

An Approach to Character Development in Defoe's Narrative Prose

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I

The critical approach to character in Defoe's narrative prose has been mainly circuitous. By emphasizing genres as external patterns that inform his conception of the individual, interpretation of central character is often sacrificed to analysis of the form assumed to beget the character. Thus, considering single works or the whole canon, Stevenson talks of Defoe's "chronicles of phenomena,"¹ Dobrée of conduct books,² Starr of spiritual autobiography,³ Secord of memoirs,⁴ Hunter of allegory,⁵ Watt of myth,⁶ Novak of economic treatise,⁷ Tillyard of epic,⁸ and Adams of travelogue.⁹ Each sees character created in the image of the genre. And each criticism is no doubt a variant gloss on Leslie Stephen's old conception, recently rejuvenated by Shinagel,¹⁰ that the form of Defoe's fiction is informed by his middle-class gentility, that dogged reliance on literary kinds is an aesthetic symptom of a bourgeois quest for propriety.¹¹ And as these forms are significations of random bourgeois interests, the characters within them, the criticism suggests, are all representative of resourceful middle-class Englishmen.

Yet summarily to dismiss the characters as middle class is at best middling criticism, however undeniably valuable that criticism may otherwise be in its manifold discoveries. Similarly one might say that Pope's characters are aristocratic and stop discussion there, a practice common until Benjamin Boyce's *Character Sketches in Pope's Poems* analyzed both technique and implication on an internal

¹ Lionel Stevenson, *The English Novel: A Panorama* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1960), p. 74.

² Bonamy Dobrée, *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1700-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 415.

³ George A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton U. Press, 1965).

⁴ Arthur W. Secord, *Robert Drury's Journal and Other Studies* (U. of Illinois Press, 1961), pp. 81-84. See also his *Studies in the Narrative Method of Defoe* (1924; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1963) which is largely an examination of the influence of travel literature on Defoe's compositional methods.

⁵ J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in "Robinson Crusoe"* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1966).

⁶ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957; U. of California Press, 1962), pp. 60-134. A more direct approach is his "Robinson Crusoe as Myth," *Essays in Criticism*, 1 (1951), 95-119.

⁷ Maximillian E. Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (U. of California Press, 1962). See also Denis Donoghue's "The Values of *Moll Flanders*," *Sewanee Review*, 71 (1963), 287-303, which tends toward an economic interpretation of character.

⁸ E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Epic Strain in the English Novel* (Fair Lawn, N.J.: Essential Books, 1958), pp. 31-50.

⁹ Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1600-1800* (U. of California Press, 1962), pp. 105-31.

¹⁰ Michael Shinagel, *Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility* (Harvard U. Press, 1968). Cf. John J. Richetti, *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 4, on the "middle-class triumph" in the eighteenth-century novel: "What is involved is nothing less than a gratuitous imposition of the social and philosophical norms (summed up in such terms as bourgeois democracy and pragmatism) and the narrative effects (summed up in the term realism) we value most upon a body of writing which was at least partly unaware of, if not hostile to, them." See also Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, I (London: Smith, Elder, 1871-79), 20 ff.

¹¹ John Robert Moore is a singular commentator who holds that genres do not predominate in Defoe. "Scott and Defoe," *PMLA*, 56 (1941), 716: "There is in Defoe no clear line of demarcation of literary methods or forms; history, fiction, moral tract, and economic treatise often run into the same mold."

basis. Defoe begs as much. I do not suggest, of course, that an internal approach is the only solution, but conceding the question of genre to the critics to say that Defoe uses features of many forms leaves still the problem of character as character. Looking at that problem, however, in terms of events, actions with which the characters are intimately involved can allow more fruitful answers.

Defoe himself moves toward an answer in the very titling of the standard novels, for they all contain names of people. But more than just names, the titles also relate events. Such titles and the pages under them turn the books in the direction of biography, if we must still insist on a genre. But that is at least a form devoted to character as character.

