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Abstract
Let me begin by saying that I am writing as a defender of Defoe's place in what has sometimes been called "the rise of the novel." A few years ago, at a meeting of the Western Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, I heard a diatribe against Defoe and his creation Moll Flanders as an example of male usurpation. By assuming the voice of a female narrator, so the argument went, Defoe had insulted women in general. The work was not so much writing as ventriloquism, and Defoe was simply exploiting the character of Moll and womankind to make money and for some obscure nefarious purposes. This attack resembled, but went far beyond, the accusations against Defoe in Madeleine Kahn's Narrative Transvestism; Defoe's writing amounted to narrative villainy. Shortly thereafter, I read a book which advocated replacing Robinson Crusoe with what was apparently a much more satisfying work-Charles Martin's Passages from Friday--that is, replacing a book that has maintained an audience throughout the world for 280 years with a work having a more appropriate message for us. Who, after all, would want to read a work that is clearly prejudiced against cannibals and opposed to vegetarian principles (among the charges levelled against Crusoe were that he eats the goats on his island and appears to feel a distinct dislike for the Caribs who use what he had come to think of as his island for the purpose of devouring the natives of other tribes)? That the cannibals would most willingly hack his body into pieces with their wooden swords and indeed, eventually, engage in an attack upon the nascent colony in The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe is not seen as an excuse. What is most at issue here is the vicious mind of the colonialist which must be castigated against all common sense.

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Maximillian E. Novak

Let me begin by saying that I am writing as a defender of Defoe's place in what has sometimes been called "the rise of the novel." A few years ago, at a meeting of the Western Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, I heard a diatribe against Defoe and his creation *Moll Flanders* as an example of male usurpation. By assuming the voice of a female narrator, so the argument went, Defoe had insulted women in general. The work was not so much writing as ventriloquism, and Defoe was simply exploiting the character of Moll and womankind to make money and for some obscure nefarious purposes. This attack resembled, but went far beyond, the accusations against Defoe in Madeleine Kahn's *Narrative Transvestism*; Defoe's writing amounted to narrative villainy.[1] Shortly thereafter, I read a book which advocated replacing *Robinson Crusoe* with what was apparently a much more satisfying work—Charles Martin's *Passages from Friday*—that is, replacing a book that has maintained an audience throughout tbe world for 280 years with a work having a more appropriate message for us. Who, after all, would want to read a work that is clearly prejudiced against cannibals and opposed to vegetarian principles (among

1 Madeleine Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism: Rhetoric and Gender in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Kahn's section on Defoe (pp. 57–102) concentrates on reminding us that Defoe is always the masculine creator behind Moll Flanders and Roxana and that his position as a writer is manipulative. The notion that Defoe experienced both "fear and envy" in assuming the voices of these characters is extremely interesting.

the charges levelled against Crusoe were that he eats the goats on his island and appears to feel a distinct dislike for the Caribs who use what he had come to think of as his island for the purpose of devouring the natives of other tribes)? That the cannibals would most willingly hack his body into pieces with their wooden swords and indeed, eventually, engage in an attack upon the nascent colony in *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* is not seen as an excuse. What is most at issue here is the vicious mind of the colonialist which must be castigated against all common sense.[2]

The basic notion behind this attack appears to be that there is no real value in *Robinson Crusoe* as a work of literature, that only the myth is interesting, and that we have the right to select a version of the myth that better suits our modern mind-set. Michel Tournier's *Vendredi* and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* are not to be seen as wonderful commentaries on Defoe's original, through which we can measure the ideas of the eighteenth century with those of our own, but rather as salubrious replacements for a flawed view of the world.[3]

Some scholars are dropping Defoe from discussions of the novel. That Margaret Anne Doody's *The True Story of the Novel* (1996) mentions Defoe a scant three times strikes me as an historical aberration in a work claiming to offer a "true" history of the novel. How comfortable should we feel about replacing the realities of literary history and criticism with autobiographical fantasies?[4] Similarly, William Beatty Warner's *Licensing Entertainment*, while denying any counter-hegemonic intentions, clearly wants to replace the usual Defoe–Richardson–Fielding paradigm for the origins of the novel with a Behn–Manley–Haywood–Richardson–Fielding pattern.[5]

2 Patrick J. Keane, *Coleridge's Submerged Politics: The Ancient Mariner and Robinson Crusoe* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994). See esp. pp. 117–23 on Martin's *Passages from Friday*; and Charles Martin, *Passages from Friday*, in *Steal the Bacon* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 21–50.

