealogical origins for the benefit of posterity. He, however, has only hearsay and, while he must begin in the beginning as is the general way, he doubts the origin for all of his knowledge with the brief aside, “If I may believe the Woman, whom I was taught to call Mother” (19). Bob was taught to believe. Bob’s origins capitalize on

76 Lyotard, The Differend, § 172.
77 Trotter, Circulation, pp. 20, 22.
78 Aravamudan, Tropicopolitans, p. 100.
Locke’s worst fears for misled children. Properly, children should learn through their own curiosity and observations and no more rely on books alone than upon servants’ fairy tales.\(^79\) The account that Bob learns from his self-authorized mother and that he passes on to the public amounts to no more than a fairy-tale for middle-class readers. A servant’s neglect allows Bob to be spirited away; a child of gentle birth grows up in ignorance of his inheritance, exhibits natural aristocratic qualities of leadership and wins riches, justifying restoration to his native home as a gentleman and landowner.

Admitting the danger of returning to England where other comrades-in-piracy may recognize and betray him, Bob acknowledges that he needs “a Refuge for my self, and a kind of Centre, to which I should tend in my future actions” (224). He marries William’s sister and they live in disguise in their country retreat. Bob and William do not offer a model for conventional social morality. Piracy attracted severe punishment in a hierarchical society because piracy begins with the violation of an oath of fidelity to superiors.\(^80\) In 1698, Jeremy Collier observed that, “Where Vertue is not made the Measure of a Correspondence, ’tis no better than that of Thieves and Pyrats. ’Tis a scandalous Excuse to say, I murther’d a Man, or betray’d my Country, at the instance of a Friend”.\(^81\) The retired pirates’ security is complete except for one possibility for betrayal: the reader. Bob’s account closes with his demand (or even threat?) that the reader should not read too


\(^80\) Baer, “The Complicated Plot of Piracy”, p. 15.

deeply: "'tis Time to leave off, and say no more for the present, lest some should be willing to inquire too nicely after", and Bob appends his signature, "Your Old Friend, CAPTAIN BOB" (225). We have no choice but to witness this signature just as Walters makes Bob witness his fictional affidavit of captivity. If William acts as Bob's spiritual mentor, or 'Voice of God', Defoe is the shadowy author behind his literary simulacrum. Narrative as a retroactive ordering of chronological and meaningful development with its inevitable closing sentence “turns out to be the genre which best hides the event”.

Richard Kearney argues the necessity for personal identity thus:

If I did not possess some sense of identity and self-constancy, I would be unable to recollect myself from my past memories or project myself into a future such that my pledges to the other (made in the past) might be realized (in the future). Narrative identity should not therefore be summarily dismissed as an illusion of mastery (for it is such in the breach rather than the observance). On the contrary, narrative identity which sustains some notion of selfhood over time, can serve as a guarantor for one's fidelity to the other. How is one to be faithful to the other, after all, if there is no self to be faithful?\(^83\)

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83 Kearney, Strangers, Gods and Monsters, p. 79.
Despite any temptation to applaud Bob's virtuous, married retirement, the reader must appreciate that his testimony is "upon the Word of a Pyrate" (122). The signature that authenticates the account and demonstrates the presence of a witness becomes a sign of deception, fraud, and a sly invitation to complicity. Reading Bob's story has become as intimate, as private and uninterruptible, as Bob and Walter's retirement. Bob's existence reads on two levels, as a historical pirate in hiding and as a character in a fiction.

Defoe presents Captain Singleton's narrator as a Lockean inscribable self in a world of epistemological and moral instability. Individual judgement, interpretation and reputation become the quicksand to all exchanges. In Captain Singleton, the sensory self is as vacant and unrealistically mechanical, as passive to every impression as a blank page in a printing press. Alternatively, the self as questing spiritual entity is bound either to entrapment in or exclusion from the material world. William Walters, a pirate captive who offers an alternative religious narrative, captivates Singleton. Bob finds communion with William, albeit hidden from all other society. In a parallel move, Defoe's narrative persona entices the reader to collude in their fiction. In the next chapter, Moll Flanders and Roxana test transactional fictions of identity to the limit.
Chapter 5

Questionable Identities: *Moll Flanders and Roxana*

*Moll Flanders* and *The Fortunate Mistress*, now more commonly known as *Roxana*, follow the fortunes and misfortunes of two women in their careers as bigamists, prostitutes, thieves, and courtesans, mothers and whores. Popular taste for criminal biographies, secret histories and masquerades enrich Defoe’s characters as self-reflexive analogues for individualist and literary experimentation. This final chapter will discuss how discourses of power and systems of exchange and evaluation demand production of an individual’s public image; how the individual balances and correlates public and private relationships, and how self-reflection produces an interior and private self-image at odds with others’ perceptions and expectations.

*Moll Flanders* is rooted in the genre of rogue biographies known to be fictitious, mocking and satirical, and often featuring unexpected jumps in the story. As Lincoln Faller notes, “Defoe’s audience would have been prepared for his leaps and jumps but not for his seriousness”.

In a parallel and comparable comment, William Warner describes *Roxana* as a counter-text to the bestselling secret histories or romances of Eliza Haywood and Delarivier Manley, arguing that Defoe’s concluding “collapse of narrative” compels readers to reflect upon their lives.

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absorption in fictional texts. Formally, *Moll Flanders* is a comedy that ends with a happy, wealthy marriage while *Roxana* is a tragedy whose heroine is rich, happy and admired but haunted by guilt and terrified of exposure. Moll’s confession is a liar’s statement of truth, and her safety depends upon deception and disguise. Roxana revels in show and display but her autobiographical masquerade collapses into confusion. Moll constructs an impenetrable persona, a surface identity; Defoe’s representation of Roxana’s inward identity becomes incoherent and illegible.

This thesis has followed a trajectory through Defoe’s work that addresses issues of authority and hierarchy from macrocosmic national and political power, through family religious governance to studies of the individual as self-directed or without direction. It concludes with two women who inhabit different versions of the global capital, London. Moll plies a trade of thieving and prostitution in the narrow streets around her birthplace, Newgate Prison; born of prosperous French refugees, Roxana gravitates towards Pall Mall, wealth and nobility. Defoe’s male protagonists, Crusoe and Singleton, profit from trade and mobility. Moll and Roxana cross into this world only as men cut them adrift. Rather than literally and spatially marginalized like Crusoe on his Caribbean island, Moll and Roxana are socially marginalized. The men

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start low but end high; the women begin with good marriages but slide into crime and corruption as circumstances erode principles of virtue.4

In the new culture of economic individualism and social mobility, capital accumulation and individual desire supplant kinship and family loyalties. However, as pointed out by Habermas, marriage persisted as an affective familial model even as it also served the economic priority of accumulation and transmission of wealth and property.5 Michael McKeon also highlights how female domestic and male economic individualism, or private and public narratives, are at odds and yet live in the same world. Defoe defamiliarizes the emergent view of the feminized and domestic interior by writing female autobiographies that enter and manipulate male territories of criminal biography and political and financial intrigue. Adapting McKeon’s remarks about Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* may be best read “as an actively contradictory process of ideological inquiry”.6

Moll and Roxana find themselves at a systematic disadvantage until they transgress social norms. As soon as Moll imagines that she attains emotional, legal and financial security in the New World of the American colonies, she discovers that her marriage is incestuous and that she will give birth to her own half-brother. If Roxana were to accept social norms and reject her landlord’s offer of a fictional, contractual

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marriage, she would starve on the streets. English Christian laws conflict with a natural law of survival. Moll’s editor assures the reader that his text’s “Fundamental” lesson must be that a person who commits wicked acts will arrive at a bad end or repentance \(MF, 25\). He also, however, gives notice that an anonymous third author reports how Moll, in her retirement, “was not so extraordinary a Penitent as she was at first” \(MF, 26\). Roxana’s editor, similarly ambiguous, draws attention to the “frequent Acknowledgements, That the Pleasure of her Wickedness was not worth the Repentance” \(FM, 21\). Defoe’s ‘editors’ may advance normative truths as the didactic goal for their publications but his narratives suggest that such norms are “historical, constructed, and only provisional”.

