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## Mercenary Motivation in Defoe's Errant Protagonists

Since works like Adam Mendilow's *Time and the Novel* (1952) and Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel* (1957), the importance of time in providing structure and realism for the novel has been generally recognized by critics. There has not, however, been comparable attention to the way in which the monetary motivation of the protagonists gave structure and realism to the eighteenth-century novel. The careful attention to time and chronology separates Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding not only from such earlier prose traditions as Spanish and German picaresque or British "rogue" literature, but even from a much closer antecedent like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The same is true when one considers mercenary motivation. Defoe is the greatest innovator who provided prose literature with realism through both a chronological structure and a mercenary motivation with which the reader could readily identify. In Defoe the times and the man coincided happily to yield the first prose epics of common people motivated by the accumulation of wealth on this earth. Wealth, in Defoe's day, was being accumulated by common English men and women, both at home and abroad, in far greater quantities than ever before. His novels allowed readers to enjoy vicariously experiences that related directly to their own class and times.

Because Defoe was the great innovator who worked without the benefit of a convention that might permit him to lie like the truth, his novels are frequently bedevilled by the way in which their need for realistic monetary motivation clashes with their temporal structure. Defoe's errant protagonists—Moll, Roxana, Colonel Jack, Captain Singleton, and Crusoe with whom I shall be dealing in this paper—all attempt to accumulate money during the full span of their lives. However, the goal of the protagonists is London, the public figures whom they meet must generally have been dead for some time, and the relatively widespread opportunities for accumulating wealth had only existed for a single generation. Understandably, Defoe is often forced

to sacrifice chronological realism as the price for realistic mercenary motivation. As an example, Moll Flanders, who tells her story in 1683 at the age of seventy, had been instructed many years earlier by her banker husband in how people might invest their money in the Bank of England. Defoe ignores the fact that the Bank of England would not be founded until 1694.

In Defoe's successors, any anachronisms tend to be far less overt. This is in part because Richardson, followed by such authors as Fielding and Austen, rigorously reduced the time span of the novel from a whole life to one year or less. As a result, the novels of Richardson and later writers were frequently suited not only to dramatic structure, but also to monetary goals like dowries or landed estates. The mercenary goals of Richardson, Fielding, and Austen differ radically from those of Defoe, since the capital involved had already been accumulated. Yet Richardson and Fielding, like Austen or Fanny Burney or Smollett, also differ from one another with respect to monetary motivation. Indeed once the modern novel had been established there were also reactions to monetary motivation that resulted in works as different as *Tristram Shandy* and the Gothic. Our concern in this paper, however, is with Defoe and with the circumstances that made monetary motivation in recognizable quantities of pounds sterling so important an element in the founding of the modern novel.

Defoe and readers of his own age had lived through a remarkable change in England's trading position with the world. Although histories tend to stress the adventures of buccaneers like Hawkins, Frobisher, and Drake, the real preeminence of British navigation and trade came about in Defoe's lifetime. As David W. Waters points out, "as late as 1568 probably only one English seaman was capable of navigating to the West Indies without the aid of Portuguese, French or Spanish pilots."<sup>1</sup> This situation had begun to change radically by the time of the Armada. Within a further twenty years John Stowe, writing in 1598, could describe some of the recent impact on London's life and shipping,<sup>2</sup> which is later vividly reflected in passages from Defoe's *Plague Year* and *Due Preparations for the Plague*. The Elizabethan developments in shipping resulted in the founding of what Thomas R. Smith has called the "Thames School" of English chart-makers. For the first three quarters of the seventeenth century, however, the Dutch retained their virtual hegemony in chartmaking. Cromwell's first Navigation Act of 1651 specified that no goods could be imported into England except in British vessels and this symbolized a movement that was to break the supremacy of the Netherlands both at sea and in America. Helen Wallis argues that the return of scholars

and craftsmen from abroad after the Restoration and the Fire of London in 1666 contributed to the remarkable demand for maps as well as the increasing ability of Englishmen to fulfill such demands.<sup>3</sup> The situation in London after the Plague and Fire of 1665-6 might be compared with that in Western Germany and Japan after World War II. Defoe, who has a keen nose for commercial opportunity maintains, in his *Journal of the Plague Year*, "that there never was known such a trade all over England for the time as was in the first seven years after the plague and after the fire of London."<sup>4</sup>

