

I

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Genre, Nature, *Robinson Crusoe*

In *The Dunciad* of 1728, Alexander Pope ironically celebrates the victory of popular over polite literature:

Books and the Man I sing, the first who brings,
The Smithfield Muses to the Ear of Kings.

And one of his satiric targets is of course Daniel Defoe, memorialized as “restless Daniel,” the sometime poet and prose pamphleteer who had been pilloried a quarter century before and who now got repilloried in print in a kind of silver anniversary moment.

Earless on high stood unabash’d Defoe.

(*The Dunciad*, 11, 139)

The Dunciad argues powerfully for a firm divide between popular, everyday, and ephemeral journalism on the one hand and a tradition of responsible, witty, ambitious, dignified, and venerable “literary” texts (mostly poetry) on the other. Pope was far from alone in his efficient attempt to divide the textual universe in Manichean terms, dismissing Smithfield and Grub Street productions as unworthy of attention or even existence. Observers from many backgrounds and perspectives – Dryden, Addison, Swift, Fielding, Sir Richard Blackmore, Joseph Trapp, and indeed Defoe himself in his poem, *The Pacificator* – all produced what we might call “sorting texts” which effectively divided the print world into the acceptable and unacceptable with little grayness in between. The dominance and proliferation of such binaries suggest that the larger cultural climate accepted and enforced the contrasts between the lower and the higher and the fit and the unfit, even though there was wide disagreement about the grounds or criteria for placing who where and for what reasons.

Now we know from Joseph Spence’s conversations that Pope himself was capable of more nuanced analysis and appreciation. As recorded by Spence,

Pope said that Defoe wrote “a vast many things; and none bad, though none excellent except ... the first part of *Robinson Crusoe*.” Still, in his public persona as literary guardian and gatekeeper of the noble tradition there was no compromise, little sympathy for popular taste, and scant tolerance for any kind of literary leveling. Now it is of course true that there were profound social, political, philosophical, and cultural differences that sharply divided habits and values as well as loyalties in early eighteenth-century England, and these distinctions are not arbitrary or trivial. I have no intention of obscuring very real divisions in authorial loyalties and socio-cultural aims. But I do wish to use Defoe to point to some textual practices that cross habitual lines and think across received historical categories, allowing the aspiring literary traditions of high culture to interact with less ambitious and less self-conscious workaday texts that could readily circulate across class and educational lines. These are utilitarian, often ephemeral, texts of everyday life and popular culture – what used to be disparagingly called paraliterature, subliterate, or popular literature – texts that seemed to have little likelihood of achieving posterity but that provided practical information, urgent rhetorical sallies, or entertainment for varieties of readers; they are – whether stories, guidebooks, or reflections – the unvarnished and unambitious texts of ordinary life.

What I want to consider here is how one major critical category of delineation (of genre or literary kind) works in practice when activated across the high/low cultural divide. I worry about two things. The first involves the discomfort inherent in using the troubled word “genre” itself, which tends to bring forward the habits of a tradition of usage that is at once too loose and baggy on the one hand, and (on the other) too narrowly applied to a limited and artificial set of familiar literary categories. At the heart of this issue, there is a basic philosophical question about whether it is right to appropriate a term from the life sciences in the service of artificial, invented, human-made categories as if they were a product of Nature or the eternal fitness of things. I would like to sideline that worry by putting aside the word “genre” and substituting here the term “textual traditions” in its place. This term, however inelegant and unmusical, has the virtue of being neutral across the privilege/popular divide. It more easily applies to new or newly identified categories of writing and is friendly to expansion. And the old, big, enduring genre categories like tragedy or elegy or pastoral or epic or georgic can function equally well under the term “textual traditions.” It is just that under this rubric they can bear a wider, more flexible, and more comprehensive reach, and be applied more directly to readers’ expectations than to writerly intent. So I mean my term “textual traditions” to comprehend both classic formal categories (like genre, species, kind, mode, etc.)

and less rigid groupings such as travel books, adventure stories, captivity and isolation narratives, and didactic treatises of several sorts, offering a less narrowly precise but more representatively comprehensive system to encompass distinct and definable but less talked about categories of reading materials. I am more concerned here with the way readers' expectations work than what authors intend or critics measure.