Brean Hammond and Shaun Regan argue that Defoe contributed to a cultural shift in perception as his literary treatment of Moll Flanders and Roxana highlights environmental, social and institutional causes for criminality. Gender considerations add to issues of class and disenfranchisement in many critical studies as Moll and Roxana struggle with the consequences of men who fail in their hierarchical obligations to support them. Moll and Roxana display capabilities that resist institutional and cultural expectations for female and subordinated


agency. Critics broadly range between reading *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* as spiritual confessions or as secular and psychological works of self-absolution. Either way, issues of responsibility and culpability are crucial. Such questions are vital in discussions of John Locke’s definition and argument for personhood. Ian Watt, to reiterate the groundwork for modern criticism, regards Moll’s adventures as a career of individualist freedom that escapes responsibilities and consequences: Moll profits from a life in crime. Discussions have focused on the emergent powers of financial credit, often gendered as a female phenomenon linked to fashion, consumption and reputation. Defoe’s female autobiographies supply an equivalent phenomenon in which truth becomes a promissory fiction.

Ian Watt championed Defoe’s style of verisimilitude as the major contribution to the ‘rise’ of the novel. Defoe works recognizable and real places, events and people into his narratives, invoking a story that appears to represent and mirror the known world in the reader’s mind. I will suggest a complementary, even opposite reading. As Moll and Roxana narrate their histories as though they are real, Defoe mirrors and demonstrates their readers’ equally constructed self-images of identity as

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dangerous fictions. This chapter will first concentrate on Moll Flanders’
criminal autobiography and then move on to Roxana’s secret history.

Criminal biography was a recent but well-established popular
genre. It had become common during the sixteenth century for felons to
make rehearsed statements before execution, and authorised tracts placed
great value on their reproduced words being authentic, as had been the
case in ‘lives’ of the saints. A designated minister, later known as the
Ordinary, took responsibility for urging repentance until the end and
taking final confession. Criminal biographies were supposed to present
penitent criminals as they faced execution and the terror of judgement in
the after-life. The social and political upheavals of the Interregnum,
however, refocused chapbook and broadside sensationalist accounts of
criminal events onto the lives of specific criminals. From 1684, the
London Court of Aldermen decreed that the sheriffs, who organized
executions, should license the speeches. Two sanctioned serials from
then on published the Ordinary of Newgate’s criminal lives. By the early
eighteenth century, convicted criminals began to realize the profit of
celebrity. The fashionable gentry paid for a prison cell audience with
Jack Sheppard, the infamous thief, highwayman and gaol breaker.
Before his execution, Sheppard posed in his dungeon for a portrait by
James Thornhill, the official court artist.

Michael Mascuch records how the criminal confession changed
from being a formulaic self-effacement of a penitent to function instead

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as “a vehicle for creating and promoting a charismatic deviant, individualist, self-identity”.\textsuperscript{16} Lives of such daring adventurers encouraged an ideology of the individual, “who acts on impulse to get ahead at any cost, to win status, property, sex, money, or power over similarly acquisitive rivals”.\textsuperscript{17} Rogue biographies glamorize and romanticize the fantasy figures that ignore social conventions and demonstrate how “freedom, power, and glory might be had simply for the taking”.\textsuperscript{18} The highwayman in particular fulfils a fantasy of irresponsible freedom as he alters literary images between noble foundling, amoral trickster and swashbuckling rogue.\textsuperscript{19} Moll prefers the company of men who are not humdrum, pious or predictable. Her greatest passion is for the highwayman, Jemy, a man who tried to trick her as she had tried to trick him, but who treats her nobly. As an Irish gentleman down on his luck with his base in a northern Catholic family, and sporting the diminutive version of an exiled king’s name, Jemy fits the image of a Jacobite gentleman whose livelihood depends upon secrecy, horsemanship and who practises the old-fashioned mores of a courtly knight-errant.

Empiricism examines external and hierarchical authority, including that of the printed word. The Ordinary’s Accounts sometimes caution their readers that expressions of repentance and contrition may be suspect because they serve felons’ self-interest. Readers are prompted

\textsuperscript{18} Faller, \textit{Crime and Defoe}, p. 18.
to consider and to draw inferences from pauses or breaks in the texts, and to suspect any unlikely literary sophistication. In Lincoln Faller’s analysis, criminal texts trained readers to apply close critical attention and “become their own policemen. Lacking any visible authority to turn to, they present themselves to themselves”. The condemned are as likely to interject that they do not tell everything and that what they do tell they borrowed from other accounts only in order to have something to tell to the chaplain. Shortly after his death in 1719, *Mists Weekly Post* reported that the Ordinary, Paul Lorrain, had left an estate of £5,000, mysteriously amassed from a gross annual salary of only £180. Moll despises the drunken, self-promotion of the Ordinary and refuses to give him her confession for even the agent for salvation of the soul will exploit criminal fame.

The purpose of confession is to acknowledge and to repent for the past. Moll makes her confession in the public print market. An unregulated print market that publicized such personal narratives led to the peculiarity that private authenticity required public consumption for affirmation. If she is to benefit from any lifting of punishment, Moll may hope that her literary confession will change others’ understanding of her and secure forgiveness. Moll claims an inward perspective that differs from others’ perception. Her subjective account would translate or explain exterior presentation through inner representation but such a process of re-presentation may alert the reader to scepticism of all appearances. There is no guarantee of trust or truth. Moll’s reflective

20 Faller, *Crime and Defoe*, pp. 24-25, 27, 73.
22 Gladfelder, *Criminality and narrative*, p. 121.
private thoughts, motives and feelings conflict with reports of her public speech and actions. Moll may be adjusting her account for approval, which casts doubt upon her testimony as just further misdirection by a pickpocket and thief.

Moll's confessional autobiography incorporates strategies for indeterminacy and denial. She opens her account by explaining that she will use the name given by "my Worst Comrades" (MF, 27). Since they are dead, they cannot give away her identity, nor can they deny or affirm her account any more than William III, deceased, can corroborate Defoe's boasts of royal confidence. Moll also and immediately offers an alternative, virtual life-story, claiming that if she had been born as a prison foundling in France, the government would have cared for her and she would never have embarked on a course of life so destructive to body and to soul. Moll tells the reader how her mother was in Newgate because she 'borrowed' materials from a draper, and then claims that the story is too long and complicated for her to repeat, especially as it had been told to her in various different ways, "that I can scarce be certain, which is the right Account" (MF, 28). When she reunites with Jemy in Newgate, she gives him a fictional account of her life after they parted and tells him that she has been oddly mistaken for being that famous and successful thief, Moll Flanders. Moll offers multiple narratives, claiming truth when reporting lies.

Locke's description of a 'person' is forensic, which is to say that a person acquires personal identity through ownership of memories. Writing an account constructs and realizes this process. The prison, her
birthplace, eventually holds her and compels reflection. Moll narrates, and therefore owns, a past that she would like to disown and leave behind in repentance. Moll uses and is pursued by a name that she would disown but that also disguises her. This produces self-contradictory tensions. Motives are ambiguous as arguments shift between material desire and religious self-denunciation. The central conflict between intention and compulsion generates, in Gary Hentzi’s words, “a system of identities or subject positions from which the characters speak and act at various moments, sometimes within the compass of the same scene”.

Different personae deal with different audiences to different ends, opening a Lyotardian multiplicity of discourses that require different genres. Moll moves through such a sequence of voices when she recalls leading a girl up an alley to steal her necklace. At the same time as she speaks reassuringly to the child, “the Devil put me upon killing the Child in the Alley, that it might not cry” (MF, 166). She then displaces blame onto irresponsible servants and offers advice to mothers, but this voice in turn becomes a more aggressive identity that berates adult vanity and self-indulgence that clearly leads to child neglect and the present child’s danger at her hands. When she runs in panic from Bartholomew Close with the necklace stolen from the girl, she maps “her exact route – which just happens to trace an arc around Newgate”.