Granting, then, that Defoe's apparent interest is in his people, it might be well to look at two concerns that condition its development before moving to a consideration of his techniques. First, the very length of the titles – each being a conspectus of the hero's progress – is indicative of a conception new to the eighteenth century, the organic character. This conception defines character “as a personality that endures in time, gradually developing, maturing, decaying, dying.”¹² Such is opposed to the older legalistic notion that sees character existing in terms of only one action. The legalistic idea is realized in satire, where a man is judged on the basis of one act; the organic idea is realized in the novel, where a man is understood in terms of a series of events. Professor Paulson has found the origins of this organic character in “the growing acceptance of the assumption (with which the satirist could never agree) that man is basically good and from the belief in progress. These led to, or demanded, a fiction that emphasized the growth of the individual. The villain of Augustan satire became the hero of the new age.”¹³ On this score Poulet observes that the central figure of this new conception of character was the man “immediately oriented toward what he is not, and toward what he desires to be.”¹⁴ Here, in large, is the end of the restrictiveness of genre and the beginning of character's determining its own form. And here, in small, is the orientation of all of Defoe's heroes and heroines.

In addition to the organic concept of character, a second condition is prefatory to examination of Defoe's technique. This is his presentational mode. By it, character emerges not by personification as in allegory but by the “realism” of, say, a newspaper report or a biography.¹⁵ The introductory attempts at establishing a historical facade, the first-person matter-of-factness and ingenuousness of the narrator, the “how-to” preoccupations with problem-solving, the basic vocabulary, the spare dialogue, the sense of immediacy, the rapid occurrence of event, the precision of detail in list-compiling, topography, and statistics, and the emphasis by simple repetition of phrase, all are means by which Defoe fashions a verisimilitude. There are, for the most part, no lingerings upon single scenes, no assessments of a glance or a raised eyebrow, no extended symbolism, no degree of sustained irony that suggests a double truth – or a half-lie. Throughout there is a forthright honesty by which story and character become highly credible.

The organic character and the emphasis on verisimilitude, however simplified, are conceptual and presentational boundaries within which I have observed a three-phase pattern of character development used by Defoe. First, in his Newgate biographies of John Sheppard and Jonathan Wild, character dominates event and stands in pronounced relief from the activity beyond it. Then in *A Journal of the*

¹² Ronald Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Yale U. Press, 1967), pp. 3-4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Georges Poulet, *The Interior Distance*, trans. Elliott Coleman (1959; rpt. U. of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 97.

¹⁵ Cf. Alan Dugald McKillop, *The Early Masters of English Fiction* (Kansas U. Press, 1956), p. 8: “Defoe uses the word ‘story’ to mean not ‘narrative,’ but ‘discussion,’ ‘account,’ or ‘report,’ somewhat as used in American journalism.”

Plague Year event dominates character. And finally in the novels – *Robinson Crusoe*, *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *Col. Jacque*, and *Roxana, the Fortunate Mistress* – there are variations of an interplay between character and event that produce a more sophisticated narrative as well as a person that can be called the Defoe hero. Though I am primarily concerned with the larger development of character throughout a number of works written concurrently between 1719 and 1725, I hope also to isolate some techniques of character development within the single works.

II

An English form of the picaresque tale might be said to be the criminal biography, that ephemeral hanging-day story that bulked large in the marginal literature of the eighteenth century. Short, moralistic, and tightly centered about the main figure, character in it is developed more from a concept or thesis than from inward motivations and external events. When the ordinaries at Newgate and Tyburn “edited” the inmates’ biographies, they were careful always to include three ingredients: the consummate malice of the criminal, his horror of the gallows, and the warning to the reader. The biography of Elizabeth Brownrigg, executed for torturing her female wards, is representative. Her actions are premeditated; she is granted no redeeming features (not even her childhood is hinted at), and her crimes are presented luridly and graphically – there is a woodcut of Mrs. Brownrigg flogging a naked, trussed-up maid. With flogging, her deeds include more conventional beatings, dunking servants in wells (to the point of drowning), and semi-stranglings with chains. Hers is the best of legalistic characterization, for she is seen only in terms of these actions. Yet there is the mechanical, implausible conversion and the usual warning for those who liked a moral with their violence: “Let her crimes be buried, though her skeleton be exposed; and may no one hereafter be found wicked enough to copy her vile example. Women who have the care of children should consider themselves at once as mistresses and as mothers; nor ever permit the strictness of the former character to preponderate over the humanity of the latter.”¹⁶

But Defoe’s Newgate biographies of Wild and Sheppard depart significantly from this pattern. First, though his characters are malicious rogues, they are fashioned with a sense of struggle, a “tragic flaw” of ambition and excess that will direct their courses throughout the narrative. Standard criminal biographies were interested in the effect or product of a life of criminal action. The scene of Mrs. Brownrigg’s flogging her maid is enough; there is no causal or sequential preparation for it. Defoe, on the other hand, is concerned with process, and one of Jack Sheppard’s many escapes from prison illustrates his treatment of it as a technique of character development:

Many of the Methods by which this miraculous Escape was effected, remain as yet a Secret; there are some indeed too Evident, the most reasonable Conjecture that has hitherto been made, is, that the first Act was his twisting and breaking assunder by the strength of his Hands a small Iron Chain which together with a great Horse Padlock, (as he went from the heavy Fetters about his Legs to the Staples) confin’d him to the Floor, and with a Nail open’d the Padlock and set himself at Liberty about the Room: A large flat Iron Bar appears to have been taken out of the Chimney, with the Assistance whereof ‘tis plain he broke thro’ a Wall of many Foot in Thickness, and made his way from the Castle into another strong Room Contiguous... Three Screws are visibly taken off the Lock, and the Doors ...forc’d open....¹⁷

¹⁶ *The Newgate Calendar or Malefactors’ Bloody Register*, introd. Sandra Lee Kerman (New York: Capricorn, 1962), p. 361.

¹⁷ “The History of the Remarkable Life of John Sheppard,” ed. Michael F. Shugrue, *Selected Poetry and Prose of Daniel*

Such passages in Defoe are crucial to the character's development, for by illustrating thus the resolve, ingenuity, and precision of the hero, he provides a key to understanding that hero's life. Here he establishes Sheppard's expertise, however misguided it may be, in order to reveal a tendency that will make the hero's later exploits in the crafts of robbery and jail-breaking more credible.

The technique of process is common also in *Jonathan Wild*. The king of Augustan crime, Wild dwarfs Sheppard in notorious stature. With a focus somewhere between Fielding's ironic treatment of him and the Newgate Ordinary's exemplary account, Defoe analyzes Wild's "systems approach" to crime in an utterly meticulous way, specifying the network of his criminal marketplace, producing case studies of his operations, and detailing periodically the amounts of his fabled wealth. Wild is, of course, symbolic of his very society in which money and gain rot moral fibers, but Defoe's attention to process makes him first that Jonathan Wild, born at Wolverhampton, who lived in the Old Bailey. Character is paramount and character is revealed through process.

But more than a character's process in performing jobs, Defoe is interested, as the standard criminal lives are not, in the process or progress of his subject's life. Concerning themselves with the final acts, the products of an undescribed life of wrongdoing, the Newgate biographers neglect any reference to formative influences of the character. In contrast, Defoe's biographies show how the rogue grew up and emphasize especially the formative influences. Both the young Sheppard and young Wild fall in with prostitutes who immediately introduce them to the ways of the underworld. Yet there is no hint of environmental predestination, for early in each work Defoe isolates the hero's particular tendency that must eventually be reckoned with, personally or legally. When Wild as a boy was apprenticed to a buckle maker, his "Temper even then was not much given to Frugality, which with his being not inclin'd to sit very close to his Work neither, made him run out pretty much ..." (p. 276). Temper recurs throughout as a theme of his life, often, however, in maturity submerged by the necessary punctilios of the profession of genteel extortion; then temper filters through as petty spite. Similarly, Defoe lays stress on Sheppard's youthful, rebellious tendencies, specifically on his restlessness, his "growing weary of the Yoke of Servitude" (p. 236), tendencies that will maintain him in his attitude toward continuous crime and his more famous profession, jail-breaking.

This stress of formative influence and determining flaw is primitive psychologizing at best, but it represents an interest in character absent in the standard criminal lives. For by showing the progress of life by means of the process Defoe suggests a sense of the individual struggling against his environment, a sense that is thematic in the novels. Thus in his Newgate biographies Defoe's accent is always on character. Places are general only – London or Billingsgate or a stone cell. And scene is a blur because Defoe's focus is on the character hurrying across it; the technique is cinematic rather than photographic and accounts for the dramatic nature of characterization that he announces in the Introduction to *Jonathan Wild*: "'Tis enough if we give you a general View of his Life or a Scheme of his Practice, illustrated by Examples ..." (p. 273).