The second worry has to do with the teleology issue in literary history, that is, the tendency to find definitions in the way history turns out rather than in the way it developed. There is no doubt in my mind that Defoe studies are healthier and sounder now than they have ever been, and that literary history has come a long way in positioning Defoe securely among the eighteenth-century writers who most matter. But the enhanced standing has come at some price. Defoe comparisons are now more likely to be with his novelist successors and heirs rather than with his contemporaries and their texts, and the critical sense of where his writings come from seems now to have diminished (except among biographers) rather than enlarged. We are critically more apt to see a modern Defoe as novelist rather than the explorer of narrative forms and methods that he was. I suggest we do more probing into his historical roots and the textual traditions available to him and his readers. There is nothing wrong (and many things right) in thinking about Defoe in relationship to Scott or Dickens or Eliot or Conrad, but we need as well to keep track of what his readers knew and expected when they first picked up his strange and surprising books, if we are to have a full and rich sense of where he belongs in literary history.

There was a time in Defoe criticism – nearly a century ago now – when sources and analogues were all the rage in literary study, and they were not very good times. The scope was wide, but the results were rather thin, especially on the “sources” side, and a lot of energy was expended looking for factual dependence and transmissions of information rather than common strategies or habits of writing and reading. But even though criticism of this kind became something of a dry well, at least the emphasis was on origins, history, development, and process rather than future trajectories and events, so that issues devolved in terms of accumulations and choices and not teleology. Even though the questions being asked then were not very sophisticated, Defoe got critical attention within some relevant contexts and traditions. But, ironically, as Defoe's formal reputation as a novelist grew and he became more solidly ensconced in the ever-higher-flying novel tradition, rather than being called “novelistic” or a proto-novelist, as was once the habit, his new, more elevated and secure place in the literary hierarchy has meant that he became more unmoored from his humbler beginnings and detached, in critical discourse, from the popular textual traditions that

his contemporary readers were familiar with and that constituted some of his own early reading materials. I believe there is still value in reading the traditions that Defoe's contemporaries read and that he himself to some extent followed, altered, and developed.

Compared to works like *The Dunciad*, or *Trivia*, or *A Tale of a Tub*, or even *Clarissa* and *Tom Jones*, *Robinson Crusoe* is not a very bookish book; that is, previous texts don't make much of an appearance there, and the text makes little direct reference or allusion to other books, although Crusoe's account of his time as a slave in North Africa (Sallee) and his escape from his master there links his story to other popular captivity narratives. Crusoe himself puts together on his Island of Despair a small library of volumes he rescues from his own shipwreck: "books of navigation ... three very good Bibles ... some *Portugueze* books also, and among them two or three Popish prayer-books"; and then he adds: "and several other books" – all unspecified.¹ These volumes, along with paper and ink, are the last things he mentions having rescued from the ship, almost as if books were some kind of leisurely afterthought, not so pressing in the contexts of physical survival. He makes good use of the paper and ink (the grounds of his own art), but never tells us whether he consults the resources of his library, with the exception of the Bibles which he says he reads daily and which he quotes liberally and echoes often, especially early on when he narrates in detail his repentance and conversion.