Individuals need community authorization. Moll watches a young pickpocket, “deliver’d up to the Rage of the Street, which is a Cruelty I

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need not describe” (MF, 179). Spontaneous communal justice passed judgement on perceived criminals. Street mobs inflicted extreme violence on “those who had violated their community values, whether criminals or informers to the authorities”. Moll attracts censure. The criminal community are angry and envious at her success, and she keeps indoors when she hears that some in Newgate are ready to inform on her. Locke acknowledges the weight of human community on an individual psyche, “But no Body, that has the least Thought, or Sense of a Man about him, can live in Society, under the constant Dislike, and ill Opinion of his Familiars, and those he converses with. This is a Burthen too heavy for humane Sufferance”. The name, or image, of Moll Flanders threatens her by exposure as she risks criminal punishment. Supposedly publishing her account as an instructive confession, Moll repeats Crusoe’s paradoxical urge to display and to hide at the same time, re-enacting her adventures as serial bigamist and shape-shifting thief on the stage of the page.

After Moll as a child is discovered wandering on the outskirts of Colchester, abandoned by or hiding from gypsies, she is placed with a nurse. At the age of eight, the local magistrates order that she should enter service. Parish authorities placed foundlings as young as six into compulsory apprenticeship or domestic service, a practice designed to shift the burden of maintenance, but the prospect terrifies Moll. In

Colchester, she achieves local fame when she resists entering service, citing her preference to be a gentlewoman. The mayor’s wife and daughters visit and encourage other gentlewomen to visit, witness and smile at the child’s precocious ambitions. Unlike the fashionable ladies in *The Family Instructor*, who flock to listen to the wisdom of Jacky, the child from heaven, they come to Moll for amusement: they believe that the foundling girl aspires to their degree of wealth and social status. Moll understands the term to convey her willingness to earn bread with needlework. Instead, and unexpectedly, she earns money from the ladies for her performance. At fourteen, her foster mother dies and one of the Ladies takes her into her home where Moll discovers that beauty and intelligence earn her more than can her nimble needlework fingers.

Moll illustrates how morality and intention are subject to verbal manipulation. As a child, Moll begins with naive and literal interpretations of words. When she cites the lace-mending ‘Madam’ as her model for a ‘Gentlewoman’, she does not understand that ‘Madam’ is a prostitute. As she grows up in the gentlewoman’s household, she believes the elder son’s promises of love for sex when he gives her gold. When she uses a diamond on glass to engage in dialogue with her Virginian suitor, she calls upon ambiguities and impermanence in their communication. Moll insists that she does not lie to him but only interprets her suitor’s uncertainty and responds to his desire. Sandra Sherman correlates such manoeuvres with stocks and shares and other

practices that depend upon credit. Capitalizing on rumours of her fortune that she has encouraged but neither confirms nor denies, Moll enables "the market to proliferate fictions around her, relying on market culture to enhance their value as true".\textsuperscript{31} Misrepresentation is the responsibility of the audience for Moll’s behavioural, verbal and printed performance. It is not the responsibility of the fictional character, editor, author of these confessions, or of Defoe.\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Caveat emptor}.

Appearances and promises are intrinsically deceptive or intentionally misleading. An economy of individualist competition and negotiated exchange introduces possibilities for subterfuge and uncertainty in the cultural dependence on indicators of money, dress and character. Credit was notoriously fickle and unpredictable, and frequently gendered as female. Defoe allegorized credit as money’s coy and perverse young sister who is hardest to gain when courted, and courts those who do not need her.\textsuperscript{33} The credit economy encouraged a culture of individual worth that was dependent on assessments of a person’s self-presentation. It was important to project a public image that would attract trust, investment and a profitable relationship.

The marriage market arose as men searched for more ways to capitalize new ventures. The press reported bridal portions as a matter of course. One 1706 newsletter, for example, announced impending marriages between the Duke of Beaufort and the Lady Rachel Noell, daughter of the late Earl of Gainsborough, whose fortune was “above

\textsuperscript{31} Sherman, \textit{Finance and Fictionality}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{32} Deirdre Shauna Lynch, “Money and character”, in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Daniel Defoe}, p. 98.
£60,000, and between Mr Harvey Junior and Mrs Luttrell, worth £20,000”. When the elder son compliments Moll publicly, one of his sisters chides that beauty alone will not help ‘Betty’ as “the market is against our Sex just now [. . . .] for nothing but Money now recommends a Woman; the Men play the Game all into their own Hands” (MF, 37). The son approaches Moll when the rest of the family are absent. He pays court to her beauty and gives her gold coins as token of “an honest Affection”. More embraces earn more gold but when she gives him her body, she realizes, “I had nothing of Value left to recommend me” (MF, 43).

Robin, the younger brother, brings the affair to crisis when he declares his open and public love for Moll. It is only when her lover urges her marriage to Robin that she understands he would see her not as his sister but as “Your dear Whore” (MF, 51). She capitulates when she realizes that she is in danger “of being turn’d out to the wide World, a meer cast off Whore, for it was no less” (MF, 63). Moll’s position is precarious, as dependent on the whim of her employers, as is any member of the household unrelated by blood. Maidservants who lost their position often faced the stark choice between starvation and prostitution. As the brother disentangles himself from Moll and manoeuvres her to marry Robin, Moll reflects, “So certainly does Interest banish all manner of Affection, and so naturally do Men give up

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Honour and Justice, Humanity, and even Christianity, to secure themselves” (MF, 64).

*The Family Instructor* recommends patterns for graded hierarchies and degrees of subordination while it presents the dangers of hierarchical disruptions, either from resistance and insubordination or through the misuse or absence of authority. With the growing belief of contractual monarchy in the political thought of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century, the head of the household is recognized as such by virtue of the exercise of reason and not by accident of birth. Locke allows that the wife has an equal claim or share in parental authority over the household but, in cases of dispute, “it therefore being necessary, that the last Determination, *i.e.* the Rule, should be placed somewhere; it naturally falls to the Man's share, as the abler and the stronger”. At the same time, heads of household are under obligation to manage those who cannot rule themselves by reason. Gender and class supply the hierarchy for the transmission of authority in family and nation. Reason justifies the exercise of power and power is embodied in the father, or delegated in his absence to appointed male representatives as Crusoe delegates his authority over his island to the male colonists.

Marriage and motherhood mattered to women as the socially sanctioned method for the acquisition of material security. Moll’s brief mentions of five-year periods of happy marriages with Robin and, later, the banker suggest “an essentially amenable character who is happy to

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live in domestic tranquillity". However, when the man, the public representative, is absent, the family structure fails. This is the conundrum brought up by Habermas that the public world is explicitly driven by interest while the private world is supposedly articulated through affection. Moll's first lover deceives her with promises of love and inheritance, and forces her into his brother's arms. After Robin dies, Moll turns her back on "that Cheat call'd LOVE" (MF, 66). The evident problem with John Locke's philosophical arguments for the rights and liberties of male property owners is that women, children and servants may take up the cry and lay claim to their own definitions of identity. Moll sets interest over affection and capitalizes on her body as a wife and as a prostitute, and on her nimble fingers as a thief and pickpocket. Moll enters the public market of disguise, tokens and performance.

Locke identifies verbal ambiguity or semantic instability as a major source of misplaced understanding and erroneous knowledge. In part, this is because people come to absorb others' words as their own thought. As Hannah Dawson rather poetically describes, "The words of others seep into the kernel of the self, becoming inseparable from and identical with it, erasing their own adventitious and contingent origins". When Moll attempts to explain her complicated marital and maternal position, Mother Midnight cuts her off with the practical, rather than legal, opinion that "to have a Husband that cannot appear, is to have no Husband in the Sense of the Case, and therefore whether you are a Wife or a Mistress is all one to me". Moll must accept her changed

38 Liz Bellamy, "Introduction", in Moll Flanders, p. 5.
40 Dawson, Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy, p. 268.
status, realizing, "that whether I was a Whore or a Wife, I was to pass for a Whore here" (MF, p. 142.)