Defoe (New York: Holt, 1968), p. 261. All subsequent references to Defoe's works will be to this and the following editions and will be cited in the text: "The True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild," Shugrue ed., above; *A Journal of the Plague Year*, ed. Anthony Burgess and Christopher Bristow (Baltimore: Penguin, 1966); *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Angus Ross (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965); *The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton*, ed. G. H. Maynadier (New York: Jenson Society, 1905); *Moll Flanders*, ed. James Sutherland (Boston: Houghton- Mifflin, 1959); *The History and Remarkable Life of the Truly Honorable Col. Jacque*, ed. Samuel Holt Monk (Oxford U. Press, 1970); and *Roxana, The Fortunate Mistress*, ed. Jane Jack (Oxford U. Press, 1964).

There is also in the Defoe biographies a form of comparative judgment that brings the characters into a sharper moral focus while completing their development. Defoe shows Wild consistently as more despicable and less attractive than Sheppard. His portrait is modulated with a shrinking from risk, a hypocrisy, a cowardice. On his final apprehension, for example, he dulls himself with laudanum, thus allaying the horror of the cart-ride to the Tyburn gallows. And in his final picture is Defoe's final judgment. From the mob there was "nothing to be heard but Cursings and Execrations; abhorring the Crimes and the very Name of the Man, throwing Stones and Dirt at him all the way, and even at the Place of Execution . . . the Hangman giving him leave to take his own Time, and he continuing setting down in the Cart, the Mob impatient, and fearing a Reprieve . . . call'd furiously upon the Hangman to dispatch him, and at last threatened to tear him to pieces, if he did not tye him up immediately" (p. 307). That mob is symptomatic of an indignation, of course. But because the character has stopped developing through incident, because he is now passive, the scene comes into clear focus. Throughout his story Wild was master of event; now event controls him, and the reader, with the mob, can pass judgment on him. Sheppard's last scene, in contrast, is lighter. Defoe has revealed him throughout more as a man of mischievous pluck than of perverse wickedness. Not a murderer – better yet, not a deceiver – he had won all but the jailors' hearts with his incredible escapes from prisons thick and thin. But on his final apprehension, "The Joy of the People of *Newgate* conceiv'd on this Occasion is inexpressible, *Te Deum* was sung in the *Lodge*, and nothing but Smiles, and Bumpers, were seen there for many Days together. But *Jonathan Wild* unfortunately happen'd to be gone upon a wrong Scent after him to *Sturbridge*, and Lost a Share of the Glory" (p. 251). A chorus of turnkeys chanting the *Te Deum*, Defoe's own obvious delight that Wild missed out on the capture, and Sheppard's later wit with the Ordinary that "*One File's worth all the Bibles in the World*" (p. 264), all lighten the impact of Jack Sheppard's deeds. He goes out in a Falstaffian way, highly unlike Wild, but still the moral point of his development is that he does go out.

III

A Journal of the Plague Year illustrates the second phase of Defoe's character development, that in which the event defines the character. Like all the novels and unlike the criminal lives, it is autobiographical in form and thus takes on an urgency that results from the plague ravaging the city. The narrator, H. F., a London saddler, has decided to remain in the city from motives both financial (to guard his shop) and spiritual (to obey God's will), while large numbers of the population flee to the safe north country. His decision thus made, he is a character in an event he cannot control; he can only respond. And because he is alone and narrating, his responses are strictly personal. The question thus is set: What effects will the plague have on him? Or, how does the event make the character?

The succession of the horrific effects of the plague crushing around him – "dead carts" and their bellmen, nervous rumors, celestial portents, looting, fires, drunken revelers, mockers and scoffers, wandering orphans, medical charlatans, astrologers, and clergymen preaching in the otherwise deserted streets to sparse groups – all produce a context of flux and instability that in turn creates a fear both physical and psychic in H. F. His repeated questionings and self-recriminations about staying behind in the stricken city couple with his sense of aloneness and affect his assessments of the situation around him.

These assessments are representative of the character that the event is producing, and so scenes, the only outward subjects for assessment, become important. Because there is no end in sight, there can be no plot; therefore H. F. must tell all that he sees randomly. But like a combat reporter whose survival

is in question, he holds his descriptions on certain scenes with greater interest than on others, hoping to extract from them a meaning by which he may come to understand and explain in a symbolic way that which is now beyond his ken. When one's existence is at stake, the here-and-now takes on an ultra-vivid aspect. The vividness is often realized in prolix and precise description and in even redundancy; these fix the character in the immediate present, partly to comprehend its full range, partly to render it understandable.