3 Notable as these works are, they lack the combination of creativity and imagination that made *Robinson Crusoe* an inspirational work for Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Vincent Van Gogh.

4 Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996). *Robinson Crusoe* makes it into her text only because of its archetypal cave. Although I have always objected to omitting the ubiquitous romances from an account of the publication of fiction, one of the important distinctions between fictions from the seventeenth century on, that is, between novel and romance, has been based upon an author's ability to create the illusion of reality. Doody never accounts for this critical stance, though it has dominated the past four centuries of novel criticism.

5 William Beatty Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684–1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 42.

Of course there is nothing new about this. It repeats what has always been the story of Defoe's place in British literature. For Defoe was an outsider: he was of the wrong religious community, the wrong political persuasion, the wrong class. He was a gadfly to the Dissenters, an embarrassment to the Whigs for his radicalism, a writer who made money from his writings while continuing to invest in business, and a defender of the rights of workers while attacking the middlemen who exploited them.

And after 1715, Defoe had to abandon fame for anonymity. He indicated authorship of only one work between that date and his death. Before that, every literate person in England knew him as the witty and infamous writer of *The True-Born Englishman* and *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, and when his radical opinions were quoted at length in the Sacheverell Trial, even the illiterate mobs were aware of his identity. I came to realize just recently how high a price he paid for his anonymity. Browsing through the Nicols Newspapers for 1728 at the Bodleian, I came upon one with advertisements for Defoe's *Plan of the English Commerce* and for a work by Voltaire. The advertisement for Defoe's book made no mention of an author but rather trumpeted the value of the work's contents; the Voltaire notice spoke not to the excellence of the work but to the fame of its author. Anonymity protected Defoe somewhat from the attacks of his enemies, but at what a price for someone so proud of his abilities as a writer.

His restructuring into a great writer of fiction accompanied both the discovery of the aesthetic value of fiction and the proliferation of the cult of genius in the second half of the eighteenth century. His works had to be reassembled in order for him to appear after 1810 as a novelist among other novelists and to be treated under that category by Walter Scott. Even after the 1810 edition, he continued to be under attack by the defenders of the polite tradition who regarded *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxana* as both low and obscene. Not until Charles Lamb's remarks in Walter Wilson's *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Daniel Defoe* (1830) did they find a whole-hearted defender.[6] Then he was attacked by the likes of Leslie Stephen, who tried to draw a distinction between the new French realists such as Flaubert and a writer who merely had a bag of tricks.[7] These assaults have been followed by criticism from any number

6 In his edition of Defoe's work published a decade after Wilson's biography, William Hazlitt quoted Lamb extensively in defence of publishing *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxana* in his three-volume edition. See Daniel Defoe, *Works* (London, 1840–41), 1:cxl–cxli.

7 See Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library* (London: Smith, Elder, 1874), esp. pp. 4 and 20, where he argues that Defoe's fiction amounted to nothing more than "telling lies," and compares Defoe to a mere photographer compared to the true art of the painter.

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of schools: the Jamesians, who found in him a want of craft; some of the New Critics, who found him lacking in true irony; the Aristotelians, who felt he did not achieve the ideal novelistic form. Most recently, feminist critics, who, despite Defoe's unique status as a believer in the strength of women's minds and characters, have found him promulgating an offensive patriarchal line of thought. There were a few influential voices defending Defoe. In his *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), E.M. Forster used Moll Flanders as his example of character in the novel, and Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Van Ghent, and Alan Tate all praised Defoe's genius as a writer of fiction.