As Moll determines to pursue money and not love, and as she becomes more active and 'masculine', her men become more unstable and 'feminine'. Desire for show attracts her to a sword-sporting linen-draper, "this amphibious Creature, this Land-water-thing, call'd, a Gentleman-Tradesman" (MF, 66). However, he is recklessly extravagant and becomes bankrupt. When he escapes the debtors' prison and flees to France, Moll hides in the sanctuary of the Mint. Common knowledge that Moll is a poor widow means that she has no prospect of an advantageous marriage and so she changes address, appearance and name. When the Mint recirculates Moll into the economy, she must work to erase her history and reputation and display a new face value.

By the end of the seventeenth century, physical coinage was in short supply, debased in metal content and from clipping and counterfeiting. Money was not as it seemed. Credit instruments, meanwhile, could erase money's provenance in its circulation of promissory exchanges. The masking anonymities of paper credit undermined the visible and material securities of landed wealth. Moll Flanders describes the increasing complexities and moral evaluations in a society of accelerated and unpredictable entitlements to status and possession. A fleeing thief throws his bag for Moll to catch in Lombard Street. A 'lombard' is a pawnbroker who offers credit for stolen goods.

When Moll collects prizes that are there for her to take, Moll is no longer “just like a Bag of Money, or a Jewel dropt on the Highway” (MF, 117). Moll pawns her body, exchanging the marriage market for direct theft. When she is caught in a goldsmith’s workshop as she is about to steal silver plate, Moll establishes her innocence to an adjudicating alderman by offering, at his prompt, to purchase a set of silver spoons. The alderman displays his pride and skill in psychological detection when he explains that “the sort of People who come upon those Designs you have been Charg’d with, are seldom troubl’d with much Gold in their Pockets” (MF, 223). The alderman is, of course, a fool. Moll dresses in money to conceal her criminal trade. Money may afford respectability and legal protection but money was now slippery as a measure of worth.

Moll marries a respectable London banker. Solid and dependable as he may be, he loses his money to a colleague and dies, leaving her with two more children. She quits her London home, sells her goods and takes lodgings. After two years of “bleeding to Death, without the least hope or prospect of help from God or Man” (MF, 163), dispossessed of security, kinship and identity, Moll turns to dispossessing others. Once a respectable banker’s wife who lived for five years “in the utmost Tranquillity” in her husband’s London home (MF, 162), Moll steals a ring from a windowsill in Stepney. Stepney was a suburban village that included affluent residents but a Parliamentary Statute of 1698 already

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42 Connor, “‘Can you apply Arithmetick to Every Thing?’”, p. 179.
44 Lynch, “Money and character in Defoe’s Fiction”, p. 86.
mentioned that criminals had established themselves within the parish.\textsuperscript{45} The propertied and the criminal classes share the same address; the well-to-do banker’s wife is a desperate thief.

The influx of uprooted people from the countryside expanded London’s population into a city of strangers, precluding the informal and traditional methods of social control that operated in rural areas where everybody knew everybody.\textsuperscript{46} One of Defoe’s French personae describes the process:

\textit{London, like the Ocean, that receives the muddy and dirty Brooks, as well as the clear and rapid Rivers, swallows up all the scum and filth of the Country} \\
[. . .] this helps to fill the Town with a generation of Whores and Thieves.\textsuperscript{47}

Moll profits from the circulation of people, goods and money and changes appearance as rapidly as the crowds that change around her. She waits at The Three Cups in St John’s Street, the stagecoach terminus for travellers to and from the north. Moll obligingly offers to guard a bundle for a nursemaid who is then free to deal with a girl in her charge and fetch her mistress. Moll slips away into a maze of streets. She removes her blue apron and uses it to conceal her straw hat and the stolen bundle, setting it all on her head in the disguise of plain sight wrapped in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{45} Durston, \textit{Moll Flanders}, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{46} Durston, \textit{Moll Flanders}, p. 17.
\end{footnotesize}
difference. When she passes the maid and her mistress, they do not notice her.

Moll takes advantage of social disorder and of others’ misapprehension. At the height of her success, she is mistaken for another thief in similar clothing and accused of shoplifting. Outraged that a mercer detains her, she calls on a constable to take them both to a magistrate where she will charge the man with false imprisonment. As they go through the streets, they attract a crowd that watches the ‘gentlewoman’ drive on the mercer who took her for a thief. She recalls happily, “this pleas’d the People strangely, and made the Crowd encrease, and they cry’d out as they went, which is the Rogue? which is the Mercer” (MF, 205). Moll regrets that such an incident, however, brings her closer to the attention of the authorities, “which was the worst thing next to being found Guilty, that cou’d befall me” (MF, 200). She has become visible.

Eighteenth-century criminal law focused on external and legible signs of behavioural criminality rather than on inner or psychological motivation.\textsuperscript{48} Court evidence largely relied upon eyewitness accounts, and testimonials of character and reputation were central to the deliberations of judge and jury. A person’s character was as visible and as telling as their clothing or as the stamp on coinage.\textsuperscript{49} Moll’s mother-in-law exhibits her criminal brand as she explains how, working out their sentence in the New World, “many a Newgate Bird becomes a great Man” (MF, 86). This also reveals that she is Moll’s mother. Moll, on the

\textsuperscript{48} Durston, \textit{Moll Flanders}, p. 85; Lacey, \textit{Women, Crime, and Character}, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{49} Lynch, “Money and character in Defoe’s Fiction”, p. 88.
other hand, will always try to hide her character. When she returns to the colonies with Jemy, she wants to claim any inheritance due from her dead mother. However, she does not wish to disclose that she has arrived as a transported Newgate criminal with another husband. She decides, “it was absolutely necessary for me to remove from the Place where I was, and come again to him, as from another Place, and in another Figure” (MF, 264). Moll withholds information and maintains false identity.

Locke’s image for the autonomous self is an empty space that reflects exterior objects into consciousness. The individuated body separates exterior from interior space. Charles Taylor argues that this enables the mind to think itself apart from its environment and that such “Radical disengagement opens the prospect of self-remaking”. The mind examines itself as a series of received patterns of thought, and then chooses to think and to act according to individual rational advantage.

Moll learns to separate private and public behaviour when one brother courts her in secret and the other in public. Each threatens to undermine the other and she must keep them distinct. Moll assents to an instant marriage with the London banker, commenting, “O! what a felicity is it to Mankind, said I, to myself, that they cannot see into the Hearts of one another!” (MF, 156). Moll keeps herself locked away. The authorities arrest and transport Moll and her mother because they are thieves. Property depends upon settled conceptions, or identifications, of what belongs to whom by rights that “presuppose a psychological

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distance between individuals". Property defines individuals into existence. Individuals divide and compartmentalize themselves as they negotiate relationships. Unable to confide in anyone, Moll has not moved on from either the physical cell or the metaphysical Hell of Newgate, nor even from the Mint where she witnesses the disintegration of a bankrupt man as he becomes “overwhelm’d in perplex’d Circumstances [. . .] having no Principles to Support him, nothing within him, or above him, to Comfort him; but finding it all Darkness on every Side” (MF, 69, 70).

Moll advises women not to throw themselves away on the first man because marriage is “having but one Cast for her Life, shall cast that Life away at once, and make Matrimony like Death, be a Leap in the Dark” (MF, 77). The proverbial phrase refers to the moment when a condemned felon is ‘turned off’ the hangman’s cart. Hanging, marriage and confession are closely associated in criminal biographies. In Moll Flanders, hanging and marriage are touchstones for heartfelt sincerity when there is no evasion from community judgement and witness. Protesting serious intentions towards Moll, Robin assures his mother, “I am in Earnest, as much as a Man is, that’s going to be Hang’d” (MF, 56). The early eighteenth century phrase, ‘to be noosed’ indicated either to be married or to be hanged while the felon about to be hanged “would dress up in his finest clothes and was frequently described as looking

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like a bridegroom”.

‘Tying the knot’ is an equivalent modern irreverent phrase for marriage.