Thomas R. Smith—in demonstrating the continuity of the "Thames School" of chartmakers—points out that eight times as many of their charts survive from after than from before 1670, and also that there is a "marked shift in the area of interest" in the "School" after about 1670. At that time, major attention changed from Northern Europe and the Mediterranean to the "Oriental Navigation"—or Far Eastern Trade—the Caribbean, and the coast of North America. It is worth noting that although Moll Flanders was ostensibly born in 1613 and Robinson Crusoe in 1632 their interests clearly follow those of British trade and navigation after 1670. Both as an author of numerous non-fictional works and as a businessman, Defoe was interested in trade and navigation throughout his adult life. In his *Autobiography* Benjamin Franklin considered Defoe's first book, *An Essay upon Projects* (1697), one of the two most important works to influence him.<sup>5</sup> Such subsequent works of Defoe as *A General History of Trade* (1713), *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-26), *The Compleat English Tradesman* (1725-27), *Augusta Triumphans* (1728), *A Plan of the English Commerce* (1728), and the *Atlas Maritimis and Commercialis* (1729) demonstrate the continuing interest in trade and navigation. In *A Plan of the English Commerce*, Defoe says, "Trade is the Wealth of the World . . . Trade has two Daughters . . . namely MANUFACTURE and NAVIGATION."<sup>6</sup> Though his novels deal less directly with manufacture, most reflect directly on the importance of navigation and all reflect on it indirectly as a source of wealth.

Defoe's novels are not merely concerned with the ultimate goal of wealth, but with the specific stock of the protagonist at any given time. We seem to know Moll's approximate stock of cash and gold watches at almost every important juncture in her life.<sup>7</sup> Though Moll's adventures cover a considerable spectrum of human experience, they are far from exhausting the materials of Defoe's novels. He seems to take as his province virtually all mercantile experience in the known world. Many of Defoe's ideas in more than thirty years of non-fictional writing (and particularly his ideas as a projector) are used to vitalize his novels and are incorporated into their chronological structure.

Though the division is not always clear cut, the goals in Defoe's novels tend to break down into those related to the achievement of personal wealth (Moll's marriages, financial investments, stealing, or planting in Virginia) and those related to projects for the betterment of mankind (Moll's plea for a House of Orphans, her defence of women's rights, or her more general advocacy of the colonies as the source of personal wealth).

All of the major topics dealt with in *An Essay upon Projects*—such as banks, highways, insurance, and bankruptcy—are reflected in the novels more than twenty years later. A passage in *The Compleat English Tradesman*—“How many have gone to other of our Colonies empty, in the nature of Servants, and are now resident there, in the Quality of considerable Planters, or come home again with estates”<sup>8</sup>—suggests important themes in *Crusoe*, *Moll*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxana*. The same non-fictional work helps us to understand in the terms of Defoe's ideal tradesman where all of the errant protagonists go astray: “He that runs into great adventures after he has enrich'd himself, seems not to have a true notion of Trade” (2.1.178). Crusoe says in Brazil: “And now increasing in business and wealth, my head began to be full of projects and undertakings beyond my reach; such as are indeed often the ruin of the best heads in business.”<sup>9</sup> His subsequent voyage to trade in Negroes wrecked him for twenty-eight years in the solitude of his island.

Defoe's own life suggests why he should be so aware of the dangers awaiting the tradesman who seeks out “*needless Projects*” (*Compleat Tradesman*, vol 2, title page). In *Crusoe II* Defoe's weakness is underlined when Crusoe and his merchant friend have done well out of a trading voyage between Bengal and the Far East: “My new friend kept himself to the nature of the thing, and would have been content to have gone, like a carrier's horse, always to the same inn, backward and forward . . . . On the other hand, mine was the notion of a mad rambling boy, that never cares to see a thing twice over.”<sup>10</sup> Crusoe's curiosity provides us with the land journey from Pekin across Asia, but any merchant will recognize that his friend is the better businessman.