Defoe would have been the last writer of his time to deny that the primacy for writing fiction belonged to the French writers of romance, to Aphra Behn, and to Eliza Haywood. It was his task to make it into a form that was better anchored in history and the social realities of his time—more like what we think of as a novel and less like a romance. Such a distinction, however odd it may sound to critics of French literature such as Joan DeJean, was certainly true enough in England.

DeJean has argued convincingly that in France the battle against the excellence of Madeleine de Scudéry was part of a deliberate attempt by male critics to shape the canon of fiction in such a way as to exclude women.[8] The author of *La Princesse de Clèves*, Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Fayette, entered the canon only because her work was ascribed to La Rochefoucauld. Anyone who has read extensively in Scudéry's romances has to agree that, though her works are more loosely constructed than La Fayette's, they contain some excellent psychological insight into character. Also DeJean's accusation against male critics, particularly Boileau, of practising "critical violence" against women, and her sense that women writers posed a genuine threat against the male-oriented fictional canon, are well based in fact. The attempt to do the same for English literature, however, produces less effective results. Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood were excellent writers with large followings. Pope's mean-spirited attack on Haywood did not have the weight of state disapproval that similar attacks by government-sanctioned writers often carried in France. What I object to is the attempt to apply the French model to the canon wars over English literature. Good as they are, the three women writers named above were simply never writers of world significance. Defoe was.

8 Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 51–53, 77. DeJean argues that, in France, women such as Scudéry, who wrote romances, were compromised, in part, by their support of the Fronde in opposition to Louis XIV.

We should never forget that *Robinson Crusoe* was one of the first literary texts written in English to make a major impact throughout Western Europe. This fact alone should cause critics to think long and hard before they begin to consider revising Defoe's place in the canon. Much has been made about the fact that Defoe did not produce a manifesto in the manner of Richardson and Fielding. He did remark, however, that everyone had to admit *Robinson Crusoe*'s originality. And he was right about that. Charles Gildon's lengthy attack upon Defoe and *Robinson Crusoe* appeared in the face of the overwhelming and instant reputation of Defoe's work. However much Gildon attempted to slander Defoe and his work, the very existence of Gildon's critique of *Robinson Crusoe* suggests how thorough was the success of Defoe's work, in much the same way as the many attacks on Richardson's *Pamela* merely validated its worth.[9] *Robinson Crusoe* was reviewed extensively on the Continent, and in a preface written to a translation published in Leipzig in 1721, the editor proclaimed that it had already gone into five editions, that it was a new and original kind of fiction, and that the probable author, Daniel Defoe, had his fame assured forever.[10]

Those studies such as Warner's *Licensing Entertainment* that treat Defoe's contribution to the novel solely through *Roxana*, which was not a great popular success, ignore the truth of literary history. Ros Ballaster suggests of Haywood's *Love in Excess*, "Only the now better-known novels *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) rivaled it as the most popular work of fiction in Britain before the publication of Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740."[11] Granting our willingness to accept *Love in Excess* as an interesting work of amatory fiction, where, aside from a few dedicatory poems, did anyone acclaim Haywood's novel as an important and serious literary work? The young lovers are almost interchangeable, the rendering of the passions mechanical, and the love scenes lubricious. So, at least, it must appear from a male perspective. French critics recognized the originality of *Robinson Crusoe*,[12] but there were any number of French writers who were better than the early Haywood at her particular form of fiction.

9 See the excellent edition by Paul Dottin, *Robinson Crusoe Examin'd and Criticis'd* (London: Dent, 1923).

10 Magister Ludwig Friedrich Vischer, preface to *Robinson Crusoe*, 6th ed. (Leipzig, 1721), sig A3.

11 Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684–1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 153.

12 See for example, *Le Journal des Scavans* (Paris, 1720), 503–8; and Jean Le Clerc, *Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne* 15 (Amsterdam, 1721), 440–41.