Formally, *Moll Flanders* is a comedy because it ends with a happy marriage. However, it may be as much a prospective tragedy because, while she may have escaped hanging, poverty, prostitution and incest, Moll is, in God’s eyes, unconfessed and walking dead. Moll’s editor points out that “no Body can write their Life to the full End of it, unless they can write it after they are dead” (*MF*, 26). Moll maintains control. Neither the reader nor her closest lover, Jemy, can be certain that what she says is ever the truth. Jemy and the reader may be happy enough to have their fantasies indulged as the well-dressed, well-accoutred fishing and shooting gentleman or as the morally superior armchair voyeur of roguery and New World reformation. Moll’s happy end is ambiguous because of the probable insincerity of her repentance. Lincoln Faller draws attention to a passage in *The Family Instructor* where Defoe “chillingly suggests” that when God lets sinners continue unpunished, it is because God has no mercy prepared for them.

Moll Flanders and Roxana differ in social and genealogical background but Defoe’s virtual selves share an imagined gendered subjectivity. One modern editor considers that Moll’s self-determination makes her “a very modern heroine” while another sees Roxana disappear behind the mask of her name, suggesting two extreme positions of

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female public identity. Maintaining a protective or manipulative mask or persona also suggests that there is another, somehow more ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ identity, behind a surface appearance. As individuals, Moll and Roxana are subject to political and government institutions. They may also capitalize, however, on new flexibilities, or ambiguities, in evaluation and exchange. Tokens, promises and pledges feature strongly in their accounts. A successful individual profits by projecting an image and reputation that attracts support and investment. An individual produces and advertises an image for public consumption. While personal identity may enthrone the individual as sovereign authority, self-governance may also lead to a sense of isolation or imprisonment within self-consciousness. Roxana exemplifies this dark figuration of personal identity.

A split begins in Roxana’s consciousness as others reallocate and rearrange the ‘words’ in her mind and the ‘things’ in the world. Her landlord and Amy try to persuade her that she would not be committing adultery if she sleeps with him but would be his wife in fact, if not in law. Her liaison succeeds legal impositions of sacramental marriage with a voluntary, written contract based upon secular law. The landlord hands sovereignty of the house to her and asks to be her first tenant. Again, comparisons appear inescapable between this ‘private’ and fictional history and the recent ‘public’ history of William III’s contractual monarchy in England. When they move to Paris, her

57 Faller, Crime and Defoe, p. 219.
landlord-jeweller makes a will that is a jointure, "a most engaging thing for a Man to do to one under my Circumstances" (FM, 57). After the jeweller is murdered, she enters into a covert but highly profitable relationship with a prince. This arrangement is based upon aristocratic arrangements of honour and gifts. As she gives him her favours, he offers her the freedom of his wealth, "but I manag'd him with such Art, that he generally anticipated my Demands" (FM, 69). In other words, the relationship still involves a negotiation of expectation and promise. Indeed, Roxana's voluntary subjection to princely bounty introduces a business habit of prudent self-restraint, or deferment of gratification, that will maximize profits.  

When Roxana rejects the honest Dutch merchant's offer of respectable marriage, she insists that women should realize that "the Staff in their own Hands, was the best Security in the World" (FM, 134). This may resonate with modern feminist convictions but, as Ellen Pollack points out, the merchant concedes the truth in Roxana's words even as he warns of the cultural price, and Roxana confesses to the reader that, in all honesty, she loves him. She also recalls how she had found herself talking "upon a kind of elevated Strain, which really was not in my Thoughts at first, at-all" (FM, 130). When Sir Robert Clayton, her financial advisor, mediates the offer of another lucrative marriage, Roxana again asserts herself beyond male definition and control. She explains, "I did not understand what Coherence the Words Honour and Obey had with the Liberty of a Free Woman [...] and seeing Liberty

58 Zomchick, Family and the law in eighteenth-century fiction, pp. 43, 47.
59 Pollack, "Gender and Fiction", p.143.
seem’d to be the Men’s Property, I wou’d be a *Man-Woman*; for as I was born free, I wou’d die so” (*FM*, 147). Roxana’s words dazzle herself as much as her beauty astonishes others.

As Deirdre Shauna Lynch reminds us, eighteenth-century culture applies the word *person* both as the description of an individual character and as somebody’s physical appearance. Roxana describes the process by which she creates a reputation and cuts a new figure by external and visible signs. Roxana knows that she is “a public character inscribed from without”.\(^6\) I quote the passage in its entirety as it sets out her value comprehensively, as on a market stall, with the insignia of address and furnishings, servants and equipage, her servant’s status and title, and her clothing, jewellery and livery:

> I paid 60l. a Year for my new Apartments, for I took them by the Year; but then, they were handsome Lodgings indeed, and very richly furnish’d; I kept my own Servants to clean and look after them; found my own Kitchen-Ware, and Firing; my Equipage was handsome, but not very great: I had a Coach, a Coachman, a Footman, my Woman, *Amy*, who I now dress’d like a Gentlewoman, and made her my Companion, and three Maids; and thus I liv’d for a time: I dress’d to the height of every Mode; went extremely rich in Cloaths; and as for Jewels, I wanted

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none; I gave a very good Livery lac’d with Silver, and as rich as any-body below the Nobility, could be seen with: And thus I appear’d, leaving the World to guess who or what I was, without offering to put myself forward. (FM, 143)

Consumption and display were conspicuous and competitive in English society, “a multi-layered society in which vertical mobility was both possible and greatly coveted”. London served as the national shop window for changing, fashionable appearance.\(^{61}\) Clothing was “the city’s major amusement and industry, as well as the major social and economic signifier of its individual persons”.\(^{62}\) Sumptuary laws once regulated and authorized social rank but now commercialized and commodified fashion enabled clothes both to advertise and to undermine hierarchical identification. Dror Wahrman explains how the metropolis was frequently described as ‘Confusion’ because of fashionable emulation and the rapid growth and availability of consumer goods and luxury items. Indeed, people used clothes “to don and doff identities with impunity”.\(^ {63}\)

The Grand Tour and foreign travel had made Continental customs of disguise and carnival increasingly familiar and popular with the educated English public. Masking and costuming developed rapidly

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to populate the new urban settings with rituals of display and promenade. Roxana’s performance of fashionable dress, location and reputation moves her into courtly circles: “I soon found myself throng’d with Admirers, and I receiv’d Visits form some Persons of very great Figure” (FM, 149). Roxana prepares her house for feasting, gaming, and dancing and knows she is at the threshold of achieving her ambitions when some Gentlemen arrive in masquerade, and it is hinted that the company may include the King.

Masquerade offered three generic disguise types for the participants or ‘masks’. The ‘domino’ was faceless, hidden in an anonymous cloak. The ‘fancy dress’ included examples of the foreign or the exotic, including Turkish dress as the most recently fashionable. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had returned from Constantinople in the 1720s and set a trend by appearing at court in Turkish dress. The third type presented the ‘character’ of a specific figure. Roxana comprises both the character of a Turkish courtesan and a specifically named figure. She acquired her costume during her Grand Tour with the Prince who presented her with a female Turkish slave. Roxana describes the magnificence of the costume with its Persian and Indian damasks, gold embroidery and sewn-in pearls and turquoises. She shows her costume first to the ladies in the drawing room and then has the double doors thrown open. The music stops as all stare at her spectacular appearance. Roxana rejoices that her second ball is even better attended so that “the

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Street was full of Coaches with Coronets, and fine Glass-Chairs” (FM, 153). She is certain that the King is present since, of the five gentlemen who wear no mask, she can see that three are Knights of the Garter. One congratulates her, “Madam Roxana you perform to Admiration”. She tells her reading audience, “I was now in my Element” (FM, 155).

In 1724, the year that Roxana first appeared, Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London, delivered a sermon to the Societies for the Reformation of Manners that preached on the dangers of masquerades. Gibson’s City morality directly challenged the resurrection of Caroline courtly pleasures that he feared would corrupt the lower orders and negate State authority. In response to this pulpit campaign, George I banned public masquerades. Consequently, private masquerades flourished and became more heterogeneous, more difficult to police and so, ironically, open to a wider and unregulated public. One of the most famous and profitable impresarios, James Heidegger, insisted that his proceedings were perfectly genteel, and protected by hussars. Roxana is glad to note that Guards regulate access to her ball, “for without that, there had been such a promiscuous Crowd, and some of them scandalous too, that we shou’d have been all Disorder and Confusion” (FM, 153). It was common belief that prostitutes disguised themselves as women of quality to trap honourable and wealthy men in masquerades. Is this not Roxana’s position precisely?