The scene at the Aldgate churchyard is illustrative. Because the plague had been raging fiercely in that parish, the death-pits in the churchyard soon filled, so that a new and larger one was dug. Moved by his curiosity, H. F. goes one night to observe this pit and judges that "it was about forty feet in length and about fifteen or sixteen feet broad, and . . . near twenty feet deep in one part" (pp. 77-78). Such description goes on to pile up statistics of mortality rates, methods of burial, and references to time – months when the epidemic is most fierce; these clockings add to the urgent atmosphere about him. Almost casually, H. F. then relates that the final capacity of this pit is 1,114 bodies. Still the detached narrator, he next tells of a lone man, who, having lost his wife and children, follows their cart to the pit to see their bodies thrown in. This, H. F. also notes casually, was a frequent kind of occurrence. Often, he says, infected and grief-stricken relatives go down into the pits to expire with loved ones and are covered by spadefuls of earth before they are cold. More description follows, interspersed with hearsay tales and H. F.'s own reflections. Though soberly related as his commentary may be, here is a man beside himself with fear, a fact manifest by his virtual talking to himself in journal form. Then another dead cart rolls up to the brink of the pit.

The cart had in it sixteen or seventeen bodies; some were wrapt up in linen sheets, some little other than naked, or so loose that what covering they had fell from them in the shooting out of the cart, and they fell quite naked among the rest; but the matter was not much to them, or the indecency much to any one else, seeing they were all dead, and were to be huddled together into the common grave of mankind, as we may call it, for here was no difference made, but poor and rich went together; there was no other way of burials, neither was there possible there should, for coffins were not to be had for the prodigious numbers that fell in such a calamity as this.

It was reported by way of scandal upon the buriers that if any corpse was delivered to them decently wound up . . . in a winding sheet tied over the head and feet, which some did, and which was generally of good linen; I say, it was reported that the buriers were so wicked as to strip them in the cart and carry them quite naked to the ground. But as I cannot easily credit anything so vile among Christians, and at a time so filled with terrors as that was, I can only relate it and leave it undetermined. (p. 81)

The practical and the moral operate together here. H. F.'s earlier comments about the plague as being an instrument of God to punish a wicked people even then seemed unconvincing. Now there is no mention of a vengeful visitation, but the image of death, now removed from the pages of Exodus, becomes alarmingly real.¹⁸ There is a physical numbness in his awareness that conceals the psychic turmoil caused by this revelation. The pit is a gaping hell, to be sure, but its theological implications are dulled by its existential actuality. And H. F., in seeing and soberly reporting, becomes a kind of prototypal Hemingway hero. The world and the event of the plague have taken control of the character, and he responds to them as he must. In his mind London has become more than a city, the plague more

¹⁸ H. F.'s insistence on the hearsay evidence of the wickedness of the buriers and on his belief that Christians would not so behave is more hopeful than ironic. At this point in a world of flux and evil, his hope that there must be some good is almost pathetic.

than an immediate terror, and himself, H. F. – it is significant perhaps that he does not sign even his full name at the end – more than a London saddler.

IV

The standard novels represent the final phase of Defoe's conception of character development. In them event acts on a primal figure to create a character (as in the *Journal*) and also infuses in him enough life so that he reacts, not only in passive response, as does H. F., nor in superior active opposition, as do Wild and Sheppard, but with a positive force equitable enough to challenge the strength of the event itself. Thus by opposing character more or less evenly to event, Defoe creates a basic kind of narrative motor. He then tightens and refines this opposition with a recurring ethical theme. The technique is at work in patterns common to all the novels and need not be examined as it operates in each individually.