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I want to turn now to a consideration of two aspects of Watt's *Rise of the Novel* which have been under particular attack by critics who feel they do not fit the newly gendered concept of the novel's origins—individualism and realism. When I was writing a review of Watt's *Myths of Modern Individualism* (1996), I was impressed by the extent of his reading and the power of his ideas. He modestly states, "The book is essentially an amateur's study, and it is addressed not to the scholar but to the general reader."[13] By this description, he appears to mean that since he has translated the passages he quotes from Spanish, German, and French, he cannot be held to a scholarly standard. Surely only he would think so. Nevertheless, given the title, I suspect that most of his readers would be thinking of the sections of *The Rise of the Novel* that deal so brilliantly with economic individualism and the nature of identity to find out what light might be thrown upon his earlier arguments. And since I began my own work on Defoe and the novel before the publication of Watt's treatise, when my teacher Edward Hooker handed me a copy of Watt's article "*Robinson Crusoe* as a Myth," I too was eager to know what he would say on that subject.[14]

As a matter of fact, Watt is disappointingly brief on myth, but his definition of individualism as both a psychological and a social phenomenon sends one back to his long discussion in *The Rise of the Novel*, in which Robinson Crusoe becomes the paradigm of economic individualism. Watt's point was brilliantly made. *Robinson Crusoe* begins with the debate between Robinson and his father over the pleasures of what Crusoe's father calls "the middle State," or what we would think of as the way of life among the upper middle class or bourgeoisie.[15] Crusoe wants to go to sea; his father wants him to settle down to life as a lawyer or a businessman. Crusoe's refusal of obedience is the individualist's rebellion, but it occurs here specifically as a conflict within the middle orders—between conservative ideals of mercantilism and the more adventurous world of capitalism, between the ideals of the first part of the seventeenth century and atti-

13 Ian Watt, *Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. viii.

14 Ian Watt, "*Robinson Crusoe* as a Myth," *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951).

15 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. J. Donald Crowley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 4.

tudes that led to the "Financial Revolution" in the second part.[16] I wanted to do a little more reading about individualism as preparation for reading Watt's latest book. I knew that Karl Marx equated individualism with the life of the bourgeoisie, but I discovered that, in some ways, George Simmel was more helpful on *Robinson Crusoe*, since he argued that the individualism associated with a kind of freedom of action and rights was typical of the eighteenth-century notion.[17] Thus Crusoe, with his combination of revolt against his father's ideas, his abilities in trade, and his ultimate isolation on his island, becomes the paradigmatic example of individualism.

I have never been entirely comfortable with the section of *The Rise of the Novel* devoted to economic individualism, and I expressed my disagreement in *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (1962), but in viewing the notion of individualism through the lens of Watt's latest work, I now see it as proposing a method of speaking about character in a new way. Watt saw the economic conditions of the period as creating a new type of personality. Crusoe was cut off from the society into which he was born and forced to find himself under conditions of complete isolation. His eccentric outfit made of goat skins sets him outside of the rest of mankind in appearance, much as his refusal to follow the calling chosen for him by his father sets him apart from the community of contented members of the upper middle class to which his father belonged. He was different from a Joseph Andrews, who was to find his niche in the gentry as the son of Mr Wilson. We come to understand Crusoe's attitudes and feelings by hearing his confessions and seeing the ways in which he acts. If Charles Gildon saw a great deal of Daniel Defoe in Crusoe, even Gildon nevertheless identified him as a unique personality. And it is clear that Crusoe was unique in a way that the characters of, say, Haywood's *Love in Excess* or even Behn's *Love Letters*, based on historically real persons, were not.