Otherwise, Crusoe seems to lead pretty much an unprecedented life, unconnected to earlier figures or situations; he is content to be only in the lineage of Jonah, Job, and the prodigal son, without reference to modern or other classic wayfarers or colonists or solitaries who preceded him and shared their experiences in print. There are no invocations of Alexander Selkirk or any of the other castaways and island solitaries of his time, and he seems to think of himself in vaguely mythic terms rather than allusive ones: he is a maker of things and a doer of deeds. He thinks of his story as telling itself without invoking precedents or citing models. But this total-originality, *tabula-rasa* pose is something of a ruse. There is frequent awareness that even in his newness he is participating consciously in traditions, themes, expectations, and methods, following the habits and patterns of whole clusters of readily accessible texts – books, pamphlets, *vade mecums*, ballads, guides – that dealt with travels and exploration and trade and cultural overlap. Sometimes these contemporary materials were organized along a narrative line, and sometimes involved just piled-up information, maps, tables, illustrations, charts, and preachy advice as well as running commentary. Defoe may well have cherry-picked here and there hints or ideas for activities or episodes or tools or geographical facts, as

the old source hunters believed, but the real dependence on traditions here involves what he leads the reader to expect by his very presence within some of the textual traditions of their informal reading. I see no reason to believe that Defoe needed specific written “sources” for his accounts of Crusoe making or discovering things – clothing, earthenware pots, umbrellas, walls, ladders, canoes, creeks, currents – but he certainly knew that his readers expected such details. These expectations were created by what was already there in the textual traditions and their contexts rather than by any particular book or model or critical directive. The many varieties of travel books in his time, for example, carried suppositions and expectations that he virtually *had* to satisfy – about the facts of climate and weather, flora and fauna, geography, physical features of the natives, skin color, diet, language, rituals, tools and building projects, etc. Defoe’s text dutifully fulfills such expectations quietly, smoothly, and realistically without any fanfare or direct acknowledgment that even in his distinctiveness and originality he was participating in established textual traditions. Here are storms at sea, shipwrecks, seamen’s language, details of location and sailing conditions, pirates, mutinies, diverted plans and voyages, cargo arrangements, opportunities for trade, money exchange values, and both realized and lost commercial opportunities. Some of these expectations – adventures, pirates, strangeness, America, uninhabited islands – are highlighted on the title page; others show up later in the unfolding of the narrative. In the *Farther Adventures* (the sequel published the same year as *Robinson Crusoe* and included with subsequent editions of the novel) Defoe very self-consciously claims that he is avoiding all these conventions and he gives a list of them: “I shall not pester my Account, or the Reader, with Descriptions of Places, Journals of our Voyages, Variations of the Compass, Latitudes, Meridian-Distances, Trade-Winds, Situation of Ports, and the like; such as almost all the Histories of long Navigation are full of, and makes the reading tiresome enough, and are perfectly unprofitable to all that read it.”² But on second look (as with the money he finds in the shipwreck) he includes the very kinds of information he pretends to rail against.

These expected “facts” and details are not necessarily trustworthy or accurate of course; Percy Adams’ classic account in *Travelers and Travel Liars 1660–1800* (1962) remains a lively read for its detailing of falsified “facts” and information mistakenly copied from one inaccurate book to another but often cobbled together in London by hacks whose sea experience was all in their garrets. The point is that the conventions were set not by design or necessity but by habit and repetition, and often accurate cultural facts about one location were relocated on another batch of natives on another continent. What is common in travel books is a thirst for cultural information

about far-off places, especially Africa and the Americas – often because such “facts” are strange and surprising in themselves and minister to a taste for the exotic, but sometimes because (more practically) they hinted at potential future markets, possibilities for expanding trade, or religious, cultural, and commercial evangelism. It was an acquisitive age, and the acquisitiveness included customs and behaviors and languages and habits of mind as well as goods, and products, and slaves. And the same kind of habits obtained in many different kinds of textual traditions, some of them discursive and didactic, as well as narrative and reflective.

A couple of years ago, when I was preparing a talk for a narrative conference in Finland, I decided to make a list of as many definable textual traditions as I could think of that were, one way or another, embodied or drawn upon in the pages of *Robinson Crusoe*. I quickly came up with a list of thirty-some of them. And when I delivered that paper a few weeks later, one listener jumped up straightaway at the end to add five more he had thought of during the talk. Ultimately, others suggested several more: each of these embodied distinct habits and conventions, and it is something of a feat to meet those expectations and fit them smoothly into something definite, distinctive, and new. I won't repeat the entire list here, but let me mention in passing just a few examples of these textual traditions and then briefly discuss two of them.