Again and again the deviations from the business ethic of *The Compleat English Tradesman* provide the interest in the novels. Frequently a misguided search for gentility also takes the protagonist from the straight and narrow path. Though Moll and Roxana eventually marry the banker and the Dutch Merchant respectively, both risk the loss of these steady husbands by a search for gentility in the form of James and the English court. Similarly, Colonel Jack's “Ramble of four and Twenty Years” begins after he has established his third plantation because “the old reproach often came in my way; Namely,

that even this was not yet, the *Life of a Gentleman*.”<sup>11</sup> Becoming a gentleman was certainly part of Defoe’s bourgeois goal in both the fiction and the non-fiction works, but as we shall see later, one first had to accumulate sufficient capital to retire from trade and become a member of the *rentier* class.

The main body of the novels, however, is concerned with the accumulation of wealth. In them retirement is merely an ultimate goal, much as marriage will be in the work of many later novelists. Defoe’s writings are epics of bourgeois endeavour, involving all the risks of both real and metaphorical shipwreck. His protagonists are like his ideal tradesmen: “I have known a Tradesman rise and fall six or seven times, and never give it over till at last he has conquer’d the world, and risen to stand” (*Complete Tradesman* 2.1: 184). The restless endeavour is that of a Christian on the way to Bunyan’s New Jerusalem, but the rewards come through a progress directly related to earthly time and the goal is the very material out of which Satan built Pandemonium. Gold—or sterling its English fiscal equivalent—is clearly the goal that motivates all of Defoe’s novels, but his attitudes are complex. Just as in politics, he is a Trimmer in the ethics related to money. Essentially, he seems to feel that necessity is an excuse for both risk and crime. But Defoe also recognizes instinctively that the accumulation of money through crime will have a special appeal for his readers. He assumes, perhaps rightly, that a criminal or at least an errant protagonist offers more vicarious enjoyment than a tradesman who might, like a carrier’s horse, become engaged in regularly visiting the same inn.

An important element in the vicarious enjoyment of readers involved recognizing the precise amounts of capital accumulated by the protagonist at any given point in the novel. Let us use an early part of *Colonel Jack* to demonstrate how this form of recognition works. After he deposits the twenty-five pounds with the clerk at the custom house, Colonel Jack outlines the following escapades interspersed with the other details over some thirty-five pages. He gets a third share of from seventeen to eighteen pounds stolen from a collier; Will gets him thirty pounds in respect of some stolen bills of exchange; he shares first fourteen pounds and then £29. 16s equally with Will; and his share of the loot with footpads is £8. 19s, although he regrets, and later returns, twenty-two shillings taken from a poor woman. At this point, Will is in trouble and Colonel Jack liquidates one hundred pounds in plate and money for him. Since Will is to be hanged, the proceeds are given to his mother.

Defoe’s readers—who would presumably be recognizing this intricate accumulation of wealth with an avidity comparable to the recognition of esoteric classical allusions by their more literary contem-

poraries—would be aware that the enterprising Colonel Jack has now accumulated £66.17s of his own (pp. 44, 53, 57, 58, 66, 70-74). At this point, their perspicacity is now at last rewarded when Colonel Jack addresses such readers directly and confirms their calculations: “I had got together as you will perceive by the past Account, above Sixty pounds, for I spent nothing” (p. 75). Readers who are not sufficiently bourgeois to make this type of calculation regarding the ongoing accumulation of wealth miss a good deal of the vicarious pleasure offered by the novels of Defoe.

When Colonel Jack does return to the clerk at the custom-house after six years, he not only deposits his sixty pounds, but he receives a bill for ninety-four pounds, which as the bourgeois reader recognizes includes nine pounds for six years interest on twenty-five pounds at six per cent (p. 77). Later, in Virginia, Colonel Jack makes the typical metamorphosis from transported slave to plantation owner.