Notwithstanding Heidegger’s claims for a safely controlled homogeneity, the masquerade allowed different ranks and gender an

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unusual level of freedom to mingle. Masquerade etiquette permitted women to attend unescorted, a practice unknown in almost every other public activity except church attendance. The purpose of masquerade was to conceal and to alter appearance to prevent identification. Roxana may bar confusion from her doors, intent as she is on social ascent but, at the same time, she deflects others from identification. She knows she is an impostor. Masquerade sartorial convention required participants to appear as their own opposites. A devil conceals a bishop while a young man hides within an old crone. Women dress as males, fulfilling Roxana’s identity as a ‘Man-Woman’. One contemporary pamphlet complained of the abomination of gendered transgression through dress because, “Whenever therefore this distinguishing Mark of the Sexes is gone, they have an Opportunity of conversing together with the most unlimited Freedom”. Estranging layers of costume “caused the usual protective spatial bubble around individual bodies to shrink”. This permitted close and personal contact that would be normally taboo. It could also lead to misunderstanding and criminal deception. Critics fell upon sensational reports that the masquerade’s anonymous promiscuity and violation of boundaries had, on occasions, resulted in incest, rape and even kidnapping and murder.

Attending Roxana and the landlord at their first dinner, Amy changes her dress and serves them in the guise of a gentlewoman. Individualist consumerism and social emulation fuelled anxieties of hierarchical transgression that figured in the “ubiquitous figure of the

71 Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, pp. 37, 45.
overdressed servant".\textsuperscript{72} Defoe's visiting Frenchman complains, for example, of female servants being mistaken for their mistresses because of "their Pride, haughty and insolent Behaviour; gay dressing, and profusion of Cloathing". He urges the Commons to legislate for compulsory livery for people to be able to identify and distinguish servants, "or (as already frequently happens) the Clerk will soon be worshipp'd for the Justice, and the Maid be kiss'd instead of the Mistress".\textsuperscript{73} When Roxana baulks at becoming the landlord's mistress, Amy offers to take her place in the landlord's bed to prompt some action.\textsuperscript{74} After a year-and-a-half of cohabitation with the landlord, Amy wonders why Roxana has not yet had a child, adding that, by now, she would have had two. Roxana urges her to go ahead. That night, Roxana strips and pushes Amy into bed with the landlord, explaining to the reader that if she is to be a whore, then Amy must be too. It is evidence, as John Richetti suggests, that Roxana uses sexuality as a control to distance others and herself.\textsuperscript{75} Amy cries for two or three days afterwards, cursing herself as a whore and as undone, while the landlord grows to blame and hate Amy. Nevertheless, Roxana brings them to repeat the "Frolick" until Amy is pregnant. Roxana sends Amy away to give birth to a daughter and then permits the landlord and Amy to drop "playing that Game over again", confirming its instrumental nature (\textit{FM}, 55, 56).

\textsuperscript{73} Defoe, \textit{The Great Law of Subordination Consider'd}, pp. 185, 189.
\textsuperscript{74} Straub, \textit{Domestic Affairs}, pp. 93, 92.
Normal service resumes, one might say, especially when Roxana bears her own children by the landlord.

Roxana reasserts control over Amy but the incident betrays uneasy awareness of her servant’s autonomy. Amy takes a year to let her mistress know the strange story of the kitchen maid who claims to be her daughter. Amy dismissed the maid, “as she had Authority to manage everything in the Family”. Roxana is not pleased, though she must concede that Amy was in the right. Roxana’s unease is, in part, recognition of her loss of direct control, the natural consequence of any delegation of authority to a servant and companion. Roxana has cause to wonder, though, what else Amy may be keeping back from her. Amy admits that she lied when she told Roxana that her first husband, the bankrupt, had died in Paris. Amy explains that she wanted to clear Roxana’s conscience in the event of remarriage. Roxana’s household waxes and wanes with her fortunes. Insecure in employment, servants are dependent upon their employers. At the very least, Amy’s future depends upon Roxana and so she would promote Roxana’s interests to serve her own. When Roxana ascends ranks to become a Prince’s mistress, Amy enters a liaison with the Prince’s valet. Roxana remarks that they “could hardly avoid the usual Question to one another, namely, Why might not they do the same thing below, that we did above?” (82). This would suggest Amy as Roxana’s mirror and imitator.

Terry Castle makes a strong case for Amy as Roxana’s double, her mother and proxy other, who manages and realizes Roxana’s sexual

76 Hill, Servants, p. 94.
and homicidal fantasies. Geoffrey Sill proposes a more sinister interpretation. He suggests the "bizarre yet plausible circumstance" that 'Susan' is Amy's daughter by the landlord, put out to nurse, placed into service, and who finally becomes a kitchen maid in Roxana's household. Alternatively, Sill suggests, the girl who claims to be Susan is an impostor and confidence trickster whose goal is blackmail. I will add a further inference, or speculation, that Amy knows, or comes to realize, that Susan is in fact Amy's daughter when Susan first clings to Amy as her mother. Amy then adopts her daughter's quest as her own. Amy even may have sought out Susan, either as a genuine daughter of Amy or Roxana, or as a criminal confederate, and so they have been in league for some time. Amy claims to have taken more than a year to let Roxana know what has been happening under her own roof. When the reader and Roxana reflect they have only Amy's report, interpretation becomes treacherous. This discussion of different background storylines for Amy and Susan also demonstrates how Defoe's ambiguity incites the reader to extrapolate their own series of parallel and divergent, individualized texts.

Masquerade revels in the duplicity of messages. Fashion, the art of studied appearance, has long been denigrated as "Inherently superficial, feminine in its capacity to enthrall and mislead". Clothing conceals and reveals through the arrangement and presentation, rearrangement and representation of materials. Language dresses thought

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79 Castle, Masquerade and Civilization, pp. 55-57.
and clothing is another discourse. The expression ‘multi-layered society’ interlinks society and clothing as a maze of concealment and display, disguise and advertisement, central to the eighteenth-century phenomenon of masquerade. Roxana invokes associations that have as much to do with imagination and desire as with any empirical reality. When she performs her French version of an oriental dance in Turkish costume, she earns the name of the wife of Alexander the Great, an oriental queen popularized in Nathaniel Lee’s tragedy, *The Rival Queens* (1677). Roxana was also the name in Racine’s tragedy *Bajazet* (1672) of the Turkish sultan’s favourite who has designs on the throne. The name ‘Roxana’ conflates passive oriental sensuality with ambition.

Roxana scoffs when she overhears a gentleman claim that her costume and dance are authentic because he believes he has seen the same in Constantinople. Defoe challenges and plays with readers’ expectations of identities. Defoe’s female autobiographies appear to share the mesmerizing, deceptive and mocking atmosphere of masquerades, described by Terry Castle as a “collective ilinx [. . . .] a bounded dreamscape of uncanny, disorienting power”.

It is possible to argue that Defoe at once achieves and subverts his fictitious editors’ didactic ends. Moll Flanders moves outside of normal social, familial and maternal obligations and confirms the dangers of such a move. Moll’s inadvertent and repudiated incest both exemplifies freedom of individual desire and reinforces sexual and social hierarchy. Moll’s expressions of pride in the performance of her crimes undermine her

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claims for reformation. When her death sentence is commuted to transportation, the minister who recommended mercy is understandably concerned that Moll will forget her repentance on such a long voyage in the company of other convicts. In fact, Moll talks and bribes her way out of keeping company with the prisoners chained below decks and she and Jemy dine with the captain in civilized comfort. Writing memoirs does not constitute any kind of spiritual confession but is another "strategy of evasion, a way of assaying and multiplying identities". Defoe's use of unreliable, even deceitful narrators, undercuts any charge that he misleads his readers when his books claim to be history. Instead, he prompts readers to search for motivation in the text as they would in any other work of rhetoric.