Fortune or providence is the matrix of Defoe's novels. As an act or event external to character and ungenerated by character, fortune acts early in the respective stories: Crusoe is cast up on an Atlantic island, Singleton is kidnapped by Portuguese merchants, Moll and Jack are orphaned, and Roxana is ruined by a wastrel husband. Thus isolated from an old world of conventional behavior, they see in their new situations new opportunities, though opportunities that can be had only by a new ethics. Novak has called this opportunity *necessity*,¹⁹ a state against which the character can do nothing but act, but it is essential to see that fortune produces it. Each fortune or providence provides the opportunity for advancement for the characters. Crusoe soon recognizes the opportunity for comfortable life on the island, Singleton for the advantages of piracy, Moll and Jack for wealth and gentility, and Roxana for wealth and nobility. Singleton's observation might well have been made by them all: "Fate certainly thus directed my beginning, knowing that I had work which I had to do in the world ..." (p. 9). And as fortune directs them early in the stories, it continues to do so later, each time offering more success. The great galleon set adrift that Singleton happens upon might well have meant destruction, but it turns out to mean 600 slaves and more wealth. Jack's ship of provisions that sinks in the Chesapeake Bay seems to mark his ruin, but it is impetus for resilience. Moll's chance theft of the package on the apothecary's counter might have meant her apprehension, but it leads her into a life of a new kind of crime exactly at the nadir of her old life of harlotry. And so on in the other novels. Cannibals arriving at Crusoe's island and lost husbands and daughters at Roxana's door are events of fortune that direct the characters' courses.

After the first successes, however, the heroes surrender a large share of their wills, for the attraction of opportunity is too compelling. First successes prompt excess which then becomes the great goal, and for most, a life of moral transgression begins; for Crusoe, however, a spiritual renaissance. Still, there is the old ethics that haunts them to produce the many interior monologues in which each hero questions the "Why" of his life of wrong. Yet none reaches a conclusion, for the answer is not in himself but in the fortune-produced events. Each character is thus a victim of his success and ultimately of his first victory over necessity. So fortunes recur throughout the novels as great moral punctuation marks. They generate an attitude in each character that conscience and will together cannot, for as they produce a character's action, they condition his assessment of it, as Singleton's observation shows. And such a situation creates what Anderson has called the "paradox of trade and

¹⁹ *Defoe and the Nature of Man* (Oxford U. Press, 1963), p. 65. He notes that Defoe saw three possible ways to fall into a state of necessity: Through vice and intemperance, through want of judgment, and through insufficient reason or knowledge.

morality,”²⁰ the tension between commercialism (or gain) and ethics that adds a dimension to each character.

Once Defoe has established the characters in terms of the events, he uses often many of the events as tests of conscience and will. But unlike Wild, Sheppard, and H. F., the novels' heroes are seldom alone in meeting the tests, because each has at least one “helper.”: For Crusoe there are Xury and Friday; for Singleton, Will Walters; for Moll, her “governess”; for Jack, his servant-tutor; and for Roxana, Amy and the Quaker lady. In a way the helper is an externalization of the hero, but he is more a kind of extramental conscience who articulates an ethic to which the hero responds positively.

The developmental technique of the “helper” is an attempt in the direction of a kind of psychologizing that supports the interior monologue in purpose of self-questioning. By her talks with the governess, Moll is persuaded to continue in the life of crime and to make contact with the baronet. Here the helper is the voice of experience and an emblem of wrong who directs Moll's course. In *Roxana* and *Col. Jacque* the “helper” technique is extended: Amy and Capt. Jack speak for the baser impulses, the Quaker lady and the servant-tutor for the more ideal ones. Due to his example, experience, and advice, the servant-tutor is a main influence in transforming Jack the knave to Jacque the gentleman. In Capt. Singleton's helper, Will Walters, the base and ideal impulses are fused, and because of this fusion he becomes a more provocative character than the hero himself. A Quaker, Will – and his name is delightfully ironic – is not only a moral conscience in his frequent warnings to Singleton to repent his life of wrong on the high seas but is also a force of intellect and volition when he advises the often rash hero in cautious and expedient solutions to the many predicaments that he encounters. The archetypal helper Friday (and in a degree, Xury), it has long been recognized, is a kind of “natural man” who presents to Crusoe an opportunity of shaping malleable humanity in its most pristine form. Through Crusoe Friday becomes the modern man, a seething savage beneath a veneer of civilization. He is both cannibal and Christian, a Caliban-Ariel on another Atlantic island. And Crusoe shapes in him what Crusoe really is.