Yet what strikes one today in reading Watt's account of Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, and Robinson Crusoe—his exemplars of modern individualism—is that all are men, that from our perspective this account of four myths of modern individualism might be more aptly titled "Four Myths of Modern Masculine Individualism." And there is some truth to

16 The term is that of P.G.M Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit 1688–1756* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

17 See George Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 187–226.

the charge made by Laurie Langbauer that his *magnum opus* might be better titled "The Rise of the Novel by Male Authors."[18] Although Watt wrote brilliantly on Richardson's *Clarissa*, it is clear that he was attracted to narratives about men. And his book on Conrad treats a nineteenth-century male author very much in the tradition of the adventure novel begun by Defoe. Who can deny that Watt's work is rooted in its time, revealing some of the influence of the 1950s, the decade in which men returning from the Second World War convinced women, who had found that they could rivet and weld like men, to return to being "homemakers" and mothers? The exclusion of La Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* from consideration as a novel on the grounds that despite "all its psychological penetration and literary skill, we feel it is too stylish to be authentic," appears more like a social and nationalistic gesture than a literary judgment.[19] The French, who write their fictions stylishly, are dismissed as effeminate compared to the more masculine styles of Defoe and Richardson.

But anyone working on the novel in 1957, when Watt's work was published, would have seen such comments in a different light. Since the number of such people is becoming smaller each year, let me say something about the situation in the academy at the time. Probably the most influential work on the novel before 1957 was F.R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948), which judged novels according to their sincerity, seriousness, and moral earnestness. His work took over from E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) with its tolerant acceptance of the definition of the novel as "a fiction in prose of a certain length."[20] Leavis, who, as a social and educational critic, was a powerful force in British thought, was unconcerned with any writer who was not truly superior—his "great" tradition. Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding were dismissed in a series of footnotes, and only Jane Austen, Henry James, George Eliot, and Joseph Conrad were considered worth the reader's valuable time. The only counter to this eccentric but influential view was Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946), such Marxist works as Ralph Fox's *The Novel and the People* (1937), and Arnold

18 Laurie Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), esp. pp. 28–30. Langbauer demonstrates the gender bias of Watt over the opening thirty pages of her book, often displaying a wit worthy of the subject: "Watt's family romance: a fantasy of origins, initially focusing on the mother, that, Freud claims, the male subject must ultimately overcome through the identification with the father that the Oedipal resolution permits."

19 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 30.

20 E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (1921; New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), p. 6. He takes this definition from Abel Chevalley, *Le Roman anglais de notre temps*.

Kettle's *An Introduction to the English Novel* (1951). For such writers, the accurate presentation of the social milieu that appeared in Defoe and Richardson and at least partly in Henry Fielding had a value in its own right. Marx had praised Balzac for this quality despite what he regarded as Balzac's deplorable politics. Marx's treatment of *Robinson Crusoe* in *Das Kapital* as a frequently aud wrongly used example of capitalist accumulation had given Defoe's work particular prestige for those on the Left. Watt's work challenged Leavis at his weakest point—his refusal to pay attention to background and milieu. By reading the novel against historical and social developments, and by theorizing and further historicizing Watt's approach, Michael McKeon has, in some sense, brought Watt up to date.[21]

In a review attacking McKeon's *Origins of the English Novel*, Warner accused Watt of having a misplaced humanist agenda and both Watt and McKeon of being heirs of Marx in valuing ideas in fiction above style and rhetoric.[22] From a descriptive standpoint Warner may be right, but interesting as more fashionable discussions of print culture may be, I am not sure we are all ready to jettison an appreciation of humanistic ideals just yet. Warner's arguments against a defamiliarized presentation of reality both in his exchange with McKeon and in *Licensing Entertainment* are to me ultimately unconvincing.

In addition to these objections, Watt has been attacked by some feminist critics for over-valuing realism. But often, as with Doody in *The True Story of the Novel*, the critics confuse *ekphrasis*, or the detailed presentation of a scene, with the presentation of characters within a social and political milieu.[23] Romances, whether those written in the ancient world, the middle ages, or in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have often had scenes involving a detailed description of a room filled with paintings or sculptures. Such scenes are almost always invitations to allegorical interpretations. They usually have the function of making the works in which they appear less concrete, less real.