Since Moll Flanders lives mainly in London and Virginia her money is always expressed in sterling. I have noted elsewhere that “Typical of his class, Defoe is meticulously concerned with statistics, and an examination of the text permits one to ascribe an almost precise date to the bulk of Moll’s experiences from her birth in Newgate in 1613 to the ostensible conclusion of her ‘own Memorandums’ in 1683.”<sup>12</sup> One might add that one can align with most of these dates the current state of her exchequer. Moll has twenty-two shillings at the age of 14¼ when her good old nurse dies; one hundred and five guineas, a handful of gold and five hundred pounds from Robin’s brother; twelve hundred pounds after Robin dies; five hundred pounds after eight years married to her brother in Virginia; four hundred and fifty pounds after she is left by Sir Walter Cleve at the age of forty-two; two hundred pounds after the death of the banker, and seven hundred pounds in cash altogether with two gold watches, clothes, rings, and plate, when almost at the height of her career as a thief. There is much more financial detail, of course, but this at least indicates the general level of Moll’s personal finances at crucial points in her career.

Again and again Moll is driven by economic necessity. At her two lowest points as an adult—just before she becomes the mistress of Sir Walter Cleve and just before she becomes a thief—she describes her situation with the same words. To spend upon a meagre stock of some two hundred pounds without the opportunity of replenishing it she calls a sort of “bleeding to death.” These conditions suggest a form of hell-upon-earth that bourgeois readers would recognize. They would also recognize the need for the protagonist to survive at all costs. Bertolt Brecht has epitomized this bourgeois spirit in his *Mother Courage*, the sutler who during the Thirty Years War—and even at the

risk of losing her children—sees her goal as winning through with herself, her children, and her minimum requirement of material goods.<sup>13</sup>

While *Moll*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxana* generally deal with the accumulation of wealth in sterling, *Crusoe*, *Captain Singleton*, and *New Voyage round the World* frequently involve more exotic currencies. Just as readers with a knowledge of the classics would gain pleasure from recognizing classical allusions in the works of Pope, so Defoe's readers would recognize and convert into sterling the references to foreign currencies such as Spanish silver pieces of eight (value 4s 6d to 5s), Spanish gold pistoles (16s 6d to 18s), French livres (1s 7d), or Portuguese gold moidores (27s), which circulated widely during the early eighteenth century. They would check Defoe's calculations of the wealth that accumulated, as well as checking interest rates and income. In *Crusoe*—just as in the journey across Africa in *Singleton* and across Patagonia in *New Voyage*—one of the goals is gold itself. Crusoe's first voyage to Guinea, for example, gains him "five pounds nine ounces of gold dust . . . which yielded me in London at my return almost £300" (p. 22). Assuming that Defoe is using troy weight with twelve ounces to the pound, Crusoe brought back sixty-nine ounces of gold dust. This accorded with the current price of approximately four pounds per ounce. It may be compared with Defoe's complaint in both *A Plan of the English Commerce* and *The Compleat English Tradesman* that gold which costs £3.18s to £4 per ounce was being "coined into guineas" at a profit of forty per cent (p. 63, and 2.1: 14). Slaves, too, had their cash equivalents and the slave trade as outlined in *A Plan of the English Commerce* (see, for example, pp. 67 and 243-44) is fleshed out in the action of *Crusoe*, *Colonel Jack* and *Captain Singleton*.

Although Defoe is the laureate who sings the virtues of British trade he has some very clear ideas about limiting the risks that trading involves. Specifically Defoe points out again and again in his non-fiction works that a tradesman should retire when he has accumulated the twenty thousand pounds, which will give him an income of one thousand pounds per year when invested at five per cent. Before we look at the way in which this magic income operates in both the non-fiction and the fiction works, we should note that although it held good until our own time the relatively fixed rate of five per cent was first achieved in England during the latter part of Defoe's life. The greatest single factor holding back the development of European money markets, in the modern sense, had been the usury laws. The Reformation gave the northern and Protestant countries of Europe a decisive lead in banking, precisely because they came to accept usury as long as it could be held within bounds. In 1547 at Geneva, for

example, Calvin fixed the maximum legal rate of interest at five per cent. Until the eighteenth century, England lagged behind the continent of Europe and particularly behind the Netherlands. England's maximum rates—which did not however apply to crown loans—were ten per cent in 1571-1624; eight per cent in 1624-51; six per cent in 1651-1714; and five percent after 1714.<sup>14</sup>