1. Personal journals (or diaries), usually Puritan in background, tone, and spirit and often Calvinistically motivated, that detail daily events and behaviors, with rich details about spiritual triumphs and failures.
2. Spiritual autobiographies that trace patterns in personal journals and summarize, from a later perspective, spiritual progress and regress.
3. Missionary accounts of conversions and tutorial successes in the New World.
4. Accounts of observations of natural phenomena, some from a scientific perspective (such as Royal Society reports and transactions), some from a meditational interest (such as Sir Robert Boyle's “meletetic lucubrations,” Protestant meditations on everyday events that help to reveal truths about God and man).
5. Captivity or fear-of-captivity narratives.
6. Guides for conduct in specific callings, occupations, and circumstances, ranging from *The Young Man's Guide*, *The Young Man's Calling*, *A Christian Directory*, and Defoe's own *Family Instructors to The Tradesman's Calling*, *The Husbandsman's Calling*, *The Seaman's Monitor*, and *Navigation Spiritualized; or a New Compass for Seamen*.
7. Stories of sinners, backsliders, reprobates, and rebels whose lives were cautionary or evitational.

8. The sequel tradition in which an original text is elaborated or extended into a new and quasi-independent narrative.
9. Wonder books that describe persons, circumstances, and events that seem to violate normal behaviors and natural laws, matters often going beyond the strange and surprising and sometimes crossing into the miraculous, eerie, bizarre, or supernatural.
10. Providence books relating special divine interventions in the natural processes of things and events.

Let us look in a little more detail at the first and last of these traditions – daily journals and Providence books, for both of these textual traditions bear a special relationship to a larger sense of order and the nature of things. Providence books first. In Defoe's time, there was nothing new in the idea that God actively watched over human events and monitored individual human lives through the orderly processes of Nature (General Providences) and that he sometimes intervened in specific moments and cases to punish or reward specific peoples or individuals (this involved Special Providences and occasionally Miracles). The theological debate about where to draw lines without lapsing into total solipsism was an old one, but what was new in emphasis in the late seventeenth century involved the increased pressures from science to discover and extend the orderly processes of Nature. Exceptions were a conceptual problem. Theology fought back largely through stories of special interventions that challenged the inviolability of natural laws. And the stories poured from the presses. One Matthew Poole in the 1670s was reported to be attempting to assemble an exhaustive collection of stories of providential interventions, and in 1697 William Turner published *A Compleat History Of the Most Remarkable Providences, both of Judgment and Mercy, which have Hapned in this PRESENT AGE*, a collection of about five thousand stories and anecdotes scattered over almost 600 folio pages. Similar collections were assembled in America, engineered by Cotton and Increase Mather, and (besides such massive anthologies) there were (on both sides of the Atlantic) scores of pamphlet-size volumes of judgments and punishments as well as rescues and deliverances. Providence books often involved doctrinal discussions and ambitious (or at least long) defenses of theory, but the emphasis was on examples, anecdotes, and narratives that illustrated or suggested providential intervention or special care in particular circumstances. It was a highly polemical (and repetitious) tradition, and it is probably safe to say that it had little impact on serious philosophical discourse or the rising Deistic challenges more generally. But it was appealing comfort reading for believers and had the cumulative effect of providing comparative test cases of credibility, for the examples were