Roxana is Defoe's quintessential true-born Englishman, a foreign outsider who performs as a native insider. She is French in her 'natural' way of dancing and she speaks English without an accent. She adopts languages, dress and manners and she deals equally with all ranks, learning how to become Roxana, for example, from her Turkish slave. The Prince showers her with jewellery and the finest clothing, and she wears a different dress for each of his visits. On one occasion, she bursts into tears of joy at his response of awe and astonishment. She claims that she will not repeat his kind words since "It wou'd look a little too much like a Romance here" (FM, 74). A long passage follows in which she

revels in the story of his further astonishment that she has no need for cosmetics to build an illusion of beauty. She is beautiful.

Roxana claims authenticity in account and in appearance but she falls victim to her most ambitious and most memorable performance. In Warhman’s view, Roxana’s oriental costume demonstrates “the potential for identity metamorphosis that was perceived to inhere in the eighteenth-century masquerade”. Such metamorphosis is often thought of as a liberation from markers of class and gender. However, the costume also fixes contingent identity upon the wearer. Philip Furbank makes the point that Roxana is dismissive, even contemptuous of the crowd that take up the cry of “Roxana!” and that she “never likes or accepts the name, which she thinks of less as a name than as a definition”.

Personal identity is not the natural revelation of an innate self but an image attached by others and by self-reflection. Roxana encounters Susan tracking her in a parallel romance of detection and foundling origins that threatens to destroy Roxana’s fulfilment of autonomy. Roxana persuades her husband to hire a private cabin on a freighter to take them to their new home in Holland. She hopes to escape Susan and avoid all chance company. Roxana, her husband and the Quaker landlady are invited by the captain to dine on board before they sail. The captain greets them with his wife and his wife’s friend who Roxana recognizes as her former kitchen maid Susan, and who must therefore be

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85 Castle, Masquerade and Civilization, p. 33.
87 Jesse M. Molesworth, “‘A Dreadful Course of Calamities’: Roxana’s Ending Reconsidered”, p. 494.
her daughter. Susan entertains the company with memories of her employer's wonderful dress and dance as the Turkish 'Roxana'. Richetti describes the passage as "a diabolical mix of Jane Austen and Dostoyevsky, [combining] calm observation of external manners with an evocation of Roxana's explosive internal state". Susan and the captain's wife call unexpectedly at the Quaker's home. Roxana's nightgown prompts further discussion of the famous Roxana that puts Roxana "in a kind of a silent Rage" (FM, 233). Susan describes the dress exactly and Roxana sees that the Quaker recognizes it as she colours and looks to her but, "as she saw I took no Notice of it, she kept her Thoughts private to herself; and I did too, as well as I cou'd" (FM, 236).

Roxana is present as others discuss her; they are unaware that she is the focus of their discussion. At least, they do not say that they know, or perhaps only one or two, at most, suspect: Roxana cannot find out without giving herself away. The complex process of judgement that is required when presenting different selves or identities and interpreting others' responses and expectations emphasizes continuous self-awareness that produces and assays a private, reflexive self-image. Locke theorized the person as an interior, self-reflexive thinker. The model of a core consciousness, or awareness as an essential and irreducible self, depends upon an assumption "that there is an observer that continually perceives its own state, as if the perception is a reflection in a mirror. How otherwise could it be private and personal?"

89 Richard S. Hallam, Virtual Selves, Real Persons, p. 179.
Roxana watches herself “as if she were an auditor or looking in a mirror”. This may read as love of display and need for appreciation but may also disclose uneasy reappraisal. Either way, watching and observing oneself is different from identifying with oneself. Defoe details the construction of an inexorably suffocating, fictional and yet inescapable, self-reporting identity. Her former image as a celebrated figure drives Roxana deeper into disguise within increasingly tightening physical spaces. She moves from the grandeur of fashionable apartments to lodgings in a Quaker’s home, believing, “I was in a perfect Retreat indeed; remote from the Eyes of all that had ever seen me” (FM, 177).

Roxana, prevaricating and masquerading, must face her past and her future in Susan’s eyes. She cannot control the consequences of her history because it has “a material and painful residue, a living, desperate presence”. As Roxana’s story becomes everybody else’s focus, Roxana loses authority. In hiding, Roxana is absent from the major events that affect her. She recounts lengthy second-hand conversations between Susan and the Quaker, and third-hand reports by the Quaker. Amy appears to disappear in a whirl of unsupervised and disowned agency while the Quaker secretes Roxana deeper into chambers of neighbouring houses, further away into other towns, mediating information and disinformation. Roxana’s self-presentation fragments under pressure from “a complex imbroglio of events that occur more or less simultaneously in different places”. Susan overtakes Roxana’s plot with

90 Backscheider, Daniel Defoe, p. 192.
her own interests, countering any rationalist narrative of progress and enlightenment with “multiplicity, possibility, and noise”.

Moll Flanders also uses clothing but as disguise and misdirection rather than as display or seduction. Roxana draws the gaze in; Moll repels attention. The name Moll Flanders incorporates common words for a prostitute and a highwayman’s mistress, and has associations with Dutch lace. This material was prohibited to protect domestic cloth production but was also fashionable, and therefore prized as a target by thieves. Moll’s name conflates material and sexual desire, transgression and crime. Moll’s presentation is unreliable information. Even her occasional expressions of maternal feeling appear contrived, as though constructed to resemble the way that she knows she ought to feel.

Mother Midnight jokingly deflates Moll’s belief that “Affection was plac’d by Nature in the Hearts of Mothers”. ‘Mother’ asks Moll whether she can be sure of knowing her own mother (MF, 150). Moll knows that she does not, since she was taken from her mother at birth. Her discovery of incest depends upon circumstantial evidence that changes the apparent roles of her mother/mother-in-law and brother/husband.

When she sees Humphrey, her Virginian son and brother, as an adult, he reimburses her moving expenses with a bag of gold. Moll gives him a gold watch that is worth the same, except that she actually profits twice. The watch cost her nothing because she stole it and, furthermore, “he told me the Watch should be a Debt upon him, that he

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92 Molesworth, “‘A Dreadful Course of Calamities’”, pp. 497, 504.
93 Pollack, Incest and the English Novel, p. 117.
94 Connor, “‘Can you apply Arithmetick to Every Thing?’”, p.184.
would be paying, as long as I liv’d” (*MF*, 271). Moll sets out to ensure a new and profitable future by concealing her past.

Coming unexpectedly on the maid who claims to be her daughter, Roxana confesses to the reader, as she kisses Susan in greeting, “it was a secret inconceivable Pleasure to me [. . . ] to know that I kiss’d my own Child; my own Flesh and Blood, born of my Body” (*FM*, 227). Roxana has only Amy’s word and the girl’s appearance of suspicion to justify this “secret inconceivable Pleasure”. Amy rages and weeps when she is faced with drowning at sea or Susan’s threat to Roxana’s fortune. Roxana, on the other hand, knows that “my Thoughts got no Vent, as Amy’s did; I had a silent sullen kind of Grief, which could not break out in either Words or Tears” (*FM*, 116). Roxana maintains psychological seclusion, locked away from the reader’s eye.

Locke images philosophy as a male who seeks truth in female Nature’s recesses. He also talks of philosophy in terms of male acquaintance with a woman as a “Subject lying somewhat in the dark”.\(^{95}\) Locke’s image of the mind as a furnished room becomes a chamber in which feminised truth is entertained and known.\(^ {96}\) Love, and individuals like Moll and Roxana who cater for male fantasy, curiosity and desire in exchange for profit, fame or security, appear to have more in common with Locke and rational individual consciousness than would be expected. Moll and Roxana also, however, confirm the flaws in Locke’s presentation of knowledge as emblematic female chambers of the body that wait to reward rational male suitors.


Critics often treat *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* in tandem because of the striking autonomy of their protagonists but also consider them as separate literary endeavours. Interestingly, however, Moll and Roxana interconnect when their reversal of fortunes switch genres between criminal biography and scandalous secret history. The turning points that threaten to expose Moll Flanders and Roxana depend upon infringement of taboos that neither would be likely to confess, either for sympathy amongst intimates or for profit in public print. Moll’s incestuous marriage confirms the sexual risks of Roxana’s masquerades while Roxana appears to confess responsibility for her daughter’s murder.