Though Government loans were at first made at or above the usury limits, the development of banking institutions—and particularly the Bank of England after 1694—regularized government borrowing and reduced progressively the interest rates that the government had to pay. The arrangement was equally attractive to individuals who wished to receive regular and reliable interest payments on the increasing amounts of capital that were accumulating. The best yard-stick of the remarkable increase in monetary as distinct from landed wealth during the eighteenth century is provided by the expansion of the long term national debt from one million pounds in 1692 to nine hundred million pounds when Jane Austen was writing her novels during the French Wars of 1793-1815. Though interest rates had reduced to as low as three per cent on consols by the middle of the eighteenth century, the best average figure that one can give for the yield on government securities during the eighteenth century is five per cent. This standard expectation has been widely reflected in literature since Defoe's time, but one should note that it would not previously have been realistic.

To understand Defoe it is important to recognize his view that beyond a certain point risks are not acceptable. A Moll with seven hundred pounds has no excuse for stealing, and a tradesman with twenty thousand pounds has no excuse for the risks inherent in trade. As Defoe tells us in *The Compleat English Tradesman*, "what need he care for Trade, that has twenty thousand Pound in his Pocket? . . . 'Tis Time to leave off and have done" (2.1: 96-97). The figure is frequently mentioned and seventy pages later it is readily converted into its equivalent annual income: "What Temptation but that I mentioned before of meer Avarice can lie in the way of a Man worth 20000 l. in his Pocket? what can he propose to himself better than what he already has? . . . As I said before, he has a thousand a Year in Hand" (2.1: 166).

The goal of twenty thousand pounds runs like a leitmotif through *The Compleat English Tradesman*: "He that is not satisfied, and does not think himself rich enough with 20000 l. in his Pocket, neither would he be satisfied one Jot the more, if he had five Times that Sum"; or "Methinks a Man that has once 20000 l. in his Pocket should not want to be advised to be satisfied with the Road of Business."



Defoe argues further that “every Man is advanc’d in Business, so as to be worth twenty thousand Pounds should leave off” because “twould be much better for the Nation in general, that twenty Tradesmen, with each a thousand Pound in his Pocket, were employ’d in Trade, than one Tradesman with twenty thousand Pounds” (2.2: 96-98). Later, he comes back to the same subject and expounds further: “it would be the best Step a Tradesman could take after he is risen up to the Magnitude of 20000 l. . . . to lay down, and draw out of Trade.” Though Defoe does not insist on this action he lists the advantages: “ ‘Tis certain, leaving off his Business with twenty thousand Pounds in his Pocket, he changes his Situation in the World, that is to say, he lays down the Tradesman, and takes up the Gentleman with a thousand Pounds a Year Estate.”

Defoe gives some interesting advice to the tradesman who, having taken his counsel, has now become a “managing Gentleman.” What Defoe says is reminiscent both of the impecunious Micawber and the image of “bleeding to death” used twice by Moll when at her lowest financial ebb:

He that has a thousand Pounds a Year Estate ought to spend five hundred a Year, and no more: He that once comes to lay up five hundred Pounds a Year, out of his Estate, will always see a rising Family under him; as he that spends but one hundred Pounds a Year more than his Estate brings in, will always be necessitous, under the Hatches, must borrow, mortgage, or sell, and so gradually bleeds to Death.

Let but the managing Tradesman be but a managing Gentleman too, and he is made for Ages, his Family is established; every two Years he can add fifty Pounds a Year in Land to his Estate; and if he lives twenty Years in such a Circumstance, adding the additional Income, and the Advances made by it, he leaves his Estate doubled and grown up to two thousand Pounds a Year. (2.1: 160-62).