argued vigorously, but varied widely in their rhetorical success. Readers of the Providence tradition were not necessarily skilled critical readers, and religious bias or gullibility were obviously friendly to Providential accounts. But readers of Providence books were trained by reading experience to assess gradations in credibility, and Defoe has the early pre-conversion Crusoe work his way carefully through basic questions of agency. When Crusoe discovers a few stalks of barley growing (apparently miraculously) just outside his fortification, he reports “the astonishment and confusion of my thoughts on this occasion” and begins “to suggest, that God had miraculously caus’d this grain to grow without any help of seed sown.” But with the help of his memory, he works out a rational explanation involving his dumping out the dregs of a bag of seed, but then he loses his sense of being singled out for special intervention. “And then,” he reports, “the wonder began to cease; and I must confess, my religious thankfulness to God’s Providence began to abate too upon the discovery that all this was nothing but what was common; tho’ I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforeseen Providence, as if it had been miraculous; for it was really the work of Providence as to me.” Here Defoe draws directly on the insistent distinction in Providence books between miracles and special providences, the former involving direct interventions in the processes of Nature, and the latter unusual favorable outcomes that happen within normal cause-and-effect sequences. Defoe knows the vocabulary and the rhetoric of the tradition and counts on readers to be able to navigate the turbulent waters of theological controversy. In *The Farther Adventures*, Crusoe’s mention of providential doings trails off noticeably: he doesn’t forget about it, but like Moll Flanders, he is perhaps “not so extraordinary a Penitent as [he] was at first.”

If reader experience with the textual tradition of Providence books was useful preparation for reading some parts of *Robinson Crusoe* where religious interpretation and critical rationality disagree, the whole life experience of keeping and re-reading a journal resonates throughout the novel, even though strictly speaking the journal itself takes up only a dozen or so pages and is much more often summarized than quoted directly.³ Still, the very idea of recording events daily, reviewing their patterns periodically, and reflecting on them long-term sets up a complex method of interpreting and evaluating events and reactions. It also enables Crusoe to keep a time line that orders events and feeds his rage for order in his unfamiliar and puzzling new world. He is obsessed by the idea of order during his entire stay on the Island of Despair and is especially anxious in his first nine months when keeping his journal is both a reminder of his discomfort and a steadying force in facing it.

It well may be that the whole idea of Crusoe's journal came to Defoe late and gradually; the delayed mention of his finding ink in the shipwreck suggests that he hadn't initially planned to interleave retrospection with on-the-spot observation; the first fifth of the book is cast as a typical I-was-born Life narrative in retrospect. And the title page contributes here by featuring "Life" as the largest and most prominent word, a sometime guide/hint to emphasis even when authored by an editor or typesetter. But in any case the idea of the journal (once introduced) quickly becomes crucial to the sense of time and order that sets up the coherence of Crusoe's writing and perspective. First of all, the journal triggers the tripartite observation/digestion/reflection tension that animates the second fifth of the novel (and the whole first year on the Island of Despair). Defoe's use of the journal is somewhat irregular and seemingly casual – Crusoe often paraphrases or summarizes in blocks of several days – but his strategy sets up a pattern of observing events and writing-to-the-day, then reviewing, and then interpreting again from a lifelong retrospective. In effect, Defoe traces the narrative move from daily journal to reflective spiritual autobiography but inserts a middle-distance that mediates the observation/reflection. The journal's effectiveness in recording change of perspective underscores the way Crusoe comes to understand not only himself but the universe in its unexpected and (at first) unwelcome variety. And beyond the layered time perspectives, the journal provides an anchor and authority for time and for order itself.

Crusoe is understandably overwrought and confused when he is first cast up on dry land, and everything seems disordered or unknown; he is an alien in a place so unnerving that he sleeps in a tree during his first night on the island. Once he gets his minimal bearings he remarks on his disorder and spends his early weeks and months trying to make sense of his environment, only to discover that the island is in fact stable and ordered in its own way, and that it is he who must adjust once he finds out the order of nature in this particular place. For there are here different kinds of growths and wildlife, different terrains, different seasons (in fact different kinds of seasons – rainy and dry rather than summer and winter), and ultimately (though it takes him years to document it) different human traits and habits and customs, including of course much later its use by cannibals for killing and consuming their prisoners of war.