Like the use of fortune and the helper, another of Defoe's techniques of character development is the first-person retrospective narration that operates by means of a double time scheme. Each of the novels maintains a distinct split between the time of action and the time of telling that helps produce characters of more breadth and depth. Within the action time, for example, the interior monologues contribute an immediate psychological dimension that in most of the novels amounts to a spiritual self-accounting. One of Jack's reflections is representative: “It occur'd to me presently ... that God had order'd every thing, the most Minute, and least Transaction of Life ... I say it occur'd to me that I had been a most unthankful Dog to that Providence, that had done so much for me ...” (pp. 170-71). The acting character here reaffirms the idea of gratitude that has become thematic in his behavior. The psychology is often deepened and the character broadened, moreover, by means of the narrating character's interspersed comments and concluding moralizations. The comments of Crusoe the narrator, for example, make it certain that Crusoe the castaway has developed significantly: “Had I then known,” “If I could have understood at the time,” are interpolations that both broaden the final character and assure the reader of that character's development or progression. And if the interior monologues and interspersed comments fail to chart adequately that development, the entire novel can still be seen, like the *Journal*, to be an extended monologue generated by memories of past experiences and epitomized by a concluding moralization. Thus Moll affirms that she and her husband Jaimie “resolve to spend the

²⁰ Hans H. Anderson, “The Paradox of Trade and Morality in Defoe,” *MP*, 39 (1941), 23-46.

remainder of our years in sincere penitence for the wicked lives we have lived” (p. 297). That said, her foregoing story takes on overtones of an exemplum, as does Jack’s when he concludes that he has learned “as *Job* says, to *abhor my self in Dust and Ashes*. It is with this Temper that I have written my Story ...” (p. 308). If these are conventional endings, they are as much techniques integral to Defoe’s conception of centripetal character.

Not strictly a technique of character development, but an occasional emblem of a stage in the development is the device of costume or mask. More than a literary convention exploited by the contemporary romances, it is a way by which Defoe often marks off periods of progress in his heroes. In a more general way it is an objectification of the character as he really is at one specific point. Crusoe’s change from waistcoat to goatskins objectifies his change from repentance to deliverance: Much like postlapsarian Adam, he confesses that “ ... tho’ it is true that the weather was so violent hot that there was no need of cloaths, yet I could not go quite naked; no, tho’ I had been inclined to it, which I was not, nor could not abide the thoughts of it, tho’ I was all alone” (p. 144). After his change of clothes, his reflections become more trenchant and his ultimate conversion and deliverance more plausible. Roxana’s new life as royal concubine begins at the masquerade as she dances in her lavish Turkish costume, itself symbolic of exotic lasciviousness. This life continues until her change to the black Quaker’s gown, an action that initiates the denouement and her marriage to the respectable Dutch merchant. For Singleton the disguise of beard and Persian robes is important functionally so that he can make his way homeward through heathen lands safely. But it is important also thematically in that it represents the rejection of his youthful, swashbuckling ways. Similarly, Moll’s donning of the “widow’s weeds” signals the passing from her old life of sexuality to a new life of theft, a life suggested in her later disguise as a young man. That disguise typifies the unnatural lengths to which she is driven in order to survive. Jack’s regimental colors also mark a mutation in his life, a change from merchant-planter to officer-gentleman, that finally gratifies his ruling passion of gentility.

There are, of course, other techniques of character development such as the use of spiritual motifs, irony, and the construing of a sense of immediacy, which I have alluded to but have not illustrated because they have been treated fully elsewhere. But with reference to the techniques that I have outlined, a paradigm can be formed for the typical hero’s progress in a Defoe novel: A character is born in a marginal situation; he tastes initial success by means of a moral transgression; he maintains a direction of wrongdoing which brings more success; his success produces excess which conditions a climate for a divided mind (a tension between base and ideal or between material and spiritual) ; a helper acts as his alter-ego in this debate; he repeatedly encounters events of fortune; and he lives to tell his story, within which he reaches either a tacit or an overt repentance. Thus in the novels, experience is a flow. There is no usual visualization of scene, for events crowd on one another quickly, and the characters, like Wild and Sheppard, have little time to stop for a still-shot. And when they do, their thoughts and not their surroundings are central.

What I have tried is to get beyond the criticism that refracts attention to Defoe’s development of character through the filters of genre and philosophy. In this effort I have tried to isolate patterns more basic to that development and to distill radicals or roots that make it what it is. In doing so I have sacrificed specificity for generality, chronology for topicality, and variations for parallels, all of which sacrifices seem sensible in terms of my scope and purpose: To show that Defoe worked concurrently with three patterns of character development between 1719 and 1725. If a conclusion must be drawn beyond that purpose, I suppose that it would point to a methodological eclecticism on his part made operative by three more or less avowed themes: To show the power of crime, the effects of a public

disaster, and the importance of fortune in life.