Defoe feels that the tradesman is always at greatest risk when, having succeeded in the trade that he knows, he allows his surplus capital to be drawn into some new project. He gives examples of such projects that “mortally wounded the Fortunes and Credit of the Undertakers of them, even after they were worth not 20000 l. only, but some of them three or four Times those Sums.” (2.1: 165-66).

Defoe is well aware of the difficulty that a tradesman has in changing from “the active Part of Life,” in which—“on Purpose to bring him to this Circumstances of Life, which I call rich”—it had been necessary to turn “his Head and Hand to every profitable Thing in the Road and Course of his Business.” But for the “managing Gentleman” the “only Virtue is Indolence, the only safe part he is to act . . . is . . . to do nothing, and I must add, it is the most difficult Part too” (2.1: 166-67).

In part it is just this bourgeois inability to emulate the natural indolence of Moll's James that aggravates the problems of Roxana and Colonel Jack as well as providing Defoe with an excuse to write *Crusoe II*.

For modern readers plagued with inflation, Defoe's confidence in what was essentially a fixed interest investment may seem both hazardous and naive. Yet for two hundred years after Defoe's death, until Britain abandoned the gold standard in 1931, inflation was kept very much under control; the price of gold rose surprisingly little and interest rates even fell. In England, a family could still live remarkably well on a thousand pounds a year, even up to the time of the First World War. In great measure, of course, this fiscal stability for the independent classes derived from a supply of cheap labour at home and abroad as well as from a supply of cheap raw material ensured by "gunboat diplomacy." In the last half century, both Britain and the other Western nations have been finding it more and more difficult to compensate for rising labour and material costs by the use of advanced technology, but for at least two centuries Defoe's economics served the middle and upper classes of England very well indeed.

When Defoe turns to a specific exemplum with which to underpin his general argument, he starts once again with the capital sum of twenty thousand pounds. He shows how by "PRUDENT Management and frugal living" this sum is invested so that when the gentleman concerned eventually dies at a ripe old age, "he had 16000 l. *per Annum* stated revenue, and almost 90000 l. in Ready Money" (2.1: 169-71). Such wealth beyond the dreams of avarice demonstrates that Defoe is not opposed to great material possessions, but only to taking trading risks when one has more than twenty thousand pounds. Neither is Defoe opposed to the acquisition of gentility when one has the funds with which to achieve this metamorphosis. His *Compleat English Gentleman*, a long work on which he was engaged almost up to the time of his death, is much concerned with demonstrating that the respectable English tradesman is in fact the best gentleman of all.

We should bear in mind Defoe's magic figure of twenty thousand pounds or one thousand pounds per annum when we consider the actions of his errant protagonists. Of Defoe's protagonists, Roxana's estate after she is deserted by the prince accords most obviously with the figures for retirement that Defoe sets out in *The Compleat English Tradesman*. When she sets up for a "she-merchant" and turns her jewels into cash, she has precisely twenty thousand pounds. At that point, the Dutch merchant would both have married her and allowed her to keep her estate of one thousand pounds per annum under her own control. Roxana prefers, however, to continue with her own trade

and with masquerades in order to seek gentility through finding a "man of quality" in England.

When she does, however, eventually marry the Dutch merchant, Roxana has doubled her income through investment. Yet she loses not only mental repose (because of the need to murder Susan who had seen her at the time of the masquerades), but also hard cash. Roxana now feels the need to contribute her income of two thousand pounds per annum to the family budget, in order not to pollute her husband's funds with her own ill-gotten gains. She has invested her twenty thousand pounds according to Defoe's advice, but her crime of continuing to trade means that she must suffer.