His first thoughts on the island, naturally enough, are about physical security, but he soon discovers that what he really lacks in his new world is any sense of Order, both in his environment and in his life. And only when he begins to keep his journal – some weeks into his island residence and when he has recovered as much of his past as he can from the shipwreck – does he begin to gain some coherent perspective: writing and keeping a

record of himself enables him to sort out climate, growth cycles, and seasonal patterns. At first he sees his carefully harvested legacy from the shipwreck as “a confus’d heap of goods which ... lay in no order” (55), but with paper and pen in hand he can sort things out in a vertical written ledger of the Good and Evil in his condition and situation. “[I]t was a great Pleasure to me to see all my Goods in such Order,” he later reports, and his journal soon records his satisfaction with being in control of his time: “This morning,” he writes in his journal on November 4, “I began to order my times of work, of going out with my gun, time of sleep and time of diversion, *viz.* Every Morning I walk’d out with my gun for two or three hours if it did not rain, then employ’d my self to work till about eleven a-clock, then eat what I had to live on, and from twelve to two I lay down to sleep, the weather being excessive hot” (58). What is remarkable about Defoe’s adaptation of the journal tradition here is the way Crusoe learns that he needs a larger sense of order, and at the same time discovers the relativity of regional and cultural norms. Travel is discovery, and what is Nature in one place is not necessarily Nature in another.

Crusoe as a land owner, trader, and accumulator was probably temperamentally and intellectually more interesting and important to Defoe than Crusoe as builder, gardener, and grower: his other novels are preoccupied with exchange and accumulation much more than production. But readers of *Crusoe* over the years have usually seen it another way, being more fascinated by the island section of the novel, with Crusoe’s need to create, with his human challenges in isolation rather than with his global business decisions and accumulated wealth. In other words, readers have been more intrigued by the potential of a book Defoe never wrote, *The Compleat English Husbandman*, rather than *The Compleat English Tradesman* that Defoe published in 1725–7. The association of reading with survival may account for part of the success of narration in the early part of the island years, but some of the narrative power results from the sheer force of “how” answers that are particular to the discrete island isolation: how can Crusoe come to understand Nature halfway across the world when his native experience is otherwise? How can he use the leftovers from the shipwreck to build a new life in a new and contrary setting? How can solitude and survival be framed as creative if not satisfying? How do things learned in one location translate to a different part of the world? How do people create or grow things as distinguished from selling or exchanging them? Among other things, the first year of the island section reconciles, largely through the conversion episode that animates Crusoe’s perception and understanding and leads to his mastery of the physical through the spiritual. That is to say, Crusoe’s needs and assets come into a do-it-yourself kind of balance.

Rousseau was essentially right in his novel, *Émile or On Education* (1762), about the educational dimensions of *Robinson Crusoe*: exploring here is instruction, and what has to be mastered once the self is ordered is Nature itself in all its particulars and variety and fundamental order. Crusoe's monocultural teaching of Friday about language and religion and diet takes over and tests the instructional function later in the novel, and in a sense *Robinson Crusoe* becomes for a while a kind of *Rough Guide* to the New World.

Pat Rogers has suggested that *Robinson Crusoe* has a good deal in common with the georgic mode, a type of verse imitating the Roman poet Virgil's poems, *The Georgics*, dealing with rural and agricultural life. Rogers makes the connection via Defoe's *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724–6), where it applies very nicely, but he could just as well have made his point with *A Tour through the Whole "Island of Despair,"* Crusoe's name at times for his island.⁴ More recently Stephen Gregg has very suggestively sorted out affinities in *Robinson Crusoe* for the languages of both georgic and pastoral.⁵ It is provocative to contemplate some of the concerns of *Robinson Crusoe* with Virgil as our guide. We might ponder for a moment parallel functions that Defoe here performs, much in the spirit of recalling some of the popular textual traditions that he drew upon for reader guidance. Defoe explores many of the same issues and functions that the georgic articulates for eighteenth-century poetry. In the central island portion of the novel, he sorts out the processes of Nature, climate, discovery, cultivation, labor, husbandry, and productivity, in concrete, particular, and narrative working terms. In fact, for the central three-fifths of the novel (that is, all of the "transformed island" narrative), Crusoe's busyness in creating an isolated economy of his own is front and center both in conception and in particular details. It is the intricate managing of these themes and concerns (especially the devotion to everyday labor within the framework of the deciphered processes of Nature) that constitutes the striking and insistent coherence of that section of the narrative. If *Robinson Crusoe* has observable affinities with the georgic they would seem to be broadly cultural and pragmatic rather than traditional or formal, but they are visible to readers across the cultural divide.