The confusion is partly Watt's fault. The division between "formal realism," better called "circumstantial realism," and psychological realism was never very significant for the novel. In *The Rise of the Novel*, Richardson's psychological realism is wrongly presented as an evolutionary advance, as

21 Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

22 William Beatty Warner, "Realist Literary History: McKeon's New Origins of the Novel," *Diacritics* 19 (1989), 62–81.

23 Doody, pp. 136–42, 386–96.

if La Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* and the many contemporary French romances and novels treating love had not already exploited psychological possibilities inherent in such a subject. Defoe was surely interested in rendering the social and political milieu in which his characters moved, but he was always more interested in what went on in his characters' minds. In addition to this sacrifice of genuine literary history to a neat rhetorical structure, Watt never abandoned a progressive theory of the novel in which Defoe was supposed to be the primitive progenitor of Richardson. Even in his most recent work, he insists on seeing the conflict between Crusoe's sense of disobedience towards his father and the pleasure Crusoe feels about his island as a kind of muddle in Defoe's mind, rather than a deliberately created paradox—a paradox reflective of Defoe's observations on the socio-economic life of his times.

That which has seemed, quite properly, as the over-valuation of a few tricks of style to create formal realism has been rightly attacked by feminist critics, but this has nothing to do with the nature of Defoe's fiction or with Watt's overall approach. By suggesting an ever-deepening rendering of reality, Watt succeeded in capturing the high ground from Leavis. After Watt, eighteenth-century fiction appeared to fulfil many of Leavis's demands for greatness in the novel—seriousness, ethical intensity, and sincerity. The novels of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding could not be dismissed in the way Leavis had attempted.

In addition, as McKeon suggested, there is simply a naïve quality about the attack upon realism mounted by Warner and the feminist critics.[24] The ability to capture reality has been a central tenet of art from ancient times. And in regard to prose fiction, almost every critic in the second half of the seventeenth century applauded the way in which the new novels that had succeeded the long romances captured images of real life in contrast to the ideal landscapes of the romance. Congreve spoke to this in his preface to *Incognita* and so did Mrs Barbauld at the end of the eighteenth century. When people half ironically praised Defoe's ability to tell a story as his one gift, they meant his ability to create an illusion of the real. And when Walter Scott spoke of Defoe's remarkable ability to capture the real in works such as the *Journal of the Plague Year*, he was applauding him for what, to Scott, was an entirely unique quality. I have recently written an article on Defoe's relationship to realist painting, particularly that produced in the Netherlands, and I do not want to repeat what I said there.[25] "Every novelist

24 Michael McKeon, "A Defense of Dialectical Method in Literary History," *Diacritics* 19 (1989), 83–96.

25 Maximillian E. Novak, "Describing the Thing Itself, or Not: Defoe and the Art of Describing," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 9 (1996), 1–20.

renders the real to some extent," says Doody,[26] but who cannot distinguish the romance from the novel, the reality of the one and the typed characters and vague settings of the other? Defoe drew his characters from life and history, not from a Theophrastan catalogue.[27] Recreating an aesthetic to judge romances—a project that Bishop Hurd attempted in 1762[28]—does not mean confusing romance and novel. Certainly eighteenth-century readers knew the difference.[29]

In an article that I wrote in *Novel* more than twenty-five years ago, I suggested that we would have to modify Watt's view of the British novel to include a larger flow of fiction than he had allowed,[30] particularly those French and Spanish writers whose works were translated into English throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I also argued that women novelists such as Behn and Haywood had to be made part of the discussion. Although I have recently been accused of "condescension" towards these writers, none was intended.[31] The psychological power of *La Princesse de Clèves* is undeniable. It is one of the great novels of Western Europe, and nothing in the nature of the style can take away from the forceful presentation of the relationships of the three main characters.

26 In *The True Story of the Novel*, Watt is made the villain, the proponent of a restrictive type of realism that stifled the romantic imagination. See esp. p. 287

27 For a somewhat futile attempt to classify Roxana in this way, see Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 36–38. There had been much consideration of Theophrastan character before Ian Watt wrote *The Rise of the Novel*, because of interest in the "Character" as a seventeenth-century form. Lynch's argument, though far more sophisticated than these early studies, may be seen as a throwback to concepts of character Watt had rejected.