If we regard *Crusoe I* as a separate work, his story in terms of the financial goal is quite different. Crusoe, had he followed the advice of his old father, would certainly have not lost financially. The father of Crusoe "settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandize and, leaving off his trade, lived afterwards at York, from whence he had married my mother." The father is almost a prototype of Defoe's tradesman, and his defence of "the middle state" in the first three pages of *Robinson Crusoe* is reminiscent of Defoe's defence of that state in *The Compleat English Tradesman*: "I know of no State of Life, I mean in that we call the Middle Station of it, and among the sensible Part of Mankind, which is more suited to make Men perfectly easy, and comfortable to themselves, than that of a thriving Tradesman" (2.1: 106).

Crusoe does not listen to his father and by the time that he returns to England his father is dead. The irony is that he would have achieved his father's goal had he stayed at home, or even if he had stayed on his plantation in Brazil. Nevertheless, Crusoe suffers, and strives, and learns. As a result, he is rewarded ultimately with a sum very much like that which he might have expected to accumulate rather sooner as a tradesman or as a lawyer at home. At the end of the book, he is living back in England. There he has a capital of thirteen thousand pounds in addition to a good dowry. Since, in *Crusoe III*, Defoe speaks of the protagonist as an allegorical parallel to his own life and Defoe received a dowry of £3,700 with Mary Tuffley, it seems probable that at the end of *Crusoe I* the protagonist has almost achieved the ideal capital of twenty thousand pounds.

The ultimate financial position of Captain Singleton and the Quaker William is less clear than that of the other errant protagonists. Defoe was probably trying to provide a parallel with Captain Avery, who is thought by some to have returned secretly to England. We know only that at the height of their success Singleton and William had between them one hundred thousand pounds together with

further funds on the ship. The similarity with Defoe's other errant protagonists as well as with his ethic regarding tradesmen is clearly the Puritan William's argument that he and Singleton should retire because they have stolen enough: "I would ask, whether . . . thou hast any Thought of leaving off this Trade; for most People leave off Trading when they are satisfied with getting, and are rich enough; for no body Trades for the sake of Trading, much less do any Men rob for the sake of Thieving . . . it is natural for most Men that are abroad to desire to come Home again at last, especially when they are grown . . . so rich, as they know not what to do with more if they had it."<sup>15</sup>

Moll Flanders is the only one of Defoe's errant protagonists who achieves only barely, if she achieves it at all, the income of five hundred pounds per annum that Defoe and his contemporaries seem to have considered the minimum for the type of gentility to which she aspired. Certainly Moll and James would have made this minimum had James heeded her plea to come and set up as a planter with her in Virginia when she was forty-two. But they did not leave until almost twenty years later. The irony, however, is that Moll and James were suffering from an illusion when they first met. She thought that he was worth "a thousand pounds a year"; he thought that she had fifteen thousand pounds. Either of the two fortunes was in the range of Defoe's ideal income, but they had neither (pp. 156-57).

In North America, Colonel Jack already has three plantations bringing him in a substantial income under management before he leaves for his "Ramble of four and Twenty Years." Indeed, he tells us that in his absence "the Plantations were encreas'd to such a Degree that some Years my return here made up eight Hundred Pound, and one Year almost a Thousand" (pp. 233, 250).

Surely—in terms of the economic ethic clearly delineated by Defoe in his non-literary works—much of the effort made by Crusoe, Singleton, Jack, Moll, and Roxana was unnecessary. They would have achieved Defoe's material goal and indeed a considerable measure of gentility with so much less effort and anguish. Their repentance, too—about which much has been said—might have come sooner and have been a little less necessary. In *Crusoe III*, Crusoe speaks for Defoe and for all the errant protagonists when he says:

They who repent, and their ill lives amend,  
Stand next to those who never did offend.<sup>16</sup>

On the question of repentance, Defoe deals with his protagonist's preparation for death much as he does with the retirement of the rich tradesman. In *The Compleat English Tradesman*, Defoe devotes a whole chapter to this subject. Among other things, he says that "The

Tradesman leaving his Shop, is like another Man's leaving the World; he should resolve to die in Charity with all Men: It is a trading Death; he dies out of Trade as much as another dies out of the World; he should therefore endeavour to go off in a Calm" (2.1: 210-13, and 187).