A strict interpretation of the georgic as a textual tradition would need to start with Virgil and virtually end there as well. There are a modest number of formal georgics in the eighteenth century, but there are hundreds of georgic derivations, spinoffs, and allusions. Literary historians are pretty well agreed that signs of the georgic pop up everywhere in the English-speaking world after Dryden's translation of Virgil's poem and Addison's influential essay of 1697, "An Essay on Virgil's *Georgics*," accompanying

that translation. And the proliferation and amalgamation of other closely related textual traditions is abundantly manifested in texts throughout the eighteenth century: in house and estate poems, prospect poems, garden and landscape poems, poetry of description, occupational and work poems, rural community poems, mock georgics, urban georgics – lots of familial variants that recall similar themes and emphases. And beyond this (mostly in prose) there is a broad spectrum of agricultural and rural improvement texts (such as Jethroe Tull's 1731 *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*) that rise up in a kind of quiet rebellion against urbanization and its discontents and that reassert and celebrate the cultural heritage of labor, instruction, and orderly rural creativity. This kind of observation is part of the context that many readers, both early and late, brought to their reading of *Robinson Crusoe*, hardly a source or allusion in the usual sense but a frame of reference that quietly (as in other textual traditions) becomes part of the reach of the novel; textual traditions – learned or popular, in poetry or prose – assert and insert themselves into reader practices and habits. This constitutes one set of reasons for thinking about traditional formal distinctions and broader textual traditions at one and the same time on more or less an equal basis.

I have been trying to think about textual traditions in a comprehensive way that includes how readers are trained and habituated by them, as well as for their thematic and formal features. But I have also been trying to complicate two broad distinctions that we seldom question hard enough: between traditional and popular literature, for one, and (second) for poetry and prose. I began with Pope's sharp division of writing into the worthy and lasting, on the one hand, and, on the other, the transitory and the inferior, a would-be distinction that once had its day in literary studies but has proved to be illusory as the novel claimed a larger and larger share of both readership and reputation. In practical terms, not many eighteenth-century scholars and critics have actual difficulty with multiple citizenship in traditional categories. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), for example, can readily be conceived as many different things at the same time, fed by multiple forms and textual traditions: rhymed poem, mock epic, couplet lyric, neoclassical poem, social comedy, five-act comedy honoring the unities of space and time, social satire, occasional poem, etc., and there is some profit in tracing its relationship to any of these traditions. But no category cancels the rights of any other one: there is no reason for any either/or rather than both/and. Perhaps Pope in his own private taste and conversations was less consistent and more generous than he was as a would-be canon maker, but in any case Defoe's catch-all lifetime habit of gleaning and gathering multiple textual traditions and transforming them into new configurations continues to have a pretty good run. What I have tried to do here is to provide

some reasons for thinking more broadly about textual traditions in both prose and poetry, and for seeing affinities by complicating some of the usual polar distinctions – traditional versus experimental or improvisational, poetry versus prose, literary establishment versus outside innovators, formal loyalties versus instinctive absorption and intermixing of multiple textual traditions into something new. These are strange and surprising adventures indeed.

NOTES

- 1 All references in the text to *Robinson Crusoe* are to *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. John Richetti (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 52–3.
- 2 *Farther Adventures*, ed. W. R. Owens, *The Novels of Daniel Defoe*, vol. 2 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), 127.
- 3 *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, ed. G. A. Starr (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 5.
- 4 Pat Rogers, *The Text of Great Britain: Theme and Design in Defoe's Tour* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 135–46.
- 5 Stephen H. Gregg, *Defoe's Writings and Manliness: Contrary Men* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 64–70.