28 Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762)

29 Critics such as Langbauer are right about the tendency to claim evolutionary superiority for the novel in critics such as Watt, and there is no question that a gender distinction was established as early as the seventeenth century in which romances were associated with women and more historical and realist fictions with men. But even Scudéry, in one of her didactic works, claimed an adherence to history and an attempt at achieving the real. That romances sometimes have a special appeal to women through providing sexual fantasies is no more an argument for literary excellence than the fact that men and boys are attracted to formulaic adventure stories and pornography. On the other hand, the condemnations of Aphra Behn's plays and novels and Haywood's early fiction, from the eighteenth century until the last few decades of the twentieth century, invariably has a component of moral disapproval based on the expectation of how women ought to behave

30 Maximillian E. Novak, "Early Fictional Forms," *Novel* 6 (1973), 120–33

31 Warner, *Licensing Fiction*, p. 66.

On the other hand, Behn's *Love Letters*, while having many excellent qualities, relies on a somewhat mechanistic rendering of passion that seems to preclude the development of characters with any real depth. I also pointed out that since the great flow of fiction was coming from France, Italy, and Spain, a narrow nationalistic view was untenable. I called for a breakdown of eighteenth-century fiction according to the variety of its forms, but I am not convinced, particularly after Paul Salzman's account of seventeenth-century fiction by a similar method, that such an enterprise would be of much utility.[32] At the same time, I prefer to think that, unless we conceive of genre as a form of strait-jacket, we should think of the Restoration and eighteenth century as a time for authorial exploration and opportunity rather than one of confusion.[33] This is a case in which the critics have had a more difficult time than the authors.

It seems to me that what has happened in the classroom is symptomatic. We have expanded the number of texts we use, and occasionally insert Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote* or even Haywood's *Betsy Thoughtless* into our courses in the novel where Frances Burney and Jane Austen have long held place. But, frankly, formulaic novels such as Haywood's *Love in Excess* are harder to teach than, say, *Robinson Crusoe* or *Moll Flanders*. Warner attacked Watt and McKeon for what Warner considered to be a prejudice in favour of ideas over form. I confess to sharing that prejudice. In his life as well as in his didactic writings, Defoe was always bubbling over with ideas, and, not surprisingly, they entered his fiction, making up a substantial part of what we feel to be their realist texture. Defoe's fictions are always rooted in the social and economic realities of his time.

We are told in the beginning that *Love in Excess* is set in the period following the War of the Spanish Succession, or around 1713. It could just as well be set in the fifteenth century for all we experience of the characters' milieu. Only if we are willing to say that such information would interfere with the moments of heightened sexual experience and categorize Haywood's novel as pornography can we applaud so vague an attention to background. For critics to make a virtue of such a failure is a mistake. Haywood herself moved in the direction of the real in *Betsy*

32 Paul Salzman, *English Prose Fiction 1558–1700: A Critical History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). Salzman's attempt to categorize the variety of fictional forms during the seventeenth century is heroic, but in classifying Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* as a "nouvelle galant," very little is gained in the way of improving our understanding of the text. Such a classification fails to take into account the incorporation of travel material, the possible autobiographical element, and the charged politics behind the action.

33 I have in mind McKeon's *Origins*. See for example his treatment of the "unstable compound" (p. 113) that makes up Behn's *Oroonoko*.

Thoughtless, and scenes in which Betsy hears an aria being sung in a shop selling music or her vivid picture of a contemporary auction give a concreteness to this later novel that was lacking in her earlier work. The vagueness of romance is sometimes compensated for by an attention to mood, rich descriptions, and perceptive analysis of feelings and emotions, but without the talent of an Ann Radcliffe, it too often becomes empty and formulaic.