As a literary salesman, Defoe knows, of course, that he cannot limit the province of his errant protagonists to such repetitive and legitimate activities as trading and planting. A comparison with Defoe's extensive writings on navigation, projects, and financial institutions does, however, suggest that there is a close relationship between what he has to say in such works and many of the activities of his protagonists. Furthermore, the protagonists all exhibit the same bourgeois resilience to adversity as did Defoe and his ideal *Compleat English Tradesman*.

It is true that the protagonists do not follow as closely as they should Defoe's economic ethic for the tradesman in his non-fictional works. If they did, they would gain an estate of one thousand pounds per annum as quickly as possible and then achieve gentility by retiring on their incomes. But to understand Defoe's economic and social ethic is to understand when and how the protagonists err, and thereby give themselves needless effort and anguish. Fortunately for Defoe and for us the protagonists of whom he draws full-life portraits are not ideal tradesmen. Their lives would otherwise have been narrower and their stories therefore less interesting. Had they been ore perfect as tradesmen, the protagonists would have been less suitable as vehicles for describing the wide range of experience and ideas that Defoe deals with elsewhere in his non-fictional works.

Defoe's novels are the first great prose epics by, for, and about the common man. With the exception of *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, they all show us how the common man or woman can eventually win through to a position in society that provides material comfort and social status after a period of suffering and effort.

Since we are the class both about whom and for whom Defoe writes, it is hardly surprising that we should have proved such avid readers of his works and of the genre that he founded. Though *Pilgrim's Progress* outpaced *Crusoe* at first, it has not run the course so well. Men and women, whatever their claims, are no longer primarily concerned with eternity and the New Jerusalem. Defoe was the first who gave to common men and women a serious prose epic of themselves on this earth to which they could vicariously relate. In Defoe's day, the combination of chronological time as structure with recognizable material wealth as motivation offered a new and realistic formula for a genre that fascinated the middle classes and their many dependents.

## NOTES

1. David W. Waters, *The Art of Navigation in England in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Times* (London, 1958), p. 101, cited in Thomas R. Smith, "Manuscript and Printed Charts in Seventeenth-Century London: The Case of the Thames School," *The Compleat Plattmaker*, ed. Norman J.W. Thrower (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1948), pp. 49-50. For much of what follows on British chart and map making, I am indebted to *The Compleat Plattmaker*. See also my review article, "The Compleat Plattmaker: British Chart and Map Making 1650-1750," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 12 (Summer 1979): 527-537.
2. John Stowe, *The Survey of London*, 3rd edn. (London, 1618), pp. 792-93, cited in Smith, p. 50.
3. Helen M. Wallis, "Geographie is Better than Divinitie. Maps, Globes, and Geography in the Days of Samuel Pepys," *Compleat Plattmaker*, p. 3, *passim*.
4. Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year* (New York: New American Library, 1960), pp. 217-18.
5. Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography*, in *The Writings* (1907; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1970), 1: 238.
6. [Daniel Defoe], *A Plan of the English Commerce* ([1730]; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967), p. 68.
7. Samuel L. Macey, *Clocks and the Cosmos: Time in Western Life and Thought* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1980), pp. 49-54.
8. [Daniel Defoe], *The Compleat English Tradesman* (1927; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), 2.2: 201-2.
9. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe, Part I* (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 43.
10. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe, Part II*, in *Works*, ed. G.H. Maynadier (Boston: David Nickerson Company, 1903), 2: 216.
11. Daniel Defoe, *Colonel Jack* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 172.
12. Samuel L. Macey, "The Time Scheme in *Moll Flanders*," *Notes and Queries*, 214 (September 1969), 336-337.
13. Bertolt Brecht, *Mutter Courage und Ihre Kinder* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963), p. 78.
14. George Chandler, *Four Centuries of Banking* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1964), 1: 41-42.
15. Daniel Defoe, *Captain Singleton* (London: J.M. Dent, 1963), pp. 309-10.
16. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe, Part III*, in *Works*, ed. G.H. Maynadier (Boston: David Nickerson Company, 1903), 3: 28.