Moll’s Editor allows that, in view of the ubiquity and popularity of novels and romances, “we must be content to leave the Reader to pass his own Opinion upon the ensuing Sheets, and take it just as he pleases” (*MF*, 23). Secret histories titillate readers with exclusive insights of the intimate lives of the rich and powerful. They supply, as Melinda Rabb argues, a feminized analysis of political intrigue as romance that counterpoints male satire with gossip, slander and innuendo. The use of blanks to represent public figures, as with Roxana’s princely lover, provides legal protection, caters for the reader’s enjoyment in acrostics and passes responsibility to the reader for filling in the spaces and thus mentally committing any libel. In *Roxana*, Defoe’s heroine complicates the genre as she names a public figure, Clayton, disguises an unnamed foreign prince because he is a secret agent, but she also manages to make these men peripheral. Roxana may mention public figures in their private

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moments but she, as the focus, then disappears into physical,
psychological and finally narrative darkness, ensuring that her ‘secret
history’ remains secret.

Readers and critics have struggled with *Roxana’s* abrupt and
inconclusive ending. Philip Furbank points out that there are, in fact, two
different endings. The first version brings Roxana to a life in Holland
that is public and happy while inwardly she “mix’d my Sighs with every
Smile” (*FM*, 218). The second version brings her and Amy into an
ominously unspecified but public, “dreadful Course of Calamities” (*FM*,
267). As in my discussion of Defoe’s parallel and binary accounts in
*Robinson Crusoe*, this affords space for readers’ own decision. It also
represents self-awareness as both subjectively real and objectively
subject to others’ interpretations.

*The Family Instructor* advocates Christian community and social
responsibility even as it sympathetically describes acts of individual
rebellion. *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* bear out Crusoe’s observation that
a person is an island identity, whether on a literal desert island or self-
absorbed in a crowded metropolis. Crusoe describes the separated self:

The World, I say, is nothing to us, but as it is more or
less to our Relish: All Reflection is carry’d Home, and
our Dear-self is, in one Respect, the End of Living.
Hence Man may be properly said to be *alone* in the
Midst of the Crowds and Hurry of Men and Business:

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All the Reflections which he makes, are to himself; all that is pleasant, he embraces for himself; all that is irksome and grievous, is tasted but by his own Palat.99

Locke’s conception of the self as a construct of sensory impressions may have ensured that “the lines between fiction and reality were becoming problematic”.100 Whether inflected by class, gender, hierarchy, or by financial, legal or moral considerations, the evasive and manipulative disguises and masquerades of Moll and Roxana highlight the transient fictions of image and self-representation. Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* invert social and epistemological hierarchies, and undermine and disassemble even as they purport to represent coherent identities. Defoe’s characters simulate the traps and delusions of the autonomous confessional self that lives in the reader’s imagination. As Richard Hallam argues, the individualized self “could be viewed as continually recreated and redefined as a virtual entity in a system of socially interacting persons”.101 However, Defoe’s characters become isolated within their ‘virtual’ identities. Moll Flanders maintains control of her life and of her narrative but at the cost of open communion with Jemy, the reader or God. She remains recognizable as an artificial, fictional construction. Roxana disappears altogether from textual sight.

Afterword

Daniel Defoe is associated with the image of an independent, self-reliant individual as exemplified in his mythic character, Robinson Crusoe. The Victorian critic, Leslie Stephen, certainly merged author and character in his summary: “Drop him in a desert island, and he is just as sturdy and self-composed as if he were in Cheapside”.¹ G. A Starr, on the other hand, presents the fictitious character as Defoe’s instrumental projection, claiming that, “Within the space of a single year, Defoe had managed to confer on Crusoe an air of gravity and integrity that his own public image lacked”.²

This thesis has followed Defoe’s interrogation of public image and private identity through works that turn readers’ attention from outward appearance and representation to inner experience and interpretation. The True-Born Englishman’s satire on national divisions in public life domesticates into the divided public and family identity of households in The Family Instructor. Robinson Crusoe presents an account of an adventurous individual while Captain Singleton’s kidnapped, criminalized narrator has little time or thought for meaningful identity. Moll Flanders and Roxana prosper as individuals despite the systematic odds against them but remain apart from their spouses and communities, hiding the inner secrets that are now supposed to be in open, public print.

Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* argues that Defoe embodied and eulogized the freedom and ingenuity of the individual within modern society. This thesis argues, however, that Defoe's work betrays profound unease with any exclusive sovereignty of individual interpretation. All of the texts discussed demonstrate how circumstances shape individuals and how individuals change circumstances through adaptation, manipulation, persuasion and disguise. Moll sets out "to Deceive the Deceiver". Later, she discovers she has also been deceived. Defoe may well advise his readers along with Moll, "I am giving an account of what was, not of what ought or ought not to be".  

The epistemological model of personal identity in John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* certainly, as Watt argues, offers a figure of rational, individual agency. Jean-François Lyotard's *The Differend* is, however, more appropriate to Defoe's multiple and discontinuous identities. Disrupted political, economic and family structures engender wayward individuals. They find themselves in new territories where they encounter alien speech and behaviour, whether within the domestic household or as a castaway on a tropical island. A Citizen's Wife falls catatonic and when she recovers, speaks others' words in a semblance of family communion. Crusoe returns to England but feels nothing in common with his fellow citizens. There is no true-born Englishman, only migration and mutation; Bob Singleton and Moll retire under foreign disguise and publisher's pseudonym; Roxana has no

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resting place in the close of the book or in the reader’s imagination. The reader shares in others’ fictitious and separated spaces.

Daniel Defoe’s characters demonstrate personal identity to be an instrumental fabrication woven into others’ belief as individuals tell stories that separate them out from hierarchically structured communities. Personal identity, or self-authorized individuality, is now the common idealized fiction that cannot be easily unthought. Defoe’s works fascinate because they experiment with the image of a private, autonomous individual at a time when such a concept had not yet settled into a normative truth.
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Abstract

Daniel Defoe and the Representation of Personal Identity
By
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This thesis examines concepts of personal identity in Defoe’s literary construction and as a social fiction. Changes in political, economic and social structures in early eighteenth-century England are often cited to explain the emergence of a modern, secular individual and of the literary genre of the novel that gave voice to a new form of subjectivity. Ian Watt’s The Rise of the Novel (1957) is the foundational critical text that correlates the phenomenon of bourgeois individualism with the style and content of Daniel Defoe’s realist fiction. Defoe’s characters are presented as individualists who calculate their own material interests at the expense of religious, moral and emotional considerations. Watt grounds such characterization in the empiricist philosophy of John Locke’s An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689). This thesis accepts that Locke’s analysis of human epistemology is crucial to the modern concept of an autonomous and coherent individual identity. At the same time, however, the thesis draws upon the postmodernist philosophic views of Jean-Francois Lyotard’s The Differend, which contend that the concept of personal identity does not withstand challenges from incommensurable epistemological and cultural pressures. This analysis is particularly apt to the cultural context of early eighteenth century England. Personal and social mobility dislocated predictable presentation of identity in terms of class, gender and religious affiliation. Globalized economic trade increased contacts with external, foreign cultures whose alien appearance, practices and beliefs also disturbed national presumptions of universal truths and human nature. Defoe’s works engage with such social, moral and international dislocations of identity.

Defoe was a prolific contributor to the print market, writing political pamphlets, poetry, religious conduct manuals, histories, proposals for social and economic improvement and imaginative ‘novels’. Part of Lyotard’s argument for the ‘differend’ is that different ‘genres’ of phrases preclude any final and overarching grand narrative or theory. This thesis discusses a range of Defoe’s texts that cross the genres of state satire, religious conduct literature, travel narrative, spiritual autobiography, pirate adventure, criminal biography and secret history. As well as gauging and capitalizing on popular demand, Defoe also delighted in experimenting with readers’ credibility as he deployed personae and projected fictions as fact. In all these texts, Defoe tests public and private self-images as he disrupts normative literary and social expectations. His provocative destabilization of any fixed definition or image of a personal identity is at the heart of the thesis.