We have no difficulty knowing the century we are in when we read Jane Austen, nor would we wish away Marianne's discussion of the annual income needed by a contemporary gentleman in *Sense and Sensibility*. Similarly, Defoe always informs the reader about how much money his protagonists have and how much they need. A detail such as the torn piece of Pamela's dress left in the door after Mr B. pursues her tells us more than her sermons and poems. We can follow Moll Flanders as she flees from a scene of crime in London just as we can follow Austen's Anne Elliot as she wanders through the streets of Bath. We should pay attention to Scott's implied comparison between Austen and Defoe as realists who created unique characters functioning in a complex setting.[34] The Russian formalists were right. Where writers succeed in defamiliarizing the real, it is a powerful element in fiction.[35]

Of course, in defending realism, I am aware that I am offering a male point of view with many of its limitations, but I cannot believe that we are condemned to separate male and female versions of the rise of the novel. What is needed is a degree of empathy on both sides. Much as I might be able to empathize imaginatively, it would be difficult for me to be certain that I was responding to the passionate delineations of sexual feelings of women provided by both Behn and Haywood with exactly the same awareness as their women readers in their time and ours. And am I able to respond adequately to the gossip and scandal that made Delarivier Manley's *New Atalantis* such a success? There is nothing very new about the idea that men and women may not share the same field of vision;

34 Walter Scott compared both Austen and Defoe to painters of the Flemish school. See *On Novelists and Fiction*, ed. Ioan Williams (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), pp. 179, 235.

35 I have frequently argued that, in terms of the product, there is no practical difference between the realist paintings of the Dutch and Flemish schools and the realist novels of Defoe and the movement of realism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. McKeon sees what he considers modern realism "lurking" in Defoe's writings, but his historical theory will not allow him to see it as equivalent. He provides a succinct formula: "The idea of realism exists to concede the accountability of art to a prior reality, without seeming to compromise the uniquely modern belief that such reality as it is answerable to is already internalized in art itself as a demystified species of spirituality." *Origins of the English Novel*, p. 120.

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feminists have been telling us this for decades.[36] Once we acknowledge that Watt's view of "the rise of the novel" was biased in the direction of a male-oriented vision of the novel, we should be able to construct a sensible history. What does not strike me as sensible is insisting entirely on the feminine nature of the form and eliminating male writers solely on the basis of gender.

For those who feel that removing Defoe from the canon may somehow improve the position of women writers by making space for them in classes, it should be remembered that Moll Flanders and Roxana are among the strongest women characters in fiction before Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*. I find that critics are persistently misreading both novels, particularly *Roxana*. It is being interpreted too strongly through the ending. I began this way of reading *Roxana*,[37] but, in my view, such an interpretation has spun completely out of control; so let me renounce it here and now. When Roxana announces her libertine arguments about the freedom of women, she feels uncomfortable about theorizing her feelings. At the same time she does not want to marry the Dutch Merchant at this point in her life. She wants to go to England to see if she can ensnare the King in much the same way that the Duchess of Mazarin came to England and ensnared Charles II. In effect, that would be the same as saying, "I want to be free to use my sexuality as I please, and I don't want anyone having control of my money." These are her feelings at the moment, and she follows them to become rich and powerful. The moral twist that Defoe puts upon this decision suggests that, in some cases, it has its drawbacks. But Defoe lived in a world in which mistresses of kings or noblemen (or at least their children) were often rewarded with titles, wealth, and power. He could be ironic on the subject, but he also accepted it as a reality. And do we really believe Roxana when she says it would have been better to starve to death? Defoe did not believe that. Many of Defoe's novels have a strong feminist message, and they should be approached critically and taught in that way.[38]

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36 See, for example, Hélène Cixous's classic essay, "The Laugh of Medusa," *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken, 1981), pp. 245–64. The original essay appeared in 1975.

37 Maximillian E. Novak, "Crime and Punishment in Defoe's *Roxana*," *JEGP* 65 (1965), 445–65.

38 This essay is a revised version of a paper read at the Tenth International Congress on the Enlightenment, Dublin, 25–31 July 1999.